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TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Kelly Diekmann, Planning and Housing Director
DATE: April 11, 2014
SUBJECT: Residential Maximum Density Comparison

At the April 8th City Council meeting, Council referred a request for information comparing the maximum density standards for residential zoning districts.

The City of Ames has a total of nine zoning districts that are primarily for either existing or new residential development. The traditional Residential Base zones of Article 7 of the Zoning Code define expected minimum and maximum range of density for development through a stated range of the number of units per net acre. The following table summarizes density standards.

Residential Base Zone Summary

Zoning District	Minimum Density	Maximum Density
Low-Density Residential (RL)	None	7.26 units per net acre
Urban Core Residential Medium Density (UCRM)	None	7.26 units per net acre
Residential Medium Density (RM)	7.26 units per net acre	22.31 units per net acre
Residential High Density (RH)	11.2 units per net acre	38.56 units per net acre

The density range is function of minimum lot area required for each unit developed within the base zone and the size of the site. For example, the RL maximum density of 7.26 units per acre is equal to dividing an acre (1 acre = 43,560 sq. ft.) by a RL minimum lot size of 6,000 sq. ft. Zoning districts, such as UCRM, that allow for a range of lot areas per unit are capped by the upper limit of units per acre regardless of the use type and individual lot areas. There are also additional development standards of each zoning district and the Subdivision Code that influence actual density of a new development.

The Floating Suburban (FS) Residential Zoning Districts of Article 12 are somewhat different than the Residential Base Zones in that they contain a mandatory requirement to achieve minimum density while allowing for a wider range of uses. Each building type includes a minimum lot area per unit, but the mix of units results in variable maximum density range to be defined through the rezoning and subdivision review process. The following table summarizes the density requirements.

Floating Zones Residential Summary

Zoning District	Minimum Density	Maximum Density
Village Residential (F-VR)	Average of 8 units per acre	None ^a
Residential Low (FS-RL)	3.75 units per net acre	Lot area per unit type*
Residential Medium (FS-RM)	10 units per net acre	Lot area per unit type*

^a. Village Residential 40-acre minimum site size, no lot area per unit type requirement

* [See Tables 29.1202 \(5\)-1 and \(5\)-2](#)

The lot area per unit type requirement varies based upon single-family detached, single-family attached, and apartment building types. Within FS-RL, the theoretical calculated maximum density is 20 units per acre based solely upon the lot area per unit requirement for attached single-family homes. Within FS-RM, the theoretical calculated maximum density is 30 units per acre based solely upon the lot area per unit requirement for attached single-family homes. Within both zoning district, the maximum building size is restricted to no more than 12 units per building.

The remaining two zoning districts of Residential Low Density Park (RLP) and Residential Planned Development (PRD) are unique zoning districts based upon requirements for Major Site Plan Review and minimum site sizes of 10 acres for mobile home park development and a minimum of 2 acres for planned developments. RLP includes a maximum density of 7 units per acre. PRD has three options for maximum density based upon the choice of a low, medium, or high density residential base zoning that corresponds density limits stated above.