



## Planning Commission Agenda

Wednesday, May 4, 2022 at 7:00 PM  
City Hall Council Chambers  
700 Highway 2, Leavenworth, WA

Meeting hosted at City Hall with option to join via zoom by:

- (1) connecting via the Zoom app: Meeting ID: 999 2949 1100 Passcode: 225225
- (2) using the web link: <https://zoom.us/j/99929491100?pwd=b1ZqSUtLNGR3STd1TmNHWndCcDFaQT09>
- (3) calling: 1-253-215-8782. Alternative call-in phone numbers: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/99929491100>

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**The Planning Commission** is responsible for long range planning and legislative policy recommendations to the City Council. Recommendations are based on thorough understanding of options and public comment/discussions. Every year, the Planning Commission work defined by the Council's [Docket](#).

### **Meeting Etiquette:**

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|--|---|
| 1. Have one discussion at a time and limit distractions. | 3. Be respectful of each other; by assuming good intentions and acknowledging it is ok to disagree. |
| 2. Seek to understand before being understood.           | 4. Focus on constructive problem solving.   |
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## Agenda

1. **Call Meeting to Order, 7:00 pm**
2. **Roll Call:** *Planning Commission Chair: Steven Booher (position #1 – expiration 2022)*  
*Planning Commission Commissioners: Kenny Renner-Singer (#2 - 2023), Open Position (#3 –2024), Pete Olson (#4 - 2025), Angie Harrison (#5 - 2025), Colin Forsyth (#6 - 2022) and Alison Miller (#7 - 2022)*
3. **Review and approval of Minutes** – April 6, 2022 (sent separately)
  - a. Motion: *I move to approve the Planning Commission minutes from April 6, 2022.*
4. **Remanded 1589 Development Standards**
  - a. Review and discussion on residential building height
5. **Future Meeting Considerations** – Continue height discussion; Review of new Development Standards Chapter, Housing Action Plan Recommendations, including triplexes
6. **Open Discussion Items, at the Chair's discretion**
7. **Adjournment**

*All Planning Commission meetings are open to the public*

## Goals for reconsideration of residential building heights

- Meet the recommendations of the Housing Action Plan (to increase diversity and housing stock)
  - Providing workforce housing (smaller units which also supports senior housing options)
  - Address concerns about height regarding, light, snow, views
  - Address concerns about character- size and proportions of new structures
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## Options

- A. Measure to the mid-point
- B. Measure to ridge/peak
- C. Varying heights based on lot sizes or grade change
- D. Step back – Reduced height at setback then option to increase height at the interior of the lot
- E. Bonus for Density – Single-family Residence reduction with increases for two and three units
- F. Floor Area Ratio – Address bulk (size) of buildings (see updated 2021 handout)
- G. Overlay District – Preservation of historical areas with limited height

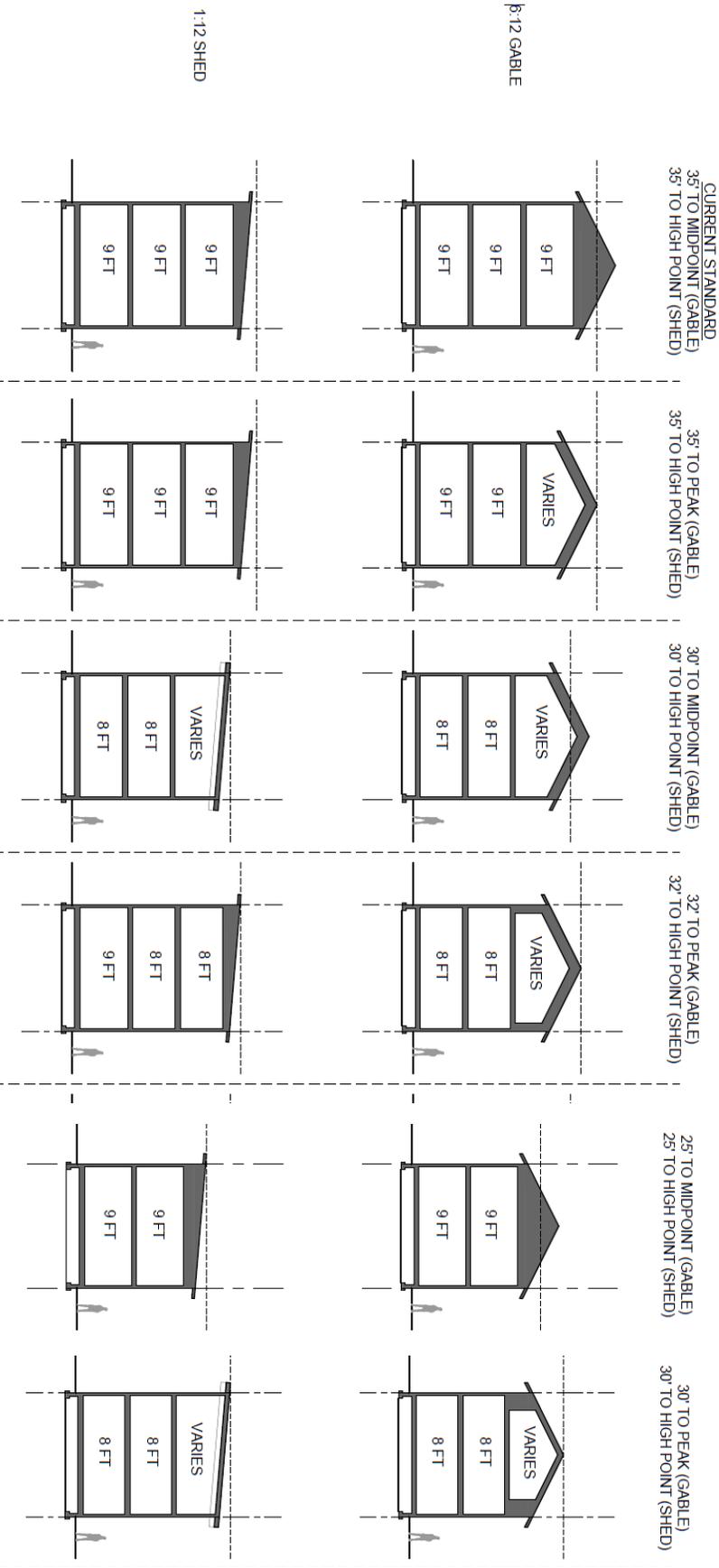
## Option A: Measure to mid-point of angled roofs or highest point of flat roofs

The historic rationale for measuring to the mid-point includes encouraging angled roofs which are common for residential buildings, especially in Leavenworth where snow shedding is needed. Additionally, an angled roof has less visual impact and does not include useable area near the peak so excluding that from the height did not penalize the owner for unusable structure.

Pro – Encourage traditional home styles with reduced visual impact

Con – The peak of a pitched roof can exceed that of a low slope or flat roof by 3-4' on average

Cost Impacts - Traditional building methods (i.e. simple flat-bottom trusses with vented attics) are a cost savings compared to more complicated roof systems like vaulted ceilings and/or low-slope shed styles or “flat” roof systems, especially for the higher snow load requirements in Leavenworth.



### Option B: Measure to ridge/peak (highest point)

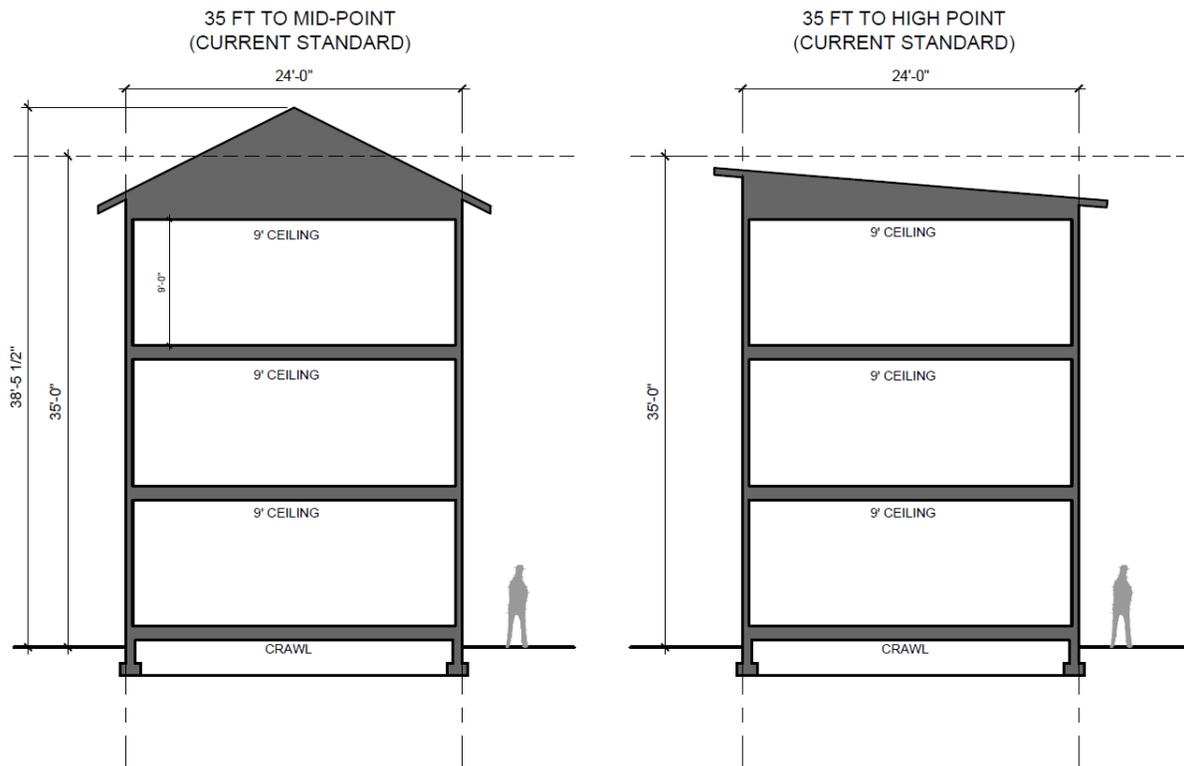
The rationale for measuring to the ridge/peak (highest point) is predominately to provide clear public expectations of building heights. Generally, excludes chimneys and other similar structures.

Pro – Clear expectations

Con – Encourages flatter roof styles as people maximize useable built area

Cost Impacts - Traditional building methods (i.e. simple flat-bottom trusses with vented attics) are a cost savings compared to more complicated roof systems like vaulted ceilings and/or low-slope shed styles or “flat” roof systems.

Alternatively, implement a base height limit for flat roofs and allow pitched roofs to exceed by a small amount (~5 ft). This could be proposed as a way to "split the difference" between the current mid-point system and over-incentivizing flat roofs.



### Option C: Varying heights for lot sizes or grade changes

Change of height between zoning districts or type of housing (single-family vs. multi-family) is more common than for lot size; however, the primary concern heard from Leavenworth residents is associated with a development on Prospect Street<sup>1</sup>, currently under construction, where the height to the ridge is approximately 36’ but the grade change from the east property is approximately 6’. These changes result in a structure that appears taller and, for some, out of place from the surrounding homes. Given other developments have not generated any public

<sup>1</sup> Other concerns have been brought up with this development which are not related to building height.

comment until the Prospect development, it may be that the grade change is more of the concern than the height.

Pro – varying height for lot size - clear expectations

Con – varying height for lot size – Smaller residential lots often require parking at the ground floor; reducing height may limit development. Inconsistent with the current Planned Development regulations which encourage smaller lots.

Pro – varying height for grade changes – reduced visual impacts of taller structures

Con – varying height for grade changes – penalizes property owner for something generally out of their control; may result in more excavation of sites; few areas of town have notable grade changes between properties.

As a third alternative, a few people have suggested a limited height to no more than 8-10' above the adjoining or neighboring structures. However, this limits development options (potentially affecting land value) and results in stair-stepping housing heights and later remodels which ultimately result in buildings reaching the maximum heights permitted. Option D may be better received and regulated.

Cost Impacts – Limiting height-based lot size, grade changes or neighboring property building heights may affect values (because of reduced building capacity). This disincentivizes smaller lots which provide options for more diverse housing types.

## Option D: Step back – Reduced height at setback then option to increase height at the interior of the lot

A step back construction of roof lines is intended to lessen the visual change between buildings and reduce impacts to surrounding properties regarding light.

Pro – Provides for a change between neighboring buildings while increasing construction options. Protects light and views of adjacent properties while allowing more buildable area.

Con – May result in complex roof systems.

Cost Impacts – Depending on building type, increased roofing costs.

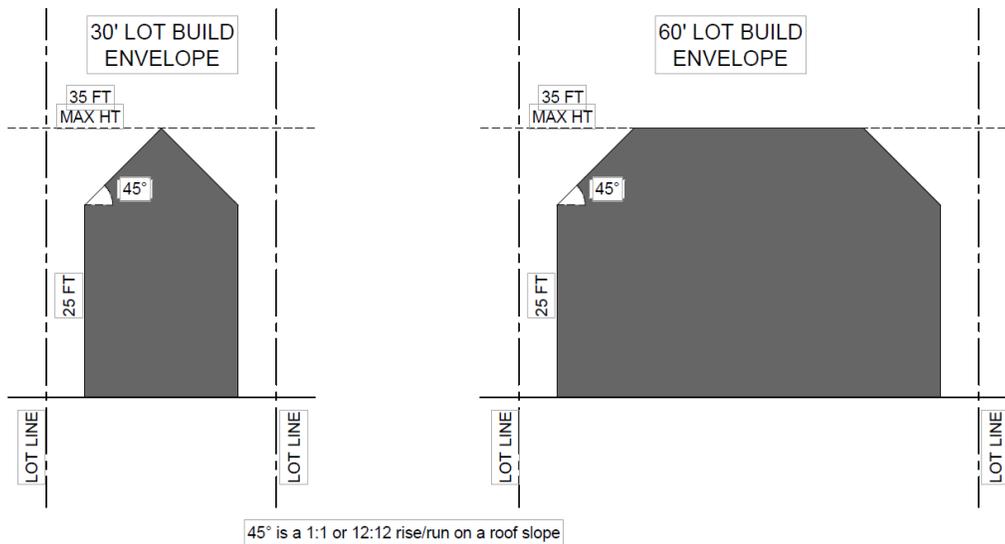
Alternative is an extended building envelope at 45°, similar to City of Wenatchee code.

Pro – Provides for a height with intended lesser light impacts to neighboring properties.

Con – Where building heights are the same (same zoning) less effective in lessening light impacts; still requires defining the maximum height.

Cost Impacts – Depending on building type, increased roofing costs.

## Height Calculation Considerations



### Option E: Bonus for Density – Single-family Residence reduction with increases for two and three units

A common form of encouraging higher densities is by providing increases to height.

Pro – Owner can add a floor (unit) without additional foundation and other construction costs – incentivizes production of a greater variety of home sizes.

Con – Reduces likelihood of similar size structures. Larger structures are equated with more units rather than a mix of large single-family structures next to duplex or other structures all with similar size. May be addressed through design standards

Cost Impacts – Reduces per unit cost for development. If adding design standards then costs of development increase.

### Option F: Floor Area Ratio – Address bulk (size) of buildings

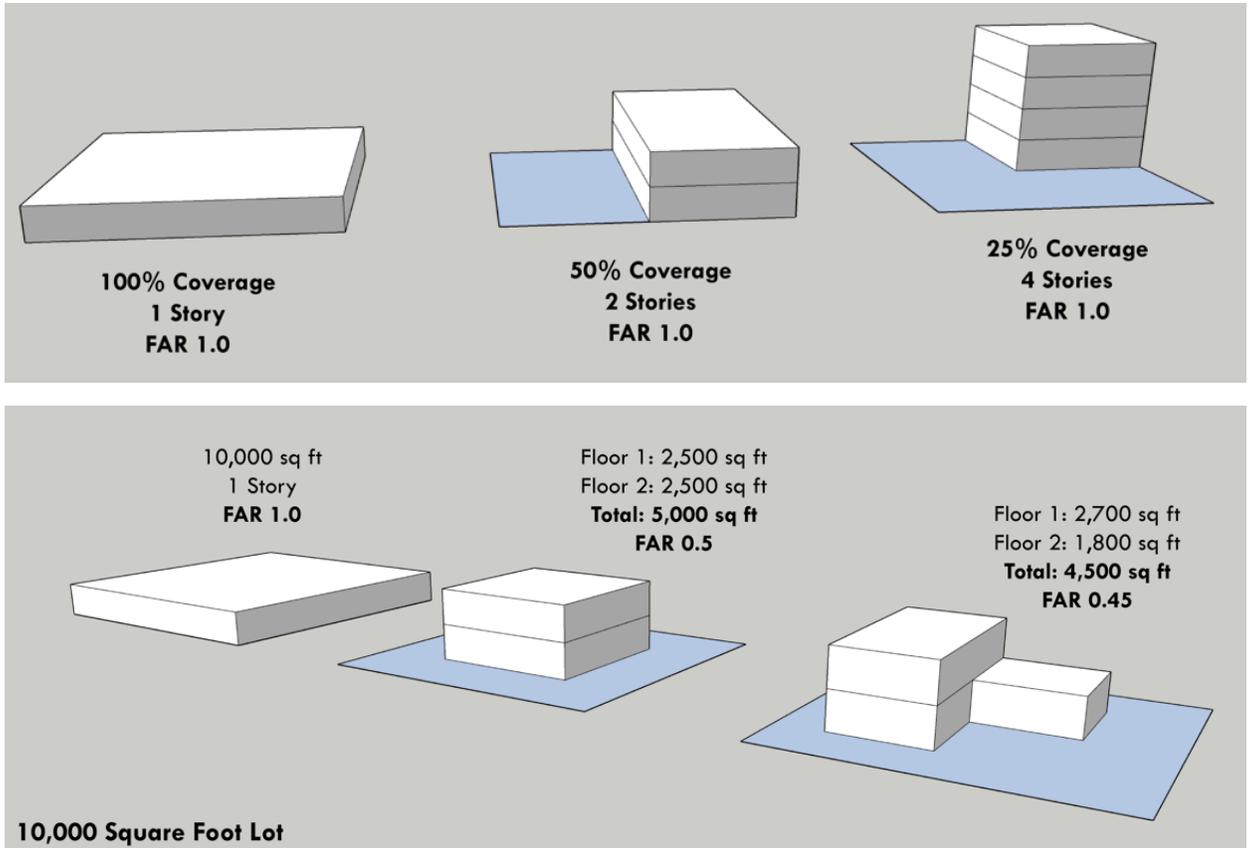
Floor Area Ratio (FAR) was recommended to be considered in Housing Action Plan, Strategy 3, which states in part *“Placing upper limits on the relative size of houses in residential areas through establishment of a maximum floor area ratio (FAR) could address [concerns about the scale of new development size]. FAR is a ratio of the total internal floor area of a building compared to the area of the site. (For example, a 2,000 square-foot house on a 6,000 square-foot lot would have a FAR of 0.33.) Establishing a maximum FAR for residential properties would limit the size of buildings in proportion to the size of the lot.*

#### Benefits

- Limiting house size could improve the affordability of homeownership, but it’s unlikely to support entry-level homeownership.
- Preserving existing neighborhood character.
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions per occupant (larger houses consume more resources to house fewer people).

- *Reducing development displacement pressure on lower- and moderate-income property owners.*

For specific details on FAR, see Planning Commission Handout from July 7, 2021 and August 4, 2021, at the end of this document. Additionally, the following graphics show potential building configurations (gray and white) in relationship to lots (blue) with the noted FARs.



Pro – provides flexibility to owner around building size and design, sets a maximum size. Can be used to create incentives for more density, similar to Option D.

Con – Lacks clarity for most residents who want a set height, setback and lot coverage.

Cost Impacts – Flexibility in design generally equates to cost reductions or increases based on the project budget rather than code requirements.

## Option G: Overlay District – Preservation of historical areas with limited height

Overlay Districts can be used to promote or limit various types of development or land uses. The creation of an overlay requires identifying the purpose, such as, to protect views, retain cohesive historic character (like a craftsman neighborhood in Seattle or mid-century modern neighborhood in Palm Springs), or allowance of neighborhood commercial uses. For Leavenworth, the older home types vary in style and type along each block making it challenging to define what would be protected. Regarding views, the natural topography of the community and existing height limits protect views of the surrounding mountains.

Pro – Generally an effective tool for protection of housing types.

## Height Calculation Considerations

Con – Limits options for owners. Reduces ability of development to respond to changing community needs. Unclear where this would apply in Leavenworth. Disincentivizes investment into existing neighborhoods. Difficult to regulate.

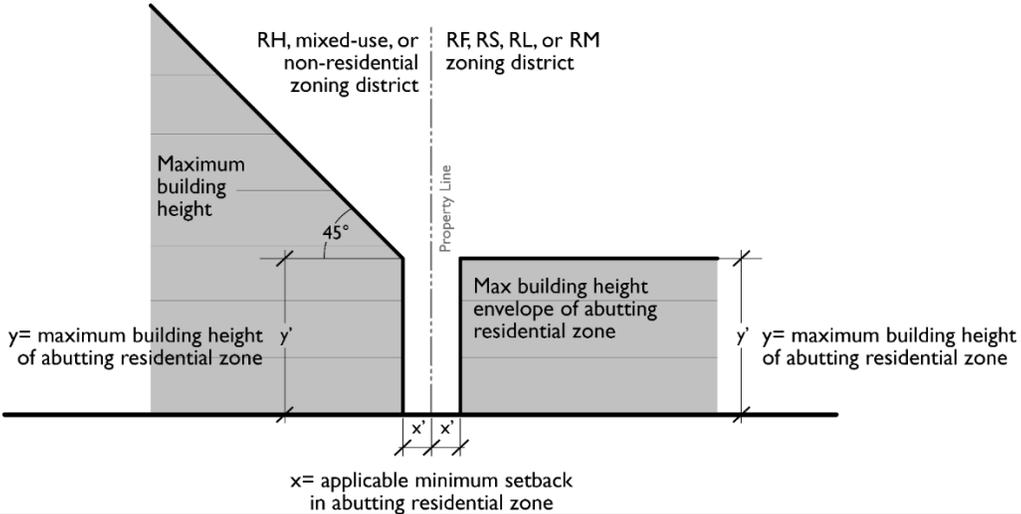
Cost Impacts – Overlay districts have more regulations which will require more information from applicants and increase permitting review and development costs.

Other Area Community Regulations

Chelan – height measured from native/historic grade to highest point		
Single Family (R-L zone)	Height – 30'	Lot Coverage – 6k lots = 35%; 8.5k lots = 30%
Townhomes (MF zone)	Height – 30' or 40' with incentives	Lot Coverage – 60%
Multifamily (MF zone)	Height – 40' option to 50' (30' adjacent to SF)	Lot Coverage – 40%
Cashmere – height measured from average exposed finished grade to highest point		
Single Family (SF zone)	Height – Two stories max 30'	Lot Coverage – 7k lots = 35%
Townhomes (MF zone)	Not addressed	
Multifamily (MF zone)	Height – Three stories max 40'	Lot Coverage – 50%
Entiat – height measured from average actual or finished grade to mid-point or peak for flat roof		
Low Density (R-L zone)	Height – 35' to ridge/peak	Lot Coverage – 8.5k lots = 35%
Townhomes (MF zone)	Not addressed	
High Density (R-H zone)	Height – Three stories or 35'	Lot Coverage – 50-80%
Wenatchee – height measured average grade (multiple calculations) to mid-point or peak for flat roof		
Single Family (RS zone)	Height – 30'	Lot Coverage – 7.25k lots = 40%; Duplexes, 10k lots = 50%
Residential Low (RL zone)	Height – 30' to ridge/peak	Lot Coverage – 5.5k lots = 45%
Townhomes – limited 4 units)	Height – 30' or 40' with incentives	Lot Coverage – 55%
Residential Moderate (RM zone)	Height – 35' to ridge/peak	Lot Coverage – 55%
Residential High (RH zone)	Height – 60' to ridge/peak	Lot Coverage – 55%

(c) Special Building Setback and Height Standards Where High Intensity Zones Abut Low to Medium Density Residential Zones. For RH, mixed use, or commercial zoned sites abutting RF, RS, RL, or RM zones, the side and rear setback shall be the same as the applicable residential zoning district, up to the maximum height limit of the applicable residential zoning district, above which the minimum side setback shall increase at a 45-degree angle inward up to the maximum height of the applicable zoning district. See Figure 10.46.090(2)(c) for an illustration. **Figure 10.46.090(2)(c)**

**Illustrating special building setback and height standards where high intensity zones abut low to medium density residential zones.**



Planning Commission Handout (modified)

Building Size – Floor Area Ratio

Consider using FAR for bonus units, duplexes or triplexes– provide examples but (based on community input they) would prefer setback, lot coverage and height regulations

Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is the ratio of a building's total floor area (gross floor area) to the size of the piece of land upon which it is built. Common exclusions to the total calculation of floor area ratio (FAR) include unoccupied areas such as mechanical equipment floors, basements, stair towers, elevator shafts, and parking garages.

Written as a formula, FAR = gross floor area / area of the lot

It is expressed in terms of a decimal; so, a FAR of 1.5 (means the structure can be 150% of the lot square footage) is a 150% of the buildable space; or, in the example, FAR .7 is 70% of the lot size.

Purpose and use

The FAR can be used in zoning to limit urban density. An architect can plan for either a single-story building consuming the entire allowable area in one floor, or a multi-story building which results in a smaller footprint than would a single-story building of the same total floor area.

By combining the horizontal and vertical limits into a single figure, some flexibility is permitted in building design, while achieving a hard limit on one measure of overall size.

Advantages

Establishing a maximum FAR for residential properties would limit the size of buildings in proportion to the size of the lot.

FAR correlates well with other considerations relevant to zoning regulation, such as total parking.

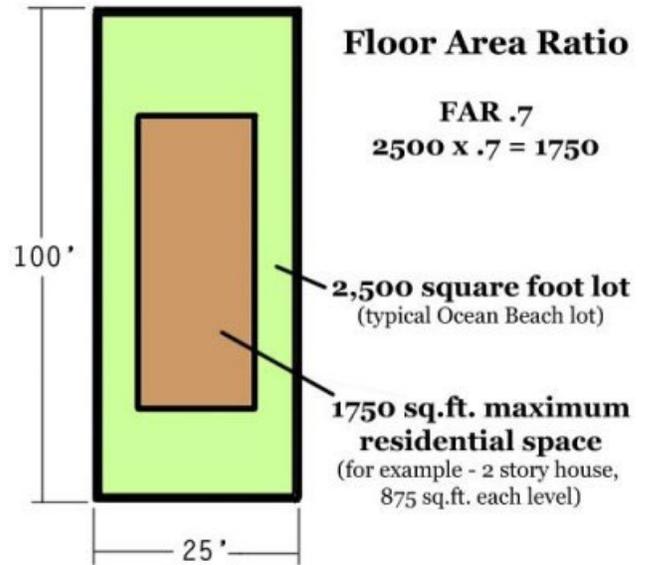
FAR can define duplex, ADUs and multi-family structures similar to SFR.

Criticism

Potential need to retain the recognizable requirements of height, lot coverage, setbacks and open space (when required) to maintain transparency and expectations.

Current City Code

Converting existing requirements into FAR using assumed lot sizes, lot coverage and maximum height would be:



Height Calculation Considerations

Example	Lot Size	Max. Coverage	Max. Height	Potential SqFt	FAR
A.	3,000	35%	35'/3 stories	3,150	1.05
B.	6,000	35%	35'/3 stories	6,300	1.05
C.	3,000	35%	30'/2 stories	2,100	0.7
D.	6,000	35%	30'/2 stories	4,200	0.7

Changing the building height between examples A/B and C/D changed the FAR. The lower building height was factored in as an option to addressing larger structures. The city could consider using a higher lot coverage to off-set the height reduction.

Using FAR for multi-family can help define the size of the structure in relationship to single-family homes which may benefit the neighborhood character. For example, if the city retains a FAR of 1.05 for SFR but change the types of uses to include multi-family with the same FAR of 1.05 the overall size of the structure would be no greater than an SFR.

Below is a summary of potential square footage per dwelling unit for diversifying housing types:

Example	Lot Size	FAR	SFR Potential SqFt	Duplex Potential SqFt	Triplex Potential SqFt	Four-Plex Potential SqFt
E.	3,000	1.05	3,150	1,575	1,050	787.5
F.	6,000	1.05	6,300	3,150	2,100	1,575
G.	3,000	0.7	2,100	1,050	700	525
H.	6,000	0.7	4,200	2,100	1,400	1,050
I.	3,000	0.9	2,700	1,350	900	675
J.	6,000	0.9	5,400	2,700	1,800	1,350