



REPORT DATE: October 13, 2008

TO: Planning Commission
Design Review Board

FROM: Steve Chase, Planning and Environmental Services Director

CONTACT: Anne Wells, Manager, Advanced Planning
Patricia W. Saley, Contract Planner

SUBJECT: **Continued Workshop on Building Intensity Standards in the General Plan/Coastal Land Use Plan**

APPLICANT

City of Goleta
130 Cremona, Suite B
Goleta, California 93117

REQUEST

Final public workshop with the Planning Commission and Design Review Board (DRB) to discuss and make recommendations to the City Council regarding Building Intensity Standards contained in Tables 2-1 through 2-4 of the General Plan/Coastal Land Use Plan (GP/CLUP). The first workshop was held August 18th, the second workshop was held September 15th and was continued to October 20th at which point a recommendation will be made for the City Council's consideration. Public input will be taken at the workshop.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Planning Commission and Design Review Board hold a public workshop on the building intensity standards, take public input and make a recommendation to the City Council.

JURISDICTION

The three workshops are intended to provide a forum for discussion of the building design standards included in Tables 2-1 through 2-4 of the GP/CLUP. Pursuant to State Planning Law Section 65354, the Planning Commission is required to make a written recommendation to the City Council on the amendment of a general plan. As building standards relate to building massing and design, input from the Design Review Board is also being solicited. Final action on the amendment is the responsibility of the City Council under Section 65356.

BACKGROUND

The Goleta General Plan/Coastal Land Use Plan (GP/LUP) includes four tables that provide information about allowable uses and standards for the following categories of land uses:

- Table 2-1 – Residential Use
- Table 2-2 – Commercial Use
- Table 2-3 – Office and Industrial Use
- Table 2-4 – Other Land Use

These four tables include *Standards for Density and Building Intensity* that provide recommended standards for “Maximum Permitted Density” for residential projects and “Maximum Floor Area Ratios” and “Maximum Structure Height” for non-residential projects. Some of the standards provided in the tables raise issues internally and on June 17, 2008, the City Council directed that staff study the Building Intensity Standards included in the four tables. The Council asked that staff consider a range of standards for inclusion in the tables in consultation with the Planning Commission and DRB.

The DRB and Planning Commission held two workshops on August 18th and September 15th, 2008. At these workshops questions were raised and public input was taken that indicated that the existing guidance provided by the four tables was unnecessarily detailed and could be simplified while still being consistent with the state General Plan Guidelines. The DRB and Commission provided clear direction at the conclusion of the September 15th meeting as discussed below.

CONSENSUS COMMENTS FROM SEPTEMBER 15TH WORKSHOP

At the conclusion of the September 15th workshop, after hearing input from staff and the public on the Building Intensity Standards contained in the General Plan, the Design Review Board and Planning Commission reached consensus on the following items:

- **Table 2-1, Residential Uses** – The consensus was that maximum residential densities should be provided and all other standards (e.g., height, lot coverage, etc.) should be provided in the Zoning Ordinance. There was some interest in having Floor Area Ratios for single family residences only.¹
- **Tables 2-2, 2-3, and 2-4 for Commercial, Industrial and Other Uses** – The Board and Commission agreed that building coverage and height should be provided in the tables where available. They agreed that FARs are not necessary nor particularly helpful in terms of evaluating the appropriateness of a proposed project.
- **Zoning Ordinance Update** – The upcoming update to the Zoning Ordinance should consider using a Form-Based Code approach to Old Town but not for the rest of the City that is more suburban in form. The definitions of the following terms discussed at both meetings should be reviewed and updated as part of that process. Those terms that should be studied for possible revision include:

¹ The City has “Maximum Floor Area Ratio” Guidelines for R-1/E-1 Zones that were adopted on May 21, 2007 by the City Council.

- Basement
 - Building Height
 - Gross building square footage or floor area definition
 - Loft
 - Mezzanine
 - Mixed use standards
 - Net and gross lot area
- **Conceptual review** – There was interest in providing a forum for meaningful feedback and discussion of concept plans prior to formal submittal of an application to the City. This review could be by the Planning Commission and/or Design Review Board depending on the scope and nature of the proposed project. Basic meeting notes would presumably be prepared to memorialize the discussion for future reference if and when a formal application is submitted.

DISCUSSION

What defines “building intensity standards”?

The discussion of building intensity standards among the City Council, Planning Commission, Design Review Board and staff has been an interesting one with acknowledgement that there is no single right way to define the standards. One thing that is clear is that the state General Plan Guidelines do not require the breadth of standards that are currently in Tables 2-1 through 2-4 in the City’s General Plan. Quoting from the City Attorney’s memo of May 7, 2008, the guidance provided in the state guidelines is as follows:

At the top of page 51, the OPR provides further information on standards for building intensity by when it states:

1. Maximum dwelling units per acre is a good residential standard.
2. Floor area ratio is a useful measure of commercial and industrial intensity.
3. The dual standard of maximum lot coverage and maximum building height is suitable for agricultural, open-space, and recreational designations where development is being limited. According to the OPR, lot size is not an adequate standing for agricultural and open-space designations because it regulates lot area, but does not quantify the allowable concentration of development on each lot.

In considering the building intensity standards that are in the General Plan, it is important to remember that the Zoning Ordinance has two standards that have a dramatic impact on all proposed development: setbacks and parking requirements. Neither of these standards are proposed for any change but they must be kept in mind when discussing standards that are in the General Plan or Zoning Ordinance. These standards effectively dictate much of the “envelope” that the proposed project can fill, at least in two dimensions (i.e., on the ground). These two standards, coupled with building height in the case of non-residential projects, help to provide a three-dimensional volume within which the project must confine itself.

Residential Land Use Standards (Table 2-1)

Research of comparable cities to Goleta revealed that virtually all used density as the sole standard for residential land uses with some providing maximum densities and others a range of densities. As Goleta has defined density standards for different residential designations, with some minor modifications it appears that these standards are appropriate. While the DRB and Commission did not embrace the idea of ranges, staff is concerned that if there is not a minimum density (effectively a lower end of the range), the City may have some difficulty meeting Housing Element standards, particularly for affordable projects.

Table 2-1 currently includes standards for FARs, structure height, lot coverage and open space ratios as well as minimum lot size. As most of these standards are the same in the General Plan (GP) as Zoning Ordinance (see table below), they can be removed from the General Plan without removing them as development standards when projects are being reviewed. The maximum structure height in the single family zones is the only instance where the GP and Zoning Ordinance standards do not conform. Staff is recommending that the 25 foot standard provided in the GP replace the 35 foot standard in the Zoning Ordinance (in the Inland area of the City). As this standard is more stringent, we are also recommending that the “good cause finding” that is appended to Table 2-1 be included in the Zoning Ordinance to allow relief from the height standard where appropriate, similar to that currently allowed by the General Plan for structures in single family zones.

For the record, the “good cause finding” is “A better site or architectural design that will result in better resource protection, will provide a significant community benefit, and/or does not create an adverse impact to the community character, aesthetics, or public views.”²

Table 2-1
Residential Use Categories
General Plan v. Corresponding Zone District

| General Plan Designation | Corresponding Zone | Differences between GP & Zoning Standards |
|----------------------------------|--|---|
| R-SF - Single Family | R-1/E-1 – Single Family | Maximum Structure Height - GP 25 ft v. Z.O. 35 ft (inland) |
| R-P - Planned Residential | R-2 – Two-Family DR-0.1 to DR-14 – Design Residential with specified density per acre³ PRD – Planned Residential | No differences |
| R-MD – Medium Density | DR-16 and -20 – Design Residential with specified density per acre | No differences |
| R-HD – High Density | DR-25 and -30 – Design Residential with specified density per acre | Maximum lot coverage ratio – GP 0.40 v. Z.O. 0.30 |
| R-MHP – Mobile Home Park | MHP – Mobile Home Park | No differences |
| R-MHP – Mobile Home Park | MHS – Mobile Home Subdivision | No differences |

² Amended by City Council Resolution 08-30, 6/17/08

³ Note that density calculations in the Zoning Ordinance are based on gross lot area whereas density in the GP is based on net area.

Non-Residential Land Use Standards

Research of comparable cities to Goleta revealed that many utilized FARs as the sole standard for non-residential uses with some providing maximum FARs and others a range. Examples of well-known buildings in our community has shown that FARs are not necessarily the best tool for assessing appropriateness of a proposed project on a particular lot. The classic example is the 10- and 11-story Francisco Torres dormitories (now called Santa Catalina) in Isla Vista that would appear to have a large FAR but instead have a FAR of about 0.30 because the parcel upon which they sit is very large.

In reviewing the General Plan Guidelines text excerpted above and comments made by the Commission and DRB on September 15th, it became clear that a FAR is not the best building intensity standard for non-residential projects. Staff believes that using maximum building height for all non-residential uses gives the guidance needed, especially when coupled with setbacks and parking requirements to define the allowable building envelope. While the Guidelines suggest these standards for agricultural, open space and recreational designations, we believe they would also be appropriate for commercial, office and industrial uses.

The following tables compare the General Plan and corresponding Zoning Ordinance standards based on Tables 2-2 (Commercial), 2-3 (Office and Industrial) and 2-4 (Other Land Uses) from the General Plan. Where there are conflicts between the General Plan and Zoning standards, we suggest that the GP standard be incorporated into the Zoning Ordinance along with the good cause findings to ensure that the flexibility now provided is retained.

Table 2-2
Commercial Use Categories
General Plan v. Corresponding Zone District

| General Plan Designation | Corresponding Zone | Differences between GP & Zoning Standards |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| C-R – Regional Commercial | SC – Shopping Center | Minimum Lot Size - GP size in 2005 v. Z.O. none |
| C-C – Community Commercial | C-1 – Limited Commercial C-2 – Retail Commercial C-3 – General Commercial C-N – Neighborhood Commercial C-S – Service Commercial SC – Shopping Center | Maximum Structure Height - GP 25 ft v. Z.O. 35 ft |
| C-OT – Commercial Old Town | C-1 – Limited Commercial C-2 – Retail Commercial C-3 – General Commercial C-N – Neighborhood Commercial OT-R/LC – Old Town Residential/ Light Commercial | Maximum Structure Height - GP 30 ft v. Z.O. 35 ft for commercial uses (in OT-R/LC Zone, Residential is limited to 25 ft in Z.O. which would remain) |
| C-VS – Visitor Serving | C-V – Resort/Visitor Serving | No differences |
| C-I – Intersection | CH – Highway Commercial | Maximum Structure Height - GP 25 ft v. Z.O. 35 ft Maximum Lot Coverage Ratio - GP N/A v. Z.O. 0.40 |
| C-G – General Commercial | C-1 – Limited Commercial C-3 – General Commercial M-1 – Light Industry MRP – Industrial Research Park | Minimum Lot Size - GP 10,000 s.f. v. Z.O. none |

Regarding the references to lot sizes “in 2005” in any of the tables staff is recommending that those be removed from all four tables in the General Plan as they are vague. We are not aware of any other city’s General Plan that includes minimum lot sizes as this is typically addressed through the zoning designation, particularly for residential, agricultural and open space lands (e.g., AG-I-40). Where a minimum lot size is provided in the Zoning Ordinance, we suggest those designations remain but that this entire standard be removed from all four land use tables in the General Plan.

There is one instance in Table 2-2 where the no value (“N/A”) is provided whereas the corresponding Zone District provides a standard. The CH or Highway Commercial Zone provides for a maximum of 0.40 lot coverage whereas the corresponding GP designation, C-I or Intersection, does not provide a value. We propose that any Zoning Ordinance standard that is provided be retained even if “N/A” is provided in the corresponding General Plan table. The development standards contained in the Zoning Ordinance should be discussed in more detail when the Zoning Ordinance is updated and not as part of this review of the General Plan Building Intensity Standards.

Table 2-3
Office & Industrial Use Categories
General Plan v. Corresponding Zone District

| General Plan Designation | Corresponding Zone | Differences between GP & Zoning Standards |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| I-BP – Business Park | MRP – Industrial Research Park | Minimum Lot Size - GP N/A v. Z.O. 1.0 acre |
| I-OI – Office & Institutional | PI – Professional & Institutional | No differences |
| I-S – Service Industrial | M-S-GOL – Service Industry Goleta | No differences |
| I-G – General Industrial | M-1 – Light Industry | Maximum Structure Height - GP 35 ft v. Z.O. 45 ft |

The difference in allowable structure heights in the General Industrial designation should be resolved by having the M-1 Light Industry Zoning Ordinance standard reduced to that provided in the General Plan (35 feet) with the addition of the good cause finding.

Table 2-3 does not provide a minimum lot size in the Business Park designation whereas the corresponding Zone District, Industrial Research Park or MRP, provides for a minimum lot size of 1.0 acre. Similar to the discussion under Table 2-2, we propose that the standard be retained in the MRP Zone until such time as it can be studied as part of a comprehensive Zoning Ordinance update.

Regarding Table 2-4 (see page 7), the Building Intensity Standards are all listed as “N/A” with the exception of the minimum lot size in the Agriculture designation of the same size as in 2005. For these and other land uses, the General Plan does not provide guidance although the Zoning Ordinance does. All of these standards that are “N/A” or not applicable should be removed from the General Plan and the Zoning Ordinance standards should remain. As discussed earlier, the reference to lot size in 2005 is unclear and should be removed and the lot sizes provided in the Zoning Ordinance followed.

**Table 2-4
Other Land Use Categories
General Plan v. Corresponding Zone District**

| General Plan Designation | Corresponding Zone | Differences between GP & Zoning Standards |
|--|--|--|
| AG – Agriculture | AG-I-5 to AG-I-40 and AG-II-40 – Agriculture with varying minimum lot sizes | Maximum Structure Height - GP N/A v. Z.O. 35 ft Minimum Lot Size – GP 2005 lot size v. Z.O. 5.0 to 40.0 acres |
| OS-PR – Open Space Passive Recreation | REC – Recreation RES-40 – Resource Management with 40-acre minimum lot size | Maximum Structure Height - GP N/A v. Z.O. 25 ft Maximum Lot Coverage Ratio - GP N/A v. Z.O. 0.20 Minimum Lot Size - GP N/A v. Z.O. REC = 1.0 acre and RES-40 = 40.0 acres |
| OS-AR – Open Space Active Recreation | REC – Recreation | Maximum Structure Height - GP N/A v. Z.O. 25 ft Maximum Lot Coverage Ratio - GP N/A v. Z.O. 0.20 Minimum Lot Size – GP N/A v. Z.O. 1.0 acre |
| P-S – Public / Quasi-public | PU – Public Works Utilities & Private Service Facilities | Maximum Structure Height - GP N/A v. Z.O. 45 ft |

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Based on the broad consensus outlined above, staff has refined the comments received and recommends that the Planning Commission and Design Review Board recommend the following to the City Council:

1. **Amend the four land use tables and corresponding Zone Districts as follows (see Attachment 1):**
 - a. **Remove the “Minimum lot size” standard from all four tables.**
 - b. **Amend Table 2-1, Residential Land Uses, as follows:**
 - 1) Change the Minimum Density for the R-MD designation from 15 to 10 units per acre;
 - 2) Delete Maximum FAR, Height, Lot Coverage, and Open Space Ratio;
 - 3) Amend the Zoning Ordinance to change the maximum structure height in the R-SF Zone from 35 feet to 25 feet and add the existing “good cause finding” to provide relief where appropriate; and
 - 4) Amend the Zoning Ordinance to change the maximum lot coverage in the DR-25 and -30 or High Density designations from 0.30 to 0.40 to be consistent with the General Plan. Add the existing “good cause finding” to provide relief where appropriate.
 - c. **Amend Table 2-2, Commercial Land Uses, as follows:**
 - 1) Delete Maximum FAR, Lot Coverage, and Open Space Ratio; and
 - 2) Amend the Zoning Ordinance to change the maximum height from 35 feet to 25 feet and add the “good cause finding” to provide relief where appropriate; and

- 3) Amend the Zoning Ordinance for the following zones to reduce the maximum commercial structure height from 35 feet to 30 feet to be consistent with the General Plan: C-1, C-2, C-3, C-N, C-2 and OT-R/LC. Add the “good cause finding” to provide relief where appropriate.

d. Amend Table 2-3, Office & Industrial Land Uses, as follows:

- 1) Delete Maximum FAR, Lot Coverage, and Open Space Ratio; and
- 2) Amend the Zoning Ordinance to change the maximum structure height in the M-1 Zone from 45 feet to 35 feet and add “good cause finding” to provide relief where appropriate.

e. Amend Table 2-4, Other Land Uses, as follows:

- 1) Delete all Standards for Density and Building Intensity from this table.

2. When the Zoning Ordinance is updated, consider the following:

a. Revise the following definitions:

- Basement
- Building Height
- Gross building square footage or floor area definition
- Loft
- Mezzanine
- Mixed use standards
- Net and gross lot area

b. Consider utilizing Form-Based Code for Old Town Goleta

3. **Provide a conceptual review process** – Provide a forum for meaningful feedback and discussion of concept plans prior to formal submittal of an application to the City. This review could be by the Planning Commission and/or Design Review Board depending on the scope and nature of the proposed project. Basic meeting notes would be prepared to memorialize the discussion for future reference if and when a formal application is submitted.

APPEALS PROCEDURES

Any recommendations made at these two workshops, as well as any staff recommendation, will be automatically forwarded to the City Council for consideration in fall 2008.

Submitted By:

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Current Planning Manager

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Four General Plan land use tables with proposed amendments

Attachment 1 Staff Recommendations

**Table 2-1
Residential Land Uses**

| Allowed Uses and Standards | Residential Use Categories | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|------------|---------|---------|------------|
| | R-SF | R-P | R-MD | R-HD | R-MHP |
| Standards for Density and Building Intensity | | | | | |
| Recommended Standards for Permitted Density | | | | | |
| Maximum Permitted Density (units/ac) | 5 or less | 5.01-13 | 20 | 30 | 15 |
| Minimum Permitted Density (units/ac) | N/A | N/A | 15 | 10 | N/A |
| Recommended Standards for Building Intensity | | | | | |
| Maximum Floor Area Ratios (FAR) | N/A | 0.30 | 0.50 | 1.10 | N/A |
| Maximum Structure Height (Inland Area) | 25 feet | 35 feet | 35 feet | 35 feet | 25 feet |
| Maximum Structure Height (Coastal Zone) | 25 feet | 25 feet | 25 feet | 25 feet | 25 feet |
| Maximum Lot Coverage Ratio | N/A | 0.30 | 0.30 | 0.40 | N/A |
| Minimum Open Space Ratio | N/A | 0.40 | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Minimum Lot Size | 7,000 s.f. | 4,500 s.f. | N/A | N/A | 2,500 s.f. |

**Table 2-2
Commercial Land Uses**

| Allowed Uses and Standards | Commercial Use Categories | | | | | |
|--|---------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| | C-R | C-C | C-OT | C-VS | C-I | C-G |
| Standards for Density and Building Intensity | | | | | | |
| Recommended Standards for Density | | | | | | |
| Maximum Residential Density | N/A | 12/acre | 20/acre | N/A | N/A | 20/acre |
| Recommended Standards for Building Intensity | | | | | | |
| Maximum FAR | 0.35 | 0.40 | 0.60 | 0.25 | 0.40 | 0.40 |
| Maximum Structure Ht | 35 ft | 25 feet | 30 feet | 35 ft | 25 ft | 35 feet |
| Maximum Lot Coverage Ratio | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Minimum Open Space Ratio | N/A | N/A | N/A | 0.40 | N/A | N/A |
| Minimum Lot Size | size in 2005 | size in 2005 | size in 2005 | size in 2005 | size in 2005 | 10,000 s.f. |

**Table 2-3
Office & Industrial Land Uses**

| Allowed Uses and Standards | Office and Industrial Use Categories | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|------------|---------|---------|
| | I-BP | I-OI | I-S | I-G |
| Standards for Density and Building Intensity | | | | |
| Recommended Standards for Density | | | | |
| Maximum Residential Density | N/A | 20units/ac | N/A | N/A |
| Recommended Standards for Building Intensity | | | | |
| Maximum FAR | 0.40 | 0.40 | 0.60 | 0.30 |
| Maximum FAR for Hotels (with Hotel Overlay) | 0.50 | 0.50 | N/A | N/A |
| Maximum Structure Heights | 35 feet | 35 feet | 35 feet | 35 feet |
| Maximum Lot Coverage Ratio | 0.35 | 0.40 | N/A | N/A |
| Minimum Open Space/Landscaping Ratio | 0.30 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 |
| Minimum Lot Size | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |

**Table 2-4
Other Land Uses**

| Allowed Uses and Standards | Other Land Use Categories | | | |
|---|---------------------------|-------|-------|-----|
| | AG | OS-PR | OS-AR | P-S |
| Standards for Density and Building Intensity | | | | |
| Recommended Standards for Density | | | | |
| Maximum Permitted Density (Units/Acres) | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Recommended Standards for Building Intensity | | | | |
| Maximum FAR | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Maximum Structure Height | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Maximum Lot Coverage Ratio | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Minimum Open Space Ratio | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Minimum Lot Size | 2005 lot size | N/A | N/A | N/A |