



BUILDINGS BULLETIN 2016-011

Technical

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Issuer: Gus Sirakis, P.E.
Assistant Commissioner for Technical Affairs and Code Development

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Purpose: This document clarifies side yard regulations and compliance with structural separations required in BC 1613.7 of the 2014 Building Code

Related Code/Zoning Section(s):	BC 1613.7	ZR Art. II, Ch. 3
	BC 1613.7.2	ZR Art. III, Ch. 3
	BC 1613.7.3	ZR 43-25

Subject(s): Earthquake, structural separations; Earthquake loads, structural separation; Zoning Resolution, side yard regulations; Zoning Resolution, floor area; Zoning Resolution, open space

Background

The Building Code requires structures to be separated from adjacent buildings to limit the structural and nonstructural damage caused by pounding from adjacent buildings during an earthquake. The Zoning Resolution requires buildings in certain districts to be built either on the side lot line or, if any opening is provided, to be built after providing a required open area. Thus, required structural separations for earthquake loads would create an open area along the side lot line and thereby a minimum required open area width could be triggered.

Specifics

In certain zoning districts, as delineated by the Zoning Resolution, no side yards or open areas along a side lot line are necessary. However, if an open area extending along the side lot line is provided, it must be of a minimum width. BC 1613.7 of the 2014 Building Code calls for a minimum one (1) inch of separation for each 50 feet of total building height from a property line not common to a public way (such as a side or rear lot line), and this structural separation may be applied incrementally over the height of the building.

When a structural separation not exceeding the minimum width required by the Building Code is provided, the building shall be considered built on the side lot line and would not set off the Zoning Resolution minimum required width. This structural separation would neither be considered floor area nor would it qualify as required open space for the purpose of the Zoning Resolution.

Furthermore, the structural separation shall be closed on all open sides to prevent unauthorized access and covered as required in BC 1613.7.2 and, for spaces wider than five (5) inches, in BC 1613.7.3. This space shall not be used for any ducts, duct terminations, conduits, or other equipment. If the space is fully enclosed, ventilation should be provided, as determined by the applicant. If the space is only partially enclosed, adequate storm drainage shall be provided in compliance with Chapter 11 of the Plumbing Code.