



SMALL TOWN, BIG BEACH™

TO: Mayor Craft & Members of the City Council

FROM: Andy Bauer, Director of Planning & Zoning

SUBJECT: ZA2015-10 – Zoning Text Amendment – Article 4 Gross Floor Area Definition

DATE: January 4, 2016

ISSUE: The City of Gulf Shores proposes to amend Article 4 of the Zoning Ordinance in order to modify the definition of gross floor area (tourist) to remove exterior balconies from being counted as part of the gross floor area.

BACKGROUND: The current regulations include exterior balconies in the gross floor area calculation in the beach area. It is staff's opinion the goal of the city when calculating the gross floor area in tourist areas of the city has been to only count the heated and cooled areas of a building that are utilized for residential or lodging use in order to promote mixed uses such as restaurants, retail, offices, and parking underneath buildings.

PLANNING COMMISSION: At their December 15, 2015 meeting the Commission unanimously voted (8-0) to recommend approval of this zoning text amendment to the City Council.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends the City Council approve the Zoning Text Amendment.

ATTACHMENTS: Staff Report



TO: Mayor Robert Craft and
Members of the City Council

DATE: January 4, 2016

FROM: Andy Bauer , AICP
Director of Planning & Zoning

SUBJECT: ZA2015-10 – Zoning Text Amendment – Article 4 Gross Floor Area Definition

OVERVIEW: The City of Gulf Shores proposes to amend Article 4 of the Zoning Ordinance in order to modify the definition of gross floor area (tourist) to remove exterior balconies from being counted as part of the gross floor area.

BACKGROUND: Over the past ten (10) years the definition of gross floor area has changed three (3) times.

1. With the adoption of the Envision Gulf Shores amendment in 2005 the definition of gross floor area read:

GROSS FLOOR AREA (GFA): The sum of the heated floor area of all the habitable stories of a building, measured from the exterior faces of exterior walls. Exterior balconies, stairways, hallways and other features are not included in GFA if they are not enclosed as heated and cooled space.

2. In 2006 the city amended the Zoning Ordinance to add the BG-1 and BG-2 zoning districts. During this amendment the definition for gross floor area was once again changed, this time reading:

Gross Floor Area (GFA), Tourist: The sum of the heated/cooled floor area of all the habitable stories of a building, measured from the exterior faces of exterior walls. Exterior balconies, stairways, hallways and other features are not included in GFA if they are not enclosed as heated and cooled space. Applies to all BTL, BTB, BTL-1-4, BTB-1-4, BNCR, BSCR, BTB-1-N, ICW, ICW-E, and ICW-S, districts.

3. In December of 2009, upon adoption of the rewritten Zoning Ordinance the definition for gross floor area was again changed and is the definition that is in place today:

Gross Floor Area (GFA), Tourist: The sum of the heated/cooled floor area of all the Habitable Stories of a Building, measured from the exterior faces of exterior walls, including exterior balconies. Common stairways, hallways, and other features are not included in GFA even if they are enclosed as heated and cooled space. Applies to all BT-1-4, BT-1-N, ICW-N, and ICW-S Districts.

Planning Commission: At their December 15, 2015 meeting the Commission voted unanimously (8-0) to recommend approval of this rezoning application to the City Council.

ANALYSIS: The City of Gulf Shores Zoning Ordinance contains two (2) definitions for Gross Floor Area, a standard definition and one for the tourist zoning districts.

- The standard definition includes all areas under the roof of a building with the exception of basements and parking located directly under a building.
- The tourist definition reads the sum of the heated and cooled floor area of all habitable stories, including exterior balconies, but excluding common stairways, hallways even if these areas are enclosed as heated and cooled space.

It appears to staff the goal of the city when calculating the gross floor area in tourist areas of the city has been to only count the heated and cooled areas of a building that are utilized for residential or lodging uses in order to promote mixed uses such as restaurants, retail, offices, and parking underneath buildings. Further evidence of this is found in Article 8-5 B. 6., BT Floor Area Ratio, which states for buildings that contain 5 or more floors the floor area ratio applies to all heated and cooled areas used for residential or lodging, excluding parking levels and areas of the building devoted to business, entertainment and similar uses. In addition exterior balconies are an amenity that adds economic and aesthetic value to multi-family developments without adding habitable space.

Below is the proposed zoning text amendment. Proposed deletions are in red and struck through and proposed insertions are underlined in red.

Gross Floor Area (GFA), Tourist: The sum of the heated/cooled floor area of all the Habitable Stories of a Building, measured from the exterior faces of exterior walls, not including exterior balconies. Common stairways, hallways, and other features are not included in GFA even if they are enclosed as heated and cooled space. Applies to all BT-1-4, BT-1-N, ICW-N, and ICW-S Districts.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends the City Council approve the change to the definition of gross floor area.