

DSG Policy Memorandum
Administrative Interpretation
#06-10



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TO: DSG Staff

FROM: Kirsten Taylor, Interim Development Services Director

DATE: October 25, 2006

RE: Gross floor area calculations margin of error

The Code Official under Section 19.15.010(C)(5)(a) of the Mercer Island City Code (MICC) makes this administrative policy determination and interpretation of the MICC of Mercer Island.

The purpose of this administrative interpretation is to specify a margin of error in gross floor area calculations.

MICC 19.02.010.E.1 requires single family development not exceed 45% of the lot being developed.

DSG verifies an applicant's gross floor area calculations based upon submitted site plans and construction drawings. Applicants either meet the limits of MICC 19.02.010.E.1 or apply for variances. Thus, DSG relies upon applicant documents stating the amount of gross floor area to be placed on lots. Recently, these calculations received increased scrutiny by neighbors of proposed developments, and applicants propose gross floor areas at the very limit of that allowed under MICC 19.02.010.E.1. Therefore, staff began careful measurement of proposed gross floor area and have disagreed with some of the applicant's calculations. This disagreement has been the result of different interpretations on areas to be included in the calculation and based upon mathematical formulas used to calculate the area. In discussions to resolve the disagreements, staff and applicants agreed that some acceptable margin of error should be adopted for these calculations. Other disciplines, e.g., engineering, apply a margin of error to mathematical and computer aided drafting calculations. Gross floor area calculations are no different in nature from engineering calculations.

In summary, it is concluded that:

1. A margin of error is necessary for administrative calculations of gross floor area proposed and allowed on single family lots.
2. Single family zoning includes lots from 8,400 square feet to 15,000 square feet. Therefore, a sliding scale, or percentage, of the lot area is a reasonable and equitable methodology. However, with larger lots the result is an amount of gross floor area that would appear to constitute a de facto gross floor area variance.
3. A reasonable margin of error is 0.5% of the lot area up to a maximum of 99 square feet.