

ATTACHMENT A

Exposed Foundation Thresholds and Materials Discussion Guide

Companion to the Proposed Exposed Foundation Wall Treatment Standard

To: Town of Alpine Planning and Zoning Commission

From: Planning and Zoning Administrator

Purpose: Commission discussion regarding the threshold, measurement method, materials, and scope

Status: Policy discussion guide; examples are not adopted Town standards

Primary question: When does visible unfinished concrete or concrete masonry become an architectural concern requiring a durable decorative finish?

1. Threshold options

Option	Practical effect	Considerations
6 inches	Requires treatment for relatively small exposed bands.	Strongest appearance standard; may increase detailing and create conflicts with required clearances unless exceptions are precise.
12 inches + 50% — staff starting point	Triggers treatment when more than half of any exterior elevation has over 12 inches of exposure.	Avoids a building-wide requirement based on a small grade dip while addressing elevations where exposed foundation is visually dominant.
24 inches	Allows more unfinished foundation before treatment is required.	Lower cost, but larger concrete areas may remain prominent.
No numeric threshold	Requires all exposed foundation walls to be treated.	Simple concept but may be unnecessarily strict for minor exposure and harder to coordinate with clearances.

2. Measurement choices

Method	Advantage	Concern
Any-point measurement	Objective, easy to inspect, and addresses isolated tall exposure.	A short high point on a sloped grade can trigger treatment.
Average by elevation	Moderates localized variation.	Can permit a very tall section if balanced by lower exposure elsewhere; requires calculations.
Threshold plus minimum wall length	Avoids treatment for small isolated areas.	Requires a second measurement and creates transition questions.

Method	Advantage	Concern
Visibility-based	Targets public-facing appearance.	Visibility changes over time and creates subjective enforcement.
Staff starting point: Calculate each exterior elevation separately. Measure the horizontal length where exposure exceeds 12 inches and divide it by the total horizontal foundation-wall length of that elevation. If the result is more than 50 percent, require treatment of the full exposed foundation area on that elevation.		

3. Treatment-material choices

Masonry and stone. Brick, natural stone, and manufactured stone provide a durable base but should be installed in accordance with product limitations and required clearances.

Cementitious finishes. Cement-based stucco and parging can provide a continuous finish and may be practical for complex walls.

Architectural concrete. Patterned, board-formed, textured, or exposed-aggregate concrete can make the wall itself the finished material.

Panels and siding. Cementitious panels or siding may be acceptable when specifically rated for the substrate and near-grade exposure.

Paint or coating. Least expensive and easy to administer, but ordinary paint may not provide the texture, durability, or architectural effect the Commission intends.

4. Municipal examples

The examples below illustrate that communities use different thresholds and material approaches. They are provided for comparison, not as a legal recommendation for Alpine.

Community/source	Approach	Relevance
Canal Winchester, Ohio	No more than 12 inches of exposed foundation; greater exposure must be finished with listed brick or stone products.	Direct example of the proposed 12-inch trigger.
Johnstown, Colorado — Thompson Crossing guidelines	Exposure above 6 inches should be covered with materials similar to the wall above.	Illustrates a more restrictive threshold.
Richmond, Texas	Foundations with more than 2 feet of exposure must be faced with brick or stone veneer; exposed concrete and cinder block are prohibited.	Illustrates a less restrictive 24-inch trigger.
Morgan County, Georgia	All exposed foundation walls in the referenced residential form standards must be finished with brick veneer, stone masonry, or stucco.	Illustrates an all-exposure material requirement.

5. Applicability and exception choices

- Apply to all elevations or only publicly visible elevations;
- Apply to principal and accessory structures, or establish a simplified accessory-structure rule;
- Apply prospectively only, with existing walls addressed when reconstructed or substantially altered;
- Exclude window wells, doors, vents, utility penetrations, inspection zones, and code-required clearances;
- Allow the Building Official to approve the minimum technical exception necessary for waterproofing, drainage, structural, fire, or product-installation compliance; and
- Require equivalent-material approvals to be documented in writing.

6. Direction requested from the Commission

1. Should Alpine use the combined 12-inch/50-percent test as the treatment threshold?
2. Should the percentage be calculated separately for each elevation, around the building perimeter, or by another method?
3. Should the rule apply on all elevations or only where visible from public and neighboring viewpoints?
4. Which finishes should be allowed, and should paint or an architectural coating qualify?
5. Which buildings and alterations should be subject to the standard?
6. Are the proposed technical exceptions and equivalent-material review process appropriate?

Sources consulted

- [Canal Winchester, Ohio, Residential Design Requirements](#)
- [Johnstown, Colorado, Thompson Crossing II Design Guidelines](#)
- [Richmond, Texas, Building Design Standards](#)
- [Morgan County, Georgia, Article 5 General Requirements](#)

Next step: Use the Commission's direction to coordinate final language with the Building Official and LUDC consultant, then return with a complete standard for recommendation.