

Chapter 14 Land Use Code Division 30 Revisions: Low-Income & Workforce Housing Bonuses

Incentivizing Affordable Housing Development in Priority Growth Areas

Portland's Plan, the City's new comprehensive plan, identifies affordability and supply of housing as one of the city's most challenging issues. As part of a broad effort to address this challenge, the City has recently developed a set of proposed changes to the affordable housing ordinance, Division 30. The City Council's Housing Committee originally developed these amendments in the early spring of 2017. They are now being reviewed by the City's Planning Board.

Why amend Division 30?

The City's existing land use ordinance provides some incentives for affordable housing development, including density and dimensional bonuses, and reductions in parking requirements and review fees. However, these incentives have had modest effect on the city's supply of affordable housing. The proposed amendments to Division 30 are designed to encourage further housing creation, particularly in the city's priority growth areas, by increasing density, dimensional, and height bonuses for affordable housing projects in certain zones. These bonuses should make affordable housing developers more competitive in terms of purchasing sites and securing funding.

What are the amendments?

The proposed amendments encourage the creation of affordable housing with two incentives:

1. Residential projects in certain commercial and mixed-use zones (the B-1 and B-1b; B-2 and B-2b; B-3, B-3b, and B-3c; B-4; B-5; R-7; and R-P zones) with affordable housing components would qualify for:
 - Density bonuses of up to 2.5 times the base density = *more residential units per lot*
 - Increased building heights of up to 25 feet = *taller buildings to accommodate more housing*
 - Decreased front, side, and/or rear yard setbacks = *larger buildable area*

The bonuses would depend on the proportion of low-income or workforce housing proposed.

2. Planned Residential Unit Developments (PRUDs) in the R-3 and R-5 zones in which half of the units are designated as low-income or workforce housing would be eligible for:
 - Density bonus of 2 times the base density
 - Decreased setbacks

Projects taking advantage of any of these incentives would be required to keep the units as affordable for the longest term permitted under federal, state, and local law.

Stay up to date with the proposed amendments and meeting schedule by visiting the City's website: www.portlandmaine.gov/Division30

How Can You Get Involved?

Whether you are a neighbor, a developer, or an advocate, the City of Portland wants your input on these proposed affordable housing incentives.

There are several ways to get involved:

1. Listen or speak up at a public meeting – the next Planning Board workshop will be Thursday, June 22
2. Send us your comments via email planningboard@portlandmaine.gov