



**ZONING ADMINISTRATOR ADVICE**  
**May 4, 2017**

**SUBJECT: Front Porches That Qualify for Lot Coverage Bonus**

**ISSUE:**

The Arlington County Zoning Ordinance (ACZO) does not provide specific criteria for determining if a proposed porch qualifies for the lot coverage bonus.

**RELEVANT ACZO SECTIONS:**

ACZO §3.1.4.A. *Lot Coverage*

ACZO §3.2.5.A. *Coverage*

ACZO §18.2. *General Terms Defined*

Article 3, Density and Dimensional Standards, §3.1.4.A. Lot Coverage:

*Lot coverage is the percentage determined by dividing the area of a lot covered by the total square feet of all features within the lot by the gross area of that lot.*

Article 3, Density and Dimensional Standards, §3.2.5.A. Coverage:

*On any one-family dwelling lot in an R, RA, C, and M district, the following shall apply:*

<b>MAXIMUM COVERAGE AND CAP</b>					
Categories	R-5, R15- 30T	R-6, R2- 7, RA, C, M	R-8	R-10, R-10T	R-20
Maximum lot coverage (%)	45	40	35	32	25
Maximum lot coverage of one-family dwelling with porch of at least 60 square feet (exclusive of any wrap-around or side portion) on the front elevation (%)	48	43	38	35	28
Maximum lot coverage with detached garage in the rear yard (%)	50	45	40	37	30
Maximum lot coverage with detached garage in the rear yard and porch of at least 60 square feet (exclusive of any wrap-around or side portion) on the front elevation (%)	53	48	43	40	33
Maximum main building footprint (%)	34	30	25	25	16
Maximum main building footprint coverage with front porch (%)	37	33	28	28	19
Maximum main building footprint (sf)	2,380	2,520	2,800	3,500	4,480
Maximum main building footprint with front porch (sf)	2,590	2,772	3,136	3,920	5,320

Article 18, Definitions, §18.2 General Terms Defined:

*Enclosed.* Any roofed-over structure or attachment to a structure is enclosed if sides (other than the side or sides where a structure is attached to a main building) are more than 40 percent covered by any material other than customary wire or mesh screening.

*Lot line, front.* The lot line, or combination of line segments, fronting a street or the legally required access to the lot. On a corner lot, it is the shortest of those lot lines that front a street. Where a corner lot has equal frontage on two or more streets, the front lot line is the lot line on that street on which the greatest number of lots front within the block.

*Porch.* An unenclosed platform with columns or piers supporting a roof.

**SUMMARY RESPONSE:**

The ACZO §3.2.5.A. Coverage permits additional lot coverage for “front” porches. While the Zoning Ordinance does not explicitly define the term “front porch”, porches on the front elevations of homes in certain zoning districts may qualify for additional lot coverage if they meet certain characteristics. The following advice is provided to guide applicants with the design of front porches and clarify when bonus lot coverage would be granted.

**DISCUSSION:**

On November 15, 2005, the County Board adopted a zoning ordinance text amendment to revise lot coverage requirements for one-family dwellings. The purpose of the front porch bonus, as described in the following excerpt from the February 8, 2005 County Board staff report for the lot coverage text amendment, was to encourage inviting streetscape and not have straight, tall façades facing the street.

*"The proposal would permit up to three percent of additional lot coverage for providing porches attached to the front of the main building at the first floor level. Many older houses in the County have front porches and provide an attractive inviting streetscape. Some recently built houses, however, have a straight, tall façade facing the street and create a streetscape that is out of character in the neighborhood. Thus ZORC recommended providing a bonus for front porches. The County policy to encourage front porches is demonstrated in the Zoning Ordinance amendments adopted by the County Board in November 2000, which permit the projection of uncovered porches into the required setback."*

The current lot coverage regulations award additional lot coverage for single-family dwellings in certain zoning districts with street-facing front porches. Therefore, areas that are to be considered as “front porches” should face the front lot line,

as defined by the ACZO. Further, porches that support enclosed living space above should not be eligible to receive bonus lot coverage as they would continue the straight, tall street-facing facades the regulation was attempting to discourage.

### **DETERMINATION**

Accordingly, the consideration of any area to be utilized for the front porch lot coverage bonus must meet the following criteria:

1. The proposed area must meet the ACZO definition of a "porch" as defined in §18.2;
2. The porch must be a minimum of 60 square feet;
3. The minimum required 60 square feet must be exclusive of any floor space above;
4. Any wrap-around portion of the porch will not count toward the minimum 60 square feet area; and,
5. The porch must be attached to the building side that faces the front lot line.