

Memo

DATE: December 10, 2019

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Brandon Goldman, Senior Planner

RE: Plaza Space Requirements

ORDINANCE REFERENCE: 18.4.2.040 D. 2 Public Spaces

Background

The Planning Commission and staff were approached by a local property owner who suggested that the requirements for plaza space in the Detail Site Review (DSR) overlay functioned to discourage new multi-story development within the downtown. Within the Detail Site Review overlay plaza spaces must be incorporated into projects when building square footage is greater than 10,000 square feet. This required plaza space is to be equal to 10% of the building's total gross floor area and must incorporate four out of six listed design elements.

The Planning Commission reviewed the detail site review standards as they relate to plaza space requirements for multistory developments at a study session on [August 26, 2019](#). The Planning Commission's discussion explored how this "plaza space" standard could be reconsidered in the City's Detail Site Review overlay and discussed specific considerations within the downtown historic district relating to maintaining the historic pattern of development.

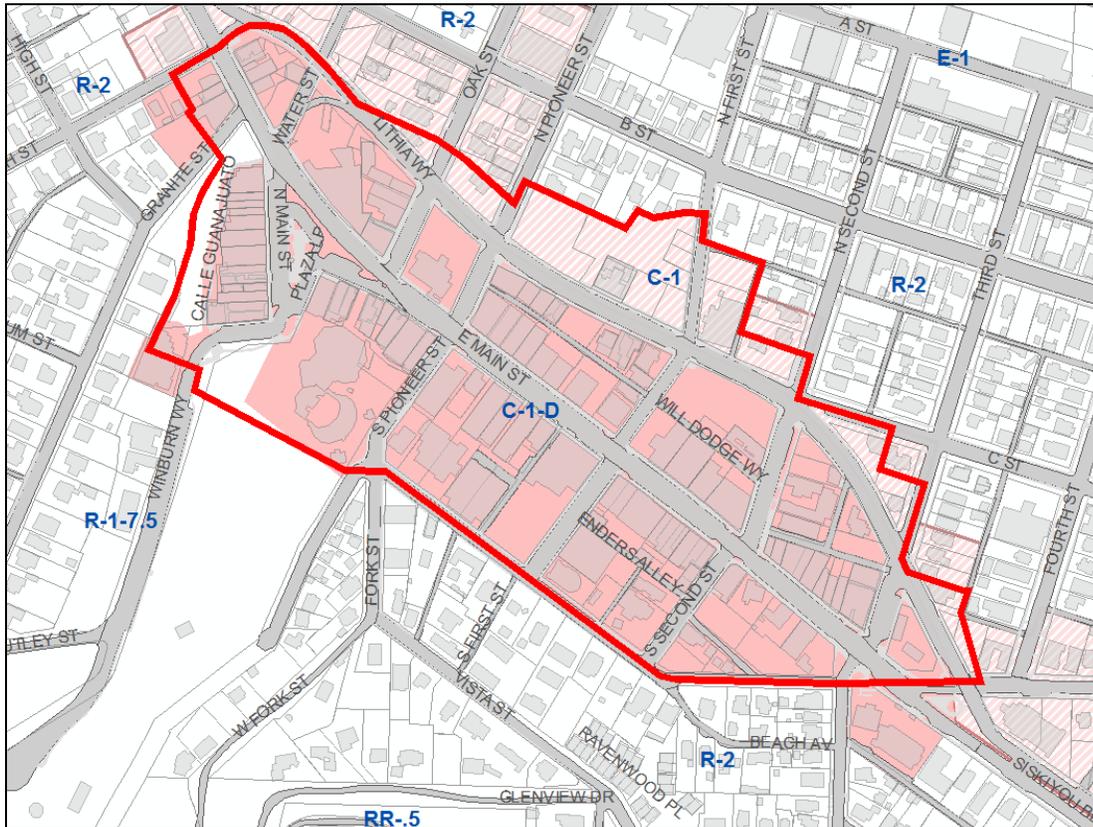
On October 15th, 2019, the City Council directed planning staff to work with Planning Commission to prepare amendments to the Land Use Ordinance to address the application of plaza space standards for large scale buildings within the Downtown Design Standards overlay area. This focus will allow proposed code amendments to specifically consider the impact on future multi-story developments within the context of the downtown historic district and downtown central business district (C-1-D zone). A comprehensive or complete review of the plaza requirement and its effect on other areas of the City could be undertaken as a separate action at a future date.

Consistent with the direction provided by the City Council, Staff has crafted potential ordinance amendments for the Planning Commission's consideration that would result in reducing the requisite amount of plaza space required for new buildings with floor areas of 10,000 or greater in the downtown area. Additionally, to clarify that such spaces are on private property, and not technically "public", the terminology in the initial draft ordinance language attached to this memo has been changed to consistently refer to "plaza space". Although private plaza spaces are

seemingly accessible to members of the public these sites are subject to private landowner restrictions, which may cause confusion regarding allowable use and access by the general public.

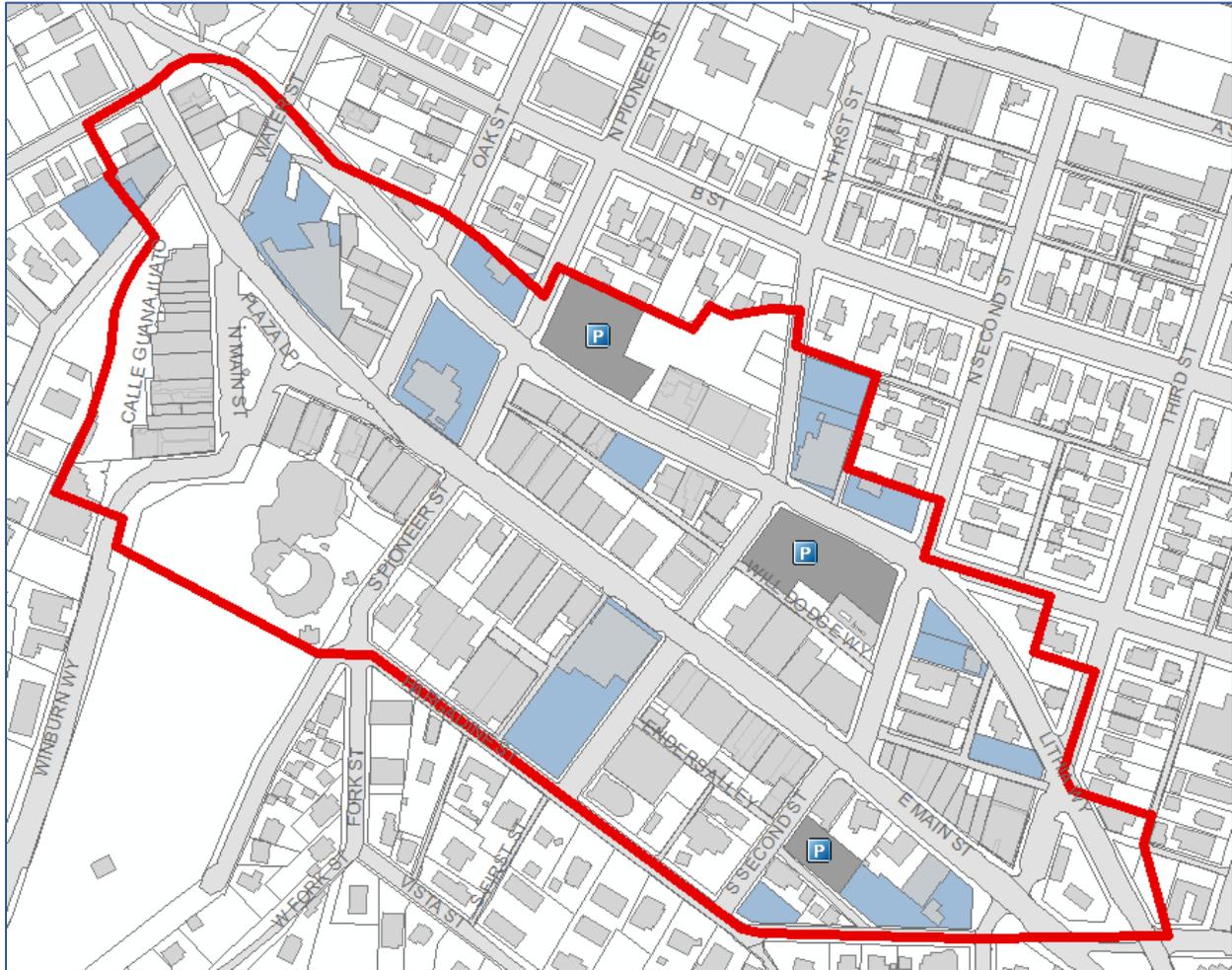
Downtown Design Standards Boundary and C-1- Zones.

The map below shows both the Downtown Design Standards boundary (bold red line), and the Commercial Downtown, C-1-D, zone (lots with solid filled pink color). Although most of the C-1-D zoned lots fall within the Downtown Design Standards overlay boundary five properties are C-1-D zoned that either bisected, or adjacent to, the boundary line. Additionally, 16 properties on the north side of Lithia way are within Downtown Design Standards Overlay area but are not in the C-1-D zone. By including both designations within the area covered by any proposed amendment to the plaza requirements we can ensure continuity in design elements through application of the ordinance in the entire downtown area. Specifically, by applying a consistent design standard on each side of Lithia Way the development of this area can better respect the traditional rhythmic spacing of historic buildings along E. Main Street.



Existing Downtown Boundary and C-1-D zones

The map below identifies currently vacant or partially vacant properties that could potentially develop or redevelop with buildings exceeding 10,000 square feet in floor area (the trigger for plaza space requirements). Surface level parking lots (both public and private) are also shown as on-site parking is not required within the C-1 D zone and thus the potential exists for these properties to be further developed.



Vacant and Potentially re-developable C-1-D and Downtown lots

Commission Direction

Staff requests that the Commission provide direction to Staff regarding the Commission's preferred option(s) addressing the requisite amount of plaza space within the Downtown Design Standards overlay and Commercial Downtown zone. With such direction staff will schedule formal public hearings for the legislative amendment to the land use code.

The options presented within the draft code language on page 5 of this memo can be compared to the existing adopted standard which requires one square foot of plaza or public space to be provided for every ten square feet of gross floor area. Staff has provided several potential

outcomes for the existing standard and of the two options presented in order to help facilitate discussion.

Existing Standard: One square foot of plaza space required for each 10sq.ft. of gross floor area (10%) for buildings 10,000 square feet or greater. This standard applies to the combined area of the first, second and third stories of a building, whereas the fourth story is excluded from the calculation.

- Provides increased opportunities for private outdoor spaces for outdoor cafés, sitting, landscaping, public art, etc.
- Creates a reduction in total gross floor area that can be developed due to the percentage of lot area that must be reserved as plaza space.
- Reduces available ground floor commercial space.
- Creates a disincentive for multi-story construction due to increasing percentage of lot area on the ground floor to be dedicated as plaza space.
- Construction cost increases possibly in order to cantilever upper stories over a designated plaza space, or alternatively a reduction of upper story floor area due to incorporating a horizontal offset to accommodate the plaza space.
- Challenges re-development through added design constraints.
- May function to break the continuity of the historic built environment of shared wall commercial buildings built to the sidewalk edge.

Option 1. Eliminates requirement for any private plaza space in the downtown area for new or redeveloped buildings.

- Eliminates required plaza space thus private open-spaces will only be provided voluntarily.
- Maintains the character and historic pattern of development along N. Main Street where buildings are built to the sidewalk and to the lot lines on either side.
- Floor area reductions attributable to required plaza space for multi-story developments are eliminated, thus increases potential gross floor area on new or redeveloped buildings.
- Reduces potential constraints to redevelopment and multi-story development.
- Potential increase in the visual mass of buildings as a result of the elimination of ground level offsets in the building façade formerly designed and intended to accommodate plaza spaces.

Option 2. Reduce the requirement for private plaza space in the downtown area to apply to the area of the ground floor only, for a building 10,000 square feet or greater.

- Maintains some plaza space for outdoor commercial activities and seating, landscaping, public art, etc.
- Reduces total gross floor area that can be developed due to percentage of lot area that must be reserved as plaza space.

- Reduces available ground floor commercial space.
- Construction cost increases possible in order to cantilever upper stories over a designated plaza space, or alternatively a reduction of upper story floor area due to incorporating a horizontal offset to accommodate the plaza space.
- Floor area reductions attributable to required plaza space for multi-story developments are reduced compared to the existing plaza space standard.

Potential Detail Site Review Overlay Non-residential Development Standards amendments:

18.4.2.040 D. 2. **Public Plaza Spaces Standards.**

a. One square foot of plaza ~~or public~~ space, shall be required for every ten square feet of gross floor area, except for the fourth gross floor area.

b. OPTION 1: Within the, C-1-D zone or Downtown Design Standards Overlay, no plaza space shall be required.

OPTION 2: Within the C-1-D zone or Downtown Design Standards Overlay, one square foot of plaza space shall be required for every ten square feet of the gross floor area of the first floor only.

b c. A plaza ~~or public~~ spaces, shall incorporate at least four of the following elements.

i. Sitting Space – at least one sitting space for each 500 square feet shall be included in the plaza. Seating shall be a minimum of 16 inches in height and 30 inches in width. Ledge benches shall have a minimum depth of 30 inches.

ii. A mixture of areas that provide both sunlight and shade.

iii. Protection from wind by screens and buildings.

iv. Trees – provided in proportion to the space at a minimum of one tree per 500 square feet, at least two inches in diameter at breast height.

v. Water features or public art.

vi. Outdoor eating areas or food vendors.

d. Exception to Plaza Space Standards. An exception to the plaza space standards may be granted pursuant to [18.5.2.050.E](#) Exception to the Site Development and Design Standards.