

## **Questions and Answers for the proposed Minimum Density Ordinance amendments to R-2 and R-3 zones.**

### **Why have Minimum Densities?**

Minimum Densities are a land use strategy that is widely applied to ensure that cities with limited urbanizable land develop efficiently at the intended densities.

**Areas dominated by single-family, detached residential development.** Presently a developer may elect to develop large single family homes upon a multifamily-zoned property because the market may be stronger, and more profitable, for houses on large lots. In Ashland given the cost of land and the strong residential housing market it is more often the case that developers build single-family attached town-homes at the maximum density allowed upon multi-family zoned property. Were market forces to change however, to favor the development of single family detached homes on individual lots in these zones, minimum density requirements could preclude the reduction of units on multi-family land in that way

**Areas zoned for multiple-family development.** Currently, land zoned for high-density uses can be developed at lower densities. For example, in Ashland, land zoned for 20 units per acre intended for the developments of apartments could readily be developed at 1-20 units per acre. Therefore a 1/2 acre High Density zoned (R-3) lot that is intended to have 10 units could be developed as just 4 single family homes and comply with our zoning ordinance. Minimum Densities would prohibit development of single-family detached housing in areas zoned for higher densities, or only allow such when special conditions, including the minimum density, are met.

**Areas targeted for future growth. Initially, urbanizable areas often develop at low densities.** As growth continues, the residents of low-density developments often oppose the infill development needed to meet planned densities. By requiring a minimum number of units per acre the City can increase the number of units served by such facilities, thereby decreasing the initial service cost per unit. Imposing minimum density requirements in areas targeted for future growth might delay some development in the short run, or serve the intended purpose of encouraging development at densities compatible with comprehensive plan policies.

## **How will Minimum Densities affect my property?**

The answer to this question depends upon the characteristics of your specific property. Common property types are outlined below:

### ***Historic District Properties:***

If your property is within one of Ashland's four designated Historic Districts (Downtown, Skidmore Academy, Hargadine, and Railroad Districts) the proposed ordinance would not apply to your property. Ashland's Historic Districts have distinct historic development patterns and are exempted from the proposed ordinance to allow for compatible development exclusive of a minimum density requirement. It is important to note that the vast majority of lots within the historic districts also fall within the small lot (less than 10,000sq.ft.) exception.

### ***Small lots:***

If your property is relatively small, at less than 10,000 sq.ft. (100' x100'), the "Exceptions" proposed with this ordinance would exempt your property from the minimum density requirements. Therefore whether you have a vacant or developed property of less than 10,000sq.ft. in size, the provisions of this ordinance would not affect your development plans.

### ***Large lots:***

If your property is larger than 10,000sqft, outside of a Historic District, it would be subject to the proposed ordinance. Although an exception is proposed to allow existing single family homes to be enlarged, the property would be subject to a minimum density of 80% the base density. For example: A 1/2 acre High Density multi-family zoned property (R3) has a base density of 20 units per acre. This 1/2 acre parcel has a base density of 10 units, and would have a minimum density of 8 units under the proposed ordinance. The proposed ordinance would prohibit partitioning the property into four independent 5,440 sqft. Lots for the development of four single family homes. Any application to partition, subdivide the property, or develop additional units would have to demonstrate that the minimum number of units (8 in this example) would ultimately be achieved. In cases where an existing single family home occupies such a property, the proposed ordinance includes an exception provision by which the existing home could be enlarged, or replaced if destroyed by a natural hazard.

### ***Land outside the City Limits (within the Urban Growth Boundary):***

If your property is currently inside the UGB but outside the City Limits, residential annexation requirements currently require

development plans to ensure the annexed land is developed at 90% of base density. This provision is unchanged by the proposed minimum density ordinance.

### **What about preservation of environmentally sensitive areas?**

The development of Ashland's natural areas including floodplains, streams, land drainages, wetlands, and steep slopes could be detrimental to these sensitive lands. To protect such areas the minimum density ordinance as proposed provides an option to reduce minimum densities in cases where strict application would require encroachment into these natural areas. The Physical and Environmental Constraints Ordinance currently limits development within these environmentally sensitive lands and thus exceptions to minimum densities may be necessary in some circumstances to protect these resources and ensure that development does not occur in hazardous areas.

### **What would the minimum density be?**

R-2 zoned properties would have a minimum density of 10.8 units per acre (base density is 13.5 units per acre)

R-3 zoned properties would have a minimum density of 16 units per acre (base density is 20 units per acre)

To calculate convert your properties area to acres (square footage / 43560sq.ft). Multiply the total acreage by the minimum density (10.8 if R-2 zoned, or 16 if R-3 zoned). The resulting number is the minimum number of units a development is to contain. For fractional answers the minimum density shall be rounded down to the nearest whole number.

## **PROPOSED ORDINANCE CHANGES**

### **For R-2 and R-3 zoned properties.**

Base Densities.

The density of the development shall not exceed the density established by this section ***including the density gained through bonus points***. The ***base*** density shall be computed by dividing the total number of dwelling units by the acreage of the project, including land dedicated to the public. ***The minimum density shall be 80% of the calculated base density.*** Fractional portions of the answer shall not apply towards the total density.

***Exceptions to minimum density standards are allowed in the following situations:***

- 1. Lots less than 10,000sq.ft, in existence prior to (the date this ordinance is adopted), shall be exempted from the minimum density requirements.***
- 2. Minimum Density requirements shall not apply in Ashland's Historic Districts***
- 3. The portion of the site that has a conditional use is not included in the site for calculations of minimum density.***
- 4. If a property is occupied by a single family home as of (the date this ordinance is adopted) the single family home can be enlarged,***

*reconstructed, or replaced in the event of a natural hazard, without having to meet the minimum density requirements.*

- 5. Where floodplains , streams, land drainages, wetlands, and or steep slopes exist upon the property an exception to minimum density requirements may be obtained to better meet the standards of Chapter 18.62 Physical and Environmental Constraints.*
- 6. A site that is nonconforming in minimum density may not move further out of conformance with the minimum density standard. However, units may be added to the site which bring the site closer to conformance without coming all the way into conformance as part of a phased project that demonstrates the minimum density will be achieved.*