



## CITY OF BURLINGAME PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <b>Agenda Item: 8b</b>   | <b>Hearing Date: March 24, 2025</b>        |
| Project No.              | CDSR23-0001                                |
| Location                 | 1430 Chapin Avenue<br>APN: 029-121-440     |
| Applicant                | Neal Yung, developURBAN,                   |
| Property Owner           | JP Morgan Chase Bank, N.A.                 |
| Staff                    | Erika Lewit, Senior Planner                |
| General Plan Designation | Downtown Specific Plan, Chapin Avenue Area |
| Zoning                   | CAC (Chapin Avenue Commercial)             |
| Lot Area                 | 30,327 S.F.                                |

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Review of an application for Amendments to the Downtown Specific Plan and Zoning Code to increase the allowable building height in the Chapin Avenue Area, Major Commercial Design Review, Special Permit for building height, Lot Merger and Tentative Condominium Map for a new five-story commercial building with two levels of subterranean parking in the CAC (Chapin Avenue Commercial) zoning district.

### BACKGROUND

The subject site is an interior property with an existing commercial building (occupied by Chase Bank) and a surface parking lot. The applicant proposes to demolish the existing building and construct a new, 86,237 S.F., five-story commercial building with two levels of subterranean parking. JP Morgan Chase Bank owns the property and would own and occupy a portion of the ground floor space in the new building. There will be a total of five commercial condominium spaces intended for a mix of professional office uses and ground floor retail. Banks and financial institutions, professional offices, and retail uses are some of the permitted uses allowed in the CAC zoning district.

This block of Chapin Avenue between El Camino Real and Primrose Road is unique as the front property lines for all lots along both sides of the street extend into the street. There is an approximately 19-foot easement in favor of the City of Burlingame (reference Sheet C3.01 and C3.02) in place that is not buildable and encompasses the sidewalk, curb, street trees, and a portion of the parallel parking spaces on Chapin Avenue.

The subject site is adjacent to an existing three-story office building to the south (1440 Chapin Avenue) and an existing two-story office building to the north (1424 Chapin Avenue). At the rear of the site to the west, the zoning designation changes to R-4 (High Density Residential) and is adjacent to two existing three-story multi-unit residential buildings (1435 and 1425 Bellevue Avenue). A culverted portion of Ralston Creek runs beneath 1435 Bellevue Avenue, approximately 120 feet from the rear property line of the subject property.

The Applicant is requesting the following applications for the proposed project:

- Amendment to the Downtown Specific Plan (Chapin Avenue Area) and Zoning Code (Chapin Avenue Commercial District) to increase the maximum allowed building height to 60 feet by right and up to 75 feet with a Special Permit (C.S. 25.96);
- Major Commercial Design Review for a new, five-story commercial building (C.S. 25.68.020.C.3.a);

- Special Permit for building height (74'-6" proposed where a Special Permit is required for a height between 60 and 75 feet) (proposed amendment for C.S. 25.10.030.); and
- Lot Merger and Tentative Condominium Map to combine the existing three lots and create five commercial condominium units.

Per Chapter 25.96, amendments to the Downtown Specific Plan and Zoning Code require City Council action with a recommendation from the Planning Commission on whether to approve, approve in modified form, or deny the proposed amendments based on the findings in Code Section 25.96.060. Since the design of the project is contingent on the amendments to the regulations, and in order not to bifurcate the project and environmental review actions, all the project applications will be packaged together for Planning Commission recommendation to the City Council for final action. Planning Commission will be a recommending review body for this project.

Environmental review is required for the proposed project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and will be conducted as part of the process and brought forward for Planning Commission recommendation to the City Council for action.

## **ANALYSIS**

The project is reviewed for compliance with the development standards and requirements established in the General Plan, Downtown Specific Plan, Municipal Code, and State law, where applicable.

The CAC zoning district does not have floor area, lot coverage, or setback requirements, except for a 20-foot rear setback for floors above the first floor when the property abuts an existing residential use. The proposed project meets all required setbacks for the CAC zoning district.

### *Trees and Landscaping*

There are no minimum landscape requirements in the CAC zoning district; however, the applicant proposes landscaping and trees at the rear of the property, in the atrium area, on the terraces throughout the building, and five new street trees along Chapin Avenue. The landscape plans can be found on Sheets L0.01 through L2.1.

The applicant proposes to remove all the existing trees onsite, including the two existing street trees on Chapin Avenue. A Certified Arborist Report was prepared by Oakley Group Arborists. Three protected size trees are proposed for removal and will require a Protected Tree Removal Permit. The proposed project complies with the Tree Reforestation Ordinance requirements.

### *Parking and Circulation*

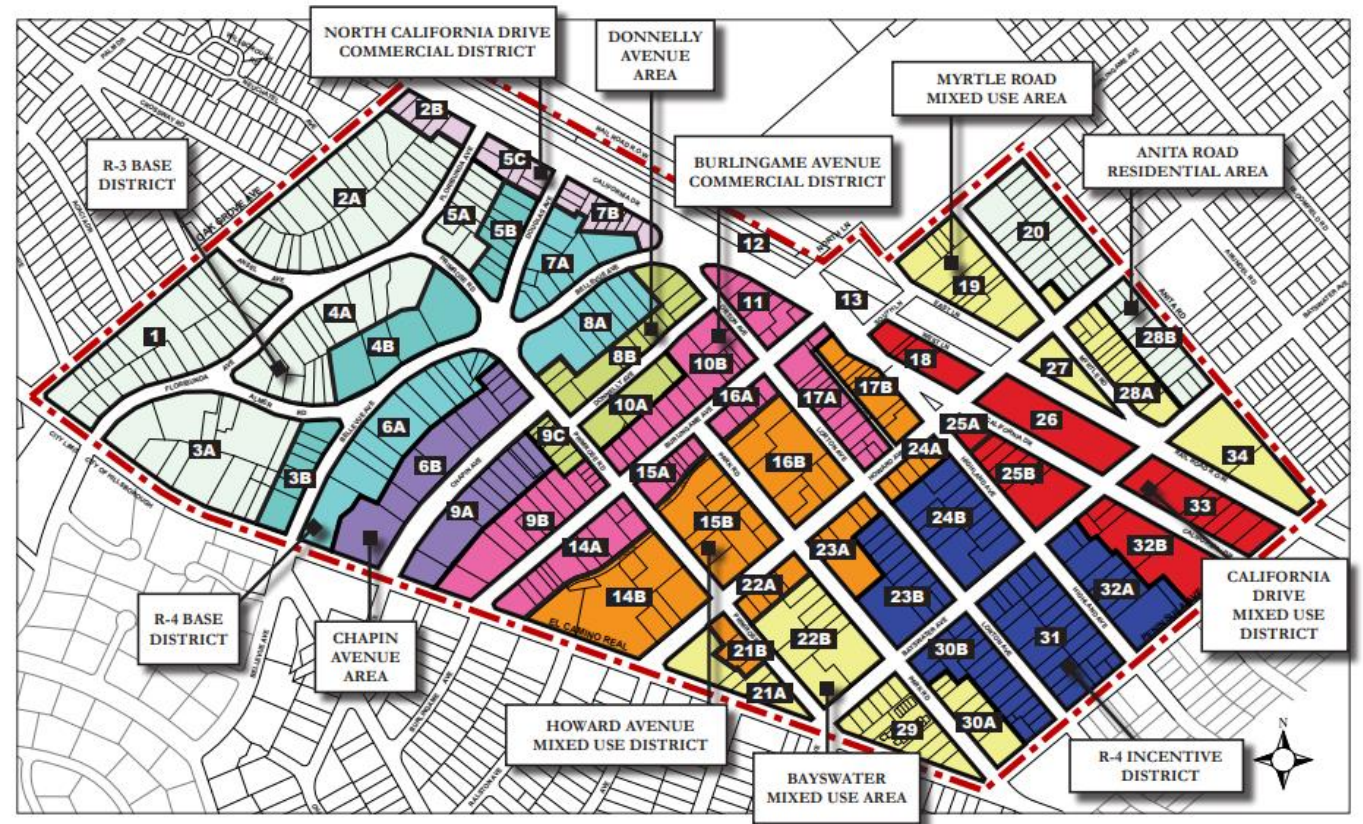
The existing site has separate ingress and egress driveways and 16 surface parking spaces. The proposed project has a single gated driveway entrance on the south side of the building frontage leading to two levels of subterranean parking containing 92 parking spaces.

Based on the mix of proposed uses, the Zoning Code parking requirements, and the applied Transportation Demand Management Plan reduction, the project requires 149 off-street parking spaces. The applicant is utilizing State law (AB 2097), which prohibits a public agency from imposing minimum parking requirements for commercial development within one-half mile of a major transit stop. The site is located within one-half mile of two transit stops, the Burlingame Caltrain Station and the SamTrans bus stop on El Camino Real. Therefore, no parking requirements can be enforced.

Building Height

Currently, the Downtown Specific Plan (Chapin Avenue Area) and the Zoning Code (Chapin Avenue Commercial zoning district), allow a building height of 35 feet and a maximum of 55 feet with a Special Permit. The proposed application includes a request to amend the Downtown Specific Plan and Zoning Code to increase the allowable building height in the Chapin Avenue Area to 60 feet and a maximum of 75 feet with a Special Permit (see Amendment Request attachment).

Figure 1: Downtown Specific Plan Planning Areas



The zoning districts immediately abutting the CAC zoning district include the R-4 (High Density Residential) zoning district with a height limit of 75 feet with Tier 2 benefits, the BAC (Burlingame Avenue Commercial) zoning district with a height limit of 55 feet with a Special Permit, and the DAC (Donnelly Avenue Commercial) zoning district with a height limit of 55 feet with a Special Permit. Across El Camino Real from the CAC zoning district is the R-3 (Medium/ high Density Residential) zoning district with a height limit of 55 feet.

The building is designed with the extra height incorporated; without the amendments to the regulations the project would need to be redesigned to eliminate the fifth floor and reduce the fourth floor by three feet.

Table 1 on the following page compares the proposed project to the development standards for a commercial building based on the CAC zoning district.

**Table 1: Project Information**

|  | PROPOSED  | ALLOWED/REQ'D   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Front Setback (basement):</b><br>(1 <sup>st</sup> flr):<br>(2 <sup>nd</sup> flr):<br>(3 <sup>rd</sup> flr):<br>(4 <sup>th</sup> flr):<br>(5 <sup>th</sup> flr): | 19'-0"<br>19'-7"<br>19'-7"<br>19'-7"<br>19'-7"<br>67'-7"    | 0'-0" all floors including basement   |
| <b>Left Setback (basement):</b><br>(1 <sup>st</sup> flr):<br>(2 <sup>nd</sup> flr):<br>(3 <sup>rd</sup> flr):<br>(4 <sup>th</sup> flr):<br>(5 <sup>th</sup> flr):  | 0'-0"<br>5'-1"<br>5'-1"<br>5'-1"<br>5'-1"<br>5'-1"          | 0'-0" all floors including basement   |
| <b>Right Setback (basement):</b><br>(1 <sup>st</sup> flr):<br>(2 <sup>nd</sup> flr):<br>(3 <sup>rd</sup> flr):<br>(4 <sup>th</sup> flr):<br>(5 <sup>th</sup> flr): | 0'-0"<br>5'-1"<br>5'-1"<br>5'-1"<br>5'-1"<br>15'-1"         | 0'-0" all floors including basement   |
| <b>Rear Setback (basement):</b><br>(1 <sup>st</sup> flr):<br>(2 <sup>nd</sup> flr):<br>(3 <sup>rd</sup> flr):<br>(4 <sup>th</sup> flr):<br>(5 <sup>th</sup> flr):  | 4'-7"<br>10'-4"<br>23'-10"<br>23'-10"<br>23'-10"<br>35'-10" | 0'-0" basement<br>0'-0" first floor<br>20'-0" second floor <sup>1</sup><br>20'-0" second floor <sup>1</sup><br>20'-0" second floor <sup>1</sup><br>20'-0" second floor <sup>1</sup> |
| <b>Off-Street Parking:</b>   | 92 spaces   | 146 spaces (per zoning code)<br>0 spaces (with AB 2097)   |
| <b>Bicycle Parking:</b>  | 8 short term spaces<br>(sidewalk)                           | 0 long term spaces<br>2 short term spaces   |
| <b>Building Height:</b>  | 74'-6" <sup>2</sup>   | 75'-0" <sup>3</sup>   |
| <b>First Floor Ceiling Height:</b>   | 15'-0"  | 12'-0" minimum  |

- <sup>1</sup> Balconies permitted to encroach into required setbacks up to five feet.
- <sup>2</sup> Special Permit requested for a building height of 74'-6" where (with proposed amendments to the Downtown Specific Plan and Zoning Code) a Special Permit is required for a height between 60 and 75 feet.
- <sup>3</sup> Current building height limits in the CAC zoning district are 35 feet by right and 55 feet with a Special Permit. The requested amendments to the Downtown Specific Plan and Zoning Code would change the height limits to 60 feet by right and 75 feet with a Special Permit.

### *Building Design*

The building is designed using mass timber construction and will have curved eaves and windows at the northeast and southeast corners facing Chapin Avenue. The northeast corner of the building design is more prominent to orient the building towards Primrose Road and the remainder of the Chapin Avenue frontage is stepped back by five feet as you move along the frontage from north to south. Each floor above the first on the front façade is terraced back with green roof landscaping and the fifth floor is set back approximately 67 feet from the floors below.

The rear of the building has a series of tiered balconies starting on the second floor and leading to the fifth floor. Both the front and rear elevations have an interior atrium with a living wall that will be visible from the exterior of the building from the first to fourth floor. The mass timber design is intended to highlight the interior of the building and much of the interior cross-laminated wood timber will be visible from the exterior of the front and rear elevations. Additional exterior materials proposed include brake metal fins around the entire exterior, a repeating pattern of metal panel siding and curtainwall and ceramic tile at the side elevations of the building. Aluminum windows with vitro solarban low-E coating are proposed throughout. The balconies and roof terrace will have a stainless-steel mesh guardrail.

The building utilizes the following building materials:

- Windows: Aluminum window wall system and windows with wood mullions
- Siding: glazed ceramic tile, brake metal fins, metal panel siding, curtainwall
- Other: stainless steel mesh terrace railings

### **Commercial Design Review**

Commercial Design Review is required for new commercial buildings pursuant to Code Section 25.68.020.C.3. The design of the building is reviewed based on the [Commercial Design Guidebook](#) and the standards established in Chapter 5 ([Design & Character](#)) in the Downtown Specific Plan.

#### *Downtown Specific Plan Design & Character Standards*

Section 5.2 of the Downtown Specific Plan provides design guidelines specifically for commercial and mixed use areas. Section 5.4 provides more general design guidelines that apply to all areas of the downtown. The titles of these sections and subsections are included below.

- 5.2 Design Standards for Commercial and Mixed Use Areas
  - 5.2.1 Pedestrian Use and Character
    - 5.2.1.1 Entrances
    - 5.2.1.2 Ground-Level Commercial
    - 5.2.1.3 Ground-Level Treatment
    - 5.2.1.4 Site Access
  - 5.2.2 Architectural Compatibility
    - 5.2.2.1 Building Scale
    - 5.2.2.2 On-Site Structured Parking
    - 5.2.2.3 Upper-Story Setbacks – Burlingame Avenue Frontages
    - 5.2.3.4 Myrtle Road Mixed Use Area
  - 5.2.3 Architectural Design Consistency
    - 5.2.3.1 Façade Design
    - 5.2.3.2 Windows

- 5.2.3.3 Awnings
  - 5.2.3.3 Materials
  - 5.2.3.4 Rear and Side Facades
- 5.2.4 Site Design and Amenities
  - 5.2.4.1 Building Coverage
  - 5.2.4.2 Open Space
- 5.4 Additional Design Standards for All Areas of Downtown
  - 5.4.1 Land Use Transitions
    - 5.4.1.1 Massing and Scale Transitions
    - 5.4.1.2 Privacy
    - 5.4.1.3 Boundaries
  - 5.4.2 Shadow Impacts
  - 5.4.3 Sustainability and Green Building Design
  - 5.4.4 Landscape Trees

In general, the project meets the design standards and guidance established in the Downtown Specific Plan that are relevant to the proposed project. Two standards to consider are highlighted below in relation to the projects interface and impact to the existing surrounding buildings which are lower scale than the proposed project:

*5.4.1.1 Massing and Scale Transitions. Transitions of development intensity from higher density development building types to lower can be done through different building sizes or massing treatments that are compatible with the lower intensity surrounding uses. Massing and orientation of new buildings should respect the massing of neighboring structures by varying the massing within a project, stepping back upper stories, reducing mass by composition of solids and voids, and varying sizes of elements to transition to smaller scale buildings.*

*5.4.2 Shadow Impacts. Every building invariably casts some shadows on adjoining parcels, public streets, and/or open spaces. However, as the design of a project is developed, consideration should be given to the potential shading impacts on surroundings. Site plans, massing, and building design should respond to potential shading issues, minimizing shading impacts where they would be undesirable, or conversely maximizing shading where it is desired.*

*As part of the design review process, development in the Specific Plan Area that is proposed to be taller than existing surrounding structures should be evaluated for potential to create new shadows/shade on public and/or quasi-public open spaces and major pedestrian routes. At a minimum, shadow diagrams should be prepared for 9 AM, 12 noon, and 3 PM on March 21st, June 21st, September 21st, and December 21st (approximately corresponding to the solstices and equinoxes) to identify extreme conditions and trends. If warranted, diagrams could also be prepared for key dates or times of day — for example, whether a sidewalk or public space would be shaded at lunchtime during warmer months.*

Although the *Massing and Scale Transitions* are in relation to lower-scale residential development and the *Shadow Impacts* are in relation to public/quasi-public spaces, consideration of these topics would be appropriate given the scale of the surrounding buildings in comparison to the size of the proposed building.

#### *Staff Comments*

The applicant is requesting changing the development regulations of the Chapin Avenue Area within the Downtown Specific Plan and Zoning Code from a maximum of 55 feet to 75 feet. Given the proposed change, should other standards be included with the Downtown Specific Plan amendment to manage the

design and/or transition with surrounding uses when there is more than a two-story change in scale and massing? Potential standards could include:

- Upper floor stepbacks and transitions in massing
- Shadow Impact studies
- Additional setbacks

Additional materials to consider requesting:

- Shadow Impact Study
- Colored Elevations that include dashed lines showing the height of the adjacent buildings
- Renderings of all angles of the building, including the sides and rear of the building

Topics to consider in review of the project:

- Are design modifications necessary to minimize light and air impacts to adjacent buildings? If so, should terraces or cut outs be added to the other facades of upper floors or the building?

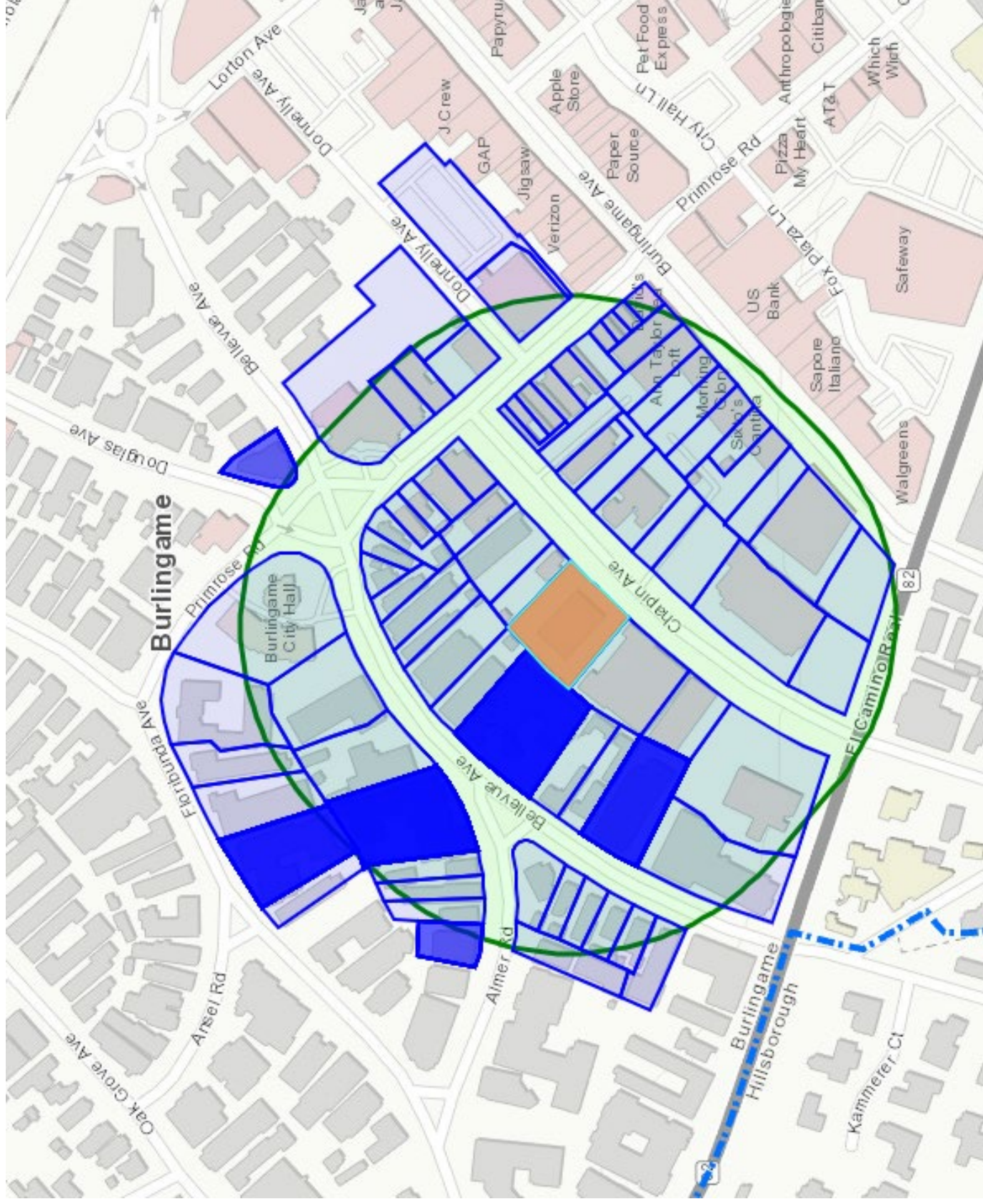
**Attachments:**

Area Map

Applicant Request for Amendments for Building Height, dated January 10, 2025

Proposed Plans dated March 12, 2025

1430 Chapin Avenue  
500' noticing  
APN: 029-121-440



January 10, 2025

Erika Lewit, Senior Planner  
City of Burlingame  
501 Primrose Road  
Burlingame, CA 94010

**RE: 1430 Chapin—Updated Specific Plan Amendment and Rezoning Request**

Dear Erika:

Thank you for your ongoing help with our project located at 1430 Chapin (Project) in Burlingame, CA (City). Based on feedback from the City, we are updating our request to amend the Downtown Specific Plan and Zoning Code to allow for a height of 75 feet along the north side of Chapin that abuts the adjacent R-4 zone (Amendments).

We believe the Amendments should establish a new height of 60 feet by right, with 75 feet allowed with a Special Use Permit (SUP). The Amendments should also include setbacks above 60 feet to create visual interest and to maximize light and air for adjacent properties and pedestrians. Specifically, we request the following changes for the north block of Chapin from Primrose Road to El Camino Real:

- 60 feet by right;
- 75 feet with SUP;
- Setbacks above 60 feet:
  - 5 foot minimum for side setbacks;
  - 15 foot minimum from street front;
  - 35 foot minimum for rear setback;
- Allow for an elevator overrun of up to 18' above the height limit.
- All other development standards to remain the same.

We believe that this request is justified because the City's current maximum 55 foot (with Conditional Use Permit) height limit no longer aligns with market standards for office or retail buildings because it yields substandard floor height clearances. Based on industry standards, for institutional Class A office/retail environments, a height limit of 55' 6" to 58' 6" would be required for appropriate floor heights in traditional concrete or steel construction (*see Exhibit A*,

*Section 2.0*). For Mass Timber office/retail environments, the appropriate height limit is closer to 60-65 feet (*see Exhibit A Section 3.0*). Under the current 55 foot height restriction, neither conventional nor Mass Timber buildings can meet desired institutional standards (*see Exhibit A, Section 4.0*). In today's hybrid work environment, employers and employees require best-in-class workspaces, which we are confident the Project will deliver.

As demonstrated in the attached exhibit, the Project's Mass Timber design is optimized at 75 feet (*see Exhibit A, Section 5.0*), which achieves the necessary floor heights for Class A office and high-quality retail. Specifically, this will accommodate 14 feet for retail floor height (with Chase Bank as the anchor tenant) and 16 feet for office space floor height. Additionally, a 75-foot height limit on the north side of Chapin aligns with the adjacent R-4 zoning, while the south side can remain at 55 feet, serving as a buffer to the core of Downtown (*see Exhibit A, Section 7.0*). Various parts of Downtown Burlingame already exceed the 55-foot height limit (*see Exhibit A, Section 8.0*), and other Peninsula downtown areas have adopted higher height limits (*see Exhibit A, Section 9.0*). Lastly, office buildings with substandard floor heights are experiencing increased vacancies, and potential obsolescence, throughout Downtown Burlingame and other Peninsula downtowns.

Our goal is to deliver a best-in-class workplace and retail environment that will attract employers and employees to Downtown Burlingame who appreciate and want to be a part of the amazing retail, culinary, office and residential environment that already exists in Downtown Burlingame

We look forward to working with the City on this exciting project.

Sincerely,

Neal Yung  
developURBAN  
Managing Principal

Attachment:  
Exhibit A

cc: Scott Spansail  
Ruben Hurin

# Exhibit A: 1430 Chapin Specific Plan Amendment

September 2024

# 1.0 Revised Design | Full Mass Timber

Mass Timber Design delivers a best-in-class work and retail environment



## Pros

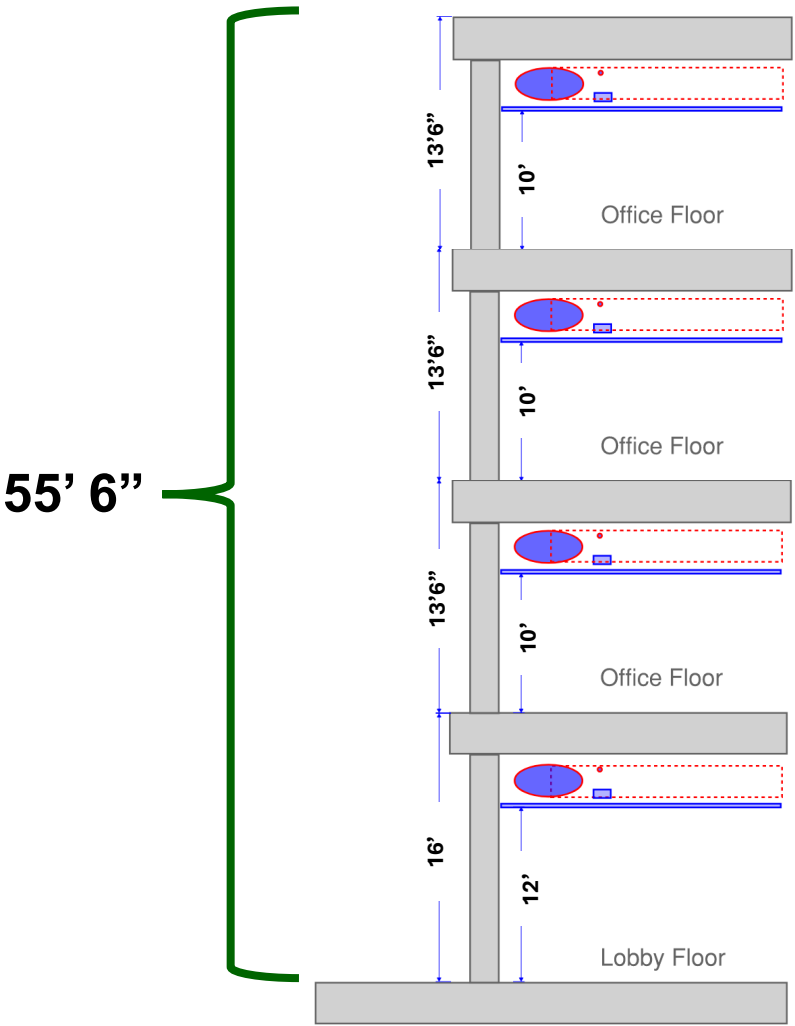
- Fully Mass Timber Building
- Beauty and Sustainability of Wood
- Warmth, Natural and More Inviting
- Type III-A building type
- Differentiated Hybrid-Work Office Space
- Structurally Efficient

## Cons

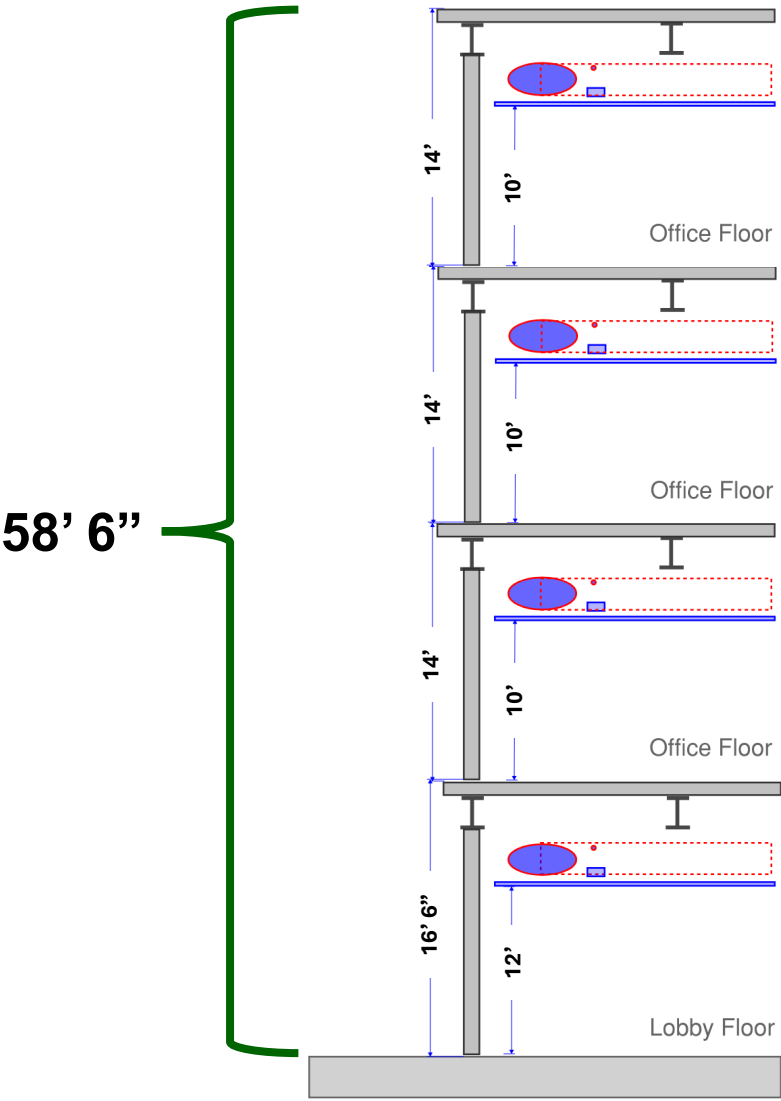
- Deeper floor assembly
- Requires more building height
- Smaller cantilevers

# 2.0 Height Limits | Concrete & Steel

55' Height Limit doesn't meet current standards



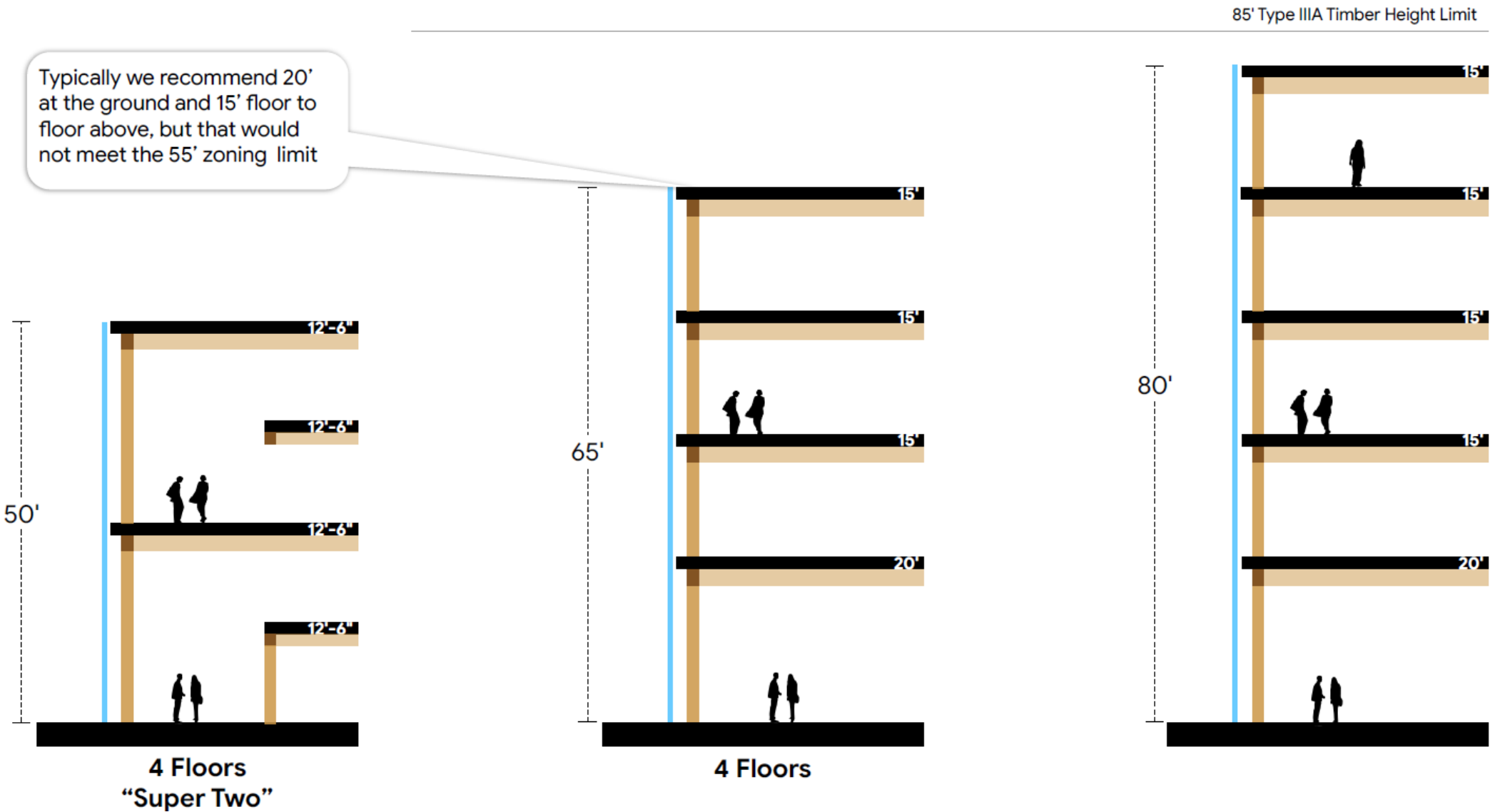
55'6" Max Height Zoning Needed for Class A Office if Concrete Construction



58'6" Max Height Zoning Needed for Class A Office if Steel Construction

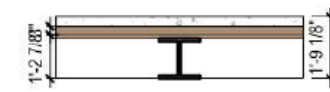
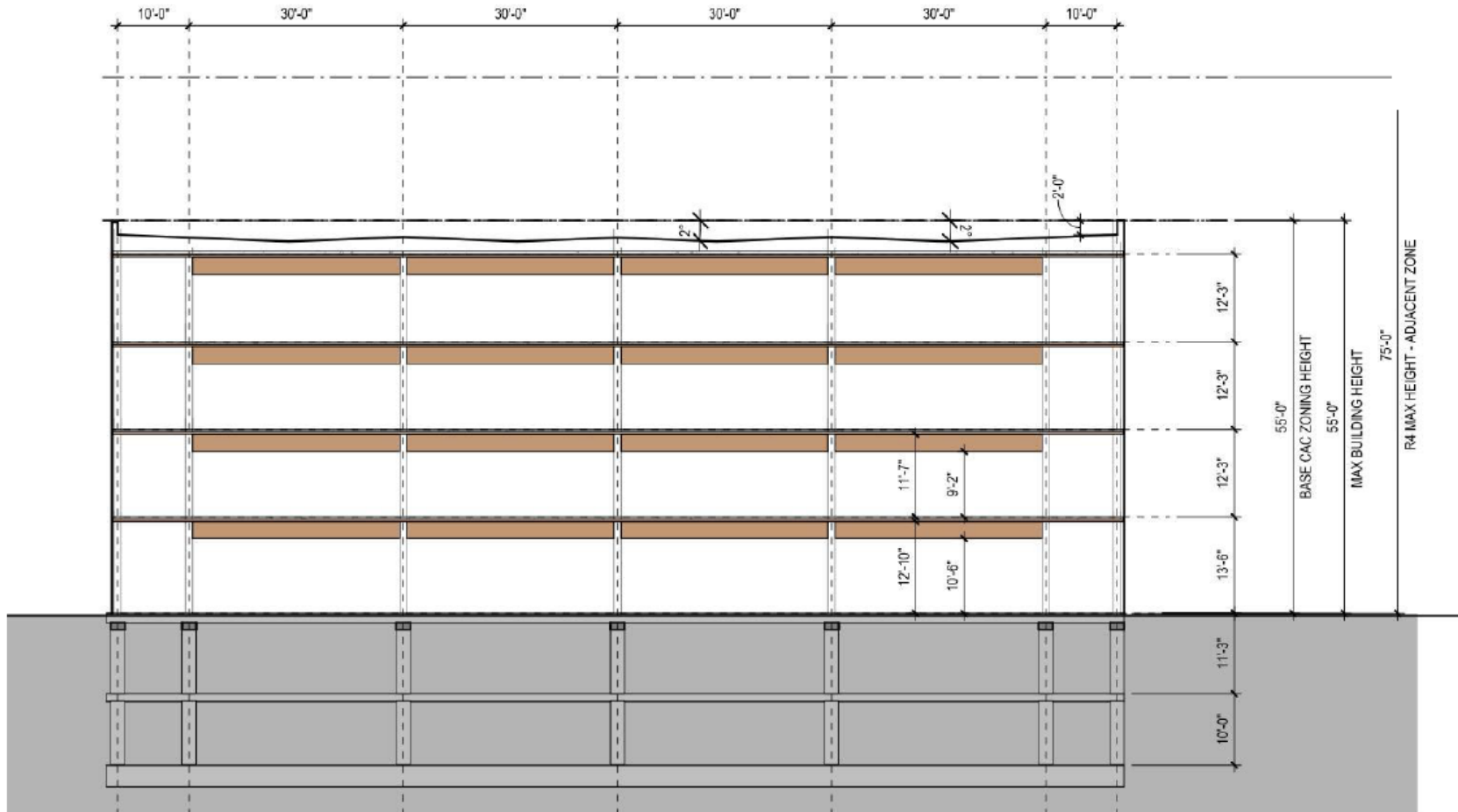
# 3.0 Mass Timber | Height Limits

Mass Timber needs taller height limits

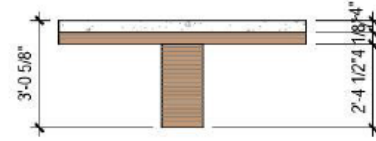


# 4.0 Mass Timber | 55' Cross Section

55' Height Limit is insufficient for mass timber construction



STEEL MASS TIMBER HYBRID SYSTEM

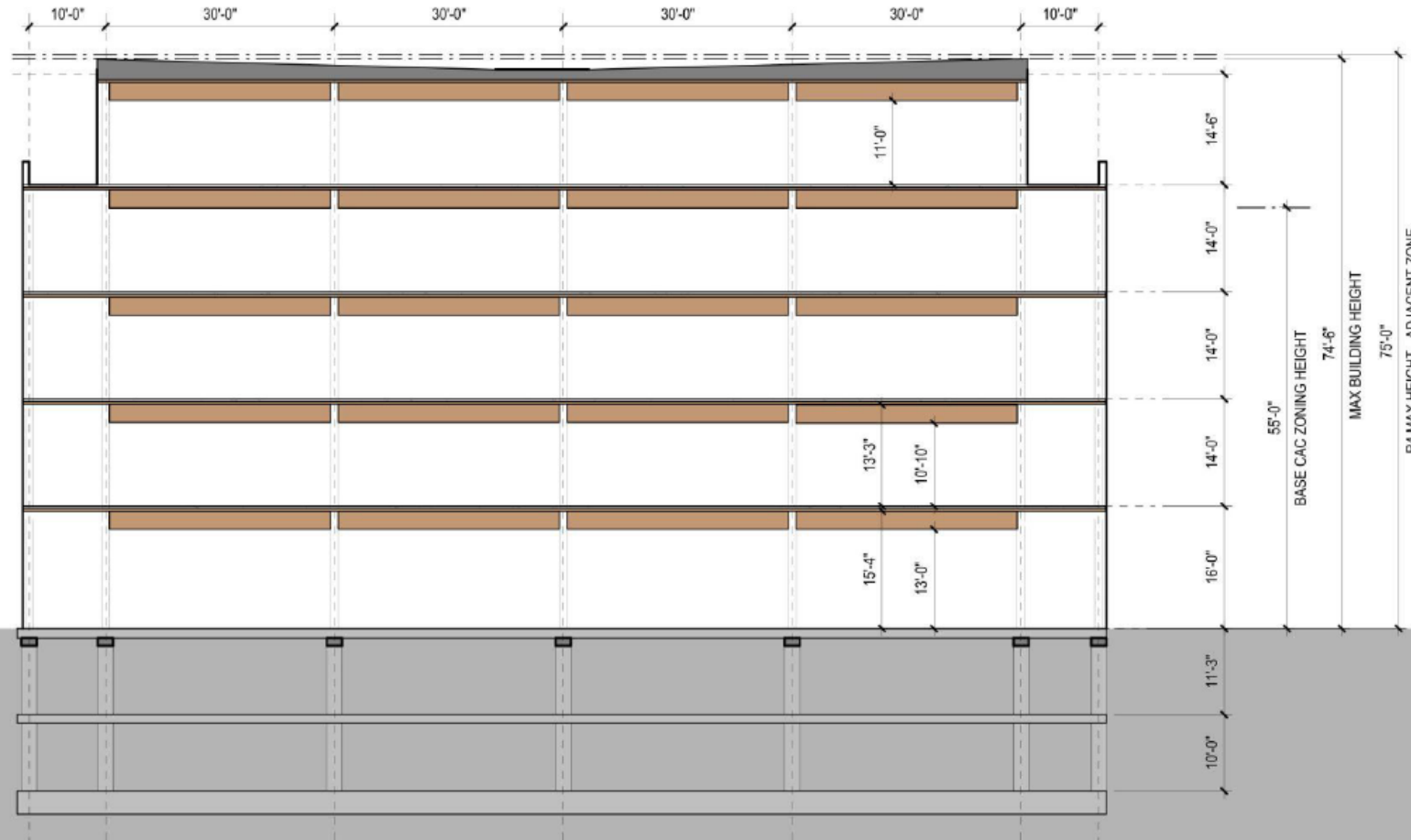


3 PLY 1 WAY SYSTEM

- Mass Timber Cross Sections Deeper than Steel
- 55' height limit constraints Class-A office
- Sub-standard floor height clearances (9'2" office floors / 10'6" retail floors which will be lower with any dropped ceilings in offices/ breakout space)
- Team recommends going for a zoning amendment to increase height

## 5.0 Mass Timber | 75' Cross Section

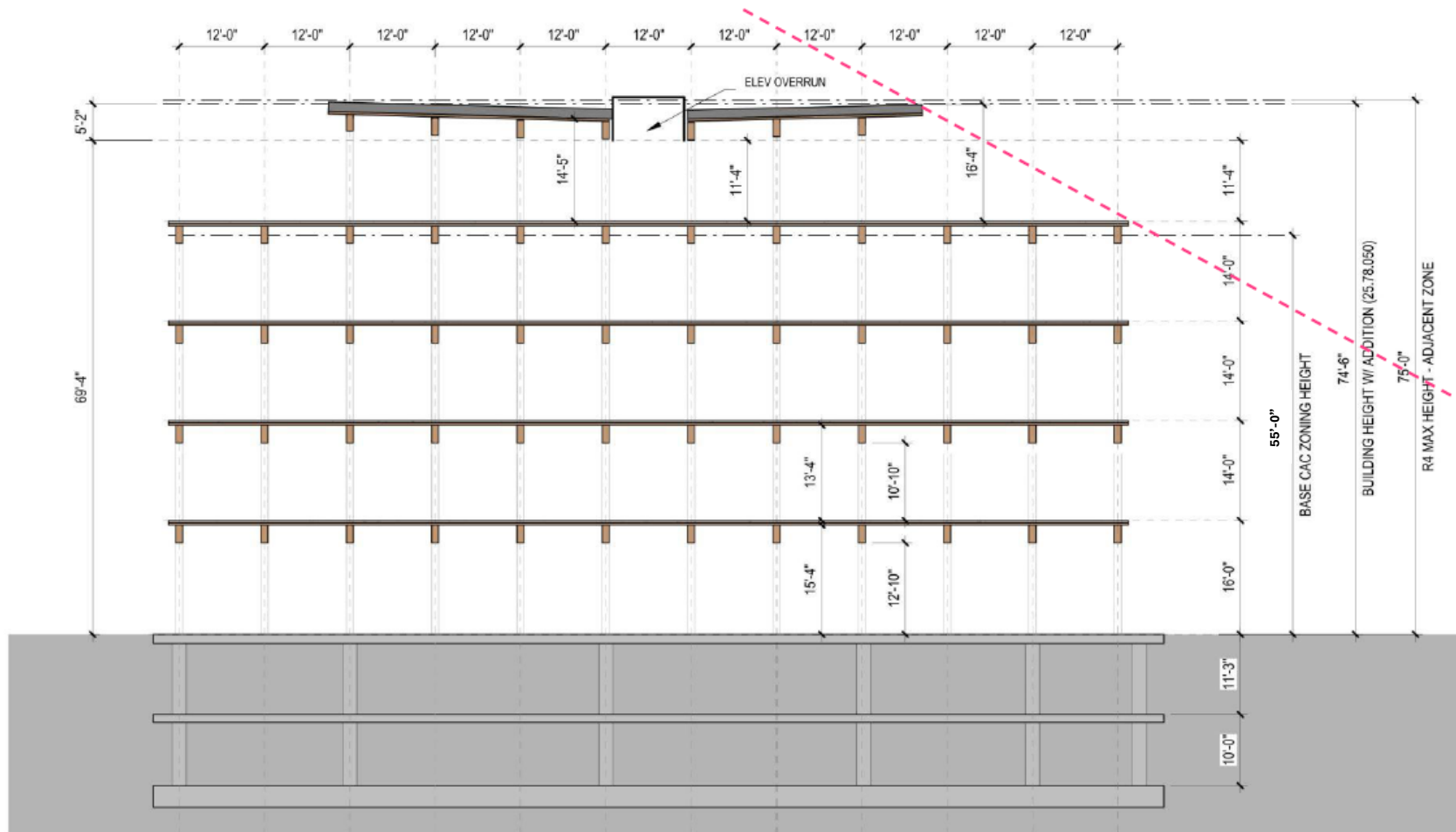
75' height limit allows for appropriate clear heights for all construction types



- 75' height limit allows for Class-A floor heights and a 5th floor keeping min recommended ceiling height
- Increased height limit allows Chase Bank height requirements & Class-A office floor heights

## 6.0 Mass Timber | Setbacks

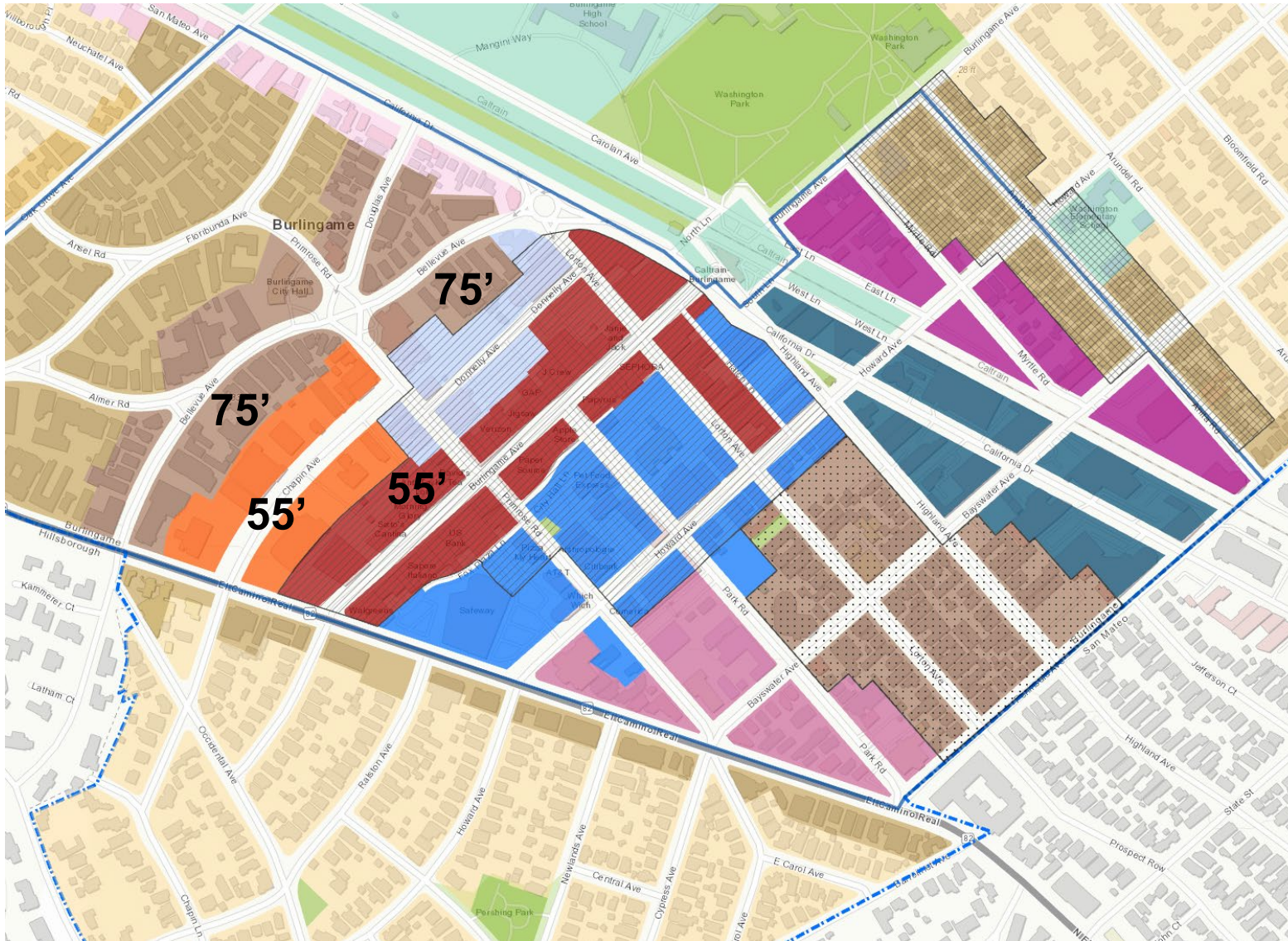
Appropriate setbacks minimize height impact on surrounding parcels



- 5th floor is set back by 20' on the north and south elevation, and 10' from the east and west, obscuring the view of 5th floor from street preserving intent of zoning code
- Note, R4 to the N allows 75' height in Downtown Plan

# 7.0 Zoning Heights | Downtown Burlingame

R-4 Zoning to the North of Chapin already has a 75' height limit



## Current Zoning Height Limits

Chapin Ave – 55' Height Limit

Bellevue Ave – 75' Height Limit

Burlingame Ave – 55' Height Limit

# 8.0 Zoning Heights | Tall Buildings in Downtown Burlingame

Buildings at or greater than 55' heights already exist Downtown



*\*Note: Building heights are estimated and not based on actual physical measurements*

## 9.0 Zoning Heights | Peninsula Downtowns

Multiple Peninsula Downtowns Allow for greater than 55' height limits



Multiple Peninsula Downtowns allow or are planning to allow up to or above 75' height limits

\*Note: Heights are based on understood zoning limits and/or planned zoning or general plan changes