

Department of Permitting & Inspections

Zoning Division
645 Pine Street
Burlington, VT 05401
Telephone:(802) 865-7188

William Ward, Director
Scott Gustin, AICP, CFM, Principal Planner
Mary O'Neil, AICP, Principal Planner
Ryan Morrison, Associate Planner
Layne Darfler, Planning Technician
Ted Miles, Zoning Specialist
Alison Davis, Zoning Clerk
Charlene Orton, Permitting & Inspections Administrator



TO: Planning Commission Ordinance Committee
FROM: Mary O'Neil, AICP
DATE: February 4, 2021
RE: Dormers

The Comprehensive Development Ordinance offers no guidance on measurement of building height when dormers are proposed. This memorandum responds to the directive of the PCOC in crafting draft language relative to **building height measurement** when dormers are proposed, include ordinance language relative to **limitations of dormer size**, and to add a **definition of dormer** to Article 13 of the Comprehensive Development Ordinance.

At present, **Section 5.2.6, Article 5** directs building height calculation based on four scenarios:

- A. Flat roof;** *(the highest point of the decking of a flat or flat-topped mansard roof. A parapet no taller than four (4) feet shall not be considered part of a flat roof for the purposes of measuring building height)*
- B. Pitched or double pitched roof** *(gable, shed, Gambrel, traditional Mansard) (the midpoint of the rise between the roofplate and the ridge of the highest gable of a pitched or hipped roof. A double-pitched roof (e.g. gambrel or double-pitched mansard) shall be measured to the roofplate of the highest pitch.*
- C. Curved roof** *(a point two thirds (2/3) the vertical distance from the point at which an exterior wall varies from a 100% slope and to highest point of the roof)*
and
- D. Other roof forms.** *(Building height shall be measured as determined by the administrative officer in a manner that most closely reflects the intent of subsections (a) through (c).)*

Recommended language, based on the PCOC discussion of January 7, 2021:

D. Roofs with dormers (move current "D" to "E")

Building height will be calculated to the midpoint of the rise of any dormer that exceeds 50% of the width of the horizontal eave length of the roof. Dormers less than this width do not affect building height calculation noted in A – C of this subsection.



Sec. 6.3.2 (a) 2, Roofs and Rooflines

New buildings should incorporate predominant roof forms and pitches within the existing neighborhood and appropriate to the context. Large expanses of undifferentiated roof forms shall be avoided. This can be achieved by incorporating dormers or some variation in the roof form to lessen the impact of the massing against the sky. While flat roofs can be a reasonable architectural solution, pitched roof forms and architectural elements that enhance the city's skyline are strongly encouraged. Roof eaves, parapets, and cornices should be articulated as an architectural detail. Roof-top mechanicals shall be screened from view from the public street, and should be incorporated into and hidden within the roof structure whenever possible.

Single (dog-house) dormers shall not exceed the height of the ridgeline of the roof to which they are attached, and are limited in total to 33% of the horizontal eave length of the principal roofline.

Solar panels, light colored ballast or roof membranes, split roof clerestories, planted or "green" roof technologies (with a clearly articulated maintenance plan) and "gray water" collection are encouraged. Active rooftop uses are also encouraged to add to the visual complexity and activity of the city's skyline, and afford public access to otherwise unseen views of the city and surrounding landscape.

Article 13: Definitions:

Dormer: A roofed structure, often containing a window that projects vertically beyond the plane of a pitched roof. Dormers are commonly used to increase the usable space in a half story and to create window openings in a roof plane.

Shed dormers have a single, inclined roof.



Dog house dormers are gable roofed, typically with a single window.

