

## **MEMORANDUM**

TO:

PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM:

STEPHANIE DEWOLFE, AICP, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF

PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

DATE:

OCTOBER 24, 2012

SUBJECT:

GENERAL PLAN LAND USE DIAGRAM - FLOOR AREA RATIO RANGES

At the Planning Commission meeting on October 10, 2012, there was a question concerning the rationale for providing a range of floor area ratios (FARs) in the draft General Plan Land Use Diagram's legend. The following provides an explanation for the use of a range of FARs each having a minimum value of zero.

The existing General Plan Land Use Diagram features a legend with five residential designations. Each of the residential designations include a minimum density of zero and a successively increasing maximum density (for example, Low Density Residential 0-6 dwelling units/acre; Low-Medium Density Residential 0-12 dwelling units/acre; Medium Density Residential 0-16 dwelling units/acre, etc.). The draft Land Use Diagram is proposing new mixed-use designations that follow the same format as the residential designations in the existing Diagram's legend, by allowing a range of allowed densities starting at zero (such as Low Mixed Use 0.0-1.0 FAR, Med Mixed Use 0.0-2.25 FAR, and High Mixed Use 2.25-3.0 FAR).

Setting a minimum density of zero is a practice that allows property owners to build projects that are less than the maximum density without requiring a General Plan amendment. In some cases, smaller project might be beneficial because they could have less environmental impacts on the area. Without a range of FARs, projects below the FAR on the General Plan Land Use Diagram would require a General Plan amendment

For example, the Urth Café, under construction at 592 E. Colorado Blvd. has approval for a project with a floor area ratio of 1.0. If the designation on the General Plan Land Use Diagram was High Mixed Use 2.25-3.0, the project would not be in conformance with the General Plan and could not be approved.