



Tempe Historic Preservation Commission Information Series

Understanding Cultural Resource Areas

General Plan 2030



What is a Cultural Resource Area? What does the term mean?

A Cultural Resource Area is a land use category used in Tempe General Plan 2030 (GP2030) to describe the Projected Land Use or the desired primary use of a land area anticipated to occur within the next 25 years.

[GP2030 defines Cultural Resource Area as follows:](#)

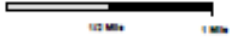
“Cultural Resource Area (existing density allowed by zoning) Areas identified on the density map, which are considered culturally significant to the character of Tempe, based on the 2001 Post World War II Subdivision Study. It is desirable to maintain the character of these areas. The underlying zoning should remain the highest appropriate density for these areas. These areas are shown as Cultural Resource Areas, with a projected density to match the zoning at the time this plan is adopted” (12/03/2003).

Existing Residential Density

City of Tempe
General Plan 2030

Adopted December 4, 2003

SCALE



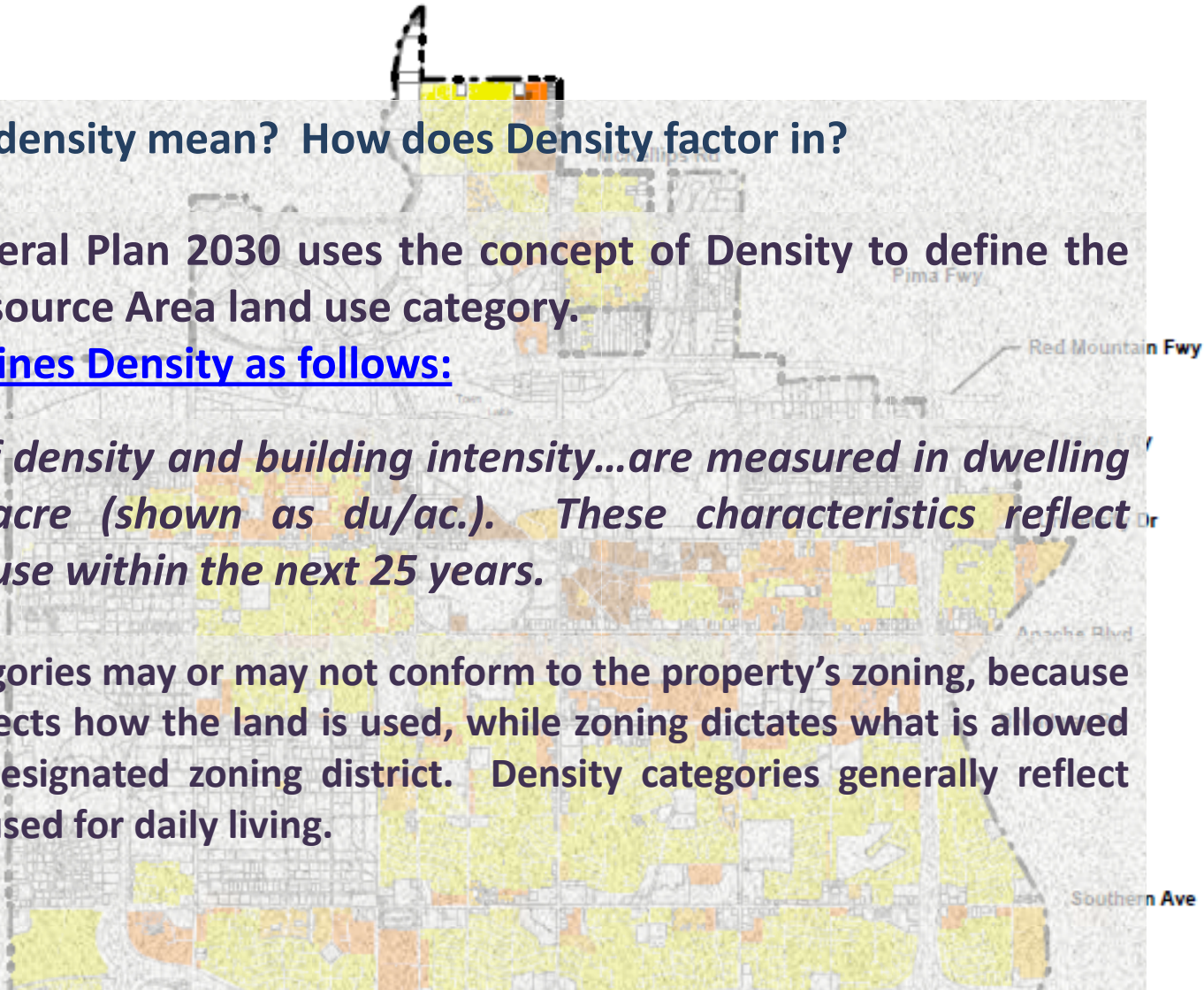
What does density mean? How does Density factor in?

Tempe General Plan 2030 uses the concept of Density to define the Cultural Resource Area land use category.

[GP2030 defines Density as follows:](#)

Concepts of density and building intensity...are measured in dwelling units per acre (shown as du/ac.). These characteristics reflect residential use within the next 25 years.

Density categories may or may not conform to the property's zoning, because land use reflects how the land is used, while zoning dictates what is allowed within the designated zoning district. Density categories generally reflect how land is used for daily living.





How did the Cultural Resource Area concept originate?

On September 2, 2003, members of the Tempe Historic Preservation Commission attended a meeting of the General Plan Advisory Team and presented information comparing existing developed densities, densities permitted under the then current General Plan 2020, and densities proposed for adoption by General Plan 2030.

Based on this presentation, the Advisory Team decided unanimously to adopt the Cultural Resource Area classification for each of the thirty-one first- and second-tier historic subdivisions identified in the Solliday Survey of Post-World War II subdivisions in Tempe.

[\(Solliday 2001\).](#)

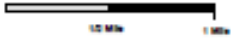


Projected Residential Density

City of Tempe
General Plan 2030

Adopted December 4, 2003

SCALE



Why was the General Plan Advisory Team so concerned?

Tempe Preservation presented information comparing existing developed densities, densities permitted under then current General Plan 2020, and densities proposed for adoption by General Plan 2030. The Advisory Team clearly understood how changing development standards precipitate intensification of land use in historic neighborhoods.

The Advisory Team felt strongly that protection and enhancement of Tempe's heritage is critical to preserving the unique identity of our community.

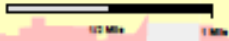
Tempe Preservation demonstrated the adverse effects on the historic integrity of neighborhoods that had taken place under GP2020 and how these effects would be increased by the land use planning proposed in GP2030.



Projected Land Use

City of Tempe
General Plan 2030

SCALE



Adopted December 4, 2003

City of Scottsdale

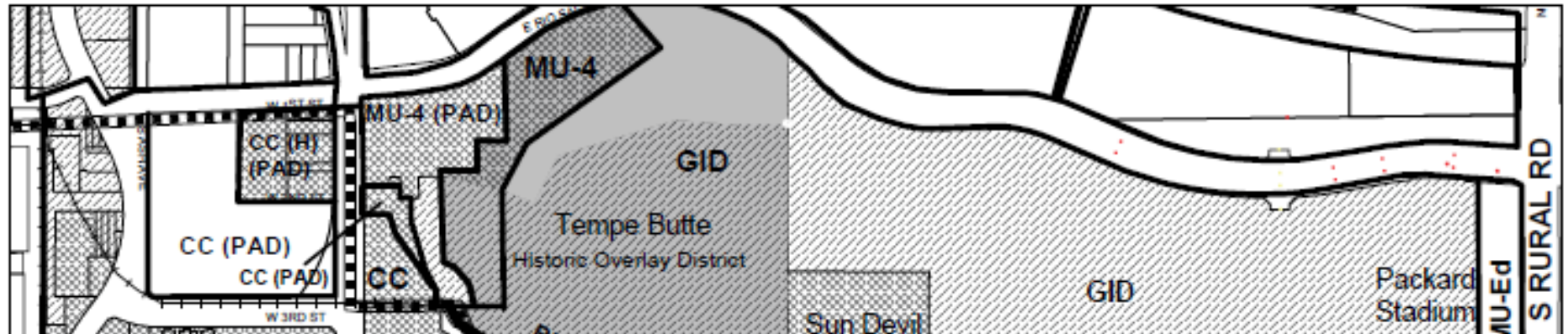
What was the intent of the General Plan Advisory Team?

Demonstration of the effect of increasing residential density on the diminution of historic character and loss of historic integrity in neighborhoods resulted in the Advisory Team unanimously adopting the Cultural Resource classification for all thirty-one potentially historic neighborhoods identified in the Solliday study.

The Advisory Team considered cultural Resource Areas to be significant for defining and interpreting our community history and stated *“It is desirable to maintain the character of these areas.”* Regrettably, they not only specified the desired outcome of the Cultural Resource classification, they also stated how it should be implemented, i.e.; *“The underlying zoning should remain the highest appropriate density for these areas.”* (GP2030)

Southern Ave

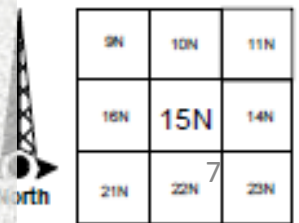
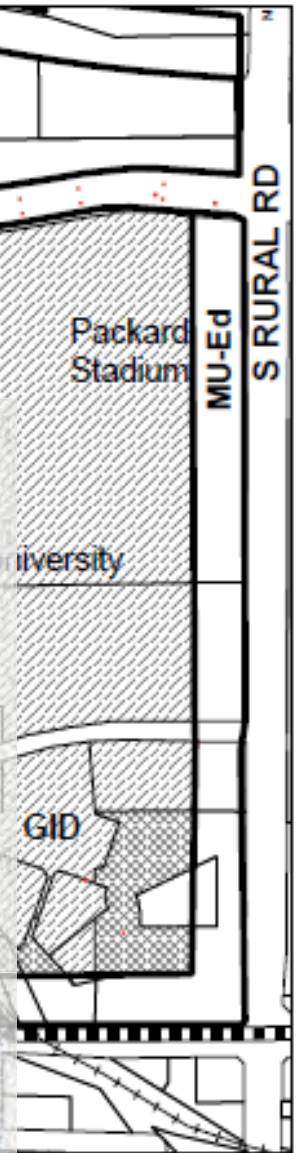
NOTE: This map represents the zoning related to a parcel or lot, but the City of Tempe is not responsible for situations requiring a field verification or legal description. This information should not be relied upon without staff verification.



So is zoning the same as density?

Not exactly, density specified in the land use plan is implemented by development standards provided in the Zoning & Development Code. Along with specifying density, zoning development standards regulate building height, lot coverage, setbacks, landscaping, parking, and other provisions of the code. Taken together, the development standards established for each zoning classification determine the limits of what can be constructed on any given parcel of land.

When GP2030 was initially approved, Tempe was operating under Zoning Ordinance 808. For some time 808 development standards were used to analyze proposed development in Cultural Resource Areas. Used this way, the Cultural Resource Area classification gave city staff an effective tool for diverting out-of-character development away from historically sensitive areas.





What was the intent of the Cultural Resource Area classification?

Tempe's built environment tells the story of Tempe's growth through a blend of the past with the present; enriching our residents, visitors, and future generations. The intent of the Cultural Resource Area designation in GP2030 is to balance the rights of property owners with the value to the community derived from the conservation and enhancement of culturally significant properties and to maintain the character of these areas for future generations to enjoy and learn from.

The stated goal of the Cultural Resource Area, to maintain the character of historically significant districts, neighborhoods, and properties, has begun to suffer from the mention of only density and not its regulatory context of related development standards in the language of GP2030. Initially, it was taken for granted that in order to maintain the character or the density of these special parts of the city, development standards must be applied consistently and in totality.

An aerial photograph of a residential neighborhood. The houses have grey shingled roofs and are arranged along a road. A prominent yellow house with two windows is visible on the right side. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent grey box in the center of the image.

How are Cultural Resource Areas being administered today?

More recently, density has been singled-out as the only development standard specifically cited in GP2030. Considering only the density standard and ignoring its regulatory context of related development standards produces random and often meaningless results. Density, like all development standards, is effected by the size of the land area being considered for development.

Development standards also change over time and current requirements can produce incongruous results in established neighborhoods and historic districts. To offset this unintended effect, the Cultural Resource Area works to lock development to the zoning in place at the time GP2030 was adopted.



How did the Cultural Resource Area classification get enacted?

On December 4, 2003, Tempe adopted General Plan 2030, codifying the Cultural Resource Areas classification thereby theoretically balancing generally increased residential densities across the board with preservation of established neighborhoods and historic districts.



"One generation plants trees, the next enjoys the shade"

What's ahead for Cultural Resource Area classification in GP2040?



The Cultural Resource Area land use classification was initiated in GP2030 with the stated purpose of maintaining the character of Tempe's historic and potentially historic districts, neighborhoods, and properties. For some time, this classification effectively diverted out of character development away from historically significant locations. More recent projects have demonstrated that the Cultural Resource Area concept is ripe for reinterpretation to improve its effectiveness as a conservation tool.

Tempe Preservation hopes to work closely with city staff in the revision of our land use planning and production of GP2040. Updating the concept of the Cultural Resource Area as a mechanism for protecting the historic integrity of the city's historic and potentially historic districts, neighborhoods, and properties will be a major part of that effort.

Tempe Historic Preservation Commission Information Series



Understanding Cultural Resource Areas

Historic Preservation Commission

Ira Bennett, Vice-Chair

Anne Bilsbarrow

Brad Graham

Andrea Gregory, Chair

Charlie Lee

Brenda Shears

Scott Solliday

Korri Turner



T E M P E
P R E S E R V A T I O N

City of Tempe, Arizona

Community Development Department

Historic Preservation Office

31 East 5th Street PO Box 5002

Tempe, Arizona 85280

480-350-8870

www.tempe.gov/historicpres