

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What does Airport Height Zoning do?

It protects arrival, departure and engine-out procedures around the airport, and outlines potential maximum heights for buildings and other structures within the City of Phoenix. The Airport Height Zoning Ordinance accommodates City growth while protecting and maintaining the airspace capacity around Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport; its purpose is to protect airspace for aircraft operations.

2. Is airport height zoning different from underlying zoning?

Yes. Underlying zoning is determined by the City of Phoenix and takes into consideration health, safety and welfare. Underlying zoning heights are typically lower than that of airport zoning heights. Airport zoning heights are determined by Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations and show the maximum allowable structure heights to allow for aircraft economics, efficiency and safety.

3. Does Airport Height Zoning affect flight patterns and noise contours?

No, the zoning is intended to protect airspace for aircraft operations, and does not affect flight patterns or noise contours.

4. Does Airport Height Zoning encourage developers to construct shorter/taller buildings?

Most likely not, because the height of development is determined by underlying zoning. A developer must go through the standard development review process and adhere to the City's allowable height, which is usually lower than that of the airport. The Airport Height Zoning purpose is to protect airspace for aircraft operations; it is not intended to influence city development.

5. What is above "Mean Sea Level (MSL)"?

The height above the level of the ocean's surface, particularly the level halfway between mean high and low tide, used as a standard in reckoning land elevation or sea depths. Phoenix is approximately 1100' above Mean Sea Level (MSL); Sky Harbor is 1135' above MSL.

6. What is Above Ground Level (AGL)?

The height above ground level.

7. What is a One Engine-Out Inoperative (OEI) Procedure?

The maneuvering of an aircraft in the event that an engine fails. Airspace is allotted for an engine-out procedure; for safety reasons it is important that tall structures not exceed this contingency space.

10. What is the FAA's involvement in Airport Height Zoning?

The FAA encourages all public-use airports to pursue local land use and zoning measures to ensure adequate protection of airspace for aircraft operations.

11. What is the maximum height of development?

The tallest height a building may be permitted for, including all rooftop appurtenances, obstruction lights, lighting arresting devices, etc.

12. Does Sky Harbor have a mission statement?

The mission of the City of Phoenix Aviation Department is to develop and maintain a system of airports that serves the traveling public – locally, nationally and internationally – in a safe and efficient manner.

13. Where can I get more information?

Contact the City of Phoenix Aviation Department at (602) 273-3340 or by e-mail at aviation.planning@phoenix.gov. You may also log on to phxskyharbor.com