

City of Sugar Hill  
Planning Staff Report  
**ZOA 24-001**

DATE: February 1, 2024  
TO: Mayor and City Council  
FROM: Planning Director  
SUBJECT: Zoning Ordinance Amendment ZOA 24-001  
RS72, R36 & CBD Building Heights

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## DISCUSSION

- Confirm preferred regulatory approach. One size-for-all or context-based?
- Is the concern over building height related to aesthetics, use or other issue(s)?
- Do we prefer variety or sameness in our portfolio of housing options?
- Should we be working to help restore affordability in the housing market and provide the opportunity for residents to age in place?
- Appropriate maximum height for RS72 & R36 zoning districts?
- Discontinue height limits based on building type in RS72 & R36?
- Appropriate maximum height in CBD?
- A public hearing has been advertised for the February Planning Commission meeting, ordinance revisions are pending direction from city council.

## BACKGROUND

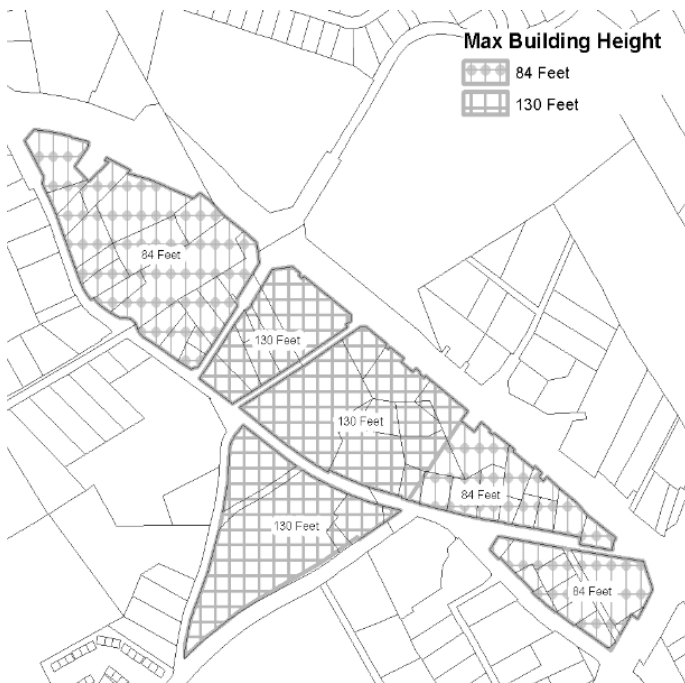
Currently, in the Medium Density Single Family Residential (RS72) and Medium Density Mixed Residential (R36) zoning districts, building height for residential uses is regulated by building type:

- Townhome: max height = 40'
- Stacked Duplex/Triplex: max height = 3 stories and 60'
- Big-house: max height = 50'
- Other, Attached: max height = 50'
- Other, Detached: max height = 35'

This approach is intended to provide a regulatory framework to encourage more options to choose from when looking for a place to live within our community. Most of the housing stock within the city generally falls on one end of the spectrum or the other. By far the largest number of homes in Sugar Hill are single-family detached residences of one to two stories. We also have a growing number of townhomes and mid-rise apartment units, but there are very few options in between. Figure 1 illustrates the range of possibilities for house-scale dwellings in a continuum of building types suitable for transitioning from existing cul-de-sac style subdivisions to traditional pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods.



**Figure 1 - Missing Middle Housing Types**



**Figure 2 - CBD Max Bldg Heights**

Within the downtown area, building height is regulated by proximity to the core. In the Central Business District (CBD), buildings up to 130 feet and 84 feet are allowed at the center as depicted on Figure 2. Otherwise, the maximum height in the CBD is 70 feet. The Town Center Overlay (TCO) permits building heights of up to 50' as a transition from larger downtown mixed-use buildings and the 35' maximum height of a typical single-family detached home. While most properties in the 84' and 130' zones are built out, there are no buildings taller than 70' (*cupolas are excluded – Section 701*).

- Solis – 69' 3"
- The Local – 61' 8"
- City Hall – 58' to top of roof, 84' to top of cupola dome, 97' to top of cupola

Below is a comparative list of nearby municipalities and maximum building heights for downtown-style areas.

Suwanee

PMUD, Planned Mixed-Use Development – No height minimum or maximum.

Duluth

CBD Residential – 4 stories max.  
 CBD Commercial <15,000 sq. ft. – 25' max.  
 CBD Commercial >15,000 sq. ft. – 4 stories max.

Lawrenceville

BGC, Central Business District – 40' max.  
 RM-24, Multifamily Residential – 70' max.

Norcross

Town Center – 72' along Buford Hwy, 24' in historic downtown

Gwinnett County

LRR, Low Rise Residential – 60' max.  
 MRR, Mid-Rise Residential – 75' max.  
 HRR, High-Rise Residential – Min. of 5 stories  
 MU-N, Neighborhood Mixed Use – 60' max.  
 MU-C, Community Mixed Use – 75' max.  
 MU-R, Regional Mixed Use – varies based on bonuses, up to 300' or 25 stories