

**GRADE PLANE.** The code indicates that the grade plane is a reference plane representing the average of the finished ground level adjoining the building at its exterior walls. Under conditions where the finished ground level slopes significantly away from the exterior walls, that reference plane is established by the lowest points of elevation of the finished surface of the ground within an area between the building and lot line, or where the lot line is more than 6 feet (1829 mm) from the building, between the building and a line 6 feet (1829 mm) from the building. Where the slope away from the building is minimal (typically provided only to drain water away from the exterior wall), the elevation at the exterior wall provides an adequate reference point.

The method for calculating grade plane can vary based on the site conditions. Where the slope is generally consistent as it passes across the building site, it may only require the averaging of a few points along the exterior wall of a rectangular-shaped building, as illustrated in Figure 202-12. Where the slope is inconsistent or retaining walls are utilized, or where the building

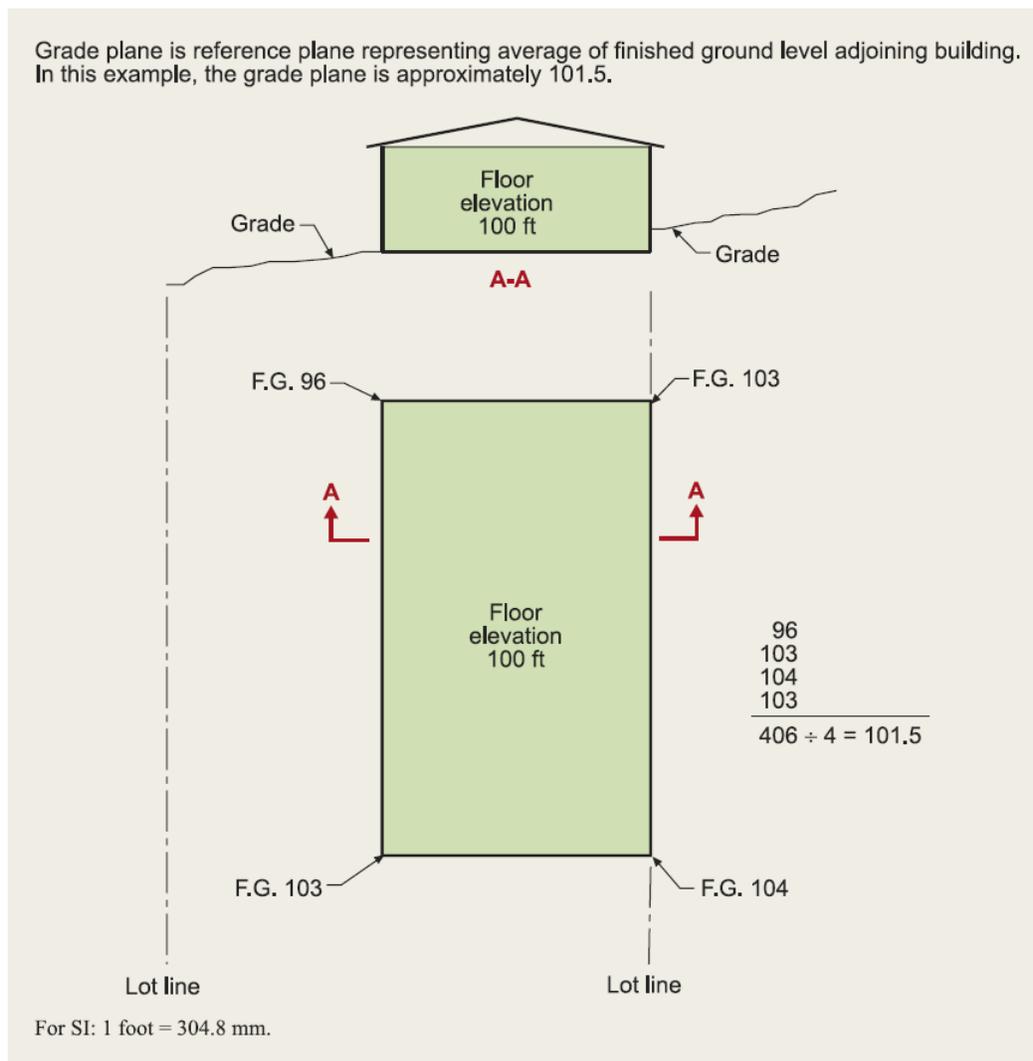


Figure 202-12  
Grade plane  
calculation.

footprint is complex, the determination of grade plane can be more complicated. In such cases, a more exacting method for calculating the grade plane must be utilized. In addition, where fire walls are present, the elevation points should be taken at the intersections of the fire wall and the exterior walls.

This definition is important in determining the number of stories above grade plane within a building as well as its height in feet. In some cases, the finished surface of the ground may be artificially raised with imported fill to create a higher grade plane around a building so as to decrease the number of stories or height in feet. The code does not prohibit this practice, and as long as a building meets the code definition and restriction for height or number of stories, the intent of the code is met. See Figure 202-13.

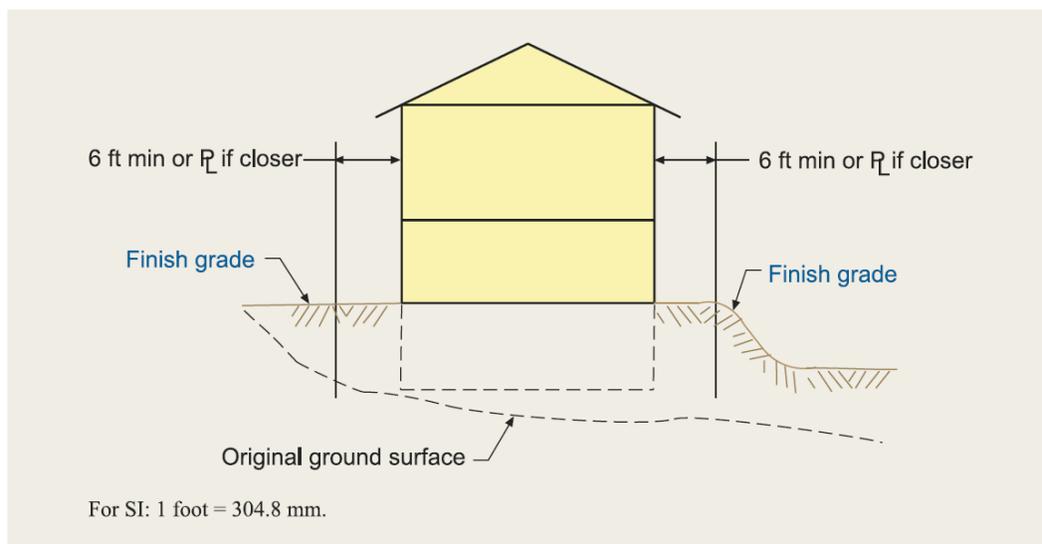


Figure 202-13  
**Use of built-up soil to raise finished grade.**

It is important to note that for the vast majority of buildings, it is not necessary to precisely calculate the grade plane. In such buildings, a general approximation of grade plane is sufficient to appropriately apply the code. A detailed calculation is only necessary in those limited situations where it is not obvious how the building is to be viewed in relationship to the surrounding ground level.