

TOWN OF LOS ALTOS HILLS

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Grading Ordinance and Policy

Approved by City Council 07/21/2011

Code Sections

Section 10-2.702 (c) of the Site Development Ordinance states that: "The amount of grading, excavation, or fill shall be the minimum necessary to accommodate proposed structures, unless grading is proposed to lower the profile of buildings."

Section 10-2.703(a) requires: "Type II foundations – step-on-contour, daylight, pole foundations, or a combination thereof – shall be used on building sites with natural slopes in excess of fourteen percent (14%)."

Intent

The purpose of this policy is to outline desired criteria for grading which assure that construction retains the existing contours and basic landform of the site to the greatest extent feasible. It is also intended that the policy provide guidance for "stepping" structures down sloped hillsides and emphasizes cut to lower the profile of structures over fill or foundation walls, which tend to raise the profile of the structure. While balanced cut and fill is desirable to minimize import or export of soil, to or from a site, it is recognized that the Town's policies and the guidelines below may encourage export as cut is generally preferred over fill.

These policies are intended to be used by staff in evaluation and making recommendations to the Planning Commission and/or City Council regarding site development applications, and as guidance for applicants. Individual sites may dictate a need to deviate from the criteria, to the extent permitted by the Planning Commission and/or City Council.

Policy

1. Cuts and fills in excess of the following levels generally will be considered excessive and contrary to Town ordinances and policies to grade only to the minimum extent necessary to accommodate structures and to site structures consistent with slope contours, i.e., "step down" the hill.*

	<u>Cut</u>	<u>Fill</u>
House	8'**	3'
Accessory Bldg.	4'	3'
Tennis Court	6'	3'
Pool	4'***	3'
Driveways	4'	3'
Other (decks, yards)	4'	3'

* Combined depths of cut plus fill for development other than the main residence should be limited to 6 feet, except that for tennis courts cut plus fill may be permitted up to a maximum of 8 feet.

** Excludes basements meeting Code definition.

*** Excludes excavation for pool.

2. The height of the lowest finished floor(s) of a structure should generally not be set in excess of four feet six inches (4'6") feet above the existing grade, to assure that structures step with the slope. Supported decks shall generally not exceed three (3) feet above adjoining grade except where located within six (6) feet of a building.

3. Driveway cut may be increased up to a maximum of ten (10) feet for the portion of the driveway or backup area which is adjacent to a garage that has been lowered with a similar amount of cut. Terracing shall be utilized for cuts exceeding six(6) feet.

4. Cut and/or fill for drainage shall be limited consistent with the guidelines set forth above for each type of structure but shall be the minimum grading needed for drainage purposes, as determined by the City Engineer.

5. The Planning Director may approve exceptions for required driveways and Fire Truck Turnarounds where cut does not exceed seven (7) feet and fill does not exceed five (5) feet at a noticed public hearing.