

What is the FAR Amenity Incentive System?

The FAR Amenity Incentive System is the Land Use Code (LUC) process whereby a proposed Downtown development project can secure the Basic Floor Area Ratio and achieve the Maximum Floor Area Ratio permitted for the land use district in which the project is proposed. The purpose of the FAR Amenity Incentive System is to ensure the provision of those amenities that are essential to the creation of the urban environment envisioned by the Downtown subarea policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

All Downtown development is permitted a “basic” FAR. The FAR Amenity Incentive System requires development to participate at a basic threshold level and encourages greater participation in exchange for increased development potential up to the maximum FAR limit permitted by the land use district.

What is FAR and how is it calculated?

FAR is a measure of development intensity expressed as the ratio of building floor area to site area. It is determined by dividing the gross floor area (GFA) of the building (excluding parking and mechanical areas) by the area within the project limit (i.e., the development parcel). GFA equals the area inside the exterior walls of a building, excluding interior openings in floor plates (e.g., vent shafts, stairwells, and interior atriums), outdoor courts, and exterior balconies.

Example:

Proposed GFA: 230,000 square feet
Project Limit: $\frac{230,000 \text{ square feet}}{77,000 \text{ square feet}} = 2.99$

The FAR of the proposed 230,000-square-foot building on the 77,000-square-foot site is 2.99.

Is all Downtown development required to participate in the Amenity Incentive System?

All new development and all remodels adding more than 50 percent gross floor area must participate in the system. Smaller expansions may be required to participate if the basic permitted FAR is exceeded. In order to secure the Basic FAR, each new residential, nonresidential, and mixed-use building is required to provide a threshold amount of one or more of the following amenities:

- Pedestrian-oriented frontage
- Landscape feature
- Arcade
- Marquee
- Awning
- Sculpture
- Water feature
- Active recreation area (Downtown-R only)
- Retail food (Downtown-R only)
- Child care services (Downtown-R only)
- Plaza (along certain rights of way only)
- Residential entry courtyard (only applicable to residential buildings on certain rights of way)

The amount of bonus floor area in square feet generated by the amenities chosen from this list must be equal at least 20 percent of the project limit area in square feet times the Basic FAR permitted for a nonresidential building in the land use district. The list of amenities that may be used to secure the Basic FAR is sometimes referred to as the “short list.”

How do I calculate the amount of amenities needed to meet the Basic FAR requirement?

Simply multiply the site area (project limit) by nonresidential Basic FAR for the land use district. Then take 20 percent of the total. For example, a 30,000-square-foot site in the DNTN-O-2 district is allowed a Basic FAR of 4.0. $4.0 \times 30,000 = 120,000$ square feet. 20 percent of 120,000 square feet = 24,000 square feet. This project must include amenities from the “short list” in the amount necessary to generate at least 24,000 square feet of bonus floor area. Refer to the complete list of amenities in LUC 20.25A.030 for the amount of additional floor area that each of the amenities from the “short list” will provide.

How can I exceed the Basic FAR?

The amenity floor area generated from the “short list” above may be used to exceed the Basic FAR. A developer may seek additional FAR, up to the permitted maximum, by providing amenities chose from the complete list in LUC 20.25A.030.

How much bonus FAR can be earned?

That depends on the type of development proposed (residential vs. nonresidential) and the land use district in which the development is located, as shown in the following table. Other considerations, discussed below, can affect allowable FAR. Ratios may differ in the Perimeter Design District

Downtown Floor Area Ratios

Land Use District	Building Type	Basic FAR	Max FAR
DNTN-O-1	Nonresidential	5.0	8.0
	Residential	5.0	None
DNTN-O-2	Nonresidential	4.0	6.0
	Residential	4.0	6.0
DNTN-MU	Nonresidential	0.5	3.0
	Residential	2.0	5.0
DNTN-R	Nonresidential	0.5	0.5
	Residential	2.0	5.0
DNTN-OLB	Nonresidential	0.5	3.0
	Residential	2.0	3.0

What can affect potential FAR?

Mix of uses. Where residential and non-residential uses occur in the same building, the FAR for residential use applies to the entire building if more than 50 percent of the GFA is devoted to residential uses. Otherwise, the FAR for nonresidential use applies.

Certain retail use. Some ground-level and upper-level retail will not be counted in FAR calculations. See the *Design Guidelines Building/Sidewalk Relationships* and LUC20.25A.020B for more information.

Certain right of way dedication. Land which is dedicated to the city for right of way without compensation to the owner in conformance with LUC 20.25A.020.D.2 is included in land area of the site for the purpose of computing FAR.

How does the Perimeter Design District affect FAR?

Different Basic and Maximum FARs apply in the Perimeter Design District (PDD) than elsewhere in the Downtown. The boundaries of each subdistrict within the PDD are defined in LUC 20.25A.090.A. Each subdistrict can include land in more than one Downtown land use district.

Allowable FAR is determined by a combination of the subdistrict, the building type, and the underlying Downtown land use district, as shown below. In Subdistricts A & B, certain retail, service, educational, and cultural entertainment and recreational uses, listed in LUC 20.25A.090. D.4, are excluded from the gross building area and are not counted in FAR calculations

Perimeter Design District Floor Area Ratios

Sub-district	Building Type	Basic FAR	Max FAR
A	Non-residential	0.5	DNTN-MU: 1.0 DNTN-OB: 1.0 DNTN-R: 0.5
	Residential	2.0	3.5
B	Non-residential	0.5	DNTN-MU: 1.5 DNTN-OB: 1.0 DNTN-R: 0.5
	Residential	2.0	5.0
C	Non-residential	0.5	3.0
	Residential	2.0	5.0
	Mixed Use	0.5	3.0

In Subdistrict C, nonresidential FAR may exceed 1.5 only by providing neighborhood services and residential uses. Neighborhood services include retail hardware, retail food, drugstores, personal services, child care services, gasoline service stations, and retail garden supplies.

The maximum FAR of 3.0 for mixed use buildings (a building type applicable only in sub district C) is the limit of all nonresidential uses in the building. In no case may the total FAR exceed 5.0.

Can FAR be transferred to another site?

Bonus FAR can be transferred to another site, subject to the following:

- Bonus floor area earned through the Amenity Incentive System for a specific parcel of land may be transferred to an abutting parcel of land in the same ownership.

- Bonus floor area earned for actual construction of the major pedestrian corridor or a major public open space, as required by LUC 20.25A.100, may be transferred to any other property within the area bounded on the west by Bellevue Way, on the north by NE 8th St., on the east by 112th Ave. NE, and on the south by NE 4th St. These properties may use the transferred floor area only to the extent that the building height does not exceed limits depicted on the Land Use Code map entitled "Height Limits in the Core Design District."
- No more than 25 percent of the GFA of a proposed project may be transferred floor area. This limitation does not include floor area generated by construction of the Major Pedestrian Corridor or Major Public Open Spaces or for the floor area generated by the neighborhood service or residential use special bonus provisions in Perimeter Design District subdistrict C.
- The property owner must record each transfer of floor area with the King County Division of Records and Elections and with the Bellevue city clerk.
- Notwithstanding any provision of the Land Use Code, no transfer of floor area occurs when all property is included in one project limit.

Where can I get additional information?

- LUC 20.25A, Downtown
- LUC 20.15A.115, Design Guidelines: Building/Sidewalk Relationships
- LUC 20.50, Definitions of *Floor Area*, *Gross Floor Area Ratio*, *Major Pedestrian Corridor*, *Project Limit*, *Substantial Remodel*

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.

