

## CHAPTER 4 – BUILDING SCALE AND FORM

### BACKGROUND

The Draft Commercial Design Guidelines were initially presented to the SunPAC on February 27, 2008. Staff gave a brief overview of all chapters of the draft document and the SunPAC noted the following items for discussion:

- Need to clarify the FAR exclusion for Affordable Housing.
- Request for more visual aides to further explain FAR changes, Basement Calculation and Height.
- Need to determine if basements should be counted toward FAR calculation.
- Need to look at examples of projects from the past few years.
- Impact on Varley Street if change in height calculation methodology.

The following information will provide additional background and clarification of the proposed changes.

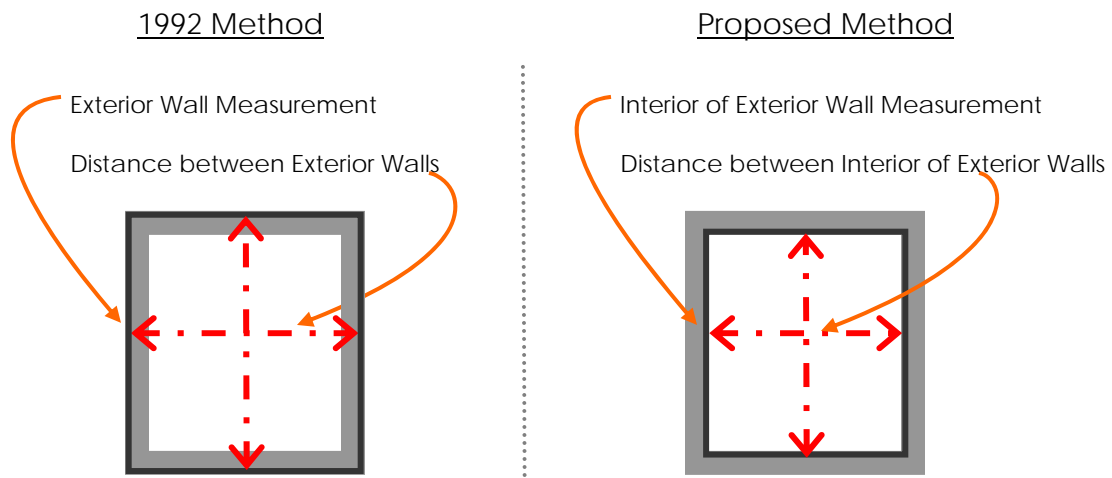
### FLOOR AREA RATIO (FAR)

As means to simplify the process of new development and to provide consistency in the rules and regulations of the County, staff proposed to change the 1992 Floor Area Ratio requirements to be similar to Montecito (page 28 of the Draft Commercial Design Guidelines). The two main differences are the method of measurement and exclusions from the FAR. It is important to note that the existing FAR allowed, as proposed, remains the same. Therefore, regardless of how you measure it, it will either be .29 or .35.

### Method of Measurement

The 1992 method of measurement was from the outside of exterior walls. This method included the thickness of the walls. An argument has been made that this penalizes those who want to increase the wall thickness to provide additional insulation or architectural interest. Currently this would be deducted from the allowable floor area on the subject lot. The draft design guidelines propose to use the method of measurement that is currently used in Montecito. Figure 1 illustrates the difference in the method of measurement between the 1992 and proposed methods.

**Figure 1 – Method of Measurement Comparison**





The tables noted above illustrate the minor difference in the methodology for calculating the floor area ratio for a project site. Table 3 illustrates the difference between the methods, the resulting square footage and percent change. The resulting additional square footage may be applied to commercial space or to the residential component if applicable.

<b>Table 3 FAR Methodology Comparison Results</b>				
	1992 Calculations	Proposed Calculations	Difference	Percent Change
Just Folk	5,673	5,331	342	6%
Kimsey Building	4,100	3,813	287	7%

**FAR Methodology Summary**

As illustrated above the proposed FAR methodology change results in a minor increase in floor area on a project site. This area may be used to enhance a proposed project. It is important to keep in mind that the proposed guidelines provide a substantial amount of architectural and design guidance for commercial design applicants. Table 3 illustrates the increased guidance provided in the draft design guidelines. The additional language and guidelines will direct development in the right direction earlier in the process as opposed to later in the process when reviewed by the Summerland BAR or South County BAR.

<b>Table 3 Commercial Design</b>	
<b>1992 BAR Guidelines</b>	<b>Proposed Guidelines</b>
Building Form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Floor Area Ratio</li> <li>• Height Limitations</li> <li>• Architectural Style</li> </ul> Scale and Orientation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimal discussion</li> </ul> Lighting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimal Discussion</li> </ul>	Building Form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Floor Area Ration</li> <li>• Height Limitations</li> <li>• Apparent Mass of Structure</li> <li>• Providing relief in large components</li> <li>• Reflecting existing topography</li> <li>• Scale in relation to Height</li> </ul> Site Design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parking locations</li> <li>• Grading</li> <li>• Relationship to Pedestrians</li> <li>• Landscaping</li> <li>• Building Placement</li> </ul> Neighborhood Context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immediate and Broader Context</li> <li>• East versus West Commercial Area</li> </ul> Signage location Lighting

**FAR EXCLUSION FOR AFFORDABLE UNITS**

The SunPAC had requested additional clarification of the affordable unit language in the proposed FAR language. The proposed FAR language is generally the same language used in the Montecito Planning Area. The proposed Summerland language is as follows:

“A measurement of development intensity represented by the quotient of net floor area, excluding basements used exclusively for storage or parking and residential units that meet the County’s definition of affordable housing, divided by net lot area. Where there is an approved Final Development Plan, the floor are ratio shall be the quotient of net floor area, excluding basements used exclusively for storage and residential units that meet the County’s definition of affordable housing, divided by the sum of the net lot area of all lots included in the Development Plan.”

The FAR language above will also be proposed to be included in residential design guidelines. Taking that into consideration, if an applicant were to propose a development that is entirely “affordable,” it would be excluded from the FAR.

State Law and the LUDC include criteria and bonuses for affordable or senior housing. Provisions to allow affordable and senior housing in areas are mandated by State Law. The SunPAC may want to consider the linking the affordable component to commercial/mixed use projects. Residential components of a commercial/mixed use project are tied to commercial square footage which limits the number of bedrooms the overall square footage allowed for the residential component. Table 4 illustrates how existing requirements for residential accessory uses in commercial areas will provide controls.

Table 4 Residential Accessory Uses in Commercial Areas					
Lot Size	Size	X	FAR	=	Allowable Floor Area
	5,000		0.35		1,750
Maximum Floor Area allowed for Residential	Commercial Floor Area	X	Maximum % for Residential	=	Residential Floor Area
	1,750		0.49		858
Bedrooms Allowed (1)	Commercial Floor Area	÷	1 Bedroom allowed per	=	Total Bedrooms Allowed (2)
	1,750		500		3.5

(1) The LUDC allows 2 bedroom per 1,000 square feet of commercial floor area. For the purposes of this table we have simplified the formula.  
 (2) The total number of bedrooms allowed are required to be rounded down. In this case the maximum number of bedroom would be 3.

In the example noted above the subject property would be allowed up to 1,750 square feet of floor area based on .35 for a mixed use project. The example also proposes to provide affordable housing above. Currently, an accessory residential use may not exceed 49% of the total floor area of the commercial floor area. In this example the maximum amount of floor area that the project may have for the affordable residential component is 858 square feet. In addition, the number of bedrooms are also limited and based on the commercial floor area which allows up to 3 bedrooms total. The example project may construct any of the following combination of units with a total floor area of 858 square feet and no more than 3 bedrooms between all unit(s).

### **FAR Exclusion for Affordable Units Summary**

Based on the information noted above, staff recommends that the following additional language be added:

“Floor Area Ratio - Summerland: A measurement of development intensity represented by the quotient of net floor area, excluding basements used exclusively for storage or parking and residential units accessory to commercial uses that meets the County’s definition of affordable housing and comply with the density requirements for C-1, Limited Commercial Zoning, divided by net lot area. Where there is an approved Final Development Plan, the floor are ratio shall be the quotient of net floor area, excluding basements used exclusively for storage and residential units that meet the County’s definition of affordable housing, divided by the sum of the net lot area of all lots included in the Development Plan.”

### **BASEMENTS**

Staff has proposed basements that are compliant with the established definition be excluded from the FAR calculation. The intent and purpose is to ensure that basements are truly basements and that the visibility of these elements are limited. Staff has combined the existing Summerland definition and the County wide definition found in the LUDC. The language included in the Draft Design Guidelines is as follows:

“Basement – Summerland: A basement shall be counted as a story if its floor-to-ceiling height is 6.5 feet or more, and the finished floor directly above is more than 4 feet above the finished grade for more than one-half of its perimeter.”

One potential problem that may result is the use of fill to make a basement comply with the adopted definition. The Floor Area Ratio (FAR) as worded above, only excludes basements if they used only for storage.

## Basements Summary

Staff recommends the following language additions to provide clarification for applicants and those reviewing proposed projects:

Floor Area Ratio - Summerland: A measurement of development intensity represented by the quotient of net floor area, excluding basements compliant with the Summerland basement definition used exclusively for storage or parking and residential units accessory to commercial uses that meets the County's definition of affordable housing and comply with the density requirements for C-1, Limited Commercial Zoning, divided by net lot area. Where there is an approved Final Development Plan, the floor are ratio shall be the quotient of net floor area, excluding basements used exclusively for storage and residential units that meet the County's definition of affordable housing, divided by the sum of the net lot area of all lots included in the Development Plan.

Basement – Summerland: A basement shall be counted as a story if its floor-to-ceiling height is 6.5 feet or more, and the finished floor directly above is more than 4 feet above the finished grade for more than one-half of its perimeter. Note: Basements are intended to be architectural elements that are cut into the existing grade of the subject property. The use of fill to qualify a story as a basement is strongly discouraged.

## BUILDING HEIGHT

At the February 27<sup>th</sup> meeting SunPAC members had voiced concern regarding the proposed change in height measurement methodology. The main concerns dealt with visual implications along Varley Street and the overall height envelope.

The proposed height methodology is consistent with that used throughout the County of Santa Barbara. The intent and purpose is to allow for a building height envelope that reflects the topography of the site. The definitions proposed in the draft design guidelines allow the existing grade to be either the existing natural grade or the manufactured grade approved with a project. When a project is reviewed by the South County BAR, they will determine if the proposed amount of grading is acceptable or excessive based on all the guidelines within the draft design guidelines and LUDC.

Height impacts on the Varley side of the through lots was a point of concern. Currently, the height limit is 22 feet and the draft design guidelines limits the maximum height 32 (difference from lowest to highest point). In addition, the maximum grade difference from Lillie Avenue to Varley is approximately 20 to 25 feet, resulting in a maximum slope of approximately 22%. The variation in topography throughout the commercial corridor and the maximum height limit of 32 feet can be detrimental to projects on steeply sloped lots.

## Building Height Summary

Staff recommends that the SunPAC consider the following options to address the potential development issues pertaining to height:

- Eliminate the maximum height requirement of 32 feet. The extent of the proposed Draft Design Guidelines will provide substantial guidelines for developers, the Summerland BAR and the South County BAR.
- Additional guidelines can be added to address the architecture on the Varley side of Lillie Avenue through lots. Examples may include the following:
  - Require structure to step down toward Varley
  - The location of residential garage on Varley can be adjusted to further enhance the residential feel of the street.
  - Location of residential trash collection enclosures to shield from public view.

The SunPAC may propose alternatives at the meeting on March 31<sup>st</sup>.