

FINAL DRAFT LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE

STAFF DENSITY DISCUSSION

Planning Commission Public Hearing November 6, 2013

Current City Code imposes maximum density requirements in all of the residential zoning districts but does not impose minimum density requirements in any of the residential zoning districts except for the Residential High (R-H) zone. The maximum densities are calculated based on the gross acreage of the site development area including areas used for roadways, stormwater facilities, etc.

<u>Current Density Requirements</u>	<u>maximum density</u>	<u>minimum density</u>
Residential Suburban (R-S)	6 du/acre	-
Residential Low (R-L)	8 du/acre	-
Residential Office (R-L)	12 du/acre	-
Residential Medium (R-M)	12 du/acre	-
Residential High (R-H)	18 du/acre	8 du/acre

The 2006 Comprehensive Plan Update addressed future densities in a variety of ways.

- Chapter 2 – Community Profile provided an analysis of the land needs to accommodate the anticipated population growth of the city over the twenty year planning horizon. The analysis looked at several different scenarios each of which used a different percentage of high density residential and mixed residential to determine how much land was needed for the projected population. The high density was set at an average of 12 du/acre and the mixed residential was set at an average of 4.25 du/acre. Under each scenario, regardless of the percentage mix of high density to mixed residential density, there was sufficient land available in the urban growth area to accommodate the projected growth.

Chapter 4 – Land Use made a major shift in the future land use designations of all lands currently zoned residential in the city by designating them as appropriate for future “mixed residential” land use. In other words, this policy direction changed the longstanding policy that lands designated for future low density or for future high density could only be zoned for low density or high density, and now designates all residential zoned land in the city as being appropriate for any density through a rezone process. The goal of this policy change is to realize a mixing of densities throughout the city rather than large areas of just low density or large areas of just high density. This Mixed Residential category of land use was applied to 34% of the existing city and 46% of the unincorporated UGA for a total of 40% of all land area within the city and UGA.

In defining the new designation at page 17 of Chapter 4, the Comp Plan says “*Mixed Residential (MDR) – This MDR land use designation is intended to provide the development of housing at approximately four to 12 dwelling units per gross acre. This density range anticipates development of homes on individual lots or the development of duplexes or detached second units in specific areas. It also anticipates development of multiplexes, small-lot single-family units and townhomes. This designation is applied to areas developed into single-family*

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neighborhoods and to areas expected to develop to lower-density or medium intensity residential patterns.”

Chapter 4 included a Demand and Needs Assessment for residential land uses similar to that found in Chapter 2, although the minimum density used to determine residential land needs was 4 du/acre. It was also recognized that *“These land consumption figures can be altered by varying the number of persons per household, and/or by introducing new housing types.”* The assessment used different mixes of single family detached at 4 du/acre, townhouse/cottage housing at 6 du/ac, and stacked units at 12 du/acre to reach the conclusion that regardless of the mix of housing types, the projected population growth could be accommodated by a land area that was relatively similar in size under all of the different housing type mixtures.

- Chapter 4 – Land Use contains a number of goals and policies designed to reach the vision of mixed residential development throughout the city.

Goal LU-2 Encourage optimum land utilization

Policy B Encourage infilling and increased residential density in and around the Central Commercial zones

Program 2 Create a residential development density bonus incentive program to reward developers of infill housing

Policy D Encourage compact form for urban development, particularly in newly developed areas and where infill is possible

Goal LU-7 Manage the spatial aspect of growth to encourage convenient and cost effective services provision.

Policy A Encourage compactness in growth and development

Program 3 Revise zoning and subdivision standards to permit a variety of less land-consumptive housing types

- Chapter 7 – Housing recognized that future housing demand *“may be for housing that is both more varied and more affordable. While the gap between what is affordable to a potential household and what is available on the market may continue to widen, Ellensburg’s population will likely demand different types of housing options in the future.”* In the Housing Profile discussion, the conclusion is made that *“Ellensburg’s sustained population growth has created a housing environment that is surprisingly diverse for a community of its size.”* And it goes on to acknowledge that, *“While most of the new residential construction has been single-family detached housing, Ellensburg has a relatively large proportion of multi-family dwelling units.”*

In the 2000 Census, single-family housing made up approximately 41% of the city’s housing stock, with 2 to 4-plexes making up almost 20% and multi-family making up nearly 31%. It indicates a very mixed and diverse housing supply.

The discussion reaches several conclusions:

One conclusion is that *“Ellensburg’s greatest housing needs include a more diverse base of affordable rental opportunities signified by range of rent and housing type, allowing the market to relax upward rental pricing pressure. In addition, the community needs affordable single-*

family homes. Potential homebuyers are getting priced out of the market due to insufficient income and escalating real estate prices.”

A second conclusion is that “Ellensburg’s residents understand that this widening gap may lead to the development of more affordable housing types (like townhouses, zero-lot line homes, multi-family structures, manufactured housing or condominiums), but they also want to preserve the characteristics of the neighborhoods they find so valuable and endearing.”

A third conclusion is that “The community also came out strongly in favor of increased flexibility in the pursuit of providing housing that is more affordable, but only in a manner that also increases the sense of community that helps tie a more intensely developed neighborhood together. Residents desire more affordability, but not at the expense of quality of life or the social networks that make Ellensburg a family place. In addition, residents also believe that choice in housing options is important. They want to see Ellensburg continue to provide single-family neighborhoods, but they would like to see them better integrated in to the community’s fabric and better able to adapt to change.”

And a fourth conclusion is that “To prepare for this, Ellensburg must provide a variety of housing types. This variety will help meet affordability demands, and will help meet housing demand in general. Increasingly, households will desire units that are smaller, that require less maintenance, and that are located within walking distance of shopping, houses of worship, parks, schools, and medical facilities. This dictates development of more compact housing forms and innovation in how they are designed and arranged to suit a variety of needs.”

To address those conclusions Chapter 7 – Housing contains a number of goals and policy directives:

Goal H-2 - Allow various densities and housing types for a variety of needs including senior, affordable, and disability housing

Policy	Program
A Encourage variety in housing types	1 Revise zoning and subdivision regulation to provide for higher density, more design flexibility, and mixing of residential and commercial uses
	2 Locate housing near services to minimize transport costs or develop services in neighborhoods
	3 Create a workable model for a variety of housing development types and densities including clustered, cottage or other types of less land-consumptive housing while still increasing

Goal H-2 - Allow various densities and housing types for a variety of needs including senior, affordable, and disability housing

Policy		Program	
			supplies of detached housing units
B	Encourage the use of smaller lot sizes and/or multifamily housing in areas designated for such uses	1	Zone for housing above retail in the Central Commercial zones
		2	Ensure that development regulations allow for accessory units as a method of addressing multifamily housing
		3	Ensure zoning permits duplexes, triplexes, and four-plexes within the city
C	Create and preserve affordable housing opportunities locally and with a regional perspective, especially for developments with fewer units	3	Create housing specifically designed for an elderly population
		4	Revise zoning and subdivision standards to accommodate innovative housing design solutions such as cottage housing to increase housing density while enhancing quality of life

The proposed new Land Development Code addresses these Comp Plan goals and policies in a number of ways.

- It revises zoning and subdivision standards to permit a variety of less consumptive housing types:
 - Establishes minimum lot size requirements (6 du/acre for R-L, 8 du/acre for R-M and R-O, and 15 du/acre for the R-H) for all residential zones except the Residential Suburban (R-S) zone in order to ensure that the higher density zoned lands are developed to their intended higher densities rather than unintended low densities.
 - Eliminates maximum density requirements for the R-M, R-O and R-H zones to allow for much higher density than current code allows. And it uses site design standards to ensure that the high density does not negatively impact adjoining properties that may be at lower densities.

- Removes the minimum lot size (formerly 7,000 sq.ft.) requirement and the minimum street frontage requirement (60-ft) for Residential Suburban (R-S) lots and allows lot size averaging to meet the maximum density requirement. The maximum 6 du/acre density is retained from the previous code to help maintain the sense of neighborhood that has developed in the R-S zone, but new density bonus options have been added that allow increased density from 15 to 150% based on the density bonus, and now housing types have been added, with the goal being to encourage smaller lot sizes, accessory dwelling units, cottage housing developments, etc. within the more traditional single-family detached dwelling neighborhoods.
- The density bonus system is available for all residential zones and may be used for larger developments as well as smaller infill developments within existing neighborhoods

DENSITY CONCLUSION

Although the Comp Plan used an “approximate” low end density of 4 du/acre net, the existing single-family development pattern is at or above that and the higher existing development densities bring that average up significantly. It is anticipated that some larger lot single-family development (3 to 4 du/acre) will occur to meet a market need that has been identified by the development and real estate community in the LDC review process, but such lots will be limited due to the higher development costs associated with a lower number of units to spread those development costs with. That lack of affordability inherent in large lot development will serve as a natural limiter of such large lots in the community, ~~and~~ with the availability of a variety of lot sizes and housing types, the overall city density is expected to increase over time.