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Senior Housing Overlay District is Adopted

By Cathy Tyson

Looking to provide and encourage a variety of senior housing options, the Lafayette City Council recently adopted a Senior Housing Overlay district (SHO) that specifies senior housing as a land use classification within the Lafayette Municipal Code.

In researching a SHO district, City staff and the Senior Housing Task Force noted a couple key findings: the impact of senior citizen housing developments is lower than other multi-family residential developments, and potential developments benefit greatly from a close proximity to downtown services and amenities.

The new SHO district establishes standards for senior housing developments within the downtown core, which include five different types of senior housing: Alzheimer's/Memory Care facilities, Assisted Living Developments, Continuing Care Retirement Communities, Independent Living and Senior Residential Care Facilities. Parking requirements are based on the level of independence of the residents. Finally density was increased from 35 units per acre to 45 units per acre, because generally units for seniors are smaller; in addition, Universal Design principles that accommodate wheelchairs and walkers are required.

It should be noted that this special district does not change any underlying zoning requirements. A senior housing permit may be issued for proposed developments that will house seven or more residents. The new senior housing overlay district fulfills one of the goals of the General Plan Housing Element - to provide opportunities for senior housing.

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