City of San Diego
HEIGHT REGULATIONS
LU&H Committee Item 2
September 14, 2011
Purpose of Information Item

• Explanation of coastal height regulations
• Requested by City Council August 2, 2011 in response to questions regarding City’s existing methods for calculation of height in the Coastal Zone (clarified by 7th Update Issue #35)
Height Regulations

- Zoning: Structure height must comply with base zone height limits (citywide requirement)
  - Base zone height limits vary (24 ft to unlimited)
- Prop D: A voter approved height limit (30 ft) that applies to coastal development in geographic area generally west of Interstate 5
  - Coastal Height Limit Overlay Zone
- Most restrictive height limit applies
Prop D Coastal Height Limit

• Local initiative passed by the voters of the City of San Diego (effective December 7, 1972)
• Limits development to 30 foot maximum height (in accordance with Prop D measurement)
• Development above 30 feet (per Prop D measurement) requires approval of City of San Diego voters
Limitations of Prop D

- 1970 UBC is method to demonstrate compliance
  - Measured from finished grade
  - Therefore, allows grade to be raised with measurement beginning at that higher point (10 ft max differential)

- Prop D alone would not be adequate to implement the City’s certified Local Coastal Program

- In low density residential zones, base zone height limits are typically more restrictive than Prop D to implement adopted land use policy
Citywide Method for Calculating Zoning Height

• Two part measurement required:
  – Plumb Line
  – Overall Height (5 feet from furthest projection)

• Height is measured to highest appurtenance (plus up to 10 ft for grade differential)

• Measurement is taken from existing grade or proposed grade, whichever is lower

• Can’t manipulate grade to achieve greater height
Plumb Line Measurement

[Diagram showing the concept of plumb line measurement for structures on sloping grades.]
Overall Structure Height

Grade

Grade differential up to max 10'

Structure

High point of structure

Low point of structure

Max. permitted structure height at any point

10' Max (grade differential)

Overall Structure Height: Max permitted structure height plus grade differential within structure footprint or 10', whichever is less

Low point of grade within 5', or the property line, whichever is closer
Summary

• Development in the Coastal Height Limit Overlay Zone must comply with the base zone height limit AND the Prop D coastal height limit
• The two height limits are measured differently
• Development that exceeds the base zone height limit requires a City variance/deviation approval
• Development that proposes to exceed the Prop D height limit requires a public vote for approval