

Land Use Categories

Chapter III of the Comprehensive Plan provides a detailed description of land uses within the urban area of the county. Staff proposes amendments to clarify certain housing types that are described in several of the residential land use categories. Specifically, the recommended amendments affect descriptions within the “Urban Residential, Single Family Detached and Attached” category. Currently, the list of land uses within this category includes single-family, attached and detached, and “small multi-family” units however, this latter term is not defined and consequently has caused some confusion among staff and developers. To better describe this unit type and to distinguish it from “multi-family”, staff proposes using the term “multiplex” defined as,

A detached (2 to 2.5-story) structure that consists of five to 12 dwelling units arranged side-by-side and/or stacked, typically with a shared entrance from the street. This structure may have the appearance of a medium-to-large single-unit house.

For reference, the Plan currently defines multi-family as,

A residential development containing three or more units, not including hotels, motels or group accommodations with an average gross density of thirteen (13) or more units per acre.

Staff recommends changing the multi-family definition to –

A residential classification that includes a variety of housing types with two or more units in a structure, ranging from duplexes to multi-story buildings, and with an average gross density of 13 or more dwelling units per acre.

Finally, the “Urban Residential, Single Family Detached and Attached” category includes a description of the development pattern and density that ranges from one to 16 dwellings per acre, depending on the housing type. For attached single-family units and multiplexes, higher densities of 12 to 16 dwellings per acre can be considered if the development meets the following criteria:

1. The property has a shape or topography that constrains normal development practices.
2. The project provides a suitable transition from existing adjacent lower-density residential land uses, such as:
 - a. Increased setbacks at common property lines;
 - b. Limiting maximum building heights adjacent to common property lines to two stories. Building heights may increase with increased distance from the common property lines;
 - c. Locating required open space or detention along common property lines; and
 - d. Other creative or similar transitioning methods.
3. The project avoids placing long building frontages along common property lines.
4. **The project is an infill development developing vacant or under-used parcels within existing urban areas that are already largely developed.**
5. The project integrates into the existing neighborhood by providing sidewalks, trails, bike lanes, open spaces, or the linkages.
6. The project is in conformance with the County’s Residential and Small Lot Residential Development Design Guidelines and Standards as established in the Land Development Code.

Staff proposes adding criterion #4 above to clarify that the intent of considering increased density is to encourage infill development and redevelopment, as stated in the Plan’s Policy GM 1.2:

Arapahoe County will encourage infill development that is compatible with existing land uses in Urban Areas to take advantage of existing public infrastructure and services.