



Fortin Group

ASSET MANAGEMENT

May 16th, 2014

Dan Stroh
Director of Planning & Community Development
City of Bellevue
450 110th Ave. NE
Bellevue, WA 98009

via Email

RE: Downtown - Future Development Standards

Dear Mr. Stroh:

For your May 21st agenda on Height and Form, Fortin Group wanted to use this opportunity to outline our views on this important topic. As we have done throughout the Citizen Advisory Committee process, at significant milestones, we have contributed our views for your consideration.

We felt now is a good time to pass along some high level development principles for your consideration. The topic of height is best discussed together with how projects plan and manage their entire site in context, how building bulk is controlled and how tower development can open up the ground plane to create a better public realm. The following attached exhibits outline and illustrate some key criteria for your consideration. We feel adopting these strategies will help advance the quality and livability in Downtown Bellevue.

As active, civic-minded property owners we share the CAC's desire to create an exceptional downtown for future generations. We sincerely appreciate the many hours that each CAC member has invested in improving our community and we look forward to working with you, the City Council, and the Planning Commission as we enter the next phase of the code revision process.

Sincerely,

Brittany F. Barker
Special Projects Manager
Fortin Group

CC: Patti Wilma, Community Development Manager
Emil King, AICP, Strategic Planning Manager

Exhibit "A" – Height Considerations for Multi Tower Sites

On multi-tower sites, rather than establishing one set height limit, consider introducing the ability to exchange approximately 20% of the height between towers. This would be structured so the cumulative number of floors and the FAR do not exceed the established baseline. Views, shadow impacts and the creation of sunlit public open space would be considered. The comparative diagrams below show how this kind of flexibility can accomplish a greater diversity and interest to the skyline and establish a hierarchy/focal point directed toward the taller, more iconic towers.

Additionally, creating standards that allow for rooftop treatments above the height limit such as common amenity rooms and architecturally integrated mechanical screening and elevator penthouses can add considerably to the aesthetic quality of a high-rise. Clearly any large sites seeking discretionary application of development standards should go through a thorough design review process where the applicant can demonstrate that an alternative solution can improve the outcomes for a specific site and be measured in terms of both public benefits and improved project design. The diagrams below illustrate this point. Both have the same FAR:

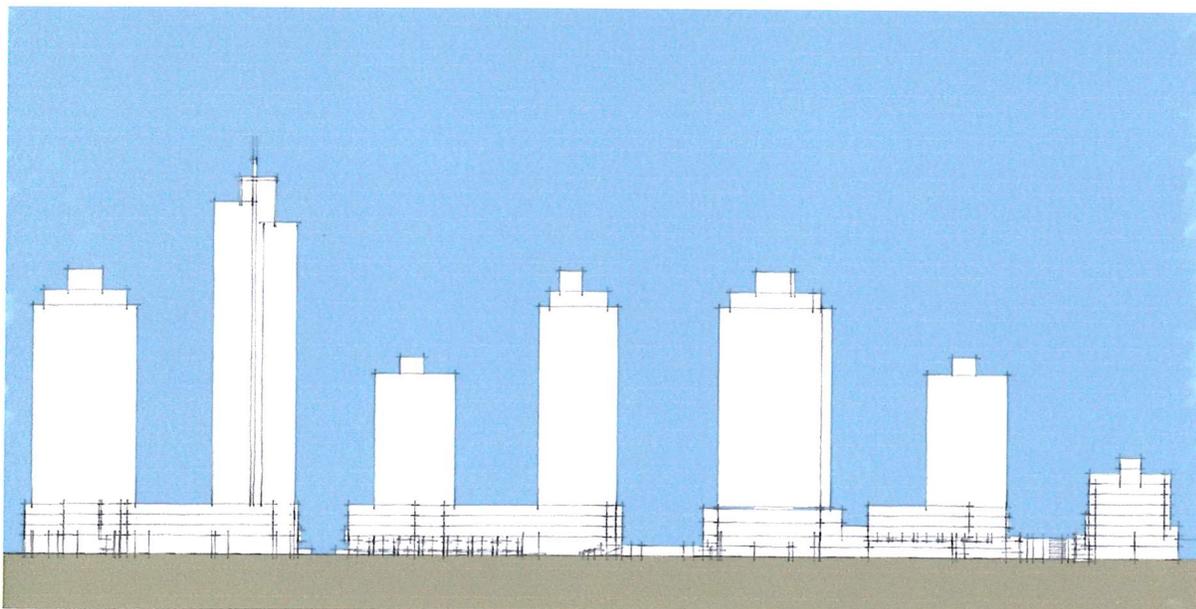
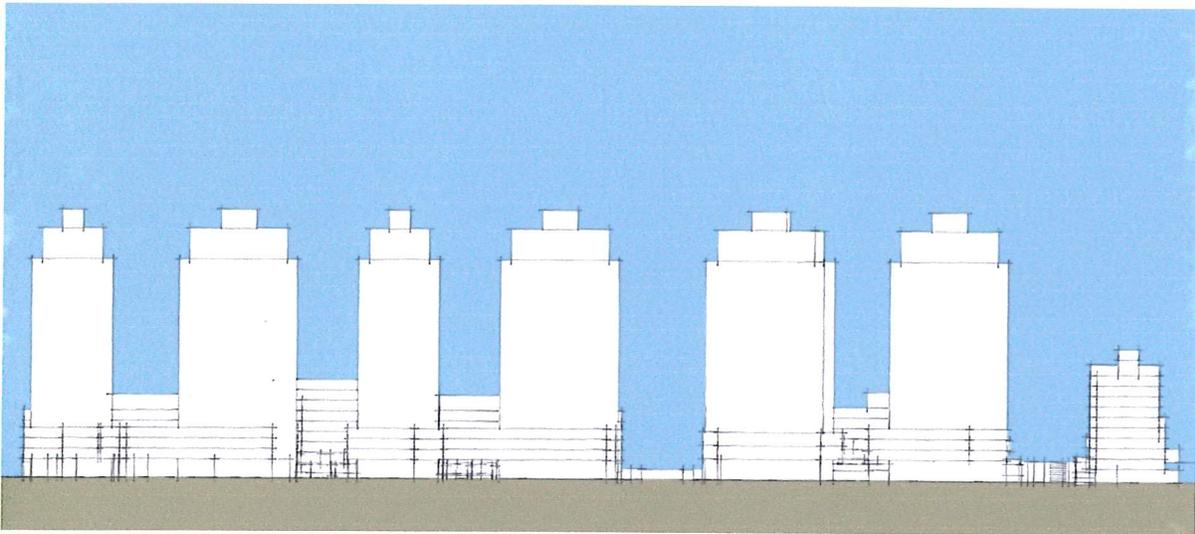


Exhibit “B” – Height Considerations with Bulk Control

Bulk Control: Any discussion of height is incomplete without understanding how to best manage the massiveness of a high-rise project. Tower spacing and staggering requirements relative to the floor plate size and the type of use should be considered. Keeping ground level podiums low enough helps diminish the impacts of a tower, as does setting back towers from podium edges. We are happy to assist the city to understand how to compose these various standards as this process moves forward.



Exhibit “C” – Amenity Incentive Considerations

Bellevue’s current amenity incentive program, while needing revised priorities and metrics, is actually set up as a welcomed discretionary system. Also, fee-in-lieu options ensure flexibility and allow for more viable or usable amenities off site. We feel this is a good approach to maintain so specific sites can respond to contextual conditions and develop creative, win-win scenarios. We agree that certain amenities should be prioritized and more heavily rewarded, especially those that consume development area and require costly site compromises and mitigations, such as underground parking and creating public open space. The following conditions should be considered for the amenity incentive program as highly rewarded priorities:

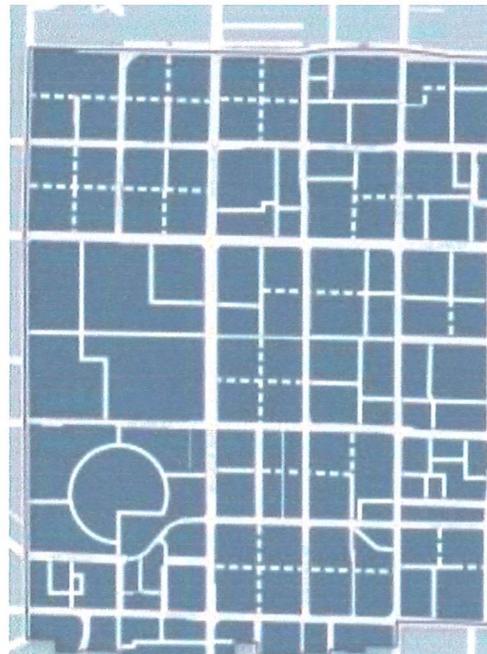
1. **Through Block Pedestrian Crossings, Open Space, Pocket Parks and Public Plazas:**

Space, Pocket Parks and Public Plazas:

The private sector can help create these exceptionally valuable public amenities, but they require considerable contributions of developable land area. They often will require the developer to commit to costly underground parking rather than above grade parking. These items should be one of the most highly rewarded options in the amenity incentive program.



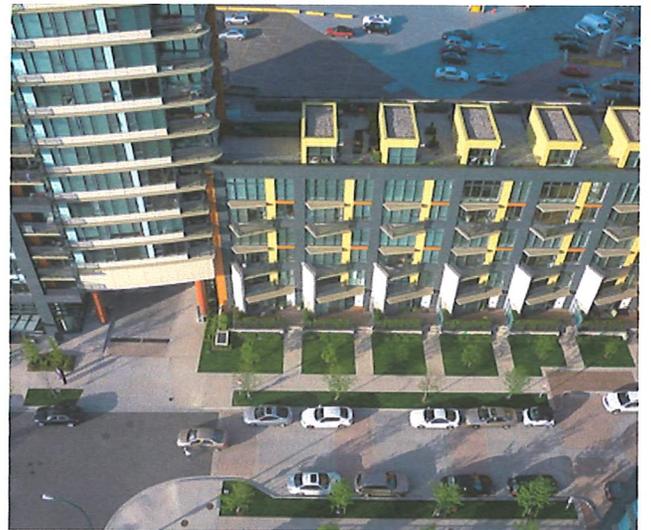
2. **New Street Grid:** Bellevue’s downtown street grid is based on a generous 600’ x 600’ grid, which is about twice as large as in most older, more walkable cities. It limits mobility choices, creates traffic congestion and discourages walking. Any project that can better distribute traffic and pedestrians and offer more porousness to the grid will help. Adding a new street through private property is extremely costly and can take tens of thousands of square feet out of the development site. New cross streets, as an amenity bonus features, should receive a heavily weighted multiplier to offset the required land area and capital costs.



3. **Sidewalk Widening and Streetscape Improvements:** Development should be encouraged and rewarded for setting buildings back to create sidewalk widening along perimeter streets. This promotes walkability and allows greater room for sidewalk cafes, retail displays, landscaping and more street furnishings. Even widening a sidewalk by 1' to 2' can make a tremendous difference.



4. **Curb Widening For Street Parking:** Bellevue lacks street parking, which is critical for smaller retailers whose patrons who only need short term parking. Creating street parking (where acceptable by the transportation department) would require a sacrifice of 8' of lineal private development area for parallel parking and about 20' for back in angle parking. The success of small retailers and the creation of vital and active streetscape would be improved by including these area improvements in the bonus amenity program. Street parking also helps buffer pedestrians from traffic and allows deeper planting areas on the sidewalks between stalls.



5. **Neighborhood Supportive Retail:** An essential element of livability is the having everyday needs within walking distance. Grocery stores, drugstores and other symbiotic retail that serve the immediate neighborhood, rather than the greater region. Alternative to the incentive bonus, the area of these amenities could be exempted from FAR calculations.

