Targeted Mixed-Use and Multi-Family Housing Study

Recommendations

Folsom, CA

Presentation to City Council

July 26, 2022
Introduction
Project background

Key Facts

Project will provide recommendations for targeted changes to zoning and to the General Plan and Folsom Plan Area Specific Plan.

Recommendations will be tailored to:
- East Bidwell Mixed-Use Overlay Zone
- Folsom Boulevard Light Rail Station areas
- Folsom Plan Area’s New Town Center

Study area excludes historic district and historic district station.
The issues

High housing demand with limited housing stock results in unaffordability for children of longtime residents, seniors who want to downsize or who don’t drive as often, and people who work in Folsom.

Folsom's housing supply doesn't provide enough options for diverse lifestyles, including for residents who want to live a compact, walkable and transit-oriented lifestyle.

One of the barriers to the production of diverse housing options is regulatory standards that end up making a site infeasible to develop as housing or that result in unattractive development.
The Issues (continued)

Issues

City’s Share of Regional Housing Need
- 6,383 housing units
- Of those, 3,567 must be affordable units

State “No Net Loss” Requirement
- Must have enough sites zoned for 30 du/ac for affordable development
- If market-rate development, City must rezone additional sites
- City has extra capacity now
- By end of the year that extra capacity may be gone
Opportunities
Opportunity site 1

East Bidwell Corridor: Snowline Hospice Thrift Store
Existing conditions
What we heard from the community

**Height:** 3 to 4 stories feels about right. Could consider allowing taller buildings, such as 5 stories, at corners

**Massing:** Small to medium width and bulk
Site design concept

Two courtyard buildings

Courtyard building form creates a semi-private open space as a buffer from the corridor environment

A new pedestrian pathway provides access to rear courtyard
Potential built form (style example A)
Design elements

- Upper story within roof form
- Pedestrian entries
- Shopfront frontages
- Open space
- Building height steps down towards street
Potential built form (style example B)
Design elements

- Open space
- Pedestrian entries
- Shopfront frontages
- Building height steps down towards street
Current regulatory barriers to development

**Parking requirements**
Minimum required: 1.5 sp/unit
Shown: 0.7 sp/unit

**Density**
Maximum allowed: 30 du/acre
Shown: 59 du/acre
Opportunity site 2

Glenn Station:
Park-and-Ride parking lot
Existing conditions
What we heard from the community

**Height:** 5 stories feels about right

**Massing:** Medium or large building width

**Other:** Important to support light rail with higher intensity development at this location; consider design guidelines to help ensure attractive design; maintain parking for station
Site design concept

Three buildings framing a public green and paseo

Two 5-story podium residential buildings

One 4-story stick-frame mixed-use building
Potential built form
Design elements

- Corner element
- Open space
- Pedestrian entries
- Shopfront frontage
- Upper story within roof form
- Massing breaks down perceived bulk
- Upper story stepback
Current regulatory barriers to development

**Building height**
Maximum allowed: 4 stories
Shown: 5+ stories

**Setbacks**
Minimum: 20 ft front, 15 ft side
Shown: 10 ft front and side

**Parking requirements**
Minimum: 1.5-2.5 spaces/unit
Shown: 1.1 spaces/unit

**Density**
Maximum: 30 du/acre
Shown: 112 du/acre
Opportunity site

Folsom Plan Area: New Town Center
What we heard from the community

**Height:** 3 stories up to 6 stories

**Massing:** Medium scale and bulk

**Other:** Transition in scale from highest intensity at the mixed-use center to lower intensity at residential edges
Site design concept

Range of building scales

5-6 story podium buildings facing the public open space at the heart of the town center

4 story apartments

3 story multiplexes

Above: Conceptual site plan developed for site testing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Test Assumptions + Yields</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of Units (du)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail area (sf)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bldg type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height (stories)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bldg width (ft)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bldg depth (ft)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Density (du/ac)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking (sp/du)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front setback (ft)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot width (ft)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot depth (ft)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot area (ac)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Potential built form

Envisioned in Folsom Plan Area Specific Plan
Design elements

Envisioned in Folsom Plan Area Specific Plan

- Architectural projections
- Breaks in wall plane to reduce perceived bulk
- Façade articulation wraps building corners
- Pedestrian entries to residential units
Current regulatory barriers to development

**Building height**
Maximum allowed: 50 feet  
Shown: 70 feet

**Parking requirements**
Minimum required: 1.5-2.5 sp/unit + 3 sp/1000 sf retail  
Evaluated for feasibility: 1.1 sp/unit + 1 sp/1000 sf retail

**Density**
Maximum: 30 du/acre  
Evaluated for feasibility: 90 du/acre
Analysis
Recommendations for the East Bidwell Study Area
# Targeted changes to existing standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regulation</th>
<th>Existing Standard</th>
<th>Proposed Adjustment</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building height</td>
<td>4 stories (50 ft) max.</td>
<td>5 stories max. on corner sites</td>
<td>Create nodes of intensity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front setback</td>
<td>None required</td>
<td>Build-to line of 5-10 ft min. to 15-20 ft max.</td>
<td>Ensure building meets the street and allows room for building frontage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking for Multi-Unit Dwellings</td>
<td>1.5 spaces per unit min.</td>
<td>0.7-0.9 space per unit min.</td>
<td>Improve development feasibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking for Retail</td>
<td>1 space per 200 sf min.</td>
<td>Allow small retail spaces in mixed-use buildings to pool parking space with adjacent parcels rather than providing them onsite</td>
<td>Enable mixed-use development and improve development feasibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Density</td>
<td>20-30 du/acre</td>
<td>60-80 du/acre max., or eliminate density standard</td>
<td>Higher density improves feasibility and attainability; eliminating density standards can enable more predictable built outcomes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recommendations for the Folsom Blvd. TOD Study Area
# Targeted changes to existing standards

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<tr>
<td>Building height</td>
<td>4 stories (50 ft) max.</td>
<td>Up to 5 stories max., and up to 7 stories max. at TOD sites</td>
<td>Maximize potential for new housing in prime transit-oriented area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front setback</td>
<td>20' min.</td>
<td>Build-to line of 5-10 ft min. to 15-20 ft max.</td>
<td>Ensure building meets the street and allows room for building frontage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side street setback</td>
<td>15' min.</td>
<td>Build-to line of 5-10 ft min. to 15 ft max.</td>
<td>Ensure building meets the street and allows room for building frontage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking for Multi-Unit Dwellings</td>
<td>1.5-2.5 spaces per unit min. (varies by unit size)</td>
<td>0.5-0.75 spaces per unit min. at TOD sites; 1 space/unit min. elsewhere</td>
<td>Improve development feasibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Density</td>
<td>20-30 du/acre</td>
<td>100-120 du/acre max., or eliminate density standard</td>
<td>Higher density improves feasibility and attainability; eliminating density standards can enable more predictable built outcomes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recommendations for the New Town Center Study Area
## Targeted changes to existing standards

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building height</td>
<td>50 ft max.</td>
<td>70 ft max.</td>
<td>Align with vision of Specific Plan and create intensity at town center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking for Multi-Unit Dwellings</td>
<td>1.5 spaces per unit min.</td>
<td>1 space per unit min.</td>
<td>Improve development feasibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Density</td>
<td>9-30 du/acre</td>
<td>80-100 du/acre max., or eliminate density standard</td>
<td>Higher density improves feasibility and attainability; eliminating density standards can enable more predictable built outcomes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additional standards for the projects

- Frontage types
- Building types
- Massing and articulation
- Standards for large sites
- Unbundling parking
- Alternative mobility provisions
Emerging Best Practices on Density and FAR
Regulating with FAR instead of density

**Density** alone as a regulatory tool does not always result in predictable built form. The type and sizes of dwelling units can result in buildings with similar densities and different built outcomes.

**FAR (floor area ratio)** can result in more predictable buildings especially when used with other, form-based regulations to guide the outcome of the zoning envelope.

Given density's inability to deliver predictable built form, an emerging best practice is to replace density with FAR as a regulatory tool.
Examples from other communities

**Roseville** allows projects to meet either density or FAR, whichever is more permissive. High allowed FAR means that FAR will replace density as applicable standard for new projects.

**San Rafael** eliminated density standards for downtown in its General Plan and now relies on FAR and form-based zoning.

**El Cerrito** eliminated density standards in a Specific Plan area and established legal precedent for state density bonus projects to receive additional FAR rather than additional density.
Recommendations
1. Increase density in these target areas up to 40 du/ac and establish minimum density of 30 du/ac

2. Allow use of FAR for projects exceeding density
   a. East Bidwell Corridor: FAR 1.5
   b. TOD Station Areas (Glenn and Iron Point): FAR 2.0 to 4.0
   c. Folsom Town Center Area: FAR 2.0 to 4.0

3. Height increases
   a. East Bidwell Corridor: 4 stories
   b. TOD Station Areas (Glenn / Iron Point): Up to 6 stories
   c. Folsom Town Center Area: 3 to 6 stories
4. Changes to Development Standards
   a. Use of build-to lines instead of setbacks
   b. Parking reductions down to 1 space per unit if development includes:
      i. Shared parking agreement; or
      ii. Car-share vehicle and space on-site; or
      iii. Transit passes; or
      iv. Micro-transit (SmaRT Ride)’ or
      v. Additional bicycling spaces/facilities

5. Increase in multi-family housing units in Folsom Plan Area
   a. Contingent on availability of water and infrastructure
   b. Focused on three areas: Prairie City site, Folsom Town Center and Empire Ranch Interchange site
Folsom Plan Area
Input from Planning Commission

• Supportive of staff recommendations but had additional input:
  ▪ Supported use of FAR but wanted limit on micro-units
  ▪ Thought FAR of 4.0 was too much for Folsom Town Center and station areas
  ▪ Recommended max height of 5 stories for those areas
  ▪ Supported parking reductions, but only if alternative parking or transportation options provided
  ▪ Wanted range for build-to lines (e.g., 5’ -10’) for variety
Input from Planning Commission (continued)

- Liked Opticos’ recommendations for objective design standards particularly:
  - Transitions with lower heights near residential
  - Stepback of upper stories
  - Breaking up massing of buildings

- Supported increasing multi-family development opportunities in the Folsom Plan Area
  - Staff should explore additional sites for multi-family there
  - Need to make sure sufficient water and infrastructure exist
Key Questions

1. Modest increase in density – up to 40 du/ac and use of minimum density?
2. Use of FAR instead of density?
3. Height increases for each area?
4. Changes to development standards?
   a. Use of build-to line instead of setbacks
   b. Parking reductions
5. Objective design standards?
   a. What are key design concerns? (Massing, scale, transitions, etc.)
6. Increase to multi-family housing units in Folsom Plan Area?
Next Steps

• Technical and environmental studies over next 12 months

• Amendments to:
  • General Plan
  • Folsom Plan Area Specific Plan