

USER GUIDE

Tools for Talking About **Housing, Density & Design**

This User Guide provides an overview of community engagement resources created for local government staff to support constructive conversations with residents and community leaders about residential rezonings.

Four template slide decks provide customizable presentation materials, including:

- **Two short presentations** that outline the value of rezoning for more housing, and examples of what different levels of density might look like.
- **Two engagement activities** to help foster dialogue about housing needs, density and design.

This User Guide provides an overview of each presentation resource and how to customize them to your needs along with tips on how to encourage productive conversations.

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So You Want to Talk About Density?

As Bay Area jurisdictions undertake rezoning to create more housing capacity, meet community goals and implement their housing elements, talking about density and how to address community concerns has become a recurring part of planners' work.

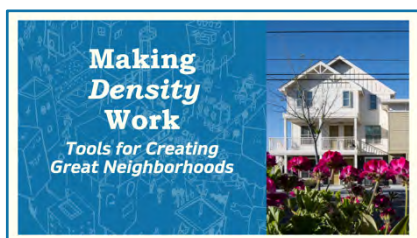
Rezoning requires change, and many community members may feel uncomfortable with the idea of change. At the same time, many residents are concerned about housing costs, traffic, limited housing choices, and the loss of young adults, workers and long-term residents to less expensive areas.

This guide walks you through how to use a set of four slide deck templates designed to connect the dots between community values and housing goals, and to illustrate how density is a tool to achieve these goals. It also provides guidance for talking about housing, density and design, and for integrating the materials into your community engagement process.



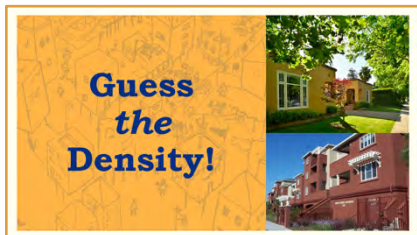
Presentation 1: Making Housing Happen

Start the conversation by connecting shared community values with the need for new homes, introducing density as a tool for creating more housing choices and countering common myths around density.



Presentation 2: Making Density Work

Help people understand that building bulk and housing density are not the same thing, explaining the planning and design tools communities can use to help density fit in while meeting a range of housing needs.



Activity 1: Guess the Density!

Engage residents in a fun and educational activity to demonstrate that density and design are interlinked, and that even low density buildings can be big and bulky while seemingly high density buildings can fit in.



Activity 2: Housing Choices for a Better Future

Facilitate a values-based conversation about the types of housing your community needs, what is missing, and where new housing choices would fit best to create a complete, welcoming community.

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Tips For Talking About Housing, Density & Design

Start the Conversation

Talking about housing is both emotional and technically complicated. You know your community best, so it helps to customize materials to address the most common concerns head on.

Housing conversations are more productive when they are grounded in the realities that community members face and shared goals they can collectively achieve. Frame conversations about changes to zoning with reminders that planning for housing is not just about creating a number of units or meeting a state requirement. **This is an important conversation about building homes for neighbors, friends and future generations, and creating the future we want for our community.**

Connect to What's Important



Lead with values. Start the conversation with a focus on what's important to community members: safety, affordability, health and vitality. Zoning and density are tools to create the future we want. They are a means, not an end.



Focus on people. Regularly remind folks that the conversation is about people and our future. We are building homes for people who live and work here today and will be here in the future, including our families and their families.



Talk about homes, not units. Homes are places where people live. An excessive focus on “numbers of housing units” can make this sound like a warehousing exercise.



Remind everyone that change is constant. It can sometimes feel like our community has been the same forever, but that's not true: it is constantly evolving. Even if we never change a single building, things will change, including the cost of housing and who is able to live here.

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Make Planning Jargon Accessible

Technical terms and major planning concepts can cause confusion or carry unintended connotations for community members. Look for ways to share the important ideas with language that will connect with your intended audience.

Jargon 1: Density

- **Avoid overuse of “density.”** It’s a useful umbrella term, but it doesn’t get at the heart of what communities care about.
- **Explain density in easy-to-understand terms.** the number of homes that can be built in a particular area. Don’t get too in the weeds with terms like “dwelling units per acre” (DUA) or “floor area ratio” (FAR). They are useful, but can lose the average person’s attention.
- **Frame density as a tool, not as the goal.** Instead of “We need to increase density.” Say “We need to build more homes, and increasing density is an effective tool to do that.”
- **Talk about housing types and who they serve.** Instead of talking about DUA, discuss building types and who they could benefit. “Cottage courts for seniors, townhomes for young families, apartments for small households.”
- **Remind people that density does not necessarily mean bulk.** A single family home can be very large, while a smaller building that looks like a single family home could actually have multiple homes within it (higher density even with an overall smaller size than the 7,000 square foot home next door). While in general higher densities will mean bigger buildings when coupled with greater allowed building heights and sizes, it is not the only factor that determines building form.
- **Tap people’s housing histories.** Ask your audience to think about the different types of housing they have lived in over the course of their lives. There is very likely a rich diversity of housing types and experiences represented in the room!
- **Use examples from your community.** Incorporate images of existing housing in your community that represent a mix of types and densities. Chances are that people have been walking past duplexes, triplexes, small apartment buildings and other types without realizing.

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Jargon 2: Zoning & Rezoning

- **Explain in easy-to-understand terms.** Zoning is the regulations we put in place to control what can be built, where and how much.
- **Explain zoning as a tool to achieve community goals.** Zoning establishes the amount and type of housing that can be built in different areas. By changing the zoning, we can create more housing opportunities, choices and affordability.
- **Avoid the zoning classification hole.** Instead of discussing the technicalities of the zoning code, talk about the housing available in different areas and what choices or opportunities are missing.
- **Explain that change happens slowly.** Rezoning won't change the neighborhood overnight, but it makes other housing types possible when change does happen over time.

Jargon 3: Walkability

- **Explain walkability.** A neighborhood is walkable if it's fun, safe, and efficient to travel by foot. We can improve walkability by putting homes near businesses, schools and community centers, and by investing in welcoming and safe streets.
- **Connect walkability to community goals.** Talk about neighborhoods that are safe and fun to walk in and streets that make it easy to get outside, run your errands and connect with neighbors.

Jargon 4: Mixed Use

- **Explain mixed-use buildings and neighborhoods.** Mixed-use neighborhoods and buildings put housing close to businesses, schools and community gathering places. It can be a grocery store on the ground floor of a residential building, or businesses and community organizations interspersed with homes along one street.
- **Connect mixed-use neighborhoods with community goals.** Instead of getting lost in zoning jargon, talk about making services accessible and streets safe. Focus on what we like about great neighborhoods, like access to restaurants, getting fresh air and connecting with our neighbors.

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Bring Clarity to Controversy

Public conversations about rezoning and density often revolve around similar themes. Community engagement is a great opportunity to educate the public while listening to their concerns. Addressing these topics head on, with sensitivity, can show that you support the community's goals and values.

Topic 1: Architectural Style

- **Talk about building design and architectural style.** Building design and style can have a bigger impact on the feel of a neighborhood than density. Architectural style can make a building or neighborhood unique, and building design elements like the shape of the roof or setbacks can make a building with multiple units look like it's a single family home.
- **Connect design with community values.** Instead of “neighborhood character” or “design conformity,” talk about buildings that feel welcoming, make the street interesting and connect people to their neighbors.

Topic 2: Affordability & Displacement

- **Connect affordability and density.** By allowing more homes on a lot we reduce the cost of land and construction needed for each home. Changes in density can also be linked to requirements that set specific income levels for new homes. And by locating more homes in places where people can get around without a car, we can support more affordable living overall.
- **Connect to community values.** Instead of over-using the phrase “affordable housing,” talk about creating a welcoming community. Focus on providing a range of housing across the community, and uplifting values of inclusion and diversity.
- **Put a face on affordability.** Instead of talking about income levels, talk about housing for people who are familiar to your audience, like “housing for teachers, grocery store workers, bus drivers, artists and seniors.” Bring the conversation home by talking about homes that their kids and future generations can afford and enjoy.
- **Connect to other city policies and programs.** Help residents understand that density is not the only tool for addressing affordability and displacement. Point to other work you are doing to help people have more secure, safe and healthy places to live.

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Topic 3: Parking & Traffic

- **Explain parking and traffic.** Parking and traffic are affected by everything from where we build homes, to how far people need to travel to get where they want to go, and whether we have transit and other options.
- **Discuss the housing impact.** Different housing types and locations have different traffic impacts. When people live further from jobs, schools, shopping and other services, they have to drive more. By creating more affordable, accessible homes near local businesses, jobs and services we can reduce traffic and parking impacts. Different types of housing, like homes for young families versus homes for seniors, will have different impacts, too.
- **Talk about transportation policies as part of the solution.** Along with creating more homes closer to transit and services, local rules about parking and traffic management can also help support housing affordability, protect the environment and achieve community goals.

Topic 4: Green Space

- **Explain how rezoning and housing shape green space.** How we build housing has a big impact on protecting open green spaces and preserving natural resources. When new development is clustered and higher density it helps save space for agriculture, parks and natural environments, instead of pushing people outside of cities and towns and into undeveloped lands. Increasing housing options in existing neighborhoods helps us preserve the natural beauty of the region.
- **Connect rezoning with existing community green space.** Talk about the areas in your community that represent space for treasured outdoors activities, like playing, recreating, hiking and swimming. Lower density development requires more land area and can impact the open space we would rather preserve.

Check out these other great resources!

- ABAG/MTC's [Let's Talk About Housing: Communications Guide for Local Government](#)
- ABAG/MTC's [Middle Housing MythBusters](#) and [presentation slide deck](#)

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Customizing the Templates for Your Community

This section provides general guidance and instructions for using individual template presentations and activities. For detailed notes on presentation content see the appendices.

Customize for Your Audience & Meeting

- Consider the scale and platform of the meeting you are planning. Will it be online or in person? How many participants do you expect? Is it a general community audience or people with a particular perspective or level of experience?
- Some interactive elements may serve better as modified activities for in-person meetings or for people who are generally familiar with housing policies.

Edit for Local Context

- **You may need to add jurisdiction-specific colors or logos** to slide decks. As you do so, be sure to consider appropriate placement and visual accessibility.
- **Language can and should be updated** to reflect the most impactful messaging for your community. Change the vocabulary, key points and/or examples to emphasize specific community goals, and be sure to consider readability, concision and accessible language.
- **Slides can be deleted or modified to align with community context.** The template slide decks are made so that you can easily remove specific slides without derailing the presentation flow. When choosing slides or images to add as density examples, consider the scale of buildings, neighborhood type and the intended zoning for the area being discussed.
- **Be honest and sensitive.** Do not minimize what is being proposed in terms of the scale and intensity of development. At the same time, try not to provoke a negative response from those in the room by using a “hot button” message or example, undermining the purpose of the conversation. And even when showing an image of a seemingly big building, keep in mind—for yourself and the audience—that this is a discussion about people and community, not just about buildings.

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Take Visible Notes

The slide decks—especially the two for engagement activities—include blank sections as prompts to pause and gather input. What that process looks like will vary depending on the size of your group, whether it’s online or in-person and whether you have support from other staff and notetakers.

Whatever format works best for your context, remember that visibly taking notes when participants contribute—on chart paper with markers, in an online document people can see, or directly into the slides—helps participants feel heard. Their contributions become part of the presentation’s content and they are assured that the point they were making is accurately recorded.

Use Meaningful Images

People remember the pictures they see more than the words you say. Choose images that your audience will relate to, that underscore key points, and help to tell the story about why changes in zoning are being considered.

- **Pick images that reflect your local context.** Consider architectural style, density and streetscape. Use examples from your community that people will know but might not have considered as higher density (like historic duplexes or apartment buildings). And consider using examples of local buildings that might be considered big and bulky, even though they are relatively low density.
- **Use high quality images.** It can be tempting to go with what you have, even if it isn’t great. Low-resolution, poorly lit, or images of buildings blocked by cars can distract from your message more than they help to make a point. Aim for images that are well-lit, with a good resolution, provide an unobstructed view of the building, and convey a welcoming streetscape.
- **Consider your audience.** Fisheye or birds-eye perspectives can feel intimidating or inaccessible. Street-level shots are more similar to what people see every day and will relate to the most. Avoid images from communities that your audience sees as undesirable or unattainable. If the audience might say “but we don’t want to be another New York,” then don’t use examples from New York.
- **Include images of people, not just buildings.** Even if the photos are from stock image libraries or general photos from community events, help ensure that your slide images convey that this is a conversation about people and community.

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- **Maintain a library of local examples.** Build an image library so that you don't have to constantly scramble to find images that work. Partner with other staff and departments to keep an eye out for good pictures that can be reused.

Using Copyright-free Photos and Graphics

In addition to local photographs and graphics developed by your staff team or partners, you can search from online resources to find images from other communities (or even your own) that are relevant and useful in communicating your key points. Below are some links worth checking out.

Photos and Graphics from the Template Slide Decks

If you want to grab any of the photographs or graphics included in the template slide decks to use in other slides you are creating, you can access them all as individual image files on the ABAG website. Just be sure that any photo credit that is included with the image is recreated when you put it into your deck.

Housing Photos from Regional Image Libraries

Many of the photos used in the template slide decks come from a photo catalog created by ABAG's Regional Housing Technical Assistance (RHTA) program. There is also a collection of "missing middle housing" photographs available from 21 Elements (San Mateo County's ongoing planning collaborative). Those can be found at the links below.

[RHTA Photo Catalog](#)

[21 Elements Missing Middle Photos](#)

Online Open-Source Stock Images

There are online sites where you can find high-resolution, open-source stock images (although it might be harder to find images of specific housing types or locations). You can also search online for Creative Commons image resources. These are images that allow for free distribution and use of otherwise copyrighted work. Be sure that you abide by the conditions specified in the Creative Commons license.

Your Public Information Officer is a great place to start if you need help in understanding or accessing these and other open-source images.

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This guide was created in July 2024 by



Technical Assistance
for Local Planning
HOUSING



**Association of
Bay Area Governments**



**COMMUNITY
PLANNING
COLLABORATIVE**

Please reach out to the [Regional Housing Technical Assistance \(RHTA\) Program](#) with any questions about the material.

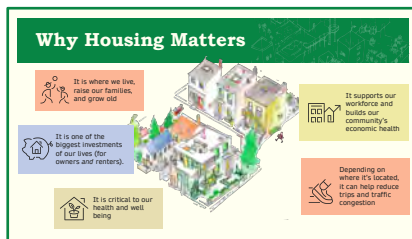
ATTACHMENT A: SLIDE NOTES

Presentation #1

MAKING HOUSING HAPPEN

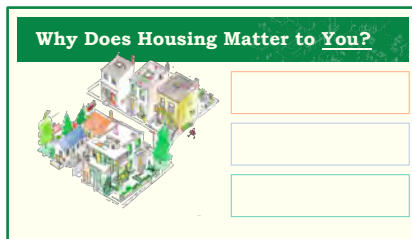


This slide deck is designed as an introductory presentation to establish a shared understanding of major concepts and to align the discussion of density and zoning with core community values. Language used in this deck should be updated to align with community context and speak directly to community priorities.



Slide 2: Why Housing Matters

This slide lists some core reasons why having enough housing and diverse housing choices is important. Edit so that the points made resonate with your community members. The illustration shows a diversity of housing types in a “sketch” but you can replace with a photo of a family or local housing, or opt to not have an image.



Slide 3: Why Does Housing Matter to You?

Use this slide to prompt conversation about shared community goals and values. The blank boxes on the slide can be used to take notes on the conversation. Depending on your set up, you can do that directly in the slide, in a separate document, or on flipcharts in the room where you’re meeting. To the extent possible, take notes in a way that participants can see you capturing their ideas.



Slide 4: Zoning implements our community's vision and goals

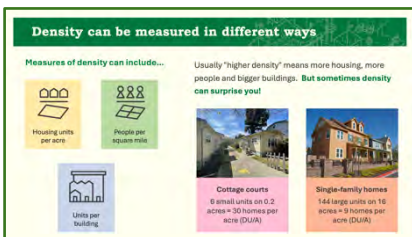
This slide briefly explains what zoning is, how it defines the level of density in each area of the community and other rules about how big buildings can be and the uses that are allowed. It is designed for a very general audience. You can change the general images for ones that are specifically from your community or keep them as generic examples.

ATTACHMENT A: SLIDE NOTES



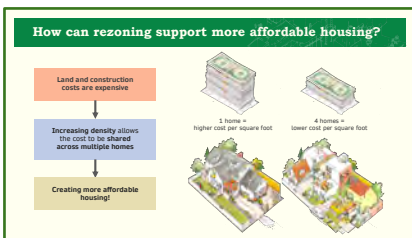
Slide 5: Density is one part of how we plan our community

This slide introduces the ways in which “density” is measured, and the connection between density, housing types, other uses and mobility. Think of example areas of your community that you can reference as examples.



Slide 6: Density can be measured in different ways

This slide shows some different ways that density can be measured. Housing units per acre is the standard measurement, but people per square mile is an opportunity to discuss overcrowding, and units per building is an opportunity to talk about building design and construction costs. The side-by-side example is an opportunity to show that higher density buildings are not necessarily larger.



Slide 7: How can rezoning support more affordable housing? (part 1)

This slide provides a high-level overview of how density can help support affordability by allowing land and construction costs to be shared over more units. In your comments, you can acknowledge that high density developments can be expensive, too. But even in expensive buildings, the smaller units are more affordable than the larger ones, because cost-per-square-foot matters.



Slide 8: How can rezoning support more affordable housing? (part 2)

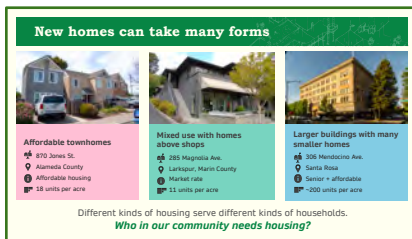
Use this slide to cite local examples of different density levels and the relationship to affordability. Local examples help your audience ground the conversation in tangible experiences of neighborhood character and cost. Choose two neighborhoods that best illustrate your intended message and add details to the placeholder boxes. This can be two neighborhoods with drastically different densities, or two neighborhoods where higher density is working well.

ATTACHMENT A: SLIDE NOTES



Slide 9: Rezoning gives us more options for...

This slide connects back to the important theme of supporting local families, seniors and workers who need housing as well as supporting other important community priorities. Edit as needed to connect back to points you made in Slide 2 and bring up points that people made in response to Slide 3.



Slide 10: New homes can take many forms

This slide can be used to make the point that zoning at different densities can expand the range of housing choices to meet the full range of housing needs. A prompt question is provided to invite audience input. You can use these examples from communities around the Bay Area or replace them with ones specific to your community. Slide 10 can also be used to present local examples, and the Activity 2 slide deck (Housing Choices for a Better Future) can be used for a more in-depth group conversation about housing choices.



Slide 11: An example from our community

This slide template can be used to present local examples of the different forms that higher density buildings can take. Pick projects or buildings that are generally well-liked and contribute to community goals like housing diversity or walkability. Examples can be recent or ones that have been around for decades—whatever will best help you make the point that denser housing can fit into the community context and create desirable housing choices.



Slide 12: Common concerns about density

This last section is provided to help respond to common concerns people raise about adding more density in your community. You can delete them, modify them, or add to them to address concerns you have been hearing from community members.

ATTACHMENT A: SLIDE NOTES

Will higher density buildings fit in our community?

Multifamily homes can take many forms and be designed to fit in their context, whether low density, medium density or high density.

Density does not determine building style - Design does.



The slide features four photographs of different multifamily housing styles. Top left: 'Cottage Courts' showing small, detached cottages. Top right: 'Modern Rowhouses' showing multi-story brick townhomes. Bottom left: 'Small Multi-Family' showing a three-story apartment building. Bottom right: 'Larger Multi-Family' showing a large, multi-story apartment complex.

Slide 13: Will higher density buildings fit in our community?

This slide helps make the point that density alone does not dictate building form. A collection of small cottages can have an effective density that is quite high even though they look small, while a single family home can be low density, but quite large. Yes – higher densities will generally be coupled with greater building height and bulk. But our design and development standards are an important part of making sure buildings fit in. Shift to local images if helpful or use these examples from other Bay Area communities.

Won't density impact parking & traffic?

Lower density housing...

- Requires more and longer car trips to work, school and the store.
- Makes owning a car a necessity (many single family homes have two or more cars).

Higher density housing...

- Puts people closer to jobs, schools, shopping and other destinations.
- Allows some trips to be walking or riding, like rides or by transit.
- Owning a car is optional (many higher density homes have only one car).



The slide includes two photographs. The top one shows a residential street with several cars parked and driving. The bottom one shows a busy pedestrian street with many people walking and a few cars.

Slide 14: Won't density impact parking & traffic?

It is true that adding more housing will add more people and, very likely, more cars. But it's also true that higher density housing creates less traffic per capita than lower density housing. An important part of the density-and-traffic conversation is where homes are located and whether the people who live in those places are able to drive less, or even not at all. Most likely your community is currently impacted by people having to drive long distances, including people who work in your community but live elsewhere and commute because they can't find a nearby place to live.


Will higher density buildings impact prices?

A reason homes are expensive because we don't have enough to meet our needs.

- New homes are expensive to build. New home prices and rents often reflect that.
- There is a lot of competition for too few homes, so even older homes can be rented or sold for more.
- Local programs and services can help support vulnerable residents as new homes are built.

Building more diverse housing types can help reduce prices and rents over time.

- Older homes can be "freed up" as people move into new units.
- Empty nesters can move out of larger homes into smaller homes close by.
- Over time, supply is in better synch with demand.



The slide features a diagram of a house with a keyhole in the front door and a large key placed in it, symbolizing the key to affordable housing.

Slide 15: Will higher density buildings impact prices?

This slide helps make the point that the primary driver of high housing prices is inadequate supply to meet demand. While it is true that many recently-built homes are expensive, that is largely because building new homes is also expensive. The slide provides a number of points related to drivers of housing costs and the importance of creating more housing. Edit the list of key points to make it as specific to your community as possible.

ATTACHMENT A: SLIDE NOTES



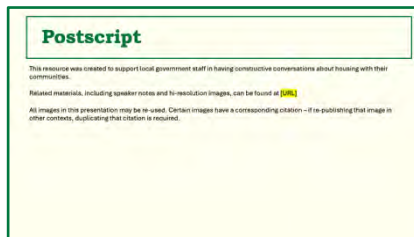
Slide 16: What will density mean for our sense of community?

There are understandable concerns about the loss of community character or even the loss of sense of community due to growth and development. This slide underscores a primary theme of this deck, connecting the need for more housing to the understanding of what community is: the people. While we could keep all of our buildings exactly the same as they are today, that wouldn't maintain the community. By creating more housing to provide more housing choices and support affordability we can actually strengthen and sustain community.



Slide 17: Thanks for joining the conversation!

Use this as a closing slide. Feel free to delete the credit logos and/or add your own.



Slide 18: Postscript

This slide provides information about the slide deck, other resources, and permissions for using the images in the deck. It is already marked as "Hidden" in PowerPoint, but it is also recommended to delete this slide from public-facing presentations.

For information about this material, please reach out to:

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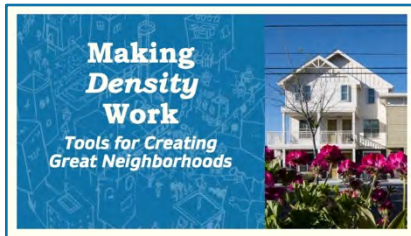
Making Housing Happen and related "Housing, Density and Design" resources were developed by [Community Planning Collaborative](#) for the [Regional Housing Technical Assistance Program of the Association of Bay Area Governments](#).

ATTACHMENT A: SLIDE NOTES

ATTACHMENT B: SLIDE NOTES

Presentation #2

MAKING DENSITY WORK



This deck builds upon the themes of Presentation #1, providing a deeper dive into how zoning, density and design are tools for creating more housing choice and more inclusive neighborhoods. The slide deck also provides examples of a variety of housing types that can fit into different neighborhood contexts, within different ranges of density. Each explanation of a housing type is complemented by real Bay Area examples, and template slides that can be customized for your community.



Slide 2: Why does housing choice matter?

The presentation starts off with a brief question for audience consideration and input, connecting personally to the different types of housing they have likely lived in over the course of their lives: from birth through today. The point is to underscore that housing needs change over time.



Slide 3: A great neighborhood provides housing options

Different housing options help to meet the needs of different households, as well as the changing needs of individual households. By providing a diversity of homes (different sizes, costs, locations and configurations...) we help create a diverse, stable and welcoming community where people can find the housing they need.



Slide 4: Tools for creating housing choices in our neighborhoods

This slide introduces tools that communities use to create different housing choices. It defines three broad categories: tools that shape buildings, tools that support affordability and tools that guide where and what we build. All of these tools work together to create great neighborhoods with diverse housing options.

ATTACHMENT B: SLIDE NOTES



Slide 5: Tools that define what, where and how much

This slide provides a high-level overview of a large and complex set of tools that communities use to determine what kinds of housing can be built, where it can be built, and the amount of it that can be built. It highlights the connection between different density ranges, different housing types, and the different kinds of households that are generally served. You can use this in addition to the housing type slides later in the slide deck to look more specifically at the density ranges and housing types that are the focus of your rezoning effort.



Slide 6: Parking, setbacks and landscape standards

Zoning and other development standards also help to shape new buildings and how they relate to the street and their surroundings. These tools include things such as setbacks, parking requirements and landscaping standards. The shape of a building and the design of street-facing areas can have a bigger impact on the neighborhood than the actual number of units in the building. These tools can and should consider the cost impact of different requirements. Sometimes development standards can make the type of housing we want to see impossible to build. We need to have a clear vision of the housing we want to see, and then structure our tools appropriately.



Side 7: Design standards or guidelines

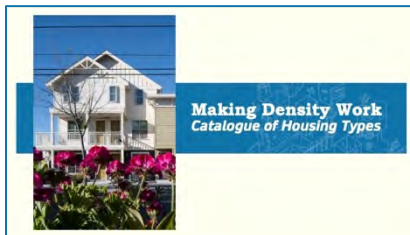
Design guidelines also help shape buildings and how they fit in their context. This includes green spaces, building architecture and materials, and the public and semi-public spaces around a building, as examples. Under California state law, some developments can only be reviewed using objective standards (i.e., standards that are not open to interpretation). Design tools should also consider the cost impact of different standards to avoid adding to the high price of new homes.

ATTACHMENT B: SLIDE NOTES



Slide 8: Tools that support affordability

Communities also have a number of tools that can be used to support greater affordability—by allowing more homes on a single property (smaller homes are generally more affordable), incentivizing or requiring housing that is affordable to households at different income levels (e.g., inclusionary zoning) and/or providing streamlined review for affordable housing (which is sometimes now required under state law). All of these help to reduce the per-unit cost of housing and facilitate more affordable housing outcomes.



Slides 9 - 34: Catalogue of Housing Types

The Catalogue of Housing Types provides slide sets for each of the following housing types:

- Townhomes
- Small Multi-Unit Buildings (Duplexes, Triplexes, JADUs etc.)
- Mixed Use Buildings
- Cottage Courts
- Low-Rise Housing
- Mid-Rise Housing

For each type, several slides are provided:

- Overview slide that defines this housing type
- Several examples of this housing type from Bay Area communities
- A template slide for showing one or more examples from your community.

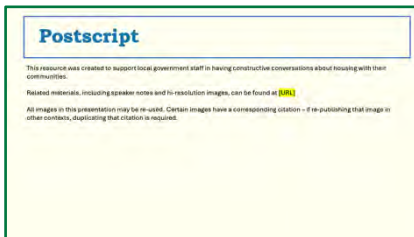
As always, edit the slides to make them as relevant to your context and project as possible. Also, consult the User Guide for more information on where and how you can find additional images that might be useful in your presentation.

ATTACHMENT B: SLIDE NOTES



Slide 35: Thanks for joining the conversation!

Use this as a closing slide. Feel free to delete the credit logos, and/or add your own.



Slide 36: Postscript

This slide provides information about the slide deck, other resources, and permissions for using the images in the deck. It is already marked as "Hidden" in PowerPoint, but consider also deleting it from any public-facing presentations.

For information about this material, please reach out to:

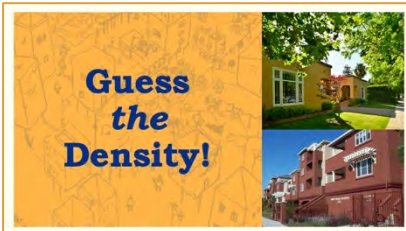
Clair A. McDevitt
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Making Housing Happen and related "Housing, Density and Design" resources were developed by [Community Planning Collaborative](#) for the [Regional Housing Technical Assistance Program of the Association of Bay Area Governments](#).

ATTACHMENT C: SLIDE NOTES

Activity #1

Guess the Density!



This deck is structured to support an interactive conversation about how the perceived and actual density of a development do not always align. It is intended to spark a more nuanced conversation that leads with “what is the type of housing we want” rather than an immediate negative response to “higher density.”



Slide 2: Context

Use this template slide to ground the activity in your local context. Explain the reason for having this conversation and, if applicable, the types of changes being considered or proposed. You may want to give examples of what kinds of buildings are currently allowed and what kinds of buildings might result if the changes are made.

Be sure to use language that gives participants a vocabulary they can understand and use. See the User Guide for examples.






Slide 3: Guess the Density! #1

This slide and the slides that follow are structured as an interactive exercise in which participants are asked to match the density number (dwelling units per acre) to the images shown. The intent is to help demonstrate how “density” can sometimes be a misleading metric for describing the size of a building and how it might fit even in a predominantly “low density” neighborhood.

There are three Guess the Density sections (numbered on the slides), with each section including an intro slide (the “game” slide); an answer slide; a key takeaways slide; and then a detailed slide with information about each of the buildings that was displayed. Consider deleting or rearranging sections to help guide the conversation based on your context. If the examples in a section are all irrelevant for your community, delete that section and replace it with examples from your community.

ATTACHMENT C: SLIDE NOTES

Guess the Density! #1 Answers

 Cherry Street 122 DU/A	 Alta Madrone 23 DU/A	 The Union Flats 72 DU/A
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Slide 4: Guess the Density! #1 Answers

This slide displays the correct answers to the preceding “Guess the Density” slide. Ask for a show of hands on how many people got 1, 2 or 3 of the answers correct. Ask them to talk about they they chose what they did.

Doesn't a higher number mean a bigger building?


Not always!


- Density measures homes per acre, not the size of the building.
- Density doesn't determine the character of the building – design does.
- How we experience density depends on many things: the size of the building, the size of the lot and how it relates to the street.
- A large single-family home on a small lot might look (and actually be) just as big as multiple smaller homes on the same lot.
- Let's look at these three examples...

Slide 5: Does a higher number mean a bigger building?

This slide provides some key points you might want to share to help explain why the numbers might not have lined up as people expected. Edit them to make other points you think are important for your community conversation (or to remove points you don't think are helpful).

Cherry Street


	122 Homes per Acre (DU/A) 6 homes on a 0.05-acre lot Market rate Built in 2000 In a mid-density neighborhood close to downtown
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Slide 6: Cherry Street

This slide provides basic information about the “highest density” example in this set of housing developments. This example is from Santa Rosa in Sonoma County.

Alta Madrone


	23 Homes per Acre (DU/A) 48 homes on a 2.1-acre lot 100% affordable housing Includes community garden, playground and other amenities In a single-family neighborhood near schools and green space
---	--




Slide 7: Alta Madrone

This slide provides information about the “lowest density” example in this set of housing developments. This example is from the City of Sonoma in Sonoma County.

Union Flats

	72 Homes per Acre (DU/A) 155 homes on a 2.14-acre lot Affordable housing Residential gardens and shared open space Transit adjacent, and near grocery stores and pharmacies
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Slide 8: Union Flats

This slide provides information about the middle density example in this set of housing developments. This example is from Union City in Alameda County.

ATTACHMENT C: SLIDE NOTES

Guess the Density! #2



Match the number of homes per acre (DU/A) to the image you think it corresponds to.


35 DU/A	19 DU/A	26 DU/A
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Slide 9: Guess the Density! #2

It's time for round two!

This slide introduces a new set of three example developments and asks participants to match the density (expressed as dwelling units per acre) to each example. Note that the density range for these examples is much narrower than in the first set of three.

Guess the Density! #2 Answers



Laguna Vista 19 DU/A	Pink Palaces 35 DU/A	Half Moon Village 26 DU/A
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Slide 10: Guess the Density! #2 Answers

This slide tells the meeting participants which answer applies to each of the images. Ask the room for a show of hands on how many people got each one correct. Ask them to express how they arrived at each of their answers.

Many older residential buildings that we love couldn't be built today!


- It's not uncommon for older buildings in existing neighborhoods to be higher density, because we used to generally build smaller units and had more flexible regulations than we do today.
- Many of the duplexes, triplexes, and smaller apartment buildings that we walk past every day could not be built under the density limits we currently have in place.

Slide 11: Many older residential buildings that we love couldn't be built today!

In addition to discussing the points participants raise, use this slide to make your own key points. The bullets provided point out that the older buildings that exist in many communities are appreciated for their character and "fit," and yet many times could not be built under the zoning in place today.

The slides in Presentation 2: Making Density Work can help explain the other ways in which buildings are regulated to help them fit, even when they contain multiple homes.

Laguna Vista



19
Homes per Acre
(DU/A)

92 homes on a 4.79 lot
Mixed affordable and market-rate
214 parking spaces
Highway-adjacent, close to some retail

Slide 12: Laguna Vista

This slide provides basic information about the "lowest density" example in this set of housing developments. This example is from Foster City in San Mateo County.

ATTACHMENT C: SLIDE NOTES

Pink Palaces



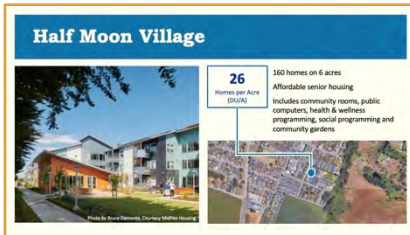
35 Homes per Acre (DU/A)

12 homes on an 0.35-acre lot
Market-rate housing
in a mixed-density neighborhood close to downtown, transit, schools and green space

Slide 13: Pink Palaces

This slide provides basic information about the “highest density” example in this set of housing developments. This example is from Santa Rosa in Sonoma County.

Half Moon Village



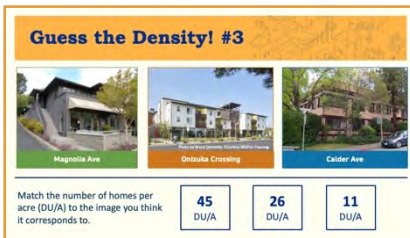
26 Homes per Acre (DU/A)

160 homes on 6 acres
Affordable senior housing
Includes community rooms, public computers, health & wellness programming, social programming and community gardens

Slide 14: Half Moon Village

This slide provides information about the middle density example in this set of housing developments. This example is from Half Moon Bay in San Mateo County.

Guess the Density! #3



Match the number of homes per acre (DU/A) to the image you think it corresponds to.

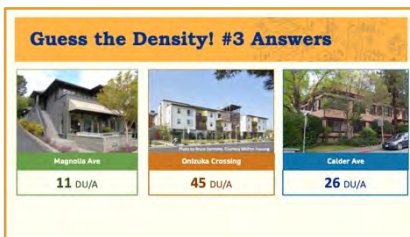
45 DU/A 26 DU/A 11 DU/A

Slide 15: Guess the Density! #3

Now for round 3!

Folks should be getting the hang of it by now, and are probably second-guessing their assumptions...

Guess the Density! #3 Answers



11 DU/A 45 DU/A 26 DU/A

Slide 16: Guess the Density! #3 Answers

This time the answers might be more aligned with what a passerby might expect. The highest number applies to the biggest building, and the lowest number to the smallest building. How many people got the answers correct?

Generally, higher densities = bigger buildings

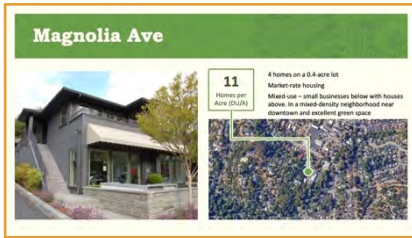
But not always! Buildings are shaped in different ways:

- Limits on height and requirements for setbacks.
- Floor area ratios that control the size of the building based on the size of the property.
- Design standards and guidelines that shape the building's architecture and its relationship to the street.

Slide 17: Generally, higher densities = bigger buildings

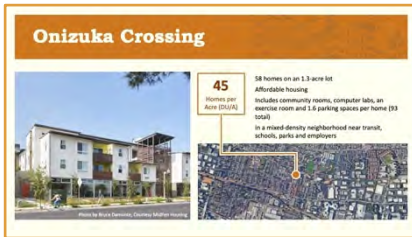
This is an important slide. The purpose of this activity is NOT to make the case that density doesn't matter. It does matter. And typically, higher densities result in bigger buildings. But it is very important to underscore that it is not always the case. A critical part of the conversation is being clear about the kind of housing we want to see in the community, and then putting in place the tools to create it. We shouldn't be automatically opposed to increases in density, because it might actually help us create the things we want.

ATTACHMENT C: SLIDE NOTES



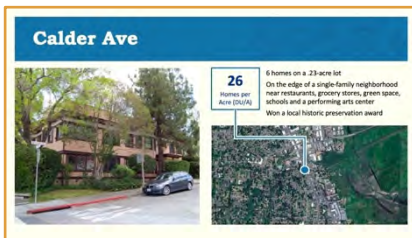
Slide 18: Magnolia Avenue

This slide provides information about the lowest density example in this set of housing developments. This example is from Larkspur in Marin County.



Slide 19: Onizuka Crossing

This slide provides information about the highest density example in this set of housing developments. This example is from Sunnyvale in Santa Clara County.



Slide 20: Calder Avenue

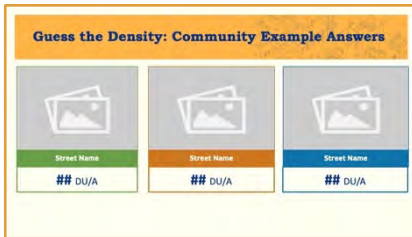
This slide provides information about the middle density example in this set of housing developments. This example is from Sebastopol in Sonoma County.



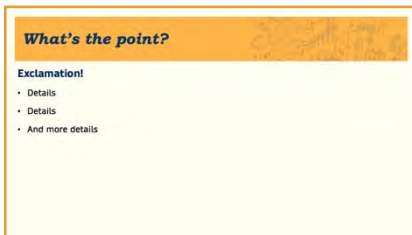
Slides 21 – 23:

Guess the Density! Community Examples

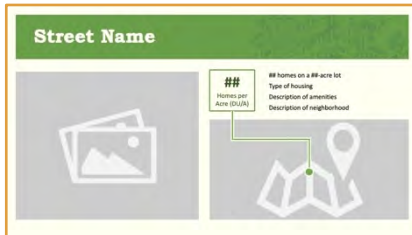
The remainder of the slides in this deck provide templates for creating your own “Guess the Density!” slides using local examples. Be sure to select examples that can act as conversation starters and prompt productive conversations around shared community goals and potential or proposed changes to local zoning.



You may want to highlight housing that is well known and well-liked and explain the zoning changes required to encourage those types of housing. Older housing stock often offers good examples of attractively designed buildings with higher densities than most people may realize, but its also helpful and important to include more recent examples that are closer to what might actually get built. Refer to the User Guide for on image selection.

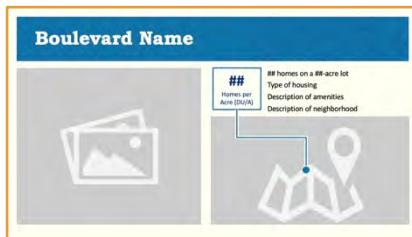


ATTACHMENT C: SLIDE NOTES



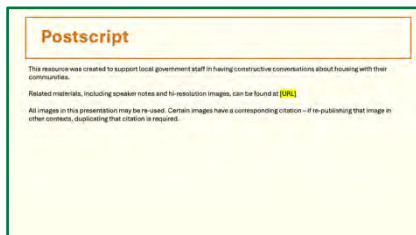
Slides 24 – 26: Community Example Detail Slides

Use these slide templates to provide details about the community examples you chose.



Slide 27: Thanks for joining the conversation!

Use this as a closing slide. Feel free to delete the credit logos, and/or add your own.



Slide 28: Postscript

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ATTACHMENT C: SLIDE NOTES

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ATTACHMENT D: SLIDE NOTES

Activity #2

Housing Choices for a Better Future



Slide 1: Housing Choices for a Better Future

This slide deck provides the structure for engaging community members in a conversation about how housing can help to create the future we want. It strives to help people understand that change is inevitable, but that we have the opportunity to shape the change that we want. It underscores that conversations about development, growth and zoning are conversations about people: the friends, family and neighbors we want to be a part of our community into the future.



Slide 2: What do you love about your community today?

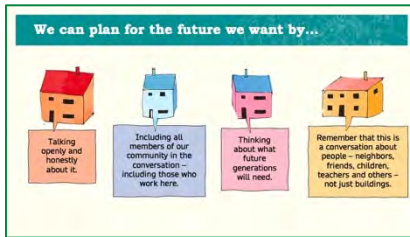
Planning doesn't take place in a vacuum. It's important to start the conversation with identifying the things we most like about the community today. While people might identify specific buildings, places or overall community character, it is also likely that they will identify things like diversity, being a great place for families, their neighbors, access to green space and other benefits.



Slide 3: Change is hard, but also inevitable

It's easy to think that stopping physical change in a community will somehow stop all change. But we know that's not the case. If no new housing is created, the most likely outcome will be that home prices and rents will go up, and some of the very things identified as needing to remain stable will be eroded or lost. In fact, some of the impacts of not creating enough housing can seem counter-intuitive, with environmental impacts being greater from *not* allowing more housing closer to jobs and services, as people have to commute longer distances and outlying green spaces get turned into needed housing.

ATTACHMENT D: SLIDE NOTES



Slide 4: We can plan for the future we want

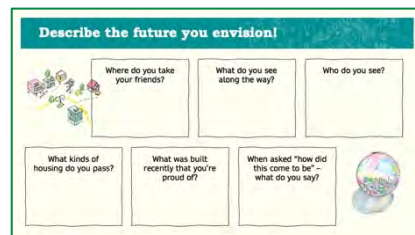
Edit this slide to make points that will resonate most with your community. Underscore that housing conversations are not just about the people who live here today, but about planning for the people who will live here 50 years from now. Encourage people to speak openly and honestly, but also to be respectful of different points of view. Being a community is about working together, listening and finding common ground.



Slide 5: Envisioning the future we want

Now comes the fun part: imagining the future we want.

Use the prompt from the slide or edit it to something you think will work best for your purposes. The idea is to encourage people to let go of thinking about all the obstacles and all the things they *don't* want to see. What would things look like if we were successful in creating the future they desire?

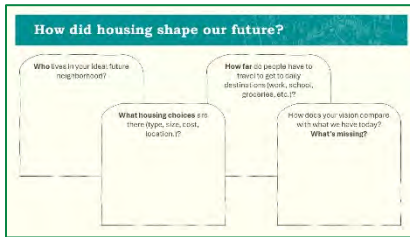


Slide 6: Describe the future you envision!

Be sure to challenge the group to think broadly and deeply about their vision. It should not just be about the buildings they see, but about the people who are there, the activities and amenities available, and even the process of making their vision a reality. You can facilitate this part of the conversation in any number of ways. Here are some fun ideas:

- Give everyone a piece of paper and colored markers and ask them to take 5 to 10 minutes to draw their vision first, and then go around the room and share each person's drawing.
- Break into small groups and have kits of loose parts (pipe cleaners, egg cartons, string, plastic dinos...) that people can use to build a model of their ideal future. Have someone at each group record key ideas that come out of their conversation in addition to hearing the group describe their model.
- Ask people to close their eyes and think about their vision. Then "popcorn" around the room to capture a single word or short phrase that best captures what was in their head.

ATTACHMENT D: SLIDE NOTES



Slide 7: How does housing shape our future?

While the vision exercise was purposefully broad, this slide prompts deeper thinking focused on housing. Who lives here? What housing choices are available, and where? How does the vision compare to today? What's missing? What's the same? If people say that everything is the same (the buildings, the people, etc.), find a nice way to remind them that change is inevitable....

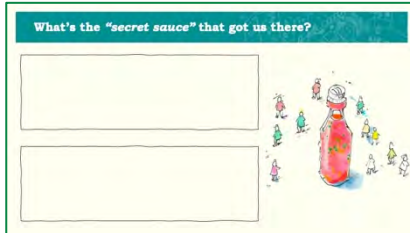
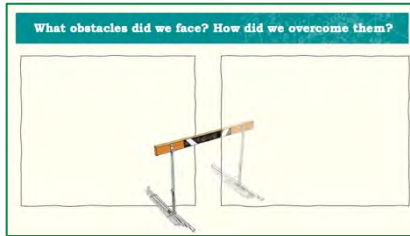


Slide 8: Who is involved...?

Slide 9: What obstacles did we face...?

Slide 10: What's the secret sauce...?"

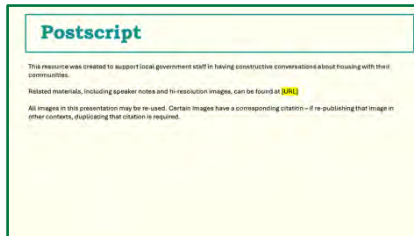
These slides can be edited to focus in on questions you think are most important to consider in your community conversation. The three slides provided are focused on getting specific about who needs to be involved, how to overcome anticipated obstacles, and the sometimes intangible factors that can contribute to success. The point is to position your participants as problem-solvers who can start to see themselves as allies in working together to achieve the vision they just described.



Slide 11: Thanks for joining the conversation!

Use this as a closing slide. Feel free to delete the credit logos, and/or add your own.

ATTACHMENT D: SLIDE NOTES



Slide 12: Postscript

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