



CITY OF RAPID CITY

RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA 57701-5035

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission

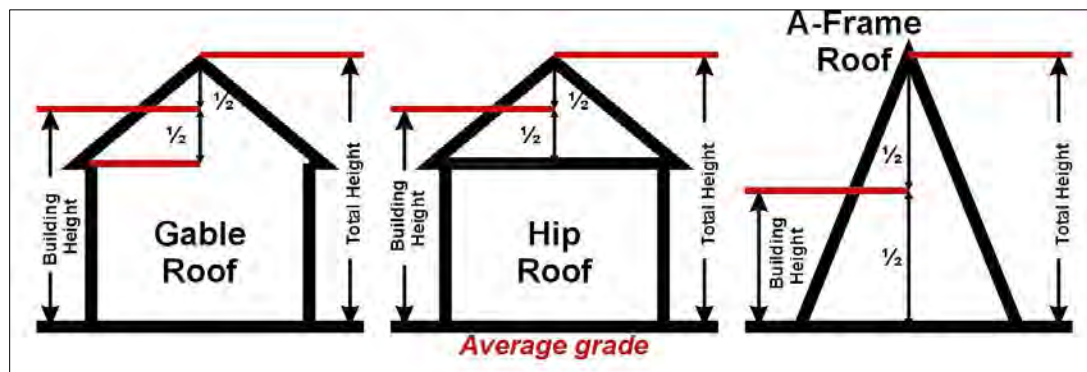
FROM: Sarah Hanzel, Planning Projects Division Manager

DATE: 2/2/23

RE: AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND SECTIONS 17.12.050, 17.12.070, AND 17.40.050 OF THE RAPID CITY MUNICIPAL CODE RELATING TO THE HEIGHT OF CERTAIN STRUCTURES (23OA001)

Staff is proposing an ordinance amendment to the height regulations in the Medium Density Residential District (MDR) and the Office Commercial District (OC). This proposal is in response to the ever growing housing needs in Rapid City, and building design practices for multi-family residential structures. Currently, the maximum height of buildings within these districts is limited to 3 stories, or 35 feet, whichever is greater.

Height is defined in the Rapid City Municipal Code (Section 17.04.115) as *“the vertical distance measured from the average ground elevated of the proposed finished grade at the front of the building to the highest point of the roof for flat roofs, to the deck line of mansard roofs, and to the mean height between eaves and ridge for gable, hip, and gambrel roofs.”* In other words, height is the distance between the ground elevation, and the median point between the peak and the eave of the building.



Above: Height definition graphic courtesy of Ridgefield, CT



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In recent years, there have been an increasing number of exception requests to this height limit. The reason for the request is often to accommodate extra ceiling space within a 3 story structure.

Since 2019, eleven of the major apartment developments constructed have requested a height Exception. All of these Exception requests have been approved. Most of the Exceptions were granted by the Planning Commission; however, one project was appealed to the City Council and ultimately approved.

Staff has prepared an ordinance amendment to increase the allowable height from 3 stories or 35 feet, to three stories or 40 feet to accommodate this now-common building design practice. This small height increase has minimal effect on the finished appearance of the constructed apartment building, while enabling higher ceilings within apartment units. Staff anticipates that the proposed amendment will eliminate the need for several exception requests, streamlining the approval process for multi-family units in many instances. As such, increasing maximum building heights is supported by the Comprehensive Plan since it promotes housing development. The proposed ordinance amendment is the first step “quick win,” with further evaluation of height increases planned for evaluation within residential and mixed-use zoning districts.

Recommendation: Staff recommends approval of the ordinance amendment.