

A Review of Thousand Oaks Measure E

By Stacy Roscoe

On October 24, 2017, the Thousand Oaks City Council received the results of a comprehensive review of Measure E, a growth control measure put in place in 1996 that requires voter approval for any amendment to the City's General Plan that increases the cumulative residential density (housing units / net acre) beyond the City's General Plan as of November 5, 1996.

Analysis to Determine Baseline

Category	Density (Units/Net Acre)	Gross Acreage	Net Acreage	Allowed Units
Very Low	0-2	3,940	3,494	6,988
Low	2-4.5	9,044	7,066	31,795
Medium	4.6-15	2,010	1,541	23,111
High	15-30	576	495	14,838
Other Categories, Specific Plans and Pools		4,392		

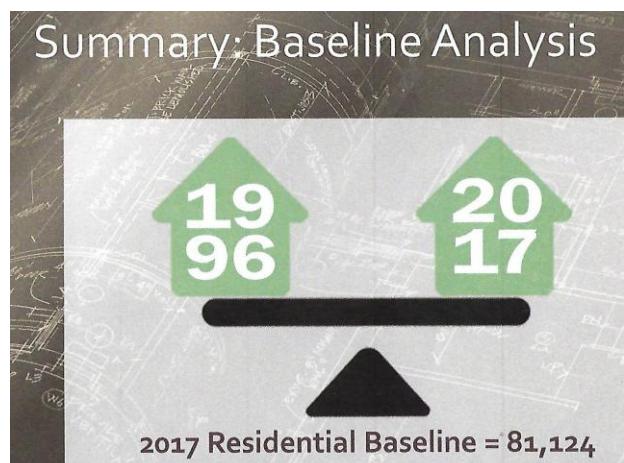
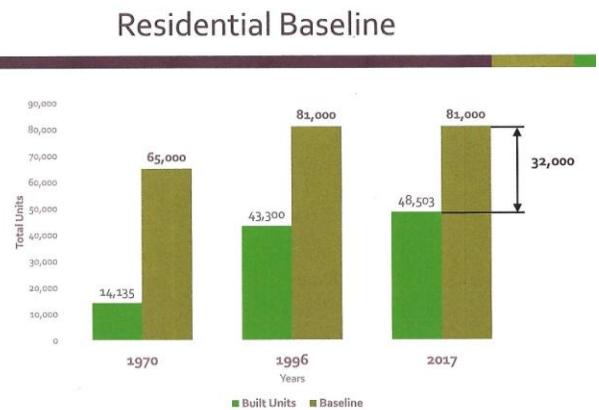
2017
Residential Baseline
81,124

Density is a function of net, not gross, acreage (i.e. Street coverage does not count in the calculation of density.) When the net acreage calculations were completed in 2017 with significantly better computer tools than available in 1996, the unit base for Measure E was seen to be 81,124 units. The study also

showed that at the end of 2017, the Thousand Oaks planning area had 48,503 units built. This means that the City is approximately 32,000 units under the Measure E upper limit. Council accepted the numbers, but did not believe that building 81,000 units was reasonable. Most focus is on what to do now, and Council told staff to prepare a plan.

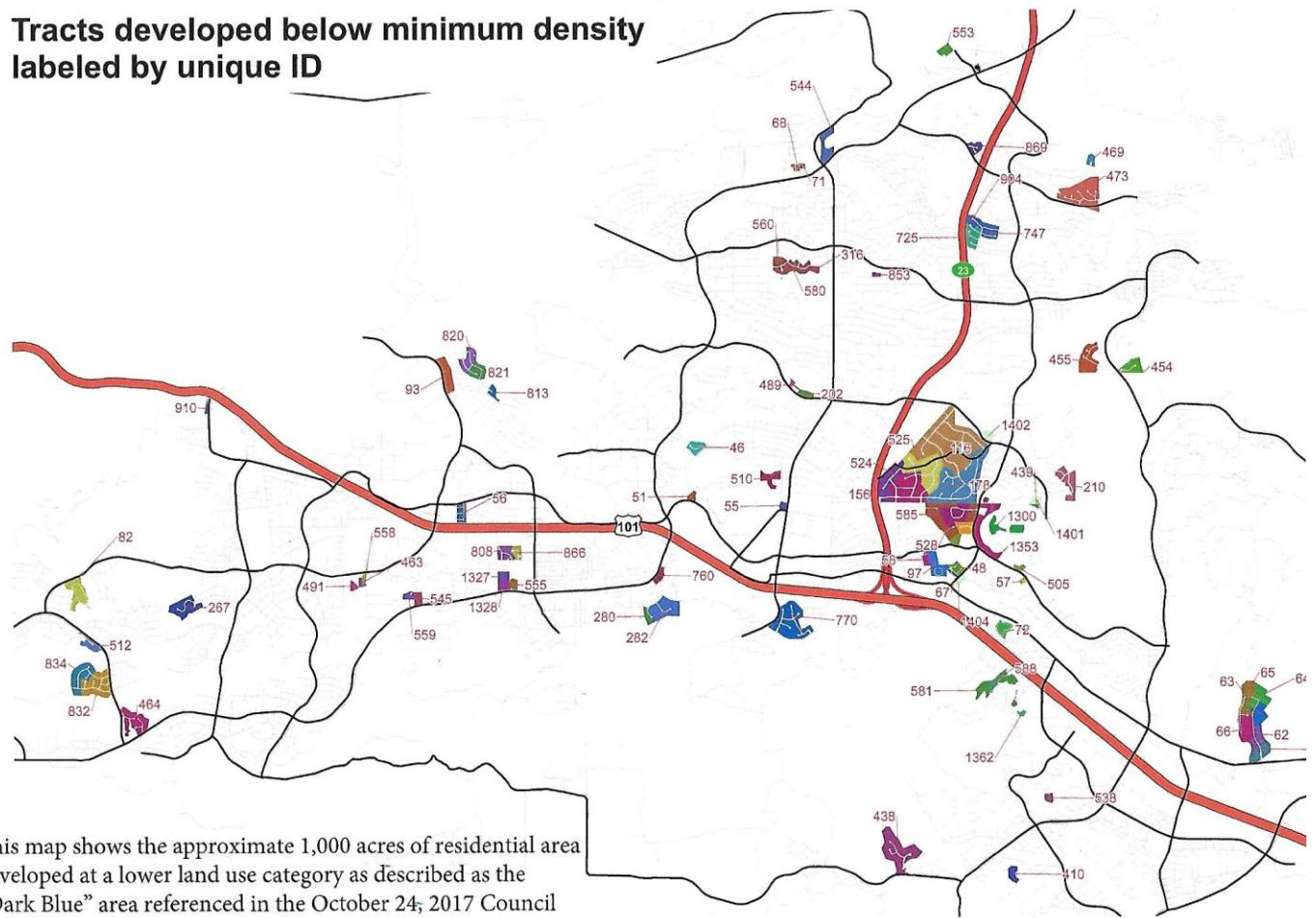
A key finding of the October study was that no changes to baseline occurred between 1996 and 2017. General Plan Amendments (GPAs) moved units from one category or location to another, but the total baseline did not change.

Another take away from this analysis is that housing density can be managed by holding density to a net zero. This means that lower density in one area may allow higher density elsewhere without impacting Measure E limits. As a result, several neighborhoods built in an area with a density range higher than the actual as-built density range can receive General Plan and zoning amendments to reduce the density range to better protect the character of the existing neighborhood.



Based on Measure E, reducing densities in one area of the City has the effect of making those units potentially available elsewhere, subject to City Council authorization. Logical areas for receiving the reallocation of housing could be the commercial corridor along the 101 which does not need all of the allocation of commercial and retail building that is currently provided. The General Plan can be adjusted by the Council without triggering a vote under Measure E as long as the residential and commercial limits are not exceeded.

5400 units are theoretically available for reallocation through General Plan Amendments (GPAs). These areas were built with lower density than the planning designation for the area, not just on the lighter side of the planning range designation.



Council's current direction calls for 1080 unit openings (20% of the 5,400 units theoretically accessible for reallocation) to be explored for now. In February, notification letters were sent to 7 low density areas throughout the City notifying them of a proposal to amend the General Plan and zoning designations in this way.

At the current rate of housing construction, it will take many years to reallocate the full 5,400 units made available. For reference, the City's last 5,000 units were built over a period of over 20 years (between 1996 and 2017). How many of those 5,400 units will be required will become clearer with the next round of regional housing need assessment coming out of the state-wide housing needs process.

New state laws will make it harder for cities to not allow those projects that comply with currently designated density. The cities may have the burden to accommodate them. There will be a Planning Commission study session on March 5th to discuss recent State housing laws.

Thousand Oaks is unique with Measure E, but from the perspective of the Ventura County Housing Solutions members, there is significant value in every city doing research into what their General Plan allows. With this research, as communities have discussions, there will be additional context. They will know what is and what is not allowed.

In addition, there is value to both protecting the character of the as built low density neighborhoods while at the same time freeing up the ability to add units to areas that can now support higher density. New housing can be built without impacting existing neighborhoods.