

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?

Currently, the City has three RM zones which allow a maximum density of 10, 15, and 20 units per acre. The RM zone amendments would create two new RM subzones allowing a maximum density of 30 and 40 units per acre, establish development standards for the new subzones, modify development standards in existing RM subzones to reduce constraints on housing production, and amend the Zoning Map to apply the new RM subzones to seven areas in Capitola.

How would a maximum density of 40 du/ac compare to density of single-family (R-1) zones in Capitola?

Under a maximum density of 40 du/ac, a one-acre property could construct up to 40 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 proposed Zoning Map amendment would increase the allowed density in seven areas. Information about these areas can be found [here](#).

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 areas, staff considered the existing ownership pattern, financial feasibility, physical suitability, neighborhood compatibility, natural resource, and hazard constraints. City staff received public feedback on these areas at a workshop on February 26, 2025.

Is this different from the RM zoning amendments considered in 2024?

Yes. In 2024 the City considered RM changes that increased the allowed density in 37 areas. The City is now considering changes in seven areas. These changes are consistent with direction provided by the [Planning Commission on March 3, 2025](#).

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?

The Planning Commission will hold a meeting on Thursday, August 21, 2025, at 6 pm in City Hall Council Chambers (420 Capitola Avenue) to consider the proposed RM zone amendments. At this meeting you can learn more about the proposed RM amendments and provide comments.

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

City staff posted notices of the Planning Commission hearing at the seven RM rezone areas and mailed public notices to property owners within 300 feet of the proposed rezones. Staff also published an update on the City website.

When does the City expect to complete the RM changes?

The Planning Commission will hold a noticed public hearing on August 21, 2025. At the meeting, the Commission may make a recommendation to the City Council or continue the item to another meeting. Once the Planning Commission makes a recommendation on the amendments, the City Council will hold a public hearing to take action on the proposed RM amendments. Modifications to the Municipal Code require two readings by City Council. The two readings are anticipated in September or October of 2025.