

Downtown Commercial

A Strategic Development & Investment Brief

City of Camas DC, MX & RC zones | Title 18 standards, opportunities & constraints

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Executive Summary

THE OPPORTUNITY

Downtown Camas is the most permissive built-form zone in the city — and the most design-disciplined. The Downtown Commercial (DC) zone imposes no maximum height, no minimum lot size, no Floor Area Ratio cap, no lot-coverage cap, and no rear or side setback. Built form is governed by the Downtown Design Manual rather than numeric envelopes, giving qualified developers an exceptional vertical and mixed-use canvas anchored by Main Street's historic 1906 character.

WHY NOW

Camas is one of the fastest-appreciating submarkets in Clark County. Demand for walkable, mixed-use product is rising alongside Vancouver's expansion and the I-205 corridor. Two adjacent commercial zones — Mixed Use (MX) and Regional Commercial (RC) — offer complementary positioning: MX for residential-anchored compact infill, RC for large-format retail and hospitality.

HOW TO USE THIS BRIEF

This document distills Camas Municipal Code Title 18 into a side-by-side comparison of DC, MX, and RC — covering permitted uses, height, setbacks, parking, landscaping, and design review. It is intended for investors, owners, and tenant-side brokers evaluating downtown Camas opportunities.

None

DC MAX BUILDING HEIGHT

no numeric cap (CMC 18.09.030)

None

DC MIN LOT SIZE

no minimum lot area required

Waivable

DC OFF-STREET PARKING

projects $\leq \frac{1}{2}$ block (CMC 18.11.010)

Exempt

DC TREE DENSITY MINIMUM

downtown design manual governs

Downtown Camas at a Glance



MAIN STREET · LIBERTY THEATER · CAMAS HOTEL · DOWNTOWN FOUNTAIN

A historic mill town with a modern, walkable core.

Founded around the Camas Paper Mill in 1883 and incorporated in 1906, downtown Camas is built on a tight grid of 1920s-era storefronts that now host more than 60 independent restaurants, boutiques, and service businesses. The Liberty Theater (1927), Camas Hotel (1911), and the central fountain plaza anchor a four-block pedestrian-oriented retail district. The DC zone covers this core; MX and RC envelope the surrounding commercial frame.

The DC Zone — Downtown Commercial

“DC is designated as a large community commercial area ... designed to promote commercial diversification through higher building heights and floor area ratios than those found in other commercial districts.”

CAMAS MUNICIPAL CODE 18.05.050

DC Development Envelope

Maximum building height	None — no numeric cap
Maximum FAR	Not numerically specified (zone purpose: highest in city)
Minimum lot area / width / depth	None / None / None
Front setback	Note 4 — residential follows 18.09.040 Table 2; commercial governed by Design Manual
Side setback	Note 1 — required only along flanking street of corner lot
Rear setback	None
Maximum lot coverage	None
Off-street parking	Waivable by CD Director for projects $\leq \frac{1}{2}$ block
Tree density minimum (20 TU/ac)	Exempt — Downtown Design Manual screening instead
Design review	Downtown Design Manual (façade, materials, frontage)

STRATEGIC TAKEAWAY

DC is the most flexible built-form envelope in Camas. The absence of height, lot-size, FAR, and lot-coverage caps — combined with a discretionary parking waiver and tree density exemption — positions DC as the city's premier vertical mixed-use canvas. Entitlement risk shifts from numeric compliance to Downtown Design Manual review, where pre-application meetings with Community Development are essential.

Livingston Apartments

404 NE 6TH AVE, CAMAS, WA 98607

56 UNITS · 76,800 SF · COMPLETED 2025



DC Zone Envelope Applied

Maximum building height	None — no numeric cap
Maximum FAR	Not numerically specified (zone purpose: highest in city)
Minimum lot area / width / depth	None / None / None
Front setback	Note 4 — residential follows 18.09.040 Table 2; commercial Design Manual
Side setback	Note 1 — required only along flanking street of corner lot
Rear setback	None
Maximum lot coverage	None
Off-street parking	Waivable by CD Director for projects $\leq \frac{1}{2}$ block
Tree density minimum	Exempt — Downtown Design Manual screening instead
Design review	Downtown Design Manual (façade, materials, frontage)

STRATEGIC TAKEAWAY

Livingston — a 56-unit, 76,800 SF mixed-use apartment complex completed in 2025 — is a direct downtown Camas analog to the subject site's program and DC-zone envelope.

Clara Flats Apartments

632 NE BIRCH ST, CAMAS, WA 98607

30 UNITS · TWO BUILDINGS · COMPLETED 2020



DC Zone Envelope Applied

Maximum building height	None — no numeric cap
Maximum FAR	Not numerically specified (zone purpose: highest in city)
Minimum lot area / width / depth	None / None / None
Front setback	Note 4 — residential follows 18.09.040 Table 2; commercial Design Manual
Side setback	Note 1 — required only along flanking street of corner lot
Rear setback	None
Maximum lot coverage	None
Off-street parking	Waivable by CD Director for projects $\leq \frac{1}{2}$ block
Tree density minimum	Exempt — Downtown Design Manual screening instead
Design review	Downtown Design Manual (façade, materials, frontage)

STRATEGIC TAKEAWAY

Clara Flats — a 30-unit mixed-use apartment complex completed in 2020 in two buildings — validates the downtown Camas program type and DC-zone development envelope.

DC vs. MX vs. RC — Side by Side

Standard	DC	MX	RC
Max building height	None	None	None
Max FAR (numeric)	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified
Max density (du/net acre)	None	24	n/a
Min lot area	None	1,800 sf	None
Front setback	Note 4	Note 3 (max 10')	Note 4
Side setback	Note 1 only	None	None
Rear setback	None	25'	None
Max lot coverage	None	60/70/50% by story	None
Parking waiver	Yes ($\leq \frac{1}{2}$ block)	Yes ($\leq \frac{1}{2}$ block)	Standard
Tree density (20 TU/ac)	Exempt	Required	Required
Single-family detached	Prohibited	Permitted	Prohibited
Multifamily / row houses	C / P	Conditional	Very limited
Hotel / motel	Conditional	Permitted	Permitted
Restaurant (sit-down)	Permitted	Conditional	Permitted
Auto repair / new-used sales	Permitted	Prohibited	Permitted
Gas station w/ mini-market	Permitted	Prohibited	Permitted
Large-scale grocery	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted
Light manufacturing (high-tech)	Permitted	Mixed	Prohibited

Source: Camas Municipal Code 18.05.050, 18.07.030 Table 1, 18.09.030 Table 1, 18.11.010, 18.13.025/051/055/060.

● Permitted by right
 ● Conditional / mixed
 ● Prohibited

Opportunities & Constraints

OPPORTUNITIES

Most flexible envelope in Camas

No height cap, no FAR cap, no lot-size minimum, no lot-coverage cap, no rear/side setback. Built form shaped by Downtown Design Manual.

Parking waiver eligibility

Projects $\leq \frac{1}{2}$ block may have off-street parking requirements waived by the Community Development Director — meaningful cost reduction for small infill.

Tree density exemption

DC properties are exempt from the 20 Tree Unit/acre minimum, reducing landscape cost and reclaiming usable area.

Broadest by-right retail use list

Restaurants, fast food, event centers, taverns, theaters, professional offices all P — fewer conditional-use hurdles than MX or RC.

Mixed-use coexistence

DC uniquely permits auto-oriented uses (P) and residential above retail (P/C) on the same parcel.

CONSTRAINTS

Discretionary design review

Downtown Design Manual replaces numeric envelopes with subjective design standards — entitlement timeline harder to predict than RC.

Single-family product prohibited

Single-family detached and cottage homes are not permitted in DC. Clients targeting SFR must look at MX (where SFR is P).

Hotel/motel is conditional only

RC and MX permit hotels outright. Hospitality investors should consider those zones first.

Residential setbacks default

Dwelling units in DC default to residential setbacks per CMC 18.09.040 Table 2 by comparable lot size — verify before designing.

Pre-application strongly advised

Discretionary review favors developers who have pre-application meetings with City of Camas Community Development.

Due Diligence & Regulatory Monitoring

Pre-Acquisition Verification Checklist

- ☐ Pull the current Title 18 from the City Clerk and confirm 18.07.030 use entries are unchanged.
- ☐ Confirm the Downtown Design Manual version applicable to the parcel.
- ☐ Verify the parcel is not within an overlay zone (CMC 18.05.060) that imposes deviations.
- ☐ Confirm Title 16 critical areas (wetlands, steep slopes, archaeology) don't constrain the buildable envelope.
- ☐ Confirm Title 17 land-development standards (rights-of-way, frontage improvements) don't reduce usable area.
- ☐ For residential dwelling units: identify the comparable lot-size residential standard in CMC 18.09.040 Table 2.
- ☐ Confirm parking-waiver eligibility with Community Development Director (360-817-1568) before relying on it pro forma.
- ☐ Identify abutting zones to determine landscape buffer requirements (CMC 18.13.055).

ACTIVE REGULATORY MONITORING

Wise Move Real Estate maintains a weekday morning scan of the Camas Municipal Code portal, Planning Commission and City Council agendas, and Washington State Legislature for any amendments materially affecting DC, MX, or RC zone rules on height, setback, parking, or permitted uses. Briefings are issued only when net-new items are identified.

Inquire about our complimentary zoning-watch brief for your active downtown deals.

Let's build downtown together.

Independent advisory for owners, investors, and tenants.



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