

GRADING

BACKGROUND/SUMMARY

Currently, there are no limits to the quantity of grading or to the amount of earth one can import or export from a property, resulting in major alterations of the City's natural terrain, the loss of natural on-site drainage courses, increased drainage impacts to the community, off-site impacts, and increased loads on under-improved hillside streets during construction. In order to address these issues, while still allowing for reasonable construction and grading activity, the Baseline Hillside Ordinance proposes to link the amount of grading allowed on a property to the size of the lot, and restrict the volume of earth allowed to be imported and exported from a property.

MAXIMUM CUT & FILL QUANTITIES

The total quantities of grading, both **Cut** and **Fill** would be limited to a maximum of 500 cubic yards plus the numeric value equal to 5% of the total lot size in cubic yards, up to a maximum of 1,000 cubic yards total, not including grading for the foundation of structures, driveways, and Remedial Grading as detailed below. Example: a 5,000 square-foot lot would have a maximum grading amount of 750 cubic yards (500 cubic yards for the base amount + 250 cubic yards for the 5% calculation).

Foundations

Cut and/or fill for foundations and other understructures, basements or other completely subterranean spaces.

Driveways

Cut and/or fill, up to 500 cubic yards, for driveways to the required parking closest to the accessible street for which a lot has ingress/egress rights.

Remedial Grading

Remedial Grading necessary to mitigate a geotechnical hazard on a site, such as repair of a landslide, expansive or compressible soils, and/or site stability. Such grading would need to be recommended in a Geotechnical Investigation Report and approved by the Department of Building & Safety Grading Division.

What is Cut?

A portion of land surface or areas from which earth has been removed or will be removed by excavation; the depth below the original ground surface or excavating surface.

What is Fill?

The depositing of soil, rock or other earth materials by artificial means.

MAXIMUM IMPORT/EXPORT QUANTITIES

The maximum quantity of all earth being brought into a property, or **import**, would be limited to no more than 500 cubic yards. The maximum quantity of all earth being taken out of a property, or **export** would be no more than 1,000 cubic yards.

GRADING**GRADING ON EXTREME SLOPES**

Grading on slopes greater than or equal to 100% would not be allowed unless recommended by a full site Geotechnical Investigation Report and approved by the Department of Building & Safety Grading Division in order to mitigate previously existing unsafe conditions.

LANDFORM GRADING REQUIREMENT

Any project that is allowed 1,000 cubic yards or more of grading, due to Remedial Grading, a Zoning Administrator Determination, or a Variance, would be required to utilize the landform grading methods as outlined in the Department of City Planning – Planning Guidelines Landform Grading Manual¹. The purpose of this requirement is to better reflect the original landform and result in minimum disturbance to natural terrain. Notching into hillsides would be encouraged so that projects are built into natural terrain as much as possible.

GRADING PERMITS

In order to better tie grading activity to construction, it is proposed that a grading permit could not be issued on single-family properties in the Hillside Area until a building permit is approved. This is intended to reduce instances where grading is done in advance of the actual construction of a building or structure, but then stops at that stage due to financial, entitlement, or other issues.

ZONING ADMINISTRATOR AUTHORITY

A Zoning Administrator would have the authority to grant the following limited deviations from the grading requirements; any deviations not included below would require a Variance:

- ☐ Grading in excess of 1,000 cubic yards, if the quantity does not exceed the true value of 500 cubic yards plus the numeric value equal to 5% of the total lot size in cubic yards.
- ☐ Import of more than 500 cubic yards or more than 1,000 cubic yards of export.
- ☐ Grading in excess of 1,000 cubic yards, in order to accommodate the additional parking requirements in Paragraph b of Subdivision 8 of this Subsection for a new one-family dwelling, accessory building, or additions on a lot which fronts on a Substandard Hillside Limited Street, but in no event shall the quantities exceed the true value of 500 cubic yards plus the numeric value equal to 5% of the total lot size in cubic yards. **(Existing Authority)**

¹ The Planning Guidelines Landform Grading Manual, adopted by the City Council on June 1983, is currently used for subdivision projects. However, it contains a lot of guidelines which, if applied to individual properties where large quantities of grading are involved, can be very effective at achieving the objectives for this Ordinance.