



DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SCHEME COMPLIANCE ADVISORY: 2 OF 2023

DEALING WITH VOIDS IN BUILDINGS/ATRIUMS

1. The concept of a 'void' is not specifically defined in the City of Cape Town Development Management Scheme (DMS), but is included into the definition of 'atrium':

“‘atrium’ means a covered courtyard comprising a void within a building that extends for one or more floors in height, but does not contain floors that penetrate into the void. An atrium contains a floor and a roof or ceiling;”

2. In order to calculate 'floor space' in terms of the DMS, any stairs, stairwells and atriums that are covered by a roof shall be included, except in the case of multi-level buildings, where any stairwells, liftwells, lightwells or other wells, and any atrium, shall only be counted once.
3. When a building plan is checked for compliance against the DMS, it is important that every room or space within the building is assigned a use and that the space is fully dimensioned both horizontally and vertically. This is a requirement of the National Building Regulation A7 which deals with the information required to be indicated on the layout drawings.
4. When a space is indicated as a 'void', as part of an 'atrium', on a building plan (in order for the floor space to be counted only once in multi-level buildings), it must comply with the DMS 'atrium' definition.
5. When a space is indicated as a 'void' on a building plan and it does not form part of an 'atrium', but is rather purposefully designed to be an unusable part or component of a structure, it can be exempted from the calculation of 'floor space'. The following criteria must be considered before an exemption of floor space may be considered:
 - a. A void is a purposefully designed and constructed part of the building that will remain an unfilled, inaccessible and unusable space within that building or structure. Undefined, unfilled spaces are not permissible within a building, with the exception of (e) below and roof space where such space between the ceiling of the uppermost floor and the roof covering is inaccessible as habitable space.
 - b. A ceiling void is a space between the underside of the floor above and the ceiling. This space is sometimes used to conceal services. Ceiling voids are permissible and must be so indicated on a building plan.
 - c. Service ducts (or voids) are open spaces usually in the form of a duct which runs from floor to floor within a building. This space is used to conceal services. Service ducts are permissible and must be so indicated on a building plan.
 - d. Open spaces beneath buildings or structures which are used to gain access to the building or as parking are permissible but must be indicated as such. These spaces may not be indicated as voids. This area must be included in the calculation of floor space, except any area which is reserved solely for parking or loading of vehicles. No earth bank, retaining structure, column, suspended floor, other device or series of such devices shall however be constructed that enables a ground floor of a building to be raised more than

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- e. 1,5 m above existing ground level, provided that where such raising takes place, the height thereof shall still be measured from existing ground level (see item 126 of the DMS).
- f. Undefined spaces beneath buildings are not permissible, with the exception of a space created beneath suspended timber floors and where unavoidable voids are created when building on sloping sites and as long as such spaces remain unfilled, inaccessible and unusable, except for landscaping or gardening purposes. See (a.) above. These spaces may be indicated as voids on the building plans. No earth bank, retaining structure, column, suspended floor, other device or series of such devices shall however be constructed that enables a ground floor of a building to be raised more than 1,5 m above existing ground level, provided that where such raising takes place, the height thereof shall still be measured from existing ground level (see item 126 of the DMS).



PLEASE NOTE

Always consult the City of Cape Town Municipal Planning By-law, 2015 (as amended), before any land use application is submitted to the Department.