

## **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, showing the location of seven RM housing opportunity areas. The document also contains maps, aerial images, and other information about these areas. The referenced slides are online; please visit the [Zoning Code Updates](#) webpage.

**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.

City Of Capitola  
**Residential Multifamily  
Zone Amendments**



**Discussion Materials**  
February 2025

# Document Purpose

This document contains discussion material for possible changes to Capitola's Residential Multifamily (RM) zoning district. You can provide comments on this material at two upcoming events:

- **Public Workshop**, February 25, 2025, at 6 pm at City Hall
- **Planning Commission**, Monday, March 3, 2025, at 6 pm at City Hall

# Document Contents

This document contains the following sections:

- 1. Background Information**

- 2. Workshop Discussion Topics**

- RM Housing Opportunity Areas
- Multifamily Housing Design
- Development Standards

# Background Information

- Capitola's [General Plan Housing Element](#) establishes City policies to facilitate housing production as required by state law
- The Housing Element identifies actions the City must complete this year to comply with state housing laws

# Background Information

- [General Plan Housing Element](#) Program 1.6 calls for the City to modify development standards in the Residential Multifamily (RM) zone to facilitate multifamily development.

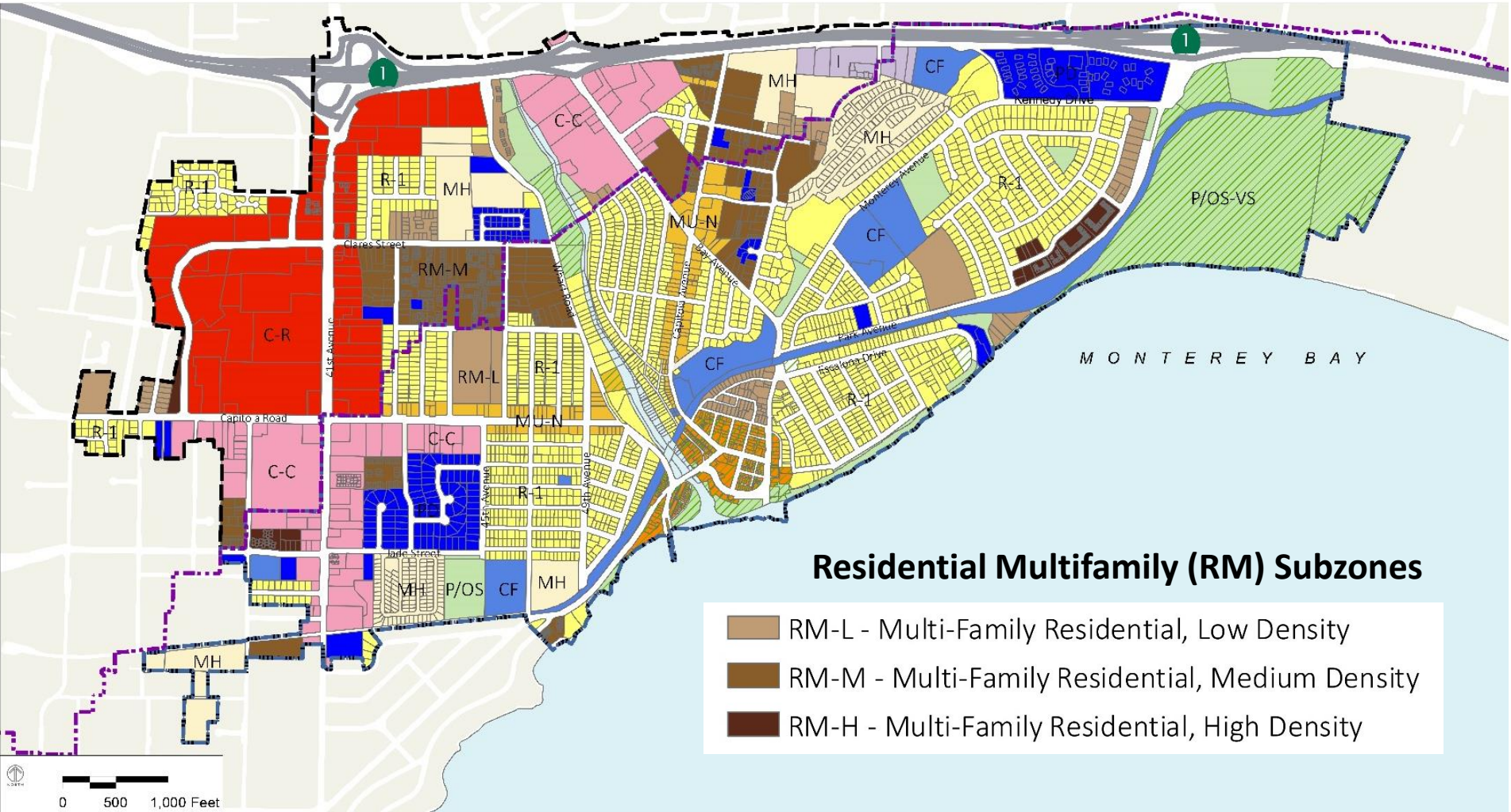
**Program 1.6:** “Review and revise as appropriate, requirements such as the minimum unit size, setbacks, parking requirements, and height restrictions to ensure they are necessary and pertinent and do not pose constraints on the development of housing. This includes assessing the maximum densities allowed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



# Background Information

- Capitola's Zoning Map shows the boundaries of all zoning districts, including the RM zone
- The RM zone is divided into three subzones, shown on next page:
  - Multifamily Residential, Low Density (RM-L)
  - Multifamily Residential, Medium Density (RM-M)
  - Multifamily Residential, High Density (RM-H)

# City of Capitola Zoning Map



# Background Information

- For each RM subzone, the Zoning Code establishes a maximum permitted residential density
- Density is calculated by dividing the number of units on the site by the site area (in acres)
- Existing maximum allowed density in the RM subzones is as follows:
  - RM-L: 10 du/ac
  - RM-M: 15 du/ac
  - RM-H: 20 du/ac

**Note:** The built density in RM areas often exceeds the maximum allowed density. See [Housing Element](#) pages 4-11 to 4-22 for example RM built densities.

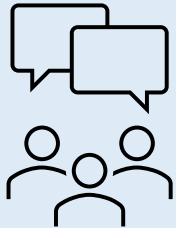
# Background Information

- In 2024, the Planning Commission held public meetings to consider proposed Zoning Code amendments to address Housing Element Program 1.6
- The 2024 draft proposal increased allowed density in 37 areas in the RM zone
- The Planning Commission directed City staff to further study the RM amendments based on public comments and site criteria

# Discussion Topics

At the February 25 workshop, the City will seek public input on the following discussion topics:

1. RM Housing Opportunity Areas
2. Multifamily Design
3. Development Standards



Look for this icon to find specific discussion questions for the workshop.

# RM Housing Opportunity Areas

- Based on Planning Commission direction and public feedback, staff has focused attention on RM areas that could realistically accommodate additional multifamily development
- Staff used the criteria described on the next page to identify these areas

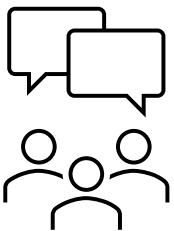
# RM Housing Opportunity Area Criteria

## Criteria for Realistic Redevelopment Opportunities:

- 1. Ownership Pattern.** Single Ownership Only. No Condominiums.
- 2. Financial Feasibility.** Age and condition of buildings. Duration of investment.
- 3. Physical Suitability.** Large parcels. Available land for new buildings.
- 4. Neighborhood Compatibility.** Access from primary roadways. Compatible adjacent uses.
- 5. Natural Resources and Hazards Constraints.** No sites along coastal bluff or with environmentally sensitive habitat.

# Area Selection

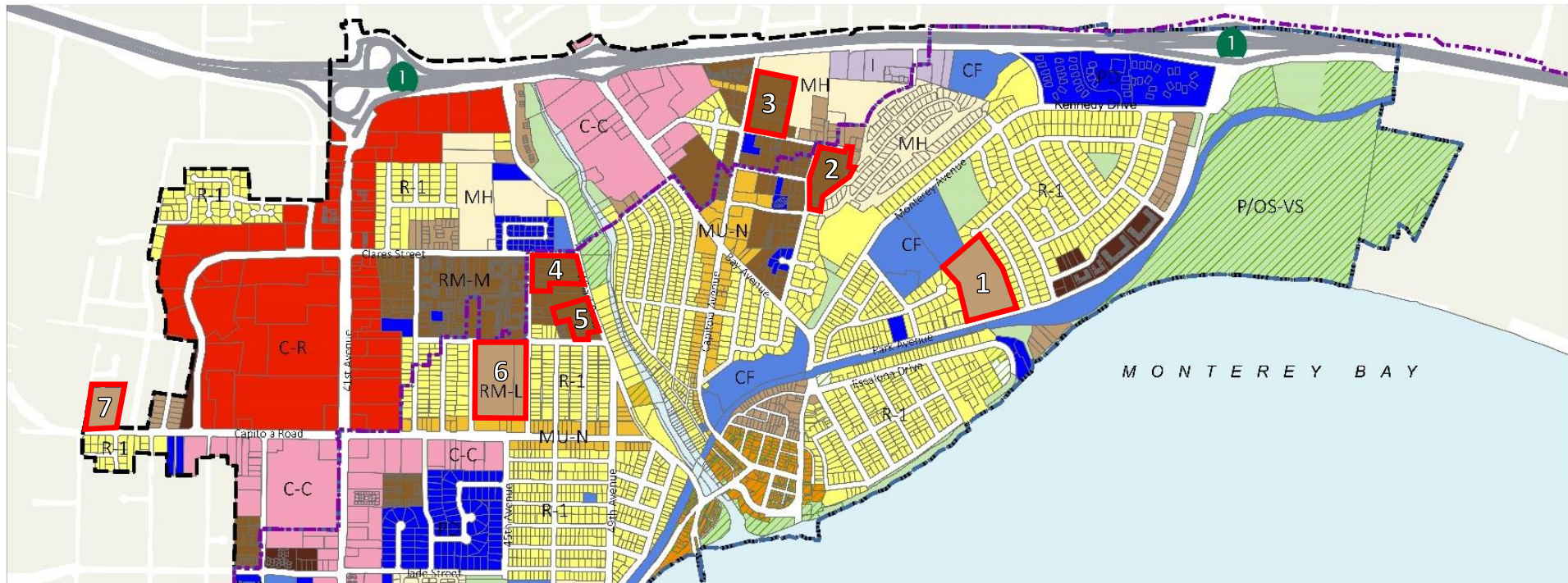
- Using this criteria, staff has identified **seven areas** (reduced from 37) that could realistically accommodate additional multifamily development facilitate multifamily development
- The City seeks feedback on these areas:



- Are these seven RM areas suitable for additional multifamily development? Why or why not?
- Are there additional or different RM areas that should be included?



# RM Housing Opportunity Areas



1. 600 Park Ave
2. Rosedale & Hill
3. Capitola Ave & Hill
4. Clares & 46<sup>th</sup>
5. Capitola Cove
6. Capitola Gardens
7. Landing at Capitola

**Additional information about these seven areas is provided in the following pages**



# Area 1: 600 Park Avenue



Existing Zoning Map

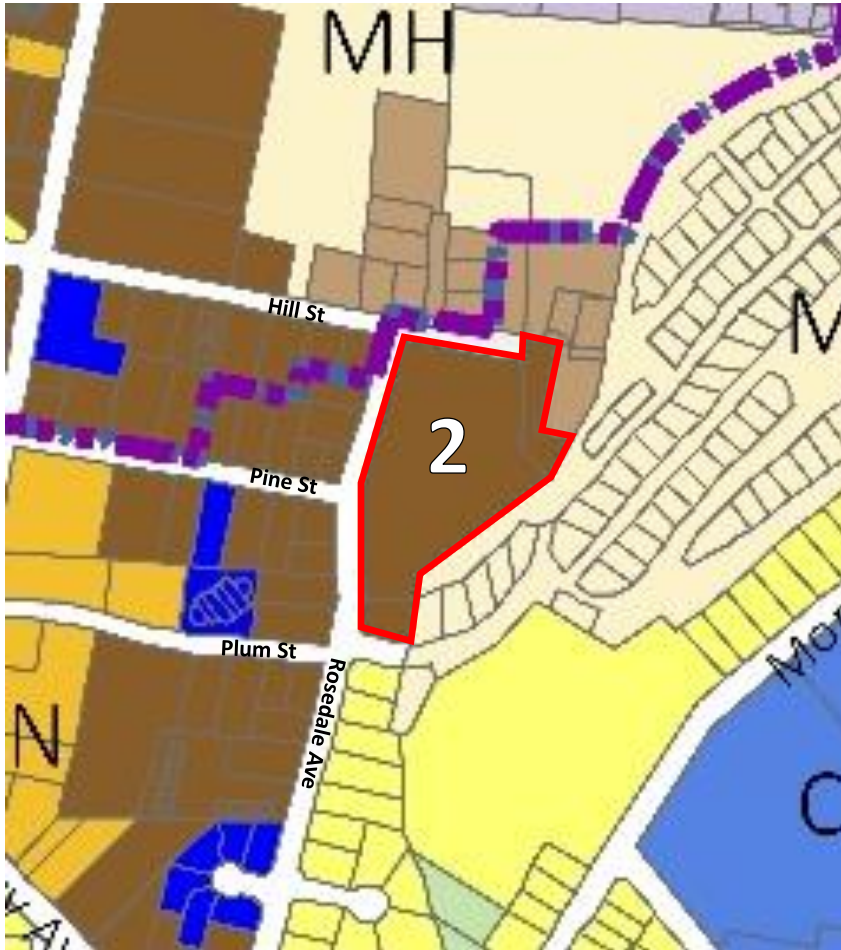
Site Area	6.8 acres
Existing Units	80
Built Density	12 du/ac
Existing Zoning	RM-L
Allowed Density	10 du/ac

# Area 1: 600 Park Avenue



Site Area	6.8 acres
Existing Units	80
Built Density	12 du/ac
Existing Zoning	RM-L
Allowed Density	10 du/ac

# Area 2: Rosedale & Hill



*Existing Zoning Map*

Site Area	2.9 acres
Existing Units	62
Built Density	21 du/ac
Existing Zoning	RM-M
Allowed Density	15 du/ac

# Area 2: Rosedale & Hill



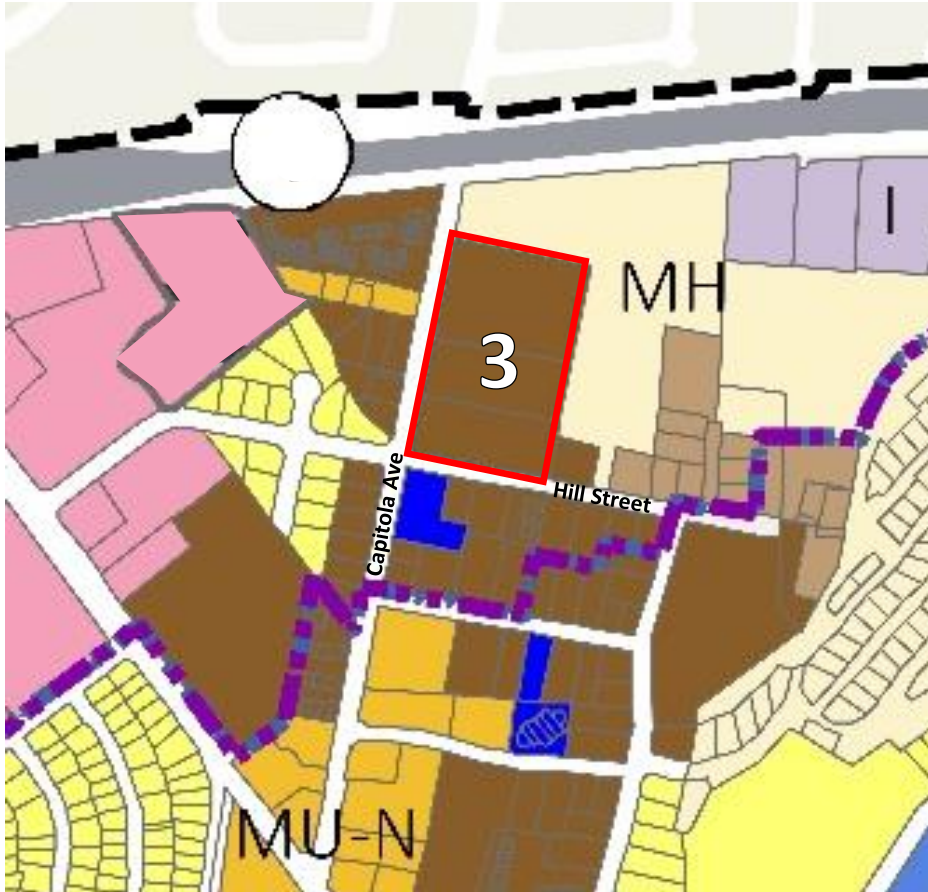
Rosedale Apartments

Hill St

Rosedale Ave

Site Area	2.9 acres
Existing Units	62
Built Density	21 du/ac
Existing Zoning	RM-M
Allowed Density	15 du/ac

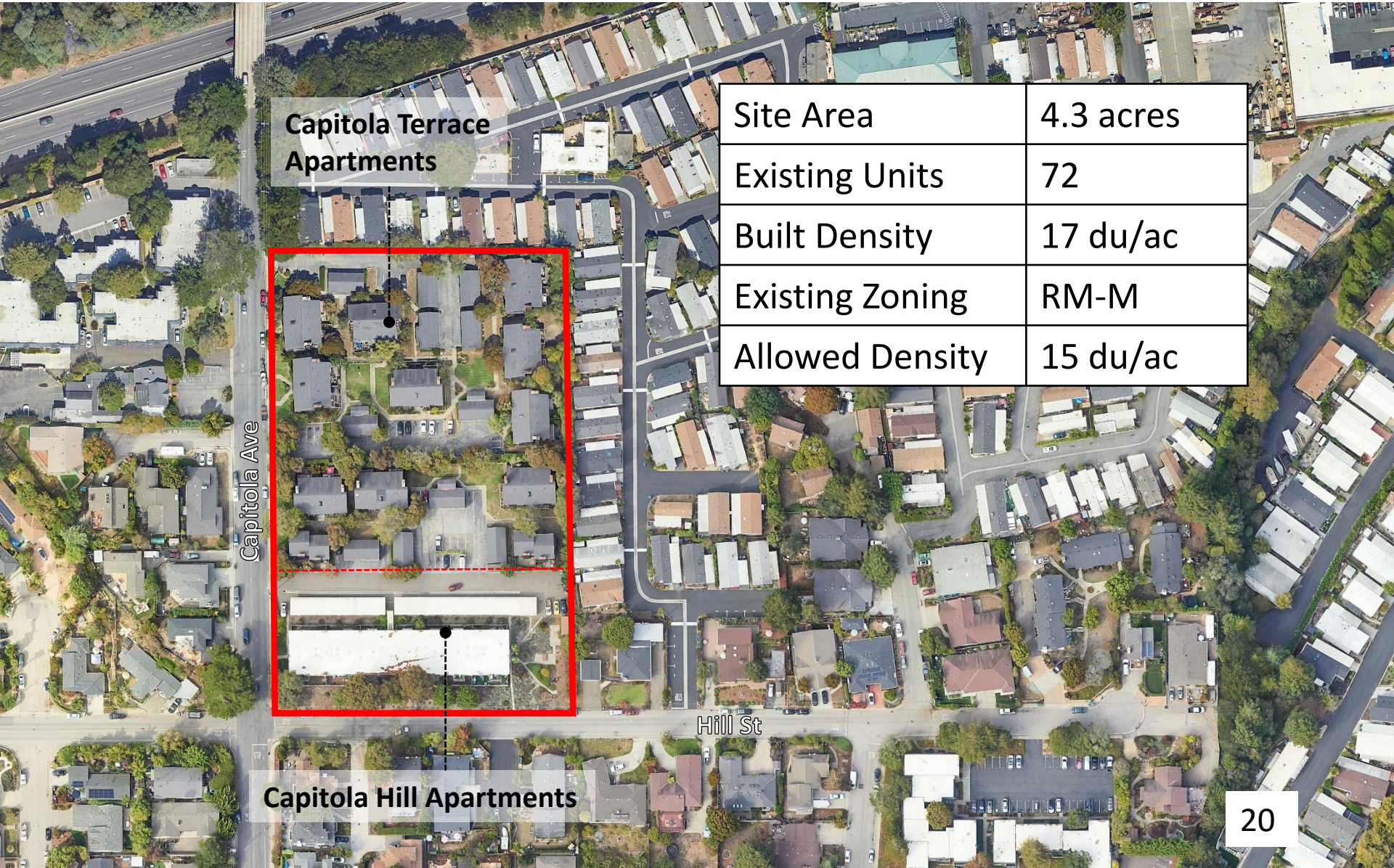
# Area 3: Capitola Ave & Hill



*Existing Zoning Map*

Site Area	3.2 acres
Existing Units	44
Built Density	14 du/ac
Existing Zoning	RM-M
Allowed Density	15 du/ac

# Area 3: Capitola Ave & Hill



Capitola Terrace  
Apartments

Capitola Ave

Hill St

Capitola Hill Apartments

Site Area	4.3 acres
Existing Units	72
Built Density	17 du/ac
Existing Zoning	RM-M
Allowed Density	15 du/ac

# Area 4: Clares & 46<sup>th</sup>



Existing Zoning Map

Site Area	2.75 acres
Existing Units	52
Built Density	19 du/ac
Existing Zoning	RM-M
Allowed Density	15 du/ac

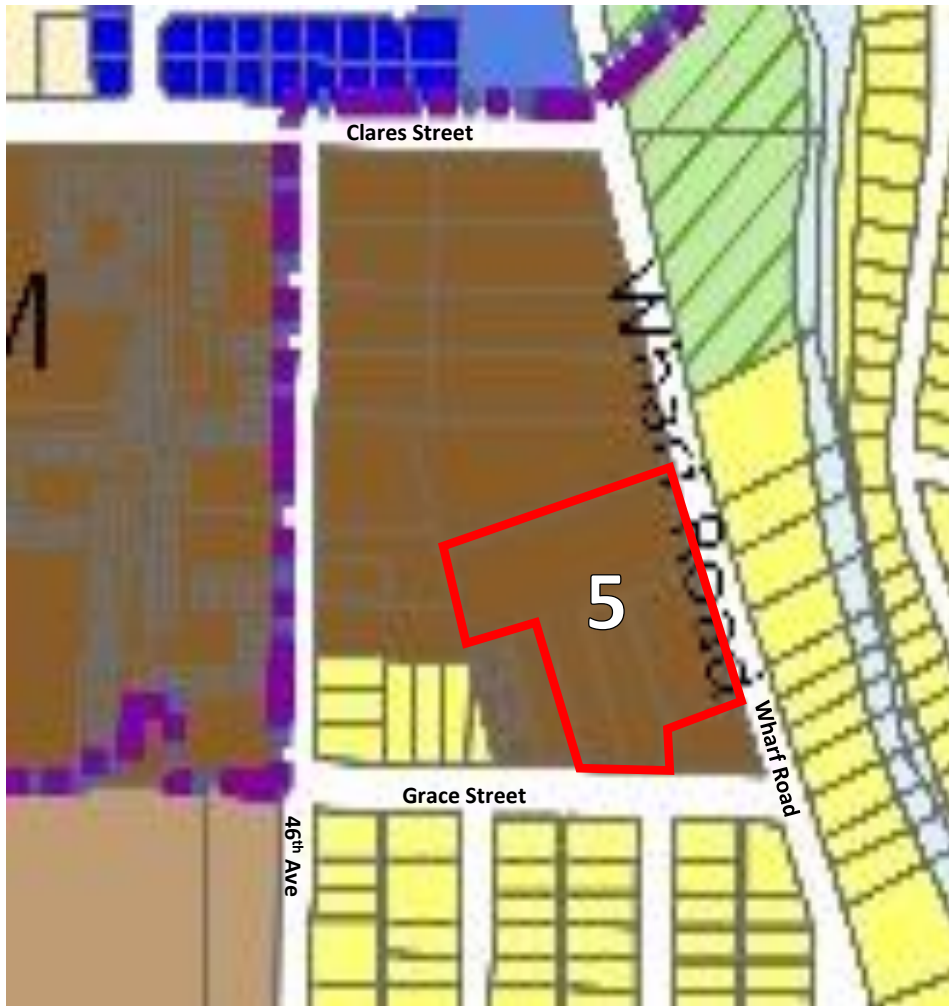


# Area 4: Clares & 46<sup>th</sup>



Site Area	2.75 acres
Existing Units	52
Built Density	19 du/ac
Existing Zoning	RM-M
Allowed Density	15 du/ac

# Area 5: Capitola Cove



Site Area	2 acres
Existing Units	35
Built Density	18 du/ac
Existing Zoning	RM-M
Allowed Density	15 du/ac

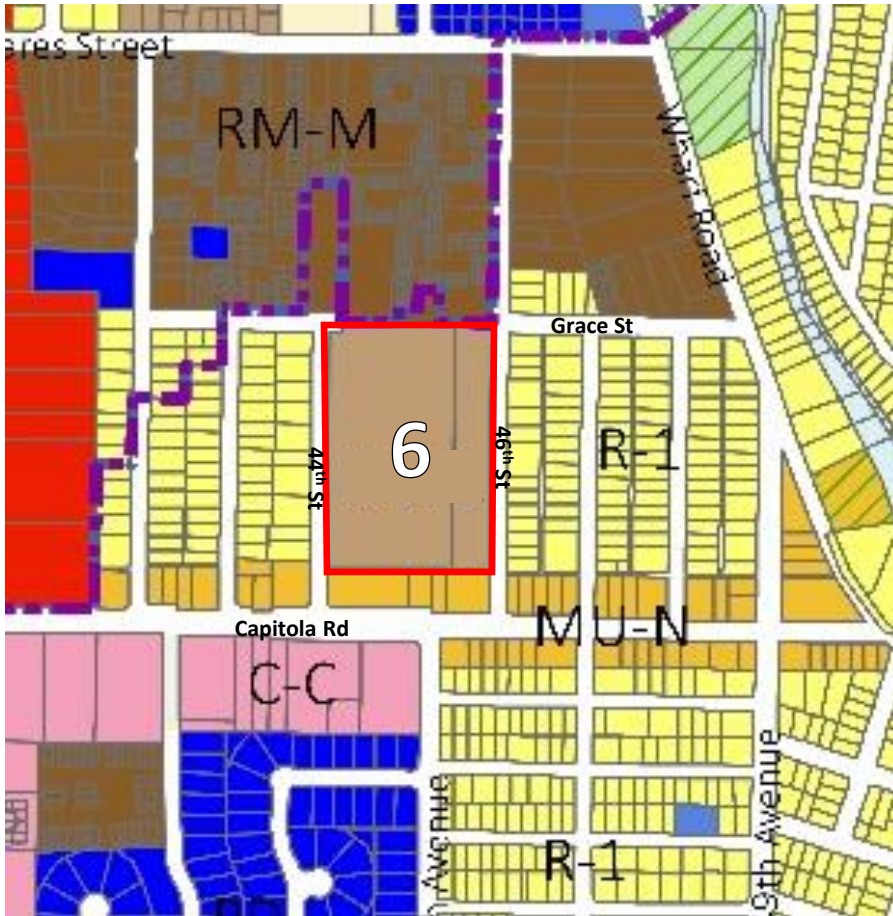
*Existing Zoning Map*

# Area 5: Capitola Cove



Site Area	2 acres
Existing Units	35
Built Density	18 du/ac
Existing Zoning	RM-M
Allowed Density	15 du/ac

# Area 6: Capitola Gardens



Existing Zoning Map

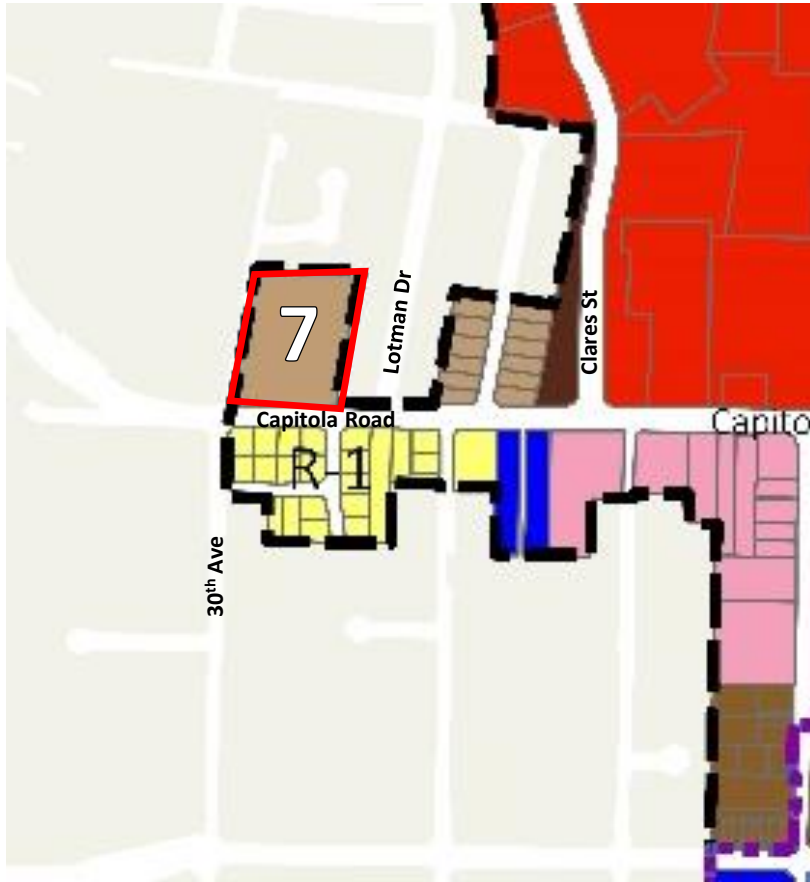
Site Area	6.6 acres
Existing Units	80
Built Density	12 du/ac
Existing Zoning	RM-L
Allowed Density	10 du/ac

# Area 6: Capitola Gardens



Site Area	6.6 acres
Existing Units	80
Built Density	12 du/ac
Existing Zoning	RM-L
Allowed Density	10 du/ac

# Area 7: Landing at Capitola



*Existing Zoning Map*

Site Area	2.8 acres
Existing Units	50
Built Density	18 du/ac
Existing Zoning	RM-L
Allowed Density	10 du/ac

# Area 7: Landing at Capitola



Site Area	2.8 acres
Existing Units	50
Built Density	18 du/ac
Existing Zoning	RM-L
Allowed Density	10 du/ac

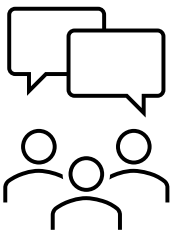
# Multifamily Housing Design

- There are many different types of multifamily housing, including townhomes, apartment buildings, and courtyard housing
- New multifamily housing can be designed to fit into the surrounding neighborhood and enhance Capitola's unique sense of place

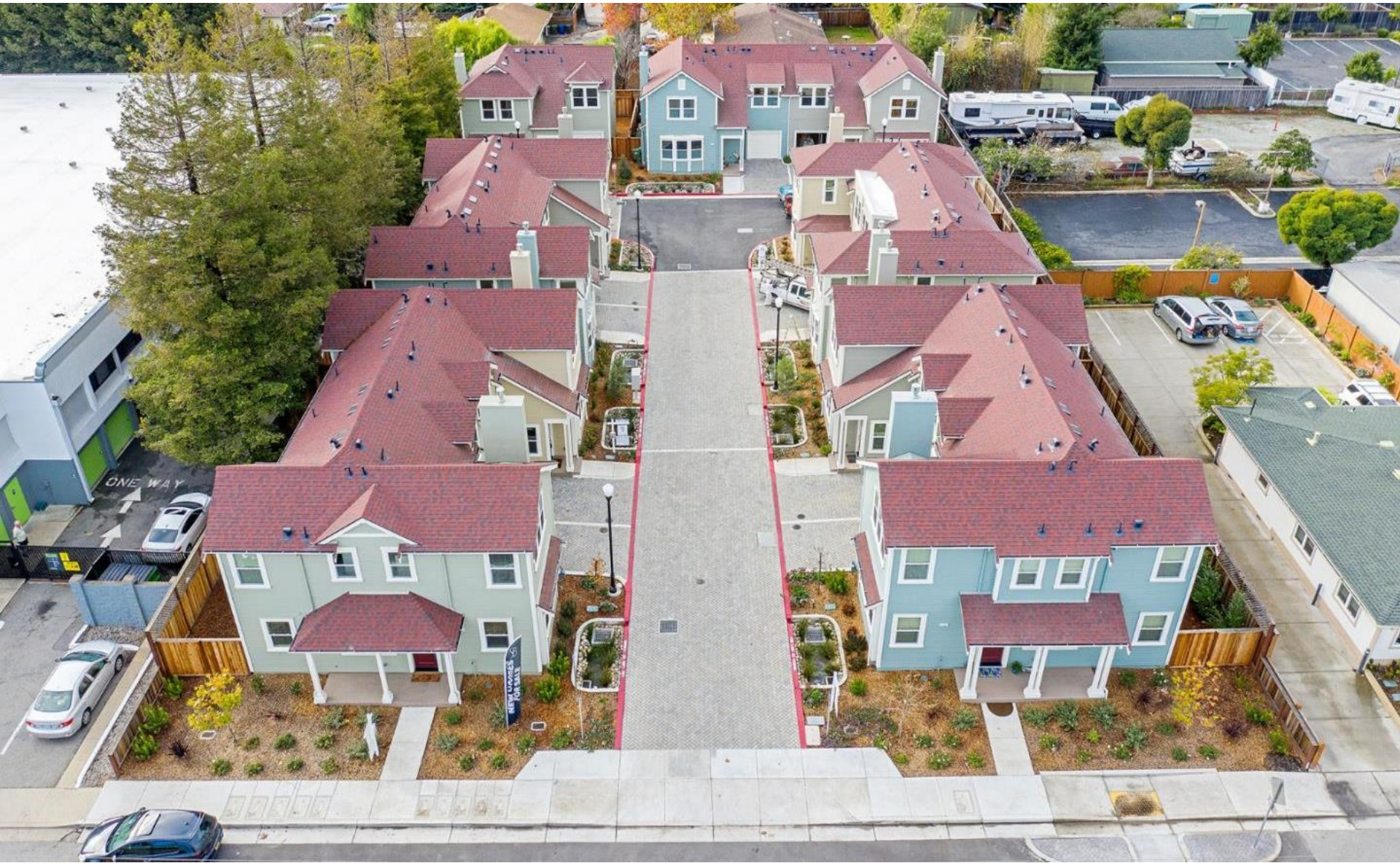


# Multifamily Housing Design

- The photographs on the following pages show examples of recent multifamily development in Santa Cruz County
- The City seeks your input on the example multifamily development:



- What do you like about these examples?  
What don't you like?
- What features would you like to see in new multifamily development in the RM zones?



Tera Court, Capitola  
15 du/ac



Dunslee Way, Scotts Valley  
15 du/ac



1209 Seabright Ave, Santa Cruz  
16 du/ac



237 Bluebonnet Lane, Scotts Valley  
19 du/ac



Bay Avenue Senior Apartments, Capitola  
23 du/ac



716 Darwin Street, Santa Cruz  
35 du/ac



708 Frederick Street, Santa Cruz  
36 du/ac





Walnut Commons, Santa Cruz  
59 du/ac

# Development Standards

- City standards can help ensure that new multifamily development is properly designed and fits in with the surrounding neighborhood
- City development standards include:
  - Allowed density
  - Maximum height
  - Maximum building coverage (percentage of lot occupied by a building)
  - Minimum setbacks from property lines

# Development Standards

- Housing Element Program 1.6 requires the City to modify RM development standards, if needed, to allow for development at the permitted density
- To allow for 20 du/ac in the RM-H subzone, staff recommends changes to building coverage and rear setback standards

# Development Standards

- If a new RM subzone is created, the City will need to establish development standards for the subzone that allows for the permitted density
- For example, if the maximum allowed density on a site is 30 units per acre, maximum height, setbacks, and lot coverage must realistically allow for new development at that density

# Development Standards

- The following page shows development standards for the existing RM subzones, with recommended changes
- The following page also shows standards that would allow for development at 30 du/ac if the City were to allow for that density in certain RM areas

# Development Standards

## Potential RM zone development standards:

	Existing			Potential New
	RM-L	RM-M	RM-H	
Density (max)	10 du/ac	15 du/ac	20 du/ac	30 du/ac
Height (max)	30 ft.	30 ft.	35 ft.	35 ft. [1]
Building Coverage (max)	40%	40%	<del>40%</del> 45%	50%
Setbacks (min)				
Front	15 ft.	15 ft.	15 ft.	15 ft. [2]
Interior Side	10% of lot width [3]	10% of lot width [3]	10% of lot width [3]	10% of lot width [3] [4]
Street Side	10 ft.	10 ft.	10 ft.	10 ft. [2]
Rear	15% of lot depth	15% of lot depth	<del>15% of lot depth</del> 15 ft.	10 ft.

[1] Additional 6 feet permitted above plate height for roof elements with a minimum 5:12 pitch. Maximum 3 stories.

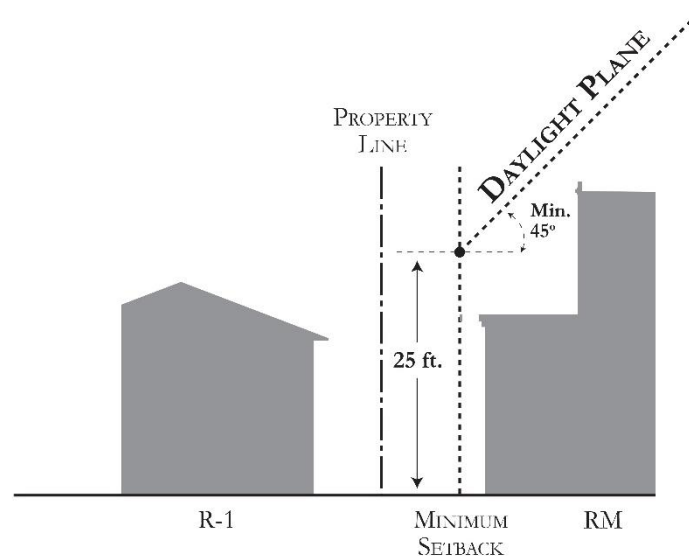
[2] The planning commission may approve reduced front and street side setbacks if the reduced setbacks will accommodate development that complies with sidewalk and street tree standards in 17.82.040 (Circulation and Streetscape).

[3] In no case less than 3 feet or greater than 7 feet.

# Development Standards

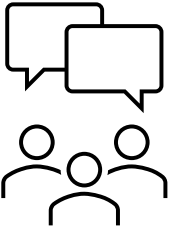
**Multifamily development in all RM subzones also must comply with an existing “daylight plane” standard to limit the height of building walls adjacent to existing single-family homes**

**RM Daylight Plane:** Where an RM zoning district abuts an R-1 zoning district, no structure shall extend above or beyond a daylight plane having a height of 25 feet at the setback from the R-1 property line and extending into the parcel at an angle of 45 degrees.



# Development Standards

- The City seeks your input on RM development standards:



- Do you have any comments on potential changes to the RM-H standards?
- Do you have any comments on potential standards to allow up to 30 du/ac?
- Of the 7 Housing Opportunity Sites, where do think a density of 30 du/ac would be appropriate?



# Next Steps

**You can learn more about the RM changes and provide input at the following events:**

- **Community Workshop:** February 25, 2025, at 6 pm at City Hall
- **Planning Commission Meeting:** March 3, 2025, at 6 pm at City Hall
- **Subsequent Hearings:** To be determined, Spring 2025

# We look forward to hearing from you!

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