



Town of Vinton Planning and Zoning

Proposed Dimensional Revisions



INTRODUCTION TO THE REVISIONS

The following proposed changes involve revisions to the dimensional standards for lots in various zoning districts in the Town of Vinton. The dimensional standards in question involve setback distance, building height, and potential lot coverage requirements.

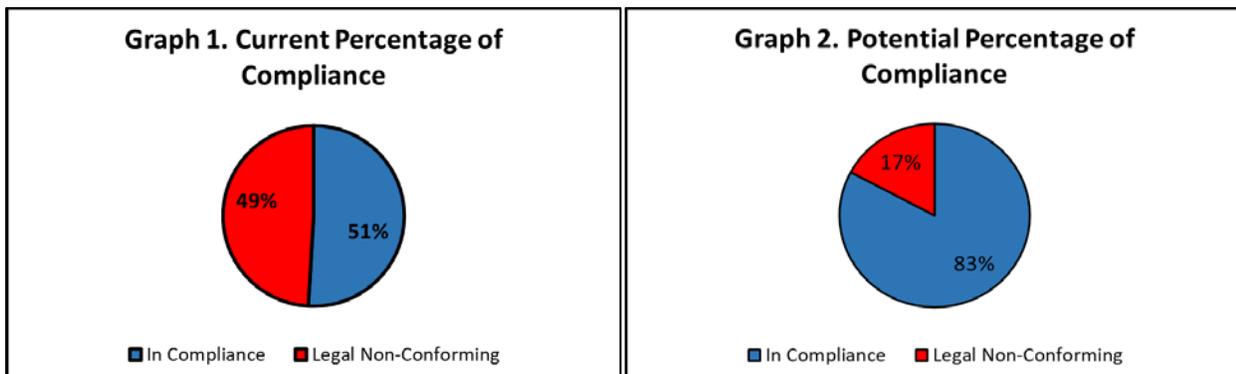
R-B RESIDENTIAL-BUSINESS FRONT YARD SETBACK REDUCTION

Suggested Changes:

- Reduce the front yard setbacks from **25 ft. to 15ft.**
 - Justification: Most of the R-B zoning is along Washington and Virginia Avenues. There are a number of older homes converted or converting to commercial uses with non-conforming front setbacks smaller than 25 ft. The reduced front setback would bring many of these into conformance. The reduced setback also promotes walkability. The 15 ft. front setbacks would allow development closer to the sidewalks while still providing appropriate separation from traffic on the arterial roadways.

Graph 1 shows that currently 49% of all the properties zoned R-B are not in compliance with the 25 feet setback requirements in a legal non-conforming way. Graph 2 show the percentage changes in compliance that would take place if the setback requirements were reduced to 15 feet. The data reveals this change would allow for 83% of the total properties zoned R-B to become compliant with the new zoning regulations. The change would allow for a 32% increase in compliant R-B properties and reduce legal non-conforming R-B properties to account for a mere 17% of the total.

Overall, implementing this recommendation allows for more properties to become compliant with the zoning code and foster a pedestrian friendly environment for current and future developments in R-B districts.

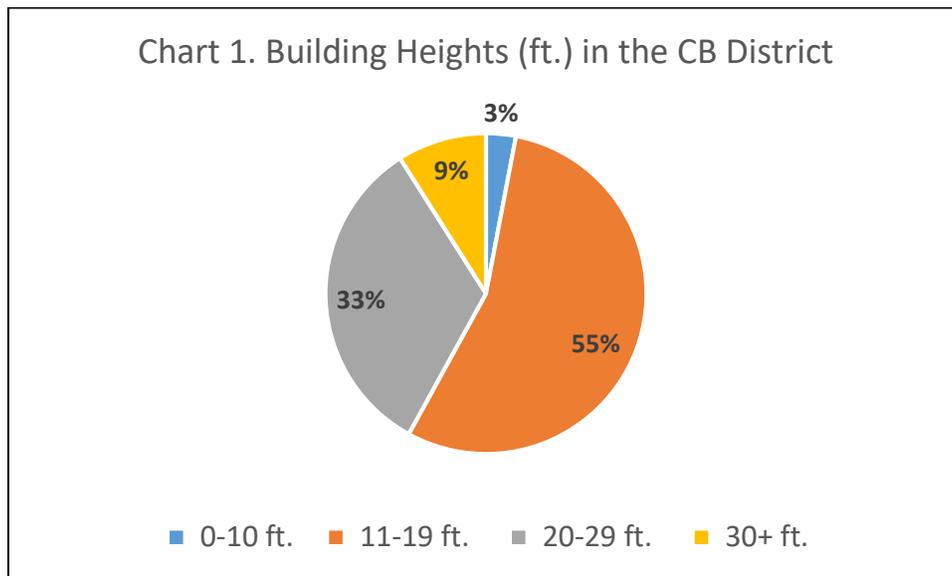


PROPOSED CHANGES IN THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

INCREASE BUILDING HEIGHT LIMIT

Revision:

- The first major recommendation is to increase the height limit in this district from **35 feet to 45 feet or four (4) stories, whichever is less.**
- **Justification:** The main justification for this increase would be to allow for greater density, particularly in relation to future mixed-use development with dwelling units being located above retail spaces. During the final UDA advisory committee meeting in December 2018, it was recommended that we change the regulation to allow for four (4) stories in general, rather than setting a specific maximum in feet. In preparation of this memorandum, sixty-six (66) properties in the CB District were analyzed to calculate their building height (in stories). Chart 1 shows the percentages of different building heights among these properties. Overall, 55% of the buildings in the Downtown area are between 11 and 19 feet in height. Presently, the tallest building in this district is only 36 feet in height, so these revisions will not cause legal non-conformities. Current and future developments or redevelopments will have the potential to incorporate a higher number of residential dwellings in the upper floors in a mixed-use format if this height limit is increased.



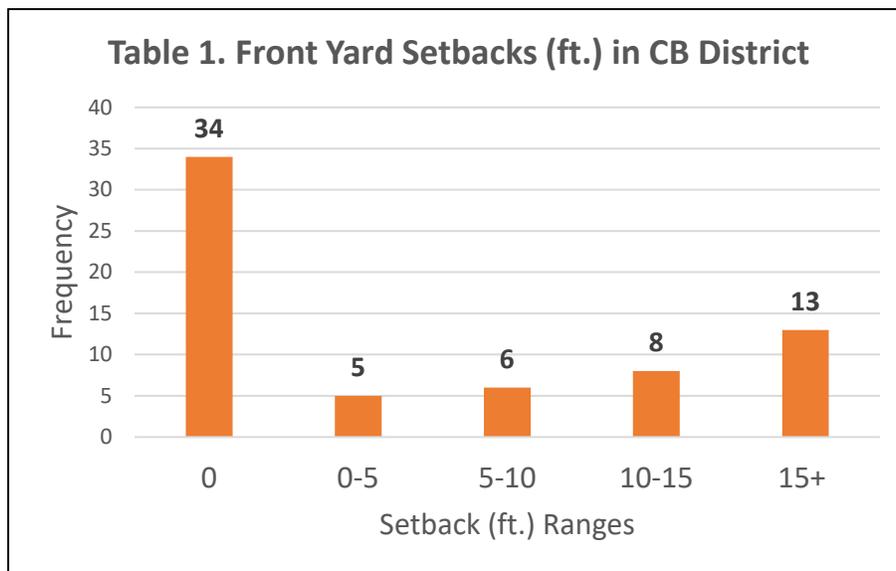
ESTABLISH A MAXIMUM FRONT YARD SETBACK DISTANCE

Revision:

- Revise the front yard setback requirement in the CB District to have a maximum of 15 ft.
- **Justification:** The establishment of a maximum front yard setback ensures that buildings are not set back too far to incentivize walkability and keep storefronts closer to the sidewalk where pedestrian traffic will flow.

This recommendation was presented by consultants in 2018 and originally included the front setback requirements being described as a range, with a minimum and maximum yard requirement. The reason for the minimum was to allow for a buffer for potential utility improvements and allow for a minimal sidewalk to be located within the public right of way. Although the Town staff agrees with the utilization of a front yard setback maximum in this district, they requested the Planning Commission forfeit the recommendation of a minimum requirement. Our current zoning regulations and other localities in the Commonwealth utilize a zero-foot minimum setback to accommodate for the existing structures typically found in Downtown areas and foster a pedestrian-oriented urban streetscape.

The data collected during this research phase shows the existing front yard setbacks of structures located in the CB District in the Town of Vinton, which will allow for these regulations to be tailored specifically for our present and future developmental standards. Table 1 shows the frequency of front yard setback (in feet) amounts among the 66 properties in the CB District. Presently, 34 of the properties currently have a zero-foot front yard setback which constitutes 52 percent of the total number of properties as indicated in Graph 2. With over half of the properties having this setback characteristic, we should be attentive when preparing regulations for future developments to follow. For example, if an existing block has a row of parcels with zero-foot front yard setbacks, we should be weary of requiring a new infill development to have front yard setback greater than zero. Of course, the nature of each block may vary in the CB District, so different approaches should be taken when constructing these developmental standards.



COMPREHENSIVE LOT COVERAGE REQUIRMENTS

Potential Addition

- Recommendation to add a special section under Article V Supplemental Regulations that addresses lot coverage more comprehensively in multiple district.
- **Justification:** R-3 is the only district with a Lot Coverage requirement (35% maximum). This standard supports sustainability by allowing for infiltration of rain water and

providing more open space. It should be handled comprehensively in multiple districts as a separate set of standards under Article V. Lot coverage is a major contributing factor to stormwater management and can assist in mitigating the amount of runoff from both residential and commercial properties.

- The addition of lot coverage requirements will require further discussion due to the extensive impact it could have on both residential and commercial properties in the Town of Vinton. Potential questions that need to be answered include the following:
 - Should lot coverage requirements be extended to other zoning districts beyond the R-3 Residential District?
 - Should these provisions apply to both residential and commercial properties?
 - Will accessory buildings and structures count towards the lot coverage calculation? Would a maximum number of accessory buildings be more appropriate than a percentage?
 - In addition to buildings and structures, should impervious surfaces count towards the calculation as well?
 - Does the current high density of Vinton pose complications towards defining a specific maximum percentage?
 - Will an incentive program to install more forms of stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs) supersede the necessity of lot coverage maximums?