



City of Phoenix

Development Services Department

Hillside: Frequently Asked Questions

This publication can be made available in alternate formats (Braille, large print, computer diskette, or audiotape) upon request. Contact the Development Services Department at (602) 262-7811 (voice) or (602) 534-5500 (TTY).

It is the purpose of the Hillside ordinance to establish regulations which recognize that development of land in hilly or mountainous areas involves special consideration and unique situations which result from the slope of the land. Since hilly or mountainous areas within the city offer a desirable setting, visible to the entire city, they are a unique natural asset. It is intended through these regulations to preserve the visual integrity and character of hillside areas, while allowing reasonable development, which is both safe and functional. In all zoning districts, wherever the natural terrain of any lot or parcel or any portion thereof has a slope of ten percent (10%) or greater, that lot or parcel or that portion of the lot or parcel shall be considered to be in a hillside development area. The sections of the Phoenix Zoning Ordinance at <http://www.codepublishing.com/AZ/phoenix/?PhoenixZNT.html> that directly apply to Hillside development are Chapter 7, DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS OF GENERAL APPLICABILITY, at <http://www.codepublishing.com/AZ/phoenix/?PhoenixZ07/PhoenixZ07.html>; Section 710, Hillside Development at <http://www.codepublishing.com/AZ/phoenix/?PhoenixZ07/PhoenixZ0710.html>; and, SECTION 507 TAB A, GUIDELINES FOR DESIGN REVIEW; Hillside Development Guidelines at <http://www.codepublishing.com/AZ/phoenix/?PhoenixZ05/PhoenixZ0507A.html>. The portion of the Phoenix Code of Ordinances, which directly applies to Hillside Development, is ARTICLE III. SUBDIVISION PLAT REQUIREMENTS, DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS, Section 32-32 at <http://www.codepublishing.com/AZ/phoenix/?Phoenix32/Phoenix3232.html>. All aforementioned ordinances may be accessed at the respective links.

Related resources include:

On-line Plan Review Status

<http://phoenix.gov/development/onlineservices/index.html>

click on: plan review status

type in permit #, KIVA# or project name

click on: "Reviews"

click on: "notes" for the review you wish to read

Hillside and Checklists

<http://phoenix.gov/development/siteandcivil/hillside/index.html>

Phoenix Zoning Ordinance

<http://www.codepublishing.com/AZ/phoenix/?PhoenixZNT.html>

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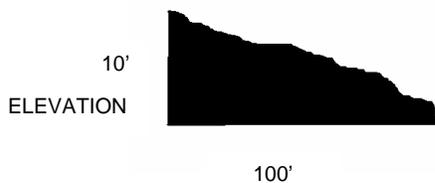
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Q: What is a Hillside lot?

A: A lot is considered hillside when it has a slope of 10% or greater. This means that in 100 feet there is a difference of 10 feet or more of grade, as shown below:



Q: What can I do on my Single Family Hillside lot?

A: You may develop 35% or 20,000 square feet (whichever is less) of the lot, with a 25% maximum square footage allowable “under roof”. If you don’t use the entire 25% under roof you may apply the percentage that is left over to your “beyond roof” graded area.

Q: How can I determine the remaining developable square footage for my hillside property if there is already a house existing on the lot?

A1: If the City of Phoenix has an approved plan on file for your lot you may ask to view this file at Central Records located on the 2nd floor of Phoenix City Hall.

A2: If the City of Phoenix does not have an approved plan on file you will need to hire a Land Surveyor or engineer to determine square footages.

Q: What if I have a Hillside property that I want to split or subdivide?

A: An approved slope analysis must precede all lot splits/subdivisions on hillside properties. For subdivision of larger properties, there is also a pre-application and preliminary review process. Further information on the pre-application and preliminary review process may be found at <http://phoenix.gov/development/commercialplanreview/processoverview/index.html>.

Q: What is meant by “graded area?”

A: Graded area is any area disturbed by construction (including utility services), or where your driveway, patios, pool, walkway, turf areas, planters, retaining walls, site cuts or fills, or backfill areas have disturbed or changed the natural ground. Areas of grading in Public Utility Easements are exempted from being considered as “graded area”.

Q: What plants can I use for revegetation?

A: The Sonoran Desert Plant List may be found on the City of Phoenix Landscape web page at <http://phoenix.gov/development/siteandcivil/landscape/index.html>.

Q: What if I want to grade more than 35% or 20,000 square feet of my Hillside lot?

A: You must submit for a Hillside Grading Waiver. For more information on the Hillside Grading Waiver process, go to <http://phoenix.gov/development/siteandcivil/hillside/index.html>.

Q: How do I apply for a Hillside Grading Waiver?

A: The hillside grading waiver review process requires that the applicant submit to Central-Login:

- ✓ 3 copies of narrative and graphic exhibit describing applicant proposal and basis for appeal, to be submitted with appropriate appeal fee.
- ✓ Photographs: on-site and adjacent to the site within 300’.
- ✓ List of property owners within 300’ of site.
- ✓ Single-family plot plan or site plan/subdivision.
- ✓ Hillside calculations. See Hillside Grading Waiver Submittal Requirements at <http://phoenix.gov/development/siteandcivil/hillside/index.html>.

Q: Where do I go to hire an engineer?

A: We suggest the Yellow Pages or asking your architect to recommend a licensed engineer. City staff is not allowed to recommend an engineer.

Q: How much are hillside and slope analysis plan submittal fees?

A: For submittal fees, permit fees, plan review fees, and submittal requirements please contact Central Log-In on 2nd Floor of City Hall at 602-534-5934, <http://phoenix.gov/development/feesandfinance/index.html>.

Q: What is a panhandle or flag lot?

A: A lot which contains an appendage that provides private or shared access to a public right-of-way or private accessway. The panhandle portion of the lot is not required to meet the minimum lot width at the required front yard setback.

Q: What does “Under Roof, Hillside” mean?

A: The area under roof is considered as all areas covered by any permanent non-permeable roof structures including roof overhangs.

Q: What about retaining walls?

A: Be aware that walls over 3 feet, 4 inches, measured from top of footing to top of wall, will require a Use Permit to be obtained through Planning and Zoning located on the 2nd floor of Phoenix City Hall, 200 W. Washington, 602-262-7131, <http://phoenix.gov/PLANNING/index.html>. No retaining wall can be over six feet in height. If more height is proposed, the added wall(s) must be one foot back for each additional foot in height. The distance between walls must be between four and six feet, and must be revegetated with screening desert plant material. This area is not included in the total graded area, however, retaining walls shall not be used to terrace or otherwise alter natural terrain, other than to fit the house into the site.

Q: What are the restrictions for fences and walls?

A: Fences and walls may not be installed along the perimeter; but can be installed within any of the graded portions of the lot since all areas within the fence/wall are considered graded and thus fall under the 35% total allowable grading area. The maximum height of the fence/wall is six feet. Maximum combined height of the retaining wall plus any screen wall is nine feet. An example would be a three-foot retaining wall plus a six-foot screening wall. Be aware, any area within a wall is considered ‘disturbed’.

Q: Why do my neighbors have perimeter fences on their property line?

A: A revision to the ordinance took effect January 1, 1994 that prohibits perimeter property line fences/walls. Many perimeter walls were built before that time. In addition, a few people have requested and received a zoning variance. Also, not all lots within a hillside subdivision meet the criteria to be considered a hillside lot.

Q: What are the building height restrictions?

A: No building shall exceed a height of two (2) stories , not to exceed (30) feet above the natural grade of the lot or parcel at any section through the structure.

Q: Can I appeal any of these restrictions?

A: Height of building, walls, or fences and the maximum area “under roof” can be appealed through the zoning variance process. Zoning variances may be applied for in the Zoning Division of the Planning Department at City Hall, 2nd floor, Development Center 602-262-7131.

Q: Does someone have to check my property before grading begins?

A: Yes. A Development Services Department inspector will check your construction fence before grading. A construction fence is installed to protect the undisturbed areas of the site. We may check during construction to see that the fence remains up and the undisturbed area remains protected. You must also call for a final inspection to make sure that all disturbed areas have been revegetated and the grading is per the approved plan before a Certificate of Occupancy can be issued. Noncompliance will delay your move in date.

Q: I believe my neighbor is building or developing on their Hillside lot without a permit or in previously undisturbed areas. Who can I call to have an inspector verify the violation?

A: Call the Development Services Department Landscape section at 602-262-7811.

Q: How do I perform a slope analysis? Can I hire someone?

A: You have the option to prepare the slope analysis yourself using the directions available on the City of Phoenix website at <http://phoenix.gov/development/siteandcivil/hillside/index.html> or you may hire a land surveyor or engineer. The professional that you hire to perform your slope analysis does not have to be registered with the Arizona State board of Technical Registration.

Q: Where can I obtain a topographic map?

A: The Engineering and Architectural Services Records Counter, located on the 2nd floor of City Hall, has topographic maps and quarter section maps for most areas north of South Mountain. You will need to hire a land surveyor for the areas where the City does not have topographic maps. Sometimes the developer will have topographic maps and topographic information for their subdivision.

Q: Can I transfer any remaining under roof to beyond roof if I do not use my entire 25% under roof?

A: Yes, as long as you do not exceed the 35% total disturbance rule.

Q: Can I transfer my allowable beyond roof square footage to my allowable under roof square footage in order to build a bigger home?

A: No, in order to exceed 25% “under roof” lot coverage, you must obtain a variance from the Planning and Zoning department (602-262-7131).

Q: How can I determine the setbacks on my hillside lot?

A1: Single Family Residential (Conventional, Standard and average lot options): front and rear setbacks are as determined by the zoning district. Call Planning and Zoning at 602-262-7131. Side yard setbacks are as required by zoning district or 10 feet, whichever is greater.

A2: Single Family Residential (Planned Residential Development): Setbacks may be called out on the final approved site plan (available for viewing on the 2nd floor of Phoenix City Hall, Central Records). If the final approved site plan does not call out setbacks then use what is mandated in Chapter 7 of the City of Phoenix Zoning Ordinance. The City of Phoenix Zoning ordinance may be viewed online at www.codepublishing.com/AZ/phoenix/.

Q: What if I only want to submit for a minor revision to my hillside property, such as development in a previously disturbed area or the addition of a covered patio?

A: A minor amendment to your approved Hillside plan may be allowed. Contact a Development Services Department Landscape Architect at 602-262-7811.

Q: Can someone from the Development Services Department, Hillside section come out to my property prior to plan submittal?

A: No, property inspection is conducted during the course of construction.

Q: Can I obtain a copy of the approved plans the City has on file pertaining to my property?

A: Plans sealed by a professional registrant are copyrighted, and therefore the City will require a written release from the original sealant in order to provide copies.

Q: What special design standards apply to vertical alignment of local streets in hillside areas?

A: Street and private access way grades shall conform as closely as possible to natural topography, but shall not exceed 15%. Where street grades exceed 12%, the street shall have a maximum length of six hundred feet. Cross slopes on cul-de-sacs may not exceed 8%.

Q: What special design standards apply to horizontal alignment of local streets in hillside areas?

A: The Department's Traffic Engineer has the discretion to accept horizontal alignment curves with less than one hundred feet centerline radius and also to consider various designs for turning and backing type of cul-de-sacs that are substituted for circular turnarounds.

Q: What special considerations are required for curbing of local streets in hillside areas?

A: Vertical curbs shall be required on the downhill side of streets having grades of 6% or greater; other types of approved curb may be installed in lieu of conventional rolled or vertical curb elsewhere.

Q: What special design standards apply to design of driveways in hillside areas?

A: Driveway locations are not to interfere with traffic calming features and driveway grades are not to exceed 20%. Desirable cross slopes are 1 to 3%, with the absolute maximum being 4%.

TRT/jo/shared/trt dev/private/updated docs hillside faq
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