

GRADING EXCEPTION

To allow installation of retaining walls, in an area not open to public view, to exceed 6' in vertical height.
To allow installation of retaining walls, exposed to public view, to exceed 3' in vertical height.
Exceedance in wall heights subject to City approval pursuant to provisions of RMC 17.28.010.C.1. The findings below are provided in accordance with RMC 17.32.020.

REQUIRED FINDINGS

Will the strict application of the provisions of this Title result in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships inconsistent with the general purpose and intent of this Title?

1. Yes. The subject property is significantly restricted due to topography and boundary conditions as described herein and in Finding No. 2, below. Due to these constraints and conditions, approximately 2 acres of the 9.8 acre site must remain undisturbed and/or utilized for matchup grading. More than 45 feet of elevation difference along the public street frontages, coupled by restrictions to public street access, create significant challenges for vehicular access and ADA-compliant pedestrian circulation within the site. The project design strikes a balance between all of these constraints. As a result, portions of wall near Sycamore Canyon Boulevard, not visible from public view, will exceed the allowable 6' in height and walls along Central Avenue, visible from public view, will exceed the allowable 3' in height. The wall locations, lengths and heights are illustrated on the Grading Exception Exhibit. The wall segments along Sycamore Canyon Boulevard vary between 85-125 linear feet and the maximum heights vary between 7.3-11.7'. The walls along Central Avenue are approximately 470 linear feet and a maximum of 5' in height. Walls along the vegetated ravine, which may be visible from public view, are approximately 390 linear feet and a maximum of 5' in height. Strict application of the Code to eliminate the over-height walls along Sycamore Canyon Boulevard would require raising the site nearly 6'. This would only serve to exacerbate the over-height wall issue along Central Avenue and the vegetated ravine. Alternatively, the site would have to incorporate terracing or excessive gradients which would negatively impact vehicular access and ADA-compliant pedestrian circulation within the development. Strict application of the Code to eliminate the over-height walls along Central Avenue and the vegetated ravine would require lowering the site 6-10'. This would not only exacerbate the over-height wall issue near Sycamore Canyon Boulevard, it would drastically impact vehicular and pedestrian access to the public street.

Are there exceptional circumstances or conditions applicable to the property or to the intended use or development of the property that do not generally apply to other property in the same zone or neighborhood?

2. Yes. The sparsely vegetated property is a combination of undulating, undisturbed land, with a large, relatively flat area that was created several years ago by undocumented grading operations. The subject property is bounded by Sycamore Canyon Boulevard, to the north and east, and on Central Avenue, to the south. Both streets have pronounced grades, with a total fall of more than 45 feet across the project frontages. As a result, a majority of the public street

frontages contain graded slopes adjacent to the roadways. Vehicular access for the site is significantly restricted due to sight distance constraints and limitations on the proximity to the intersection. Direct access to Central Avenue is not allowed. The westerly boundary is undisturbed with a large knoll near the northwesterly corner and a deep, heavily vegetated ravine near the southwesterly corner. The total elevation difference along the property line is approximately 120'. Due to these constraints and conditions, approximately 2 acres of the 9.8 acre site must remain undisturbed and/or utilized for matchup grading.

Will the granting of a waiver be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in the zone or neighborhood in which the property is located?

3. No. The granting of the grading exception will allow reasonable development of the property in accordance with the City's General Plan and development standards. The conceptual grading design balances the significant and varied constraints and conditions described in the findings above.

The terraced, curvilinear walls along the southerly and westerly boundaries are visible from public view and will not exceed 5 feet in height. This wall configuration is less obtrusive than a single retaining wall and provides a more subtle transition than a single, expansive slope surface. The design includes ample areas for landscaping to screen the walls and add visual interest. Further, the proposed walls will stabilize the existing slopes along the westerly boundary, allowing sensitive areas to remain undisturbed, preserving natural vegetation and historic drainage patterns. The three wall segments near Sycamore Canyon Boulevard are not visible from public view and will vary between 7.3-11.7 feet in height. These walls are necessary to accommodate three buildings and related parking and walkways, as well as, provide a vehicular and pedestrian connection to Sycamore Canyon Boulevard. Granting of the exception will not result in any conflict or inconsistency with the purpose and intent of the grading ordinance.

GRADING EXCEPTION

To allow 2:1 slopes to exceed 20 feet in vertical height as specified in RMC 17.28.020.10. The findings below are provided in accordance with RMC 17.32.020.

REQUIRED FINDINGS

Will the strict application of the provisions of this Title result in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships inconsistent with the general purpose and intent of this Title?

1. Yes. The subject property is significantly restricted due to topography and boundary conditions as described in herein and under Finding No. 2, below. The top of the isolated knoll near the northerly project boundary has an elevation of 1381.6 feet. The parkway along Central Avenue near the southwesterly project boundary has an elevation of 1316.5 feet. The total elevation difference between these two points is approximately 65 feet. Strict application of the code would limit slope grading around the knoll and along Central Avenue to 20 feet in each area. As a result, the conceptual grading design would have to accommodate an additional 25 feet of fall within the site. Such a profound grade differential creates significant challenges for vehicular access and ADA-compliant pedestrian circulation within the site, as well as, controlling surface flows for water quality compliance. The grading exception is necessary to allow the project to moderately reshape the knoll to accommodate internal circulation, parking and emergency vehicle access to Sycamore Canyon Boulevard. The exception is also necessary to allow matchup grading along Central Avenue and adjacent to the vegetated ravine along the westerly boundary to accommodate the conceptual grading design. Attempting to lower the site to reduce or eliminate the grading exception at the southwesterly corner of the site would only serve to exacerbate the matter around the knoll to the north, while adversely affecting vehicular access to Sycamore Canyon Boulevard. Approval of the grading exception to allow 2:1 slopes to exceed 20 feet in height would be consistent with the general purpose and intent of Title 17 of the Riverside Municipal Code to minimize the adverse effects of grading on natural landforms.

Are there exceptional circumstances or conditions applicable to the property or to the intended use or development of the property that do not generally apply to other property in the same zone or neighborhood?

2. Yes. The sparsely vegetated property is a combination of undulating, undisturbed land, with a large, relatively flat area that was created several years ago by undocumented grading operations. The grading operations, together with Caltrans' realignment of Sycamore Canyon Boulevard, created an isolated knoll at the northerly property boundary with an overall height of 20-30 feet. The subject property is bounded by Sycamore Canyon Boulevard, to the north and east, and on Central Avenue, to the south. Both streets have pronounced grades, with a total fall of more than 45 feet across the project frontages. As a result, the majority of the public street frontages contain graded slopes adjacent to the roadways. Vehicular access for the site is significantly restricted due to sight distance constraints and limitations on proximity to the intersection. Direct access to Central Avenue is not allowed. The westerly boundary is

undisturbed with a large knoll near the northwesterly corner and a deep, heavily vegetated ravine near the southwesterly corner. The total elevation difference along the property line is approximately 120'.

Will the granting of a waiver be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in the zone or neighborhood in which the property is located?

3. No. The granting of the grading exception will allow reasonable development of the property in accordance with the City's General Plan and development standards. The conceptual grading design balances the significant and varied constraints and conditions described in the findings above. The granting of the grading exception will allow the development to moderately reshape the isolated knoll without increasing the overall height or altering the crown. The grading exception will also allow slope grading up to 35 feet along Central Avenue and adjacent to the vegetated ravine. Design measures, such as curvilinear, terraced retaining walls and enhanced landscaping, will be incorporated to minimize the visual impacts from the public view.