



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** American Institute of Architects- Austin

**THRU:** Residential Review Planners and Residential Inspectors

**FROM:** Daniel Word, Planner II, Residential Review Division  
Watershed Protection and Development Review Department

**DATE:** July 29, 2008

**SUBJECT:** Habitable Attics and Gross Floor Area

Section 3.3.3 (C) of Subchapter F, commonly referred to as the “McMansion” ordinance, allows for the exclusion of a habitable portion of an attic from the gross floor area measurement prescribed in the Land Development Code if:

1. The roof above is not a flat or mansard roof and has a slope of 3 to 12 or greater;
2. It is fully contained within the roof structure;
3. It has only one floor;
4. It does not extend beyond the footprint of the floors below;
5. It is the highest habitable portion of the building, or a section of the building, and adds no additional mass to the structure; and
6. Fifty percent or more of the area has a ceiling height of seven feet or less.

Under the second provision, the space must be “fully contained within the roof structure.” For the purposes of implementing Subchapter F of the Land Development Code, this is interpreted to mean that the attic space is contained between the underside of the roof rafters and the top of the ceiling joists, floor joists, or floor truss, provided that the finished floor of the attic space does not drop below the height of the ceiling joists, floor joists, or floor truss at the intersection with the exterior walls. This is to prevent the floor surface within the attic space to be artificially lowered in order to gain additional ceiling height that would not otherwise be present.

Please refer to the following sketches for further clarification:

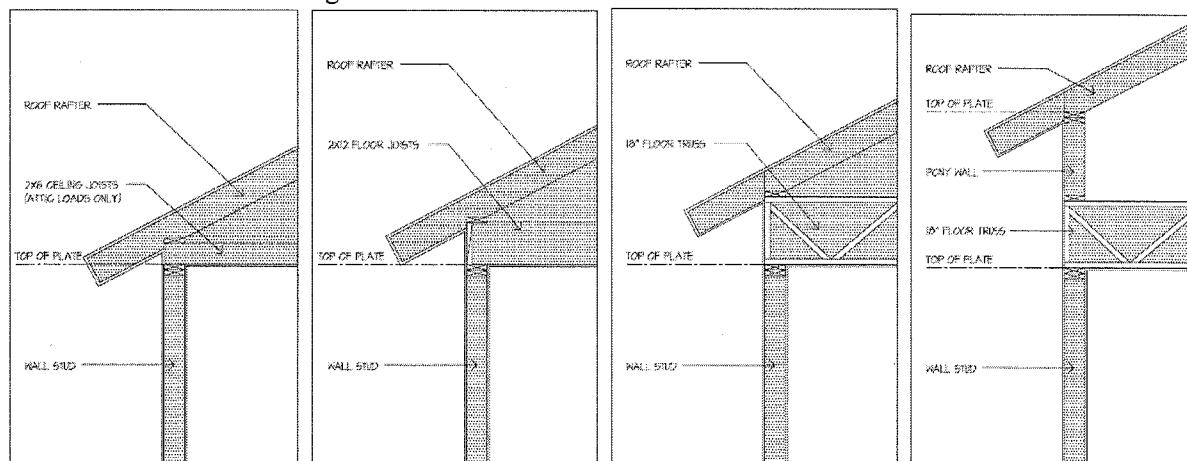


Fig 1

Fig 2

Fig 3

Fig 4

Figures 1, 2, and 3 are examples of acceptable construction methods that would qualify as being “fully contained within the roof structure.” Figure 4 is a sketch of an unacceptable construction method for the purpose of qualifying as being “fully contained within the roof structure.” This attic area would not qualify for exclusion from the calculation of gross floor area.