



Village of Northbrook

DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING SERVICES

Zoning Code Interpretation

Purpose:	Determination of Attic Space in Computing Floor Area Ratio
Northbrook Zoning Code Section(s):	Article III, Single Family Residential Districts Section 12-206, Definition of Floor Area, Gross
Date:	August 30, 2010

Reason for Interpretation

The definition of the "Gross Floor Area" (Floor Area, Gross in the Zoning Code) excludes certain areas from residential floor area ratio calculations. The definition of the term Gross Floor Area specifically states that any windows, subject to certain restrictions, are specifically excluded. The following excerpt is taken from the definition of Gross Floor Area:

"Gross floor area shall exclude the following specific areas:

- 1. cellar floors;*
- 2. **attic floors, regardless of the clear ceiling height;***
- 3. decks and patios;*
- 4. open, unenclosed porches, not exceeding eight feet in depth;*
- 5. chimneys projecting not more than two feet from an exterior wall;*
- 6. bay windows projecting not more than three feet from an exterior wall for a distance not more than 1/3 of the length of such wall provided that such projections shall come entirely within planes drawn from the main corners of the building at an interior angle of 45 degrees with the wall in question; and*
- 7. the first 200 square feet of accessory storage structures other than garages, when authorized pursuant to Paragraph 9-101 D1 of this Code.*

The term "attic" is not defined in the Zoning Code. This interpretation is intended to provide clarity as to what constitutes an "attic".

Interpretation:

The definition of "attic" established in the 2006 International Residential Code (which was applicable in 2010) and officially adopted by the Village of Northbrook shall be used in interpreting the Northbrook Zoning Code.

The following guidelines shall be used in determining unfinished "attic space":

1. Only areas above the lowest point of roof rafters shall be considered eligible for inclusion as an attic, and excluded from residential floor area calculations;
2. Attic space can have a up to two outlets and two convenience light fixtures;
3. Attic space shall not be heated, but can be insulated;
4. Attic space shall not be finished with drywall;
5. Attic space must be separate from the house by a ceiling joist or an insulated wall;
6. Attic space may only be accessible by a pull down stair or an access panel and not a doorway;

7. Attic space can have a plywood floor, skylights, or a dormer; and
8. Attic space can have a “reasonably sized” enclosure in which to locate a furnace used to heat the remainder of the structure.

If a space cannot satisfy all of the above criteria, it shall be deemed single family habitable floor area unless a specific finding of facts to the contrary is made by the Director.

Reviewed and Affirmed:



Thomas R Poupard, AICP
Director of Development & Planning Services