What is Maximum Allowable Residential Density (MARD)

The Maximum Allowable Residential Density (MARD), sometimes referred to as base density, is the maximum number of dwelling units that may be built on a site before any density bonuses. Defined in state law (California Government Code Section 65915), MARD is the highest number of units permitted by a parcel's existing zoning designation, any applicable specific plan, or General Plan land-use designation. A site's MARD establishes baseline eligibility for Los Angeles' Citywide Housing Incentive Program (CHIP), which is made up of three key programs: the State Density Bonus Program (LAMC 12.22.A.37), the Mixed Income Incentive Program (LAMC 12.22.A.38), and the Affordable Housing Incentive Program (LAMC 12.22.A.39). A site's MARD calculation does not apply to projects outside of CHIP.

Each CHIP program uses MARD for varying eligibility thresholds. These thresholds are outlined in the pre-application forms for each project type and highlighted below.

- For the State Density Bonus Program (LAMC 12.22 A.37), a project is only eligible if its MARD permits the construction of at least five units.

- In contrast, the Mixed Income Incentive Program (MIIP) (LAMC 12.22 A.38) measures eligibility by total proposed units (MARD + proposed density bonus). Most projects must include at least five units, with modified incentives for projects that propose less than five units.

- The Affordable Housing Incentive Program (AHIP) (LAMC 12.22 A.39) is available to projects with a MARD of less than five units but measures a project's eligibility for incentives based on whether at least five units are permitted. The program offers one set of bonuses when a site's MARD allows fewer than five units, and a more generous set of bonuses when the MARD allows five or more units.

In short, the Density Bonus Program uses MARD to determine eligibility, while MIIP and AHIP use total proposed units in a project to determine if a project qualifies for these programs. All three programs, however, require analyzing MARD in pre-application forms.

As stated above, under State Density Bonus Law, a site's MARD is based on the greatest number of units allowed under the zoning ordinance, specific plan, or land use element of the general plan. If a range of density is permitted, the MARD is based on the greatest number of units allowed by the specific zoning range, specific plan, or land use element of the general plan applicable to a parcel. MARD does not include the calculation of any Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs).

Calculating MARD

To determine a site's MARD, begin by utilizing the City's Zone Information and Map Access System (ZIMAS) to find property level zoning information. *Following this section includes a guide on how to navigate ZIMAS.*

A site's permitted density is a function of the required minimum lot area per dwelling unit. The density allowed on the subject site is calculated by taking your total Lot Area, as it existed prior to any street dedication pursuant to LAMC Section 12.37, and dividing it by what is permitted by the least restrictive underlying Zone, Overlay/Specific Plan, or General Plan Land Use Corresponding Zone's density factor[1-2].

The Maximum Allowable Residential Density (MARD), which is the highest density allowed across all factors, becomes the maximum number of dwelling units a site may build before any bonuses are applied. Reference the Generalized Summary of Zoning Regulations for density regulations for different zones. The following examples demonstrate how to calculate MARD:

Project Site A

Lot Size:	7,500 sq ft
Density Allowed by Zone:	RD1.5 → *Density is 1,500 SF per Dwelling Unit*
Specific Plan:	N/A
General Plan Land Use (GPLU):	Medium Residential
GPLU's Least Restrictive Corresponding Zone:	R3 → *Density is 800 SF per Dwelling Unit*
Least Restrictive Density Factor	= 800 sq ft/ Dwelling Unit

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[1] Article 2. LAMC 12.04, "...The order of restrictiveness of these zones, the first being the most restrictive and last being the least restrictive, is as follows: OS, A1, A2, RA, RE, RS, R1, RU, RZ, RW1, R2, RD, RMP, RW2, R3, RAS3, R4, RAS4, R5, CR, C1, C1.5, C4, C2, C5, CM, MR1, M1, MR2, M2, M3 and PF."
[2] Whichever density ratio has the lowest value will offer the highest density and greatest number of dwelling units.

Lot Size *(include any ½ of alleys)*	7,500	SF (a)
Density allowed by Zone *(includes Q's and Overlays)*	1,500	SF of lot area per DU (b)
Density allowed by GPLU's Least Restrictive Corresponding Zone	800	SF of lot area per DU (c)
Density allowed by Specific Plan	N/A	SF of lot area per DU (d)
Maximum Allowable Residential Density (MARD) *(Lot Size divided by the highest density allowed in (b) (c) (d) , round up to the nearest whole number)*	10	units

7,500/800 = 9.38
(Rounds up to 10 units)

Project Site B

Lot Size:	10,000 sq ft
Density Allowed by Zone:	[Q]C2 → *Density is 800 square feet per Dwelling Unit including Q*
General Plan Land Use (GPLU):	Neighborhood Commercial
GPLU's Least Restrictive Corresponding Zone:	C1.5, CR, C2, C4, RAS3 → C2 Density is 400 square feet per Dwelling Unit including Q
Overlay/Specific Plan:	R3 → *Density is 800 square feet per Dwelling Unit*
Least Restrictive Density Factor	= 400 sq ft/ Dwelling Unit (C2 zone density)

Lot Size *(include any ½ of alleys)*	10,000	SF (a)
Density allowed by Zone	800	SF of lot area per DU (b)

Citywide Housing Incentive Program:
Calculating Base and Maximum Allowable Residential Density

(includes Q's and Overlays)

Density allowed by GPLU's Least Restrictive Corresponding Zone	400	SF of lot area per DU (c)
Density allowed by Specific Plan	800	SF of lot area per DU (d)
Maximum Allowable Residential Density (MARD) *(Lot Size divided by the highest density allowed in (b) (c) (d) , round up to the nearest whole number)*	25	units

10,000/400 = 25

Sites zoned with a density limited by floor area (unlimited density) are advised to contact the Affordable Housing Services Section at planning.priorityhousing@lacity.org.

For questions or additional assistance when determining the density allowed by zoning, schedule an in-person or virtual appointment with the Planning Counter.

Navigating ZIMAS

1. **Access ZIMAS**

   ○ Follow the link to access the Zone Information and Map Access System (ZIMAS) https://zimas.lacity.org/

2. **Plug in your site address into ZIMAS.**

   [close]

   SEARCH BY:

   Address
   Street Intersection
   Assessor Parcel No.
   PIN Number
   Legal Description
   MapSheet
   Case Number
   Community Plan Area
   Council District
   Neighborhood Council

   SEARCH BY ADDRESS:

   To search by property address, enter its house number in the first field and enter its street name in the second field below. Click GO when ready. Alternatively, you can click on the menu items on the left to search by other methods such as Street Intersection, Assessor Parcel Number, Council District, etc.

   House Number:

   Example: Enter '14400'

   Street Name:

   Note: Do not use prefixes or suffixes
   Example: For W Van Nuys Blvd, enter 'van nuys'

   Click "GO" to start the search: GO

   ☐ Display resulting parcel in a new popup for comparison?

3. **Find the lot area through the Address/Legal Tab**

   ○ In the left hand navigation tab, you will see Address/Legal Tab with drop down arrows that show you information critical to your site. A parcel's lot size is labeled "Lot/Parcel Area (Calculated)."

   ○ If your project includes multiple properties, be sure to select them all to determine lot size. To do this, find the "Select parcels" tool then go to the Select Parcels pop-up to "Select by Line" to be able select all the applicable properties on the map. Once all parcels are selected, click the "Show total area for selected parcels"

   ○ The total lot area will be used to calculate the number of MARD units.

   ZIMAS

   Search

   1918 S STANFORD AVE   Font: A A A +/-

   ▼ Address/Legal

Site Address	1918 S STANFORD AVE
Site Address	901 E 20TH ST
ZIP Code	90011
PIN Number	121-5A209 246
Lot/Parcel Area (Calculated)	6,000.0 (sq ft)
Thomas Brothers Grid	PAGE 634 - GRID E7
Assessor Parcel No. (APN)	5131007025
Tract	MENLO PARK SUBDIVISION NO. 2

4. **Find the site's zoning, land use and specific plan designations through the Planning and Zoning Tab**

○ Find and expand the Planning and Zoning tab. Here you will find your site's Underlying Zoning, General Plan Land Use (GPLU) and applicable Specific Plan Area (Note, not all sites are within a Specific Plan).

○ Find the parcel's underlying zoning designation listed beside 'Zoning'. Review the zone's residential density standards (in LAMC Article 2). Density in Los Angeles is regulated as a lot area per dwelling unit ratio. For example, in the RD2 zone the ratio is 1 dwelling unit per 2,000 sq ft, meaning for every 2,000 square feet of lot area one dwelling unit is permitted.

○ The density permitted by the general plan is based on the General Plan Land Use designation for a property. If the designation allows for greater density through one of the corresponding zones in the permitted range, then it shall be used to calculate maximum allowable residential density for density bonus projects. Find the parcel's land use designation by clicking the linked General Plan Land Use Map beside 'General Plan Land Use.' Each Community Plan includes a General Plan Land Use Map, located in the plan's Map Gallery, which displays the site's land use designation and its corresponding zones. You will be redirected from ZIMAS to the appropriate Community Plan page.

○ Overlay standards can also be found in the Planning and Zoning tab in ZIMAS. If applicable to your site, click the linked Overlay to access the respective webpage for the Overlay. Once you are on the webpage you can access regulation documents that detail development standards. For a full list of overlays within the City, click here.

○ Continue in the Planning and Zoning tab in ZIMAS to find any applicable Specific Plan provisions. Review the Specific Plan's residential density standards (LAMC).

ZIMAS

Search

1918 S STANFORD AVE	Font: A A A +/-

▶ Address/Legal
▶ Jurisdictional
▶ Permitting and Zoning Compliance
▼ Planning and Zoning

| Special Notes	None
Zoning	RD2-1
Zoning Information (ZI)	ZI-1231 Specific Plan: South Los Angeles Alcohol Sales
Zoning Information (ZI)	ZI-2452 Transit Priority Area in the City of Los Angeles
Zoning Information (ZI)	ZI-1117 MTA Right-of-Way (ROW) Project Area
Zoning Information (ZI)	ZI-2512 Housing Element Sites
Zoning Information (ZI)	ZI-2374 State Enterprise Zone; Los Angeles
Zoning Information (ZI)	ZI-2427 Freeway Adjacent Advisory Notice for Sensitive Uses
General Plan Land Use	Low Medium II Residential
General Plan Note(s)	Yes
Minimum Density Requirement	No
Hillside Area (Zoning Code)	No
Specific Plan Area	SOUTH LOS ANGELES ALCOHOL SALES
Subarea	None
Special Land Use / Zoning	None
Historic Preservation Review	No
HistoricPlacesLA	No
CDO: Community Design Overlay	None
CPIO: Community Plan Imp. Overlay	None
Subarea	None
CPIO Historic Preservation Review	No
CUGU: Clean Up-Green Up	None
HCR: Hillside Construction Regulation	No
NSO: Neighborhood Stabilization Overlay	No
POD: Pedestrian Oriented Districts	None
RBP: Restaurant Beverage Program Eligible Area	None
ASP: Alcohol Sales Program	No
RFA: Residential Floor Area District	None
RIO: River Implementation Overlay	No

Note, not all sites have Specific Plans and not all Specific Plans include residential density standards.

5. **Case Numbers Tab**

   ○ If your site has a [Q] condition listed in the zoning, your zoning string could look like [Q]R4-1, and you will want to confirm if the [Q] Condition regulates density on your site. To do this, in the same navigation you will expand the Case Numbers tab.

   ○ Scroll to the Ordinance rows and select any ordinances that include SA (sub area) in the ordinance number, for example ORD-1XXXX-SA152. Click on the ordinance link to search for the sub area number (for example 152) and its site specific development limitations.

   ○ If your site's [Q] condition is a result of a project specific zone change, it will have a case number with a "zc" suffix listed under case numbers (for example, CPC-Year-1234-ZC). For that instance, there will be an ordinance listed that will include the specific additional density standard, if any, that is applicable to the site.
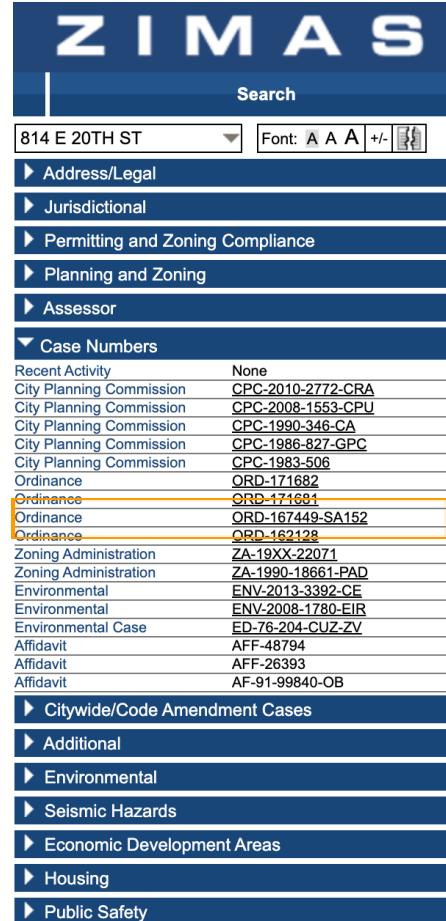
ZIMAS	
Search	
814 E 20TH ST	Font: A A A +/-
▶ Address/Legal	
▶ Jurisdictional	
▶ Permitting and Zoning Compliance	
▶ Planning and Zoning	
▶ Assessor	
▼ Case Numbers	
Recent Activity	None
City Planning Commission	CPC-2010-2772-CRA
City Planning Commission	CPC-2008-1553-CPU
City Planning Commission	CPC-1990-346-CA
City Planning Commission	CPC-1986-827-GPC
City Planning Commission	CPC-1983-506
Ordinance	ORD-171682
Ordinance	ORD-171681
Ordinance	ORD-167449-SA152
Ordinance	ORD-162128
Zoning Administration	ZA-19XX-22071
Zoning Administration	ZA-1990-18661-PAD
Environmental	ENV-2013-3392-CE
Environmental	ENV-2008-1780-EIR
Environmental Case	ED-76-204-CUZ-ZV
Affidavit	AFF-48794
Affidavit	AFF-26393
Affidavit	AF-91-99840-OB
▶ Citywide/Code Amendment Cases	
▶ Additional	
▶ Environmental	
▶ Seismic Hazards	
▶ Economic Development Areas	
▶ Housing	
▶ Public Safety	