

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is the Residential Multifamily Zone?**

The Residential Multifamily (“RM”) zone is one of many zoning districts established in Capitola’s Zoning Code (Title 17 of the Municipal Code). For each zoning district, the Zoning Code identifies allowed land uses and development standards (e.g., maximum height, minimum setbacks). The Zoning Code implements land use and development policies contained in the City’s General Plan. For more information, view the [Capitola General Plan](#).

### **Why is the City considering changes to the RM Zone?**

Potential changes to the RM zone are in response to Program 1.6 of the Capitola Housing Element. This program requires the City to assess the maximum densities allowed in the RM subzones and to determine if higher densities can help facilitate multi-family development in Capitola. Program 1.6 also requires the City to assess the RM development standards to identify if amendments are needed to reduce constraints on housing production. For more information, view the [Adopted Capitola Housing Element](#).

### **What does the Housing Element Program 1.6 say?**

*Housing Element Program 1.6: “Review and revise as appropriate, requirements such as the minimum unit size, setbacks, parking requirements, and height restrictions to ensure they are necessary and pertinent and do not pose constraints on the development of housing. This includes assessing the maximum densities allowed in the RM-L and RM-M zones to determine if higher densities can help facilitate multi-family development in the City.”*

### **What is property density?**

Density is the ratio between the number of residences (dwelling units) to the gross size of the property (acres). This is typically shown as ‘dwelling units/acre’ or ‘du/ac’. Dwelling units are a building or portion of a building that is used as the residence of a single household. This includes single-family homes, duplexes (2), triplexes (3), accessory dwelling units, apartment buildings, condominiums, and more.

### **What changes to RM zone are being considered?**

Potential changes to the RM zone are discussed in the published slides. City staff has identified existing RM areas where an increased allowed density could help facilitate additional multifamily development. As required by Housing Element Program 1.6, the City also needs to consider potential changes to development standards (e.g., maximum height and minimum setbacks) that allows for development at the permitted densities. The City is considering a maximum density of 30 du/ac in certain areas.

**How would a maximum density of 30 du/ac compare to density of single-family (R-1) zones in Capitola?**

Under a maximum density of 30 du/ac, a one-acre property could construct up to 30 dwellings. Single-family properties in Capitola are closer to 10 percent of an acre, with a density between 7du/ac to 13du/ac, depending on the size of the lot. However, existing state and local law also allow for the construction of accessory dwelling units in single-family zones. For single-family properties with an accessory unit, the density is doubled. The table below provides density estimates based on typical R-1 lots throughout Capitola.

Neighborhood	Lot Dimensions (ft.)	Lot Size		Density (du/ac)	
		Sq. ft.	Acres	Single Dwelling	Single Dwelling and Accessory Unit
Riverview Terrace	40x70	2800 sq. ft.	0.06 ac.	15.6 du/ac	31.1 du/ac
Jewel Box	40x80	3200 sq. ft.	0.07 ac.	13.6 du/ac	27.2 du/ac
Depot Hill	40x100	4000 sq. ft.	0.09 ac.	10.9 du/ac	21.8 du/ac
Cliffwood Heights	60x100	6000 sq. ft.	0.14 ac.	7.3 du/ac	14.5 du/ac
Monterey-Kennedy	60x120	7200 sq. ft.	0.17 ac.	6.1 du/ac	12.1 du/ac

**Which properties are being considered for increased allowed density?**

The potential RM housing opportunity area are analyzed in the published slides. Page 14 of [this document](#) shows the location of seven RM housing opportunity areas. The document also contains maps, aerial images, and other information about these areas.

**Why were these areas selected?**

To comply with Housing Element Program 1.6, City staff identified areas where increased allowed density could realistically facilitate additional multifamily development. To select the sites, staff considered the existing ownership pattern, financial feasibility, physical suitability, neighborhood compatibility, and natural resource and hazard constraints.

**Is this different from the RM zoning amendments considered last year?**

Yes. In 2024 the City considered RM changes that increased the allowed density in 37 areas. The City is now considering changes in only seven areas. In 2024, the City also considered a maximum density of 40 du/ac. The City now is considering increased densities limited to no more than 30 du/ac.

**What are development standards?**

As defined by the City, “Development standards” means regulations in the zoning code that limit the size, bulk, or placement of structures or other improvements and modifications to a site. Standards can include, among others, allowed density, minimum distance structures can be from a property boundary (setbacks), maximum height of structures, parking requirements, and landscape requirements.

### **What changes to development standards are being considered other than density?**

Changes to development standards are related to setbacks, height limitations, and maximum building coverage.

### **Would there be any immediate effects by amending RM zones or RM development standards?**

- The amendments do not include the approval of a development project. Any housing development will still need to apply for the appropriate permits and approvals.
- The amendments would not mandate private owners to develop or redevelop their property.
- The amendments would not lessen the existing ability for private owners to develop or redevelop their property.

### **How can I comment on the potential RM changes?**

You are invited to attend a community workshop at 6:00 PM on Tuesday February 25, 2025, in City Hall (420 Capitola Avenue). At this workshop you can learn more about the proposed RM changes and provide comments.

The Planning Commission will hold a meeting on Monday, March 3, 2025, at 6 pm in City Hall Council Chambers (420 Capitola Avenue) to receive additional public comment and provide feedback to City staff.

### **How will the public be notified of the potential RM changes?**

2/25/25 Community Workshop: City staff will post notices of the community workshop at the seven RM opportunity areas, and provide information by social media, the City's newsletter, *Capitola Waves*, and on the City website. Notices will also be sent to property owners of opportunity areas.

Planning Commission Hearings: In addition to posting on-site notices, the City will also publish a notice in the Santa Cruz Sentinel and mail postcards to residents and owners of properties within 300 feet of the opportunity areas.

### **When does the City expect to complete the RM changes?**

The City expects to hold public hearings on the proposed RM changes in the spring of 2025. Following the community meeting any Planning Commission public work sessions, the Planning Commission will hold a noticed public hearing to make a recommendation to the City Council. After the Planning Commission hearing, the City Council will hold a public hearing to take action on the proposed changes.