



*"We are a welcoming, active and business-friendly rural foothill community built on California's rich gold rush history."*

## Planning Commission Staff Report

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**Meeting Date:** May 19, 2026

**Prepared By:** Carole Kendrick, Director of Development Services

### PROJECT INFORMATION SUMMARY

**Case File:** Zoning Ordinance Amendment (ZOA) 26-03 Program A-5 Minimum Densities.

**Request:** Public Hearing and Recommendation to City Council on Proposed Amend Title 10 (Zoning) of the Placerville Municipal Code to Establish Minimum Densities and Modify Development Regulations for Multi-Family Residential Zones (R-2, R-3, and R-4), and Amend Conditional Use Provisions for Multi-Family Residential Zones (R-2, R-3, R-4, and R-5) in Compliance with the Housing Element (Program A-5).

### Summary Recommendation:

1. Conduct a public hearing and receive public input on the proposed ordinance amendment.
2. Recommend that the City Council find that the proposed ordinance is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) and Section 15268; and
3. Recommend that the City Council introduce and waive the first reading of an Ordinance amending Sections 10-5-9 (R-2), 10-5-10 (R-3), 10-5-11 (R-4) and 10-5-12 (R-5) to establish minimum density requirements, modify minimum parcel areas, and amend conditional use standards.

### BACKGROUND

The City of Placerville adopted its 2021-2029 Housing Element on August 31, 2021, with the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) certifying the element on December 21, 2022. This certification emphasized the timely implementation of programs to avoid revocation of compliance (Gov. Code § 65585(i)).

Housing Element Program A-5 specifically commits the City to amending the Zoning Ordinance to establish minimum densities and modify minimum parcel areas in the R-2, R-3, and R-4 zones. Historically, these zones lacked a minimum density requirement. This created a regulatory inconsistency allowing for "under-utilization," where land designated for high-density, multi-family use could be developed with single-family homes. This gap contributed to a loss of potential housing units and complicated the City's ability to meet its Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA). On December 3, 2025, HCD issued a Letter of Inquiry (LOI) regarding the status of Housing Element Implementation Programs including A-5, as the City had originally committed

to completing this program by October 2023. This proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment addresses that commitment.

Proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendments: The following table provides a direct comparison between existing standards and the proposed amendments to Title 10 to implement Program A-5.

Zone District	Standard	Existing (Zoning Ord.)	Proposed	Change Status
<b>R-2</b>	Min. Density	None ( <i>Max is 8</i> )	<b>4 du/ac</b>	<b>New Standard</b>
	Min. Parcel Area	6,000 sf	<b>6,000 sf</b>	<b>No Change</b>
	Max. Height	40 feet	<b>40 feet</b>	<b>No Change</b>
	Max. Parcel Coverage	60%	<b>60%</b>	<b>No Change</b>
<b>R-3</b>	Min. Density	None ( <i>Max is 12</i> )	<b>8 du/ac</b>	<b>New Standard</b>
	Min. Parcel Area	6,000 sf	<b>5,000 sf</b>	<b>Reduction</b>
	Max. Height	40 feet	<b>40 feet</b>	<b>No Change</b>
	Max. Parcel Coverage	60%	<b>60%</b>	<b>No Change</b>
<b>R-4</b>	Min. Density	None ( <i>Max is 16</i> )	<b>12 du/ac</b>	<b>New Standard</b>
	Min. Parcel Area	6,000 sf	<b>4,500 sf</b>	<b>Reduction</b>
	Max. Height	40 feet	<b>40 feet</b>	<b>No Change</b>

	Max. Parcel Coverage	60%	60%	No Change
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Conditional Uses: Staff recommends the following changes to Zoning Ordinance Title 10, Chapter 5, Subsection (C) "Conditional Uses" of each multifamily residential zone district to ensure land is reserved for housing.

Zone District	Action	Proposed Amendment
R-2, R-3, R-4, R-5	Delete Subsection (C)1	Eliminate provision allowing single-family dwellings via CUP.
R-2	Delete Subsection (C)3	Eliminate Professional Offices as a conditional use.
R-3, R-4, R-5	Amend Subsection (C)3	Allow Professional Offices only as part of a Mixed-Use project.

**Analysis of Proposed and Existing Standards:**

- **Building Height & Parcel Coverage:** Per the current code, the R-2, R-3, and R-4 zones already share a generous 60% maximum parcel coverage allowance and a 40-foot height limit. This existing development envelope is highly functional; a 40-foot ceiling safely can accommodate three full stories, which is sufficient vertical space to construct the triplexes and apartments required by the highest-density designations. Therefore, Staff recommends no changes to the existing height or coverage limits, ensuring that new development remains within the established physical scale of Placerville's multi-family neighborhoods.
- **Density Floor:** While the code currently lists maximum densities, the lack of a minimum allows these parcels to be under-developed. Consistent with Housing Element Program A-5, the proposed amendments establish a minimum density "floor" to ensure these zones support the City's housing targets.
- **Parcel Area Modifications:** The reduction in minimum parcel areas for the R-3 and R-4 multi-family residential zones is the only physical form change required, and it is critical to ensure that a developer can actually fit the unit counts mandated by the new minimum density on standard-sized urban lots. Under existing City Code for the R-2, R-3, and R-4 zones (Sections 10-5-9, 10-5-10, and 10-5-11), a developer is required to provide a

minimum parcel area per dwelling unit of two thousand (2,000) square feet. This means that while a standard duplex mathematically requires exactly 4,000 square feet of land, maintaining a rigid 6,000-square-foot minimum parcel area across the higher-density zones forces a home builder to acquire additional land, which may not even be available, just to build a duplex in an area already zoned for multi-family residential. By reducing the minimum lot size from 6,000 to 5,000 square feet in the R-3 zone and from 6,000 to 4,500 square feet in the R-4 zone, the City better aligns its regulatory standards with physical reality, providing a more practical footprint for multi-family units along with a functional buffer for driveways and setbacks. Furthermore, this graduated approach (6,000 sq. ft., to 5,000 sq. ft., to 4,500 sq. ft.) creates a logical "stepped transition" that protects existing neighborhood character, gently bridging the physical scale between low-density residential buffers and the higher-intensity urban core.

### **Environmental Review:**

Staff has evaluated the proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment (ZOA) and determined it is exempt from further environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Furthermore, these amendments are strictly necessary to comply with recent State housing legislation, specifically the Housing Accountability Act (HAA) and Senate Bill 330 (SB 330, as amended). The ZOA is exempt pursuant to the following CEQA Guidelines:

- Section 15061(b)(3) (Common Sense Exemption) and SB 330 Compliance: This exemption applies when it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment. The proposed ZOA does not authorize any specific physical construction. Rather, it aligns the City's regulatory framework with the population and housing projections already comprehensively analyzed in the environmental documents for the City's 2021-2029 Housing Element. Crucially, this action is mandated to comply with SB 330's "No Net Loss" provisions. Under prior conflicting rules, the City risked losing analyzed high-density housing capacity to single-family development on technically undersized lots. By rectifying this and legalizing infill lots for their intended multi-family use, the City protects its existing housing inventory without introducing new environmental impacts.
- Section 15268 (Ministerial Projects) and HAA Compliance: This section exempts ministerial actions from CEQA. The Housing Accountability Act (Gov. Code § 65589.5) strictly mandates that local jurisdictions replace subjective guidelines with quantifiable "Objective Standards" for housing development. This ZOA establishes exact, objective minimum density metrics.

## **Public Communications:**

In accordance with California Government Code Section 65091(a)(2) and Section 65854 (20-day notice requirement for zoning ordinance amendments), a legal advertisement for the May 19, 2026, Planning Commission public hearing was published in the Mountain Democrat on April 29, 2026, twenty (20) days prior to the hearing date (see Attachment C). As of the date of preparation of this report, no public comments have been received.

## **DECISION MAKING AUTHORITY**

The **Planning Commission's** authority to hold a public hearing and make a recommendation to the City Council on proposed amendments to Title 10, Chapter 4, Section 20 of the Placerville Municipal Code (regarding Short Term Rentals) comes from the following sources:

- **City of Placerville Practices and Descriptions:** The official City website and related documents describe the Planning Commission as responsible for reviewing land use proposals and making recommendations to the City Council on amendments to the Zoning Ordinance (Title 10 of the Municipal Code), rezoning requests, General Plan amendments, and other planning matters. This includes preparing and reviewing ordinance amendments for consistency with the General Plan and State law.
- **Standard California Local Government Structure:** Under California law (Government Code Sections 65100 et seq. and 65800 et seq.), local planning commissions serve in an advisory capacity to the legislative body (City Council). They typically conduct public hearings on zoning ordinance amendments and forward recommendations to the Council, which holds final adoption authority. This process aligns with Placerville's practices, as evidenced by historical examples where the Commission has reviewed and recommended zoning text amendments to the Council.

## **RECOMMENDED PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION**

Hold a public meeting; and,

The Planning Commission may take one of the following actions based on the analysis provided:

1. Forward a recommendation of approval to the City Council
2. Forward a recommendation of approval with modifications to the City Council
3. Forward a recommendation of denial to the City Council

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- A. Planning Commission Resolution No. XX – Draft
- B. Proposed Zoning Ordinance Text Amendments

C. Proof of Publication

**INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE**

City of Placerville General Plan  
City of Placerville Zoning Ordinance  
City of Placerville 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Element