



# FLOOR TO LOT AREA RATIO (FAR) SUPPLEMENTAL APPLICATION



## GENERAL INFORMATION

### WHAT IS A FLOOR TO LOT AREA RATIO (FAR)?

FAR is defined as the net floor area of the buildings on a lot divided by the net lot area. The City uses a formula to determine the maximum net floor area that is allowed on a lot based on a range of lot sizes. FARs provide general parameters of reasonable lot build-out according to lot size and are often used to analyze a proposed project's potential for neighborhood compatibility.

### WHEN IS FAR REQUIRED?

FAR is a requirement in the Municipal Code for a home more than one-story, or taller than 17 feet in height, on lots smaller than 15,000 square feet in size in residential single unit (RS) zones. On other properties, such as those on lots 15,000 square foot or larger, or on properties in multi-unit residential zones, the FARs are used as a guideline, rather than a requirement. The "guideline" FAR maximum is listed in the [Single Family Residence Design Guidelines](#), rather than the Municipal Code.

### WHAT IF MY PROJECT EXCEEDS THE MAXIMUM FAR?

Applicants are strongly encouraged to design a project that is less than 85% of the maximum FAR because it is more likely to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. However, there may be some project sites with special physical features, which when combined with exceptional design, can accommodate a higher FAR and still be compatible with the neighborhood. Projects over 85% of the maximum required FAR must provide additional submittal information, and some may require a Zoning Modification. Projects over 100% of the maximum required FAR will require a Zoning Modification.



# FAR REQUIREMENTS

This table summarizes the steps in determining the FAR per SBMC §30.20.030.A or §28.15.083

## STEP 1: DETERMINE IF FAR IS APPLICABLE

The first step is to determine if the project is subject to the Maximum Floor Area (FAR) as a **requirement** or a **guideline**.

- **Required FAR** is applicable to the development if all of the following are met:
  - Property is developed with a single-unit residence, and associated accessory buildings, with two or more stories or 17 feet or more in height.
  - Lot area is less than 15,000 net square feet.
  - RS Residential Single-Unit Zone (one-family residence zones in the Coastal Zone).
- **Guideline FAR** applies to any other lot developed with a single-unit residence if the project is subject to design review by the Single Family Design Board or Historic Landmarks Commission.

## STEP 2: CALCULATE THE MAXIMUM FAR

The second step is to calculate the maximum net floor area for the project’s lot size by using the appropriate formula in the table below (or use the City’s [Floor to Lot Area Ratio Calculator](#))

NET LOT AREA	MAXIMUM NET FLOOR AREA
Less than 4,000 sq. ft.	2,200 sq. ft.
4,000 to 9,999 sq. ft.	1,200 sq. ft. + (0.25 x net lot area)
10,000 to 14,999 sq. ft.	2,500 sq. ft. + (0.125 x net lot area)
15,000 to 19,999 sq. ft.	4,180 sq. ft. + (0.013 x net lot area) <b>Guideline Only</b>
Greater than 20,000 sq. ft.	4,430 sq. ft. + (0.013 x net lot area) <b>Guideline Only</b>

## STEP 3: CALCULATE 85% OF THE MAXIMUM FAR

Once the maximum required or guideline floor area has been determined, next determine what 85% of the maximum net floor area will be for the project. If the project exceeds 85% of the maximum required FAR, additional submittal requirements will apply (see pages 3-4).

## STEP 4: DETERMINE IF AN FAR MODIFICATION IS REQUIRED

Any increase to building floor area or height (17 feet or higher) will require a Zoning Modification if:

- The floor area will exceed the maximum net floor area for the lot, or
- The floor area will exceed 85% of the maximum floor area and any of the following apply:
  - The average slope of the lot or the building site is 30% or greater,
  - The height of any structure on the lot is more than 25 feet, or
  - The lot is located in the Hillside Design District and 500 or more cubic yards of grading is proposed to occur outside the footprint of the main or accessory buildings.



## SUBMITTAL INFORMATION

Projects proposed to be over 85% or over 100% of a **required** maximum floor area must submit the following items as part of a complete Planning (PLN) Application, unless waived by the Single Family Design Board (SFDB) or Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) during Conceptual Review.

### OVER 85% OF MAXIMUM FAR

Submit the following information prior to Project Design Approval, unless it is formally waived.

- Street Silhouette Elevation**  
Street silhouette elevation showing adjacent building outline silhouettes (roof and exterior wall lines). All homes to be shown in same amount of detail.
- Panoramic Photo Simulations**  
Panoramic streetscape photographic presentation with a simulation of the proposed project superimposed on the streetscape panoramic photographs.
- Story Poles and Other Visual Aids**  
Story poles, and at least one other visual aid such as perspective drawings or three-dimensional massing models, must be provided prior to Project Design Approval unless waived by the SFDB or HLC. See the requirements for visual aids here: [Visual Aids and Story Poles](#).
- 20-Closest Home Survey**  
Provide a **map** and a **survey** of FAR information for the 20 closest lots to the subject property. The map must show the 20 closest lots and label the floor area of each building. The survey should be in a table, such as an Excel file, or you can use the City's [20 Closest Lots Calculator](#), and must include the following information:
  - **Address and APN.** Include the addresses and APNs of the 20 closest lots. Exclude any properties that are not single-unit residences, such as commercial properties or apartments.
  - **Floor Area.** Include the square feet of the buildings on each of the 20 lots. If possible, provide the garage floor area separately from the house floor area.
  - **Lot Area.** Include the lot area in square feet of each of the 20 lots. (Assessor's data is often shown in a decimal, multiply the acreage decimal by 43,560 to obtain lot size square feet.)
  - **FAR.** Provide the FAR for each lot (FAR = net floor area of the buildings on a lot divided by the net lot area).
  - **Sort Parcels.** Sort the lots from largest to smallest FAR.
  - **Calculate Average.** Provide the average **house size** and the average **FAR** for all 20 lots.

Information for properties in the City of Santa Barbara is available online through the City's web-based mapping tool, [MAPS](#). MAPS includes a link to the County Assessor Parcel Information with floor area and lot size. Or you can contact the County Assessor's Office at 105 E. Anapamu St. 2nd floor at (805) 568-2550 and request property information worksheets.

## OVER 100% OF MAXIMUM FAR

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*In addition to all the information required for projects over 85% of the required maximum floor area, submit the following information prior to Zoning Modification approval for projects over 100% FAR.*

**Neighborhood Workshop**

A neighborhood workshop is required prior to the first Design Review Hearing. Property owners and tenants of the 20 closest parcels, as identified by Design Review staff, must be noticed at least 10 days prior to the workshop. At the same time property owners are noticed for the workshop, send a copy of the workshop invitation through the US mail to:

Planning Staff  
Community Development Department  
PO Box 1990  
City of Santa Barbara, CA 93102

Also include a copy of the workshop invitation that was delivered to the 20 closest neighbors and a copy of the mailing labels used for the workshop invitation.

**Planning Commission Modification**

Make an appointment with applicable Design Review staff to submit the Planning Commission Zoning Modification application after positive, super-majority (5 members of the Single Family Design Board or 6 members of the Historic Landmarks Commission voting in favor), conceptual comments are obtained from the applicable design review body. This is required prior to scheduling a hearing at the Planning Commission.