

Better Housing by Design Project: Potential Zoning Approaches for Historic Districts

Balancing housing opportunity with compatibility in historic districts

Planners with the Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability are considering potential zoning code and map changes that would affect the allowed scale of new development in higher density residential and mixed use zones in historic districts. The changes would have little impact on existing buildings. The proposals are being considered as part of the Better Housing by Design project, which is updating Portland's multi-dwelling zoning regulations to better meet the needs of current and future residents.

These potential zoning changes for historic districts seek to create more affordable housing opportunities and to ensure that new development is responsive to the scale of historic districts.

The concepts, summarized below, would provide incentives for new projects that include affordable housing *and* adjust regulations so the size of new buildings is comparable to larger historic buildings.

- **RM4 zone changes.** In the proposed RM4 zone (currently RH with a base FAR of 4:1), reduce the base FAR to 3:1 when located in historic districts *but* give projects that include affordable housing units an FAR of 4.5:1.
- **Change RM3 to RM4 zoning in part of the Alphet Historic District.** In a portion of the Alphet Historic district that now has RH zoning with a base FAR of 2:1, change the proposed new zoning to RM4 (3:1 base FAR) to more closely match the scale of larger historic apartment buildings in the area. This would apply to properties between NW 21st and 23rd, from Burnside up to NW Hoyt.
- **Allow affordable housing bonuses in mixed use zones (CM).** Allow bonuses (primarily for affordable housing) and FAR transfers in historic districts. In the CM2 zone along NW 21st and 23rd avenues in the Alphet Historic District, the maximum FAR is currently 2.5:1 (roughly three stories covering most of a lot) with no opportunity for development bonuses. Proposed changes to the CM2 zone in historic districts would allow a bonus FAR of 4:1 (up to four stories for a building covering the entire lot). A small number of CM3-zoned properties in the historic district that currently have a base FAR of 3:1 would have a bonus FAR of up to 5:1.

What is FAR (floor-to-area ratio)?

"FAR" regulates the size of buildings. An FAR of 4 to 1 (4:1) allows up to 40,000 square feet of building floor area on a site that is 10,000 square feet in size, typically a five- to six-story building.



To learn more or comment on these historic district proposals (please submit comments by April 2nd):

Visit: <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/bhd-historic>

Email the project team: betterhousing@portlandoregon.gov

Visit the **Better Housing by Design** table at one of these Historic Resources Code Project Open House public events:

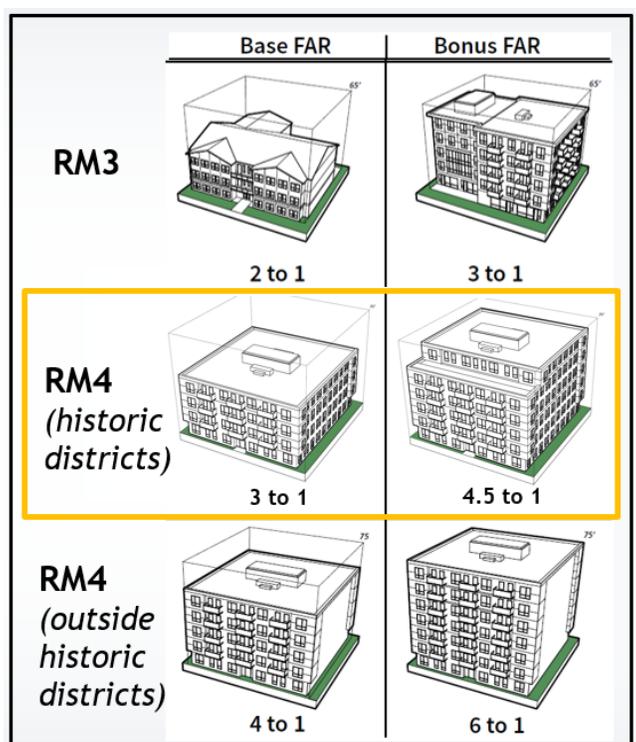
Tuesday, February 19, 2019, 5:30 – 7 p.m.
Architectural Heritage Center, 701 SE Grand Avenue, Portland

Tuesday, March 19, 2019, 4 – 7 p.m.
Center for Architecture (AIA Portland), 403 NW 11th Avenue, Portland

Call TriMet at 503-238-7433 or go to their web site at <http://www.trimet.org> for routes and times for accessing these locations.

What happens next?

These potential zone changes are conceptual only; they are not formal proposals. Bureau of Planning and Sustainability staff will consider community input when preparing for discussions with the Planning and Sustainability Commission (PSC). If the proposals become part of the PSC's Recommended Draft, the public will have an opportunity to testify on them to Portland City Council. The City Council public hearing date has not been set yet but will likely be sometime in Summer 2019.



RM4 Zone: Alphabet and King's Hill Historic Districts



3 to 1



3.3 to 1



4.3 to 1



3 to 1



3.7 to 1

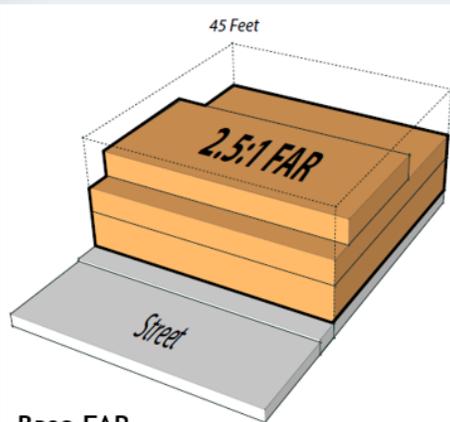


4.7 to 1

3 to 1 → 4.5 to 1

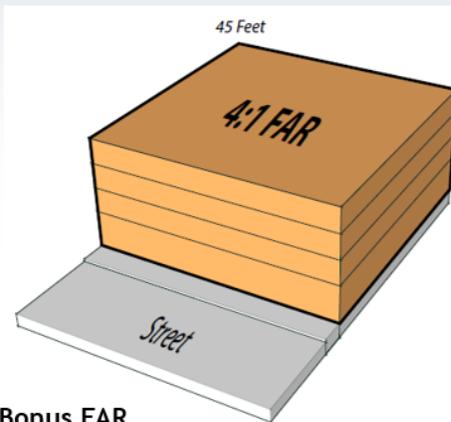
Base and bonus FARs of 3:1 to 4.5:1 would allow new buildings similar to the scale of larger historic apartment buildings

CM2 Base and Bonus FAR



Base FAR

Current maximum in historic districts



Bonus FAR

Achieved through:

- Providing affordable units, or
- FAR transfers from other sites

- Currently no allowances for bonus FAR in mixed use zones in historic districts.
- Proposal: allow FAR bonuses and transfers in historic districts - maximum height in CM2 remains 45 feet (four stories)

Alphabet Historic District - CM2 Zone

Historic



2.8 to 1



3.7 to 1



5 to 1

Newer



3 to 1



3.2 to 1



3.6 to 1

Examples of larger buildings in the CM2 zone along NW 21st and NW 23rd