



## **Timeline and History of Building Height Standards in the Maple Avenue Commercial Corridor**

**1956 Town Code** – Maximum height of 3 stories/35 feet in C-1, C-1A, and C-2 zoning districts. Additional elements, such as penthouses or roof structures, not providing additional floor space are allowed above the height limit.

**1962 and 1966 Town Code** – Maximum height of 3 stories/35 feet in C-1 zoning district, 6 stories/75 feet for commercial and office buildings and 3 stories/35 feet for any buildings with residential uses in C-1A and C-2 zoning districts. Additional elements, such as penthouses or roof structures, not providing additional floor space are allowed above the height limit.

**1969 Town Code** - Maximum height of 3 stories/35 feet in C-1 zoning district, 75 feet for commercial and office buildings and 3 stories/35 feet for any buildings with residential uses in C-1A and C-2 zoning districts. Additional elements, such as penthouses or roof structures, not providing additional floor space are allowed above the height limit.

**June 1977** - Town Council, in reaction to the proposed White Oak Tower office building, approves lowering the maximum height from 75 feet to 35 feet in the C-1A and C-2 commercial zoning districts. From the July 1977 Town Newsletter – (<https://www.viennava.gov/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/2443>):

- “Building heights in the commercial district became an increasing concern to Council after a recent court order was issued permitting the construction of a seven-story building in the 301 Maple Avenue West office building complex. Council adopted an emergency 35 foot height limit for the C-1 zone prior to the court order in an effort to limit the height of the proposed building at the 301 Maple Avenue location. While the new height limit could not apply to the proposed seven-story building it was formally adopted by Council after a series of public hearings and will govern future development in the C-1 zone.”
- “Shortly after the adoption of the height limit in the C-1 zone, public hearings were conducted for a new height limit in the C-1A and C-2

zones. The new 35 foot height limit in C-1A and C-2 zones was adopted by Council on a 4-3 vote on June 6. Councilmembers Pellicciotto and Upchurch, and Mayor Robinson opted for a 45 foot limit near the town's business core. Councilmen Buckley, Hicks, Olson and Walp voted for the 35 foot limit."

**November 2001 to January 2002** – Town of Vienna holds a charrette to discuss future development patterns of the community. Charrette report:

<https://www.viennava.gov/documentcenter/view/864>

- Maple Avenue Vision Committee is created to study land use patterns along Maple Avenue East and West
- Committee meets every two weeks for over two years
- Resolution creating committee in January 2002:  
<https://www.viennava.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/866>

**March 2005** – Maple Avenue Vision Committee recommends to Town Council that the Town implement a form based overlay revitalization district for Maple Avenue.

No immediate action is taken by Town Council. Maple Avenue Vision Committee

Recommendations: <https://www.viennava.gov/DocumentCenter/View/4706>

- "Building Standards would include specification for height, fenestration, and use for a building on any given piece of property in the revitalization district. Stories rather than feet would determine height. Story height on first floor would be higher than upper stories. Upper floors could be 10 to 12 feet in height. This height would encourage residential condominium use or office use. Most of the property owners we talked to preferred 7 to 8 stories...We would propose a compromise of up to 5 to 6 stories in appropriate locations. This height would encourage residential condominiums or office use. Impact of increased stories on the streetscape would be mitigated through the use of bulk plane. Such flexibility with interior heights would give the property owner latitude in responding to his or her market."

**November 2006** – Consultants contracted by the Town, Duncan Associates and Ferrell-Madden Associates, release report on *Assessment of Regulatory Options for Maple Avenue Commercial Feasibility Study*:

<https://www.viennava.gov/documentcenter/view/867>

- "One of the biggest areas of concern amongst many stakeholders focused on building height. Local landowners and merchants

expressed concern that the 35-foot height limit made expansion or new construction impractical and subsequently stifled investment in the community. At the same time, many local residents and community leaders felt that the modest scale of the buildings created a compelling atmosphere that was appropriate for a suburban residential neighborhood. Some suggested that taller buildings would not complement the character of the community. However, there does seem to be general support amongst the various stakeholders for an increase in height in certain areas where the added intensity would not compromise the surrounding residential areas.”

- “It should be noted that a 35-foot height limit generally limits commercial buildings to two stories. In many cases, the first floor of a commercial building is at least 12 feet from floor to ceiling. Then there is a one to three foot space for heating and cooling ductwork, plumbing, and other utilities. The second story is generally a minimum of ten feet in height (although this may be reduced to eight or nine feet in the case of residential space). Buildings that attempt to fit three stories into the 35-foot height would likely be considered subprime commercial space.”
- “As a starting point for the discussion, the consultant team recommends an increased building height limit of perhaps four or five stories in limited areas. This recommendation is based on discussions with elected and appointed officials, staff, and citizens; as well the consultant’s understanding of the key issues. The Town may consider using the increased height as an incentive for providing features that would benefit not only the property owner, but the larger community.”

**November 2010 to June 2011** – A consulting firm, Wiley Wilson, is contracted with the Town to provide photo renderings illustrating building heights of 35 feet, 50 feet, and 54 feet, at both 15 and 30 foot setbacks. Study narrative and renderings:

<https://www.viennava.gov/DocumentCenter/View/4709> and  
<https://www.viennava.gov/DocumentCenter/View/4708>

- “Areas of study include the 400 block of Maple Avenue, West; the 100 block of Maple Avenue, East; and the 300 block of Maple Avenue, East. For each location, a photograph was taken looking down the street in a cross-sectional view, and across the street in an elevation view. Architectural renderings of new buildings were developed on top of these photos to illustrate various combinations of building heights and building setback distances. Building heights of 35 feet, 50 feet, and 54 feet are shown. Building setback distances of 15 feet and 30 feet are shown.”

**June 13, 2011** – Town Council holds a work session to discuss the photo renderings. Work Session Minutes:

<https://www.viennava.gov/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/1651>

- “Ed Shea of Wiley|Wilson presented large photo renderings of intersections and sections of Maple Avenue, depicting different development heights and setbacks as requested by the Department of Planning and Zoning. The building heights displayed for comparison were 35 feet, 50 feet, and 54 feet. Within a given height limit, a building’s number of floors could also be limited. The extra height difference between a 50 foot and a 54 foot building could potentially be used for heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning equipment. Higher ceilings on a building’s first floor could also be desirable for retail spaces.”

**November 14, 2011** – Town Council holds another work session to discuss building heights and a consensus is reached to allow for a 54-foot maximum building height and a 15-foot setback. Work Session Minutes:

<https://www.viennava.gov/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/1654>

- “As noted, there is not much of a visual difference between a height of 50 feet and a height of 54 feet, but the higher structures allow for the extra space needed between floors for 21st century wiring and cables.”
- “Recommendation: The Department of Planning and Zoning will prepare an RFP for an architectural and engineering firm, using the recommended set-back of 15 feet and height limit of 54 feet.”

**June 4, 2012** – Town Council awards contract to Lardner/Klein Landscape Architects, P.C. and associated firms to provide consultant services outlined in RFP 12-06 to develop ordinance amendments related to increase of building heights along Maple Avenue. Meeting Minutes:

<https://www.viennava.gov/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/1676>

**October 2014** – Town Council adopts the Maple Avenue Commercial MAC zoning district, which permits a height of 54 feet, with an additional 8.1 feet for architectural elements, such as parapets and mechanical rooms.