



CITY OF RAPID CITY

RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA 57701-2724

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Rapid City Planning Commission

FROM: Marcia Elkins, Director *me*

DATE: November 26, 2008

RE: Building Height Requirements in General Commercial Zoning District

The Planning Commission has requested that staff review the maximum building height requirements allowed in the General Commercial Zoning District. Two concerns were expressed: the maximum height of motels allowed at Interstate interchanges, specifically the Elk Vale Road and Interstate 90 interchange; and, the use of taller than normal entry areas and the impact on the overall height of the building.

Zoning Ordinances nearly always include some standard for building heights in General Commercial zoning districts. The requirement limits the effect the building mass will have on the light and air provided to adjacent properties. While some codes – typically in large urban centers - provide complicated formulas relating to building height and setback or floor area ratios, most more recently adopted codes and codes in small cities provide a simple maximum height limit.

Currently, the Rapid City Municipal Code allows a maximum building height of 45 feet or four stories in the General Commercial Zoning District. Based on the definition of building height, the height of the structure is measured to the mid-point of the peaked roof line. This results in many cases structures with an actual overall dimension that exceeds 45 feet.

Staff researched several other communities in the region and identified the following standards:

Sioux Falls Maximum height in General Commercial District is 45 feet measured to the highest point of the roof or gable;

Fort Collins Maximum height of four stories in Community Commercial District and maximum height of five stories in Commercial District



EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

Billings Maximum height of 45 feet in Community Commercial and Highway Commercial Districts based on the highest point of the building (can be increased by 10% with a pitch of greater than 7:1);

Lincoln Maximum height of Commercial District is 35 feet if abutting residential district or 45 feet if not; maximum height in Interstate Commercial District is 55 feet with the required setback increasing for every foot over 45 feet; maximum height in General Commercial is 55 feet with a fifty foot front yard setback (setback increases for every foot over 45 foot height to a maximum of 60 feet);

Des Moines Maximum height of 45 feet (four stories for residential and three stories for commercial) in General Retail and Highway Oriented Retail.

Based on the standards in similar communities, the current standard of 45 feet or four stories is consistent with the requirements of a number of other communities in our region. In fact, based on the way the building height is measured pursuant to the Rapid City Municipal Code, the actual physical height is greater for structures in Rapid City than in other communities with the same height standards.

In evaluating the potential for increasing the maximum height allowed in the General Commercial, staff identified concerns with the impact an increased building height could have on adjoining residential properties in areas such as along Jackson Boulevard, Mount Rushmore Road, LaCrosse Street and other commercial corridors. Staff also noted that maximum building height increases have been approved through the Planned Commercial Development process where the topography and the lot configuration relative to the surrounding property accommodated the increase in height (Founder's Park condominium tower and Tower Ridge condominium tower.) Staff also identified other areas where increased building height may be appropriate including commercial nodes such as some of the Interstate interchanges and the SD Highway 44 interchange with Elk Vale Road (U.S. 16B.) The use of the Planned Commercial Development review process could be used in those instances to increase the building heights where appropriate.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends no change in the maximum allowable building height allowed in the General Commercial District.