



PLANNING COMMISSION STUDY SESSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Michael Fossati, Planner

MEETING DATE: March 26, 2013

SUBJECT: Existing Building Heights in CV & CN Zoning Districts

The purpose of this study session item is to review the current height limits within the Commercial-Visitor and Commercial-Neighborhood zoning districts.

BACKGROUND

The Planning Commission held two outreach meetings regarding the existing height limits for different building types in the Commercial-Visitor (CV) and Commercial-Neighborhood (CN) zoning districts. The CV zone is generally located along Saratoga-Sunnyvale Road and the CN zones are generally located at the Argonaut and Quito shopping centers.

Both workshops were well attended and the detailed meeting notes from each meeting are enclosed as Attachments 1 and 2. The majority of the comments called for keeping commercial building heights at 20 feet and either lowering multi-family heights to 20 feet or eliminating residential as an allowed use in those two commercial zoning districts.

The following table compares the various building height limits within the City's non-residential zoning districts:

Zoning Districts	Commercial Building Height Limit	Multi-Family Building Height Limit
Commercial Visitor C-V	20 ft.	30 ft.
Neighborhood Commercial C-N	20 ft.	30 ft.
C-N (Residential HD)	30 ft.	30 ft.
Professional & Administrative Office P-A	30 ft.	N/A
CH-1 (Village)	35 ft.	30 ft.
CH-2 (Village)	26 ft.	30 ft.

The City of Saratoga is 12 square miles or 7,750 acre. Less than one percent (approximately 71 acres) of the City is zoned either CN or CV. All of the CN zoning districts and the majority of the CV districts are built out with either commercial or residential buildings. Approximately 29 acres or 40% of the properties contain multi-family or small-lot single family units and approximately 42 acres or 60% contain commercial uses.

During the workshops, the term’s “Mixed-Use” and “Multi-Family Residential” were discussed numerous times. In order to provide some clarity, the General Plan definitions of both terms are provided below.

- Mixed-Use – Properties on which various uses, such as office, commercial, institutional, and residential, are combined in a single building or on a single site in an integrated development project with significant functional interrelationships and a coherent physical design. A “single site” may include contiguous properties.
- Residential, Multiple-Family – Usually three or more dwelling units on a single site, which may be in the same or separate buildings.

Staff presented the following information regarding existing landscape buffers and rear setbacks at the meetings:

	Rear Setback Next to R-1	Landscape Buffer Next to Residential
Neighborhood Commercial C-N	30 ft.	25 ft.
Commercial Visitor C-V. <i>Setback is 30 ft. + one foot for each foot of building height above 14 feet within 60 ft. of the rear lot line.</i>	36 ft. for a 20 ft. tall building	25 ft.
Multi-Family.	25 ft.	25 ft.

DISCUSSION

The following questions were asked at the meetings and are repeated here to help guide the Commission’s discussion.

- Given the nature of existing development, what should the appropriate height limits be for multi-family and commercial buildings?
 - For the Commercial Neighborhood district?
 - For the Commercial Visitor district?
- Is allowing greater height for multi-family buildings in commercial districts appropriate?

Many of the attendees at the Quito meeting repeatedly questioned whether residential uses are appropriate for the CN and CV districts. We recommend the Commission consider that question with questions above.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Summarized minutes from 2/26 Building Height Workshop
2. Summarized minutes from 3/12 Building Height Workshop
3. Zoning Map excerpts

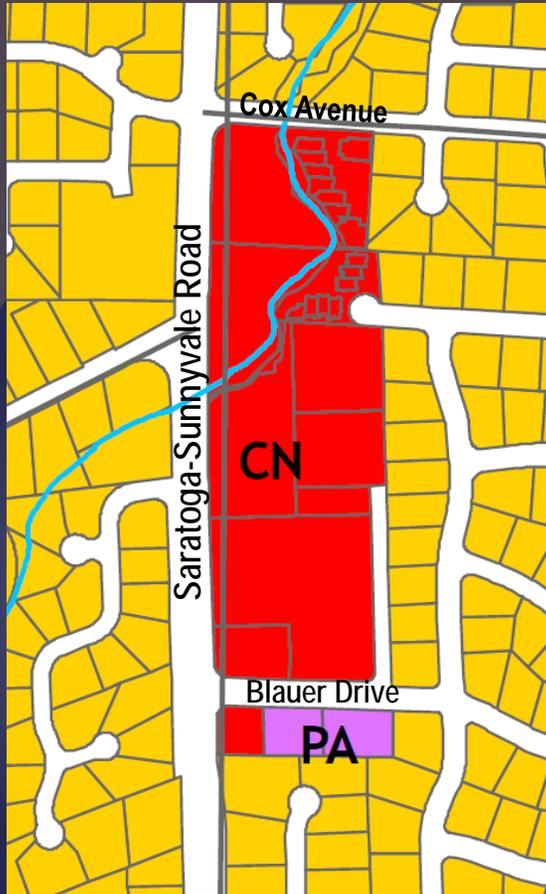
Minutes from 2/26 Building Height Workshop

1. Concerns on size of building (i.e. Timesquare project – 12230 Sara Sun)
2. Concerns that Quito Village will be over-developed (i.e. 3-story mixed use)
3. Should stay at 20' height limit
4. Recognize of setting a precedent regarding construction
5. By increasing commercial height, commercial property values will increase but residential property values will decrease.
6. Take multi-family heights down to 26 ft.
7. Commercial – If it ain't broke, don't fix it"
8. Not city's responsibility to "pencil out" a commercial project.
9. Investor's job to do "due diligence"
10. Develop within limits
11. 26 feet enable 2-story commercial, which equals more density, more traffic, etc.
12. 26' can enable 30' tall building when AC equipment is counted with parapet.
13. There is a variety of building heights in the Gateway.
14. There is inequality in the building heights.
15. What is the side setback standard?
16. If a home can be built at 26' why can't commercial?
17. Increase setbacks to 1.5' for each foot in commercial building height
18. The real issue is use of the property & intensity with its impact.
19. City should not change rules to "bail out" land owners.
20. City isn't interested in standardizing heights
21. Depends on who pushes "hard enough" on what height can be reached.
22. Opposed to increasing heights in Gateway
23. Heights were researched/studied for a number of months.
24. Residents count on "Gateway Guidelines"
25. Saratoga has a high quality of life because it's based on our character.
26. Zoning guidelines (existing) have served us well.
27. Townhomes in rear (@30') are not intruding because they are hidden.
28. Saratoga Square development was a "good meeting of minds" and is working.
29. What about redevelopment potential of properties with low heights.
30. Ripple effect of increased density & intensity of use.
31. Townhouse development could have less traffic than intense commercial.
32. Bring heights down to lowest available.
33. When you change heights, you change priorities.
34. Every project should be considered, but priorities should be recognized.
35. When you approve one with exception, others will come.
36. Doesn't want to see tall buildings from their backyard.
37. Developers seem to have rights (i.e. guidelines) that private property owners don't seem to have. Community shouldn't have to object.
38. A fence "exception" doesn't get the same type of credibility as a big commercial development. Why is that?

39. Seems that community interests are not being adequately represented.

Minutes from 3/12 Building Height Workshop

1. City of Cupertino allows 30' tall buildings @ story 3 story buildings.
2. Do not want anymore densities. Want space for the trees. Want to see the mountains.
3. The existing zoning allows 30' for multi-family residential 20' for commercial.
4. Do we want to incentivize a builder to build residential?
5. Bought house in Saratoga for a certain reason because of the character. We want it to remain.
6. Is the issue 1-story vs. 2-story?
7. Concerned about tall townhomes so close to S.F.
8. What happened to the landscaping behind Gene's.
9. 30' feet high multifamily is too high.
10. Cupertino was ruined by developers, don't want the same for Saratoga.
11. Against raising limit in Saratoga
12. Change zoning ordinance to restrict height to 20' in Quito.
13. Can the PC recommend a 20' height limit to City Council?
14. No residential in commercial
15. No variances @ Quito
16. Multifamily should not be higher than commercial.
17. Don't reduce the amount of commercial
18. Gateway & Quito have different character.
19. You can't build 2-story @ 20'
20. Gateway commercial should be allowed to be as tall as residential behind.
21. Want to make business work so we don't lose to residential.
22. All neighborhoods want the lowest limits.
23. Heights control density/density of use. Density brings traffic.
24. The services we want are all on the 1st story. We don't need 2-story commercial.
25. 20', all 3 neighborhoods, all uses.
26. One shoe doesn't fit the whole community.
27. How do we not get there again?
28. Lower height to 20'. No residential in commercial district.
29. Density is an issue not just height
30. Review development based on design & use not specific height
31. Review how we measure height of buildings
32. Design that runs well with the neighborhood may make higher heights ok, should not be rigid.
33. Maybe consider FAR for density issues.
34. If you want 26' to be flexible, then we can't say "no" to a site that is overdeveloped.
35. Make code restrictive to maintain.
36. Create ordinance dealing with multi-family residential
37. Safety should be acknowledged
38. Keep multi-family residential out of commercial & professional office.



Argonaut Center

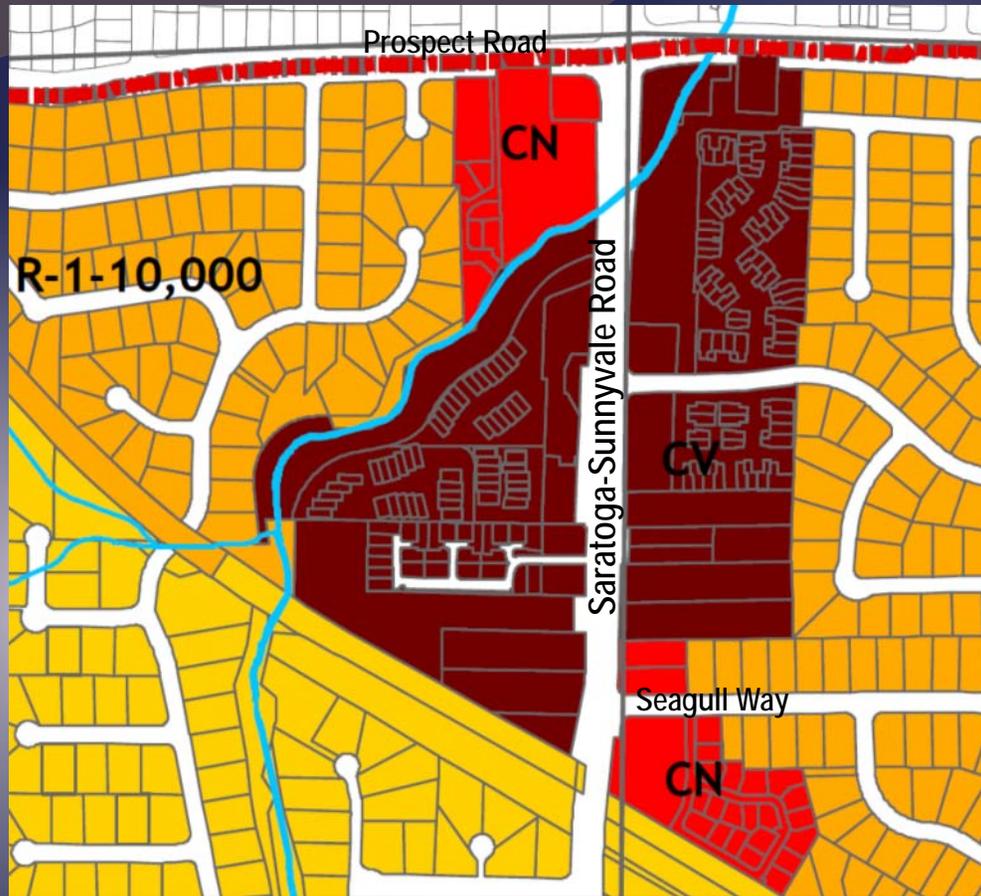


Gateway



Quito Village

C-N District



C-V District