

ROLLINGWOOD COMPREHENSIVE RESIDENTIAL CODE SURVEY

The Comprehensive Residential Code Review Committee (CRCRC) was created to gather public opinion in response to recent building trends, and to evaluate Rollingwood's aging building codes for current fitness. This survey covers residential code-related issues and attempts to assess the public's appetite for change, if any. Its focus is driven by over 75 recent constituent emails, and responses from the 2021 Comprehensive Plan Strike Force survey. After reviewing the results of this survey, the committee will analyze and promptly present them back to the public for further review at future CRCRC meetings.

This survey is open to every Rollingwood resident who is at least eighteen years old. Please take this survey only once per person; up to two qualifying members of a family may each take the survey. This survey was authored by the CRCRC. Buie & Co., the team that conducted the Comprehensive Strike Force survey, has been hired to administer and authenticate it. The identity of the responders will be anonymous to the CRCRC. Addresses will be collected at the end of the survey to be used for survey verification by Buie & Co. only and will remain confidential from residents and the CRCRC.

Survey responses are largely open-ended. Depending on the level of response detail, the survey can take between 15 and 45 minutes to complete. You may save and return at any time. **Survey deadline is Sunday, November 5, 2023 by midnight.**

The results of this survey will help inform what the City of Rollingwood looks like for decades to come. Thank you for your thoughtful participation.

- START OF SURVEY -

Q1: Are you generally satisfied with the trend of new construction in Rollingwood?
Please mention what you do and/or don't like about building trends, be specific.

Yes

No

Comments:

Q2: Do you think Rollingwood should consider changes to its building codes?
Please mention specifically what you do and/or don't like about building codes. If you are not sure, the rest of the survey may help clarify current codes and issues.

Yes

No

Comments:

BUILDING HEIGHT

Rollingwood adopted its current 35-foot maximum residential building height in the 1980's. The current code reads as follows:

Sec. 107-71. – Maximum permissible height

No portion of any building or structure (except a chimney, attic vent, lightning rod, or any equipment required by the city building code) may exceed 35 feet in height. Except as may be required by applicable codes, no chimney, attic vent, lightning rod or required equipment may extend more than three feet above the highest point of the following: the coping of a flat roof, the deck line of a mansard roof, or the gable of a pitched or hipped roof.

Q3: Is Rollingwood's maximum residential building height of 35 feet:

Too high Not high enough About right

Comments:

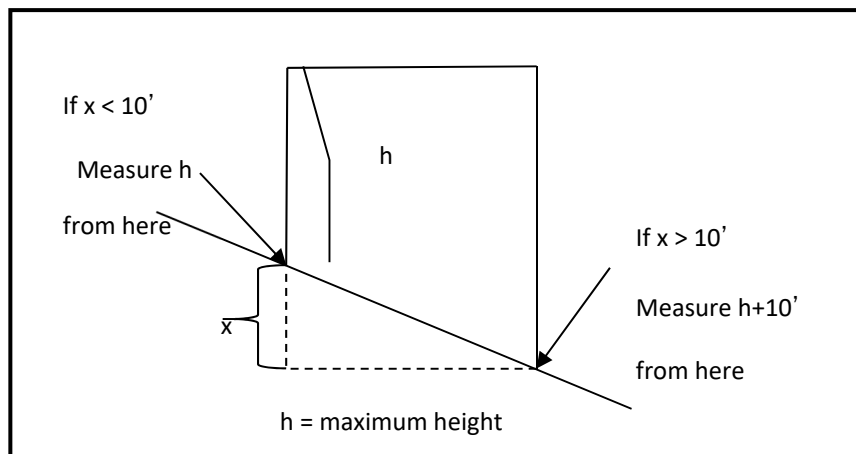
MEASURING BUILDING HEIGHT

Rollingwood also adopted its current method for *measuring* building height in the 1980's. The code allows up to 10 feet of additional wall height on the low side of sloping lots. The result is that depending on the slope of the lot, residential walls are legally permitted to measure up to 45 high from the original native ground surface. The definition from the current code with a descriptive illustration follows:

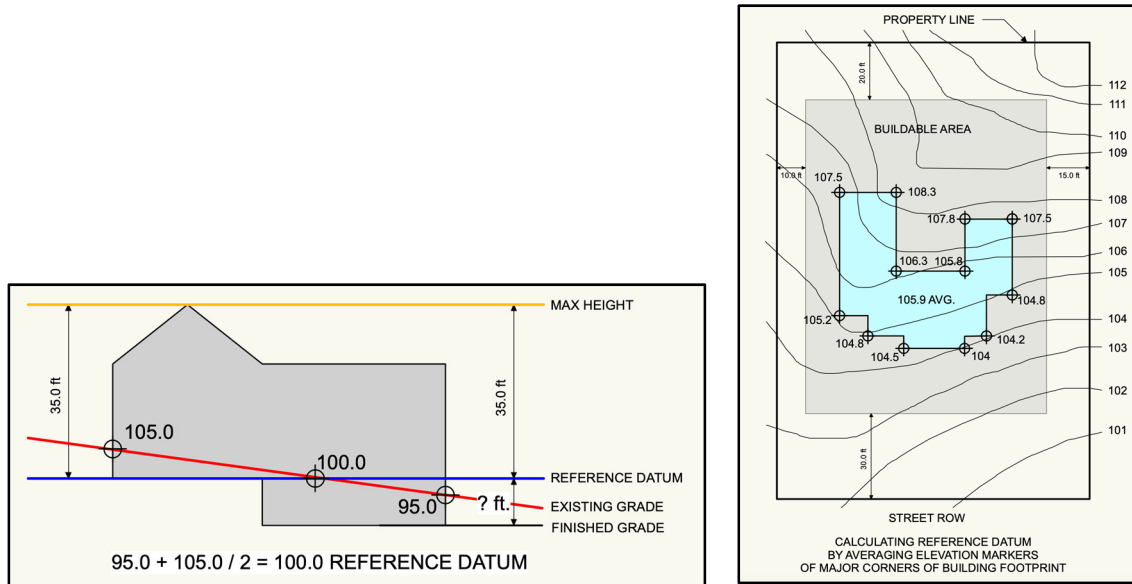
Sec. 107-3. - Definitions

*Building height, residential, means the vertical distance above a **reference datum** (a point of reference from which to measure building height) measured to the highest point of the building. The **reference datum** shall be selected by either of the following, whichever yields a greater height of the building:*

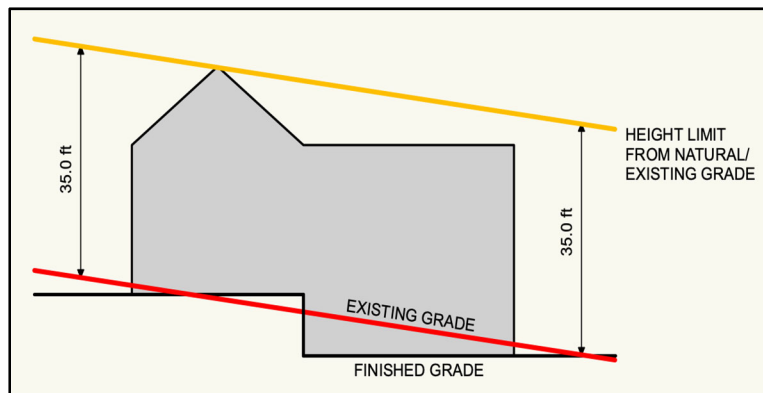
1. *The elevation of the highest adjoining original native ground surface to the exterior wall of the building when such original native ground surface is not more than ten feet above the lowest adjoining original native ground surface; or*
2. *An elevation of ten feet higher than the lowest adjoining original native ground surface when the highest adjoining original native ground surface (described in subsection (1) of this section) is more than ten feet above lowest adjoining original native ground surface-*
3. *The original native ground surface shall be determined as the existing grade on the lot prior to development of the residential building as may be shown on approved building plans or survey of the property.*



There are other ways to determine a **reference datum**. Many cities use either an average of the slope (left image below), or the average elevation of the building footprint from existing grade: (right image below). Both approaches may allow for some maximum height forgiveness on sloped lots but may be simpler to apply than the current method.



Another approach to managing buildable height is to not allow any part of a building to exceed the maximum height from a parallel line to existing grade. This method does not provide height forgiveness.



Q4: Should we look at alternate ways to measure building height? If so, which of the ways listed above would you prefer? Please write in your answer under the comments.

- Yes No

Comments:

Q5: Should we measure the maximum height of a home with a flat roof differently from one with a pitched roof?

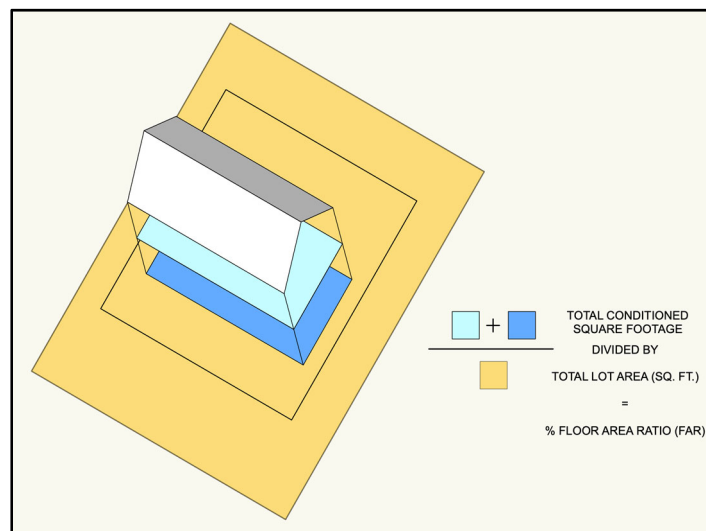
Yes

No

Comments:

FAR

The **Floor to Area Ratio (FAR)** of a building measures a building's mass relative to its lot size and can reveal how much built area there is on a property. FAR is calculated by dividing the total square footage of the home by the square footage of the lot.



The **ratio of building footprint to lot size** is another way to measure what percentage of a lot is occupied by a building.

Q6: Should we consider adding FAR and/or ratio of building footprint to lot size to Rollingwood's building code?

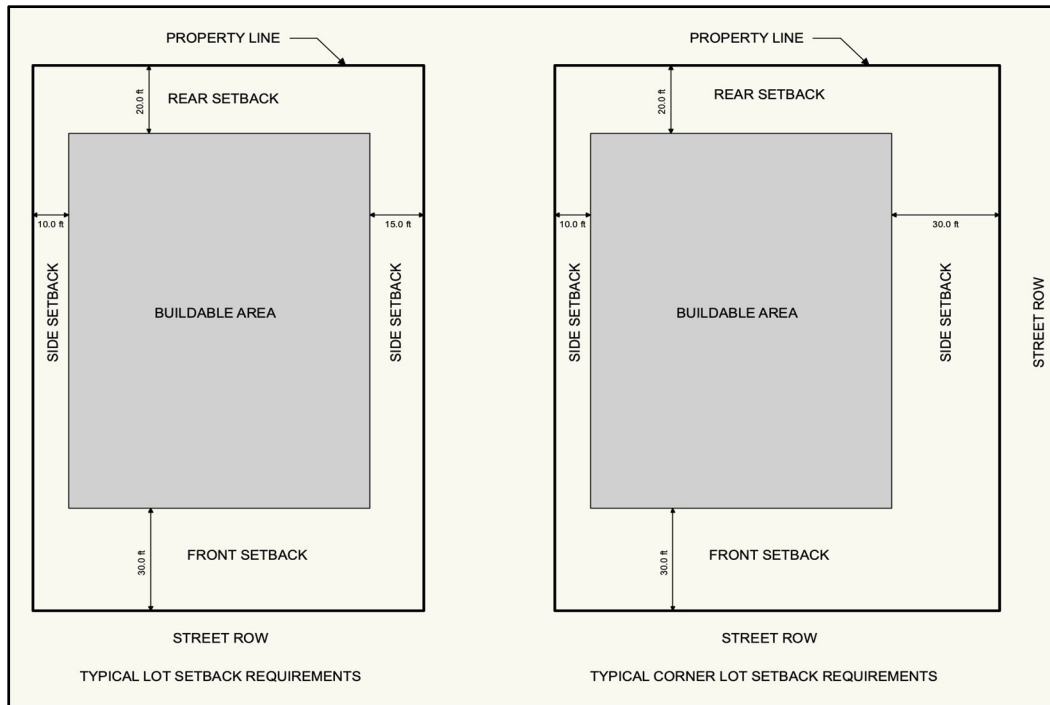
Yes

No

Comments:

BUILDING ALONG SETBACKS

A **building setback** is the distance (measured in feet) a house or structure must be from the front, side, and rear property lines.



The setback requirements in Rollingwood are:

- **Front:** 30 feet plus 10 feet right-of-way (ROW)
- **Side:** minimum 10 feet with a cumulative minimum requirement of 25 feet
- **Corner:** street facing side – 30 feet plus 10 feet right-of-way (ROW)
- **Rear:** 20 feet – pools may not be in the rear setback, but pool decking may be included in the setback.

Q7: Please indicate your feelings on Rollingwood's current setback dimensions, and clarify in the comments if you have thoughts or concerns specific to front, side, or rear:

Too large

Too small

About right

Comments:

Front:

Side:

Rear:

On April 5, 2023 Rollingwood City Council set limits on projections into setbacks, as follows:

Roof overhangs may encroach into front and rear yard setbacks up to 5 feet, and into side yard setbacks up to 33 percent of their maximum width. **Projections** that include chimneys and bay windows may encroach only 2 feet into setbacks on all sides.

Prior to this amendment, the code excepted these types of building extensions from setback limits, thus allowing unlimited encroachment of projections into setbacks.

Q8: Please indicate your general feelings on the new setback projection limits described above, and clarify if you have concerns specific to roof or bay window projections:

Too much

Too little

About right

Comments:

BUILDING ALONG SETBACKS CONT.

Residents have written emails with concerns about the impacts of buildings and landscape along, and within the setbacks, including:

- Building to the allowable maximum height of 35 feet, and up to 45 feet on sloped lots;
- Building along the entire length of setbacks, including to the maximum height;
- Minimal side articulation by building flat walls and roofs with minimal variation or changes in building form or material;
- Foundation height - allowable to any height within overall maximum building height;
- Land removal; and
- Tree removal

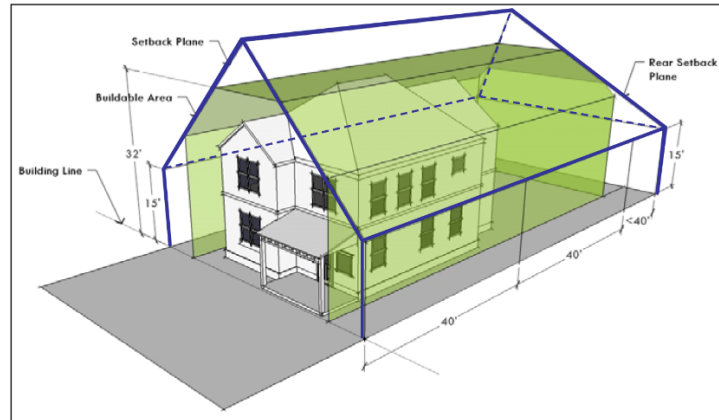
Q9: Should we consider any limitations on what can be built along a setback? Please indicate in the comments any specific thoughts on the bullet points listed above.

Yes

No

Comments:

Buildable area can also be restricted using a set of angled plane geometric constraints known as “tenting”. Tenting serves as the core basis for City of Austin’s ordinances whose intent is to harmonize new development with existing residences.



Q10: Should we develop a set of “tenting” rules for Rollingwood that restrict building height along a setback?

Yes

No

Comments:

NUMBER OF STORIES

Rollingwood has a few three- and four-story homes that are built, or in permitting, some with an additional rooftop lookout. These homes still meet the maximum allowable height requirements. Some residents have asked for a limit on the number of stories.

Q11: Should we limit the number of allowable stories?

Yes - limit residences to _____ stories

No - no limit to the number of stories, provided that the residence meets all other code requirements such as the 35 foot height requirement.

Comments:

Q12: Should we restrict overall area of additional floors above a certain level?

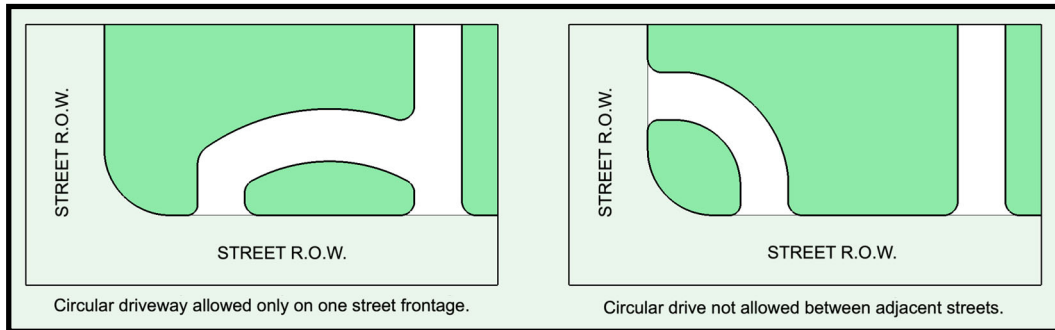
Yes

No

CIRCULAR DRIVEWAYS

The current code allows for a circular driveway, provided that both driveway ends terminate on the same street. A driveway that cuts across a corner lot from one street frontage, to the adjacent street frontage, is not allowed.

Some residents who live on the corner of busy intersections are concerned that they cannot provide the safest driveway access for their driver-age children and guests.



Q13: Should we reconsider code limitations placed on circular driveways for a corner lot that connects two streets?

Yes

No

Comments:

LIGHT POLLUTION

A number of respondents from the Comprehensive Plan Task Force, as well as recent emails to the CRCRC, have indicated an interest in some codified lighting standards to reduce light pollution and trespass (when lights from one property are cast into another).

The International Dark Sky Association, along with the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America, designed a Model Lighting Ordinance (MLO) template to help municipalities develop outdoor lighting standards according to the sensitivity of the area, as well as accommodating community intent.

Q14: Should we examine some aspects of a Dark Sky initiative in our residential code that may include Exterior and Landscape Lighting?

Yes

No

Comments:

TREES

Rollingwood passed a tree ordinance in February 2019. Its PURPOSE states:

The tree code regulations protect the health, safety, and general welfare of the citizens of the city. In doing so, the appearance of the city is enhanced and important ecological, cultural, and economic resources are protected for the benefit of the city's residents, businesses, and visitors.

Q15: How much of a priority to you are the trees in Rollingwood on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest priority?

1

2

3

4

5

Q16: Is our current tree ordinance doing enough to save protected and Heritage trees?

Yes

No

Comments:

Q17: Should we consider a plan sponsored by the city, or private donations, to plant additional trees, with owner approval, in public ROW?

Yes

No

Comments:

ZONING BY TOPOGRAPHY

Rollingwood has a complex topography that affects lot types, lot shapes, right of way restrictions, drainage concerns, adjacencies to natural areas and creek frontage, and heritage trees. Yet, all lots have the same rules, i.e. setback limitations, building heights, drainage considerations, etc. Property owners with unusual lots have little recourse other than to address those requirements through appeal to the City Council or the Board of Adjustment.

Q18: Should we consider the creation of special zoning districts for unusual lots?

Yes

No

Comments:

FENCES

There is no limit to the height of side and backyard fences. Front yard fences may not exceed 36 inches.

Q19: Should there be a height limit on side and backyard fences?

Yes

No

Comments:

IMPERVIOUS COVER / DRAINAGE

Impervious cover is any type of human-made surface that doesn't absorb rainfall including: rooftops; patios; driveways, paved and unpaved; and sidewalks. The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) has impervious cover restrictions designed to limit the run-off from one property to a neighboring property. These restrictions must be addressed before construction can begin anywhere within the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone (Rollingwood is entirely in this zone). The City of Rollingwood has its own, more restrictive impervious cover requirements built into its Drainage Ordinance - adopted in 2016. Those requirements are thoroughly discussed in the Drainage Criteria Manual found at this site:

<https://www.rollingwoodtx.gov/building/page/rollingwood-drainage-criteria-manual>

Q20: Should more be done to limit the amount of impervious cover on a building lot?

Yes

No

Comments:

BUILDING PROCESS & PERMITTING

Q21: Have you built or significantly remodeled a home in RW in the last 10 years?

Yes

No

Comments

Q22: Were the applicable building permit rules understandable?

Yes

No

N/A

Comments

Q23: Did you find working with the City easy and efficient? What if anything would you change?

Yes

No

N/A

Comments

Q24: Have you lived near a recent build?

Yes

No

Q25: Did you receive adequate notice of the building permit?

Yes

No

N/A

Comments

Q26: What concerns did you have and/or what issues were important to you as a nearby neighbor?

Q27: Home Address (required *) _____

**Address to be used for survey verification by Buie & Co. only, and will remain confidential from City of Rollingwood staff and residents, as well as the CRCRC.*

Q28: Please check any that apply to you in Rollingwood:

- Own your home
- Own more than one property
- Own a rental home
- Renting the home you are living in
- Built/currently building your home
- Planning to build
- A builder/investor that does not live in RW

Q29: How long have you lived in Rollingwood:

- Less than 5 years
- 5-10 years
- 11-20 years
- 21-30 years
- More than 30 years.

Q30: How old are you:

- 18-34
- 35-49
- 50-64
- More than 64

Q31: Annual Household Income:

- Under \$50,000
- \$50,000 - \$100,000
- \$100,000 - \$250,000
- \$250,000 - \$500,000
- More than \$500,000

- END OF SURVEY -