

DECK REGULATIONS

Including Terraces, Cantilevered Balconies, Uncovered Porches and Patios

Planning, Building, and Transportation Department
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Hours: 7:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m., M–Th

What constitutes a deck?

A deck is a flat, uncovered platform constructed of wood, concrete, or any impervious material, extending at grade or elevated over yard areas or atop a structure. Terraces, uncovered porches and balconies¹, and patios are regulated as decks under Alameda Municipal Code section 30-5.7(c).

When does a deck require a permit?

The threshold for requiring permits for a deck is based on the height of the deck above the ground, measured from the ground to the platform, as follows:

Deck Height	Deck Size	Planning Permit	Building Permit
Under 30 inches	Any size	No Permit	No Permit
30 inches and above, but less than 6 feet	Less than 220 square feet	No Permit	Yes
30 inches and above, but less than 6 feet	220 square feet and over	Design Review ²	Yes
Above 6 feet	Any size	Design Review ²	Yes

What are the setbacks for decks?

Decks are required to be located a distance from property lines and structures. This setback requirement varies depending on the height of the deck.

Deck Height	Setback from Property Lines	Setback from Buildings on the Same Lot
Under 12”	None	None
12” – 29”	3’	None
30 inches and above	5’	6’

What are the safety requirements for decks?

Decks 30 inches and higher that are not encompassed by the exterior walls of the main building structure require guardrails at least 42 inches in height at the edges. Guardrails must withstand a 20-pound per foot load applied at the top of the rail. Intermediate members in open-type railing cannot be spaced more than 4 inches apart.

How are decks on slopes measured?

Heights and setbacks of decks on slopes higher than 10 percent are calculated based on the average height of numerous points. The top elevation of railings and privacy screens cannot exceed the building height limit.

Is there a limit to the size of a deck?

Decks above 30 inches in height and more than 200 square feet in size would count toward the Maximum Main Building Coverage for the property. Decks are calculated at 50 percent of their area in excess of 200 square feet.

May I build a deck in my front yard or pave it for a patio?

No. AMC Section 30-5.7 prohibits the paving of the front yard setback, which is typically the front 20’ of a property. The AMC further requires such areas to be used exclusively for landscaping.

¹Balconies that are less than 50 square feet, have no exterior access and are cantilevered or supported from the main structure may extend three feet into the required front, rear or street side-yard. These structures must maintain a setback at least 3 feet from any property line and cannot project more than 6 feet from the supporting wall to its furthest outward extension.

²As part of Design Review, screening and/or landscaping may be required to mitigate potential privacy impacts. Decks above 6’ in height or above the first story may be required to provide a 6-foot architecturally compatible visual screen to protect the privacy of neighboring properties.