

**City of Auburn Planning Commission
PL-2021-00174 'Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment – Downtown Design Standards'**

Review Date: April 1, 2021

Applicant: City of Auburn
Planning Department
171 North Ross Street, Suite 100
Auburn, AL 36830

Case Staff: Logan Kipp, Principal Planner
Jay Howell, Planner

Request: Recommendation to City Council for approval of amendments to Article II, Definitions (Section 203) Article V, Detailed Use Regulations (Sections 507, 508, 509, and Tables 5-3, 5-4, 5-5, 5-6, 5-7); and Article VI, Signs (Section 605.04) of the *City of Auburn Zoning Ordinance*

Purpose: The purpose of this text amendment is to add new language relating to Downtown Design Standards. Text proposed for removal is shown as strikeouts. Proposed additions to the text are underlined. All other text shall remain the same.

Recommendation: Approval

Analysis

The purpose of this proposed text amendment is to provide staff with the tools and language to review new construction in the downtown area and provide baseline design standards that have been vetted by design professionals with a vested interest in Auburn's urban fabric and character. These proposed regulations provide minimum design standards which, in conjunction with a pending update of the Downtown Design Guidelines will create a more comprehensive design document.

The City of Auburn created the Downtown Design Review Committee (DDRC) in 2018 for the purposes of conducting architectural reviews of proposed development downtown, and to review the City's design standard requirements in the Urban Core. Following an initial period of proposal reviews to build a base of contextual familiarity, the committee focused on the second of these two purposes in late 2019.

Beginning in January 2020, Planning staff held five work sessions with the Downtown Design Review Committee to address revisions to the current design regulations in the downtown area (UC, CEOD, UN-W, UN-E, UN-S). In February, a moratorium on purpose-built student housing was enacted, giving staff and commissions valuable time to address building code revisions, appropriate residential uses, density, and these design standards. During early sessions with the DDRC, it was decided that the current Downtown Design Guidelines, a separate document created in 2008 at the conclusion of the Urban Core Task Force review and assessment of downtown should be reviewed and updated. The portions of the design requirements that relate to desired design outcomes, urban character, and recommended design characteristics would be

written into the guidelines where appropriate illustrations and additional information could be provided. Specific design criteria such as story height and percent of fenestration would be written into the Zoning Ordinance where it could be enforced. The DDRC and staff prioritized the revision of baseline standards in the Zoning Ordinance and staff directed their attention to this effort while an update to the guidelines would be a subsequent work effort. Discussions between staff and the DDRC were guided by research and suggestions through benchmarking other communities (Nashville, Chattanooga, Charleston, Columbus, San Francisco, Mobile, among others) and through a review and critique of recent projects that have been through the architectural review process and constructed in Auburn. At the final DDRC work session on October 13, 2020, staff and the committee concluded with an understanding that the proposed regulations met their intent and overall represented an improvement to the current regulations.

On November 10th, 2020 Planning staff presented a first draft of the proposed regulations as they had been vetted and prepared with the DDRC in a Joint DDRC/PC work session. The Planning Commission provided staff with valuable direction and staff then reached out to stakeholders including city staff and both local and regional professionals in the design, engineering, and architecture industry. These professionals provided staff with insight into common building practices and design obstacles that the proposed regulations might create. The issues that presented major conflicts with standard building practice were then addressed and two additional joint work sessions were held with the DDRC and Planning Commission to present these changes and finalize the proposed amendment.

In addition to the existing design regulations in the downtown area (UC, CEOD, UN-W, UN-E, UN-S), this proposal adds design criteria to the following aspects of the urban fabric which were not previously considered in the Zoning Ordinance:

- Minimum Story Heights (no change in total structure height)
- Building Mass and Articulation
- Distinct Façade Compositions
- Functional Entrances
- Allow a specific urban-style residential use at the ground story
- Waivers

Additional changes to the Zoning Ordinance through the proposed amendment include:

- Provide an additional two feet for architectural details and parapets at the top of a structure
- Remove ground-story commercial use requirement in areas where such uses may be unreasonable and instead require “active uses”
- Increase the amount of fenestration or glazing required at the ground and 2nd story
- Require surface and structured parking to meet certain design characteristics and screening
- Relocate the sign regulations in the downtown area to Article VI, Signs

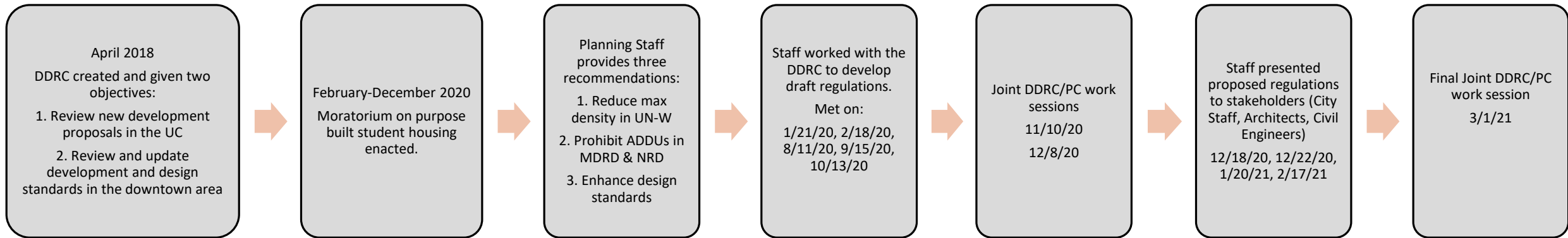
Other changes proposed by this ordinance correct inaccurate references within the Zoning Ordinance.

Downtown Development & Design Standards

PROPOSED REVISIONS

Planning Services
4/8/2021

Background



Definitions

Active Use: A category of uses in the Urban Core (UC), Urban Neighborhood East (UN-E), Urban Neighborhood West (UN-W), and Urban Neighborhood South (UN-S) Districts that intersects the public-private realm to provide visual, cultural, and social interest to both those that are engaged in the use as well as passers-by. Active Uses include retail and entertainment, recreation, offices, institutions, and ground-story residences with primary entrances that take access from the public right of way and create inviting spaces through their ability to stimulate interactivity.

Articulation, Vertical or Horizontal: In architecture, it is the definition of the formal elements of architectural design and expression. Through degrees of articulation, each part is united with the whole in such a way that the joined parts are put together to form a pattern. The articulation of a building reveals how the parts fit into the whole by emphasizing each part separately. Vertical articulation is the change of patterned façade elements from one vertical band to the left or right. Horizontal articulation is the change of patterned façade elements from one horizontal band or story to the stories above or below.

Building Mass: Refers to the structure in three dimensions (form), not just its outline from a single perspective (shape). Building Mass influences the sense of space which the building encloses, and helps to define both the interior space and the exterior shape of the building.

Bulkhead: The horizontal area between the bottom of the ground story to the bottom of an opening such as a window or bay.

Façade Composition: The arrangement and proportion of façade materials and elements (window, doors, columns, pilasters, bays).

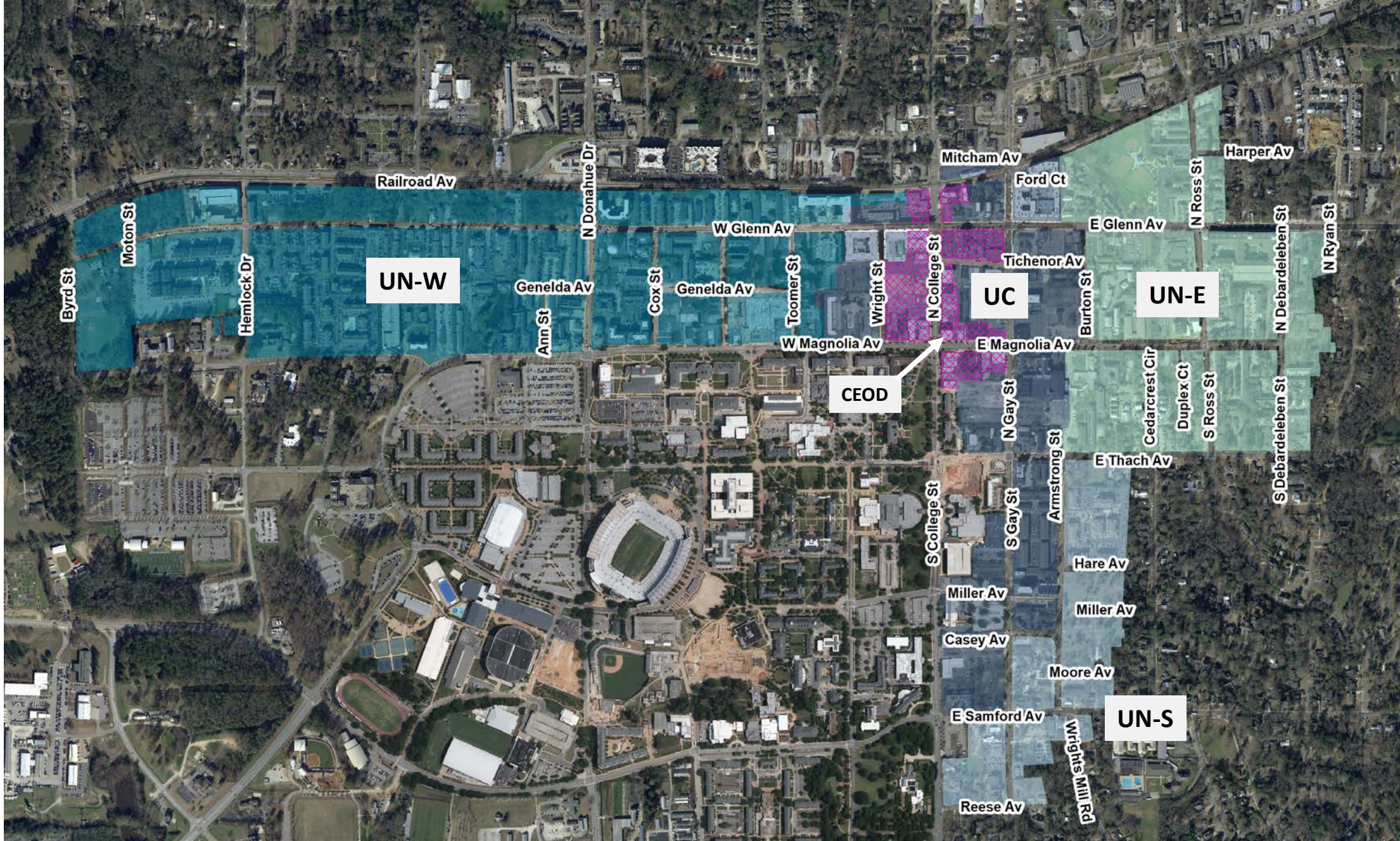
Fenestration: The arrangement of windows and doors on the elevations of a building and their associated level of transparency. Fenestration is often examined as a pattern.

Forecourt: A private frontage wherein a portion of the facade is close to the frontage line and remaining facade is set back from the frontage line.

Functional Entrance: A building opening designed to be used by pedestrians and/or tenants and accessible during regular business hours. It does not include any entry exclusively designated as an emergency exit, entry to mechanical rooms, or a garage door not designed as a pedestrian entrance for the general public.

Spandrel: Horizontal element or infill that marks the floor level between stories and is above the fenestration of the façade.

Story Height: The vertical distance between the floor and the ceiling plus the thickness of the floors between each pane. In situations where the grade level slopes, the beginning of the floor height is the average of the least and greatest vertical distance.



UN-W

UC

UN-E

CEOD

UN-S

Byrd St

Moton St

Hemlock Dr

Railroad Av

N Donahue Dr

W Glenn Av

Genelda Av

Genelda Av

Cox St

Toomer St

Wright St

Mitcham Av

Ford Ct

E Glenn Av

Harper Av

N Ross St

N Debardeleben St

N Ryan St

Ann St

W Magnolia Av

W Magnolia Av

N College St

Tichenor Av

Burton St

E Magnolia Av

Cedarcrest Cir

Duplex Ct

S Ross St

S Debardeleben St

N Gay St

Armstrong St

E Thach Av

S College St

S Gay St

Miller Av

Hare Av

Miller Av

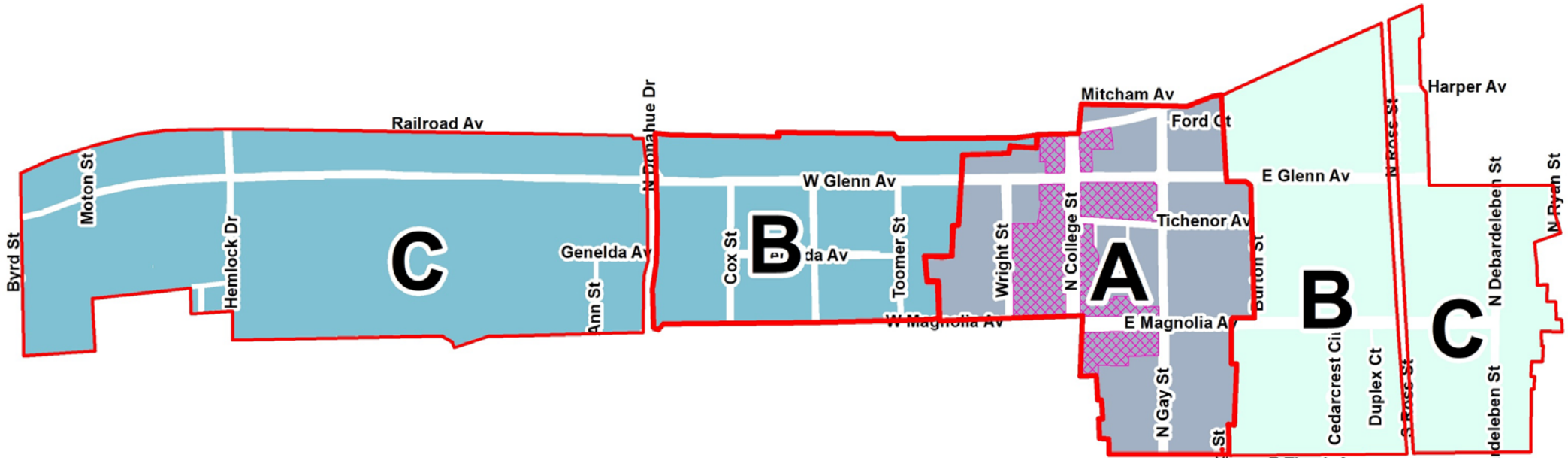
Casey Av

Moore Av

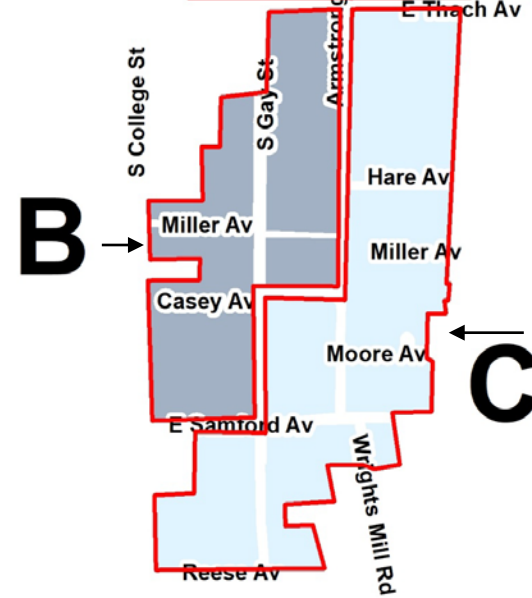
E Samford Av

Reese Av

Wrights Mill Rd



For presentation purposes only



Zone Comparison

Aspect	CEOD UC (North of E Thach)*	UC (South of E Thach)* UN-W (East of N Donahue) UN-E (West of Ross St)	UN-W (West of N Donahue) UN-E (East of Ross St) UN-S
Story Height (Ground/Upper)	18' or 15' / 10.5'	18' or 15' / 10.5'	15' / 10.5'
Fenestration	Ground story: 50% 2nd story: 30% Upper: 20%	Ground story: 40% 2nd story: 30% Upper: 20%	Ground story: 30% 2nd story: 20% Upper: 20%
Ground Story Uses	Active Use: 70% Max Amenity: 50% No more than 30% of street façade blank or service entry.	Active Use: 70% Max Amenity: 50% No more than 30% of street façade blank or service entry.	Active Use: 70% Max Amenity: No Maximum No more than 30% of street façade blank or service entry.
Ground Story Residential	Permitted Limit of 30% Prohibited on specific streets	Permitted	Permitted
Parking lot screening (Structured)	Ground story parking setback of 15 feet Upper Story Screening No visible sloped ramps Façade articulation with vegetation or architecture *All UC shall use Façade articulation with vegetation or architecture	Upper Story Screening No visible sloped ramps Façade articulation with vegetation or architecture *All UC shall use Façade articulation with vegetation or architecture	Upper Story Screening No visible sloped ramps Screening with materials
Parking lot screening (Surface)	Clad screen + 10' landscape strip	Clad screen + 10' landscape strip	Clad screen + 5' landscape strip
Functional Entrances	Minimum every 75 feet	Minimum every 75 feet	Not required

Story Height

In the UC, UN-W (East of N Donahue), and UN-E (West of Ross St) zoning districts:
The minimum ground story height for nonresidential uses shall be 18 feet. The minimum ground story height for ground story residential shall be 15 feet. The minimum upper story height shall be 10.5 feet. Buildings which include both nonresidential and residential uses at the ground story shall arrange the exterior façade so as to give the appearance of a consistent floor line at 18 feet between the ground and second stories. The minimum upper story height shall be 10.5 feet, floor to floor.

In the UN-W (West of N Donahue), UN-E (East of Ross St), and UN-S zoning districts:
The minimum ground story height shall be 15 feet, floor to floor. The minimum upper story height shall be 10.5 feet floor to floor.



Building Mass

The maximum street-facing building length is 240 feet.



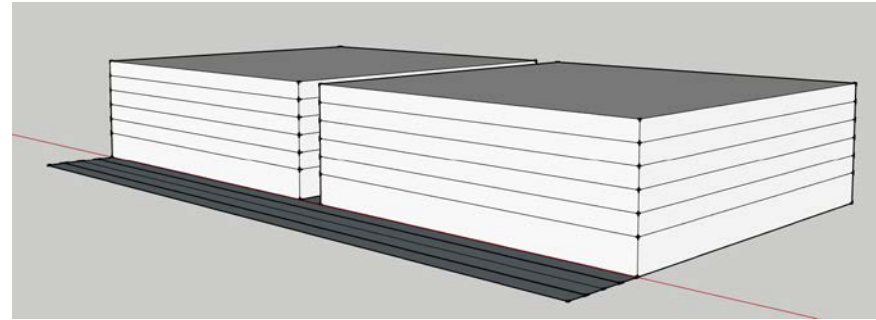
The Hub (proposed)



NONCOMPLIANT

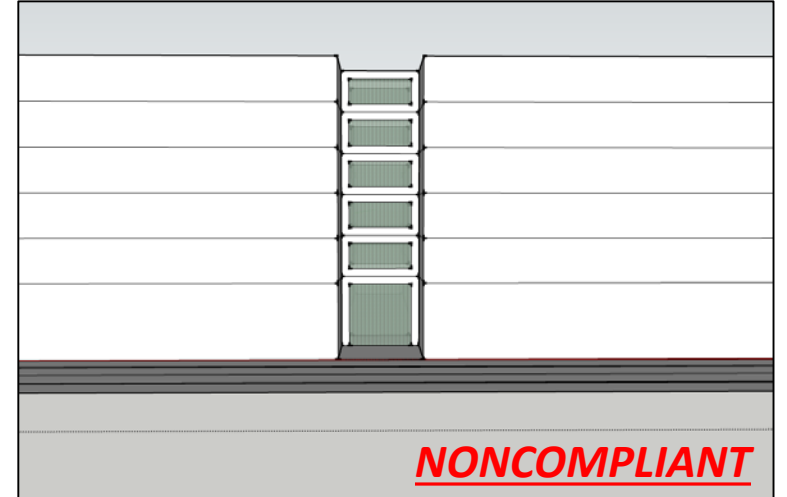
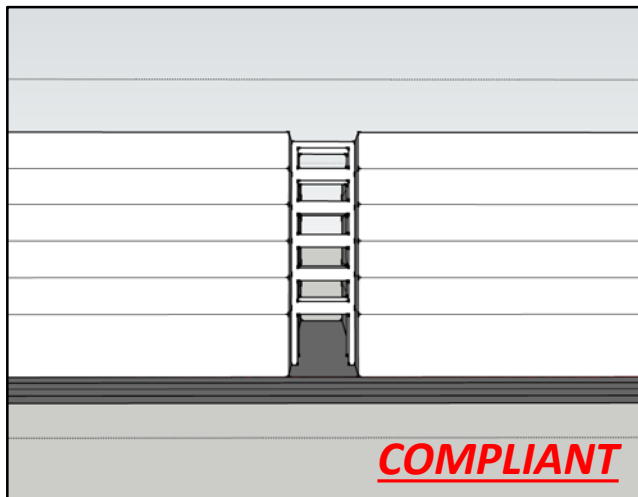
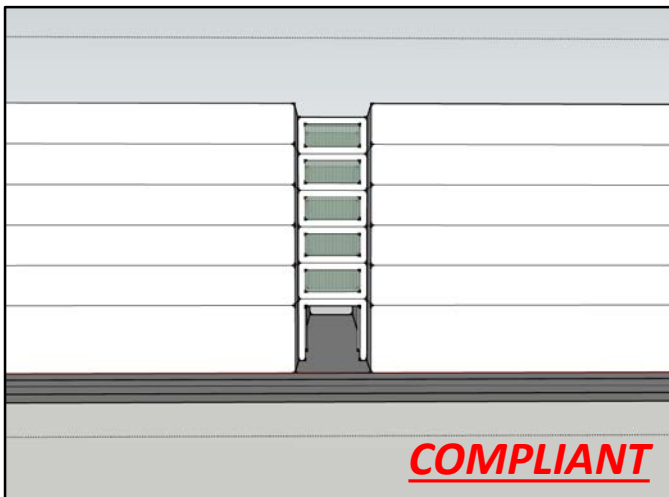
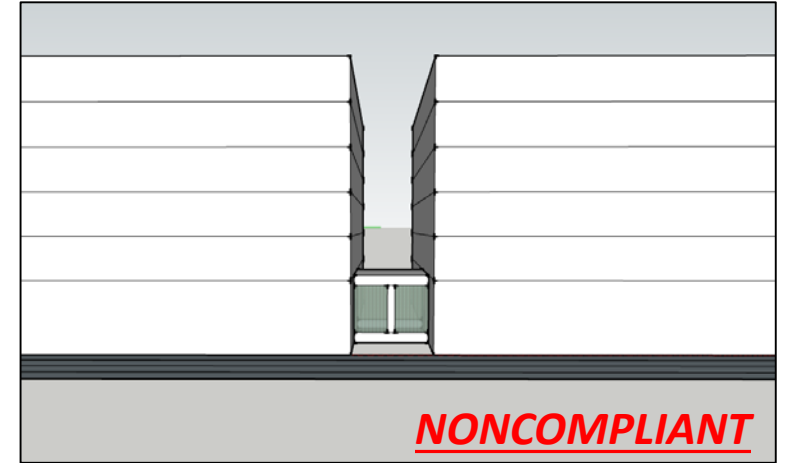
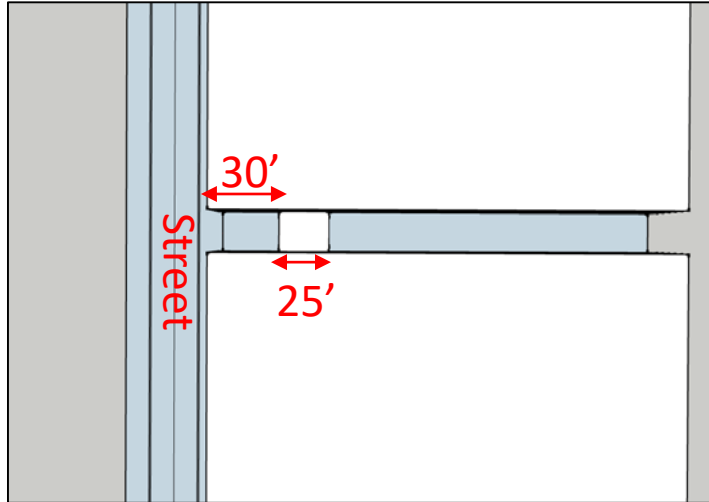
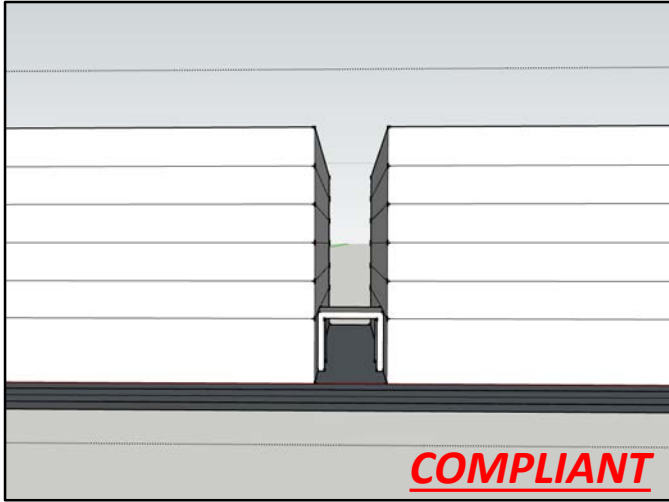
Building Mass

Connections made from one building mass to another beyond the maximum building length are limited to hallways, breezeways, and overhead walkways not to exceed 25 feet in combined width per story. The minimum separation between buildings where connections are provided shall be 15 feet. Such connections shall be setback no less than 30 feet from the property line. Enclosed connections shall be permitted only at the 2nd story and above and shall be fenestrated at 80% to provide a level of transparency through the connecting structure.



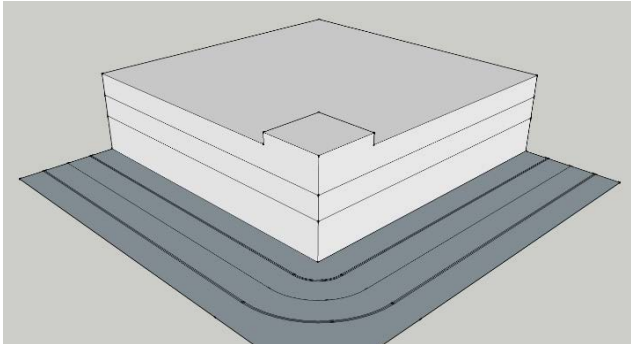
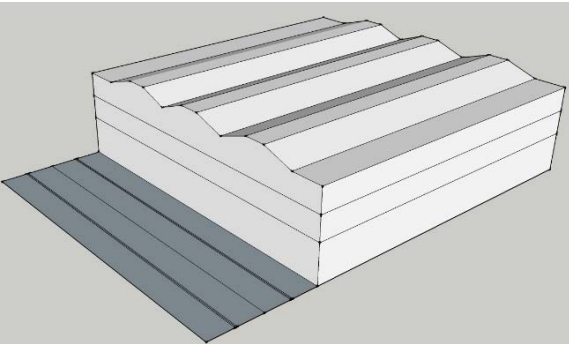
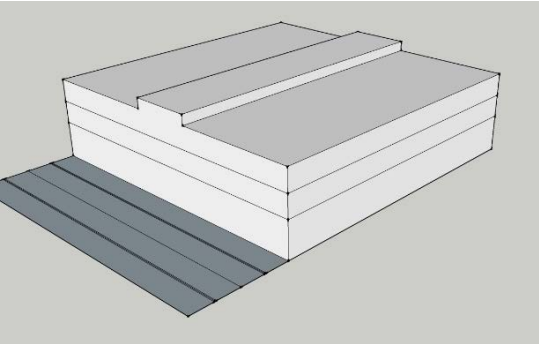
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Building Height Articulation

Building Mass	Articulation in Building Height: For buildings 100 feet or more in length, the street-facing roof line must have a variation in height. On a corner lot, the variation in height must be located at the corner of the building that addresses both street fronts. Parapets and other prominent architectural details visible from the street which rise above the building roofline may account for the required articulation in structure height.
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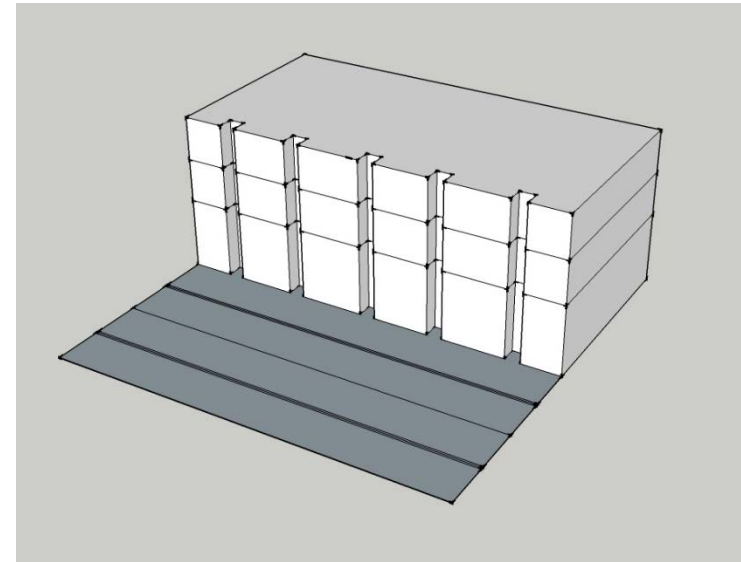
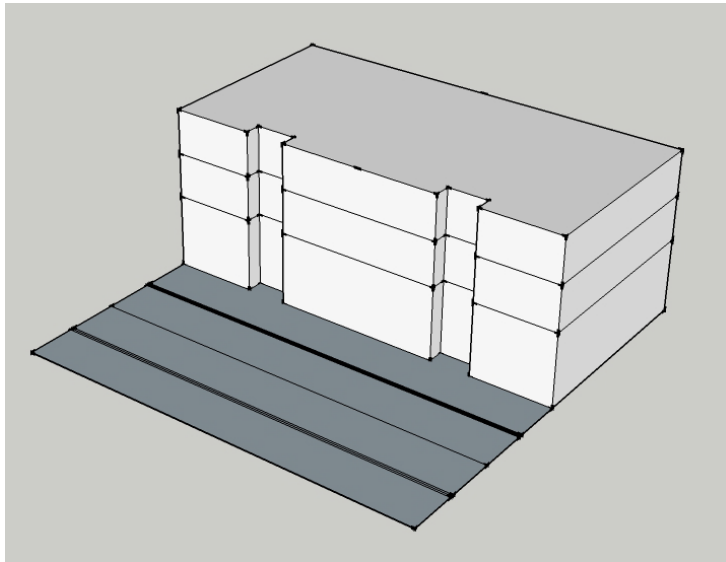
Corner Lot Roof Variation

COMPLIANT

Articulation in Façade

Building Mass

Articulation in Building Façade: Buildings 100 feet or more in length must use changes in the depth of building plane to create variations in the building face along the street frontage.

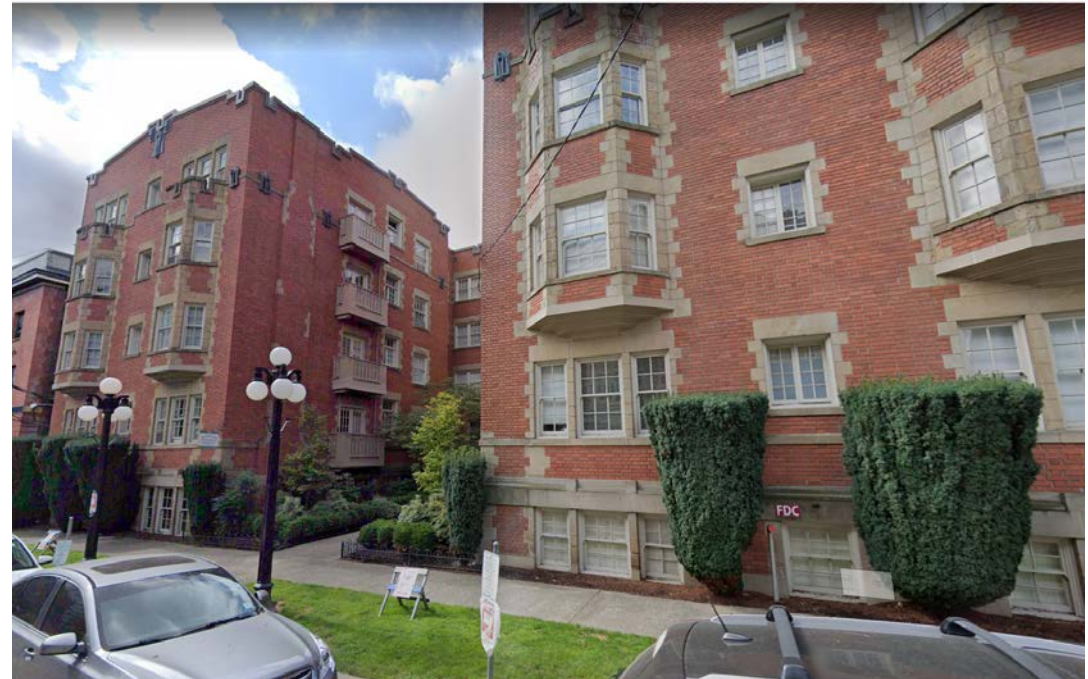


COMPLIANT

Forecourts

Building Mass

A portion of the building, not to exceed thirty percent (30%) of the street frontage but no less than ten (10) feet in width, may be used as a recessed area along the front plane for additional entrances and amenity space. Vehicular access shall be prohibited in this space. A maximum of one forecourt is permitted per lot.



COMPLIANT

Functional Entrances

Functional Entrances

Ground story uses along the street frontage, including ground story residential, shall provide a functional entrance no greater than seventy-five (75) feet apart. On corner lots, a primary entrance shall be located at the corner. Pedestrian alleyways and passages may satisfy this requirement. The Planning Director may waive this requirement.

Not required for UN-W (West of N Donahue), UN-E (East of Ross St), and UN-S zoning districts



NONCOMPLIANT

Maximum Façade Length

Façade Composition

The maximum length of individual façade compositions along a required building line, generally running parallel to the fronting sidewalk, shall be 100 feet. Each façade composition shall be distinct from the previous by means of material changes, fenestration, and/or configuration of architectural elements.



The Hub

NONCOMPLIANT

Fenestration	The maximum bulkhead of ground story is four (4) feet above the grade level. Spandrel area shall be no larger than six (6) feet in height for all ground story fenestration.
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COMPLIANT 3.5' bulkhead

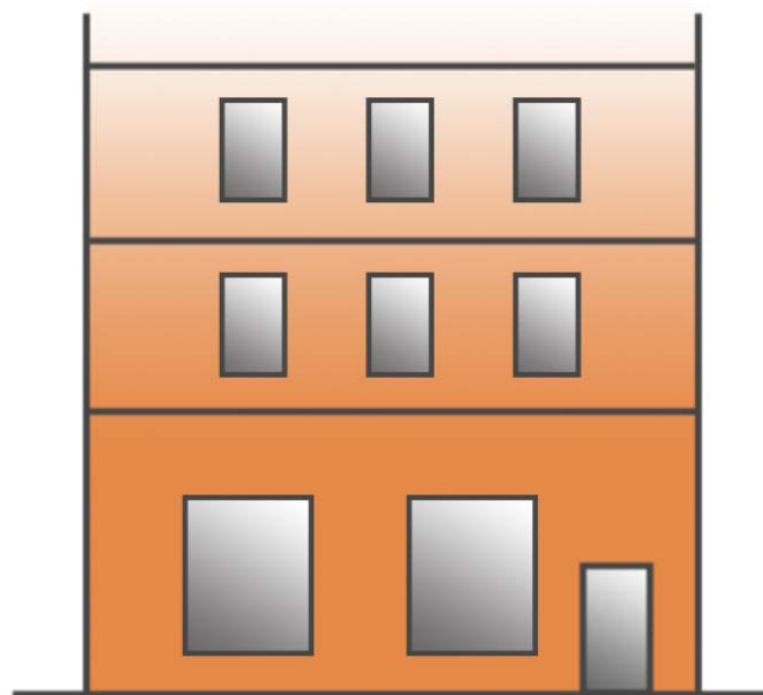


~12' spandrel **NONCOMPLIANT**

Fenestration

Fenestration (A)	<p>The percentage of openings for glass fenestration at the ground story visible from the street is required to be a minimum of 50% of the total façade area measured from floor to floor.</p> <p>The percentage of openings for glass fenestration at the second story visible from the street is required to be 30% of the total façade area measured from floor to floor.</p> <p>The percentage of openings for glass fenestration at the third story and above visible from the street is required to be a minimum of 20% of the total façade area measured from floor to floor.</p>
Fenestration (B)	<p>The percentage of openings for glass fenestration at the ground story visible from the street is required to be a minimum of 40% of the total façade area measured from floor to floor.</p> <p>The percentage of openings for glass fenestration at the second story visible from the street is required to be 30% of the total façade area measured from floor to floor.</p> <p>The percentage of openings for glass fenestration at the third story and above visible from the street is required to be a minimum of 20% of the total façade area measured from floor to floor.</p>
Fenestration (C)	<p>The percentage of openings for glass fenestration at the ground story visible from the street is required to be a minimum of 30% of the total façade area measured from floor to floor.</p> <p>The percentage of openings for glass fenestration at the second story visible from the street is required to be 20% of the total façade area measured from floor to floor.</p> <p>The percentage of openings for glass fenestration at the third story and above visible from the street is required to be a minimum of 20% of the total façade area measured from floor to floor.</p>

Fenestration (A)

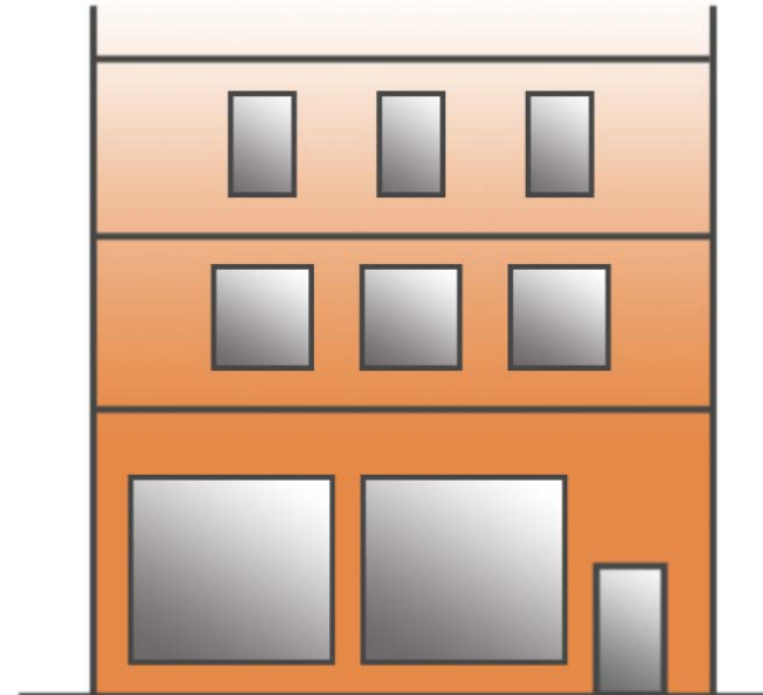


Current

**Upper Stories
Min. 20%**

**Upper Stories
Min. 20%**

**Ground Story
Min. 30%**



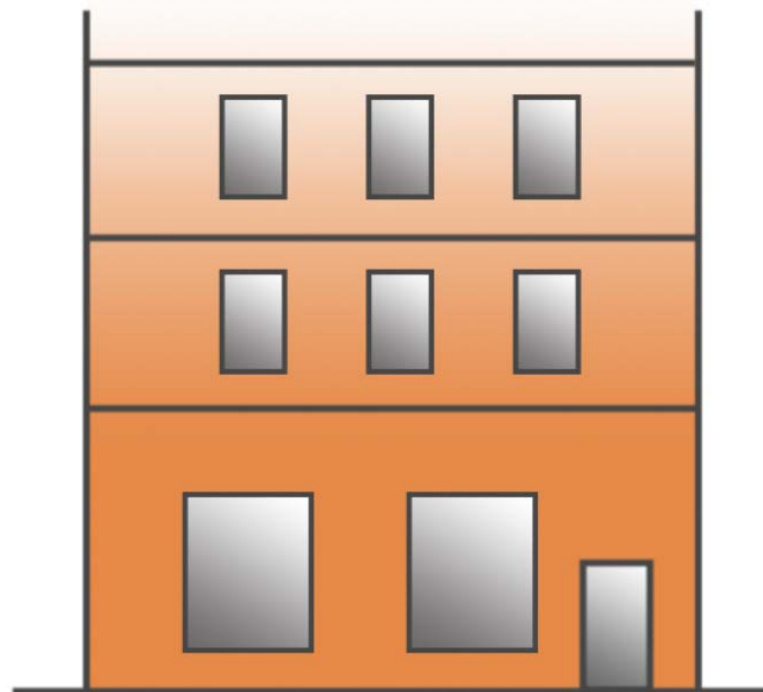
Proposed

**Upper Stories
Min. 20%**

**Upper Stories
Min. 30%**

**Ground Story
Min. 50%**

Fenestration (B)

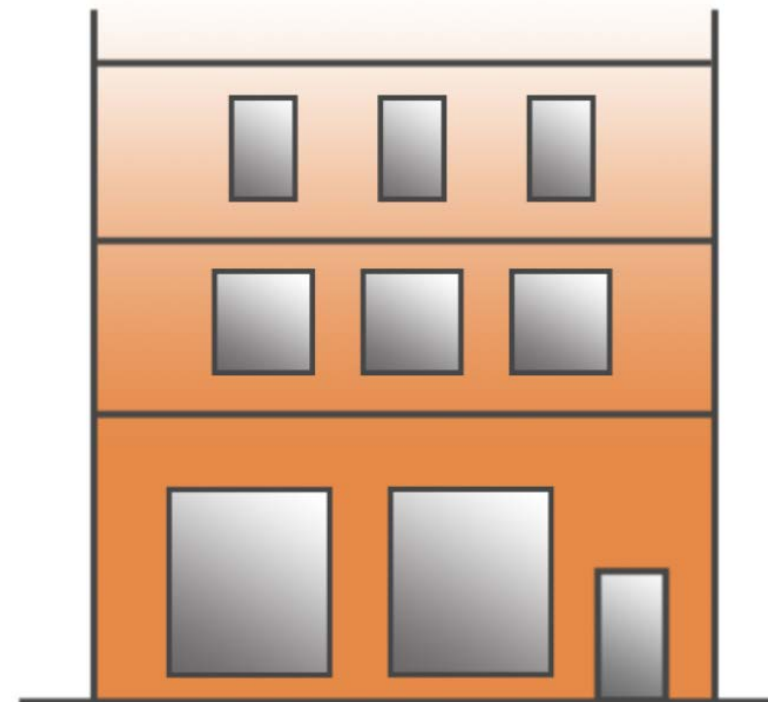


Current

Upper Stories
Min. 20%

Upper Stories
Min. 20%

Ground Story
Min. 30%



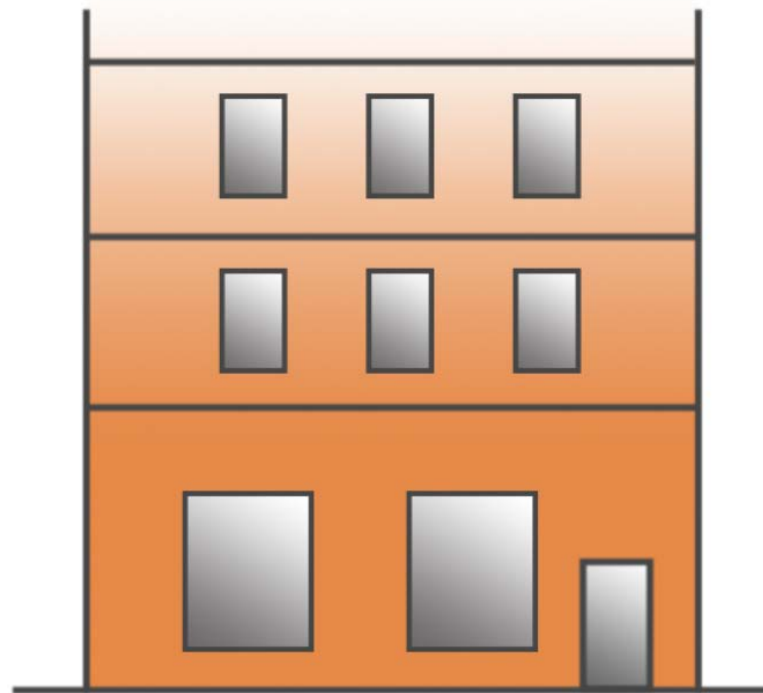
Proposed

Upper Stories
Min. 20%

Upper Stories
Min. 30%

Ground Story
Min. 40%

Fenestration (C)

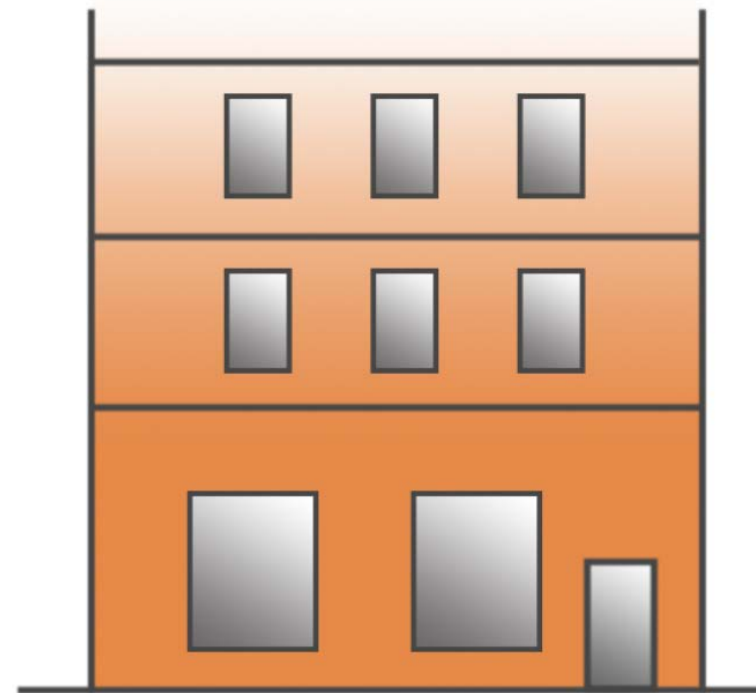


Current

Upper Stories
Min. 20%

Upper Stories
Min. 20%

Ground Story
Min. 30%



Proposed

Upper Stories
Min. 20%

Upper Stories
Min. 20%

Ground Story
Min. 30%

Cladding Materials

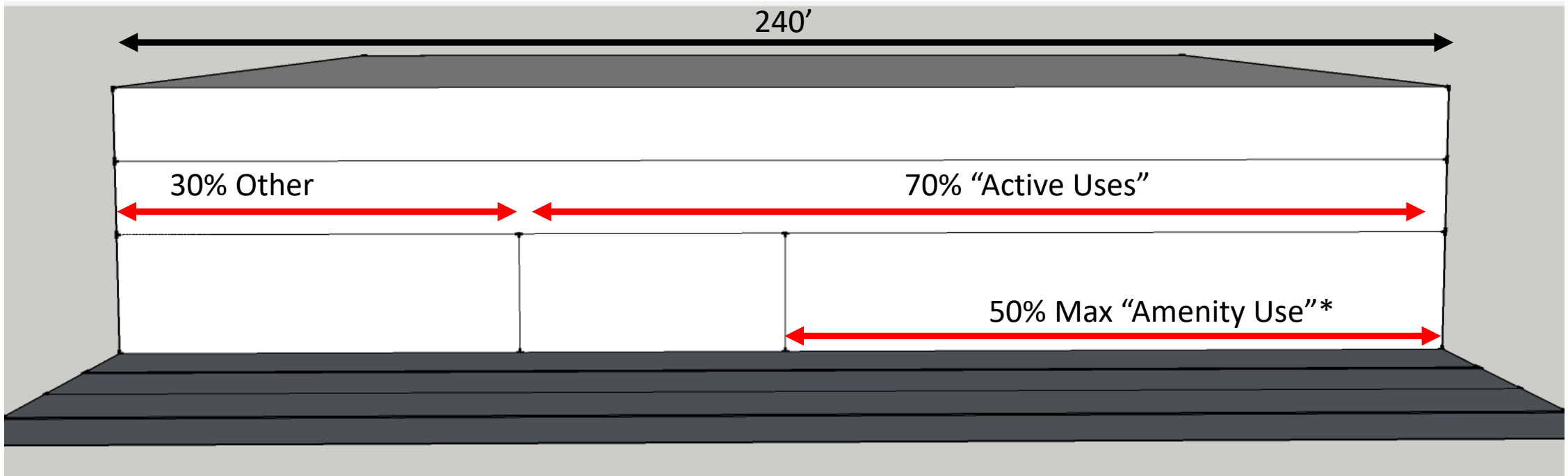
Cladding Materials, Materials and Composition	Building materials shall consist of stone, masonry, ceramic tile, terracotta tile, wood (not composite), precast concrete and traditional “hard coat” stucco or brick with accents of stucco, limestone, or wood. If synthetic materials are used, they must simulate natural materials and are limited to architectural trim and cornices.
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Ground Story Uses

Ground Story Uses

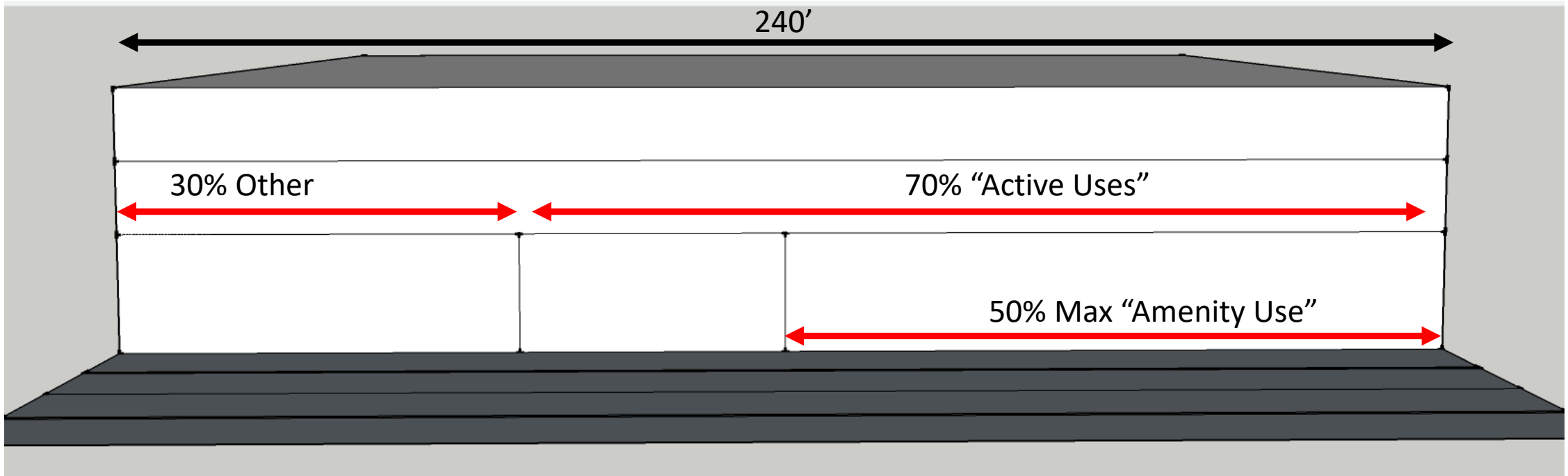
Buildings 100 feet or longer must contain an active use at the ground story for no less than 70% of the length of any street frontage. No more than 50% of ground story street frontage shall be used as private amenity space for exclusive use by residents of the building. The Planning Director may reduce the minimum frontage of active use space required to accommodate for unique conditions. Such reductions shall not exceed 10 feet.

*Property in the UN-W (West of N Donahue), UN-E (East of Ross St), and UN-S may utilize the full length of the street frontage for amenity uses.



Ground Story Uses

Ground Story Uses	Garages, blank walls, service entries, or mechanical rooms shall not exceed 30% of the ground story street frontage.
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Ground Story Uses

Ground Story Uses

Corner lots shall locate any non-residential uses at the intersection of the highest street classification. Garage entrances, mechanical rooms, blank walls, and areas inaccessible to the general public are prohibited on building corners.



COMPLIANT

Ground Story Residential Treatment



Residential Use Provisions

Residential Use Provisions

Ground story residential units shall be designed as independent living units with a primary entrance that takes access from the public right of way or nearest sidewalk. No more than four individual units may share said entryway. Units on the 3rd story and above shall take separate access interior to the building.

Minimum unit width: 18 feet

Maximum unit width: 50 feet

Minimum front setback (in UC): 5 feet

Minimum fenestration: 30%

No more than 30% of ground story street frontage shall be used for residential uses in the UC zoning district, north of East Thach Avenue.*

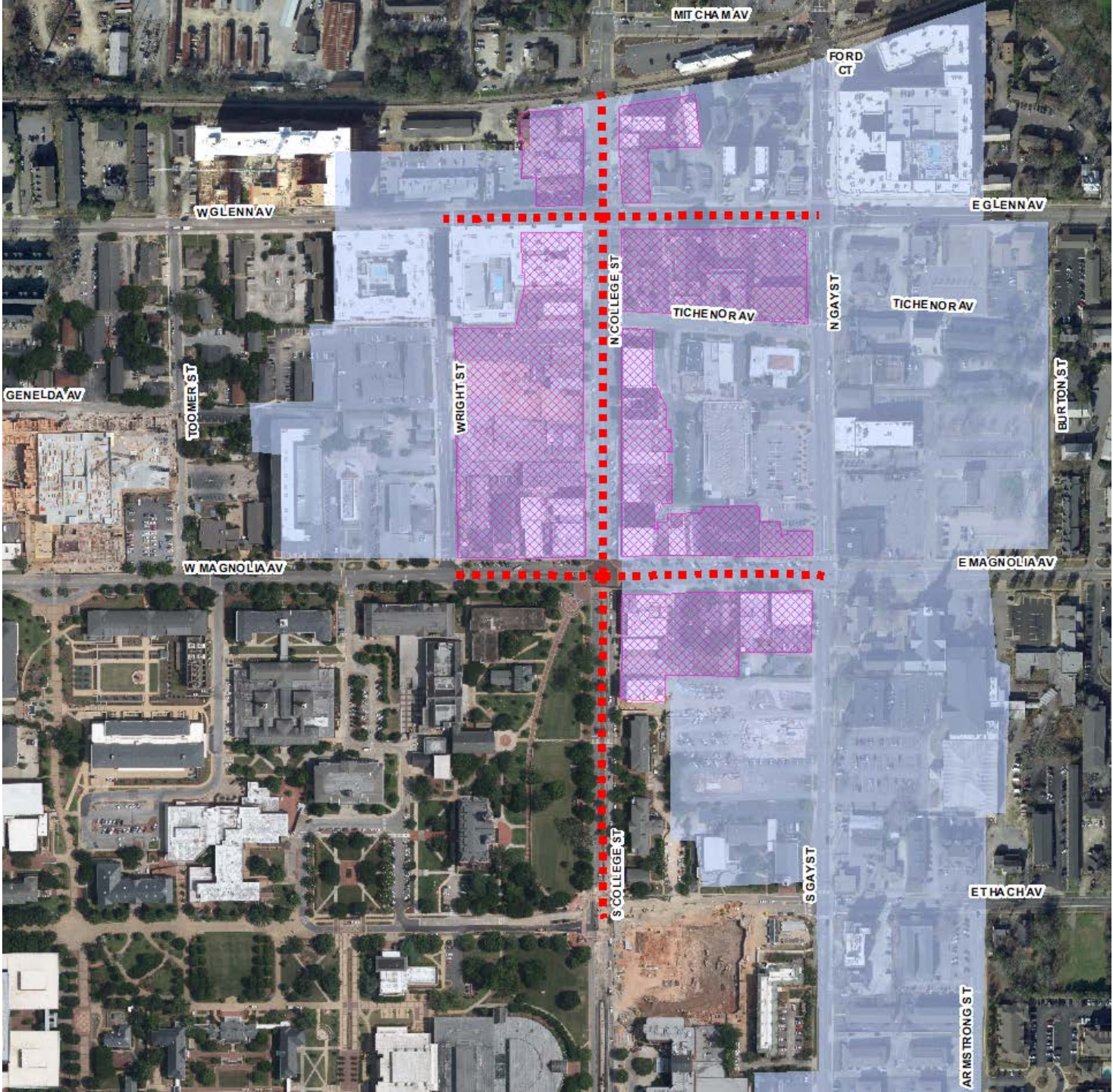
*The Planning Director may waive this limitation.

Ground story residential uses are prohibited on the following streets:

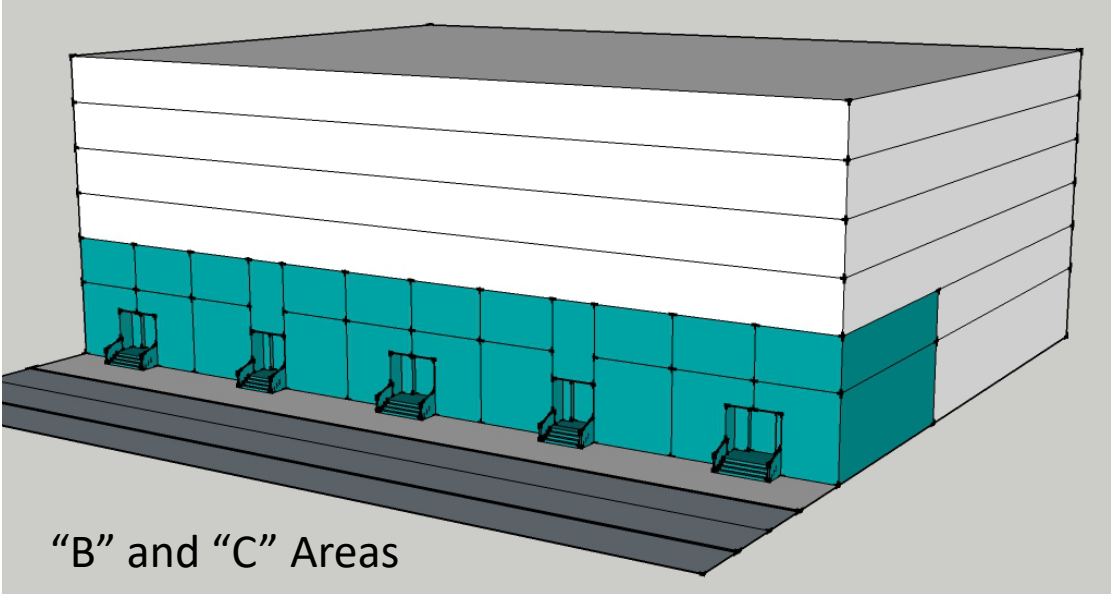
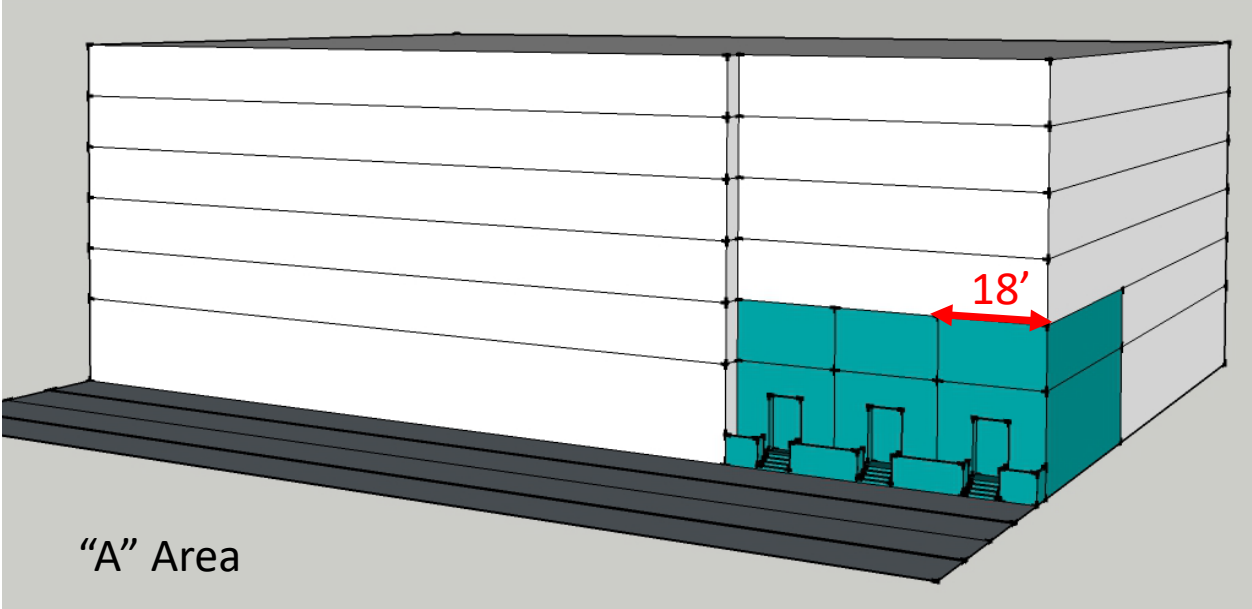
1. North College Street between East/West Magnolia Avenue and the railroad right of way between East/West Glenn Avenue and Mitcham Avenue
2. South College Street between East/West Magnolia Avenue and East Thach Avenue
3. West Glenn Avenue between Wright Street and North College Avenue
4. East Glenn Avenue between North College Avenue and North Gay Street
5. West Magnolia Avenue between Wright Street and North/South College Street
6. East Magnolia Avenue between North/South College Street and North/South Gay Street

(See Section 502.02(A.) for fee-simple Single-family detached)

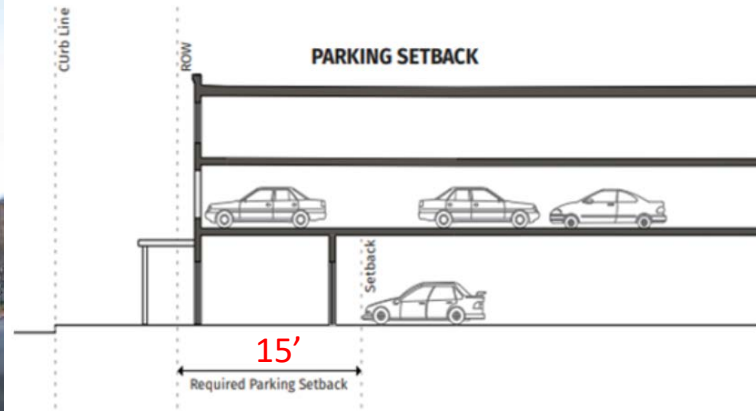
Ground Story Residential Prohibited



Residential Use Provisions



Parking Lot Screening



Acceptable for all UC, UN-W (East of N Donahue), and UN-E (West of Ross St) zoning districts, .



Acceptable for the UN-W (West of N Donahue), UN-E (East of Ross St), and UN-S zoning districts.



Acceptable for all surface parking

Parking Lot Screening

Parking Lot Screening	<p>Screening Requirements:</p> <p>In the UC, UN-W (East of N Donahue), and UN-E (West of Ross St) zoning districts, ground story parking in a structure shall be setback no less than 15 feet from the property line and shall be screened using an appropriate façade composition or use. Where upper stories of structured parking are located at the perimeter of a building, they must be screened so that cars are not visible from adjacent streets. Sloped ramps must not be discernable along the perimeter of the parking structure. Architectural and/or vegetative screens must be used to articulate the façade, hide parked vehicles and shield lighting.</p> <p>In the UN-W (West of N Donahue), UN-E (East of Ross St), and UN-S zoning districts, structured parking located at the perimeter of a building, must be screened so that cars are not visible from adjacent streets. Screening must use approved cladding material or vegetation to hide parked vehicles and shield lighting. Sloped ramps must not be discernable along the perimeter of the parking structure.</p>
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Parking Lot Screening

Parking Lot Screening

Grade level parking (surface or structured) must be screened with a building. In cases where the parking cannot be screened by a building of the permitted use as determined by the Planning Director, parking adjacent to any street ROW must be separated with a planted buffer at least 10 feet wide in the UC, UN-W (East of N Donahue), and UN-E (West of Ross St) zoning districts, and at least 5 feet wide in the UN-W (West of N Donahue), UN-E (East of Ross St), and UN-S zoning districts. Surface parking adjacent to any street ROW shall also be screened with a Type 1, Option A fence (see Figure 4-2) with support piers that meet the Cladding Materials and Exterior Wall Palette requirements of this section.

The planting requirement shall be 1 canopy tree and 6 shrubs for every twenty-five (25) feet of ROW frontage. The planting requirements and buffer width may vary due to site conditions at the discretion of the Planning Director.



COMPLIANT



COMPLIANT

Waivers

Waivers	<p>Applicants should meet early on with Planning staff and refer to the Downtown Design Guidelines for additional information and recommendations. These standards shall be met in addition to all other standards of this Ordinance, unless specifically exempted. Where there is conflict between these provisions and other sections of the Zoning Ordinance, these regulations shall govern. Any proposed deviation from these standards shall be requested in the form of a waiver and shall be reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission. In considering any request for a waiver of these standards, the Planning Commission may request that the proposed deviation be reviewed and evaluated by the Downtown Design and Review Committee.</p>
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Alleyways

- Not included in these amendments
- Staff will address this issue separately

