
	BUILDING DEVELOPMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES ADMINISTRATIVE/GENERAL	Effective Date: July 19, 2019
		Supersedes Policy Dated: May 1, 2016
	1.15 Story Above Grade Plane	Issued by: Eric M. Mays, P.E.  Building Official

The basic premise of the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code is that there is a direct relationship between the height and area of a building and the ability of people to exit the building safely in an emergency and the ability of the firefighters to combat a fire. Therefore, the VUSBC stipulates the height and area limitations of buildings in Chapter 5 of the International Building Code (IBC). The VUSBC also limits the use of the International Residential Code (IRC) to detached houses and townhouses not more than three stories above grade plane in height.

Following are the applicable definitions for all projects where the VUSBC applies:

- *Basement* - A story that is not a story above grade plane.
- *Grade Plane* - A reference plane representing the average of finished ground level adjoining the building at exterior walls. Where the finished ground level slopes away from the exterior walls, the reference plane shall be established by the lowest points within the area between the building and the lot line or, where the lot line is more than 6 feet from the building, between the building and a point six (6) feet from the building.
- *Story Above Grade Plane* - Any story having its finished floor surface entirely above grade plane, or in which the finished surface of the floor next above is:
 1. More than six (6) feet above grade plane, or
 2. More than 12 feet above the finished ground level at any point.

Following are the procedures for this policy:

1. The Building Plan Review staff is empowered to require a certification by a Licensed Architect, Professional Engineer, or Land Surveyor with a determination as to the number of stories above grade plane. The certification is to be submitted on the Prince William County Story Above Grade Plane Certification Form with all data, computations and conclusions attached
2. The Construction Inspections staff is empowered to require a certification by a Licensed Architect, Professional Engineer, or Land Surveyor with a determination as to the number of stories above grade plane. The certification is to be submitted on the Prince William County Story Above Grade Plane Certification Form with all data, computations and conclusions attached.

Attachment/Hyperlink:

- [Story Above Grade Plane Certification](http://eservice.pwcgov.org/eBuildingDevelopmentForms/forms/StoryAboveGradeCertification.pdf)