Variance for Heights Adjacent to Low Density Zones.

Decision Criteria 1
The variance request lists four specific conditions that are unique to this site that do not apply to other properties. These included the fact that it is narrow, that access to the site is limited, that the portion of the site has an irregular panhandle shape, and that the vertical clearance over the railroad tracks raises pedestrian and vehicle access elevation adjacent to the property area in question.

The explanation for why buildings are in this specific location is tied to the building programs and is further explained under the narrative for criteria 3.

Decision Criteria 2
The variance request provides explanation regarding the challenging conditions of the site under criteria 1. These same conditions and their unique nature suggest that this site requires special consideration. In the neighboring Shoreline residential R-6 zone the allowable building height is 35 feet (SMC 20.50.050) with a setback of five feet on side and 15 feet at rear yards (SMC Table 20.50.020 (1)). This represents a significant benefit to adjacent property owners in height relationship to the setback when compared to the Urban Center zoning code criteria.

The proposed height variance request suggests a reasonable alternative, comparable to commercial setback requirements in Shoreline, that helps preserve the building density permitted on the Point Wells property while maintaining a height limit compatible to adjacent residential zoning. Refer to attached plan and section diagrams for code compliant building height to setback ratio of ½:1 compared to requested variance ratio of 1:1.

Decision Criteria 3
Combined with the lower base elevation relative to buildings east and south of the site mentioned in the variance request, the proposed building heights will not be detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to properties in the vicinity. As demonstrated on the attached diagram, the proposed building massing is compatible with adjacent residential structures.

These buildings include site security and community services. They are located at the primary site entrance to optimize their affect. These ground floor uses are a significant aspect of this area of the site providing commercial and retail uses within walking distance of adjacent residential areas. The ground floor elevation climbs up 20 feet higher at the bridge crossing from the building entry point on Richmond Beach Drive. Through this variance request, the building locations on the Urban Plaza contribute to the minimum mixed-use FAR while accommodating the vehicular and pedestrian access to the western portion of the site.

Decision Criteria 4
For building height and massing, refer to elevation drawing 1/A-300.2 and building sections 2 and 3 on sheet A-310. The building massing and height are stepped down on the southeast
portion of the site adjacent to the low-density zoning. As demonstrated on the attached plan and section diagram, the requested variance height to setback ratio of 1:1 results in building heights compatible with nearby residential buildings.

The variance will not impact the comprehensive plan. The building’s commercial and retail programming, their height and their location on the site support the comprehensive plan objectives for planned growth in the county and increased density within existing urban boundaries. Specific goals and objectives of the comprehensive plan that the proposed development supports include:

- LU 1.a Establish UGAs with sufficient capacity to accommodate the majority of the county’s projected population...over the next 20 years,
- LU 2.A Increase residential densities within UGAs by concentrating and intensifying development in appropriate locations, particularly within designated centers and along identified transit emphasis corridors.
- LU2.C Encourage intensification and revitalization of existing and planned commercial and industrial areas.
- LU 3.A Plan for Urban Centers within unincorporated UGAs consistent with Vision 2040 and the CPP’s.
- LU 4.A Improve the quality of residential, commercial, and industrial development through comprehensive design standards and a design review process.
- LU 4.B Improve the quality of mixed use areas (Urban Centers and Urban Villages) through comprehensive design standards and a design review process.
- LU 5.A Revitalize or create identifiable, pedestrian-oriented neighborhood areas with focal points, mixed-use centers, and employment areas that are linked with each other.
- LU 10.B Develop plans and techniques to preserve open space and scenic resources.
SECTION DIAGRAMS: URBAN PLAZA (NTS) - BUILDING HEIGHT AT A 1/2:1 RATIO (PER CODE)