

To: Robert Hughes, Village of Pleasantville Building Inspector

From: Susan Favate, AICP, PP, Principal
Christine Jimenez, Planner

Subject: Pleasantville Residential FAR Zoning Study

Date: February 2, 2021

The following memo provides an update of the work undertaken in evaluating floor area ratio (FAR) controls for single-family residential zoning districts (RRR, RR, R, and R-1) in Pleasantville.

Analysis of Existing Homes in Pleasantville

ArcGIS software was used to upload the necessary datasets required to analyze Pleasantville's existing single-family zoning districts. For this study, the primary datasets used include the Village's building footprints (2018), tax parcels (2019), and zoning districts (2007) from Westchester County GIS. To supplement County data, the Village provided the building permits and plans for nine new homes approved or built in the single-family districts since 2015. The County's data was modified to reflect the changes in the newer homes' building footprints.

To calculate each parcel's FAR in the single-family zones, the following formula was used: (Building Footprint x Assumed Stories)/Lot Area. Each floor of all buildings on a parcel was included in the FAR calculation. For the purposes of this study, the assumed stories for the main residences and accessory structures (over 20 ft in height) is 2.5 stories, which is the maximum height in stories within single-family zones. The assumed stories for accessory structures (20 ft or less in height) is one story. Below is a table showing the range of FAR that exists sorted by lot size in Pleasantville.

Existing FAR in Pleasantville by Lot Size

Lot Area	Low FAR	Median FAR	High FAR
Less than 5,000 SF	0.41	0.54	1.06
5,000 SF	0.05	0.52	1.40
6,000 SF	0.30	0.49	0.69
7,000 SF	0.10	0.46	0.71
8,000 SF	0.10	0.40	0.82
9,000 SF	0.03	0.37	0.72
10,000 SF	0.08	0.38	0.55
11,000 SF	0.06	0.31	0.62
12,000 SF	0.13	0.31	0.63
13,000 SF	0.09	0.31	0.50
14,000 SF	0.16	0.25	0.51
15,000 SF	0.04	0.27	0.49
16,000 SF	0.16	0.23	0.45
17,000 SF	0.16	0.24	0.81
18,000 SF	0.06	0.25	0.46
19,000 SF	0.19	0.26	0.35
20,000 SF	0.10	0.25	0.46
21,000 SF	0.04	0.22	0.35
22,000 SF or more	0.0001	0.18	0.58

Source: Village of Pleasantville, Building Permits of New Homes from 2015-2020; Westchester County GIS.

Review of Recently Approved/Constructed Homes

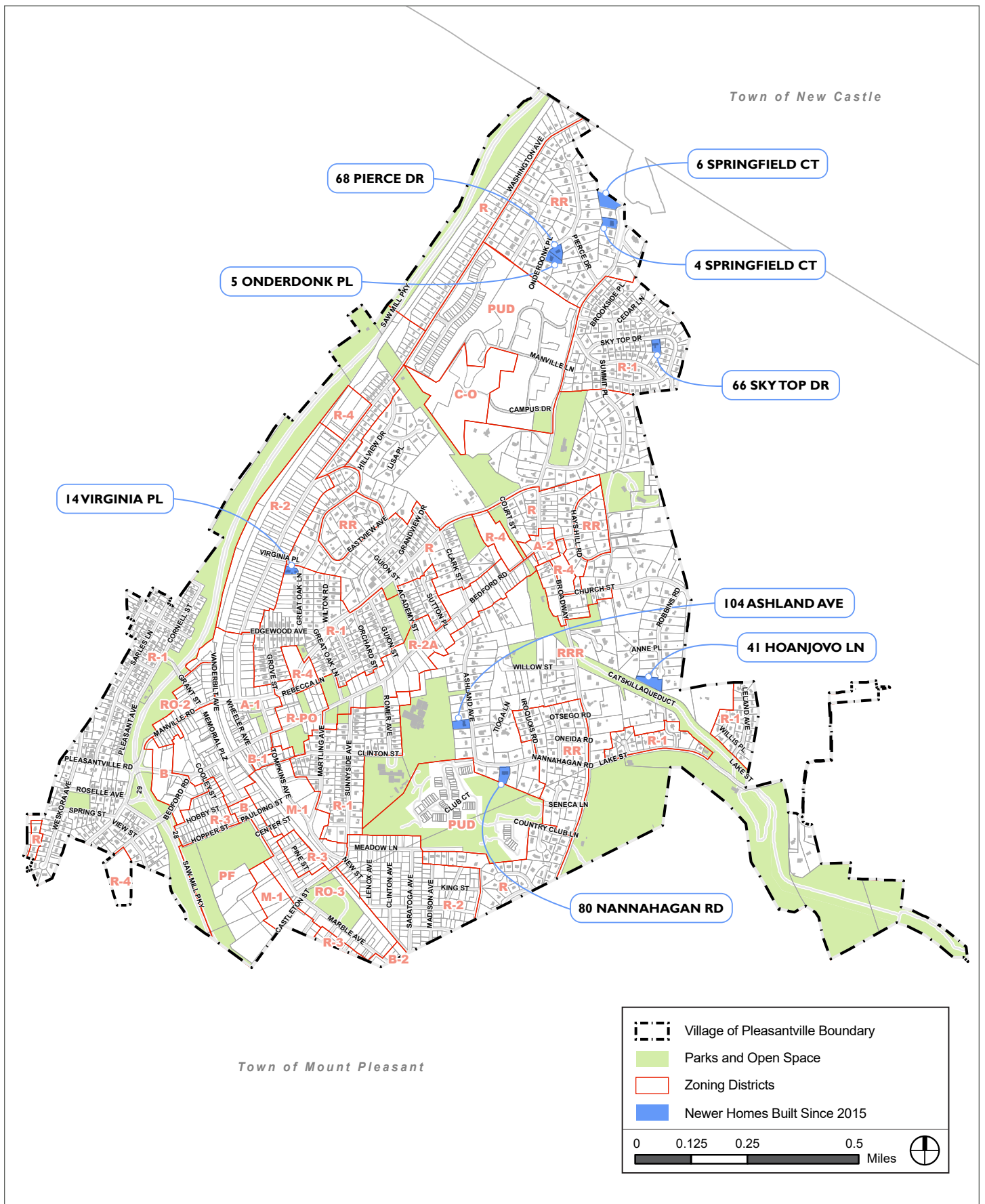
As mentioned, the Village provided additional information on the nine new homes recently approved or constructed in Pleasantville since 2015. These new homes were included as a part of the existing FAR analysis completed above. The map on the following page illustrates the location of the parcels with new homes shaded in blue. Out of the nine new homes, two are located in the R-1 zone, four are located in the RR zone, and three are located in the RRR zone.

When comparing the size of new homes in the R-1 zone to the average existing home in this zone, the newer homes are smaller than the average existing home by about 150 to 300 square feet (SF). Comparing new homes in the RR zone to the average existing home in this zone shows that some newer homes are smaller or slightly larger than existing homes. In the RRR zoning district, newer homes are much larger than the average existing home. Using 104 Ashland Avenue in the RRR zone as an example, the new home's building footprint (3,809 SF) is more than two times larger than the average existing home (1,852 SF) in the same zone. Establishing a maximum FAR value based on lot area in the Village could ensure new and existing homes maintain the community's small-scale character. The table below depicts the size of new homes compared to the average existing home in the same zoning district.

Recently Approved/Constructed Homes in Pleasantville

Zoning District	Location of Newer Homes	Building Footprint of Newer Home	Average of Existing Building Footprint in Specified Zoning District
R-1	66 Sky Top Drive	1,320 SF	1,654 SF (excl. new homes)
	14 Virginia Place	1,499 SF	1,810 SF (incl. new homes)
RR	68 Pierce Drive	1,320 SF	1,769 SF (excl. new homes) 1,807 SF (incl. new homes)
	4 Springfield Court	1,725 SF	
	5 Onderdonk Place	1,794 SF	
	6 Springfield Court	1,830 SF	
RRR	80 Nannahagan Road	2,827 SF	1,852 SF (excl. new homes) 1,856 SF (incl. new homes)
	41 Hoanjovo Lane	2,995 SF	
	104 Ashland Avenue	3,809 SF	

Source: Village of Pleasantville, Building Permits of New Homes from 2015-2020; Westchester County GIS.



Location of New Homes in Pleasantville Since 2015

Zoning Best Practices Review

We reviewed comparable communities in Westchester County, including the Village of Mamaroneck, Bronxville, Scarsdale, and Irvington, and the Town of Mamaroneck, that have established a sliding scale for FAR based on lot size. The sliding FAR scale found in these communities can serve as a guide for establishing Pleasantville's FAR regulations. Below is a table comparing the maximum FARs found in these communities and the range of FARs found in Pleasantville by lot area. All the comparable communities have FAR values similar to Pleasantville's median FAR values. Out of the five communities, the Town of Mamaroneck's maximum FAR values by lot area aligns the most with Pleasantville's median FAR values. When establishing a maximum FAR by lot area for Pleasantville, it is important to note that some parcels will be nonconforming to the newly established FAR regulations. We will assess the creation of nonconformity when drafting the proposed zoning regulation. We will also study whether the parcels that are nonconforming based on the proposed FAR conform to the required 20% building coverage. The study will help indicate how many new nonconformities will be created compared to how many nonconformities existed before FAR was established.

Comparison of FAR in Pleasantville and Comparable Communities in Westchester County

Lot Area	Village of Mamaroneck	Village of Bronxville	Town of Mamaroneck	Village of Scarsdale	Village of Irvington	Village of Pleasantville		
	Maximum FAR					Low FAR	Median FAR	High FAR
Less than 5,000 SF	0.53	0.49	0.55	0.43	0.43	0.41	0.54	1.06
5,000 SF	0.53	0.47	0.55	0.43	0.43	0.05	0.52	1.40
6,000 SF	0.48	0.45	0.55	0.414	0.39	0.30	0.49	0.69
7,000 SF	0.43	0.43	0.52	0.398	0.36	0.10	0.46	0.71
8,000 SF	0.41	0.41	0.49	0.382	0.33	0.10	0.40	0.82
9,000 SF	0.39	0.39	0.46	0.366	0.30	0.03	0.37	0.72
10,000 SF	0.37	0.37	0.43	0.35	0.28	0.08	0.38	0.55
11,000 SF	0.36	0.36	0.41	0.338	0.2725	0.06	0.31	0.62
12,000 SF	0.35	0.35	0.39	0.326	0.265	0.13	0.31	0.63
13,000 SF	0.34	0.34	0.369	0.314	0.2575	0.09	0.31	0.50
14,000 SF	0.33	0.33	0.35	0.302	0.25	0.16	0.25	0.51
15,000 SF	0.32	0.32	0.334	0.29	0.2425	0.04	0.27	0.49
16,000 SF	0.31	0.31	0.32	0.284	0.235	0.16	0.23	0.45
17,000 SF	0.30	0.30	0.31	0.278	0.2275	0.16	0.24	0.81
18,000 SF	0.29	0.29	0.30	0.272	0.22	0.06	0.25	0.46
19,000 SF	0.28	0.28	0.29	0.266	0.2125	0.19	0.26	0.35
20,000 SF	0.27	0.27	0.281	0.26	0.20	0.10	0.25	0.46
21,000 SF		0.265	0.2725	0.254	0.198	0.04	0.22	0.35
22,000 SF or more		0.26	0.265	0.248	0.196	0.0001	0.18	0.58

Source: Village of Mamaroneck Zoning Code, Village of Bronxville Zoning Code, Town of Mamaroneck Zoning Code, Village of Scarsdale Zoning Code, Village of Irvington Zoning Code; Village of Pleasantville, Building Permits of New Homes from 2015-2020 and Westchester County GIS.

In addition to the maximum FAR by lot area, the comparable communities have additional FAR-related regulations that Pleasantville could consider. Below are the additional regulations by municipality:

Village of Bronxville

In Bronxville, houses larger than 7,500 SF in gross floor area require a site plan review by the Planning Board. Building permits for structures in Bronxville whose total floor area exceeds the maximum permitted FAR are required to seek an area variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Town of Mamaroneck

For lot sizes greater than 50,000 SF, the maximum permitted total gross floor area is 9,712.50 SF plus 10 SF for every 100 SF by which the size of such lot exceeds 50,000 SF. The maximum gross floor area of a home cannot exceed 15,000 SF for lot sizes greater than 50,000 SF. In Mamaroneck, building permits for structures whose total floor area exceeds the maximum permitted FAR are allowed to compute the average total square footage of comparison parcels and use the average as the new maximum total square footage. Once the average is calculated and submitted to the Town's Building Department, the Town will review the request.

Village of Scarsdale

Like Bronxville, building permits for structures whose total floor area exceeds the maximum permitted FAR in Residence A zones are required to seek an area variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals. For homes in Scarsdale exceeding 15,000 SF in total gross floor area, the applicant is required to apply for a special permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals. Scarsdale allows for an FAR bonus in Residence A zones if the house is setback beyond the minimum required side yard setback.

Village of Irvington

For homes exceeding 10,000 SF in total gross floor area, the applicant is required to seek a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals. Similar to Bronxville and Scarsdale, building permits for structures whose total floor area exceeds the maximum permitted FAR are required to seek a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals. If a pre-existing structure would like an addition, but exceeds the allowable FAR, the Zoning Board of Appeals will review the application.

Additional Items to Consider

When crafting the definition for FAR for Pleasantville, we will be considering specifics to include and exclude in the FAR calculation. The following are suggested items to consider excluding from the calculation:

- Accessory structures that meet height, setback, or building coverage requirements or have previously received a variance for those requirements.
- Half stories as defined by the Village's zoning code (space under a roof that is less than 7.5 feet in height or where no more than 50% of such space is 7.5 feet or greater in height). This would be consistent with the approach many communities take in exempting non-habitable attic space from FAR.
- Portions of basements (peer communities exempt basements where the average height of exposed exterior walls is below a certain threshold).

In addition, some communities require interior space with more than 12 feet of ceiling height to be weighted in the calculation of FAR (i.e., counted twice or 1.5 times). This addresses large interior areas such as entrance foyers, where there is technically no added floor area but there is additional building volume.

Next Steps

We suggest having a virtual meeting in the next couple of weeks to discuss this memo and the additional items for consideration. We would then meet with the full Village Board to discuss our findings. Based on the results of that meeting, we would be in position to draft the proposed zoning regulations and assess the creation of nonconformities.

Cc: Mayor Peter Scherer
Eric Morrissey, Village Administrator