



**4. Deletion of Floor Area Bonus System –21.04.020**

**ISSUE:**

The draft AO 2015-059 proposes to eliminate the bonus menu system for earning high density building bulk in the R-4 district. Under the system, buildings earn additional floor area beyond the building bulk allowed by-right on the site by providing bonus features from a menu of choices that mitigate the higher density. No rationale is provided.

**RESPONSE:**

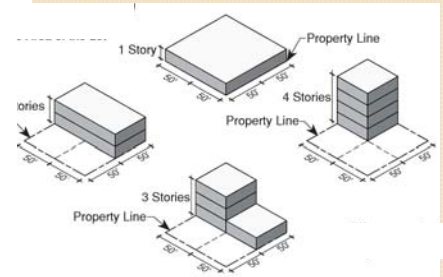
The bonus system for earning FAR in addition to 1.5 FAR by-right should be retained, with recommended amendments from the Department in PZC Case 2015-0049.

- The maximum building bulk for residences in the new code is the same as the old code for the R-4, B-3, and RO Districts. This is a longstanding safeguard that ensures appropriate bulk for high-density residential development in these districts.
- The old and new maximum allowed building bulk is a “floor-area-ratio” of **2 in the above districts**. (See 1.) This maintains a reasonable building scale relative to the size of its lot and setbacks, and intended neighborhood character.
- The bonus system, as adopted, applies to high density projects that exceed **1.0 FAR**. Projects earn additional floor area up to the maximum 2.0 FAR, by providing features from a menu.
- Site tests consistently show that example projects are able to earn up to the maximum FAR. Evidence is that the bonus system avoids inhibiting projects from achieving FAR.
- Instead, the bonus menu choices encourage projects to mitigate impacts of high density with public benefit features, such as active ground floor uses, daylighting, underground parking, wrapped parking, enhanced sidewalks, and amenities.
- The FAR bonus system allows for more than typically built. Few properties achieve even 1 FAR, as illustrated on the next page.
- Park Plaza II apartments at 16th and A is one of the highest density projects in recent decades. It incorporates two levels of structured parking, yet its FAR of 1.89 still falls below the maximum allowed bulk. (See 2.)

**REFERENCES:**

- Title 21 Chapter 21.04.*
- Proposed AO 2015-059*
- PZC Case No. 2015-0049 .*

(1) The bulk of a building relative to the size of its lot is measured as floor-area-ratio: the amount of floor area in the building compared to the area of the lot. The figure below shows an “FAR” of 1.



(2) **Park Plaza II** has a high residential density of more than 80 dwellings per acre, and a floor-area-



ratio of 1.89.

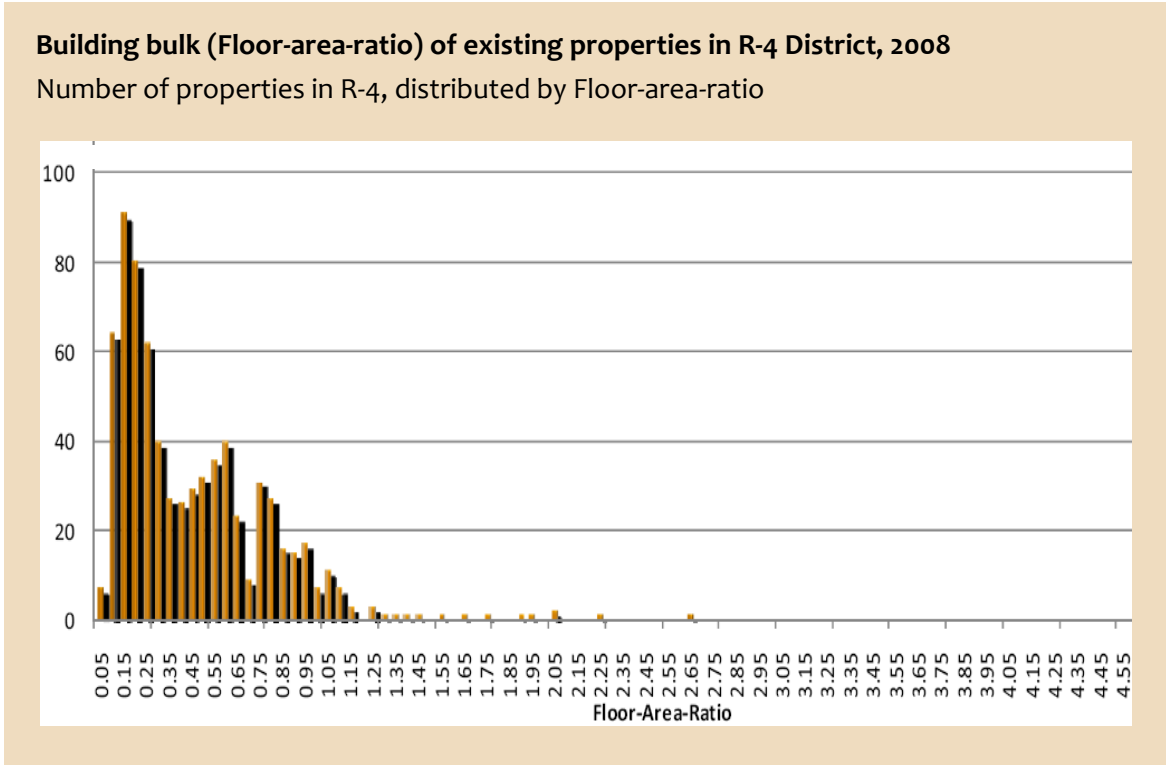
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**4. Deletion of Floor Area Bonus System (Continued)**

**RESPONSE CONTINUED:**



- There are a limited number of sites near Midtown and Downtown, which have potential for residential development at a higher density. For these cases, the provisionally adopted R-4A District is available, allowing an FAR of up to 3.
- Other communities with maximum FARs simply require some of the features that appear in the Title 21 bonus menu. This community directed its new code was to be more flexible and incentivize these features as menu choices.
- Many communities use bonus systems; the Anchorage system is a relatively simple one adapted from that of Mankato, MN and Bloomington MN.
- Deleting the FAR bonus system would eliminate one of the primary tools in Title 21 and used zoning practice widely elsewhere for incentivizing desirable development features.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Retain the bonus system for earning maximum allowed FAR, with a by-right 1.5 FAR in all districts.

