

# Fontana: A Change in Attitude

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Before 2003, density was a four-letter word in Fontana. The highest permitted density was 12 dwelling units per acre, and projects were criticized for lacking 10,000-sq.-ft. lots. That attitude is changing. In his State of the City address Mayor Mark Nuaimi said, "When I joined this city council 10 years ago, the attitude in Fontana was if you didn't have a 7,200sq.-ft. lot minimum, the project wasn't quality. As you will see the quality of life we are developing in Fontana is based upon amenities in the communities, not the size of the backyard of your lot."

The shift toward a wider variety of housing options stems from the city's anticipation of growth in employment, particularly in what is referred to as the Corporate Corridor along Interstate 15. "Imagine 5 million square feet of office, entertainment, and hotel development along the I-15 corridor," said Nuaimi. "Imagine tens of thousands of jobs in our own community that keep us working, living, and playing in Fontana." To attract those employees, the city will need to build more housing, and lots of it. However, only so many homes can be built at 7,200 square feet per lot, and the city must be able to offer a variety of high-quality housing options.

With the adoption of the 2003 General Plan and update of the zoning code, Fontana increased the maximum density to 24 units per acre. This increase was brought about through discussions with the public, property owners, and developers who sought to increase the variety of housing available in the city. To guarantee that developers could reach the maximum density of 24 units per acre, the city has developed an optional density stands policy. In the R-3 zoning district, the maximum number of dwelling units allowed per adjusted gross acre is 12.1. To increase that density, up to a maximum of 24 dwelling units per acre, projects must incorporate additional amenities and features to ensure high-quality, highdensity development. Many of the amenities reflect a desire to balance density with open space, ensuring that the city maintains its suburban character. Such amenities include large open lawn areas at least 50 feet wide or deep, a quarter-mile dedicated jogging/walking trail, large flower and vegetable gardens, and playgrounds.

The city is reviewing three projects offering 546 units at densities of up to 22 units per acre. All three qualified for the high density ranges using the optional density standards. "Developers realize the importance of providing additional amenities to not only achieve higher densities, but to create a sense of community within their projects," says Kevin Ryan, senior planner at Fontana. "As a governmental regulation, the costs incurred from the added amenities are relatively low and don't seem to be posing a constraint to the production of multifamily housing in Fontana."

The city is seeing an abundance of growth through specific plans, adding not just homes but complete neighborhoods and communities. For example, the Fontana Promenade Specific Plan proposes medium- and high-density multifamily units within a 125-acre masterplanned, mixed-use community. The Promenade site is in the northern part of Fontana next to the Fontana Auto Center and the 210 Freeway. With densities of up to 24 units per acre, the Promenade would offer more than 900 high-density multifamily units, providing an alternative suburban/urban living environment, with unique

housing types, designs, and sizes that include lofts above retail and office space, townhouses, and garden lofts, as well as condominiums in a village setting. Linking the residences to a 500,000-sq.-ft. retail center would be a pedestrian bridge spanning Walnut Avenue. The bridge would include the potential for access to 20,000 sq. ft. of specialty retail. Another project is the Ventana at Duncan Canyon, a mixed-use community adjacent to I-15. Ventana would have up to 672 medium- and high-density multifamily units at densities of up to 20 units per acre, as well as a 210,000-sq.-ft. office building along I-15.

A third facet of the city's multifamily housing strategy is housing for seniors. The city permits the development of seniors' housing in commercial zones with no minimum lot size or maximum density requirement. As a result, the Fontana Housing Authority recently completed three phases of the Downtown Senior Affordable Housing Project at densities exceeding 30 dwelling units per acre. (Phase I opened in 2003, phases II and III in 2005). The project is within walking distance of public transportation, various medical facilities, the post office, a grocery store, and several churches. All 293 housing units are affordable to verylowincome seniors (those with income levels at or below 50 percent of the area median income), using a combination of California Tax Credit Allocation Committee (TCAV), HOME, and redevelopment funds. In addition, a nonprofit entity will provide a wide variety of ancillary services in conjunction with the development, including meals, nutritional counseling, health services, and recreational activities. A fourth phase is expected to bring another 90 affordable units to very-low-income households.