3 Removal of Height Transitions for Neighborhood Compatibility –21.06.030D.8.

ISSUE:

The draft AO 2015-059 would remove the 'Height Transitions for Neighborhood Compatibility' standard from the B-3, RO, R-4, and R-4A districts. This would render the Height Transitions standards useless by exempting nearly all districts that place taller buildings next to residential neighborhoods.

A specific rationale is not provided. There has been an assertion that the new code with the height transition reduces density and increases costs of housing. This claim uses the proposed City View II project. At the May 7 work session a developer's Outside consultant also claimed access to light is not a priority of zoning.

RESPONSE:

The proposal conflicts with site testing results, community priorities, and *Comprehensive Plan* objectives to protect existing neighborhoods while allowing greater density.

Key reasons to preserve the height transition include:

- Site testing shows that the new Title 21 with the Height Transition allows substantially more multifamily housing density than did the old Title 21. See (1) .
- The height transition improves the compatibility of new higher density buildings with adjacent lower density neighborhoods.
- It preserves the development capacity on the subject lot. Its function is to find the appropriate **placement** of taller buildings on the lot, with respect to adjacent residences.
- It **protects property values** on both sides of the fence, including the continued full enjoyment of residential property.
- Access to light and air is a fundamental part of zoning. The community has repeatedly stated it is important. Protections are becoming more important as redevelopment occurs in existing areas. See (2) and photo.

REFERENCES:

Title 21 Section 21.06.030D.8.

Proposed AO 2015-059 Section 4

Department's Proposed Title 21 Amendments, PZC Case 2015-49

(1) Site examples appear on pages 2 and 3. See also Attachment A studies, and Attachment B which is a study of City View II .

(2) Multistory structures have begun to pop up adjacent to residential areas. In the photo below, a ministorage building below backs up close to the south property line of a residential area near Tudor and Elmore.

New Title 21 enables even higher densities on a lot for multistory uses like offices and apartments, in part because of lower parking requirements.

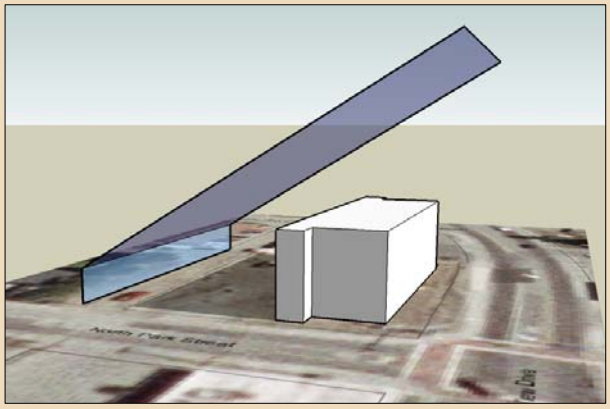
Continued…

3. Removal of Height Transitions for Neighborhood Compatibility – (2 of 3)

RESPONSE (Continued):

Height Transition Applied: Example Site 1

***4211 Mt. View* —3 stories / 35-feet on a shallow lot**



Height Transition applied: *4211* complies easily

Years of testing, refinement and public review has calibrated the height transition to avoid impacting the development potential of a commercial and multifamily properties.

Even the most shallow commercial lots backing up to residential districts have room to shift the building placement on the lot to be further away from the residential property, as demonstrated by this Cook Inlet Housing (CIHA) project.

The three story CIHA building easily passes the height transitions requirement while also maximizing the effective development potential of its lot. Parking is placed between the building and residential properties behind it.

See more about this and other examples in **Attachments A and B.**

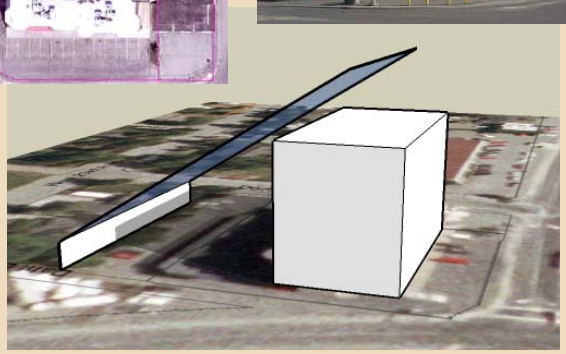
- The **'Exceptions'** subsection provides administrative relief where topography or lot size would restrict development.
- It provides alternative methods and gives applicants more discretion for achieving the objectives.
- The Department's recommended amendments through the Assembly Title 21 Committee process respond to specific concerns raised by the City View II site. (PZC Case 2015-0049)

Continued...

3. Removal of Height Transitions for Neighborhood Compatibility – (3 of 3)

RESPONSE (Continued):

Height Transition Applied: Example Site 2



Height Transition applied: *Woronzof complies, staying just below the maximum height plane*

The 73-foot tall Woronzof Tower on Fireweed Lane would also comply, falling a few feet under the height transition, though its site is only 200-feet deep abutting a residential zone.

The building is placed approximately **100 feet back from what would otherwise be only a 15 foot rear setback** from the house lots. This leaves room for its 2-bay wide parking lot in back to buffer the residences to the north from the building mass.

Woronzof was constructed before the current parking requirements. The Rewrite's parking section will make larger buildings possible again. See more in **Attachment A**.

- The height transition is calibrated to ensure **ambient daylighting** for residences at Anchorage's latitude of 61 ° North.
- It is also designed to allow **direct solar access** for residences for at least part of the day in spring, summer, and fall, at 61 ° North.
- It also addresses **compatible bulk, visual buffering,** and **privacy**.
- Experience elsewhere demonstrates that a strategy to grow by infill/ redevelopment has a greater chance of success if developments protect and contribute **to neighborhoods of lasting value**.

Example cities with height transitions :

- Seattle
- Spokane
- Denver
- New York City

RECOMMENDATION:

Preserve the Height Transitions, with the Department's amendments in PZC Case 2015-0049 .