

Residential Density

Background Information

Density, in relationship to residential units, is usually described differently in each jurisdiction and those definitions can also change over time as a community matures. Density is measured in units per area or as a floor area ratio (net floor area to area of land).

Within the District of Lake Country, the Official Community Plan (OCP) and Zoning Bylaw determine where density should be located and to what extent. Further, these documents categorize residential density into two categories: *rural* and *urban*, with the broad *urban* category typically divided into three sub-categories of *low density*, *medium density*, and *high density*.

The 2018 OCP (and the previous 2010 OCP) for Lake Country uses a modification of the categories described above, with the categories of:

Rural: means areas of the community with a low population density and no urban servicing. Rural areas in Lake Country are characterized by large lots, proximity to agricultural areas and views.

Urban: means areas of the community with higher population densities and a larger array of services than rural areas. In Lake Country, urban areas include single-unit housing on lots smaller than 0.4 hectares up to multi-dwelling residential and high-intensity commercial use.

The average density in 2018 was ~ six (6) units per hectare. A target density of between 12.5 and 25 units per hectare was set

High Density: no definition provided in the OCP. The average density in 2018 was ~13 units per hectare. A target density of between 25 and 120 units per hectare was set.

The 2018 OCP also includes a table to help relate the OCP designations to corresponding Zoning classifications (excerpt below). Additional information from the Zoning Bylaw has been added to the table to demonstrate the densities associated with each zone and the corresponding OCP designation.

Official Community Plan Designation	Corresponding Zone Classification	Density Description	Zone Density Value
Urban Residential * (20-100 units per ha)	RU1 – Small Scale Multiple Housing (min lot size: 500m ²)	unspecified	1 unit per lot (20 units / ha) SSMUH: 4 units per lot (80 units / ha)
	RU2 – Small Lot Small-Scale Housing (min lot size: 400m ²)	unspecified	1 unit per lot (25 units / ha) SSMUH: 4 units per lot (80 units / ha)
	RU6 – Large Lot Small-Scale Housing (min lot size: 700m ²)	unspecified	2 units per lot (28.6 units / ha) SSMUH: 4 units per lot (57.1 units / ha)
	RU-M – Single Family Housing Mobile Home (min lot size: 400m ²)	unspecified	1 unit per lot (25 units / ha)
	RM2 – Low Density Row Housing	low density	FAR 0.5 -0.63 (5,000m ² – 6,300m ² per ha)
	DC7 – Cadence at the Lakes (min lot size: 400m ²)	unspecified	1 unit per lot (25 units / hectare) SSMUH: 4 units per lot (100 units /ha)
	DC8 – Lodge Pine Estates	low density	12 units total (30 units / ha)
High Density Residential *	RM2 – Low Density Row Housing	low density	FAR 0.5 -0.63 (5000m ² – 6300m ² per ha)
	RM4 – Low Density Multiple Housing	low density	FAR 0.65-0.95 (6,500m ² – 9,500m ² per ha)
	RM5 – Medium Density Multiple Housing	medium density	FAR 1.0 -1.6 (10,000m ² – 16,000m ² per ha)
	RM7 – Mobile Home Park	unspecified	20 units per ha
	DC2 – Emerald Beach Apartments	unspecified	114 units per ha (80 units total)
* Additional zones may be accommodated within these OCP categories only if consistent with the intent of the Future Land Use Designation.			

If the two standard categories (rural and urban) had been used in the DLC OCP, then there would be no ‘high density residential’ category as it would have been combined with the ‘urban residential’ category. This change would thereby adjust the target density to between 12.5 and 120 units per hectare (which may then be divided into sub categorizes of low, medium and high). It is also noted that the Zoning Bylaw does not consider any of the zones as being a ‘high density’.

Density Context in Relation to ASP00002 Proposal

The application, ASP00002, proposes to have 55 residential units on 1.03 hectares of land, thereby proposing a density of 53.3 units per hectare. Unit sizes are proposed at an average of 102.2m² (11,000 sq feet) each, for a total of 5,621m²; this calculates to a floor area ratio (FAR) of 0.54.

The table below compares the proposal in relationship to zones within Zoning Bylaw 561, and RU1 zoned properties in the surrounding area:

	Proposal	Existing RU1 Average	RU1 zone	RM2 zone low density row houses	RM4 zone low rise low density apartment
Land Area	1.0319 ha	753m ²	min 500m ²	n/a	n/a
Density - Units	55 units (53.3 units per ha)	13.7 lots 53.2 units [^]	20.6 lots 80 units [^]	n/a	n/a
Density - FAR	0.54 (5,621m ² floor area)	n/a	n/a	0.5 to 0.63 (5,160 – 6,501m ² floor area [^])	0.65 to 0.95 (6,707 – 9,803m ² floor area [^])

[^]based on subject property lot size of 1.0319ha)

As demonstrated in the table, the applicant has proposed a density that is similar to the existing RU1 density in the surrounding area. The proposed FAR is also in line with the RM2 zone and is lower than the FAR for the RM4 zone.

Summary

This analysis demonstrates that the proposed development at 53.3 units per hectare is:

- inline with the high density target density of 25-120 units per hectare
- inline with existing low density urban residential development (RU1 and RM2) within the area
- proposes a housing form (building type) with the RM4 zone, but is below the maximum FAR permitted within the RM4 zone

Therefore, based on this analysis, the land use proposed reflects low density urban residential development. The OCP designation of Urban Residential with either the RM2 or RM4 zone would be suitable. The form (type) of housing is the only substantial change that would occur in the neighbourhood.

This analysis also demonstrates the need to review and update definitions associated with the OCP future land use designations. This can occur during the OCP update currently in progress.