

TECHNICAL REPORT

Council Meeting – 02/19/2020



LUMO TEXT AMENDMENT FOR BLUE HILL MASSING STANDARDS

The following Technical Report describes proposed modifications to the Form District Regulations in order to increase visual and pedestrian permeability in the Blue Hill District, in response to a petition from Council members. The modifications constitute a proposed Text Amendment to Section 3.11 of LUMO.

BACKGROUND

May 12, 2014	Ephesus-Fordham (Blue Hill) Form-Based Code adopted
March 14, 2018	Council received a petition regarding potential changes to the Form District Regulations, addressing several topics including building massing concerns
June 27, 2018	Council updated Form District Regulations for recreation space in a way intended to make such space provide more relief to building mass. Council provided direction to continue studying additional strategies
June 5, 2019	Council Work Session to discuss potential approaches on how to regulate building mass
Sept – Oct 2019	Introduction and discussion with the Community Design Commission and Planning Commission
November 1, 2019	Council Committee on Economic Sustainability to consider development finance considerations of new massing standards
January 7, 2020	Public Information Meeting
January 7, 2020	Planning Commission Meeting
January 8, 2020	Council Public Hearing to hear the proposed amendments and receive public comments
January 28, 2020	Community Design Commission Meeting

NEXT STEPS

February 19, 2020	Council has the opportunity to take action on the proposed amendments
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UPDATES TO DRAFT ORDINANCE SINCE JANUARY 8, 2020 COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING

Based on feedback received from Council, the Planning Commission, and the Community Design Commission, planning staff has revised the proposed text amendments before you tonight in the following ways:

- Clarification that vehicular drives are allowed in a building separation area, but that they do not count towards meeting the minimum separation width between buildings unless properly designed and approved by the Town Manager as a 'shared space' for vehicles and pedestrians.
- Limiting the range of townhome and stacked townhome projects that are exempted from commercial space requirements – only achievable if (i) the project has no more than 60 units and (ii) at least half of the units are less than 1800 sq. ft.
- Limiting the locations where standalone parking decks can have a reduced street setback through a Design Alternative – not available along Type A frontages, which are intended to be the most pedestrian-oriented.

ADDITIONAL RESPONSES TO COUNCIL FEEDBACK FROM THE PUBLIC HEARING

Building Separation Area Design: Both the project consultant and the Town's Urban Designer consider the proposed widths to be appropriate for the intent of the District and adequate to avoid a sense of too much enclosure. The CDC will review the facades of adjacent buildings using the Blue Hill Design Guidelines to ensure sufficient landscape character and façade visual interest, with a particular focus on the building's first floor. These corridors will replace and improve upon the framework for building pass-throughs (which can be 12' wide and only 1 story tall). They will continue to be secondary routes as part of a hierarchy of pedestrian connections throughout sites in the District.

Townhome Expected Price Points: Noell Consulting Group performed a market analysis that identified several feasible product types in the Blue Hill District. Typical starting sales price for these townhome types ranges from \$300,000 to \$700,000. The proposed unit size limit (see section B-2 of the table) would encourage development of townhomes priced on the lower side of this range. This could expand the variety of for-sale housing price points in Chapel Hill as a whole.

Stacked Townhome Definition: Stacked townhomes consist of two units stacked on top of each other, with a series of stacked units then arranged in a row. Each unit is typically two stories and has its own entrance at street level. This housing configuration is common in many urban areas.

Increased Commercial Space Threshold: Council suggested increasing the commercial space requirement for Multifamily Living projects to balance the proposed exemption for townhomes that would allow residential-only projects. Staff believes that further study of market dynamics is needed before recommending any increase in the commercial space percentages. The intent of the current percentages is to set an amount that maintains the development feasibility of a multifamily project.

Secondary Wing Measurement Criteria: The proposed ordinance states that "a secondary wing shall be appended to the rear of the building to create an extension of the building's depth. The wing may not be configured to increase the maximum building width." This prevents a scenario where the secondary wing is used to increase a building dimension beyond 330 ft.

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SUMMARY OF PROPOSED CHANGES

Based upon the review and feedback received to date, the proposed updates to the Form District Regulations can be broken down into the following general categories:

- A. Massing and Building Separation (Core standards): Standards that relate directly to building mass by limiting the horizontal dimensions and creating public space between buildings
 - 1. Establish a framework maximum dimensions for buildings and structured parking in various contexts
 - 2. Establish a minimum separation between buildings, with such area serving a pedestrian connectivity function for the public.

- B. Options for Additional Changes: Standards that indirectly support positive outcomes for building mass and/or accomplish other objectives for the Blue Hill District based on Council interest.
 - 1. Exempt four-story buildings from having to reduce the area of the upper floor
 - 2. Improve feasibility of developing a townhome or stacked townhomes project
 - 3. Expand options for reducing the number of required parking spaces
 - 4. Allow parking structures closer to the street, when they are thoughtfully designed

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TABLE OF PROPOSED CHANGES

TODAY'S REGULATIONS	PROPOSED CORE STANDARDS	IMPROVEMENT AREA
<p>A-1. Building Mass</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum Upper Story Floor Area: starting at the 4th floor, upper stories are limited to an average of 70% and maximum of 80% of the 3rd story floor plate area • Possible Upper Floor Area bonus for projects where more than 10% of square footage is non-residential • Mass Variation: Required along street frontages through either a 10' stepback above the 3rd floor or a 80' maximum module length 	<p>A-1. Building Mass</p> <p>All existing regulations, and in addition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Width and Depth: Maximum dimensions before a separation between buildings is required. Range of dimensions tailored to zoning subdistrict and parking configuration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 330' x 200' with wrapped parking ○ Applicant choice of 330' x 120' or 275' x 210' without wrapped parking ○ 220' x 120' in the WR-3 Subdistrict • Secondary Wings: Maximum dimension of 75' x 100' allowed for each situation above, as a way to allow building extensions while limiting the overall footprint. Wings must adjoin public realm area (side streets, greenways, amenity space, etc) • Structured Parking Width and Depth: Maximum dimensions of 230' x 180' • Administrative Adjustment: 5% increase of dimensions allowed for unusual site configuration or other special circumstances 	<p>Limits the size of a building footprint while providing flexibility for varying site configurations, land uses, and parking approaches</p>
<p>A-2. Building Separation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not explicitly required • Building Pass-throughs: 12' separation required every 330' for the lower one-two stories only; can be covered by built space 	<p>A-2. Building Separation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum Separation: Required between buildings / groups of buildings once the maximum width / depth is met <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 20' in the WR-3 Subdistrict ○ 30' in other Subdistricts • Pedestrian Connection: 8' sidewalk required in separation area, connecting from one side of the site to the other • May count as Outdoor Amenity Space • Building Articulation: Balconies, awnings, overhead walkways, etc. are allowed to jut into separation area • Vehicular Functions: Alleys and service drives allowed between buildings, but not counted as part of minimum separation width • Design Guidelines: applied by CDC to ensure space is active and inviting • Building Pass-throughs: 'Tunnel' design no longer an option - buildings must now be fully separated • Administrative Adjustment and Design Alternative: Flexibility allowed for special circumstances, equivalent to what was previously used for Building Pass-throughs 	<p>Providing visual and pedestrian permeability around and between buildings</p> <p>Ensuring such space is reasonably inviting and functional for the public</p>

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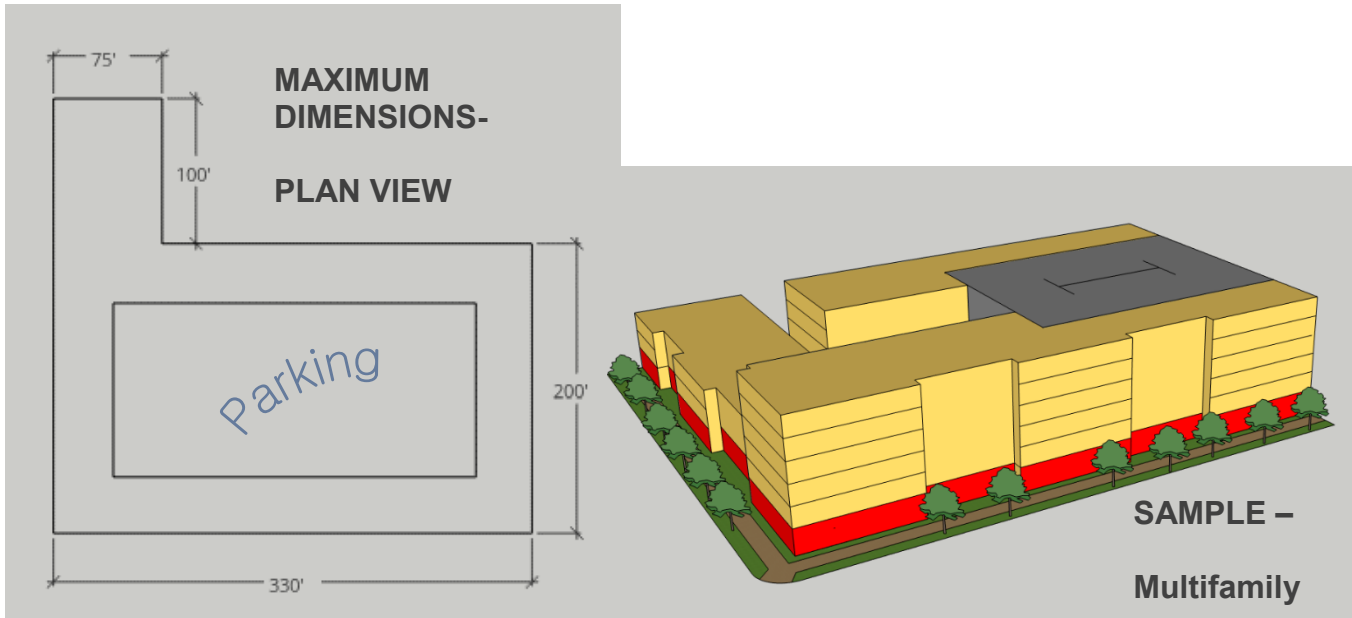
TODAY'S REGULATIONS	OPTIONS FOR ADDITIONAL CHANGES	IMPROVEMENT AREA
<p>B-1. <u>Maximum Floor Plate</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fourth Floor and above: Limited based on floor plate area of third floor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 70% average area over all upper floors - 80% maximum area for any single floor 	<p>B-1. <u>Maximum Floor Plate</u></p> <p>Same as previous, except:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum/Average upper floor area based on ground floor • Four-story buildings can have a full floor plate for the fourth floor (the floor plate limits apply at fourth floor and above for buildings five stories or greater) 	<p>Encouraging four-story buildings in zones that allow up to five or seven stories</p>
<p>B-2. <u>Townhomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonresidential Requirement: All residential projects in WX- Subdistricts must include a nonresidential use Minimum 10% of building floor area or 15% of site floor area 	<p>B-2. <u>Townhomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attached Living: Townhomes/rowhouses not required to include a nonresidential use if (i) the project is ≤ 60 units and (ii) at least half of the units are < 1800 sq. ft. • Stacked Townhomes: A project with no more than two units vertically stacked can have the same nonresidential use exemption if meeting above conditions • Other Multifamily Living: Nonresidential use still required 	<p>Encourage housing types that are generally smaller in scale, not currently represented in the District, and could serve a 'missing middle' function for affordability</p>
<p>B-3. <u>Parking Reductions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in number of spaces (varying amounts) allowed with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motorcycle/scooter parking - Transportation Management Plan - Services for the elderly or handicapped - Off-site shared parking - Analysis of use(s) showing lower demand 	<p>B-3. <u>Parking Reductions</u></p> <p>All existing options, and in addition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed Use Reduction: Allow a 50% reduction in required parking spaces for projects that are at least 25% residential and 25% non-residential (same as MU-V District) 	<p>Reduce the amount of site area and structure area needed for parking, which can produce positive outcomes for building mass</p> <p>Encourage individual projects to have an integrated mixture of uses</p>
<p>B-4. <u>Structured Parking Setback</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street Setback: 30' behind front of building • Design Alternative: Allow smaller setback for second and third levels (podium parking with ground floor use) 	<p>B-4. <u>Structured Parking Setback</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design Alternative: Allow setbacks to be less than 30' behind building façade for all levels • Not available along Type A Frontages • Clarification that a parking structure can only count towards build-to percentage for the frontage if it has an active ground floor use 	<p>Improving the feasibility of a standalone parking deck, disconnected from buildings, where it can produce a positive outcome for building mass</p>

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VISUAL IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED BUILDING DIMENSIONS FRAMEWORK

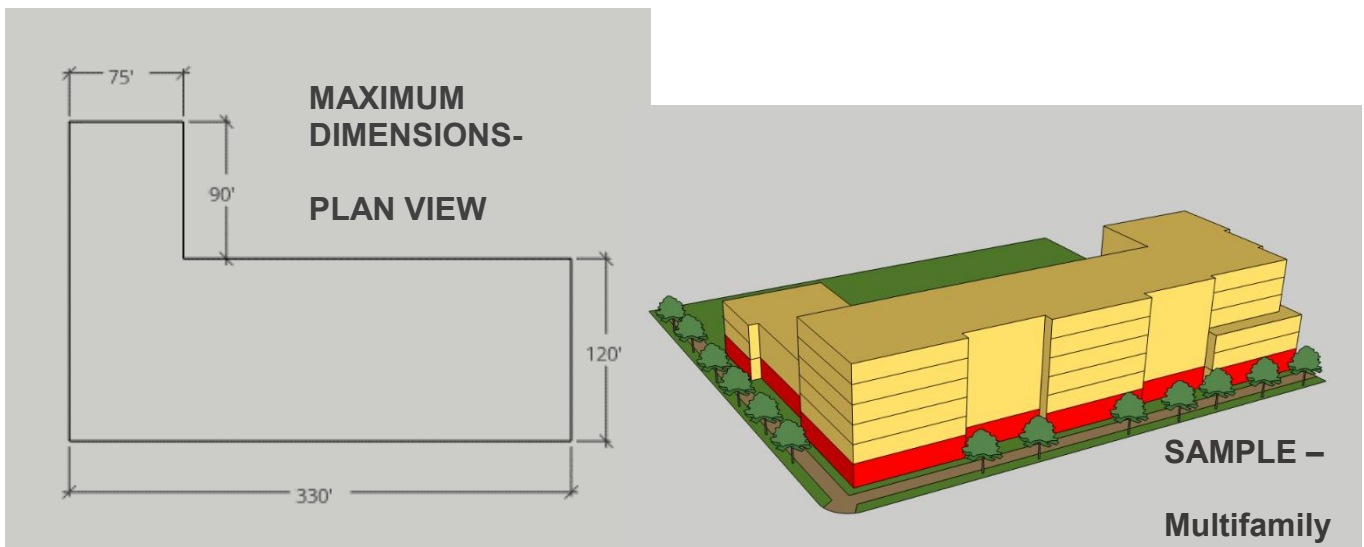
I. Wrapped Parking, WX-5/WX-7/WR-7 Subdistricts



- ❖ Parking deck must be wrapped by building on at least 2 sides
- ❖ Accommodates larger multifamily configurations (wrapped deck is less common for office or hotel)

II. Standalone Building, WX-5/WX-7/WR-7 Subdistricts

Option 1: Greater Width, Less Depth

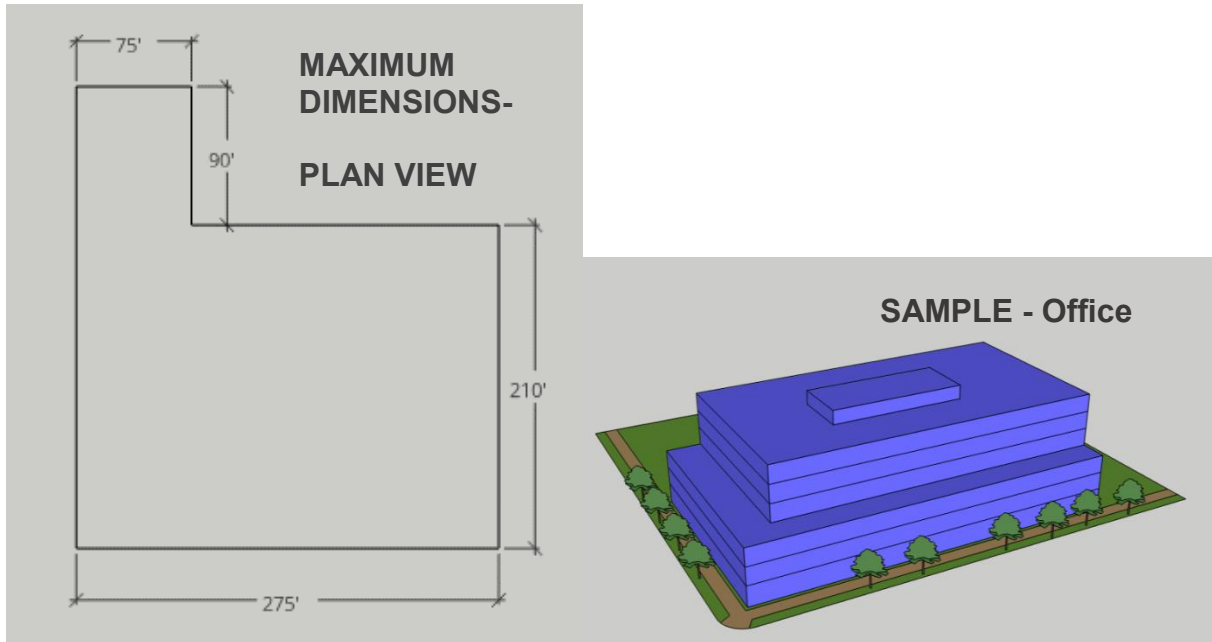


- ❖ Option for applicant when building is disconnected from parking
- ❖ Accommodates smaller multifamily configurations
- ❖ Accommodates smaller office and hotel typical footprints

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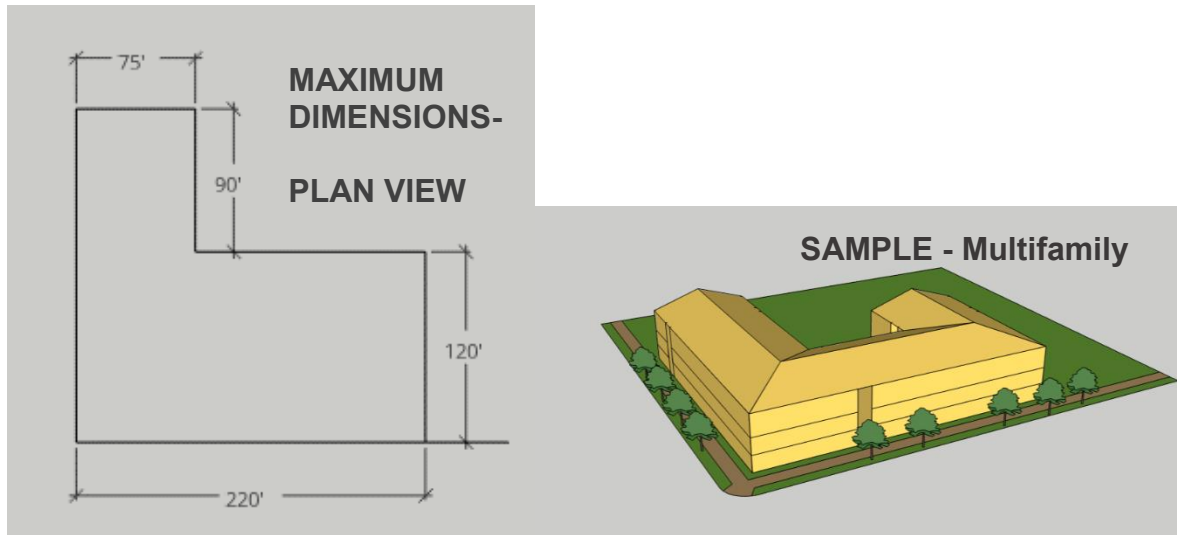
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Option 2: Less Width, Greater Width



- ❖ Option for applicant when building is disconnected from parking
- ❖ Accommodates courtyard multifamily configurations
- ❖ Accommodates larger office and hotel typical footprints

III. Standalone Building, WR-3 Subdistrict

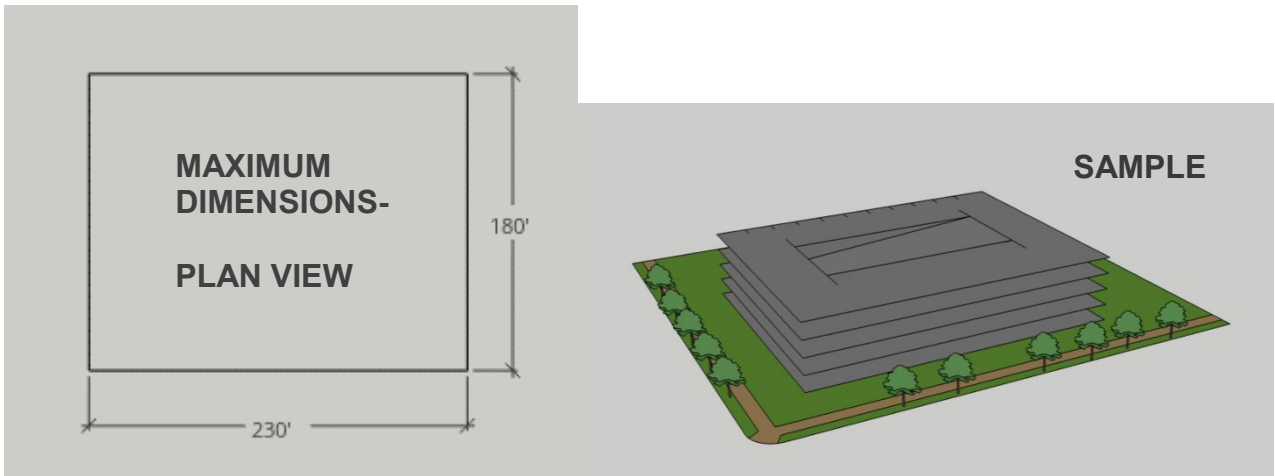


- ❖ Accommodates smaller garden-style multifamily configurations

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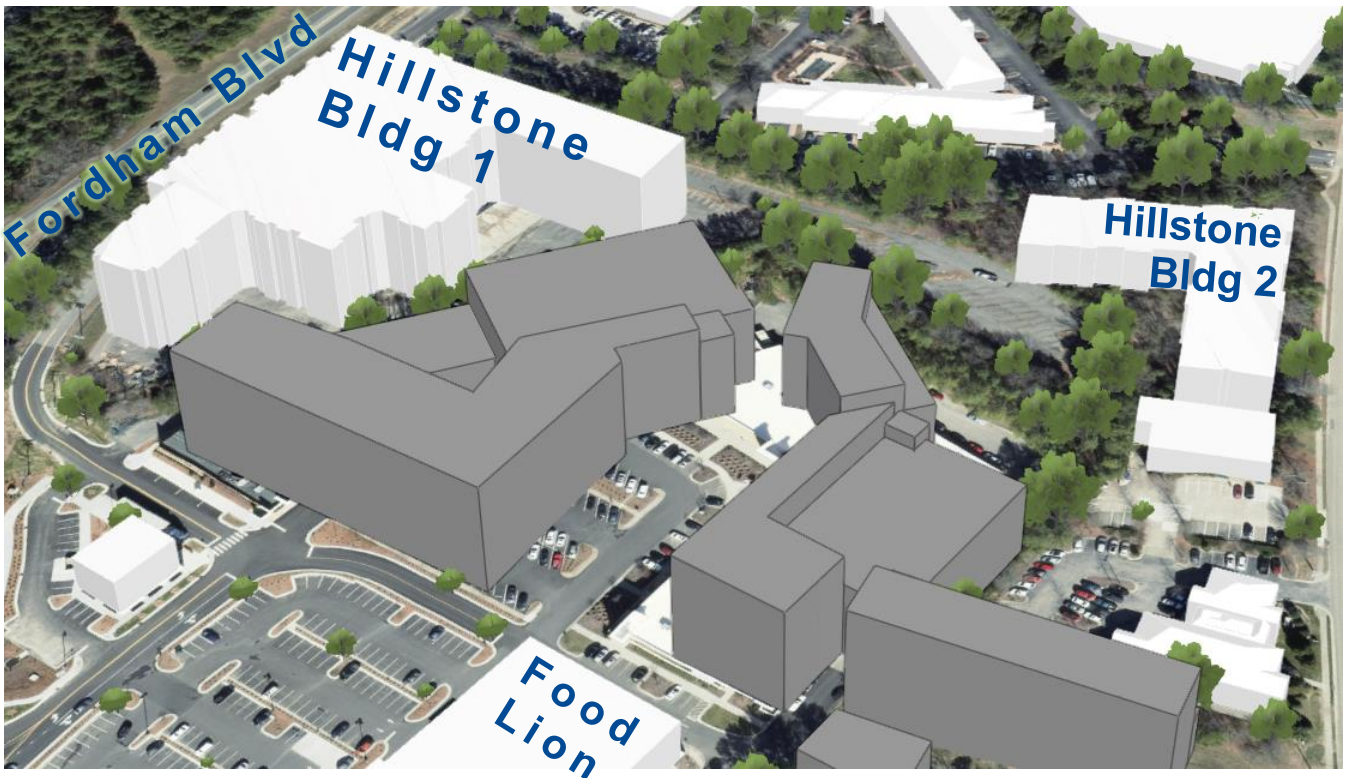
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IV. Parking Structures



- ❖ Applies to any parking deck, whether wrapped or standalone / disconnected

3D Model Study – Ram’s Plaza



- ❖ Existing Buildings (white) compared to Potential Buildings under proposed Framework (gray)
- ❖ Maximum Building Dimensions in combination with other Form-Based Code standards and with site conditions

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ZONING AMENDMENT FINDINGS OF FACT

Based on the comments and information submitted, the Council will consider whether it can make one or more of the three required findings (listed below A-C) for enactment of a Land Use Management Ordinance Text Amendment.

In order to establish and maintain sound, stable, and desirable development within the planning jurisdiction of the Town, it is intended that the Land Use Management Ordinance (as stated in Section 4.4) shall not be amended except:

- A. To correct a manifest error in the chapter; or
- B. Because of changed or changing conditions in a particular area or in the jurisdiction generally; or
- C. To achieve the purposes of the Comprehensive Plan.

Staff provides below an evaluation of the proposed text amendment based on the three findings. Further information may be presented for the Council’s consideration as part of the public hearing process. All information submitted at the public hearing will be included in the record of the hearing.

A. To correct a manifest error in the chapter

Arguments in Support:	To date no arguments in support have been submitted or identified by staff.
Arguments in Opposition:	To date no arguments in opposition have been submitted or identified by staff.

B. Because of changed or changing conditions in a particular area or in the jurisdiction generally

Arguments in Support:	Five years after adoption of the Form-Based Code, the community now has a better understanding of the types of building design that the Blue Hill District encourages, and the associated impacts on the public realm Stakeholders have expressed concern over whether the large buildings frequently proposed and constructed in the District are achieving a human scale design that contributes to a walkable environment
Arguments in Opposition:	To date no arguments in opposition have been submitted or identified by staff.

Staff Response: We believe, based on the information entered into the record to date, that the proposed zoning amendment responds to changed and changing conditions in the area.

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C. To achieve the purposes of the Comprehensive Plan

Arguments in Support:	Staff believes that the proposed text amendment would contribute to the following elements of the Comprehensive Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Family-friendly, accessible exterior and interior places throughout the town for a variety of active uses (Goal <i>A Place for Everyone</i> 1)▪ Promote a safe, vibrant, and connected (physical and person) community (Goal <i>Community Prosperity and Engagement</i> 3)▪ A development decision-making process that provides clarity and consistency with the goals of the Chapel Hill 2020 comprehensive plan (Goal <i>Good Places New Spaces</i> 3)▪ Open and accessible common spaces for community gathering, cultural uses, and community development (Goal <i>Good Places New Spaces</i> 7)▪ Future land use, form, and density that strengthen the community, social equity, economic prosperity, and natural environment (Goal <i>Good Places, New Spaces</i> 8)
Arguments in Opposition:	To date no arguments in opposition have been submitted or identified by staff.

Staff Response: We believe, based on the information entered into the record to date, that the proposed zoning amendment achieves the purposes of the Comprehensive Plan.