

## **BUILDING HEIGHT & FAR COMMERCIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES**

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### Background

SunPAC members expressed concern regarding the extent of recommended changes in methodologies and the resulting increase in the size of buildings. Staff has recommended the following changes, those that have been approved by the SunPAC include a check (✓) next to them:

- ✓ FAR Calculation – Changed to methodology consistent with the County.
- ✓ Basement – Language has been modified to allow parking to be excluded from the FAR for any portion meeting the Summerland Basement Definition. Additional exclusion language was added for a “true basement” in which accessory storage and mechanical equipment may be located based on the number of stories of the structure. In addition, a guideline was added to the draft document which discourages the use of excessive fill to qualify portions of a structure as a basement.
- ✓ Plate Height – The definition of plate height has been retained and used as a design guideline to allow more flexibility in design. This was done to make this element consistent with the proposed design guidelines since they encourage taller plate heights at the first floor level. In these cases, applicants should not be penalized through a reduction of FAR as is the current practice.

Building Height – Staff has recommended the SunPAC adopt the current methodology used throughout the County which uses a building height based on the existing grade. This creates a “height” envelope over the site in which the entire structure, including the roof, must be located. The methodology also includes a maximum height, measured from the lowest point of the structure to the highest point of the structure for those sites that qualify as Ridgeline and Hillside Development. Staff and some SunPAC members have expressed that the existing 22 foot height limit is too restrictive for commercial development. In response, staff recommends the SunPAC change the building height in the C-1 to 25 feet, which is consistent with the Countywide allowed height within the Coastal Zone.

FAR – Staff has recommended that the existing FAR calculations of .29 for commercial and .35 for mixed used be retained. The SunPAC indicated concern about the extent of the adopted changes and the resulting increase in the building envelope.

At the May 7, 2008 SunPAC meeting, the SunPAC continued the discussion of Building Height and FAR to June 4, 2008. The SunPAC also indicated by a straw vote that they would like staff to study existing projects based on the proposed new height methodology and to consider a FAR that would keep the building envelopes similar in size as existing development. The following discussion addresses the direction given by the SunPAC.

### Building Height

The current methodology for measuring building height is determined by the calculating the average height by measuring from the grade to the midpoint of the roof at various points around the structure. This allows for portions of a building to have taller facades on one side and shorter facades on another, which may not

necessarily be consistent with the topography of the site. Currently, the maximum building height for "Urban Area" of the community is 22 feet.

In order to provide consistency within the County, staff has recommended that the SunPAC consider the adoption of the height methodology used throughout the County. This methodology establishes a height envelope over the subject lot, which reflects the existing grade. On sloped lots, this encourages designers to cut into the slope, which will lower the building profile. This also allows for increased design flexibility and provides consistency with the proposed design guidelines.

Staff has noted that the existing building height of 22 feet is too restrictive to accommodate good design. In the example provided at the May 7, 2008 meeting, a two story structure with minimal plate heights of 8 feet and floor joists of 1.5 feet would result in a 19 foot high structure, leaving 3 feet available for the roof structure. Staff recommended the following for building height:

1. Adoption of the Countywide Height Methodology for Summerland.
2. Change the Building Height in the C-1 to 25 feet, consistent with the County Coastal Area height limit.

Note: Staff has included a sample of the height methodology form for Summerland.

Site sections for 2410 Lillie (Kimsey Building) and 2420 Lillie (Perkins Building) have been included for your reference (Attachments 4 and 5 respectively). The first sheet in Attachments 4 and 5 indicate the existing grade, the height envelope based on the new methodology for 22 feet and 25 feet, and the buildings height measured from the lowest point to the ridge as a reference. The second sheet indicates the same measurements, but with topography changed to a flat site. Staff has included the 11" x 17" set of plans for reference, which will be sent via mail and available at the June 4, 2008 meeting.

In comparing the two illustrations for each building you will see that the proposed methodology at a 22 foot height envelope will limit the design flexibility. It also important to note the design of these buildings and their rooflines were influenced by the current methodology, which results in a roof structure slightly out of proportion with the main structure and retail space that feels closed in. Table 1, indicates the heights of building components that affect the overall height and interior space.

<b>Table 1</b>		
<b>Building Component</b>	<b>2410 Lillie</b>	<b>2420 Lillie</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> Floor Plate <sup>1</sup>	9'	10'
2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor Plate	11'	9'
Height, based on proposed methodology <sup>2</sup>	22'	22'
Height, based on existing methodology	17'	18'

1. The second floor plate height includes the floor joists.

2. The building height indicated is measured from the finished floor to the highest point of the roof structure.

A good exercise prior to the meeting for SunPAC members is to walk into the Just Folk commercial space to get a sense of the interior and then walk down to the Kimsey and Perkins building just past Valencia. This will provide a gauge on how plate height

influences the interior and functionality of a structure. Staff's recommendation remains the same as noted above.

### FAR

At the May 7, 2008 meeting, the SunPAC also stated that in light of the changes approved to date, which include FAR calculation methodology, removal of the plate height FAR penalty and basement exclusions, the FAR should be adjusted accordingly to ensure that the extent of building allowed (FAR) matches that of existing development.

The existing FAR for commercial is .29 and mixed use is .35. As indicated during the FAR methodology discussion, the resulting change FAR is approximately 6% to 7% based on the examples used. Based on the direction of the SunPAC, this additional floor area should be adjusted to ensure that the building scale remains similar to current development. A reduction of 6% in FAR allowed on a site translates into approximately .02. The resulting "adjusted" FAR would be .27 for commercial and .33 for mixed use.

Other factors that have changed include the elimination of a penalty for plate height. Plate height penalty was unique in that was not always used by applicants. Further reducing the FAR would restrict the design of commercial development, when considering that generally commercial areas have a FAR of .50 or greater, and the new design guidelines have a significant amount of additional guidelines to further shape and mold a structure into a composition that is consistent and complimentary to the character of the community.

Staff has not mentioned Understories since the guidelines generally deal with this issue by requiring buildings to be set at or near the same level of the sidewalk. The issue of understory affects the apparent height of building. Staff will propose other strategies to address the understory or crawl space area under a structure in the Residential Design Guidelines.

Staff recommends that the SunPAC retain the existing FAR calculations of .29 and .35 due to the depth of the updated design guidelines and comparison of interior space of the Just Folk Building and the Kimsey and Perkins building past Valencia. The additional square footage is minimal and would be unperceivable on a new structure. Staff recommends that design flexibility for architects and should be preferred with the expectation of a higher quality design within existing FAR. Additional language can be added to the Commercial Design Guidelines if recommended by the SunPAC.