

**Date:** March 15, 2024  
**To:** Planning and Zoning Commission Members  
**From:** Patrick R. Zenner, Development Services Manager  
**Re:** Small Lot Standards Text Change

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Review of the Sketchup visualizations consumed almost all of the prior March 7 work session. As a result, consideration of the necessary definitions to support the new dimensional standards were not discussed. As such, staff desires to discuss these changes prior to moving onto the discussion of subdivision regulation changes and potential use-specific standards relating to each proposed lot range category.

As Commissioners may recall, at the February 22 work session there was discussion relating to the proposed definitions for “building area”, “building envelope” and “Floor Area Ratio (FAR)”. As noted, the UDC already has a definition of “building area” and that definition will remain unaltered. However, no definitions exist for “building envelope” and “Floor Area Ratio (FAR)”. While there was general agreement with the proposed definition of “building envelope” there was significant discussion about the definition for FAR and the need to clarify if the calculation was based on “gross” or “net” floor area.

During February 22 work session discussion, two definitions with respect to “floor area” were identified by the Commission. The first definition, within the UDC, specifically dealt with “floor area, gross” and the second was within Chapter 26 [Taxation] and referenced “total floor area”. Commissioners requested that the proposed definition for FAR be modified to match that presented in the UDC.

However, upon further review of the UDC definition for “floor area, gross”, it was determined that this definition is located within a section of the UDC that has terms only applicable to property located within regulated floodplains and the city’s floodplain overlay (FP-O) district. As such, the definition offered within Chapter 26 appears to be more appropriate to use given it is applied generally with respect to building construction. Furthermore, the definition in Chapter 26 can be easily depicted on a plot plan reviewed by the Building and Site Development Division when issuing a building permit given it is the area within the outside perimeter walls of a dwelling – generally the footprint of the structure as shown on a plot plan.

Given this finding, staff proposes the following definition for “Floor Area Ratio (FAR)” be included within the UDC in Section 29-1.11(a) [Definitions – General]:

*Floor Area Ratio (FAR).* The total floor area within the **perimeter of the outside walls of the principal structure** on a lot including the basement floor area, without deduction for hallways, stairs, closets, thickness of walls, columns or other features, divided by the total area of the lot upon which the principal structure is located.

The **bold** text in the above definition is identified to emphasize the area of a future dwelling that would be included in the calculation of FAR. Staff believes the definition captures the essence of the Commission’s prior discussions in that it is a “gross” calculation of area with the area inside the “perimeter walls” of the structure defining the outside boundary to which the measurement is tied. Furthermore, this definition also makes a clear distinction that allowable FAR on the lot is tied to just the “principal structure” on that lot. This means that detached accessory structures such as a garage, storage building, or ADU (not proposed as being permitted within on a 3000-5000 sq. ft R-1 lot) would not count toward the maximum buildable square footage allowed on a small or medium lot. While detached structures would not be included in the calculation of allowable FAR, their area is regulated by provisions contained within sec. 29-3.3(ii) of the UDC.

As of the preparing this memo, staff continues to work on reviewing the subdivision regulations to identify where revisions will be required to ensure a seamless integration of the new lot types into the built environment. Based on current workload, it is hoped that staff will be capable of identifying several elements for discussion that will be presented work session.

Finally, in reviewing the request of the Commission to consider changes to the maximum ground floor square footage allowed within the proposed lot size “bands” it would appear greater clarity on this request is needed. Is the Commission seeking modifications within a size “band” itself or between one size “band” and another? Staff acknowledges that buildable lot area coverage becomes less as lot sizes increase within each size “band”; however, believes that making modification to establish a sliding scale of allowable ground floor area has the potential to create unnecessary complication. Gaining a greater understanding of the Commission’s request will assist staff in devising a possible solution. The established ground floor area was established given the new smaller lot sizes and reduced frontages were viewed as a “permissible option” not a “by-right” authorization for future development.

Staff looks forward to our discussion on this topic at the March 22 work session. Please contact me if you have questions.