



MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 12, 2023

TO: Chair Ledell and Planning Commission members

CC: Rebecca Kennedy, Deputy Director Community Development,
rebecca.kennedy@cityofvancouver.us

FROM: Amy Zoltie, Real Estate Project Manager, Economic Prosperity and Housing Department

RE: **Additional Heights Plan District (HX) Code Revision**

Background

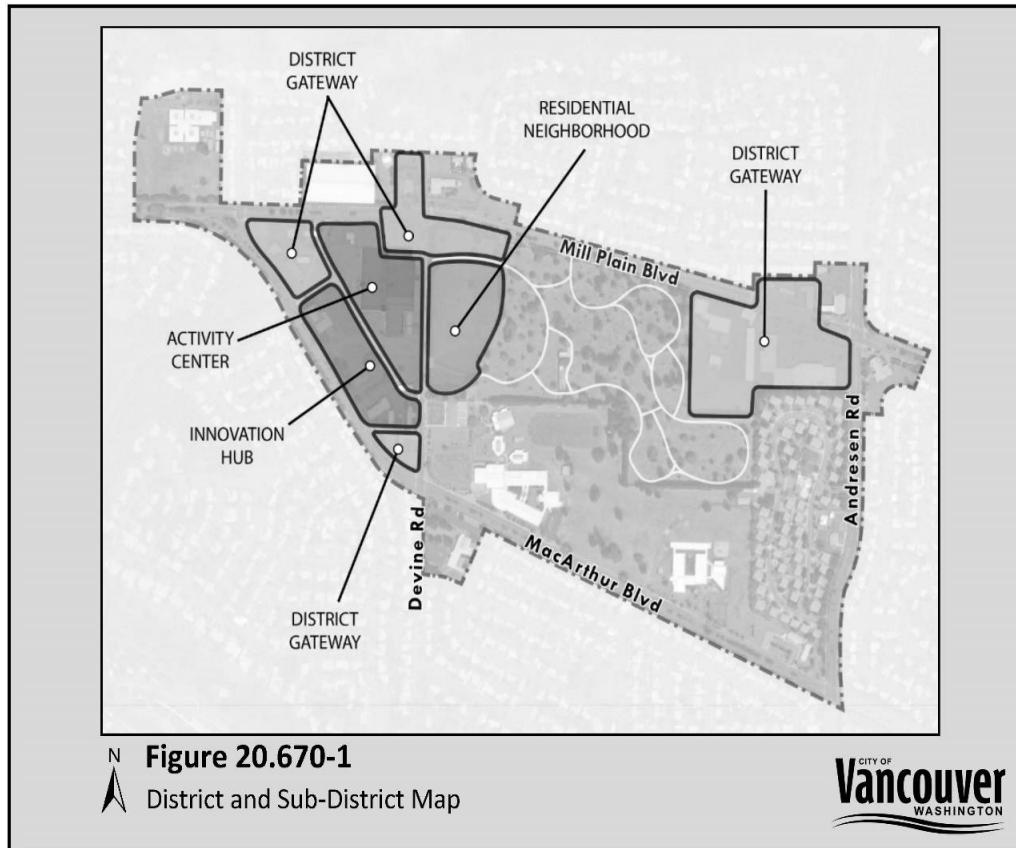
The Heights Mixed Use (HX) Plan District was adopted in 2021 following City Council's approval of the Heights District Subarea Plan in 2020 and after a lengthy community planning process that started with the acquisition of the Tower Mall property in 2017. The Heights District is envisioned as a vibrant 15-minute walkable neighborhood that is safe, accessible, equitable and sustainable, and includes a variety of amenities such as a civic plaza, neighborhood park, linear park spanning almost a mile looping around the Tower Mall site (Grand Loop), mixed-income housing, a variety of commercial space to offer entertainment and services to the community and multimodal travel opportunities throughout the district.

Since the adoption of the HX code, staff has been working to advance the next phases of plan implementation. The City entered into a contract with urban design firm First Forty Feet (FFF) to refine the layout of the district and design the infrastructure. FFF reviewed the Plan recommendations for the Tower Mall Redevelopment Area (TMRA) and recommended a suite of refinements to ensure future development meets the Plan goals and intent, which require several updates to the HX code.

Proposed changes to the Vancouver zoning code text or map not involving Comprehensive Plan changes may be considered at any time, subject to public hearing review before the Planning Commission and City Council. Code amendments were previously brought to the Planning Commission on March 14th and to Council on April 10th, which both indicating overall support for the code refinements. Staff has a couple of additional code changes that was not included in the March 14th discussion to review with the Planning Commission at the July 25th meeting. Staff anticipate bringing all the proposed code amendments forward for future Planning Commission and City Council hearings in the Fall.

Proposed Code Changes

1. Increase maximum building height in the District Gateway subdistrict from 50 feet to 55 feet for properties not abutting residentially zoned properties. For ease of reference, below is the District and Sub-District Map, Figure 20.670-1.



This additional proposed code change addresses a recently raised issue, which is that buildings in the District Gateway subdistrict that do not abut residentially zoned properties cannot develop to their intended building height of four stories and include ground floor commercial, given the requirement in VMC 20.670.040 B 2 that the ground floor of buildings must have a minimum of 16 feet floor to floor height. Increasing the overall building height to address this allows for mixed use buildings that include ground floor retail and three stories of housing above as envisioned in the Heights District Plan and maintain a consistent pedestrian retail experience throughout the district.

To be clear, this increased height limit does not apply to properties abutting residentially zoned properties.

Heights Plan District HX Code Updates

July 12, 2023

Page 3 of 3

2. Divide the definition of commercial frontage in two – Commercial Type 1 to define the active uses such as sales orientated retail and dining establishments and Commercial Type 2 to define all other commercial uses, except office.
3. Modify the Ground-Floor Uses diagram to allow for all types of commercial uses (i.e. Commercial Type 2) at the Safeway site on Mill Plain Blvd. and Andresen Road.

The proposed changes in bullet points 2 and 3 allow for more flexibility and help differentiate between the active retail uses required around the Civic Plaza and all other commercial uses in the District.

Summary of Previously Discussed Refinements for Reference

As a reminder, the code changes previously discussed at the March 14 workshop are;

- Update the *Ground Floor Use Map*, Figure 20.670-2 consistent with the Master Plan refinements for street layout and block formation.
- Modify the Ground-Floor Use Regulations by Frontage Type to promote active retail, entertainment, and dining oriented to the Civic Plaza.
- Adjust portions of text to maintain consistency and delete some unclear or non-essential narrative.
- Consider adding a new standard to regulate off-street parking access by limiting vehicle pedestrian, and bicycle conflicts and better promote non-motorized access and use of the Grand Loop.

Next Steps

Staff will return to the Planning Commission for a public hearing in the Fall with the complete package of code amendments and will return to Council for a workshop late Summer to address this additional code change with the intent to schedule a Council public hearing after the Planning Commission public hearing in the Fall.

Staff Contact Information

Amy Zoltie, Real Estate Project Manager, amy.stewart@cityofvancouver.us, 360-305-1909

Attachments:

Attached is a tracked changes copy of VMC 20.670 to identify the whole package of proposed changes.