

Topic: Floor Plate Reduction and Open Space Requirement with Added Height

July 17, 2017 City Council Study Session

During the June 26, 2017 Council Study Session, the recommended Code provisions (for floor plate reduction and required open space) in LUC 20.25A.075.A when using additional building height were identified as one of the topics that warranted further Council review.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

As has been reviewed with Council, the Planning Commission has included in its recommended Code the ability to achieve taller building heights in many parts of Downtown. Not as a goal for all development to use, but rather as an opportunity for:

- Taller, more slender buildings
- More distinctive architecture and variability of height
- More ground-level, publicly accessible open space

In most of Downtown, the additional building height would need to be used with the same floor area ratio (FAR) as is allowed today. The primary exceptions are DT-OLB Central and South and for office buildings in the DT-MU District, where both additional FAR and taller building heights were recommended by the Planning Commission.

As was articulated in the transmittal of the recommended Downtown Land Use Code (LUC) to Council, the Planning Commission believes it is important to ensure that buildings utilizing the new height allowance definitely result in more narrow, sculpted building forms. For residential buildings, the Commission recommended a 10 percent floor plate reduction for floors above the current height limit (the “trigger height”). For nonresidential buildings, the Commission explored a floor plate reduction in the range of 10-25 percent for floors above the trigger height. Ultimately, the Commission was not able to land on recommended reductions within this range for nonresidential buildings, and asked Council to resolve this issue during the adoption process.

The outdoor plaza requirement for exceeding the trigger height is generally 10 percent of the site area with some departure opportunities, and may be counted towards participation in the Amenity Incentive System.

Commission’s Recommended Code Section: LUC 20.25A.075 Downtown Tower Requirements

A. Requirements for Additional Height

1. Applicability. Buildings with heights that exceed the trigger for additional height shall be subject to the diminishing floor plate requirement in paragraph A.2. and an outdoor plaza space requirement.

2. Diminishing Floor Plate Requirement. The floor plates above the trigger for additional height shall be reduced by 10 to 25 percent nonresidential buildings and 10 percent for residential buildings. The reduction shall be applied on all floor plates above the trigger for additional height. The applicable percent reduction may be averaged among all floor plates above 80 feet, but no single floor plate shall exceed the maximum floor plate size above 80 feet.

3. Outdoor Plaza Requirement. Buildings with heights that exceed the trigger for additional height shall provide outdoor plaza space in the amount of ten percent of the site, provided that the outdoor plaza space shall be no less than 3,000 square feet in size. In no event shall the Outdoor Plaza Space be required by the Director to exceed one acre in size. The open space shall be provided within 30 inches of the adjacent sidewalk and shall comply with the requirements for Outdoor Plazas in the Amenity Incentive System of LUC 20.25A.070.D.2. Vehicle and loading drive surfaces shall not be counted as outdoor plaza space.

a. Modification of the Plaza Size with Criteria. The Director may approve a modification to the 10 percent requirement for outdoor plaza space through an administrative departure pursuant to 20.25A.030.D.1, provided that the following minimum criteria are met:

- i. The outdoor plaza is not less than 3,000 square feet in size;
- ii. The outdoor plaza is functional and is not made up of isolated unusable fragments;
- iii. The outdoor plaza meets the design criteria for Outdoor Plazas in the Floor Area Ratio and Amenity Incentive System, LUC Chart 20.25A.070.D.4; and
- iv. The size of the plaza is roughly proportional to the additional height requested.

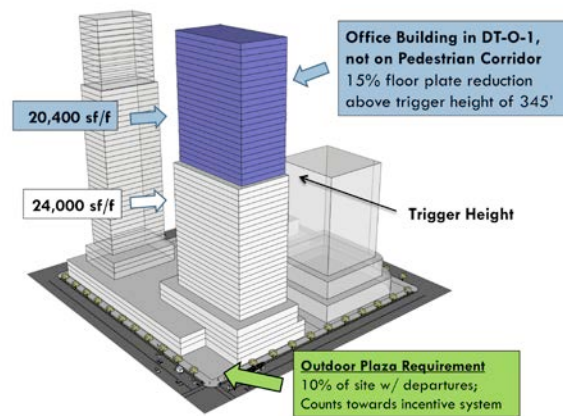
DISCUSSION:

The discussion in this paper focuses on analysis of nonresidential floor plate reductions between 10-25 percent in the DT-O-1, DT-O-2, DT-MU and DT-MU Civic Center districts. The Planning Commission and staff feel the recommended 10 percent floor plate reduction for residential buildings that exceed the trigger height is a sound approach (generally 13,500 square feet reduced to 12,150 square feet). The discussion of floor plates in the DT-OLB District will be reserved for the overall discussion of DT-OLB density and design planned for September 5.

On the following page, three conceptual examples are shown for how a nonresidential/office project could achieve a floor plate reduction in the DT-O-1 District. A 15 percent floor plate reduction is shown for illustrative purposes. A developer could use one of these approaches or a number of other variations as allowed by Code.

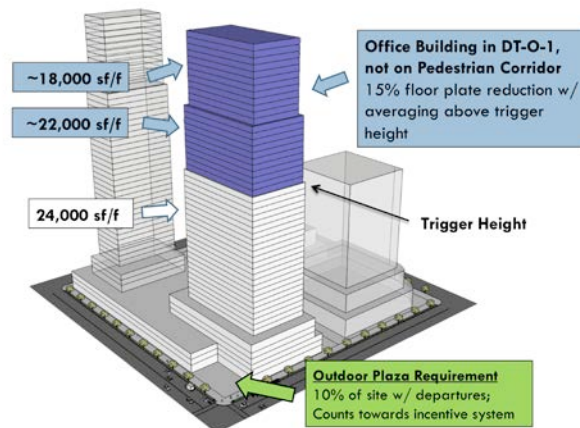
Example 1 shows an office building in DT-O-1 with a 15 percent floor plate reduction. The project applies the 15 percent reduction to only the floors above the trigger height of 345 feet. The floors between 80 feet and 345 feet are built to the maximum of 24,000 square feet per floor and floors above 345 feet are 20,400 square feet, which is 15 percent less than 24,000 square feet.

Example 1: 15% Floor Plate Reduction



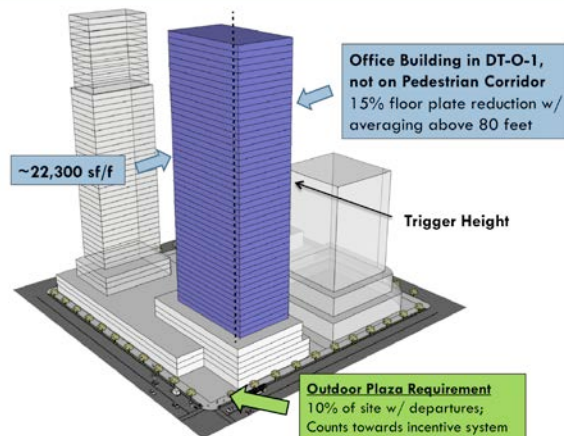
Example 2 also shows an office building in DT-O-1 with a 15 percent floor plate reduction. The project applies the 15 percent reduction only above the trigger height of 345 feet as in Example 1, but chooses to have some floors at 22,000 square feet and some at 18,000 square feet. The average of these floors above the 345-foot trigger height represents a 15 percent reduction from 24,000 square feet.

Example 2: 15% Floor Plate Reduction



Example 3 shows that same height office building with a 15 percent floor plate reduction, but chooses to average the reduction for all floors above 80 feet. This provides roughly 22,300 square feet floor plates for the overall tower, while including the same amount of total square footage in the tower form as the two examples above.

Example 3: 15% Floor Plate Reduction



The table below shows the size of floor plates above the trigger heights for a 10 percent, 15 percent, 20 percent or 25 percent reduction. As was discussed previously, there are a number of different ways to incorporate floor plate reductions into a project, and not all projects will exceed the trigger height and need to do reduced floor plates. A map depicting the Downtown Land Use Districts is included as Attachment B-1. The staff recommendation is to (1) maintain the Planning Commission's recommended 10 percent floor plate reduction in the DT-MU and DT-MU Civic Center Districts and not pursue further reductions; and (2) to have a 15 percent floor plate reduction in the DT-O-1 and DT-O-2 Districts that still allows for floor plates of 20,400 square feet above the trigger height. A floor plate reduction of 15 percent will be more perceptible than a 10 percent reduction. Floor plate reductions beyond 15 percent in the DT-O-1 and DT-O-2 appear to begin to impact project feasibility because it goes below 20,000 square feet which is often cited as a minimum standard tower floor plate for office. The reduction of floor plates in the DT-MU and DT-MU Civic Center Districts to 18,000 square feet above the trigger height is of some concern, but with a starting point of 20,000 square feet, even a 10 percent reduction results in this number.

The table below also notes a code modification that is needed for the trigger height (and base height) to correctly reflect that properties along the Pedestrian Corridor can achieve 450 feet for nonresidential buildings under the current Code if using Pedestrian Corridor or Major Public Open Space amenity points.

Nonresidential Floor Plate Reductions of 10-25 Percent Above Trigger Height

				10%	15%	20%	25%			
Land Use District	Building Type (2)	Max Floor Plate Above 40'	Max Floor Plate Above 80'	Floor Plate Above Trigger, with 10% Reduction	Floor Plate Above Trigger, with 15% Reduction	Floor Plate Above Trigger, with 20% Reduction	Floor Plate Above Trigger, with 25% Reduction	Trigger for additional height	Max Height / Max Height with Mech. Equip. (17)	Floor Area Ratio: Base / Max (3)
DT-O-1	Nonres.	24,000 sf	24,000 sf	21,600 sf	20,400 sf	19,200 sf	18,000 sf	345'	600' (8) / 600'	7.2 / 8.0
	Nonres. (on Ped Corridor)	24,000 sf	24,000 sf	21,600 sf	20,400 sf	19,200 sf	18,000 sf	450' on Pedestrian Corridor	600' (8) / 600'	7.2 / 8.0
DT-O-2 North of NE 8th	Nonres.	24,000 sf	24,000 sf	21,600 sf	20,400 sf	19,200 sf	18,000 sf	288'	460' / 480'	5.4 / 6.0
DT-O-2 East of 110th	Nonres.	24,000 sf	24,000 sf	21,600 sf	20,400 sf	19,200 sf	18,000 sf	288'	403' / 423'	5.4 / 6.0
DT-O-2 South of NE 4th	Nonres.	24,000 sf	24,000 sf	21,600 sf	20,400 sf	19,200 sf	18,000 sf	288'	345' / 365' east of 106th; 288' / 308' west of 106th Ave, see Note (18)	5.4 / 6.0
DT-MU	Nonres.	22,000 sf	20,000 sf	18,000 sf	17,000 sf	16,000 sf	15,000 sf	115'	230' / 250'	4.5 / 5.0
DT-MU Civic Center	Nonres.	22,000 sf	20,000 sf	18,000 sf	17,000 sf	16,000 sf	15,000 sf	115'	403' / 423'	5.4 / 6.0

Notes: Dimensional requirements in Downtown Land Use Districts and Perimeter Overlays

(2) A single building is considered residential if more than 50 percent of the gross floor area is devoted to residential uses. See LUC [20.50.020](#) for the definition of “floor area, gross.”

(3) The maximum permitted FAR may only be achieved by participation in the FAR Amenity Incentive System, LUC 20.25A.070. Where residential and nonresidential uses occur in the same building, the FAR is limited to the maximum FAR for the building type as determined in accordance with Note (2).

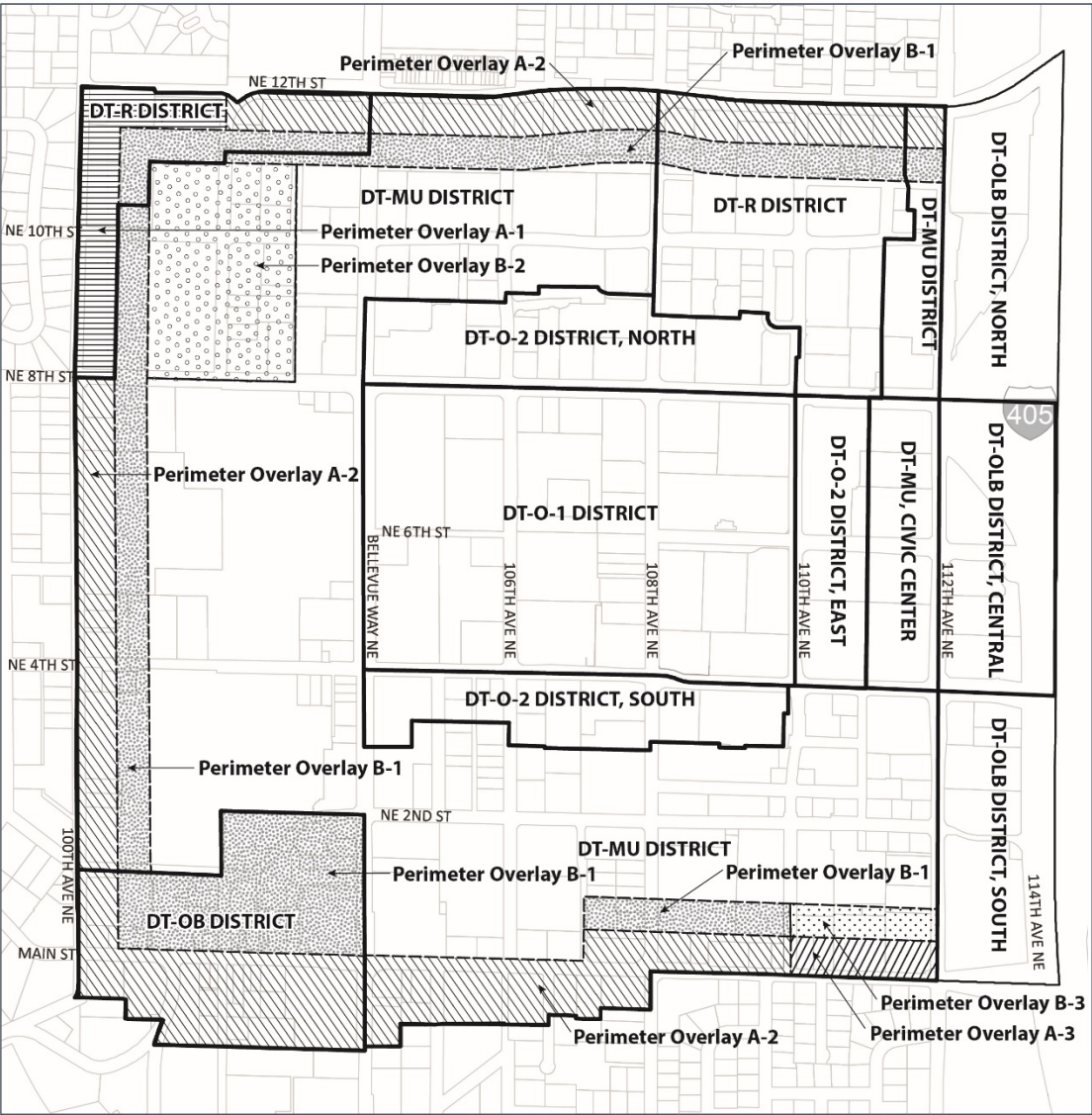
(8) No additional building height allowed.

(17) The additional 20 feet allowed for mechanical equipment is uninhabitable space.

(18) The area west of 106th Avenue NE in the DT-O-2 South District shall be limited to 288 feet with 20 feet additional height available for mechanical equipment.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

- To provide opportunities for taller, more slender buildings, distinctive architecture and variability of height:
 - Maintain the Commission’s recommended 10 percent floor plate reduction in the DT-MU and DT-MU Civic Center Districts for nonresidential buildings that exceed the trigger height.
 - Include a 15 percent floor plate reduction in the DT-O-1 and DT-O-2 Districts for nonresidential buildings that exceed the trigger height.
- Amend Chart 20.25A.060.A.4, Dimensional Requirements to correctly reflect the trigger height and base height of 450 feet in the DT-O-1 if property is located along the Pedestrian Corridor versus 345 feet in other portions of the DT-O-1 District.
- Maintain Planning Commission recommendation of a 10 percent floor plate reduction for residential buildings that exceed the trigger height.
- Maintain Planning Commission recommendation for 10 percent of a project’s site area to be outdoor plaza if exceeding the trigger height (with some departures), to achieve more ground-level, publicly accessible open space.
- Discuss floor plate reductions above the trigger height in the DT-OLB Districts with the overall discussion of DT-OLB density and design planned for September 5.



LAND USE DISTRICT CLASSIFICATIONS
AND PERIMETER OVERLAYS

