

DOWNTOWN NASHVILLE BONUS HEIGHT FOR GREEN BUILDING

SK COLLABORATIVE | FACT SHEET

Nashville's [Downtown Development Code](#) Bonus Height Program (BHP) allows additional height for buildings in the Downtown area in exchange for contributing programs or improvements that provide benefits to the public. SK Collaborative developed this fact sheet to break down the program benefits and requirements for developers and architects that want to take advantage of this incentive through green building certification.

HOW IT WORKS

Participating in the BHP involves the following general process:

1. The project team commits to providing an eligible public benefit (see list below).
2. The Planning Commission certifies compliance with the program criteria.
3. Approval for the bonus height is issued, allowing the proposed development to build within the restrictions of the Subdistrict, up to the Bonus Height Maximum.



Developments within Nashville's Downtown Code (DTC) area can earn height bonuses by providing one or more of the following public benefits:

- Green-Certified Buildings
- Green-Certified Neighborhoods and Communities
- Pervious Surface
- Historic Building Preservation
- Publicly-Accessible Open Space
- Civil Support Space
- Inclusionary Housing
- Upper Level Garage Liners, Underground Parking
- Public Parking

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Project teams can combine public benefit options to reach a maximum bonus height specific to each subdistrict. Subdistricts have different caps for individual bonus height options and a maximum for a cumulative bonus height beyond the existing building height limit. The amount of extra earned height is based on the subdistrict's needs and the project's level of contribution. Projects may also transfer development rights achieved through the BHP to another property within the DTC boundaries.

Not every subdistrict offers the same bonuses. For example, bonus height in the Historic Core Subdistrict is available for historic building preservation but not for green certification. Green certification can earn bonus height in 10 of the 15 subdistricts listed in the DTC.

In certain circumstances exceeding the maximum height is allowed. This may be granted for "unique architecture, exceptionally strong streetscape, contribution to the skyline, improvement of the project's relationship to surrounding properties, and improvement to the character of the neighborhood" (DTC p. 14). This type of Height Modification requires approval from the Executive Director of the Planning Department.



EARNING BONUS HEIGHT FOR GREEN CERTIFICATION

Certifying green is a particularly good choice for developers interested in maximizing building height under the Bonus Height Program. Subdistricts that allow this option offer anywhere from 1-12 stories of added height in exchange for certifying an individual building under Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver, Gold, or Platinum or a comparable nationally recognized certification program. Height amounts for some subdistricts are scaled according to the certification tier; for example, LEED Platinum or National Green Building Standard (NGBS) Emerald would earn a greater number of stories than LEED Silver or NGBS Silver. Other subdistricts have a flat rate of bonus height, regardless of certification level.

In addition to individual building certification, bonus height is also available for any property located in a LEED Neighborhood Development (LEED ND)-certified community. It's important to know that LEED ND requires at least one building to be green certified and that all buildings meet minimum energy and water efficiency standards.

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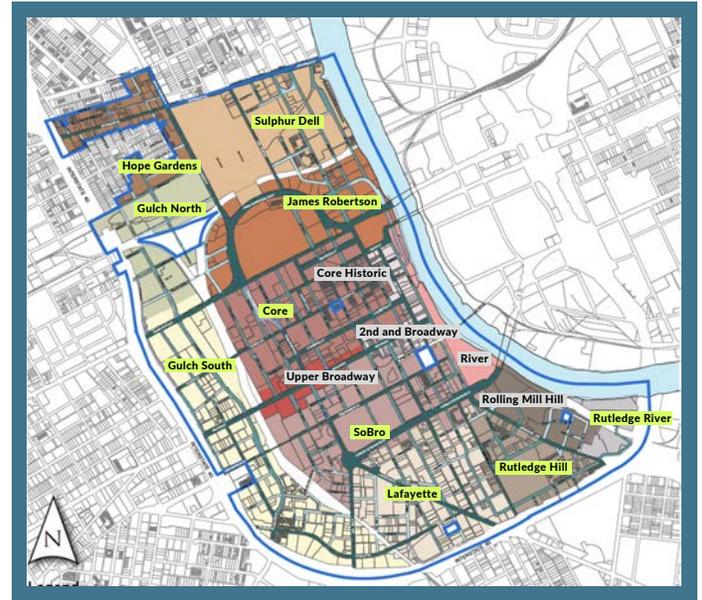
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Although LEED is specifically listed in the DTC, developers may use a different nationally recognized green building program. For example, SK Collaborative is working on a number of developments that have been approved to use the National Green Building Standard (NGBS) Silver level certification. The Planning Commission ultimately determines bonuses for alternative programs based on ratings equivalent to LEED silver, gold, and platinum.

Below are the downtown subdistricts that offer height bonuses for green building and neighborhood certification:

Subdistricts w/ Green Certification Bonus Option	
Central	James Robertson
	Core
	SoBro
South	Lafayette
	Rutledge Hill (Primary and Secondary*)
	Rutledge River
West	Gulch North (not incl. fronting Herman St.)
	Gulch South
North	Hope Gardens (Primary and Secondary*)
	Sulphur Dell



*The DTC uses street types as an urban design and organizing tool. All streets are classified as Primary, Secondary, Tertiary, Other, or Alley.

Example: Five-Story Development in Sulphur Dell Subdistrict

A proposed project on a secondary street in the Sulphur Dell Subdistrict has a by-right height limit of 5 stories and a Bonus Height Maximum of 6 stories. Certifying under NGBS Silver would allow the developer to add one bonus story – for a total of six.

If the same project were located in a different area with a higher maximum bonus height limit (such as the Core Subdistrict, which has an unlimited bonus height amount) the developer could stack other features – pervious surfaces, open space, public parking – to increase the allowed height. They could also request to transfer any leftover, unused height bonuses to another bonus-eligible project within the DTC boundaries.



OTHER BONUS HEIGHT OPTIONS

Projects can obtain additional height bonuses in certain subdistricts for other public benefit contributions. These include incorporating pervious surfaces, historic building preservation, publicly accessible open space or parking, inclusionary housing, civil support spaces, and/or hiding parking garages from view by locating them underground or (for above ground upper-level garages) behind habitable space.

FINDING A STRATEGIC PARTNER

The key to maximizing incentives like Nashville's Bonus Height Program is to plan carefully from the start to include all the criteria in the project scope. When the sustainability consultant is involved early in the design process, they can assist the architects and contractors on details and specifications to ensure a smooth path to certification or other sustainable design goals.

SK Collaborative has extensive experience in certifying green building projects in Nashville and across the United States. Having completed thousands of units under LEED, National Green Building Standard (NGBS), EarthCraft, Green Globes, Enterprise Green Communities (EGC), and other certification programs, we will help you select the most appropriate option for your project. We have the capacity to perform onsite inspection projects promptly and are strategic partner with the passion and professionalism to get the job done. By working closely with the project team throughout the design and construction process, we are committed to making sustainable building certification effortless at project completion.



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