Changing how Square Footage is Calculated

Reference Number: KB-00424
Last Modified: January 29, 2020

The information in this article applies to:

QUESTION
In my area, the square footage of a structure is measured from the exterior of a wall rather than from the floor platform. How do I obtain the square footage, measured from the exterior of the wall, using Chief Architect?

ANSWER
The Living Area should not be mistaken for the footprint of the house. Only true livable areas are included in the Living Area calculation. By default, exterior and hybrid room types are not included.

Living Area is measured from either the outside surface of the wall or the outer surface of the Main Layer of exterior walls.

Note: Room types that are not included in the Living Area calculation are: Attic, Court, Deck, Garage, Open Below, and Porch.
There are two ways to calculate the square footage from the exterior of the structure instead. The first calculates the Living Area by excluding the room types above; the second method allows you to calculate the total area of the footprint of the plan.

To calculate the Living Area

1. Go the the floor of which would like to calculate the Living Area.

2. Select Edit> Default Settings from the menu.

3. From the list, click on the word Plan to highlight it, then click the Edit button to display the General Plan Defaults dialog.

4. In the Living Area section near the bottom of the dialog, change the selection to the desired setting.

   - Select Main Layer to have the Living Area measured from the wall's Main Layer (the framing or structural layer typically).

   - Select Surface to have the Living Area measured from the wall's exterior surface

5. Click OK and click Done to close the dialogs and apply your change.

6. The Living Area label for this floor will now reflect the square footage of the current floor, excluding any Attic, Court, Deck, Garage, Open Below or Porch rooms.

To create a Living Area Polyline

1. Go the the floor that you would like to calculate the Living Area of.

2. Click the Select Objects button, then click just outside of an exterior wall in your plan
The entire exterior area of the plan will highlight, indicating that the "exterior room" has been selected.

If you are unable to select the exterior room, try pressing the **Tab** key on your keyboard or click the **Select Next Object** edit button to cycle the selection through nearby objects.

3. With the exterior room selected, click the **Make Living Area Polyline** edit button to create a polyline that shows the living area.
4. With the living area polyline selected, click the **Open Object** edit button to open the **Polyline Specification** dialog.

- On the **POLYLINE** panel, the **Area** of the polyline is provided in square feet.
- Select the **LABEL** panel and enter the Area value in the Label input field.
Alternatively, you can insert the %area% macro into the Label input field to have the label update automatically anytime a change is made to the polylines shape.

- Click **OK** to apply the change and close the dialog.

To calculate the area of the plan's footprint

1. Go the the floor that you would like to get the footprint of.

2. Click the **Select Objects** button, then click just outside of an exterior wall in your plan.

   - The entire exterior area of the plan will highlight, indicating that the "exterior room" has been selected.
If you are unable to select the exterior room, try pressing the Tab key on your keyboard or click the Select Next Object edit button to cycle the selection through nearby objects.

3. With the exterior room selected, click the Make Room Polyline edit button to create a polyline that follows the exterior surfaces of the exterior walls.
4. With the exterior room polyline selected, click the Open Object edit button to open the Polyline Specification dialog.

- On the POLYLINE panel, the Area of the polyline is provided in square feet.
- Select the LABEL panel and enter the Area value in the Label input field.
Alternatively, you can insert the %area% macro into the Label input field to have the label update automatically anytime a change is made to the polylines shape.

- Click OK to apply the change and close the dialog.

Related Articles

- Displaying the Square Footage of a Room (/support/article/KB-00009/displaying-the-square-footage-of-a-room.html)
- Showing the Room Area and Room Dimensions Using Macros (/support/article/KB-00687/showing-the-room-area-and-room-dimensions-using-macros.html)