

This document provides an overview on residential density. A summary has been included in Chapter 1 (Introduction) of the Housing Element.

Density Overview

Residential density refers to the number of homes per unit of land, typically reported as dwelling units per acre (du/ac).

Residential density does not necessarily equate to height or mass of buildings, as can be seen in the examples below of existing single-family, multi-family and mixed use projects in Mill Valley.

Table 1. Existing Residential Densities in Mill Valley

Development Regulation (Existing Zoning Equivalent)	Density Equivalent (dwelling units per acre, or du/ac)	
Residential Single-Family (RS)		
1 dwelling unit per 10 acres (RS-10A equivalent)	0.1 du/ac	
1 dwelling unit per 6,000 square feet (RS-6 equivalent)	7 du/ac	
Residential Multi-Family (RM)		
1 dwelling unit per 5,500 square feet (RM-5.5 equivalent)	8 du/ac	

<p>1 dwelling unit per 3,000 square feet (RM-3.0 equivalent)</p>	<p>14 du/ac</p>	
<p>1 dwelling unit per 2,000 square feet (RM-2.0 equivalent)</p>	<p>22 du/ac</p>	
<p>1 dwelling unit per 1,500 square feet (RM-1.5 equivalent)</p>	<p>29 du/ac</p>	

Establishing Minimum and Maximum Densities

Establishing minimum and maximum densities is important in order to regulate land use within the City. As discussed above, Mill Valley’s single-family development regulations equate to densities ranging from 0.1 to 7 dwelling units per acre (du/ac), and Residential Multi-family densities within the RM and commercial areas range from 8 du/ac to 29 du/ac.

The purpose of establishing minimum and maximum densities is to establish housing stock that is appropriate for the given area. Over 75% of all Mill Valley’s parcels are within Single Family Residential areas, and it is therefore critical to establish other densities that promote a diverse and wide range in housing stock in the multi-family and commercial areas. Similarly, Mill Valley’s housing inventory consists of 76% single family units compared to the more typical 65% statewide.

Listed below are the potential total units (minimum and maximum) associated with various parcel sizes in the City, and the Capacity Analysis. Note that the average multi-family parcel in the Capacity Analysis less than a half-acre, and could accommodate a range of 7 to 12 units/acre. While there are some very large sites in the City, most of them are not zoned to allow multi-family residential housing. As shown in the table below, the largest multi-family site in the Capacity Analysis is the Redwoods Senior Housing site (8.87 acres), followed by the “Kite Hill” site near the intersection of E. Blithedale Ave and Camino Alto (1.18 acres).

Table 2: Unit Potentials of Sites Zoned for Multi-Family Housing

Diagrammatic Size	Parcel Size	Minimum potential unit count at 17 du/ac (numbers are rounded down)	Maximum potential unit count at 29 du/ac (numbers are rounded down)	Percentage of sites in the City below this parcel size**	Percentage of sites in Mill Valley that are zoned to allow multi-family housing, below this parcel size **
	7,500 sq. ft. (0.17 acre , smallest multi-family site in Capacity Analysis*)	2	4		
	10,890 sq. ft. (0.25 acre)	4	7	3840 (67%)	927 (85%)
	18,920 sq. ft. (0.43 acre , average multi-family parcel size in the Capacity Analysis*)	7	12		
	21,780 sq. ft. (0.5 acre)	8	14	4922 (86%)	1018 (93%)
	32,670 sq. ft. (0.75 acre)	12	21	5276 (92%)	1055 (97%)
	43,560 sq. ft. (1 acre)	17	29	5399 (94%)	1065 (97%)
	51,670 sq. ft. (1.18 acre , largest multi-family site in Capacity Analysis*)	20	34		

* The analysis does not include the Redwoods Senior Housing site, which has a total parcel size of 386,250 sq. ft. or 8.87 acres. The second largest site is the “Kite Hill” site (1.18 acres).

** There are approximately 5733 parcels in the entire City, including all zoning districts. Of all these parcels approximately 1093 parcels are zoned to allow multi-family housing. This data shows that the vast majority of such sites are under an acre.

Default Density

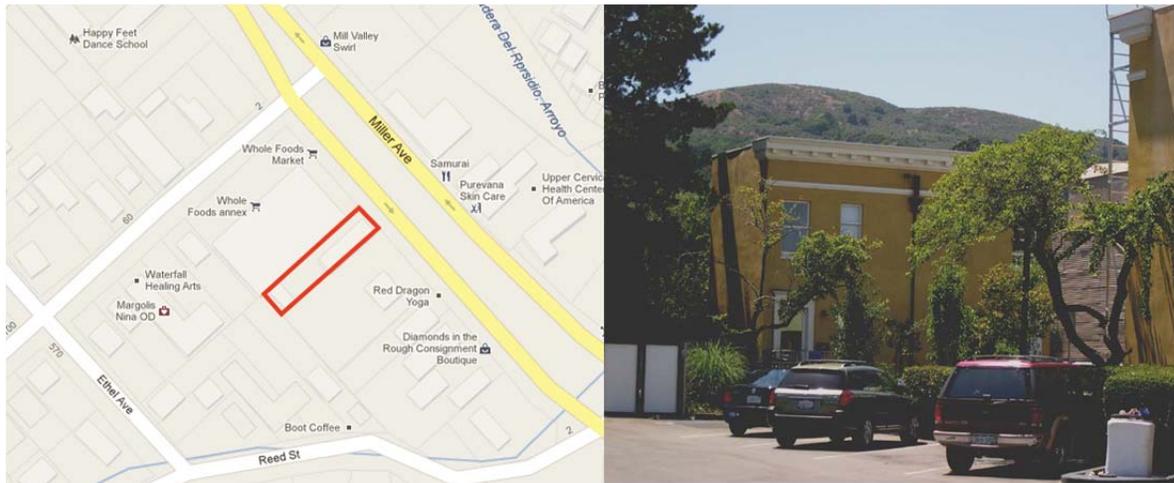
Default density refers to the minimum residential density at which the State will consider a residential development to be affordable to a particular income category, used in the State-required site inventory and capacity analysis to determine whether the jurisdiction has sufficient housing development to meet the income level distribution of the Regional Housing Needs Allocation number assigned to the jurisdiction. There are

different levels of default density to determine affordability for different income levels. In most urban and suburban communities in California, the default density has been pegged at ≥ 30 units per acre for lower-income households, but this number has been lowered for certain jurisdictions, including Mill Valley, to ≥ 20 units per acre. Residential densities of ≥ 10 to 20 du/ac are considered affordable to moderate income households, and densities of 0 to 10 du/ac are considered affordable only to above moderate income households.

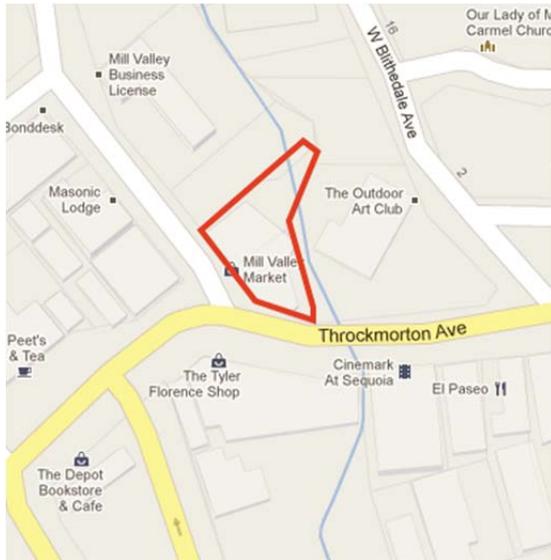
Additional Examples of Density in Multi-Family and Commercially Zoned Areas

Below are additional examples of multi-family developments of varying size and density in Mill Valley:

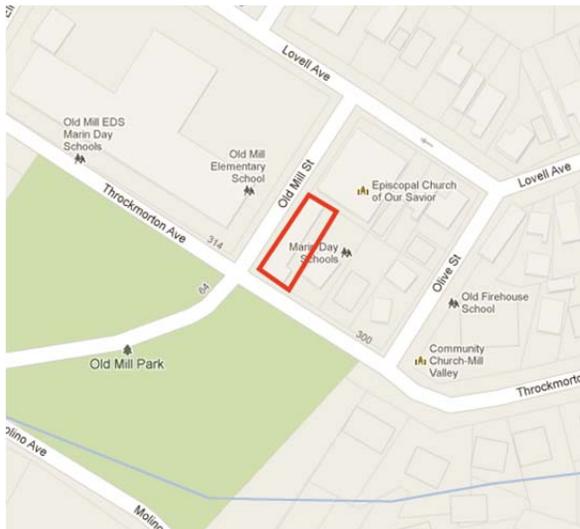
420 Miller Ave. This Mixed Use development of 4 units is in the Commercial (C-N) Zoning District on a narrow, 7,600 square foot lot in two buildings. The residential density is 22 du/ac.



65 Throckmorton Ave. This Mixed Use development of four 2-bedroom residential units ranging in size from 758 - 937 sq. ft. is in the Commercial (C-N) Zoning District in a 9,316 square foot two-story commercial building, with commercial space on the first floor of the front building that is situated on Miller Avenue (the Tyler Florence shop). The residential density is 19 du/ac.



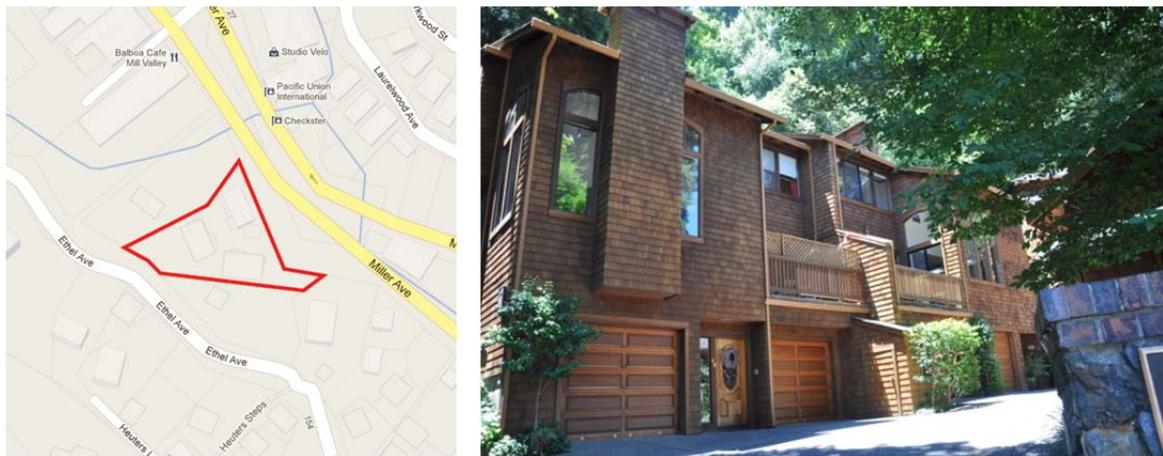
8 Old Mill. This multi-family residential development of four residential units is in the RM 1.5 Zoning District on a 6,500 square foot lot. The residential density is 27 du/ac.



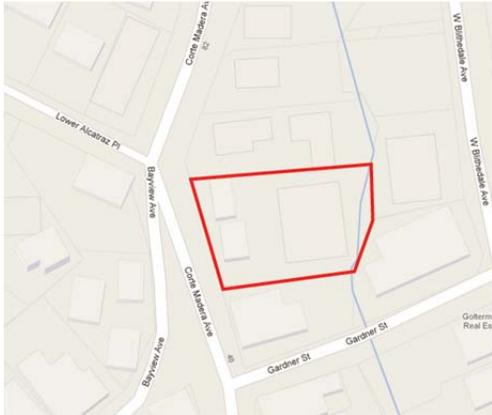
59 Lovell Ave. This multi-family development of 3 units is in the RM-1.5 Zoning District on a 7,700 square foot lot in two buildings. The residential density is 17 du/ac. Due to the shape of the lot, the second house is not very visible from public view.



44-54 Miller Ave. This is a six-unit housing development in the CN Zoning District. The buildings have the appearance of single-family homes. The site is 27,000 square feet, and the residential density is 10 du/ac. The buildings are well screened from public view by mature trees and vegetation.

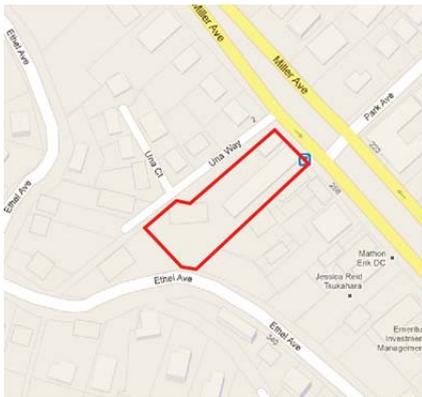


50 Corte Madera. This is a 10-unit multi-family housing development in a CN district. The parcel size is 15,000 square feet, and the residential density is 29 du/ac. This site includes 16 parking spaces. There are three buildings on the site, creating a courtyard in the center. It is surrounded by other multi-family housing developments and single-family homes, and is well-screened by mature vegetation.



(close up of rear building)

216 Miller Ave. This is an 18-unit multi-family development on a 27,500 square feet lot in the RM-3.5 district. It has 26 parking spaces and the residential density is 28 du/ac. Parking is accessed by Una Way off Miller Ave. The buildings are arranged in steps up the slope.



505 Miller Ave. This is a 21-unit Mixed-Use development on a 51,827 square foot lot (1.19 acres) in the C-N district with a RM-2.0 overlay. There are 6 commercial spaces on site, totaling about 5,200 square feet, and 21 residential units consisting of 12 single-family townhomes and 9 second-floor units above commercial. The residential density is 17 du/ac. There are 28 on-site parking spaces and 6 on-street parking spaces. The project is GreenPoint Rated.



22 Bernard Street. This multi-family development of three units is in the RM-1.5 Zoning District on a 6,751 square foot lot. The residential density is 19 du/ac. There are three parking spaces on-site and the site is well-screened from the public street by trees and vegetation.

