



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 7/14/2026

File #: 26-624

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Planning and Building Department

Agenda Section: Public Hearing

Vote Requirement: Majority

SUBJECT:

An Ordinance to Define Mixed Residential Density Provisions and Development Standards in Sections 314-56 and 314-6 of the Inland Zoning Regulations to Allow up to 25 Units Per Acre Within Residential One-Family (R-1) and Residential Two-Family (R-2) Zones located in Housing Opportunity Zones

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Adopt the resolution (Attachment 1) which does the following:
 - a. Finds the amendments to the Zoning Regulations exempt from CEQA pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.085(a); and
 - b. Finds the Mixed Residential Density Ordinance is in the public interest and complies with the General Plan and State Planning Law; and
2. Adopt the ordinance (Attachment 2), Ordinance Amending Title III, Division 1, Chapter 4 of Humboldt County Code Sections 314-56 and 314-6 (adding Section 314-56.6 and amending Sections 314-6.2 and 314-6.3); and
3. Direct the Clerk of the Board to publish a post-adoption summary of the Mixed Residential Density Ordinance within 15 days after adoption by the Board, and to post in the Office of the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors a certified copy of the full text of the adopted ordinance along with the names of those supervisors voting for and against the ordinance.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

This action supports the following areas of your Board's Strategic Plan.

Area of Focus: Housing for All

Strategic Plan Category: 4002 - Increase and prioritize housing development

DISCUSSION:

The requested action is to adopt the Mixed Residential Density Ordinance within the County Zoning Regulations. Adopting the ordinance will ensure compliance with the 2019 Housing Element. The Planning Commission recommended approval with a 5-0 vote.

The proposed ordinance addresses Housing Element Implementation Measure H-IM61, which directs the county to amend the Zoning Regulations by adding a principal zoning district to be applied within Housing Opportunity Zones that allow higher residential densities and flexible housing configurations to address workforce housing needs for existing and new development. To more efficiently achieve the same goal, the proposed ordinance instead modifies the R-1 and R-2 zones within the Housing Opportunity Zones to add additional higher density housing options that would be subject to additional development standards meant to limit impacts on neighborhood character. To remain consistent with the implementation measure, most new options may be principally permitted with a building permit, though certain developments would require a Conditional Use Permit. Housing Opportunity Zones are exclusively within the inland region of Humboldt County, in portions of the Redway, Garberville, Miranda, Weott, Scotia, McKinleyville, Pine Hill, Humboldt Hill, Cutten, Myrtle town, and Ridgewood Heights areas.

The additions incorporated into the County Code are significant but meet the intent of the Housing Element approved in 2019. The following summarizes some of the key aspects of the proposed project.

- A. Permitted Structures. (314-56.6.3) The proposed code principally permits structures comprised of 2 to 5 units. Multiple multifamily structures can be developed on one parcel, provided they are below the 25 units per acre density and meet the development standards. For structures comprised of 6 or more units, a Conditional Use Permit would be required. This is intended to maintain some consistency with building size by limiting the number of units in a structure.
- B. Development Standards. (314-56.6.5) Any development that relies upon this ordinance for approval needs to meet the Development Standards in Section 314-56.6.5, most of which are tailored to make the higher density development consistent with the surrounding neighborhood. The structures need to incorporate design elements to match the surrounding neighborhood and, if any street-facing façade is over 60 feet in width, design features are required to incorporate recesses or extensions to read as a series of buildings no wider than 40 feet each. To support the higher density, the maximum ground coverage standard is raised to 45%.
- C. Parking. (314-56.6.5.10) Parking for the developments that may be approved by this ordinance would typically match the standard parking code (Section 314-109), but if a structure is comprised of four or more units, only 1 parking space per unit would be required. Between the parking code and this ordinance, only the lesser number of off-street parking spaces is required. Two

alternatives were provided to the Planning Commission, both incorporate the above but Alternative 2, which the Planning Commission ultimately recommended, added an option for one off-street parking space per two units for structures with six or more residential units that are also within one-half mile of an active bus stop that provides service at least twice daily, Monday through Saturday, using similar language and parking requirements as Density Bonus Codes.

- D. Exceptions. (314-56.6.6) Various subsections of this ordinance either do not belong with the Development Standards or apply only in very specific circumstances. These include prohibitions for development pursuant to this ordinance near or adjacent to industrial zones or uses, avoidance from Greenway and Open Space, and requirements to maintain at least as many dwelling units as had been present onsite within the last five years.

These changes do not remove any ability for property owners to develop their property in a manner that could already be approved, the changes only add new options which have restrictions applied.

Planning Commission Meeting - May 21, 2026

The Planning Commission Meeting on May 21, 2026, included a public hearing to discuss and recommend approval of the Mixed Residential Density Ordinance. The Planning Commission recommended the following changes to the ordinance that was presented to the Commission, each of which have been made: the removal of “colors” from Section 56.6.5.11.1’s design considerations, the addition of “ADA-compliant” to and removal of examples from Section 56.6.5.6, and the addition of “whichever is greater” to Section 56.6.6.7. **One public comment was received:** a letter which expressed concerns regarding limited distinction in the ordinance between “rural” and “urban” areas of the county, a desire for zero parking requirements in Housing Opportunity Zones, and concern that the development standards delineated in the proposed ordinance excessively limit higher density developments in favor of single-family development. Planning staff determined that the concerns and desires expressed by this letter were unsubstantiated by the proposed code’s standards and intents. All other discussion by the Commission involved clarifying questions or concern regarding whether the parking requirements would require too much parking in urban areas or too little parking in rural areas. After a failed 2-3 vote for recommending adoption of the amended ordinance using Alternative 1 of the Parking Code, Alternative 2 of the Parking Code was selected by the Planning Commission and, with a 5-0 vote, the Planning Commission recommended adoption of the proposed ordinance (Attachment 4).

Effect of Ordinance:

The results of the changes are intended to provide standards for permitting higher density residential development in Housing Opportunity Zones.

Environmental Review:

The ordinance is exempt per Public Resources Code Section 21080.085 because, in effect, it is a rezoning which implements the schedule of actions contained within Humboldt County’s Housing

Element, which was approved by the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) on October 22, 2019.

For CEQA compliance, the Planning Commission considered the General Plan Update Environmental Impact Report (GPU EIR) and an Addendum to the EIR, but a memorandum distributed by the Department of Housing and Community Development on May 19, 2026 communicated the effects of SB 131, signed into effect on July 1, 2025, which exempts rezoning activities that implement an approved Housing Element from CEQA in Section 21080.085 of California Public Resources Code. The new code section was not brought to the attention of Planning staff until receiving the memo, so, because the memo was distributed after the Planning Commission hearing item was noticed, the initial CEQA analysis was retained in their findings. This memo was distributed with Frequently Asked Questions, and their associated answers, which clarified that the proposed ordinance, despite not re-drawing any zoning maps, would be covered by this new exemption for rezoning.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

The salary funding for research, staff tasks, and preparing the draft ordinance and staff report is included in the General Fund contribution to the Long-Range Planning unit (1100-282).

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Staff costs and other expenses related to research, staff tasks, and preparing the draft ordinance and staff report total approximately \$42,000.

STAFFING IMPACT:

If there is public interest in development utilizing the proposed ordinance, there would be a slight increase in staff time required for permitting applicable projects both in discussion with potential applicants and review of the applications.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The project was referred to County Counsel.

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Board of Supervisors could choose to modify the proposed ordinance based upon public input and Board discussion. This alternative should be implemented if the Board is unable to make all the required findings. Staff has determined that the required findings can be made and does not recommend further consideration of this alternative.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Resolution
2. Draft Ordinance No. ____
3. Post-Adoption Summary
4. PC Resolution 26-029

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Meeting of: Planning Commission Meeting of: May 21, 2026

File No.: 26-501