



# Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning

*Planning for the Challenges Ahead*



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**DETERMINING BASE DENSITY FOR MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL PROJECTS IN COMMERCIAL ZONES, WHERE THE UNDERLYING COMMUNITY- BASED PLAN COMMERCIAL LAND USE CATEGORIES DO NOT SPECIFY DENSITY. INTERPRETATION NO. 2020-03**

**PURPOSE**

This memorandum provides guidance on determining the base density for a proposed multifamily residential project (including mixed-use) that is located on a site zoned commercial, and where the underlying community-based plan commercial land use category does not specify a density.

**BACKGROUND**

The General Plan Land Use Legend specifies density and/or Floor Area Ratio for each land use category. However, some community-based plans that have not been updated have land use categories that do not specify density and intensity.

Currently there are various state mandates, including SB 35 and the Density Bonus Law, that refer to the General Plan for maximum allowable density.

In recent years, various state mandates aimed at increasing housing and affordable housing production, such as SB 35, have made residential uses in commercial zones by-right. In addition, these mandates require using General Plan land use over zoning to determine base density. More than ever, in those community-based plan areas where the land use category is silent on permitted density, planners need a consistent method for determining the base density.

## **APPLICABILITY**

This memo shall apply to all applications to establish a multifamily residential use on a commercially-zoned parcel (**C-1:Restricted Commercial, C-2:Neighborhood Commercial, C-3:General Commercial, C-H:Commercial Highway, C-M:Commercial Manufacturing, C-MJ:Major Commercial, C-3-CRS: Commercial Residential Zone**) with an underlying commercial land use category, and are subject to the following plans:

- Altadena Community Plan
- East Los Angeles Community Plan
- Rowland Heights Community Plan
- Walnut Park Neighborhood Plan
- West Athens-Westmont Community Plan

The pending Housing Element Update of the LA County General Plan will amend the General Plan Land Use Legend to specify a density for community-based plan commercial land use categories that do not specify density. Until it is adopted, this memo provides guidance on the matter. Upon the effective date of the Housing Element Update, this memo shall expire.

## **INTERPRETATION**

All applications to establish a new multifamily residential use (including mixed-use) in a commercial zone with an underlying commercial land use category, and that is located in Altadena, East Los Angeles, Rowland Heights, Walnut Park, and West Athens shall use a permitted base density of 50 dwelling units per net acre and calculate any allowable units accordingly. An exception to this is when the applicant proposes the multifamily residential use under the prescribed densities in the Mixed Use Ordinance, which allows certain residential uses by right in commercial zones.

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