



What is Floor Area Ratio?

Floor Area Ratio, or FAR, is a measure of development intensity expressed as the ratio of gross building floor area to site area. For example, if a 10,000-square-foot building occupied a 20,000-square-foot site, its FAR would be expressed as 0.50, indicating that there is 1 square foot of building area for each 2 square feet of land area. If that same site contained a 2,000-square-foot building, the FAR would be 0.10 because the building area is equal to 10% of the land area.

What is the purpose of FAR?

Bellevue's FAR provisions limit the intensity of office development in office and commercial land use districts outside of the Downtown. They encourage construction of office buildings of 50,000 square feet or less. This helps lessen impacts of bulk and scale on surrounding uses. Office buildings larger than 50,000 are not prohibited but are subject to stricter FAR limits, which require proportionately more land to support the increased building size. Proposed building size determines the amount of land required for development.

What are Bellevue's FAR limits? *

Individual office buildings (and office portions of individual buildings) located in the PO, O, OLB, LI, GC, NB, or CB land use districts must comply with FAR limits*. Buildings with a gross floor area of 50,000 square feet (SF) or less are allowed a FAR of 0.50.

As building size increases above 50,000 SF, the allowable FAR decreases. A 100,000-SF building is allowed a maximum FAR of 0.30. A 150,000-SF building is allowed a maximum FAR of 0.10. Basically, for each 2,500-square-foot increase in building size over the first 50,000 square feet, the permitted FAR is reduced by 0.01. The chart below displays permitted FAR for building floor areas in increments of 2,500 square feet. FAR for floor areas between those shown on the chart is determined through interpolation. For example, each additional 250 square feet of gross floor area will reduce the

permitted FAR by 0.001. All FAR limits are based on the gross office floor area of the building.

**If the site includes a critical area as designated by Land Use Code (LUC) 20.25H, these FAR limits do not apply. See LUC 20.25H.045.C for the applicable FAR provisions.*

Can you give me an example?

Suppose you want to construct 150,000 square feet of office space but are undecided whether to construct it in one building or multiple buildings. Here are some scenarios showing different building sizes and applying the FAR from the chart on the reverse side to determine required lot area for each:

Scenario 1 – single building:

Bldg size - 150,000 SF / 0.10 FAR
= 1,500,000 SF minimum site area
1,500,000 total minimum site area required.

Scenario 2 – three buildings:

Bldg 1 size – 70,000 SF / 0.42 FAR
= 166,667 SF minimum site area *PLUS*

Bldg 2 size – 40,000 SF / 0.50 FAR
= 80,000 SF minimum site area *PLUS*

Bldg 3 size – 40,000 SF / 0.50 FAR
= 80,000 SF minimum site area *EQUALS*
326,667 total minimum site area required.

Scenario 3 – three buildings:

Bldg 1 size - 50,000 SF / 0.50 FAR
= 100,000 SF min. site area *PLUS*

Bldg 2 size – 50,000 SF / 0.50 FAR
= 100,000 SF min. site area *PLUS*

Bldg 3 size – 50,000 SF / 0.50 FAR
= 100,000 SF min. site area *EQUALS*
300,000 total minimum site area required.

As you can see, Scenario 3, which keeps all buildings at or below 50,000 square feet, requires the least amount of land area.

Floor Area Ratio Chart

Building Size in Gross SF	FAR	Required Minimum Site Size in SF	Building Size in Gross SF	FAR	Required Minimum Site Size in SF
10,000	0.50	20,000	110,000	0.26	423,077
25,000	0.50	50,000	112,500	0.25	450,000
50,000	0.50	100,000	115,000	0.24	479,167
52,500	0.49	107,143	117,500	0.23	510,870
55,000	0.48	114,583	120,000	0.22	545,455
57,500	0.47	122,340	122,500	0.21	583,333
60,000	0.46	130,435	125,000	0.20	625,000
62,500	0.45	138,889	127,400	0.19	671,053
65,000	0.44	147,727	130,000	0.18	722,222
67,500	0.43	156,977	132,500	0.17	799,412
70,000	0.42	166,667	135,000	0.16	843,750
72,500	0.41	176,829	137,500	0.15	916,667
75,000	0.40	187,500	140,000	0.14	1,000,000
77,500	0.39	198,718	142,500	0.13	1,096,154
80,000	0.38	210,526	145,000	0.12	1,208,333
82,500	0.37	222,973	147,500	0.11	1,340,909
85,000	0.36	236,111	150,000	0.10	1,500,000
87,500	0.35	250,000	152,500	0.09	1,694,444
90,000	0.34	264,706	155,000	0.08	1,937,500
92,500	0.33	280,303	157,500	0.07	2,250,000
95,000	0.32	296,875	160,000	0.06	2,666,667
97,500	0.31	314,516	162,500	0.05	3,250,000
100,000	0.30	333,333	165,000	0.04	4,125,000
102,500	0.29	353,448	167,500	0.03	5,583,333
105,000	0.28	375,000	170,000	0.02	8,500,000
107,500	0.27	398,148	172,500	0.01	17,250,000

What is meant by “gross floor area”?

Gross floor area means the total number of square feet within the inside finished wall surface of the outer building walls of a structure, excluding vent shafts, stairwells, and atriums. For purposes of calculating FAR, gross floor area also excludes parking and mechanical areas.

Where can I get additional information?

- LUC 20.20.010, Dimensional Chart, Note 9
- LUC 20.50.020, Definitions of *Floor Area*, *Gross* and *Floor Area Ratio*
- LUC 20.50.022, Definition of *Gross Square Feet*
- LUC 20.20.032, Definition of *Low Intensity*
- LUC 20.25H.100C, FAR in Critical Areas

This document is intended to provide guidance in applying certain Land Use Code regulations and is for informational use only. It cannot be used as a substitute for the Land Use Code or for other city codes, such as the Construction Codes. Additional information is available from Development Services at Bellevue City Hall or on the city website at www.bellevuewa.gov.

For land use regulations that may apply to your project, contact the Land Use Information Desk in Development Services. Phone: 425-452-4188. E-mail: landusereview@ci.bellevue.wa.us. Assistance for the hearing impaired: dial 711.
