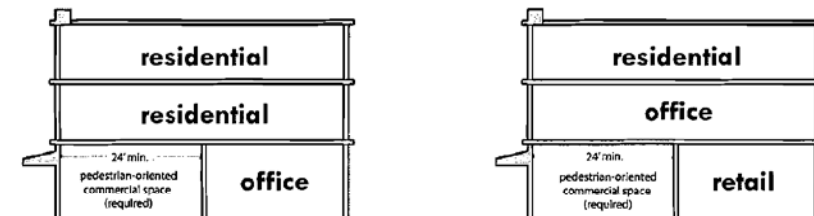


OVERVIEW OF VERTICAL MIXED USE (VMU) AND THE VMU OPT-IN/OPT-OUT PROCESS

WHAT IS A VERTICAL MIXED USE BUILDING?

A vertical mixed use building contains a mix of residential and commercial uses. Typically, commercial uses (i.e. retail shops, restaurants, offices) are located on the ground floor, while residential units (condominiums or apartments) are located on upper levels. Below, are some examples of a vertical mixed use building:



WHAT IS THE VERTICAL MIXED USE (VMU) OVERLAY DISTRICT?

In an effort to encourage vertical mixed use buildings, the City Council established a vertical mixed use (VMU) overlay district. The district includes most commercially zoned and used properties along Core Transit Corridors and Future Core Transit Corridors as defined in the Commercial Design Standards. Core Transit Corridors include roadways that have or will have a sufficient population density, mix of uses, and transit facilities to encourage and support transit use. Examples include sections of South Congress Avenue, Riverside Drive, North and South Lamar Boulevard, and Guadalupe Street. Properties within this district have the additional option to develop a vertical mixed use building subject to specific design standards.

WHY VERTICAL MIXED USE BUILDINGS?

- Encourages density on commercial corridors with higher levels of transit service
- Focused on the creation of a high quality pedestrian and transit-supportive environment
- Consistent with Envision Central Texas (ECT) Preferred Scenario
- Provides a more sustainable development pattern

WHAT ARE THE STANDARDS FOR A BUILDING?

- Must have a mix of uses
- Must have pedestrian-oriented spaces on the ground floor
- Must contain residential dwelling units
- Possibility for relaxed site development standards—some of which require a residential affordability component

WHAT ARE THE RELAXED SITE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS?

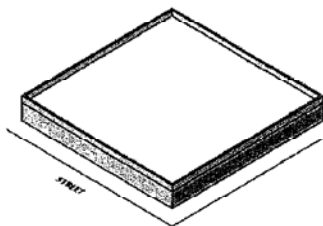
Dimensional Standards

These dimensional standards listed below are a “package” and must be accepted or rejected as such in the opt-in/opt-out process.

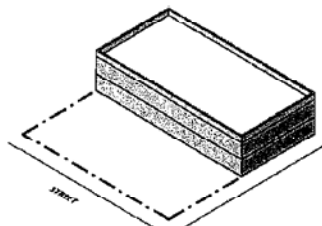
- Setbacks—no minimum front, street side or interior side yard setbacks. A setback refers to how far a building must be placed from a particular property line.
- Floor to Area Ratio—no floor to area ratio (FAR) limit.

The floor area ratio (FAR) is the principal bulk regulation controlling the size of buildings. FAR is the ratio of total building floor area in relation to the area of its zoning lot. Each zoning district has an FAR control which, when multiplied by the lot area of the zoning lot, produces the maximum amount of floor area allowable in a building on the zoning lot.

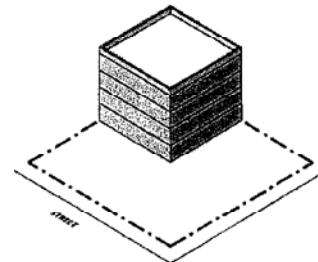
For example, on a 10,000 square-foot zoning lot in a district with a maximum FAR of 1.0, the floor area of a building cannot exceed 10,000 square feet.



FAR=1.0
10,000 sq. ft. building
covering 100% of lot



FAR=1.0
10,000 sq. ft. building
covering 50% of lot



FAR=1.0
10,000 sq. ft. building
covering 25% of lot

- Building Coverage—no building coverage limit. Most zoning districts place a percentage limit on the amount of a lot that may be covered by a building. This provision would not change the amount of impervious cover allowed on site. Impervious cover is anything that stops water from being absorbed into the ground and includes such things as buildings, driveways, and sidewalks.
- Minimum Site Area—no “minimum site area” requirements. Site area requirements limit the number of dwelling units on a site by requiring a certain amount of square footage at a site for a specific type of multi-family unit (efficiency, one-bedroom, two-bedroom, etc.). For example, if a zoning district for a 10,000 square foot lot requires 2,500 square feet for each two-bedroom unit, then four two-bedroom units can be built on that lot.

Off-Street Parking Reduction

Minimum off-street parking for the commercial uses within a VMU building can be reduced to 60% of the normal Land Development Code requirements. Residential uses within a VMU building receive this parking reduction by right and cannot be changed through this process. The parking reduction cannot be used in addition to any other parking reduction allowances

such as the one for properties within the Urban Core. Below are some typical uses and the amount of parking required.

- A small restaurant or bar, billiard parlor—one space per 100 sq/ft of floor space
- Convenience Store, bank, bowling alley, liquor store, barber shop, yoga studio, pet shop—one space per 275 sq/ft of floor space
- Furniture or carpet store—one space per 500 sq/ft of floor space

Additional Ground Floor Commercial Uses in Office Districts

If approved through the opt-in/opt-out process, the following commercial uses will be allowed in a VMU building in an office zoning district (**NO, LO, GO**):

- Consumer convenience services (allows private postal boxes, safety deposit boxes, and ATMs)
- Food Sales (allows grocery stores, delicatessens, meat markets, retail bakeries, and candy shops),
- General Retail Sales Convenience and General (allows a full range of retail establishments)
- Restaurants Limited and General (without drive-thrus).

Zoning use information can be found starting on page 45 of the following document:
http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/zoning/downloads/np_guide.pdf.

WHAT IS THE OPT-IN/OPT-OUT PROCESS?

The City Council established a one-time process whereby neighborhoods provided recommendations on the location and the development characteristics of Vertical Mixed Use (VMU) buildings. Application materials were sent to each registered neighborhood planning team, or neighborhood association if there was not an established planning team.

The Neighborhood Planning & Zoning Department is currently in the process of reviewing the application submittals and forwarding the neighborhood recommendations to Planning Commission and City Council. The Planning Commission reviews the neighborhood requests and forwards a recommendation to City Council. After considering the Neighborhood's and Planning Commission's recommendations, the City Council makes a decision on the vertical mixed use application.

WHAT TYPES OF RECOMMENDATIONS CAN BE MADE BY THE NEIGHBORHOOD?

- 1) Amend the boundaries of the vertical mixed use overlay district to remove a property from the overlay district. If a property is removed from the overlay district, a vertical mixed use building is not permitted on the property.
- 2) Allow for the vertical mixed use building option on properties outside of the VMU Overlay. A neighborhood can recommend to opt-in a commercially zoned property with any of the relaxed dimensional standards.
- 3) VMU Overlay District Opt-Out—the neighborhood can recommend to remove some or all of the relaxed site development standards to the VMU eligible properties within the overlay district.

- 4) **Affordability Level**—If VMU Buildings are approved through the opt-in/opt-out process and take advantage of the dimensional and parking exemptions they are subject to certain affordability requirements.

Owner-Occupied Units—Five percent of residential units shall be affordable for households earning no more than 80 percent of the current Median Family Income (MFI). Five percent of the residential units shall be affordable for households earning no more than 100 percent of the MFI. The affordability period is 99 years.

Rental Units—Ten percent of the residential units shall be affordable for households earning no more than 80 percent of the current MFI. As part of the opt-in/opt-out process, a neighborhood association or neighborhood planning team may request that the affordable rental units be available for renters earning a lower percentage of the median family income. This percentage can range from 80% to as low as 60 percent of the median family income. The affordability period is 40 years.

OTHER FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

DO I HAVE TO BUILD A VERTICAL MIXED USE BUILDING IF I GET REZONED THROUGH THE OPT-IN/OPT-OUT PROCESS?

The vertical mixed use combining district adds an additional development *option* to a property. Any property owner that gets their property rezoned through the opt-in/opt-out process to add the vertical mixed use building “V” combining district will still have the right to (re)develop under their existing base zoning district.

HOW HIGH CAN A VERTICAL MIXED USE BUILDING BE BUILT?

A vertical mixed use building cannot be built any higher than the base zoning district. For example, if your zoning is GR-V (community commercial-vertical mixed use building-combining district), the height limit would be 60 feet which is permitted under GR zoning.

IF THERE IS NO MINIMUM FRONT, STREET SIDE OR INTERIOR SIDE YARD SETBACKS CAN A VMU BUILDING BE BUILT RIGHT ON MY PROPERTY LINE?

The City of Austin requires compatibility standards to help minimize negative impacts between low-intensity and high-intensity uses. Any lot zoned for condominium, multifamily, office, commercial, or industrial uses must comply with compatibility standards if it is adjacent to, across the street from, or within 540 feet of a single-family zoning district or use.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF/WHEN A VERTICAL MIXED USE BUILDING IS BEING CONSTRUCTED?

Any property owner/developer who chooses to construct a vertical mixed use building must submit a site plan to the City. Site plans approval requires a public hearing before the Planning Commission. All property owners and registered neighborhood organizations within 300 feet of a proposed vertical mixed use development will be notified of the public hearing via US Mail.

WHAT CAN I DO IF I DO NOT AGREE WITH THE NEIGHBORHOOD RECOMMENDATION?

The Opt-In/Opt-Out process includes two public hearings, first at Planning Commission and then at City Council. If you do not agree with the neighborhood recommendations you can submit a public comment form or email the zoning case manager with your comments. All comments will be forwarded to both Planning Commission and City Council. There is also an opportunity to attend the public hearings and state your comments directly to the Commissioners and City Council members.

HOW CAN I GET A VMU BUILDING ON MY PROPERTY IF I AM NOT IN THE OVERLAY DISTRICT?

Any property owner can apply for a rezoning of their property to add the vertical mixed use building "V" combining district. The Planning Commission reviews the applicant's request and forwards a recommendation to City Council.

IF THERE IS NOT A MINIMUM BUILDING COVERAGE REQUIREMENT, ARE THERE ANY OTHER LIMITATIONS ON BUILDING COVERAGE ON A LOT?

The City's impervious cover limits and compatibility standards will still apply.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE COMMERCIAL DESIGN STANDARDS AND VMU?

http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/planning/downloads/Subchapter_E_Design_Standards.pdf

<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/planning/verticalmixeduse.htm>