

TOD University
Planning 101
Exercise 2: Building Blocks

Objective:

- Teach the class how to translate from abstract numbers such as density, floor-to-area ratio, and height limits into actual building sizes.

Materials (per group of 4-5 people):

- 15 small rectangular blocks, identical in size and shape. You can use butter boxes or check boxes, or purchase foam blocks at a craft store. If you use recycled boxes, you may want to wrap them in plain paper. Label the blocks 10 ft high, 15 ft wide, 30 ft long
- A large piece of paper with a grid of 3 squares by 6 squares, each representing 10 feet. The long side of your block should take up three squares, and the short side should take up 1 ½ squares. Label the sides with three squares as the “front” and “back” of your lot.
- Duplo blocks or Lego blocks also work for this exercise.

Instructions:

Have each group stack its blocks on the grid paper to make different building shapes and sizes, to represent each of the six scenarios below. These are also listed on Slide 29:

1. 20 ft front set-backs, then reduce to 5 ft. set-backs
2. 50% maximum lot coverage, then increase to 75%
3. A maximum 35 ft. height limit or 5 story building. *Which factor ends up limiting the size of the building?*
4. Building with 1:1 FAR, then 2:1 FAR, then 3:1 FAR
5. A building on a lot with a 10 ft. set back, a 50 ft. height limit and 1:1 FAR. *Which factors end up limiting the size of the building?*