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**MEMORANDUM**

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DATE: May 23, 2013

TO: City Planning Commission, Committee of the Whole

FROM: Jason Wittenberg, Planning Manager

SUBJECT: Zoning code text amendment – minimum lot area per dwelling unit

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The City’s zoning ordinance has historically limited residential density primarily through a standard that requires a minimum amount of lot area per residential dwelling unit. For example, an apartment or condominium building in the R5 district must include at least 700 square feet of lot area per residential unit, prior to consideration of applicable density bonuses. Thus, a property with 70,000 square feet in an R5 District can construct up to 100 dwelling units.

In 2009 the City Council adopted a zoning code text amendment that reduced the minimum lot area requirements—thus increasing the permitted density—in many of the zoning districts that allow residential uses. The current standards are shown in the following table:

<i>Zoning Districts That Allow Multi-Family Residential Uses</i>	<i>Minimum Lot Area Per Dwelling Unit (square feet)</i>
R3	1,500
R4	1,250
R5	700
R6	400
OR1	1,500
OR2	700
OR3	300
C1	700
C2	700
C3A	400
C3S	400
C4	900
B4, B4S, B4C, B4N	No minimum
ILOD	900

Revision to these standards has been on CPED's zoning code text amendment work plan for some time. Commissioners have requested that staff bring forward this amendment as soon as possible. There is a growing consensus that these standards may no longer be an important tool for regulating development and that, in some instances, the limitations may conflict with adopted policy objectives. As the City continues to place additional emphasis on quality urban design and ensuring that new development makes a positive contribution to its urban context, the specific number of dwelling units incorporated in new buildings has become less important.

While the policies of the City's comprehensive plan emphasize the importance of traditional urban design, density is not irrelevant in the City's policy documents. Although this amendment could eliminate many of the standards that most directly limit density in many of the City's zoning districts, the City has a number of existing tools that will continue to place practical limitations on the number of dwelling units that may be constructed on a given piece or property, including:

- Minimum off-street parking requirements
- Maximum permitted height
- Maximum floor area ratio
- Minimum size of individual dwelling units (350 sq. ft. for efficiency units; 500 sq. ft. for all other units)
- Required yards/setbacks (primarily in R and OR Districts)
- Maximum building coverage (R and OR Districts only)

Staff has not yet identified all of the text that must be amended but would like to discuss the possibility of eliminating standards that require a minimum lot area per dwelling unit. Staff's intent is to prepare the amendment for a public hearing by July but will also be prepared to bring additional information and discuss the issue with the Commission again prior to the public hearing.