



# **Board of Supervisors Land Use Policy Committee Meeting**

## **Residential Building Height Zoning Ordinance Amendment**

March 10, 2026

# Why look at building height?

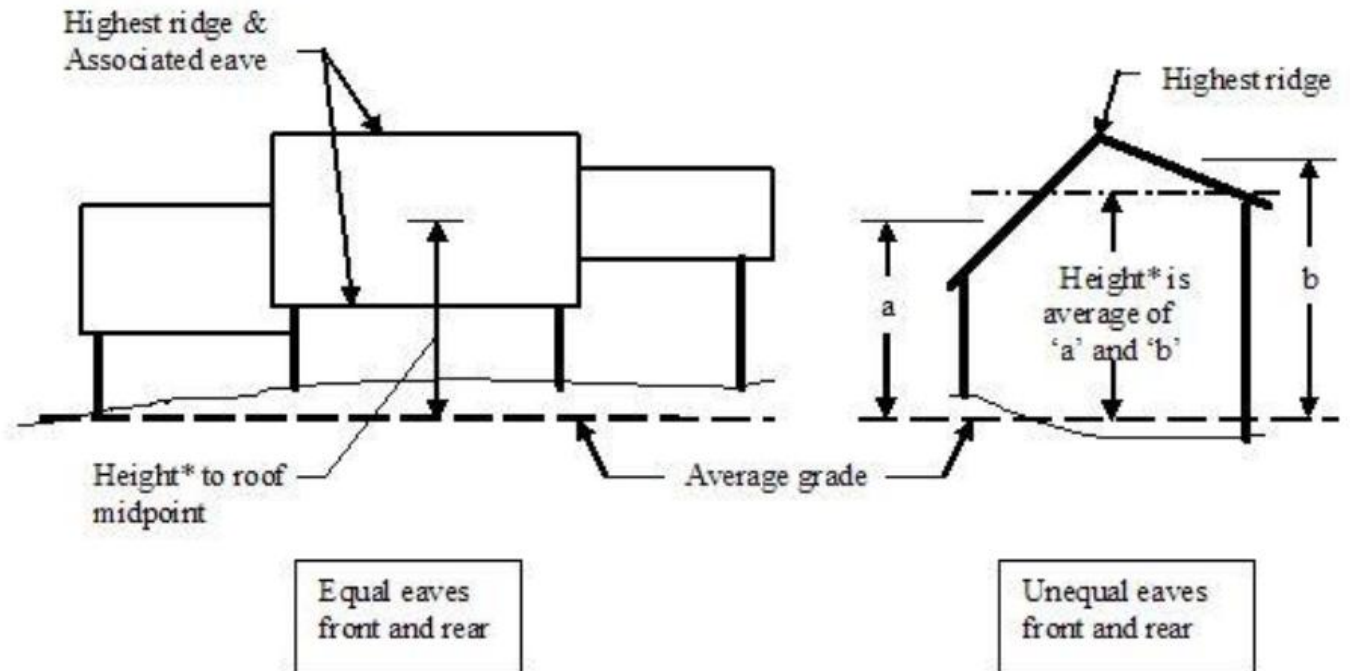
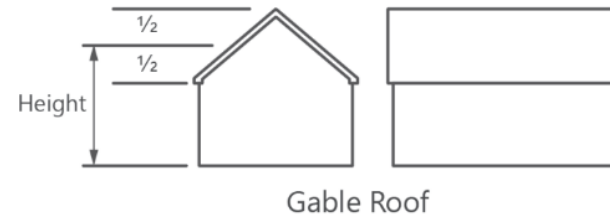
## Changing home trends; changing neighborhood landscapes

- Teardown-rebuild and infill development replacing older homes with larger homes featuring **complex rooflines** and **heights pushing the maximum** allowable height.
- Many new homes are reaching overall heights of **35-40 feet**.
- Staff recommends **revising the definition of building height and/or the measurement method**.



# How is building height measured?

- Flat Roof
  - Highest point of the roof.
- Gable Pitched Roofs
  - **Average height** (midpoint) between the ridge and the corresponding eaves of the highest roof line.
  - Midpoint of roof is used instead of overall height because the peak has less impact on bulk.



# Background



**1959**

Residential building height maximum of 35' is introduced



**2009**

Amendment ZO-09-419 revises grade definition



**2006, 2009, 2018, 2019**

Several Letters to Industry issued to address building height



**2016**

Amendment ZO-16-455 increases max height for single family detached in R-C and R-E to 40 feet with 50' setback



**2025**

Board Matter presented on infill development and considering building height revisions added to Zoning Ordinance Work Program 2026-27

# Emerging home trends





# Current Standards

And challenges

# Current standards - maximum height

## 35-foot maximum building height

Most single family detached dwellings have a max 35-foot building height.

Dwellings in R-E and R-C allowed a max 40-foot building height with a 50-foot setback.

P-district maximum height is determined as part of the rezoning review.



**Height certifications** are required for new single family detached dwellings and additions with proposed heights of 33 feet or greater.

# Challenges

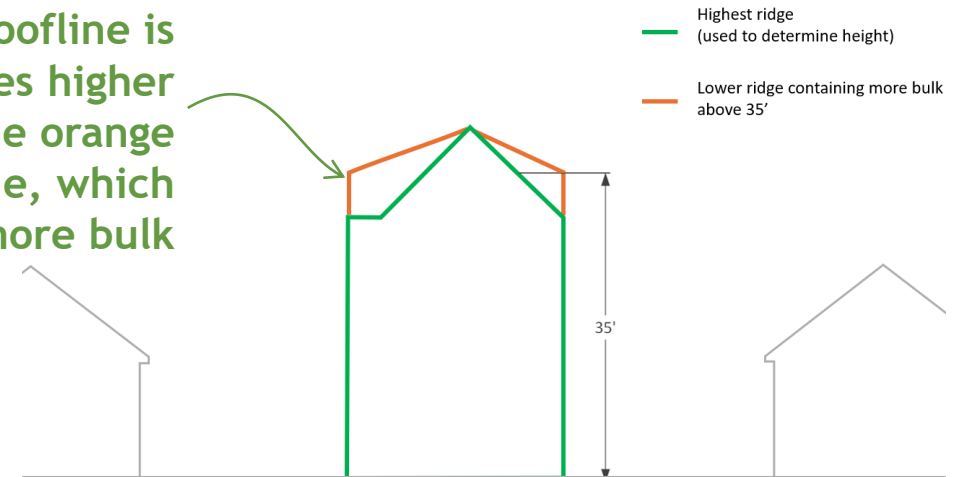
## Multiple rooflines - creative workarounds

Because **only the highest ridge** is used to calculate building height, some home designs have achieved overall heights over 35 feet, reaching over 40 feet.

**Steeply pitched roofs** allow for more overall height while technically meeting the calculated height requirement.



The green roofline is only 2 inches higher than the orange roofline, which includes more bulk





# Potential Zoning Ordinance Revisions

# Building Height Definition

## Option 1: maintain current method

Maintain current definition: average grade to the average of the highest ridge and its associated eave.

Clarify the building height definition language and update illustrations. Codify Technical Bulletin 19-01 specifying the highest ridge as the roofline used for height calculation.

Codify that flat roofs are roofs with pitch lower than 3:12 slope.

# Building Height Definition

## Option 2: introduce a maximum peak height

Maintain the current method to calculate building height and introduce a maximum peak height in a range of 37.5 feet to 40 feet.

This puts a cap on the overall height of homes and addresses multiple rooflines.

Staff recommends a peak height of **38 feet**.



# Building Height Definition

## Option 3: use the highest eave to calculate height

Use the **highest eave** and its associated ridge to calculate building height, instead of the highest ridge.

This captures more of the building bulk under the maximum height. However, the result depends largely on the design of the home and its rooflines.



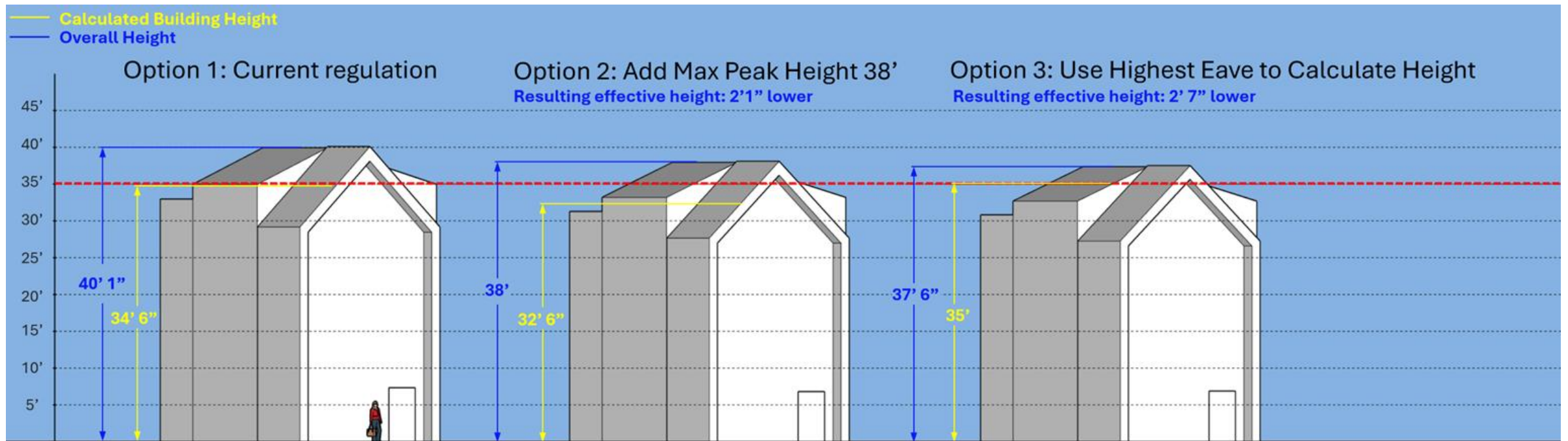
# Options Comparison

## Applied to Case Study 1

Option 1 results in no change in height.

Option 2 reduces the overall height by 2 inches to 2.5 feet depending on the peak height selected.

Option 3 reduces the overall height by 2.5 feet by using the highest eave to capture more of the bulk of the dwelling.



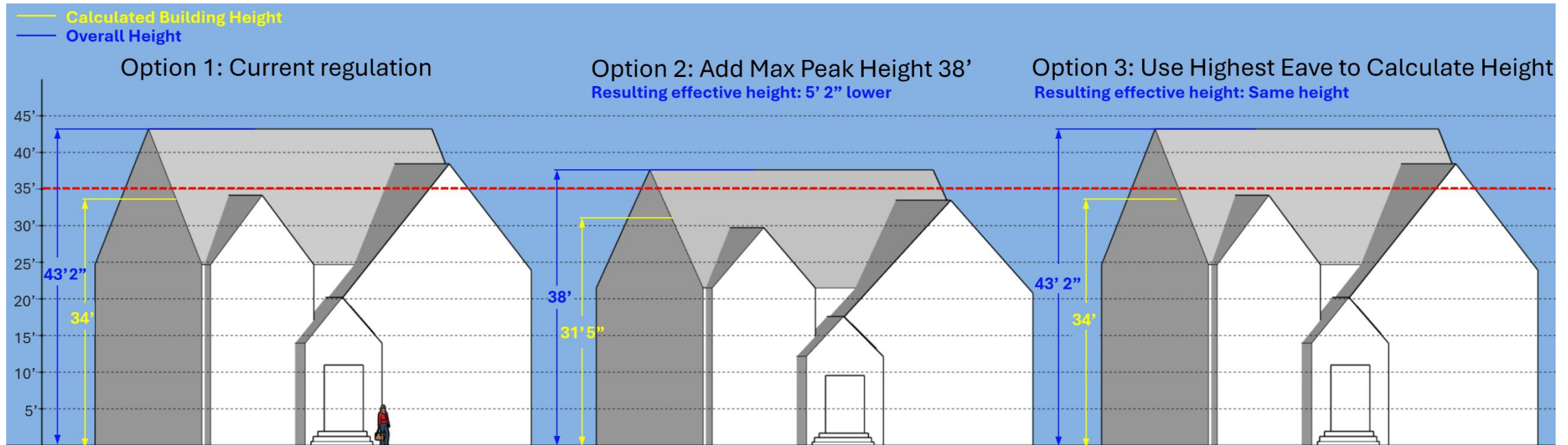
# Options Comparison

## Applied to Case Study 2

Option 1 results in no change in height.

Option 2 reduces the overall height by 3 feet to 3.5 feet depending on the peak height selected.

Option 3 results in no change in height, as the highest eave and highest ridge are the same roofline.





# Next Steps

Community and Industry Outreach

# Outreach and return to Land Use Policy Committee



## Industry Outreach

NVIBIA-NAIOP, Engineers and Surveyors Institute, and Mid-Atlantic Builders



## Community Outreach

In-Person and Virtual Open Houses



## Land Use Policy Committee

Return with draft text Fall 2026



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT



# Thank you

Questions and Discussion?