

Commercial Development



Facts to Know

INTRODUCTION:

In the City of Commerce City, there are three commercial zone districts. They are as follows:

- C-1: Local Commercial District
- C-2: General Commercial District
- C-3: Regional Commercial District

Each zone district has a unique purpose, and the combination of regulations for a particular zone district are designed to meet that intended purpose. For example, the C-1: Local Commercial District is intended to provide a district designed for administration and professional services, local employment and services, and small local retail districts designed for smaller retail shopping and personal service areas. The regulations for the C-1 zone district contribute to the creation of local business services and local retail districts within neighborhoods.

These regulations can generally be broken down into two categories: bulk standards, and design standards.

Bulk standards deal with the general form of a building, and determine things like the maximum size and placement of a building on a lot. These regulations typically include the lot size, floor area ratio, open space, height, and setbacks. The purpose of bulk standards is to allow building forms within a particular zone district that are characteristic of the built environment that zone district is intended to create.

Design standards deal with the specific architectural details of a building. These regulations typically include exterior materials, entry features, and the location of windows and doors. The purpose of design standards is to promote the design of an environment that is built to a human scale, to encourage attractive street fronts that accommodate pedestrians in a safe and pleasant manner, and to allow for vehicular movement.

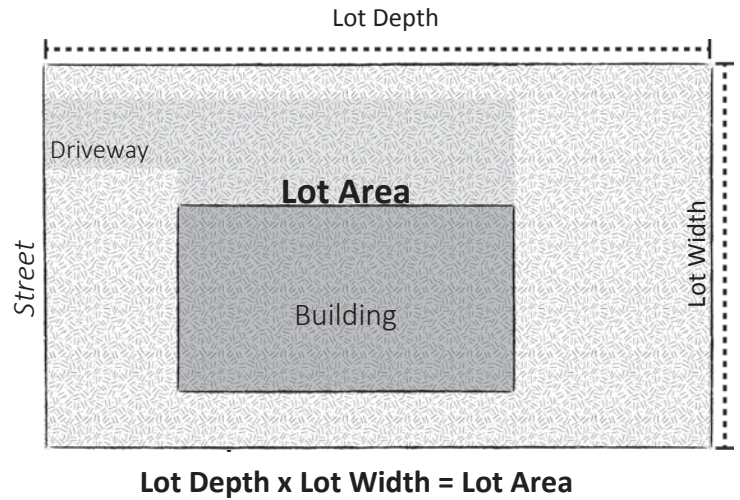
This packet explains what each of the bulk standards means and how to measure it, as well as lists the specific requirements for each of the commercial zone districts.

There are also various commercial areas, predominately in the northern part of the city, that are zoned PUD (Planned Unit Development). Each of these PUDs is unique, and may have different standards than those for the regular commercial zone districts. Please contact the Planner of the Day to obtain a copy of a PUD zone document for the specific standards which apply in a particular PUD.

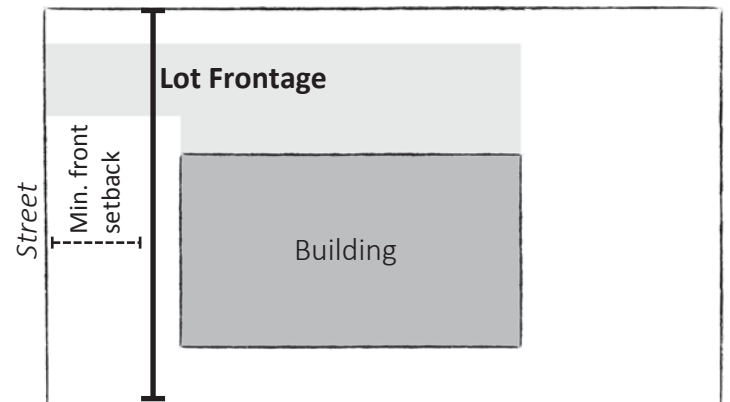
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BULK STANDARDS:

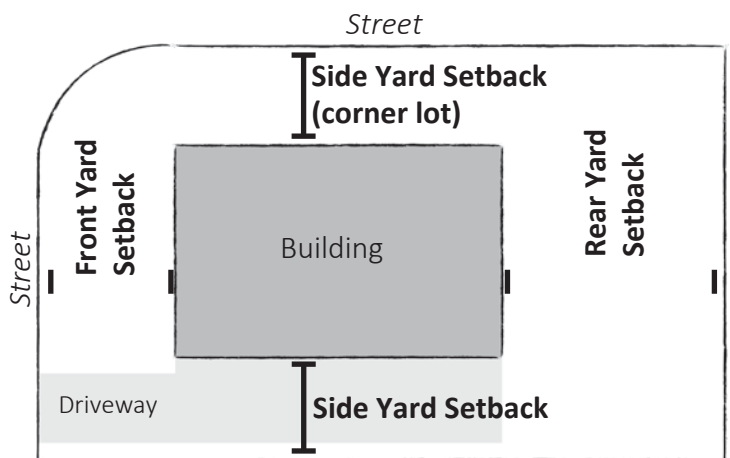
Lot Area: The term “lot area” refers to the size of the lot, and is defined as the total square footage within the lot lines of a lot. This information can typically be found in a variety of places, including tax assessment records, subdivision plats, and property deeds. Any new lots to be created through the subdivision process must meet the applicable lot area requirements for the particular zone district in which the property is located. Existing lots which do not meet the lot area requirements may still be allowed to develop so long as the use complies with the underlying zone district and any new structures meet the remaining bulk standards.



Lot Frontage: The term “lot frontage” refers to the distance between the side lot lines, as measured along a straight line parallel to the front lot line and located the minimum front setback distance from the front lot line. The front lot line is the one adjacent to the street on which the property has its principal access.



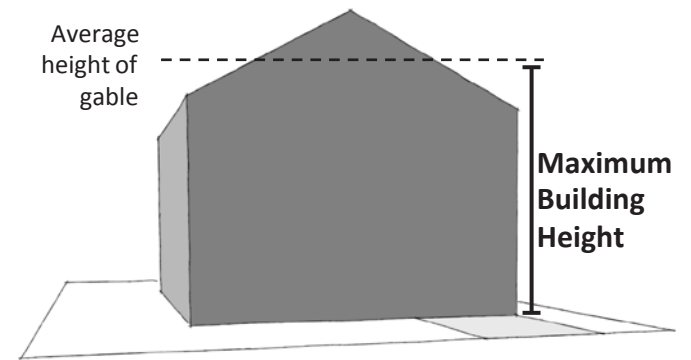
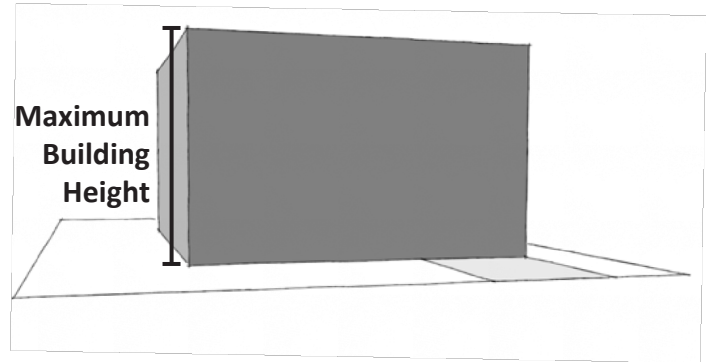
Setback: A “setback” is the distance between a lot line and a building or structure. There are setback requirements for all sides of a property, as measured from the front lot line (the side with the primary pedestrian access), the side lot lines, and the rear lot line. These can be measured by drawing a straight line at a right angle from the lot line to the closest projection of the building or structure. Cornices, cupolas, box and bay windows, or similar architectural features are allowed to extend up to one foot into any setback.



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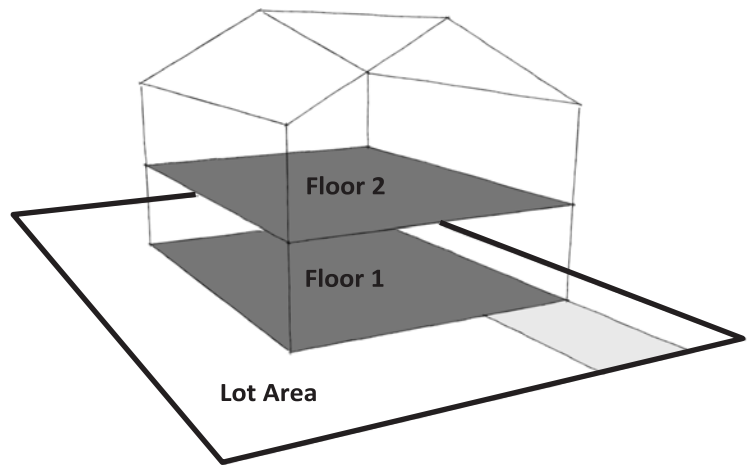
Building Height: Building height is the vertical distance from the highest finished grade adjacent to the building to the highest point of the building, which is determined in one of three ways depending on roof style. For flat roofs, the highest point is considered to be the cap. For pitched roofs, the highest point is considered to be the average height of the highest gable or hip.

Chimneys, cornices without windows, cupolas, domes not used for human occupancy, elevator penthouses, monuments, parapet walls, skylights, spires, steeples, theater scenery lofts, towers, and other similar structures may exceed the maximum permitted height by up to 150%.



Floor Area Ratio: The “floor area ratio,” or “FAR,” is the gross floor area of all buildings on a lot or parcel, divided by the lot area. The term “gross floor area” refers to the total area in square feet of all floors of a building measured from exterior walls.

$$\text{Floor 1} + \text{Floor 2} = \text{Gross Floor Area}$$
$$\text{Gross Floor Area} / \text{Lot Area} = \text{FAR}$$



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C-1: LOCAL COMMERCIAL DISTRICT:

The purpose of the local commercial district is to provide a district designed for administration and professional services, local employment and services, and a small local retail district designed for smaller retail shopping and personal service areas.

BULK STANDARD	REQUIREMENT
Minimum floor area ratio	0.05
Maximum floor area ratio	0.50
Minimum lot area	8,000-square feet
Maximum lot area	80,000-square feet
Minimum lot frontage	70 feet
Minimum front yard setback	10 feet (garages to be set back 20 feet minimum)
Maximum front yard setback	25 feet (new structures only)
Minimum side yard setback (interior lot)	10 feet
Maximum side yard setback (interior lot)	25 feet
Minimum side yard setback (corner lot)	10 feet
Maximum side yard setback (corner lot)	See Commercial Design Standards
Minimum side yard setback (corner lot along collector or arterial)	20 feet
Minimum rear yard setback	15 feet
Minimum building height	15 feet
Maximum building height	35 feet

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C-2: GENERAL COMMERCIAL DISTRICT:

The purpose of the general commercial district is to provide a wide variety of general retail, business, and service uses, as well as professional and business offices, but not intensive, high-traffic generating activities.

BULK STANDARD	REQUIREMENT
Minimum floor area ratio	0.05
Maximum floor area ratio	N/A
Minimum lot area	8,000-square feet
Maximum lot area	N/A
Minimum lot frontage	70 feet
Minimum front yard setback	10 feet (garages to be set back 20 feet minimum)
Maximum front yard setback	25 feet (at least 1 building on a lot)
Minimum side yard setback (interior lot)	10 feet
Maximum side yard setback (interior lot)	N/A
Minimum side yard setback (corner lot)	10 feet
Maximum side yard setback (corner lot)	See Commercial Design Standards
Minimum side yard setback (corner lot along collector or arterial)	20 feet
Minimum rear yard setback	20 feet
Minimum building height	15 feet
Maximum building height	50 feet

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C-3: REGIONAL COMMERCIAL DISTRICT:

The purpose of the regional commercial district is to provide for more intensive or higher impact business activities, as well as general retail, commercial, personal and business services, and professional offices for both the general and traveling public in an interstate and regional context.

BULK STANDARD	REQUIREMENT
Minimum floor area ratio	0.05
Maximum floor area ratio	N/A
Minimum lot area	8,000-square feet
Maximum lot area	N/A
Minimum lot frontage	70 feet
Minimum front yard setback	10 feet (garages to be set back 20 feet minimum)
Maximum front yard setback	35 feet (at least 1 building on a lot)
Minimum side yard setback (interior lot)	10 feet
Maximum side yard setback (interior lot)	N/A
Minimum side yard setback (corner lot)	10 feet
Maximum side yard setback (corner lot)	See Commercial Design Standards
Minimum side yard setback (corner lot) collector or arterial	25 feet
Minimum rear yard setback	20 feet
Minimum building height	15 feet
Maximum building height	50 feet

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DESIGN STANDARDS:

The purpose of this section is to provide for a uniform set of standards for the review of new commercial developments as well as additions to existing commercial developments. These standards are designed to promote a concentrated development pattern that encourages pedestrian use and provides a community environment not dominated by vehicles. Two or more story commercial uses are encouraged and can be used for a wide variety of uses including commercial and office. The standards below are a summary of the key items which are reviewed during the development process. The full text of these standards can be found in Article VII of the Land Development Code.

Building Location: In a single-building development, the building shall be located no more than 20 feet from the front property line. On a corner lot, the building shall be located no more than 20 feet from either adjacent street property line. This maximum setback shall not be required where plazas, courtyards, gardens, parks, or other public spaces integral to the development are provided adjacent to a street, and where these areas have urban improvements such as paving, benches, landscaping, and other amenities that create an attractive public use area. In a single-building development on a corner lot, this setback exception shall apply to only one of the adjacent streets, not both. Any building adjacent to a public or private street and adjacent to a sidewalk, plaza, or other public space, shall provide an entry to the building from that sidewalk, plaza, or public space.

Building Entrance: The main entrance of a building should face a pedestrian plaza or space and shall have a direct pedestrian connection to the street, so that pedestrians are not required to walk through parking lots. Each building of any size, whether free-standing or part of a shopping center, shall have a highly visible customer entrance featuring a combination of at least two of the following elements:

- (a) Roof overhangs, raised cornice parapets or peaked roof forms;
- (b) Recessed or projecting wall sections;
- (c) Arcades or arches;
- (d) Outdoor patios;
- (e) Water features;
- (f) Display windows;
- (g) Architectural details such as tile work and moldings integrated into the building structure; or
- (h) Integral planters or wing walls that incorporate landscaped areas and/or seating areas.

Architectural Design: Buildings shall be aesthetically pleasing from all views. Three hundred sixty degree architecture is required with massing, setbacks, and character that creates a pleasant streetscape and does not overly dominate streets or people. A single, large, dominant building mass shall be avoided. Horizontal masses should have substantial variation in massing that includes a change in height and projecting or recessed elements. New primary structures that express a standardized corporate identity may be required to be modified to meet the architectural standards included in this code and to ensure consistent and similar facades and building designs in developments.

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Façades: Transparent features (windows and doors) shall be incorporated over the surface area of street-fronting façades. In cases where a building has more than two façades fronting a street, the transparency requirement shall only be required on two façades based on pedestrian traffic and vehicular visibility.

All façades are required to have a distinct base at the ground level, a recognizable body or middle section that constitutes a minimum of 50 percent of total building height, and a clearly identified top or cap.

The base should be identified by using articulation and materials such as, but not limited to:

- (a) Integrally textured materials such as stone or other masonry;
- (b) Thicker walls, ledges, or sills;
- (c) Integrally colored and patterned materials such as smooth-finished stone or tile;
- (d) Lighter or darker colored materials, mullions, or panels; or
- (e) Planters.

The top or cap shall be treated with a distinct outline with elements such as:

- (a) Cornice treatments, other than just colored “stripes” or “bands,” with integrally textured materials such as stone or other masonry, or differently colored materials;
- (b) Sloping roof with overhangs and brackets;
- (c) Stepped parapets.

Primary structures having single walls or portions of walls exceeding 65 feet in length shall have additional architectural treatment. At least three of the following elements shall be incorporated into walls fronting adjacent streets or residential uses. All other walls shall incorporate a minimum of two of the following elements:

- (a) Concrete or masonry plinth at the base of the wall;
- (b) Recesses and reveals at least 12 inches in depth;
- (c) Windows and fenestration;
- (d) Arcades and pergolas;
- (e) Towers;
- (f) Gable projections;
- (g) Horizontal/vertical breaks;
- (h) Belt courses of a different texture and color;
- (i) Projecting cornice;
- (j) Projecting metal canopy;
- (k) Decorative tile work;
- (l) Trellis containing planting;
- (m) Artwork; or
- (n) Other similar techniques approved by the city.

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Materials: The predominant exterior building materials shall be materials that are characteristic of Colorado including, but not limited to, brick, sandstone or other native stone, stucco, tilt-up concrete, and glass. The director may approve other high-quality materials.

Architectural metal and concrete masonry units (CMU) may be used as an accent, but should not constitute more than 25 percent of any façade. Further, such metal siding shall be a standing seam type or equivalent quality, not a “corrugated” type. Architectural metals, such as bronze, brass, copper, and wrought iron, may be used and may exceed the 25 percent area limit.

Brick, concrete, and stone have their own inherent color and should be left in their natural state to weather over time. Paint can be used to complement and accent other exterior building materials.

Roofs: Roofs shall be designed to reduce the apparent exterior mass of a building, add visual interest and be appropriate to the architectural style of the building. Variations within one architectural style, visible roof lines, and roofs that project over the exterior wall of a building enough to cast a shadow on the ground, as well as overhanging eaves, sloped roofs, articulated parapet walls, and multiple-roof elements, are highly encouraged. Architectural methods shall be used to conceal flat roof tops, unless specifically required by the architectural style (contemporary).

Metal roofs may be allowed if compatible with the overall architectural design of the building. In no case may a roof material be reflective or cause glare, as determined by the building official.

On all structures exceeding two stories in height, roofs shall internally drain, and external scuppers and wall drains shall be prohibited.

Parking: Please contact the Planner of the Day for the specific number of parking spaces required for your use. Note that each parking stall must have minimum dimensions of 9 feet by 19 feet, and minimum drive aisle widths of 24 feet for two-way traffic. Bicycle parking is also required at a rate of 1 bicycle parking space for every 20 automobile parking spaces.

Lighting: All proposals for new exterior lighting systems, as well as any alterations or renovations to existing lighting systems, must submit a photometric plan for review. Key standards include that in no case shall exterior lighting add more than one foot-candle to illumination levels at any point off-site, and that the maximum height of freestanding outdoor light fixtures is 30 feet, unless the development abuts a single-family residential property, in which case the maximum allowed height is 25 feet. Please see the complete lighting standards in Division 7 of Article VII of the Land Development Code.

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Landscaping: All areas on a site that are not covered by buildings, structures, paving or impervious surface are considered landscape areas and shall be landscaped in accordance with these standards. Landscape areas may include such elements as turf grass, planting beds, tree lawns, hardscape, detention and retention ponds, and drainage zones. The following table indicates the minimum requirements that landscape areas must meet.

Development Type	Trees	Shrubs	Material	Turf	Mulch	Tree-Lawn
Commercial lot up to 5 acres	1 for every 600-sq. ft. of landscape area	1 for every 300-sq. ft. of landscape area	Landscape area must contain 75% live plants	Max of 50% of landscape area	Two types required	Yes-spaced 40 feet apart along all street frontages
Commercial lot greater than 5 acres	1 for every 1200-sq. ft. of landscape area	1 for every 300-sq. ft. of landscape area	Landscape area must contain 75% live plants	Max of 50% of landscape area	Two types required	Yes-spaced 40 feet apart along all street frontages
Public/institutional land uses on any size lot	2 for every 600 sq. ft. of landscape area	2 for every 300 sq. ft. of landscape area	Landscape area must contain 75% live plants	Max of 50% of landscape area	Two types required	Yes-spaced 40 feet apart along all street frontages

In addition to the general landscape requirements listed above, buffer zones are required for properties in the commercial zone districts when they adjoin certain other zone districts or land uses, as shown in the table below. Trees and shrubs planted as part of the buffer requirements cannot be used to meet any other landscaping requirement.

Zoning District of Proposed Use	Adjacent Zone or Land Use: AG, R-1, R-2	Adjacent Zone or Land Use: MHP, R-3, R-4	Adjacent Zone or Land Use: C-1, C-2, C-3, MU-1, I-1	Adjacent Zone or Land Use: I-2, I-3
C-1, C-2, C-3	Type B: 15 feet wide, 8 shrubs and 5 evergreen trees per 100 linear feet	Type A: 10 feet wide, 5 shrubs and 3 trees per 100 linear feet	N/A	Type B: 15 feet wide, 8 shrubs and 5 evergreen trees per 100 linear feet

There are also specific landscaping standards for parking lots. The perimeter of all parking areas must be landscaped with at least 1 tree and 5 shrubs for every 30 linear feet along a street, right-of-way, or abutting another property. The width of this buffer is determined by the table on the next page. Perimeter parking area landscaping may be including with other buffer requirements, as applicable.

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Abuts a local street	Abuts a collector street or another parking area	Abuts an arterial street
Minimum 5 feet	Minimum 10 feet	Minimum 15 feet

Parking lots with six or more spaces also must be screened from abutting uses and from the street. Screening must consist of a fence, wall, planter, earthen berm, plant material, or a combination of such elements, each of which shall have a minimum height of 36 inches. If the abutting land use is residential, the screening must consist of a wall or fence in combination with plant material.

In the interior of parking lots, landscape islands must be placed at least every 15 parking stalls, and must have minimum dimensions of 8 feet by 10 feet. The landscape islands must each have at least 1 tree and 6 shrubs per parking row.

Fencing: All new commercial fences and walls, including those used for screening purposes, must adhere to the fencing standards shown in the table below:

Location	Maximum Height	Minimum Setback from Property Line	Style
Front Yard	42 inches (3.5 feet)	10 feet (50 feet for gates)	Open or Screen
Rear Yard	8 feet	0 feet	Open or Screen
Side Yard	6 feet	0 feet	Open or Screen
Side or Rear Yard along Public Right-of-Way	6 feet	20 feet (50 feet for gates)	Open or Screen
Along a Public or Private Open Space or Park	8 feet	0 feet	Open or Screen

Acceptable fence and wall materials include wood, brick, stone, masonry, stucco over concrete block, vinyl, wrought iron, aluminum, fiberglass, composite, or chain link. Sheet plastic, sheet metal, and plywood fencing is not allowed. In addition, chain link fencing with inserts, slats, or attached fabric screening material is prohibited.

Screening Areas of Low Visual Interest: Mechanical equipment, utility equipment, trash receptacles, and loading docks should be screened from view from public rights-of-way and from adjacent properties to the maximum extent feasible through their placement on the site, architectural design, and landscaping. Screening enclosures for mechanical and utility equipment and for trash receptacles must use at least one of the predominant materials and colors used in the primary structure. Enclosures for trash receptacles must be a minimum of 6 feet in height.

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SOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- Interactive Property Lookup Map (What's My Zoning?): maps.c3gov.com/propertylookup
- Land Development Code Article IV (Zoning Districts)
- Land Development Code Article VII (Development and Design Standards)
- Facts to Know for Development Plans
- Facts to Know for Landscape Plans
- Commercial and Industrial Submittal Requirements
- Planner of the Day: 303-227-8777 or cdplanner@c3gov.com
- Building Safety Division: 303-289-3790