

SUBJECT: ZONE TEXT AMENDMENT: ROOFTOP PROJECTIONS
DATE: OCTOBER 1, 2018
INITATED BY: CITY COUNCIL
PREPARED BY: PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT
Garen G. Srapyan (Associate Planner, Long Range Planning)

ISSUE STATEMENT

The existing requirements for rooftop projections such as elevators, mechanical equipment, stair towers, and trellises, are complex and difficult to understand. The proposed zone text amendment would clarify standards for allowable rooftop projections in all zoning districts.

COUNCIL INTENT

On June 5, 2017, the City Council directed staff to evaluate how the City calculates commercial building height and rooftop projections to determine if the City's zoning standards are appropriate for providing well-scaled commercial and mixed-use developments (Exhibit 5). Staff presented recommendations to the Long Range Planning Project Subcommittee on commercial building height measurements and rooftop projections on August 16, 2018. During that meeting, the subcommittee requested additional time to provide feedback on commercial height and asked staff to move forward with a zone text amendment on rooftop projections. Staff will present the research on commercial height calculation in a separate report to the City Council once input is received from the Planning Commission. In this report, staff is focusing on rooftop projections above the allowable height in an effort to clarify how they are measured and to define which types of projections should be permitted.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION

At their September 6, 2018 meeting, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of Resolution 18-1286 to amend the standards for allowable rooftop projections in all zoning districts. During the meeting, the Commission requested removal of the references to design guidelines and also requested to include language in the ordinance that would discourage projections from being located in a manner as to not create the appearance an additional floor above the roof. These amendments are reflected in the attached draft ordinance (Exhibit 1).

ANALYSIS

The City's Zoning Ordinance (Section 19.28.080-C) allows the following types of rooftop projections that exceed the allowable height in the applicable zoning district:

1. Architectural Projections – non-occupiable and up to twenty-five feet in height; and
2. Mechanical Equipment - elevator shafts, skylights, stairwells and ventilation artia, up to ten feet in height and a maximum of fifteen percent of the total roof area.

Based on feedback from Current Planning staff that process rooftop projections as part of new development projects, these two types of allowable projections in the Zoning Ordinance have been problematic for projects with elevator shafts, mechanical equipment and other rooftop features because the code lacks clear definition of “projections.” Typically, elevator shafts are considered mechanical equipment, not projections. The current ten foot maximum for mechanical equipment in the Zoning Ordinance is not able to accommodate most elevator shafts. Therefore it is not clear which standard to use: a projection or mechanical equipment, both of which have different height standards. For example, some development projects have incorporated elevator shafts as part of the overall architectural design of the building and therefore assume that they fall under the allowable height for architectural projections, which have a more generous twenty-five foot maximum than the ten feet for mechanical equipment.

See Exhibit 6 for a comparison of rooftop projection standards in nearby municipalities.

With this zoning text amendment, staff recommends revising this section of the code, making it clear exactly what projection is permitted over the allowable height or roofline by how many feet (*i.e.*, some projections are measured from the roofline of the building while other projections areas measured based on the allowable height limit of the building, see Figure 1), and the maximum area it can take on the roof. Additionally, the Zoning Ordinance does not currently address sustainable energy generation equipment on the roof. The proposed zone text amendment includes language to allow for these features as well.

The proposed zone text amendment clearly addresses the requirements for the following allowed rooftop projections in both commercial and residential projects:

- 1) Sustainable energy equipment
- 2) Elevator shafts
- 3) Stairwells
- 4) Chimneys, vent stacks and windscoops
- 5) Parapets, fire escapes, catwalks, and open guard rails required by law
- 6) Non-occupiable architectural features such as steeples, spires, towers, domes and cupolas
- 7) Rooftop features for outdoor living areas, such as sunshade and open trellises
- 8) Mechanical rooms and enclosures, telecommunications facilities, ventilating fans, water tanks, cooling towers, or other equipment required to operate and maintain a building

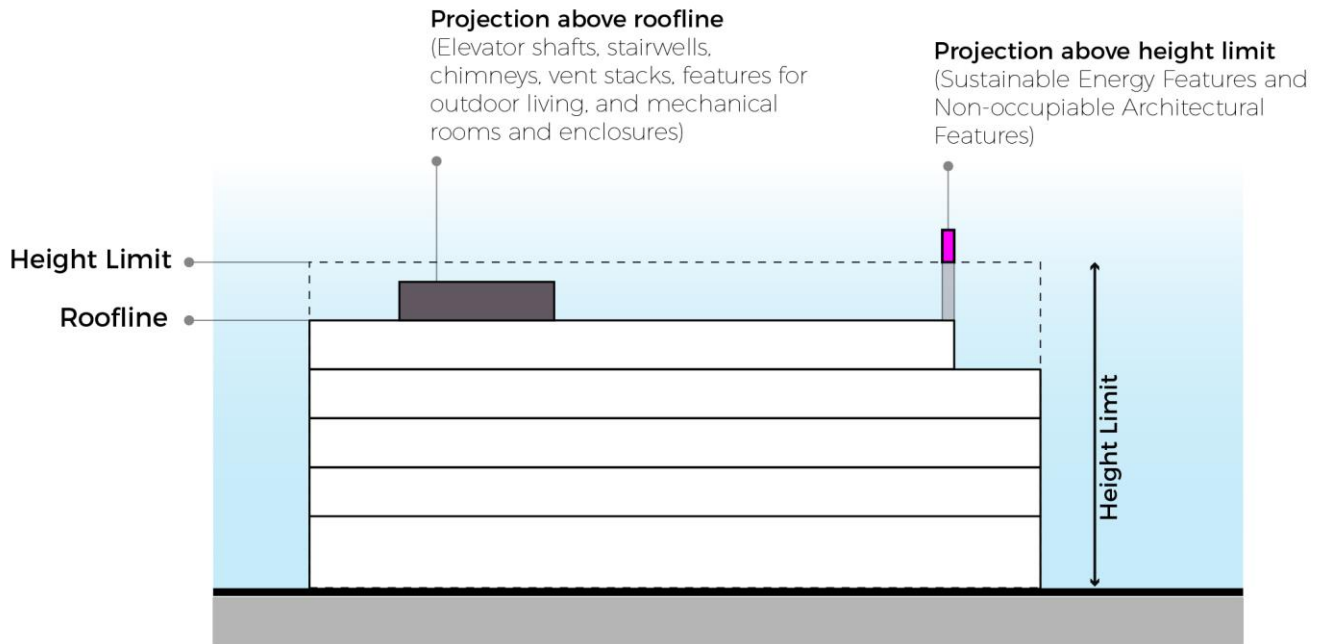


Figure 1 – Projections above the roofline vs projections above the height limit. Note that the roofline is typically already at the maximum height limit.

ALTERNATIVES

1. The Council could take no action at this time, and direct staff to return this item to council with the research on commercial height calculation at a future hearing date.

EXHIBITS

1. Ordinance No. 18-_____
2. Planning Commission Resolution 18-1286
3. Planning Commission Staff Report dated September 6, 2018
4. Planning Commission Minutes dated September 6, 2018
5. City Council Staff Report dated June 5, 2017- Initial Direction
6. Rooftop Projection Research