

NET RESIDENTIAL DENSITY

LOCAL PLANNING HANDBOOK

Net density is important in ensuring the region’s orderly and efficient growth, and to provide essential services that benefit the metro area. Communities and land within the Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA) receive a higher level of regional services and investments than those in the Rural Service Area, such as regional wastewater services, regional highways, transit service, the Regional Parks System, and programs that support redevelopment. In return, the Council expects jurisdictions in the MUSA to plan for and build the higher levels of development that economically support those regional services.

The region is able to provide cost-effective infrastructure and services when it is able to anticipate where, when, and to what extent growth will occur. The Council establishes overall density expectations for communities based on their **Community Designation** with additional expectations near transit stations. Density thresholds are based on an understanding of future regional growth, market demand in different parts of the region, existing development patterns and redevelopment opportunities, existing planned land uses in local comprehensive plans, and regional policies to support the concentration of higher density growth around transit stations.

Setting minimum average densities for new development provides communities with the flexibility to determine which areas in their community are best suited for higher or lower density development under the framework of meeting that overall minimum on available developable lands.

| OVERALL DENSITY EXPECTATIONS FOR NEW GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT, AND REDEVELOPMENT | |
|---|----------------|
| Metropolitan Urban Service Area: Minimum Average Net Density | |
| Urban Center | 20 units/acre |
| Urban | 10 units/acre |
| Suburban | 5 units/acre |
| Suburban Edge | 3-5 units/acre |
| Emerging Suburban Edge | 3-5 units/acre |

HOW DO WE CALCULATE NET DENSITY?

The Council measures minimum net density to support forecasted growth by taking the minimum number of planned housing units and dividing by the net acreage. Net acreage does not include land covered by wetlands, water bodies, public parks and trails, public open space, arterial road rights-of-way, and other undevelopable acres identified in or protected by local ordinances such as steep slopes.

NET RESIDENTIAL DENSITY GUIDELINES

| What can be netted out from Gross Acres | Important notes | What cannot be netted out |
|---|---|---|
| Wetlands and Water Bodies | Defined as public waters and wetlands consistent with state delineation practices, buffers may also be included* | Setbacks from water bodies, storm ponds, NURP ponds |
| Public Parks and Open Space | Must be public or in permanent open space (federal, state, regional, local) or land held in perpetual open space in an open space easement. | Privately held conservation easements, private parks, private trails |
| Arterial Road Rights-of-Way | Arterial roads are part of the metropolitan highway system Arterial Road Right-of-Way | Local road rights-of-way that are not part of the metropolitan highway system |
| Other areas that are protected from development by local ordinances | Floodplains, steep slopes, bluffs | |

*Areas protected or removed from development by local ordinance can be netted out