

City of Auburn, Maine

"Maine's City of Opportunity"

Office of Planning & Development

PLANNING BOARD STAFF REPORT

To: Auburn Planning Board

From: Douglas M. Greene; AICP, RLA
City Planner

Re: Proposed Moderate Density Residential Zone District Text Amendment

Date: August 11, 2015

I. PROPOSAL- the Planning Staff was approached last year by land owners interested in developing a low density (8 units/ac.) multi-family development in an area currently zoned Urban Residential (UR). The Urban Residential zoning district allows, single family, duplex and attached townhomes housing styles but not multi-family (3 or more dwelling units per structure) development. The Staff presented basic information to the Planning Board at their November 14, 2014 meeting and asked the Planning Board to initiate a zoning ordinance text amendment that would allow multi-family dwellings in a moderate density setting.

The Staff reviewed the current Zoning Ordinance for how it regulates densities in areas that allow multi-family structures. The existing zones that allow multi-family development are Multi-Family Suburban (MFS) and Multi-Family Urban (MRU) Districts. The MFS District allows 17 dwelling units per acre (for multi-family) and the MFU allows 26 dwelling units per acre (for multi-family) (Attachment 3). These densities are much higher than the interested land owner wanted to develop. The Staff concluded that the current Zoning Ordinance does not have a zone that would allow multi-family development with a lower density than MFS (17 du/ac) or MFU (26 du/ac).

The 2010 Comprehensive Plan contains a Future Land Use Map (Attachment 1) and land use category, "Moderate Density Residential Development" and (Attachment 2), which recommends a residential land use category in 4 areas that would also allow multi-family development at a density of 6-8 dwelling units per acre. (Attachment 4) The Planning Board agreed to initiate the zoning text amendment and that staff proceeded to produce a draft.

Through the course of 4 reviews and revisions, the staff has arrived at a final draft of a "Moderate Density Residential District" to be considered now at a public hearing and a recommendation on to the City Council for their consideration. The issues that the Planning Board wanted to be sure the following issues were addressed:

1. Ensuring that any multi-family dwellings would not diminish surrounding property values, be compatible to adjacent properties, and have adequate set-backs and buffering from adjacent property.
2. Any multi-family proposal would be a special exception and site plan review that included notice to abutters.
3. Any multi-family project would have to have at least 3 acres of land.
4. Any multi-family project would have to be located along a collector or arterial road.

Further research by the Staff showed that restricting moderate density multi-family development by lot size (3 acre minimum) would limit the number of possible areas this type of development. (Attachment 5)

II. DEPARTMENT REVIEW-

- a. Police- None
- b. Auburn Water and Sewer- None
- c. Fire Department- None
- d. Engineering- None

III. PLANNING BOARD ACTION- The Planning Board is asked to review the draft zoning ordinance text amendment and forward its recommendation to the City Council for a final decision.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION- The Staff recommends the Planning Board forward a recommendation of **APPROVAL** to the City Council with the following findings:

1. The Moderate Density Residential District text amendment is in compliance with the 2010 Comprehensive Plan's recommendation of a Moderate Density Residential District Future Land Use Category.
2. The Moderate Density Residential District text amendment provides adequate buffering, lot size requirement and density limits to protect surrounding areas from adverse impacts.
3. The Moderate Density Residential District will allow for a greater variety of choices to the housing market.
4. The Moderate Density Residential District will give approval authority to the City Planning Board through the Special Exception and Site Plan Review process.



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