

DOCKET ITEM 07-01

Maximum Height Requirement for Utilities in Residential Zones

ISSUE:

- Should zoning rules allow for additional height for essential public utility facilities within residential zones, such as including but not limited to above-ground water reservoir standpipes, s_ and elevated water towers, water treatment facilities, wastewater and stormwater treatment facilities ~~within residential zones?~~
- Is the proposed 175.75-foot height maximum ~~suffieient~~ for water reservoirs and 50-foot maximum height sufficient for public utility facilities needs while still providing opportunity for buffering of residential properties?

RECOMMENDATION:

- Approve a code modification to allow additional height for above-ground and elevated water towers reservoirs and public utility facilities. This amendment is proposed as a note in the development standards table allowing the height of a publicly owned utility facility, such as an above-ground standpipe water reservoir, an elevated water tank, a water treatment facility, system structure to be increased up to a maximum height of one hundred and seventy-five feet (75175 feet¹) to the highest point of the water storage reservoir and fifty feet (50 feet) maximum height for water facilities, such as water treatment facility, and pump stations. ~~building.~~
- Approve language requiring graphic treatment of public utility facilities that exceed the height standard in the zone.

BACKGROUND:

Current zoning treats public facilities the same as all other structures in a zone with respect to height, setback, and lot coverage. Height in Renton's R-1, R-4, and R-8 zones is two stories and 30 feet. Existing and proposed above-ground and elevated Water reservoirs towers do not cannot meet these standard heights due to the operational and functional uses of the facilities. Public facilities are defined in the Renton Municipal Code as: *streets, roads, highways, sidewalks, street lighting systems, traffic signals, domestic water system; storm and sanitary sewer systems, park and recreation facilities, schools, public buildings.*

Most of these public facilities can appropriately meet height requirements because, where structures are required (e.g. parks buildings, schools and public buildings), the function of the building does not necessitate greater height. However, water storage reservoirs and water treatment facilities, which are needed for fire protection and for domestic water uses, domestic water system facilities are an exception to that rule. The height and ~~bulk~~ storage capacity of the water reservoir is are needed to provide for required storage capacity and to deliver the required minimum water pressure and volume for fire protection and for domestic uses. and for water flow. ~~The height of water treatment facilities must be sufficient to accommodate the height of various filters -and water processing and treatment equipment.~~

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In the past, variances have been requested and granted to height standards for the construction of new public facilities in residential zones. However, the variance is not the correct zoning tool to use in this instance because variances are property specific, and findings are required for hardship based on the physical constraints of the parcel. For a typical structure in the zone, these findings would be based on evidence that the size, shape or environmental constraints of a site prevent reasonable use of the parcel.

However, above-ground water towers reservoirs and water treatment facilities, by function, typically require height much greater than 35 feet. The need for additional height is not created by any physical constraint of the site, but by the function of the use. Sites proposed for water reservoirs, system- water treatment facilities and pump stations, typically are larger than the minimum lot size allowed in the zone and are selected because they do not have physical constraints and also because they meet the operational and functional requirements of the facilities. The facilities typically do not require the entire 35 percent lot coverage allowed for other structures in the zone, and land is available in the larger setback for buffering adjacent uses. The water tower-reservoir, pump station, and water treatment facility uses requires a Hearing Examiner Conditional Use Permit as a large utility and requires a public hearing with an opportunity for public comment on site planning and buffering issues.

The Planning Commission requested consideration of adding a requirement for graphic art on public utility facilities. Staff reviewed this request and provides several examples of water towers treated with art from other jurisdictions.

It is recommended that the following language be added to the development standards table in Section 4-2-110A.

Public utility facilities exceeding 30 feet in height shall be treated with public art depicting landscaping incorporating a typical Pacific Northwest pastoral scene. Such public art may be eligible for 1% for art funding and shall be reviewed by the Renton Art Commission.



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COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE:

Implementation of a height exception for essential public facilities in residential zones meets Land Use Element **Objective LU-R: *Locate and plan for public facilities in ways that benefit a broad range of potential public uses.*** It also meets **Policy LU-79: *Guide and modify development of essential public facilities to meet Comprehensive Plan policies and to mitigate impacts and costs to the City.*** A height exception complies with the Comprehensive Plan because the facility could not be located or planned for in a residential area with a conventional height.

CONCLUSION:

Allowing additional height of a maximum of 75 175 feet for water reservoirs and 50 feet maximum height for public utility facilities allows these facilities to be constructed in neighborhoods where they are needed in order to provide required water storage for fire protection of public and private properties and for domestic water uses.