



MEDINA, WASHINGTON

AGENDA BILL

Tuesday, June 21, 2022

Subject: Alternatives to Original Grade

Category: Public Hearing

Staff Contact(s): Stephanie Keyser, Planning Manager

Summary

Original grade has been used as the starting point for measuring structure height in Medina for decades. Defined as the natural ground elevation that existed prior to any lot development or manmade modifications in the first instance (MMC 16.12.080), determining original grade is not as simple as going to a site to look at it or reviewing a topographic map. As prescribed in the code, the determination requires a soils investigation by a geotechnical engineer along the parameters of the proposed exterior walls/sides (MMC 16.23.080(B)). Test pits are dug and based on those samples the geotechnical engineer determines original grade underneath the entire structure. A written report is submitted with the building permit and is reviewed for completeness against the requirements in MMC 16.23.080(D).

The process of determining original grade is an imperfect science. Different firms can and have reached contrasting conclusions for the same site. There are sites where original grade is actually in the air at a point above the existing ground because the site was graded at some point in its history. There are sites that have been amended with soil and now the original grade is 4-6 feet beneath the visual ground.

For the first half of 2022, Planning Commission has discussed moving to an average grade method for determining structure height. During the last meeting, concern was raised about the impact this might have on Medina Heights, a neighborhood with a lower height allowance.

The attachments include a redlined version (Attachment A) and one with all changes accepted (Attachment B). Just as with the tree code draft, in the redlined version, the sections that are *existing text* but have been moved are in **red** while the sections with new text are **red and underlined**.

Attachment(s)

- A) Average Grade Draft – Redlined
- B) Average Grade Draft – All changes accepted
- C) Public Comments
 1. Bill Pollard, received via email June 6, 2022
 2. Andrew DeFlorio, Baylis Architects, received via email May 17, 2022
 3. David Yee, received via email May 20, 2022
- D) History of Height Map
- E) Examples

Budget/Fiscal Impact: N/A

Recommendation: Approve

Proposed Commission Motion: Move to recommend approval of the draft code

Time Estimate: 90 minutes