Memorandum

Policy for interpretation of Redwood City fifty percent (50%) rule for additions and alterations in excess of fifty percent of the existing floor area or exterior wall framing

A. When additions, alterations, remodels, tenant improvements, or a combinations thereof performed to a lawfully constructed building or structure made within any five (5) year period exceeds fifty percent (50%) of the floor area or exterior wall framing of an existing building or structure as determined by the Building Official, then except as otherwise provided in section C, the existing building or structure shall be brought into conformity with the requirements for new construction as the Building Official may determine to be necessary or appropriate to eliminate existing health or safety hazards, including, but not limited to,

1. Defects in structural integrity, defective or inadequate electrical installations;
2. Defective or inadequate fire sprinkler, sanitary sewer or storm drainage facilities;
3. Installation of an approved emergency responder radio coverage system.

B. For the purposes of making the determinations required by subsection A the following definitions, rules of interpretation, and procedures shall be applied:

1. The “floor area” of a building or structure shall mean the sum of the gross horizontal areas of all floors of a building or structure measured from the interior face of the exterior walls, but excluding each of the following:
   a. Any area where the floor to ceiling height is less than six (6) feet; or
   b. Any detached garage or other detached accessory structure which does not constitute habitable space; or
   c. Covered deck.
2. The “exterior wall framing” of a building or structure shall consist of wall studs, sheetrock, exterior cladding systems and/or windows.
3. Additions, alterations, remodels, tenant improvements, or combinations thereof performed at different periods of time shall be considered to have been made within a five (5) year period if any building permits are issued or any additional work is commenced within the five (5) years following the date of completion of any earlier work on the same building or structure. The date of completion shall
normally be established as the date on which final inspection approval of the earlier work is granted by the City.

4. Calculation of the changes to the structure are to be determined by the Building Official, who may require documentation of applicants regarding effected areas and/or impose conditions of approval upon issuance of a building permit. The Building Official shall have the authority to determine whether additions, alterations, remodels, tenant improvements, or combinations thereof are subject to the requirements of Section A or if they qualify under the exceptions.

C. Exceptions:

1. Work involving exterior surfaces such as siding, or the addition or replacement of windows or doors, or the addition of a porch or deck shall not be considered alterations subject to the provisions of this policy.

2. For detached one-and-two-family dwelling units, efficiency dwelling units, and townhouses not more than three stories above grade plan in height, alterations, renovations or repairs which do not essentially change the original size, configuration, and habitable floor area of the building or structure or basic uses of the rooms within the building or structure, shall not be considered as additions or alterations subject to the provisions provided, however:
   a. Conversion or recognition of previously undocumented rooms to be permitted as habitable may be included in the calculation of alteration of space, at the discretion of the Building Official. This exception may not be applied where the Building Official has determined that the alteration or repair constitutes a “major rebuild”, where 50% or more of the combined surface area of the interior walls, exterior wall and ceilings of the habitable rooms are to be removed to expose support members.

D. This policy clarifies Redwood City Code Section 9.42 and is not a replacement of any ordinance.