Memorandum

To:	Cynthia Berne, Long Bay Enterprises
From:	Sierra Carson, AICP Candidate, Chad Weiser
Copies:	File
Date:	May 23, 2022
Subject:	Edmonds BD2 Zoning Analysis—Recommendations
Project No.:	20793

Purpose

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide recommendations to Edmonds City Staff and City Council on potential code changes to the BD2 zoning regulations. The findings of this analysis indicate no significant revisions to the code are required, although some minor refinements in code language and standards should be considered. The recommendations include suggested code changes to the requirements for the BD2 zone to address inconsistencies and to improve the ease of development for owners and developers in achieving the intent of the allowances within the zone.

Summary of BD2 Zoning

Development in the BD2 zone is regulated through the development standards located in Edmonds Community Development Code (ECDC) Chapter 16.43. New buildings in the BD2 zone located along a Designated Street Front must have a street level floor with commercial uses at a minimum 12 foot height. New buildings located outside of the Designated Street Front are not required to have commercial uses on the first floor and may be multifamily residential (only) buildings.

New buildings in the BD2 zone are limited to 30 feet in height. Height is defined as the vertical distance from the average level of the undisturbed soil of a site covered by a structure to the highest point of the structure. Buildings located along a Designated Street Front are allowed to place commercial storefronts below grade with limitations as defined in the code. No off-street parking is required for new commercial or retail uses, and one parking space is required per multifamily residential unit. Public open space is required in new developments on lots of 12,000 square feet or more or on lots with 120 feet or more of street frontage. Please reference the Edmonds BD2 Zoning Memo for additional information.

Summary of Comparable Cities

Other Puget Sound communities similar to Edmonds, such as Mukilteo and Snohomish, have similar downtown zoning requirements as Edmonds, although Edmonds has more subsets of their Downtown Business District zoning. Mukilteo and Snohomish are similar in size and scale to Edmonds including their downtown areas. In general, the Downtown Business District zoning is very comparable between all three communities including permitted uses and bulk/dimensional standards. However, there are some minor, but notable differences. Both Mukilteo and Snohomish have higher maximum height requirements (35

and 40 feet respectively) than Edmonds, but in comparison, require more off-street parking for both commercial and residential uses. Mukilteo restricts residential development on the ground floor of new buildings in their downtown business zone similar to Edmonds BD2 regulations for Designated Street Front, while Snohomish has no restrictions on the location of residential development. Please reference the Zoning Memo – Additional Research on Comparable Cities for additional information.

Recommendations

Permitted Uses

Permitted uses in the BD2 zone are listed in ECDC 16.43.020. No changes to specific permitted uses are recommended. It is recommended to revise the use table ECDC 16.43-1 to clarify where multi-dwelling housing is allowed to eliminate the inconsistencies in language regarding the allowance of all residential development in the BD2 zone when not on a Designated Street Front.

Site Development Standards (setbacks, height)

Site development standards for the BD2 zone are located in ECDC 16.43.030.(A). Existing regulations limit building development in the BD2 zone to 30 feet in height. The analysis shows that a 30-foot building height with a required 12-foot first floor height puts constraints on mixed use development within the downtown core. Requiring a 12-foot commercial first floor along with a 30-foot height limit, constrains the ability of a developer to build three stories on many sites within this zone. It is possible to develop a 3-story mixed use building while meeting the code requirements for the BD2 zone if the site has sloping topography and the commercial space is, in part, set below existing adjacent grade. By using the average grade methodology for measuring building height, as defined in the code, developers have been able to achieve a third floor. The addition of a third floor to a mixed use development project within the existing height limits often results in needing to build a partially subterranean first floor. The below grade commercial space impacts the aesthetics, marketability and desirability of street front commercial as well as the general streetscape appearance in the downtown business district. Examples of developments in the downtown business district where these regulations have impacted development have been included for reference, see Figures 1, 2, and 3 below.

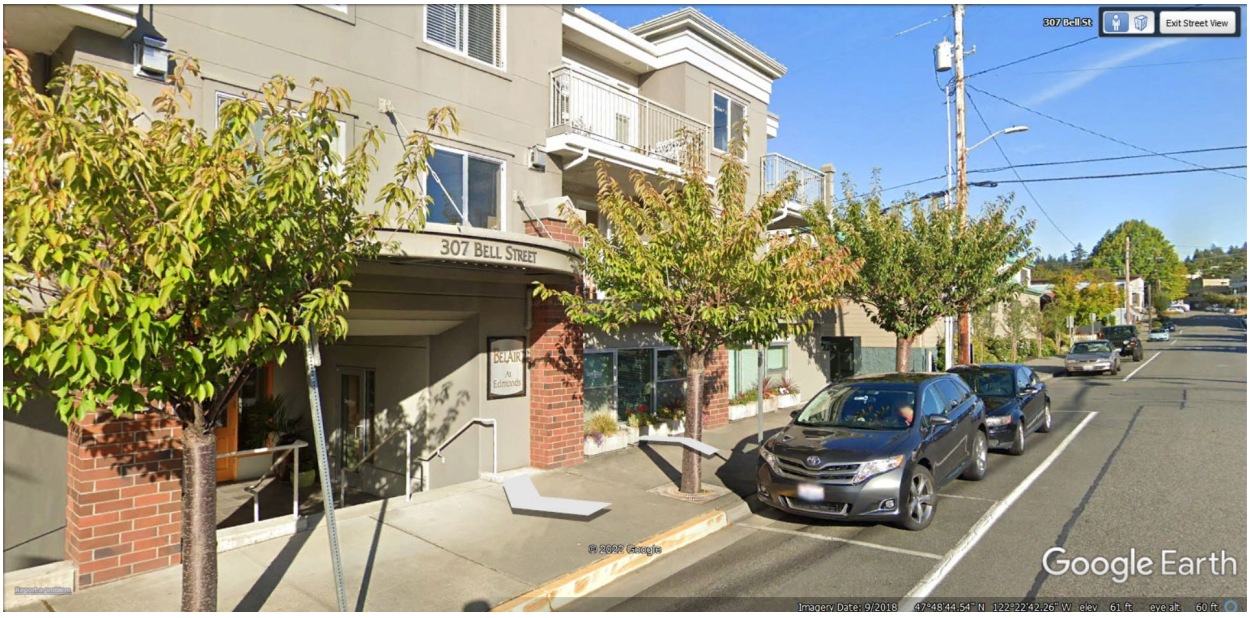

Figure 1. Three story development with a below grade commercial entrance.

It is recommended a minor increase in allowed building height be considered in the BD2 zone, as well as any other BD zones similarly affected. This height increase would create more flexibility for a developer to design a 3-story mixed use development. An increase of two (2) to five (5) feet in building height would encourage more 3-story mixed use redevelopment by making a third story feasible on more sites and allowing already feasible sites to be developed in a manner that avoids less desirable subterranean first floor commercial space. This recommended change is intended to make the Designated Street Front commercial requirement as feasible to integrate into a 3-story development as developing an all-residential development. Any increases in height should be crafted with code language that limits all BD2 development to no more than 3-stories in height.

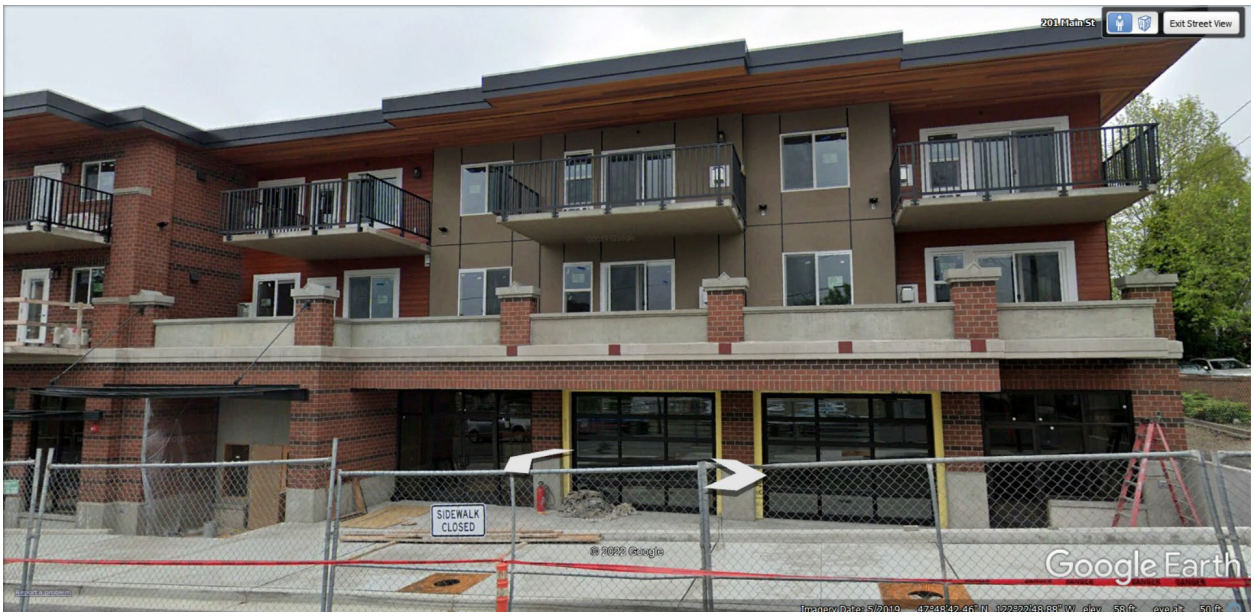

Figure 2. Three story development with a below grade commercial entrance.

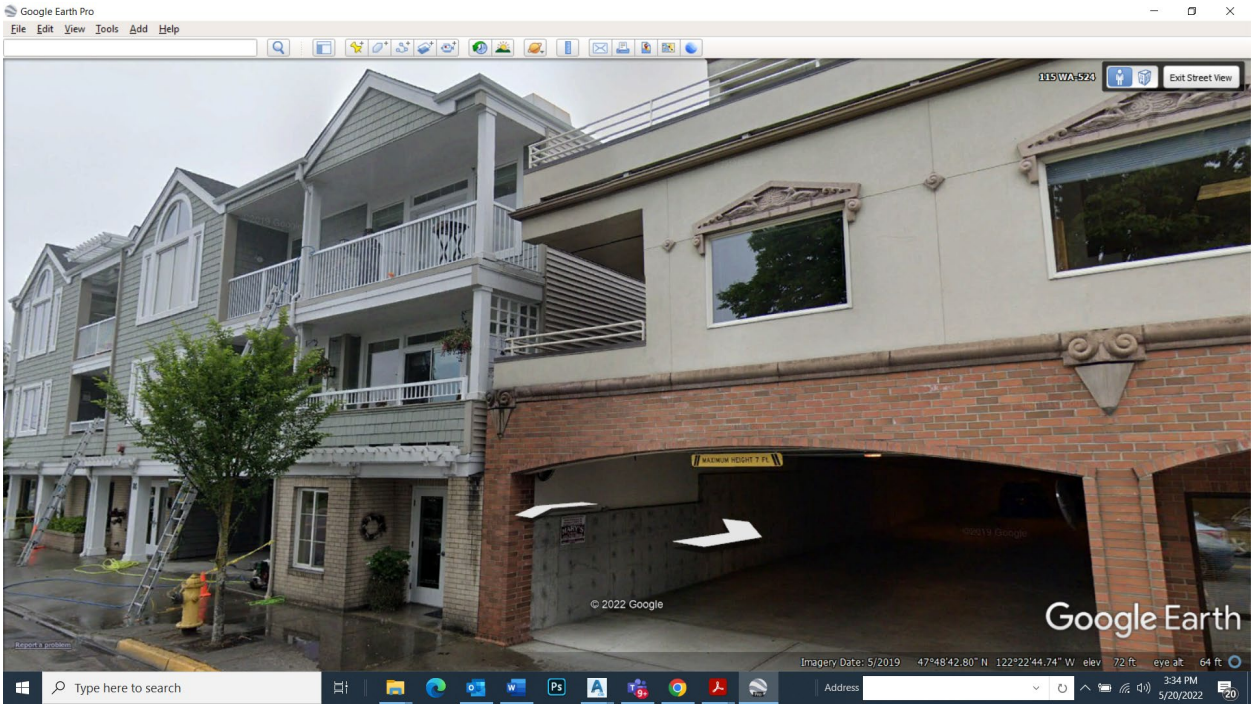

Figure 3 – A multi-family residential building (left) adjacent to a Mixed Use Building (right) showing the 3-foot height difference in the first floor

Designated Street Front

Regulations for the Designated Street Front are located in ECDC 16.43.030.(B). The extent of Designated Street Front as reflected on the Designated Street Front Map (EDCD Map 16.43-1), could be expanded based on the discretion of the City Council and the City's goals for the downtown business district. An expansion of the extents of Designated Street Front should be addressed in the context of the other noted recommendations.

Off-Street Parking

Off street parking regulations in the BD2 zone are located in ECDC 16.43.030.(D) The existing off-street parking regulations are more flexible than comparable cities and do not negatively impact the ability to develop parcels in the BD2 zone. As long as the community is not experiencing a negative impact from a less stringent parking requirement in the downtown area, no changes are recommended for this requirement.

Open Space

Open space regulations in the BD2 zone are located in ECDC 16.43.030.(E). No changes are recommended for the Open Space regulations.