

# TRINITY COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

## STAFF REPORT

**PROJECT TITLE:** Housing Element Program 1.1: 25-foot Height Limit Review

**REPORT BY:** Mitchell Wexler, Assistant Planner

**LOCATION:** Countywide

**ZONING DISTRICT:** Multiple-Family Residential (R-3)

**BACKGROUND:**

In the 2019 Trinity County Housing Element Update, as mentioned under the *Objectives and Programs* section, Program 1.1 requires reviews of the R-3 district. It states that “As part of this program, the County will review and amend its development standards if the 25-foot height limit in the R-3 zone and lack of permitted ‘by right’ uses in the R-2 zone are constraints to the development of multifamily housing.” The current height limit for Trinity County’s Multiple Family District (R-3) is 25 feet. This report shall review this given height limit, and determine if it constrains local land owners and developers.

Residential Zoning Districts		Height Limit
<i>Rural Residential (RR)</i>		40 ft
<i>Single-Family District (R-1)</i>		40 ft
<i>Duplex Residential District (R-2)</i>		40 ft
<i>Multiple Family District (R-3)</i>		25 ft
<i>Residential Office District (R-O)</i>		25 ft
Zoning District	Housing Allowed	Height Limit
<i>Agricultural (A)</i>	Farm Labor Quarters, Servants’ Quarters	40 ft
<i>Agricultural Forest (A-F)</i>	Single Family Dwelling	40 ft
<i>Recreational Development District (R-D-1)</i>	Single Family Dwelling	2 stories but not to exceed 40 ft
<i>Unclassified (UNC)</i>	Single Family Dwelling	40 ft

As shown in the chart above, the R-3 district’s height limit is 15 ft shorter than all but one residential zoning district, including non-residential districts allowing for the construction of single-family residences. This inconsistency has the potential to confuse local land owners and developers and possibly stop projects from being built. To determine if this is a constraint for development within the County, the height limits in the multifamily housing districts of neighboring counties shall be examined, along with height averages based on records of their most recent multiple family development projects.

**COUNTY ORDINANCES:**

The chart below lists the height limits that neighboring counties’ R-3 districts have applied to their developments. The Recent Projects Average (RPA) accounts for the average height of their recent multiple family developments. This information shall demonstrate how the height limit of these counties affects the types of developments passed within

County	Zoning District	Residential Uses Permitted (including Accessory Uses)	RPA	Height
Lake	Multiple-Family Residential District (R-3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2plex-4plex</li> <li>• Apartments up to 20 units/project</li> <li>• Residential accessory uses and accessory structures</li> </ul>	34 ft	<b>Max:</b>
				45 ft
				<b>ADU:</b> 20 ft
Plumas	Multiple-Family Residential Zone (M-R)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dwelling units (apartments) and manufactured homes</li> </ul>	N/A	<b>Max:</b> 35 ft
Mendocino	Multiple Family Residential District (R-3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family residential; multi-family</li> <li>• Accessory uses</li> </ul>	20-25 ft	<b>Max:</b> 50 ft
Lassen	Multiple Family Residential District (R-3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-family dwelling and groups of up to 4 units</li> <li>• Accessory uses and accessory buildings</li> </ul>	N/A	<b>Max:</b> 45 ft
Calaveras	Multiple Family Residential District (R-3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single family residence (1 per parcel)</li> <li>• MFH meeting density requirements</li> <li>• Time-share</li> <li>• Residential occupation</li> </ul>	N/A	<b>Max:</b> 45 ft
Shasta	Multiple Family Residential District (R-3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-family residences</li> <li>• Two-family residences</li> <li>• Condominiums</li> <li>• Accessory buildings &amp; uses commonly found in multifamily or condominium developments</li> </ul>	N/A	<b>Max:</b> 45 ft

Sources: Lake County, Plumas County, Mendocino County, Lassen County, Calaveras County, and Shasta County Zoning Ordinances

**FINDINGS:**

Based on the height limits provided, the average maximum allowed height for multifamily residential zoning is 44.16 feet. Despite this average, these counties haven’t faced waves of development straddling the limit, nor any notable alterations to the built landscape of their communities. The RPA in Lake County is 34 ft and that in Mendocino County is 20-25 ft. Plumas County, Calaveras County, Shasta County, and Lassen County have no RPA, as there has been no recent multi-family development in any of them. The county’s multi-family height limit makes it an outlier among those listed. This information also reveals that there is no practice of maintaining lower height limits for multiple-family residential zoning in these given counties. Given this information, this height limit could be a barrier to the flexibility of local land owners and developers.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission:

1. Recommend that the Board of Supervisors amend Section 17.18.060 of the Trinity County Code section to change the height limit from 25 feet to 40 feet

**ALTERNATIVES**

The alternatives to raising the height limit for R3 development include:

1. Wait until the comprehensive zoning ordinance update to modify the height limits in the R-3 district
2. Do not amend the height limit of the R3 zoning district