



## IV. DEVELOPMENT INTENSITY

### A. Maximum Allowable Development

The Town of Los Gatos controls the amount of development that is allowed by limiting density and intensity of development - the minimum land area required for each house - and by limiting the maximum floor area of each house.

In Los Gatos, limiting the floor area or size of a house is important for several reasons:

- Large houses are more visible and therefore create greater adverse visual impacts.
- Large houses cover more land area, therefore requiring more disruption of the natural landscape and ecosystems.
- Large houses create more impervious surface area, which can increase runoff and cause drainage, landslide, and flooding problems.
- Large houses consume a greater amount of resources, both to construct and to maintain.

**Maximum allowed gross floor area.** The maximum allowable gross floor area for homes subject to the Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines is determined using a floor area ratio (FAR) adjusted for slope as provided in Table 1, below. However, achieving the maximum floor area allowed is not guaranteed due to individual site constraints. The priority is to comply with the standards and guidelines rather than designing to the FAR. The FAR is a numerical guide and achieving the allowable square footage is not a goal. Greater weight shall be given to issues, including but not limited to, height, building mass and scale, visual impacts, grading and compatibility.

Refer to the  
 Town's  
 Zoning  
 Regulations

**TABLE 1**  
**REDUCTION OF NET SITE AREA ON SLOPING LOTS**

Average lot slope	Percent of net lot area to be deducted
10.01 - 20%	10% plus 2% for each 1% of slope over 10%
20.01 - 30%	30% plus 3% for each 1% of slope over 20%
Over 30%	60%



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**TABLE 2**  
**MAXIMUM ALLOWED GROSS FLOOR AREA**

<b>Net Lot Area<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Floor Area Ratio (%)</b>	<b>Allowable Floor Area<sup>3</sup></b>
11,000 sq. ft. and less	34.5	3800
up to 12,000 sq. ft.	32.5	3900
up to 13,000 sq. ft.	30.7	4000
up to 14,000 sq. ft.	29.3	4100
up to 15,000 sq. ft.	28.0	4200
up to 16,000 sq. ft.	26.9	4300
up to 17,000 sq. ft.	25.9	4400
up to 18,000 sq. ft.	25.0	4500
up to 19,000 sq. ft.	24.2	4600
up to 20,000 sq. ft.	23.5	4700
up to 21,000 sq. ft.	22.8	4800
up to 22,000 sq. ft.	22.3	4900
up to 23,000 sq. ft.	21.7	5000
up to 24,000 sq. ft.	21.3	5100
up to 25,000 sq. ft.	20.8	5200
up to 26,000 sq. ft.	20.4	5300
up to 27,000 sq. ft.	20.0	5400
up to 28,000 sq. ft.	19.6	5500
up to 29,000 sq. ft.	19.3	5600
up to 30,000 sq. ft.	19.0	5700
up to 31,000 sq. ft.	18.7	5800
up to 32,000 sq. ft.	18.5	5900
32,001 sq. ft. and above <sup>2</sup>		6000

<sup>1</sup>Net lot area as adjusted for slope – see Table 1

<sup>2</sup>For lots containing a net lot area of more than 32,000 square feet, the maximum gross floor area shall be 6,000 square feet unless an exception is granted by the Planning Commission in compliance with subsection c. (Exceptions to maximum floor area)

<sup>3</sup>Accessory buildings including garages larger than 400 sq. ft. are included in the maximum floor area.



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**B. Exclusions from allowed floor area.**

The following items are not included in the calculation of a structure’s allowed gross floor area.

1. Below grade square footage pursuant to Section 29.40.072 of the Town Code.
2. Garages up to 400 square feet in area.
3. Stables that are not fully enclosed.
4. Barns that do not exceed the applicable size shown in Table 3 below.
5. Additional floor area allowed pursuant to Section 29.10.320 of the Town Code for accessory dwelling units.

**TABLE 3**  
**MAXIMUM FLOOR AREA FOR BARNs AND STABLES\***

Parcel Size (gross)	Maximum floor area of barns and stables
Up to one acre	500 sq. ft.
Up to 2.5 acres	1,000 sq. ft.
Up to 5 acres	2,000 sq. ft.
Over 5 acres	2,500 sq. ft.

\*All other enclosed accessory buildings are included in FAR.

Note: Accessory buildings that do not contain floor area because they are not fully enclosed (e.g. gazebos, arbors, carports) will be carefully reviewed for potential impacts such as grading, trees, impervious coverage, visibility, etc.

**C. Exceptions to maximum floor area.**

The Town Council or Planning Commission *may* approve residential projects greater than the maximum allowed floor area (but it is not guaranteed) when all of the following conditions apply:

1. The development will not be visible from any of the established viewing areas (see glossary for definition of visible home).
2. There will be no significant impacts on protected trees, wildlife habitat or movement corridors.



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3. Any grading necessary to accommodate the building area that exceeds the allowed FAR or an accessory building will be minimized.
4. All standards and applicable guidelines are being met.
5. Compliance to Title 24 Energy Efficiency Standards are shown using computer methods. The compliance margin must be at least 10.0.
6. The house will be pre-wired for future photovoltaic (PV) installation.
7. A minimum of 25% of hardscape material is permeable (certain types of interlocking pavers, grasscrete, pervious concrete, etc.).
8. A significant below grade square footage element is included in the design, unless it conflicts with other standards.
9. There will not be a significant visual impact to neighboring properties.