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CIRCULARS TO PROFESSIONAL INSTITUTES

REVISED GROSS FLOOR AREA (GFA) DEFINITION

- Please refer to related circulars, [URA/PB/93/23 - DCD](#), dated 24 AUG 1993 and [URA/PB/94/07 - DCD](#), dated 25 APR 1994 for further clarifications.
1. In 1989, following the introduction of the new development charge system, a simplified approach was adopted to determine the Gross Floor Area (GFA) of a building. Under this concept, all covered floor areas of a building, except otherwise stated, and uncovered areas for commercial uses are deemed the GFA of the building for purposes of plot ratio control and development charge. Owners/developers are free to make their own decisions on how much neutral areas they want in their buildings.
 2. Since then, URA has received feedback from practitioners, appeals and the professional institutes that the interpretation of the GFA definition in some instances inhibits building designs and penalises the use of modern construction technology.
 3. We are pleased to inform you that we have reviewed the definition of GFA. Without changing the concept of GFA as a control on building bulk and intensity of development, the revised GFA definition takes into account the following principles:
 - a. Where the floor areas are uncovered and do not generate activities that will intensify the development, they would be excluded from GFA.
 - b. Where the floor areas are required by government agencies or to meet public policies/ objectives, they would be excluded from GFA.
 - c. Where the building design features or the use of modern construction techniques do not give rise to additional floor space and intensity of development, they would be excluded from GFA.
 - d. Where the floor areas have a limited height clearance (1.5m or less) and are used for M&E or other services, they would be excluded from GFA.
 4. In line with the principles mentioned, the following are additional areas not counted as GFA:

a. Covered linkways, pavilions and sheds

This refers to covered open-sided linkways and pavilions/sheds (with no commercial use) incorporated as part of landscaping provided these structures are located outside and detached from the main buildings and

the linkways are designed as connections between buildings and/or facilities at the 1st storey level.

b. Basement diaphragm walls

Such walls are built along the periphery of the site and are usually required to meet structural conditions in basements.

c. Curtain wall or cladding systems

For buildings with curtain wall or cladding systems fixed onto the main structure, the GFA shall be measured up to edge of the main structural floor slab. However, if there are external walls, the GFA shall be measured up to the thickness of the external walls excluding the curtain wall or cladding systems.

d. Left over spaces in car park floors

This refers to all left over spaces like pedestrian walkways, pavements, planting boxes and residual areas (including areas enclosed on 3 sides regardless of shape or size) arising from the layout of parking lots. However, enclosed staircases, loading/ unloading platforms, stores, toilets, lift lobbies will continue to be counted as GFA.

e. Covered public footway/walkway

This applies only to covered footway/walkway facing any existing or proposed public road, public pedestrian mall, public open space/landscaped area or which links 2 public areas and where such footway/walkway is required by the Competent Authority or other Government agencies to be kept open at all times for public use as part of the public pedestrian network.

f. Certain covered public concourse area

This refers to areas provided voluntarily at the 1st storey level of a building in an office or main shopping or hotel development if the covered public space meets all the locational, urban design and development control criteria spelt out in [Appendix 1](#).

g. Roof concealing unsightly roof-top equipment

This refers to the space under a roof to conceal unsightly roof-top equipment provided there is no direct access via a common staircase to the roof top. This is to ensure that the space is not used for other purposes.

h. M&E spaces with limited headroom (ie less than 1.5 m)

This includes pump room, crawl space for maintenance access and cable chamber. For cable chamber, if the height of the ESS and the cable chamber exceed the 1st storey height control, the cable chamber would not be counted as GFA if it can be justified that a higher ESS is a PUB requirement. If this is so, PUB's certification is necessary.

i. Roof-top or other uncovered landscape gardens, tennis courts, swimming pools, private enclosed spaces, balconies

With these areas now not counted as GFA, the criterion of exclusive private use (eg by means of strata boundary) as a basis to determine GFA no longer applies except for air wells/open courtyards of shophouses which will continue to be treated as GFA.

j. Ledges for air-conditioning units and planters

k. Suspended AHU in voids

These are suspended and supported by metal brackets or beams within voids. They are regarded as equipment and not structures per se.

l. Rainwater holding tanks buried in the ground, aesthetic mouldings, unroofed staircases to ESS, meter compartment /bin point at gate post, non-weather proof building maintenance platforms at roof level

5. The following areas are however partially counted as GFA:

a. Lift shafts

Lift shafts to be counted once for single lift cabin, twice for double lift cabin in double decker lifts. This is applicable to normal, express and bubble lifts.

b. Vertical service duct space

These service ducts, like lift shafts, to be counted once provided the vertical space is hollow. If the service ducts are slabbed over, they will be treated just like any other floor space to be counted as GFA.

c. Lift lobbies in car park floors

GFA is limited to an area equivalent to the size of the lift shaft or to the actual size of the lift lobby, whichever is smaller. This is intended to provide flexibility in design and ease of computation.

6. Implementation

7. The above revised GFA treatments are to be applied with immediate effect and floor area previously counted as GFA (for cases approved after 1 Sept 1989) could be used to offset proposed additional floor space submitted as amendments or additions/alterations plans. The new proposal should comply with the planning requirements for the site.

8. I would appreciate it if you could convey the contents of this circular to members of your Institute/Association/Board.

9. If you or your members have any queries regarding this circular, please do not hesitate to call our DCD Technical Enquiry Hotline (Toll-free) at Tel: 1800-223-4811.

10. Thank you for your assistance in conveying this information to your members.

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for CHIEF PLANNER
URBAN REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

APPENDIX 1

CRITERIA TO EXEMPT COVERED PUBLIC SPACE FROM GFA

1. Concept

- a. Conceptually, the public covered space serves as an alternative 'relief space' in areas of intense commercial development where the provision of open spaces is inadequate.
- b. The term 'Public Covered Space' can be described as:

"An internal space with high ceiling located at the ground level of a major landmark building easily accessible and made available for public use at all times."

"It is a place for public use, situated closely to the covered walkway with links to major pedestrian networks. It is a space that is well connected both visually and physically with the surrounding urban streetscape."

"It is a space that can be used by the public both during the day and night."

2. Type of Development

The exemption will be limited to office, main shopping and hotel development.

3. Locational Guidelines

'Public covered space' to be exempted from GFA calculation can only be considered if it meets all of these locational criteria:

- a. It must be located in an intensively built-up urban area with a high level of commercial activities like the existing CBD and Orchard Road.
- b. It must not compromise the continuity of shopping activities ie the established and/or desired shopping edge should not be disrupted.
- c. It must be located along a route of heavy pedestrian movement and be an integral part of the main pedestrian network (existing/proposed) for the Central Area.
- d. It must be located at critical pedestrian node or junction.
- e. It must be located at the focal point of a visual corridor.

4. Urban Design Guidelines

'Public covered space' to be exempted from GFA calculation can only be considered if it meets all of these urban design criteria:

- a. It must be situated at the ground level of a prominent building.
- b. It must have a high ceiling with a sense of grandeur.

- c. It must have a quality overall interior finishes that incorporates proper landscaping.
- d. It must have a good lighting design layout with the necessary fixtures.
- e. There must be a comfortable and easy flow between this space and the adjacent urban streetscape and walkways.
- f. It must be fully accessible to the public at all times.

5. Development Control Guidelines

To be designated as "public covered space", a space must meet all of these development control criteria.

- a. The space granted exemption from GFA must be open to the public at all times.
- b. Once the space is exempted from the GFA calculation, the space cannot be enclosed and be converted to any other uses in the future.