

19.911 VARIANCES

19.911.6 Building Height Variance in the Downtown Mixed Use Zone

A. Intent

To provide a discretionary option for variances to maximum building heights in the Downtown Mixed Use Zone to reward buildings of truly exceptional design that respond to the specific context of their location and provide desired public benefits and/or amenities.

B. Applicability

The Type III building height variance is an option for proposed buildings that exceed the maximum heights or stories allowed through the bonuses specified in Figure 19.304-4, Subsection 19.304.5.B.3, and Section 19.510.

C. Review Process

The building height variance shall be subject to Type III review and approval by the Design and Landmarks Committee and the Planning Commission, in accordance with Chapter 19.907 and Section 19.1011. The building height variance shall be consolidated with downtown design review.

1. Because the building height variance provides substantial flexibility and discretion, additional time will be required for public input and technical evaluation of the proposal. To use this option, the applicant shall sign a waiver of the 120-day decision requirement.
2. The applicant may request design advice from the Design and Landmarks Committee prior to submitting an application. Design advice requests provide the opportunity to assess approval potential prior to committing excessive time or money to detailed design plans.
3. Design advice requests may not be made for a specific project or site with an active land use review application.
4. A special application fee may be required to use this Type III option to allow the City to contract with a registered architect to assist in the review of the height variance application.

D. Approval Criteria

The approval authority may approve, approve with conditions, or deny the building height variance based on the following approval criteria:

1. ~~Substantial consistency~~ Compliance with the Downtown Design Guidelines downtown design guidelines in Subsection 19.508.4.
2. The proposed height variance will result in a project that is exceptional in the quality of detailing, appearance and materials or creates a positive unique relationship to other nearby structures, views or open space.
3. The proposed height variance preserves important views to the Willamette River, limits shadows on public open spaces and ensures step downs and transitions to neighborhoods at the edge of the Downtown Mixed Use Zone.
4. The proposed height variance will result in a project that provides public benefits and/or amenities beyond those required by the base zone standards and that will increase downtown vibrancy and/or help meet sustainability goals.