



To: Mayor Holladay and City Commissioners
From: Pete Walter, AICP, Senior Planner
Date: September 24th, 2019
Re: Building Heights in the Mixed-Use Downtown Zone
October 2nd, 2019 Work Session

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide background for the City Commission to provide direction to staff regarding proposed changes to the maximum height limit in the Mixed Use Downtown District (Outside of the Downtown Design District). Per Chapter 17.34. of the Oregon City Municipal Code, the maximum height is 75', except for the following which is limited to 45':

- Properties between Main Street and McLoughlin Boulevard and 11th and 16th streets
- Property within five hundred feet of the End of the Oregon Trail Center property
- Property within 100 feet of single-family detached or attached units.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Staff had originally proposed amendments to the height limitation and the Planning Commission ultimately recommended to the City Commission the following change for properties located outside of the Downtown Design District: The maximum height is 75', except for the following which is limited to 45':

- Properties between Main Street and McLoughlin Boulevard and 11th and 16th streets
- Property within five hundred feet of the End of the Oregon Trail Center property
- Property ~~within 100' of~~ abutting a single-family detached or attached units.

The Planning Commission commented that:

- Properties abutting existing single-family homes should be limited in height, but that the height of properties not adjacent to residences do not need to have reduced height.
- Reduced maximum height to retain a view from I-205 to the EOT.
- Reduced maximum height between Main Street/McLoughlin/11th/16th streets in order to retain existing property values and visual corridors while transitioning height from McLoughlin. Some concern as to why only views in certain locations were preserved and for the desire to maximize densities along the highway in the Regional Center.



CITY COMMISSION DISCUSSION

The City Commission discussed the maximum heights in the Mixed-Use Downtown (outside of the Downtown Design District) at several public meetings. Most recently, the City Commission and Planning Commission held a joint work session on July 3rd, 2019 to discuss to height limits in the Mixed-Use Downtown zone district (please refer to the previous memorandum dated June 24th, 2019). The groups spoke about the many advantages and disadvantages of amending the height in various locations and suggested a more cohesive transition of heights between the downtown design district and the End of the Oregon Trail.

As the height limitation is measured from the floodplain, the Commission requested a map indicating the maximum height limitations. Staff has provided three maps that show what this scenario might look like with heights measured from the average street grade, or from the Base Flood Elevation for the 100-year floodplain, whichever is higher (per the code definition for building height). These maps indicate:

- Within the downtown design district, which is outside of the 100-year floodplain, the height of a 58' building could vary as much as 18' due to changes in grade. The top of buildings would average approximately 124' above sea level.
- From the downtown design district to the End of the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center (EOT), the maximum height of buildings could vary as much as 50', due to the presence or absence of the 100-year floodplain and the various height limitations detailed above. The absolute elevation of a building in this area could vary from 143' to 91' feet above sea level. In general, however, building heights would be approximately 20' lower on the blocks between main street and Washington Street, as intended by the Planning Commission recommendation. Note that the approved height of the hotel at 17th and Washington (across from the EOT) has an elevation above sea level of approximately 110.7', which corresponds to an approved building height of 63.3' measured from the floodplain.
- From the EOT to the north end of the MUD zone district, there are larger underdeveloped tax lots, and the presence of the 100-year floodplain provides more consistent height limits of approximately 126' above sea level. Note that there are fewer single-family residences in this area so the 45' height limit has a limited effect.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff originally supported making the height limits more consistent throughout the zone district, for the reasons outlined in the July 3, 2019 work session memorandum, however, staff now recommends the City Commission implement the Planning Commission recommendation as an interim measure, and



conduct additional analysis as part of future long-range planning. The discussion of height limitations is increasingly complex, and it is appropriate to analyze the issue in greater context than this project can provide.

We have begun embarking on an update to the Oregon City Comprehensive Plan and that process includes an Economic Opportunities Analysis and a Supplement to the Housing Needs Analysis which can both provide greater insight as to the pros and cons of amending the height limitation or identify future projects such as a regional center plan update. Staff anticipates that providing opportunities for additional input from residents and downtown businesses will be a very important aspect of the comprehensive plan update, and that input will provide a broader and more comprehensive outlook on the building height discussion. Other considerations include the Vertical Housing Incentive Program, Alternate Mobility Standards, adequacy of public facilities.

CITY COMMISSION DIRECTION

Staff requests the City Commission provide direction to staff regarding proposed changes to the maximum height limitations in the Mixed Use Downtown District (Outside of the Downtown Design District).