

A wide-angle photograph of the Seattle skyline under a clear blue sky. The Space Needle is the central focus, with other skyscrapers like the Smith Tower and the dark, tiered Smith Tower visible in the background. The foreground shows a dense urban landscape with various buildings and green trees.

Rooftop Features Code Update Proposal

Photo by John Skelton



Seattle Department of
Construction & Inspections

Presentation to Land Use Committee
April 27, 2022

SDCI PURPOSE AND VALUES

Our Purpose

Helping people build a safe, livable, and inclusive Seattle.

Our Values

- Equity
- Respect
- Quality
- Integrity
- Service

WHAT DOES THIS RELATE TO?

- Rooftops will need to host more equipment (like heat pumps) per Energy Code – supports carbon neutrality
- Coordinate Land Use Code limits with new Energy Code requirements
- Simplify language, and what is counted
- Allow new rooftop spaces for Pioneer Square rooftop lodging, dining
- Chinatown/I.D.: Increasing the roof coverage limit, including for greenhouses

EXISTING CODE APPROACH – HEIGHT

- Height limit is measured at the roof's surface.
- Features up to 4 feet over roof easily allowed
- Taller features: many can reach up to 15 feet over roof
- Elevators: up to 16-35 feet (varies) over roof
- Taller features limited to a certain % limit of the roof

ROOF PERCENT COVERAGE FOR TALLER ITEMS

- The code has limits on % coverage of taller features on roofs

PROPOSAL: Adjust maximums up to account for more mech. equipment

Max. rooftop coverage limit for features more than 4 ft. over roof	Proposed % increase
Percent-rooftop-coverage limit option	
Up to 30% in LR	+10%
Up to 35% in MR, HR, C, NC, Yesler Terrace	+10%
Up to 35% in SM and Industrial	+15%
Up to 75% for Downtown residential towers, and 50% for other Downtown buildings	+15-20%
Up to 25% for buildings in Pioneer Square and Chinatown/I.D. zones (& up to 35% or 45% with Board, DON recommendation)	+10%

IMPROVE CONSISTENCY IN ROOFTOP LIMITS

- More % coverage is needed for residential towers with limited floor sizes, and greater than 120 feet tall:
 - Downtown zones: Denny Triangle, Belltown, others with residential towers
 - Seattle Mixed zones: New kinds of SM zones; better align their roof cover limit
 - Tall residential buildings in multifamily zones: MR, HR, NC, C, Yesler Terrace
- Update an existing roof % cover choice that allows 75% coverage:
 - Group taller features in middle of roof
 - Limit height of features near roof edges
 - Extend this option to HR, C, NC, SM zones

PIONEER SQUARE

- Add lodging and eating and drinking establishments as new kinds of “penthouse” uses on rooftops in Pioneer Square zones. And allow enclosed recreation spaces retrofits on roofs of non-historic buildings.
 - On buildings at least 40 feet tall
 - Coverage limit = 50%
 - Expands choice from long-time allowance for office or residential use on roof
 - Allow recreational spaces to be added to existing buildings built since 2008, up to 45% roof coverage (this space + other tall features).
- Pioneer Square has lower limits on roof coverage; this proposal fits with that more sensitive set of limits; subject to Board, DON recommendation.

CHINATOWN/INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT

- Increase allowable roof coverages by 10%; to 25%, or 35% with Board and DON recommendation
- Greenhouse allowance on rooftop is not clearly stated
 - Allow 10% more roof coverage for it; up to 45% total roof coverage with Board, DON recommendation

QUESTIONS?

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