



City of Santa Barbara

AVERAGE UNIT-SIZE DENSITY INCENTIVE PROGRAM COMMON QUESTIONS

What is the Average Unit-Size Density Incentive Program?

On July 30, 2013, the City Council adopted the Average Unit-Size Density (AUD) Incentive Program, SBMC Chapter 30.150. The AUD Program is intended to encourage smaller, more affordable housing units through the application of increased densities and development incentives in selected areas of the City.

The AUD Program will be in effect until August 31, 2020. Any application for new units that is deemed complete prior to the expiration of the Program may continue to be processed under the AUD Incentive Program.

Where is the AUD Program permitted?

The AUD Program is permitted in the following zones: R-M, R-MH, O-R, C-R, C-G, and M-C, as shown on the [Average Unit-Size Density Incentive Program Map](#). Please note that lots subject to the USS overlay zone may be developed in accordance with the AUD Program if it is otherwise allowed by the base zoning of the lot, but not all incentives may apply.

The AUD Program does not apply to properties located in the Coastal Zone (CZ Overlay Zone). However, applicants wanting to develop projects with residential densities and incentives allowed by the AUD program may apply for Modifications to allow an equivalent level of development. Please contact Planning Staff to learn more about which incentives may be found consistent with existing coastal policies and to determine the level of coastal review.

What are the density and unit size ranges allowed by the AUD Program?

The AUD Program consists of the following density tiers based on the General Plan Land Use Designation for the lot (see attached AUD Program density table):

Medium-High Density – The Medium-High density tier applies to lots with a General Plan land use designation of Medium-High Density Residential. It allows densities ranging from 15-27 dwelling units per acre. The maximum average unit size for the Medium High Density ranges from 905 to 1,450 square feet of floor area depending on the number of units per acre being developed.

High Density – The High Density tier applies to lots with a General Plan land use designation of High Density Residential. It allows densities ranging from 28-36 dwelling units per acre. The maximum average unit size for the High Density would range from 970 to 1,245 square feet of floor area depending on the number of units per acre being developed.

Priority Housing Overlay – The Priority Housing Overlay applies to lots with a General Plan land use designation of High Density Residential and lots zoned M-C as shown on the Average Unit-Size Density Incentive Program Map. The overlay allows additional units above the High Density incentive program, with densities ranging from 37-63 dwelling units per acre and maximum average unit sizes ranging from 811 to 970 square feet of floor area depending on the number of units per acre being developed. The Priority Housing Overlay is only available to rental, employer sponsored, and limited equity cooperative housing.

What if the project density is less than the assigned AUD Program density tier?

Projects may develop using the AUD Program at a residential density that is less than the density range specified in the density tier assigned to the lot by its General Plan land use designation; however, the project density must be greater than the base density for the zone in which the lot is located. In addition, the maximum average unit size for the project shall not exceed the maximum average unit size for the applicable residential density tier specified on the [Average Unit-Size Density Incentive Program Table](#) (as shown at the end of SBMC§30.150).

Can the maximum average unit size of a project be less than that specified on the AUD Table?

Projects may develop using the AUD Program at a maximum average unit size that is less than the average unit size specified in the density tier assigned to the lot by General Plan land use designation.

For example, a project developed under the AUD Program at 20 dwelling units per acre, cannot exceed a maximum average unit size of 1,090 square feet for the project, but would be permitted to be developed with an average unit size less than 1,090 square feet.

Note that the minimum unit size for a studio residential unit is 220 square feet and 400 square feet for all other residential units, unless the unit is an affordable efficiency unit, see SBMC§30.140.150.B.1.

What if a project chooses not to develop under the AUD Program?

The base density for multi-family and commercial zones (where residential use is allowed) will continue to be a range of 12-18 dwelling units per acre based on the Zoning Ordinance standards (SBMC Table 30.20.030.B). New projects choosing not to develop under the AUD Program can develop at base density standards. These projects must comply with SBMC Table 30.20.030.B, as applicable. AUD development incentives will not apply.

Can more bedrooms be added to an existing, permitted Variable Density project?

While the AUD Program is in effect, the variable density provisions in SBMC§30.140.220 are suspended. During this time, alterations and additions to existing variable density projects will be permitted. If an existing, permitted development conforms to the variable density requirements, additions (including bedrooms) may be added, as long as the project does not result in additional units and the project continues to conform to all variable density provisions.

Can new units be added to an existing, permitted Variable Density project?

While the AUD Program is in effect, the variable density provisions in SBMC§30.140.220 are suspended. During this time, alterations and additions to existing variable density projects that result in net new residential units will not be allowed UNLESS the entire property is revised to comply with the AUD Program requirements.

What is considered priority housing?

Priority Housing includes three categories of housing: 1) Rental Housing; 2) Employer-Sponsored Housing; and 3) Limited-Equity Housing Cooperatives. In order to qualify for the density incentives allowed by the Priority Housing Overlay density tier the following requirements must be met:

Rental Housing – A written covenant must be recorded, by which the owner agrees to maintain the rental housing use for as long as the property is developed and maintained at the densities allowed by the AUD Program.

Employer-Sponsored Housing – The project should contain a range of rents or purchase prices, some of which are affordable to households earning up to 200% of the Area Median Income at the time of initial occupancy. A written covenant must be recorded, by which the owner agrees to limit the occupancy of each unit as a primary residence, and which includes at least one person per household who is employed within the south coast region of Santa Barbara County.

Limited-Equity Housing Cooperatives – The units must be affordable to households earning up to 250% of the Area Median Income at the time of purchase.

What additional development standard incentives are allowed by the AUD Program?

To further encourage the construction of units that achieve the objectives of the AUD Program, development standard incentives are permitted as follows:

Maximum Height, in the Central Business District, in the Priority Housing Overlay, and the C-G and M-C zones of 48 feet.

Setbacks – AUD projects shall observe the setback standards in the zone unless otherwise described below. However, projects developed with market rate condominium units on lots designated Medium-High Density Residential and subject to the USS overlay zone shall observe the USS zone front setback standards as required by SBMC Chapter 30.85.

AUD setbacks for AUD projects in O-R, C-R, C-G, and M-C zones			
	Front	Interior <i>(Adjacent to Residential Zone)</i>	Interior <i>(Adjacent to Nonresidential Zone)</i>
AUD Setback	5 feet variable	6 feet variable	None

Applicable setbacks for AUD projects in the USS Overlay zone		
	Medium-High Density	High Density/Priority Housing Overlay
Rental	AUD setbacks	AUD setbacks
Market Rate Ownership	USS setbacks	AUD setbacks

Parking – AUD projects shall observe the residential parking requirements identified below. However, AUD parking incentives do not apply to projects developed with market rate condominium units on lots designated Medium-High Density Residential and subject to the USS overlay zone.

- a. **Vehicle Parking, In the Central Business District** - Provide a maximum of one covered or uncovered parking space per residential unit.
- b. **Vehicle Parking, Outside the Central Business District** - Provide a minimum of one covered or uncovered parking space per residential unit.
- c. **Bicycle Parking** - Provide a minimum of one covered and secured bicycle parking space per residential unit.
- d. **Guest Parking** - No guest parking required.

Open Yard – AUD projects shall provide open yard as described below. However, projects developed with market rate condominium units on lots designated Medium-High Density Residential and subject to the USS overlay zone shall observe the Open Yard requirements required per SBMC§30.140.140.

Average Unit-Size Density Incentive Program - Common Questions

O-R, C-R, C-G, and M-C Zones		R-M and R-MH Zones
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private Open Yard for each unit per SBMC§30.140.140 • 15' x 15' Common Open Yard (4 or more units) 	See SBMC§30.140.140
B	Alternative Open Yard Design that meets the following standards may replace “A” above: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15% of the lot area • one area 20' x 20' (on any floor) 	

Does my AUD rental project require Planning Commission review?

Planning Commission review is required if 1) the project site has a High Density Residential land use designation or the project is proposed under the AUD Program Priority Housing Overlay; AND 2) the project site has a combined net lot area of 15,000 square feet or greater.

Note that all proposed condominium projects require Staff Hearing Officer or Planning Commission review, as applicable.

Should I apply for review by the Pre-Application Review Team (PRT)?

Review by the Pre-Application Review Team is necessary if Planning Commission review is required. PRT review is optional, **but highly recommended** for all other AUD projects. The Team is composed of staff members from the Planning Division, Building & Safety Division, Fire Department, Public Works Engineering Division and Public Works Transportation Division, as well as the Creeks Division and Environmental Services (trash and recycling) Division, as necessary. The benefits of a PRT review are: consolidated and coordinated preliminary review of your project, and identification of important requirements up front, which might otherwise not be identified until the project is in plan check for building permits. This can save time and money in the long run. Please contact Planning Staff to learn more about the process and determine if it might be beneficial for your proposal.

****For further information regarding the City’s Average Unit-Size Density Incentive Program, please contact the Planning and Zoning Counter at (805) 564-5578.**

Information is also available at http://www.santabarbaraca.gov/services/planning/aud_program.asp.