

Capitola Planning Commission

Agenda Report



Meeting: June 6, 2024

From: Community Development Department

Address: Citywide Zoning Code Update

Project Description: #24-0026 for future Amendments to the Capitola Municipal Code Title 17: Zoning. The future Zoning Code amendments will impact citywide development standards and regulations. The Zoning Code is part of the City’s Local Coastal Program (LCP), and amendments require certification by the California Coastal Commission prior to taking effect in the Coastal Zone.

Recommended Action: Provide feedback to staff on zoning discussion items and direct staff to prepare an ordinance to amend Capitola Municipal Code Title 17: Zoning.

Property Owner: Zoning Code amendments apply to properties citywide.

Representative: Ben Noble Consultant

Sean Sesanto, Associate Planner

Background: The City is updating the Zoning Code to implement programs in the recently adopted Housing Element and to address other identified issues. The Planning Commission previously met on February 1, February 16, and May 2, 2024, to provide input on important Zoning Code Update issues. Attachment 1 summarizes Planning Commission input received at these meetings.

On May 2, 2024, the Planning Commission discussed potential Zoning Code Amendments to implement Housing Element Program 1.6: Development Regulations. This program calls for the City to assess the maximum densities allowed in the RM zones and to determine if higher densities can help facilitate multi-family development in Capitola. Program 1.6 also calls for the City to assess if revisions to RM development standards, such as setbacks and height standards, are needed to reduce constraints on housing production.

Currently, the RM zone is divided into three subzones, with a maximum allowed density of 10 dwelling units per acre (du/ac) in RM-L, 15 du/ac in RM-M, and 20 du/ac in RM-H. The location of the RM subzones is shown in the Zoning Map (Attachment 2). Table 1 shows existing RM height, coverage, and setback standards. Table 2 shows existing parking standards and revisions recommended by the Planning Commission.

Table 1: RM Zone Development Standards

	RM-L	RM-M	RM-H
Height (max)	30 ft.	30 ft.	35 ft.
Building Coverage (max)	40%	40%	40%
Setbacks (min)			
Front	Main Structure: 15 ft. Garage: 20 ft.	Main Structure: 15 ft. Garage: 20 ft.	Main Structure: 15 ft. Garage: 20 ft.
Interior Side	10% of lot width [1]	10% of lot width [1]	10% of lot width [1]
Street Side	10 ft.	10 ft.	10 ft.
Rear	15% of lot depth	15% of lot depth	15% of lot depth

Notes:

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

Table 2: Planning Commission Recommended Changes to Parking Standards

	Existing	New
Duplex homes	2 per unit, 1 covered	No change
Multifamily Dwellings	2.5 per unit, 1 covered	0.5 per unit <350 sf close to transit 1.0 per unit <500 sf 1.5 per unit 500-750 sf 2.0 per unit ≥750 sf No required covered parking or guest parking

On May 2, 2024, the Planning Commission reviewed information on existing RM density and development standards, existing built densities in the RM zone, recent Santa Cruz County multifamily development, and prototype models of infill multifamily housing types. The Planning Commission noted a general need to consider increased RM densities and requested staff to return with additional information. Planning Commissioners requested information on development standards needed to achieve increased densities and suggested a site-specific consideration of changes to density standards.

RM Development Standards: Staff and consultants reviewed existing RM development standards to assess if these standards constrain housing production at different densities. This assessment found that in the RM-L and RM-M subzones, existing standards can accommodate development at 10 du/ac and 15 du/ac, respectively. In the RM-H subzone, building coverage and rear setbacks may constrain development at 20 du/ac. Existing parking standards (2.5 per unit) also constrain development at 15 and 20 du/ac.

Table 3 shows the existing RM-H height, coverage, and setback standards (second column), and proposed standards to allow for multifamily development at 20, 30, and 40 du/ac. If the Planning Commission recommends RM densities greater than 40 du/ac, additional increased height, reduced coverage, or both, would be necessary to allow for this density. Further reductions to minimum parking would also be needed to allow densities greater than 40 du/ac. Maximum plate height standards are introduced with additional height allowed for pitched roof forms. These standards are included in response to prior Planning Commission feedback.

Table 3: Standards to Allow for Increased Density

	Existing RM-H Standards	Standards Needed to Allow for:		
		20 du/ac	30 du/ac	40 du/ac
Height (max)	35 ft.			
Stories	-	3	3	3
Top Plate	-	30 ft.	30 ft.	35 ft.
Additional for pitched roof	-	6 ft.	6 ft.	6 ft.
Building Coverage (max)	40%	45%	50%	60%
Setbacks (min)				
Front	15 ft.	15 ft.	15 ft.	15 ft.
Interior Side	10% of lot width [1]	10% of lot width [1]	10% of lot width [1]	10% of lot width [1]
Street Side	10 ft.	10 ft.	10 ft.	10 ft.
Rear	15% of lot depth	10 ft [2]	10 ft [2]	10 ft [2]

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

[2] 20 ft. if abutting a R-1 zone.

[3] New multifamily dwellings must comply with Objective Standards for Multifamily and Mixed-Use Development.

RM Density: Attachment 2 shows existing zoning, built RM densities, and proposed new RM densities. This information is shown in five geographic areas (e.g., Northeast, Village) to facilitate Planning Commission discussion. Within each geographic area, RM parcels are further grouped into numbered areas. For each numbered area, tables show maximum density allowed under existing zoning, built densities, and proposed new densities.

The summary table in Attachment 3 lists proposed new densities for the numbered areas with additional information explaining the rationale for the proposal. Proposed new densities reflect prior Planning Commission comments to consider significant increases to allow densities in certain locations. Proposed densities also reflect the following considerations:

- Densities allowed in R-1 under SB 9 (up to 32 du/ac on a 5,500 sq. ft. lot)
- Typical densities of “missing middle” infill housing typologies (20+ du/ac)
- Existing built densities exceeding allowed densities
- Redevelopment potential of sites
- Form of ownership (e.g., condominiums)
- Surrounding land uses
- Environmental constraints

The maximum proposed new density is 40 dwelling units per acre, which can be achieved with three stories and recommended new parking standards. Greater residential density will be allowed in the Commercial and Mixed-Use zones along major transportation corridors. In the RM zone, a proposed project with deed-restricted affordable or senior housing also may request additional density and modified development standards through state density bonus law.

The proposed densities are not uniform for all parcels with the same RM subzone. For example, the proposed density for the Grove Lane RM-L parcels (No. 7 in Northeast Area) is 10 du/ac, while the proposed density of Park Avenue Apartments (No. 6 in Northeast Area), also RM-L, is 40 du/ac. The Grove Lane parcels cannot accommodate additional density due to coastal hazards-related site constraints and Coastal Act requirements. The Park Avenue Apartments site, in contrast, could accommodate additional units if allowed density is sufficient to support financially feasible redevelopment.

Staff requests Planning Commission feedback on the proposed density for numbered areas shown in Attachment 2 and 3. Based on this feedback, staff will prepare Zoning Map and Zoning Code text amendments as needed. It is possible that new or different RM subzones will be necessary to allow for the range of maximum densities. The Planning Commission, affected property owners, and general public will have the opportunity to review and comment on these proposed amendments at future meetings.

Next Steps: An ordinance to amend the zoning code will be drafted in preparation for public input, Planning Commission recommendation, and City Council Adoption.

CEQA: Analysis of potential environmental impacts from increased residential densities will be provided as part of public review of the proposed Zoning Code and Zoning Map amendments.

Attachments:

1. Zoning Code Update Summary Table
2. RM Zone Maps: Built and Proposed Densities
3. RM Zone Properties Summary Table: Allowed, Built, Proposed Density
4. Staff List of Amendments

Report Prepared By: Ben Noble, Consultant

Reviewed By: Austin Westly, Deputy City Clerk

Approved By: Katie Herlihy, Community Development Director