Measurement of building areas

Construction area

Definition

The construction area of a building is the summation of all the areas on plan, measured at each covered floor level over the external walls or external lines of the outermost vertical enclosing planes, or, where applicable, the centre lines of party walls between buildings.

Items to be included

- Internal stairwell and staircase areas
- Lift shaft areas
- Duct space areas
- Ground floor lobby areas
- Corridor areas
- Machine room and lift motor room areas
- Mezzanine floor areas
- Covered parking (in basements or above ground)
- Basements
- Finished floor areas in attic spaces
- Floor areas of penthouses, staff quarters, lift motor rooms, etc.
- All open but covered porches, balconies and balcony corridors within the enclosing planes of the main building
- Floor areas to attached sheds, carports, etc and all partially completed rooms, porches, balconies, etc provided the relevant areas are covered and have at least two of their walls not less than two thirds the height of the wall common to the main building
- Corridors to multi-storey flats (apartments)

Items to be excluded

- External steps and paved areas
- Areas of projecting roof overhangs, hoods, canopies and the like not exceeding 1m
- Enclosed open areas (light or ventilation wells and courtyards)
- Areas of open covered ways and carports, etc
- Areas of unenclosed fire escapes
- Areas on plan of small projections such as pilasters, attached piers, fins, chimney breasts, etc

Gross building area

Certain local authorities have their own definition of gross building area (sometimes referred to as floor space). It is important to check the applicable local authorities’ definition against the definition below.

Definition

The gross building area covers the entire building area, but excludes the following items:

- Internal atriums, light wells, etc in excess of 9 m²
- Patios
Plant boxes
Sun screening
Normal eaves projections (but not excessive eaves projections)
Escape stairs
Internal uncovered areas
Floor areas, including basement storeys (any storey with a floor level at least 2m lower than the average level of the land around the building), reserved exclusively for the parking of vehicles
Machine rooms, lift motor rooms, service rooms, caretakers’ flats, etc
Balconies, terraces, etc

The gross building area is mainly used by planning consultants to plan a building in accordance with the permissible floor area ratio (FAR)/ floor space ratio (FSR). The exact definition may vary from one local authority to the next.

**Sectional title area (South Africa)**

The sectional title area is the area of the unit (excluding the common property) measured to the median line of the boundary walls of each section and to the median line of the external walls.

**Rentable area and usable area (South Africa)**

Refer to the “Method for Measuring Floor Areas in Buildings” published by the South African Property Owners Association (SAPOA) for the definition of rentable area and useable area. Go to “Further sources of property data” for a link to the website of the South African Property Owners Association.