



**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

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**NOTIFICATION OF THE YAKIMA PLANNING COMMISSION'S  
RECOMMENDATION TO THE YAKIMA CITY COUNCIL**

**DATE:** February 4, 2025  
**TO:** Parties of Record  
**SUBJECT:** Notice of the Yakima Planning Commission's Recommendation  
**FILE #(S):** TXT#003-24, SEPA#014-24  
**APPLICANT:** City of Yakima Planning Division  
**PROJECT LOCATION:** Citywide

On February 3, 2025, the City of Yakima Planning Commission rendered its written recommendation on **TXT#003-24**. Proposed non-project amendments to Title 15 of the Yakima Municipal Code to development processes within the City's Downtown and Type 1 Review Exemptions.

A copy of the Planning Commission's Findings and Recommendation is enclosed.

The Planning Commission's Recommendation will be considered by the Yakima City Council in a public hearing to be scheduled. The City Clerk will notify you of the date, time, and place of the public hearing.

For further information or assistance, you may contact the City of Yakima Planning Division at (509) 575-6183 or email: [ask.planning@yakimawa.gov](mailto:ask.planning@yakimawa.gov)

Eva Rivera  
Planning Technician

Date of Mailing: **February 4, 2025**  
Enclosures: Planning Commission's Recommendation



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**YAKIMA PLANNING COMMISSION  
RECOMMENDATION TO THE YAKIMA CITY COUNCIL  
FOR  
AMENDMENT TO YAKIMA MUNICIPAL CODE  
February 3, 2025**

**WHEREAS**, Pursuant to RCW 36.70A.130(1) the City is required to take legislative action to review and revise its development regulations in accordance with the Growth Management Act; and

**WHEREAS**, These updates to Yakima Municipal Code (YMC) Title 14, 15 and 16 are considered to be a non-project application without a specific use or site plan to be considered; and

**WHEREAS**, Under the provisions of YMC Ch. 1.42 the Yakima Planning Commission is responsible for the review of amendments to the City's Yakima Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance, and other land use matters, and for recommending the approval, modification, or denial of each amendment; and

**WHEREAS**, The Yakima Planning Commission held study sessions to review the proposed amendments on July 10, 2024 and September 25, 2024; and

**WHEREAS**, All required public notice for these amendments were provided, in accordance with the provisions of YMC Ch. 16.10, on October 25, 2024; and

**WHEREAS**, SEPA Environmental Review for these updates was considered, a Determination of Nonsignificance was issued on December 5, 2024; and

**WHEREAS**, The Yakima Planning Commission held an open record public hearing on January 8, 2025, to hear testimony from the public, consider the amendments, and provide a recommendation to the Yakima City Council;

**Now therefore, the Yakima City Planning Commission presents the following findings and recommendation to the Yakima City Council:**

Based upon a review of the information contained in the application, staff report, exhibits, and other evidence presented at an open record public hearing held on January 8, 2025, the Planning Commission makes the following:

**PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED AMENDMENTS:**

The complete track changes text can be found in Exhibit "A" and is incorporated herein by reference. A summary of the amendments is as follows:

1. YMC § 15.09.025 Mixed use buildings and downtown business district multifamily development
  - a. Amending the title of the section,
  - b. Removing certain subsections from chapter
  - c. Adding mixed use building criteria to this chapter
  - d. Adding a small section regarding height bonuses and design standards for mixed use buildings

*Staff Analysis: The City of Yakima frequently reviews mixed-use buildings in various zoning districts beyond the Central Business District (CBD). It's crucial to recognize that multi-use buildings are constructed across numerous zoning districts throughout Yakima. Enhancing and streamlining the development and utilization of these buildings yield significant benefits for the entire city. Simplified and unified regulations enable businesses to upgrade and occupy their spaces more quickly, while also expediting the City's review process for buildings with minimal exterior alterations.*

2. YMC § 15.09.026 – Downtown business district development
  - a. Adding a new section to chapter 15.09 specifically covering development regulations in the downtown area.

*Staff Analysis: the purpose of this section is to provide a separate criterion for development within the downtown (CBD). This would establish a new development chapter and address criteria for parking, entrances, blank walls, equipment screening, multifamily development.*

3. YMC § 15.13.025 Central Business district – Type (1) review exemption
  - a. Modifying the title of this section
  - b. Removing a series of regulations from the chapter, and moving it into the downtown specific section.
  - c. Adding a series of Type 1 exemptions

*Staff Analysis: This section has been modified and streamlined specifically for the Type 1 Review process. Changes to this chapter would allow property owners and businesses to use existing buildings without being required to go through a Change of Use Type 1 Review. This change to the Municipal Code would expedite permit processing time, specifically when there are minimal changes to the site overall.*

4. YMC § 15.06.050 Computation of required spaces
  - a. Modifying and clarifying some language used when calculating the number of required spaces.

*Staff Analysis: Modification to this chapter adds clarity to the rounding method in the computation of required parking spaces.*

5. YMC § 15.08.030 Development permit required
  - a. Adding additional language to clarify section.
6. YMC § 15.08.060 Sign standards
  - a. Streamlining the processes for signs and generalizing the language to remove ambiguity.

*Staff Analysis: The proposed change slightly modifies the criteria for on-site signs and the level of review for placing a sign on a parcel.*

7. YMC § 15.10.020 Administrative adjustment of some development standards authorized
  - a. Adding language to clarify how an Administrative Adjustment shall be processed.

*Staff Analysis: Changes to this section specify the level of review an Administrative Adjustment shall be process at.*

8. YMC § 15.17.030 Exemptions:
  - a. Amending YMC § 15.17.030 remove single family and duplexes from the modification process.

*Staff Response: This section exempts single family homes and duplexes from the modification process.*

### **FINDINGS OF FACT**

Goal 2.1: Establish a development pattern consistent with the community's vision.

Policy 2.1.6: Adopt coordinated development regulations that facilitate Yakima's preferred land use pattern (e.g. allowed density, uses, and site provisions)

- Refine the land use code on an ongoing basis to make it user-friendly by employing simple language, easy to read charts, and illustrative graphics.
- Monitor and refine the land use code as needed to facilitate the preferred land use pattern and development character.
- Integrate an appropriate balance of predictability and flexibility when updating development regulations that allow ease of administration and interpretation and offer optional ways of meeting requirements when possible.

Goal 2.4. Downtown. Enhance the character and economic vitality of Yakima's Central Business District.

Policy 2.4.2. Land Uses - Maintain and strengthen downtown as the center for civic, retail, cultural, dining and entertainment activity in Yakima.

E. Emphasize storefronts with active uses (retail, food and drink, and entertainment) along strategic downtown core block frontages.

### **YAKIMA PLANNING COMMISSION'S CONCLUSIONS**

1. No adverse impacts have been identified;
2. The proposed updates underwent Environmental Review;
3. The proposed amendments are consistent with the Yakima Urban Area Zoning Ordinance, 2040 Comprehensive Plan, and Housing Action Plan.

### **MOTION**

Based on the testimony and evidence presented during this afternoon's public hearing, it was moved and seconded that Planning staff draft findings of fact and forward a recommendation of approval to the Yakima City Council. The motion carried unanimously.

**RECOMMENDATION TO CITY COUNCIL**

The Planning Commission of the City of Yakima, having received and considered all evidence and testimony presented at the public hearing, and having received and reviewed the record herein, hereby recommends that the City Council of the City of Yakima APPROVE the proposed text amendments to the Yakima Municipal Code.

RECOMMENDED this 3rd day of February, 2025.

By:   
**Mary Place, Chair**  
**Yakima Planning Commission**

## EXHIBIT A

### **15.09.025 Mixed-use buildings and downtown business district multifamily development.**

#### A. Purpose and Intent.

1. To provide a streamlined process for new development or redevelopment projects that include a mixture of high density residential along with complementary retail, commercial, or professional uses at a scale that is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

2. ~~These standards shall also apply to new multifamily or commercial development or multifamily or commercial redevelopment in the downtown business district. New or redeveloped multifamily multifamily or commercial uses within this area shall comply with all of the following development and design standards excluding those which are only relevant to the nonresidential portion of a mixed-use building.~~

~~3. a. For the purpose of implementing this section, the "downtown business district" shall be defined as the downtown business district exempt area—See YMC 15.06.040, Figure 6-1.~~

#### B. Level of Review—Mixed-use building Uses.

1. ~~MA new or redeveloped mixed-use building and downtown business district multifamily development is a Class (1) permitted use, requiring Type (1) review, in applicable zones and is determined to be the appropriate level of review for any combination of Class (1) and Class (2) uses listed in those zones.~~

2. Any combination of uses which includes a Class (3) permitted use shall undergo Type (2) review.

3. ~~The mixed-use building/development land use shall not allow contain any use which is otherwise not permitted in the zone.~~

4. A new mixed-use building that does not meet the layout requirement of subsection (D)(1) of this section shall undergo Type (2) review or be reviewed based upon its particular uses as listed in Table 4-1, whichever is higher.

~~5. An existing building that does not meet the layout requirement of subsection (D)(2) of this section shall still be subject to the other development standards of that subsection. A new mixed-use building located in the downtown business district shall also comply with YMC 15.09.026.~~

#### C. Prohibited Uses. The following uses are prohibited in a mixed-use building/development project:

1. All wholesale trade—Storage uses.
2. All transportation uses.
3. All utilities uses.

4. All automotive sales, maintenance and repair, carwash/detailing, paint and body, parts and accessories, and towing uses.
5. Boats and marine accessories.
6. Farm and implements, tools and heavy construction equipment.
7. Farm supplies.
8. Fuel oil and coal distributors.
9. Lumber yards.
10. Nurseries.
11. All rental uses.
12. Repairs: reupholstery and furniture.
13. Repairs: small engine and garden equipment.
14. Service stations.
15. Truck service stations and shops.

D. Development Standards.

1. Mixed-Use Layout. A mixed-use building should not have any residential dwelling units located on the ground floor, whenever feasible. ~~There shall be a~~ A minimum of fifty percent of the total floor area shall be residential dwelling units, and least 60 percent of the ground floor shall be dedicated for community facility or commercial use.
2. Height Bonus. In the B-1, B-2, and SCC zoning districts, the maximum height of the building (YMC 15.05.030, Table 5-1) may be increased to fifty feet if all of the following are met:
  - a. The majority of the additional building height is used to increase the number of dwelling units;
  - b. The additional building height is necessary to accommodate off-street parking requirements.
  - c. Additional onsite landscaping is provided equal to a minimum of fifteen percent of the parking area.

E. Design Standards.

1. Entrances. Primary pedestrian entrances to the building shall face the street frontage or face common open space which is oriented toward the street.
2. Transparency.
  - a. There shall be windows on all sides of the building facing streets and pedestrian ways.
  - b. Within the downtown business district, the ground floor of a mixed-use building shall contain transparency for the majority of the wall between three and twelve feet above ground level, including both doors and windows, as measured along street but excluding

alleys. Ground floor transparency shall be visually distinct from the above floors by not repeating the exact dimensions and placement of windows.

## **15.09.026 Downtown business district development.**

### A. Purpose and Intent.

1. To establish standards for new development or redevelopment projects within the downtown business district in order to promote efficient land use and a pedestrian-friendly environment.
2. These standards shall apply to the following in the downtown business district:
  - a. New mixed-use buildings, pursuant to YMC 15.09.025.
  - b. New multifamily development.
  - c. New commercial/nonresidential development, except for the following:
    - i. Uses exempt from review per YMC 15.13.025.
    - ii. Uses located in the light industrial zoning district.
3. For the purpose of implementing this section, the "downtown business district" shall be defined as the downtown business district exempt area—See YMC 15.06.040, Figure 6-1.

### B. Development Standards.

#### 1. Parking.

- a. Location. Off-street parking shall be located within, behind, below, and/or to the side of the building. Any side of the building that faces a street shall not be fronted by off-street parking. However, for corner lots with more than one street frontage, at least one side of the building that faces the street shall not be fronted by off-street parking. For corner lots that have frontage on Yakima Avenue, that side shall not be fronted by off-street parking.
- a.b. Off-street parking shall be installed in accordance with YMC Chapter 15.06, except that buildings that cannot physically provide on-street residential parking may utilize off-street private parking through a shared parking agreement; or on-street or off-street public parking if the building is located within the residential or long-term parking boundary (YMC Chapter 9.50).
- c. Off-street parking shall be separated from abutting public rights-of-way that includes an existing or required sidewalk by a landscaping buffer a minimum of four feet in width consisting of a combination of trees and shrubs. Fencing may substitute for the required landscaping buffer.



- d. Parking located within a structure, whether attached to or detached from the primary structure, shall be architecturally compatible with the primary structure. Any openings within a parking structure that do not provide pedestrian or vehicular access shall be screened from view with decorative grilles or landscaping.
- e. These standards shall also apply to standalone parking lots and garages not otherwise part of a development or structure.
- f. A drive-up lane intended to arriving/departing guests, valet service, and other related functions located at the front of motels and hotels (including extended stay) is not considered to be parking for the purpose of this section.

### C. Design Standards.

- 1. Entrances. Primary pedestrian entrances to the building shall face the street frontage or face common open space which is oriented toward the street.
- 2. Windows Along Streets and Pedestrian Ways.
  - a. There shall be windows on all sides of the building facing streets and pedestrian ways, excluding alleys.
  - b. All floors of a multifamily building shall contain transparency consistent with the Washington State Energy Code, including both doors and windows.
- 3. Blank Walls.
  - a. Defined. "Blank wall" means a wall or portion of a wall that has eight hundred square feet of vertical surface area without any building modulation, transparency, or other architectural feature.
  - b. Along streets and pedestrian ways, a minimum of fifty percent of the wall between three feet and twelve feet above grade shall be treated with one or more of the following elements:
    - i. Architectural variation including but not limited to color, material, and/or modulation.
    - ii. Artwork, including murals and signs.
    - iii. Shrubs, trees, trellises, or other landscaping that may be actively maintained.
- 4. Equipment Screening.
  - a. Electrical and mechanical equipment placed on the ground surface or rooftop shall be screened from view by materials that are consistent and compatible with the design, color, and materials of the building.

b. The height of the parapet and other rooftop elements may be increased in order to achieve this and shall comply with the height restrictions of YMC 15.05.030 and 15.10.020(D)(1).

5. Multifamily Development Limited Downtown. Multifamily development that does not meet the definition of mixed-use shall comply with the following standards:

a. New buildings shall have a minimum front setback of ten feet from the property line or have windows that begin at least three feet above the elevation of the highest adjoining sidewalk or finished ground surface adjacent to the setback.

b. Multifamily development in existing or new buildings shall not be permitted in the following locations unless it meets the definition of mixed-use (YMC 15.09.025):

i. On any corner lot along Yakima Avenue.

ii. Within the Old North Yakima Historic District.

### 15.13.025 Central business district—Type (1) review exemptions.

A. Change of use proposals for commercial uses within existing buildings in the CBD Downtown Business District Exempt Parking Area (YMC 15.06.040(C)) shall be exempt from Type (1) review when the proposed new use is a Class (1) use for the zone in under the Retail Trade and Service portion of YMC 15.04.030, Table 4-1. New construction, or expansion of existing buildings, or alteration of parking lots Class (1) uses shall follow the Type (1) review or modification process, as applicable.

B. Change of use proposals within existing buildings in all commercial and industrial zones outside of the Downtown Business District Exempt Parking Area shall be exempt from the Type (1) review when:

1. The proposed use is a Class (1) use for the zone in YMC 15.04.030; and,

2. Parking:

i. The use is located within an existing multiple use center; or,

ii. The parking requirement for the proposed use is equal to or less than the existing use.

a. If the proposed use requires more parking than the existing use and that parking is available on-site, then it meets the intent of this section.

3. Change of use exemptions for Class (1) uses in the commercial and industrial zones shall not apply to the following:

~~i. New construction or expansion of buildings;~~

~~ii. Automotive dealer new and used sales; towing services; farm and implements, tools and heavy construction equipment; Rental and Repairs uses; and other similar uses that utilize outside storage/sales areas that alter existing parking lots.~~

B. The following residential uses listed as Class (1) uses in Table 4-1 shall be exempt from Type (1) review when a compliant site plan is submitted with the building plans:

1. Detached single-family dwelling
2. Attached single-family dwelling, common wall
3. Two-family dwelling (duplex) and converted dwelling
4. Accessory dwelling unit
5. Multifamily development up to six dwelling units

## **15.06.050 Computation of required spaces.**

The following rules shall apply in the determination of the number of required off-street parking spaces:

A. Fraction. If the number of off-street parking spaces required in Table 6-1 contains a fraction, such number shall be changed rounded up to the next higher-whole number if one-half or over or down to the next whole number if less than one-half.

B. Mixed Uses. When different uses occupy a single structure or lot, the total required parking spaces shall be the sum of the requirements of the individual uses.

C. Shared Uses.

1. Owners of two or more uses, structures, or parcels of land within three hundred feet of each other may share the same parking or loading areas when the hours of operation do not overlap.
2. The owners of two or more uses, structures, or parcels within three hundred feet of each other may also share facilities concurrently; however, the total parking requirements shall be the sum of the requirements for each individual use.
3. Whenever shared parking is allowed under this section, the parking lot shall be signed so as to reasonably notify the public of the availability of use, and spaces shall not be assigned, allocated, or reserved between uses. (Also see YMC 15.06.060.)
4. A parking easement approved by the administrative official shall be filed with the county auditor whenever two or more uses propose to share off-street parking facilities.

D. Tandem Parking. Parking spaces in tandem, having a single means of ingress and egress, shall not be counted as two off-street parking spaces for the purpose of fulfilling the requirements of this chapter; except that each tandem space for ~~single-family dwellings and duplexes~~residential uses shall be counted as a required parking space for every linear 20 feet.

E. Compact Car Parking. For parking areas with twenty or more required parking spaces, up to fifteen percent of the required number of off-street parking spaces may be designed for compact car parking. Compact spaces shall be no less than eight feet by seventeen feet and each space must be labeled individually with a durable pavement marking "Compact."

## 15.06.140 Nonconforming parking.

A. Any use which, on the effective date of the ordinance codified in this section or any amendments hereto, is nonconforming in terms of required off-street parking facilities may continue in the same manner as if they were conforming; however, the number of existing off-street parking spaces shall not be reduced.

B. When an existing structure with nonconforming parking is expanded and additional parking is required, the additional parking spaces shall be provided in accordance with the provisions of this chapter; however, the number of additional spaces shall be computed only to the extent of the enlargement, regardless of whether or not the number of previously existing spaces satisfies the requirements of this chapter.

C. When the use of an existing lot or structure with nonconforming parking is changed to another use listed in Table 4-1, the nonconformity shall cease and the new use shall provide all the required off-street parking in accordance with the provisions of this chapter. However, this requirement may be waived by the administrative official for existing buildings and/or lots within the B-1, CBD or GC zoning districts, containing insufficient area to provide parking, provided the following factors are taken into consideration:

1. New use has similar parking requirements to the previously approved use;
2. The availability of on-street parking;
3. The availability of nearby off-street parking or other opportunities to conform to the parking standard, such as a shared parking agreement; and
4. Location of the business in proximity to the downtown business district exempt area (YMC 15.06.040(C)).

## 15.08.030 Development permit required.

No sign governed by this title shall be erected, structurally altered or relocated after the adoption without first receiving a development permit from the building official. All applications for a development permit under this chapter shall be reviewed for consistency with the standards of this chapter and other applicable chapters of the Yakima Municipal Code, according to sign type and other applicable regulations.

1. For ~~New Uses~~new freestanding signs and subdivision identification/signs. All on-premises freestanding signs and subdivision identification/use identification signs meeting the standards of this chapter are ~~considered Class (1) uses requiring Type (1)~~require Modification review under YMC Ch. 15.17 if proposed to be located in a parking space or drive aisle. On-premises signs not meeting the standards shall follow the procedures of YMC 15.08.170, and are otherwise not permitted. Off-premises signs and billboards are permitted as identified in YMC 15.08.130.

2. For Changes or Replacement of an Existing Sign. Structural changes to, or replacement of, an existing sign requires ~~Type (1)~~ review and approval by the building official. ~~Changes to the face or copy of a sign, provided such change does not change the material or appearance of the sign as originally permitted by the city does not require a Type (1) review, or permit.~~

## 15.08.060 Sign standards.

The provisions of this chapter and the requirements in Table 8-1, "Type and Number of Signs Permitted," Table 8-2, "Maximum Sign Area," and Table 8-3, "Sign Height and Setbacks," are established for all signs in the zoning districts indicated. All permitted signs are subject to the review procedures of this title and the standards of this section. ~~Signs for Class (1), (2) and (3) uses shall be subject to the same procedural and review requirements as the principal use.~~

## 15.08.140 Multiple-building complexes and multiple-tenant buildings.

A. Purpose. The following provisions shall apply to multiple-building complexes and multiple-tenant buildings in the ~~SCC, LCC, GC, and RD~~commercial and industrial districts. Tenants in such buildings or complexes may also have their own signs in accordance with the provisions of this chapter.

B. Number of Freestanding Signs. Each multiple-building complex shall be allowed one freestanding sign on each street frontage in accordance with Table 8-2. When the street frontage is longer than four hundred feet:

1. One additional freestanding sign shall be permitted for each additional four hundred feet of street frontage or part thereof; or
2. A single, larger freestanding sign can be erected in accordance with Table 8-2.

If option 1, as set forth in subsection (B)(1) of this section, is selected, no freestanding sign shall be placed closer than two hundred feet to any other freestanding sign or exceed the standards in Table 8-2. These provisions shall also apply to each multiple-tenant building, unless it is a part of a multiple-building complex.

The allowable freestanding sign(s) may be used to advertise one or more of the uses in the multiple-building complex or multiple-tenant building.

## 15.10.020 Administrative adjustment of some development standards authorized.

The purpose of this section is to provide flexibility by allowing certain development standards in YMC Chapters 15.05 through 15.08 to be administratively adjusted. A particular standard may be reduced or modified, so long as the administrative official determines that the adjustment and/or reduction is consistent with the intent and purpose of the standards, and will accomplish one or more of the following objectives:

- A. Allow buildings to be sited in a manner which maximizes solar access;
- B. Coordinate development with adjacent land uses and the physical features;
- C. Permit flexibility in the design and placement of structures and other site improvements that is the minimum adjustment necessary to accommodate the proposed structure or site improvement; or
- D. Allow development consistent with a specific subarea plan adopted by the appropriate jurisdiction.

Administrative adjustments of development standards shall be processed under Type (2) review for Class (1) and (2) uses, and under Type (3) review for Class (3) uses.

Administrative adjustments of development standards for signs in Chapter 15.08 shall be processed under Type (2) review.

The administrative official shall not have the authority to reduce the site design requirements for minimum lot size, building height, or subdivision requirements set forth in YMC 15.05.030 and Table 5-2; except as provided below:

- 1. Maximum building height may be increased to incorporate architectural building elements or mechanical equipment that:
  - a. Does not exceed more than a ten percent increase of the total building height; and
  - b. Does not cover more than fifty percent of the total roof area.

## 15.17.020 Modification to permitted development and uses regulated.

Minor changes to existing or approved Class (1), (2) or (3) uses or development may qualify for abbreviated review under the provisions in this chapter, if they meet the criteria listed below. Overlay districts shall not increase the level of review for the provisions of this chapter. Modifications not meeting the criteria below must apply directly for review as a Class (1), (2) or (3) use or development.

- A. The modification will not increase residential density that would require an additional level of review;

B. The modification will not increase the amount of parking by more than ten percent or twenty spaces (whichever is least), except that the amount of parking for controlled atmosphere and cold storage warehouses may be increased by up to twenty spaces. This limit shall be calculated cumulatively for all previous modifications since the last normal review;

C. Any expansion of use area or structure will not exceed fifty percent of the gross floor area. The expansion of an existing single-family home may exceed the fifty percent limit when all applicable setback and lot coverage standards are met. This limit shall be calculated cumulatively for all previous modifications since the last normal review;

D. The modification will not increase the height of any structure;

E. This limit shall be calculated cumulatively for all previous modifications since the last normal review;

F. The modification will not add a drive-thru facility; and

G. The modification does not include hazardous materials.

## 15.17.030 Exemptions.

Modifications to existing single-family homes and duplexes when Class (1) or (2) uses shall be exempt from the review processes of this chapter when in conformance with the standards of Table 5-1. For other exemptions from the review processes, see YMC 15.01.040(A).