

**STAFF REPORT**  
**City of Lancaster**

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Date: March 26, 2013

To: Mayor Parris and City Council Members

From: Brian S. Ludicke, Planning Director

Subject: **Residential Zones Update and Other Zoning Code Amendments for Implementation of Housing Element Specific Actions**

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**Recommendation:**

Introduce **Ordinance No. 989**, approving the comprehensive revision of the Residential Zoning Ordinance (Exhibit “A”), Title 17, Chapter 8 of the Lancaster Municipal Code, and other zoning code amendments for implementation of Housing Element specific actions.

**Background:**

Various sections of the Residential zoning ordinance have been revised in the past; however, this is the first significant update to Title 17, Chapter 8 of the Lancaster Municipal Code since 1994, and the first comprehensive update since 1983. Shortly after the adoption of the General Plan Update in 2009, City staff began initial research on the Residential Zones update. An administrative draft was released in June 2011, followed by a public draft in January 2012. Following several outreach efforts and a series of public hearings, the Planning Commission adopted Resolution No. 13-01 on January 28, 2013, recommending to the City Council approval of the City’s Residential Zoning Ordinance. Other zoning code amendments for implementation of specific actions from the City’s Housing Element are also included in the same resolution.

**Analysis:**

The following summarizes the featured changes of the Residential Zones:

- **Revised development standards:** Requires recessed garages; porches, or other façade features as identified in the City’s adopted Design Guidelines.
- **Added design and performance measures:** Various provisions in the residential zones implement the General Plan and the adopted design Guidelines by providing increased opportunities for flexibility in site design and unit type through a Residential Planned Development (RPD) process.
- **Solar energy systems for new homes:** Requires new single family residential units to provide solar-generated power at a minimum average of 1 kW per unit.
- **Infill development incentives:** A developer may, without an amendment to the General Plan or a zone change, build up to 8 units per acre if the property meets the criteria for infill development. This provision implements Specific Action 18.2.1(c) of the General Plan.

- **Accessory dwelling units:** Requirements are revised to allow accessory units to be built on minimum 7,000 square-foot lot, with floor area limited to 10 percent of the lot size, up to a maximum of 1,500 square feet. Separate utility meters are optional, not required. These provisions are design to accommodate an increasing number of requests for units for elderly parents and relatives.
- **Live-work:** These provisions allow units that incorporate both living and working space on residential properties that are located along and directly front primary arterial streets. This approach will provide some additional flexibility on lots that are difficult to use exclusively for residential use, given the impacts from high vehicle traffic counts and speeds, and may provide an impetus for more rapid long-term transition of these sites to non-residential use.
- **Corner duplexes:** Builders are permitted to build duplexes in single-family zoned neighborhoods on lots with minimum dimensions of 100' by 100' as a way of providing a greater diversity of residential units within a neighborhood.

The proposed ordinance also contains regulations to implement provisions of the City's adopted Housing Element and current State housing law, as follows:

- **Density bonus:** A developer is allowed up to a 35 percent increase in units beyond the maximum density as allowed by the zone in exchange for affordable or senior housing units, as required by State statutes.
- **Removal of base density restrictions:** Developers are allowed by right to build up to the maximum allowed density of the zone classification; i.e. the City cannot use density as a "bargaining chip" for greater amenities than otherwise required by the zone classification.
- **Removal of CUP requirement for multi-family projects:** Multi-family projects are reviewed and approved through an administrative approval process (site plan review) instead of a conditional use permit, and must meet the requirements of the zone classification in which they are located.

The recommended comprehensive update to the Residential Zoning Ordinance will be in conformance with the Lancaster 2030 General Plan, and will further implement enhanced architecture and design as adopted in the City's Design Guidelines. The proposed zoning code amendments implementing adopted Housing Element specific actions are necessary to comply with State law.

CCN:BSL/jr

**Attachments:**

1. Ordinance No. 989
2. Exhibit "A": Recommended Comprehensive Update of the Residential Zoning Ordinance
3. Staff Report from the January 28, 2013, Planning Commission Meeting – *available for review in the City Clerk Department*
4. Staff Report from the October 15, 2012, Planning Commission Meeting – *available for review in the City Clerk Department*