



STAFF REPORT

Comprehensive Plan Amendment CP-4-21: Missing Middle Housing

This is a city-initiated amendment to the 2030 Comprehensive Plan to revise existing and add new policies that support the provision of “Missing Middle” housing – housing types such as duplexes, townhouses, and small apartments that provide housing choice while retaining the scale of detached houses. More broadly, it is intended to assist in removing barriers created by exclusionary zoning, improve affordability by allowing more affordable housing types in more places, and reduce per capita carbon emissions by allowing housing types that are more energy efficient than detached houses.

This amendment is a companion piece to TC-5-20, a change to the Unified Development Ordinance that allows these housing types in a broader range of contexts.

Missing middle housing is the primary topic of the amendment. However, it also includes relatively minor changes that reflect recent code changes and planning work. These include eliminating a reference to an ADU overlay district and supporting additional housing near frequent transit.

The amendments are displayed as blackline edits, with underlined text representing additions and ~~strikethrough~~ text representing deletions.

The following amendments apply to Section 2: *Framework*

2.3 Vision and Themes

Expanding Housing Choices

Raleigh will have an expanded supply of affordable and workforce housing options that provide housing opportunities for all segments of our population in all areas of the city. This expanded supply of decent affordable housing will provide stability for families, improve opportunities for education and career advancement, and reduce homelessness for low and moderate income households. A range of housing types will be available in residential zoning districts to meet the needs of diverse households and remove barriers created by exclusionary housing practices.

Greenprint Raleigh — Sustainable Development

Raleigh will be nationally recognized as a model green city. Environmental sustainability and stewardship—the protection and wise use of resources for existing residents and future generations—will be institutionalized. Individuals, institutions, businesses, and government will work together and enhance the natural environment through policies, decisions, and investments. The city will significantly improve its environmental policy framework and land management practices; protect sensitive lands; and preserve water, air, and land resources. Land use policy and regulation will prioritize strategies that reduce carbon emissions and improve community health, such as allowing more density in walkable places near transit and allowing more energy-efficient housing types across the city.

Growing Successful Neighborhoods and Communities

Growth and new development will be accommodated within Raleigh through creative solutions that conserve our unique neighborhoods while improving access to families and individuals with varying levels of income by diversifying permitted building types. ~~while~~ Allowing existing neighborhoods in high opportunity areas with convenient access to employment and commercial amenities, like the inner beltline suburbs, to develop with a variety of housing types will improve access to families with broader ranges of incomes. This will also ~~help and help to~~ expand our local businesses by providing them with more potential customers and employees. The city's ~~will have healthy and safe~~ older neighborhoods that are ~~will be~~ conserved and enhanced through careful infill development that allows a range of housing types and that complements while complementing existing built character and responds responding to natural features. Places of historic and architectural significance will be protected through the application of character protection zoning overlay districts. Newly developed areas, including infill development and redevelopment projects of all sizes, will ~~be create more~~ diverse, walkable neighborhoods, with a variety of housing types, and convenient access to open space, community services, retail, and employment. Allowing neighborhoods to change to provide housing for families at all income levels is strongly encouraged.

The following amendments apply to Section 3: *Land Use*

3.1 Future Land Uses

Low Density Residential (1-6 units per acre)

~~This category encompasses most of Raleigh's single-family detached residential neighborhoods, corresponding roughly to the R-2, R-4, and R-6 zoning districts (but excluding parks within these districts). It also identifies vacant or agricultural lands—in the city and in the county—where single-family residential use is planned over the next 20 years. Smaller lots, townhouses and multifamily dwellings would only be appropriate as part of a conservation subdivision resulting in a significant open space set aside. As defined in the zoning regulations, manufactured home parks could also be appropriate in this land use category.~~

Low Scale Residential

This category encompasses most of the city's neighborhoods that are primarily made up of detached houses on lots of roughly one-sixth of an acre or larger, although duplexes or small apartments may also exist. This category envisions a range of housing types, including duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes and other small apartment buildings, and townhouses, but at a scale that follows the precedent set by existing detached houses. It corresponds roughly to the R-2, R-4, and R-6 zoning districts. It also identifies vacant or agricultural lands—in the city and in the county—where residential use at a similar scale is planned over the next 20 years. As defined in the zoning regulations, manufactured home parks could also be appropriate in this land use category.

Moderate Density Residential (6-14 units per acre)

~~This category applies to some of the city's older single-family residential neighborhoods, along with newer small-lot single-family subdivisions and patio-home developments. Other housing types including townhouses and multifamily dwellings would be consistent with this designation as long as an overall gross density not exceeding 14 units per acre was maintained. Gross density in these areas would be 6 to 14 units per acre. Corresponding zoning districts are R-6~~

and R-10, or RX conditioned to limit density. In some instances, small-scale commercial uses allowed in RX districts may be appropriate. Comprehensive Plan Land Use Section policies should be consulted for additional guidance.

Moderate Scale Residential

This category applies to many of the city’s older residential neighborhoods as well as newer master-planned communities, which typically contain a mix of housing types, including small-lot detached houses and many traditional examples of “missing middle” housing types. It also applies to suburban townhouse and garden apartment communities that would benefit from enhanced walkability. As with Low Scale Residential, this category envisions a range of housing types, including duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes and other small apartment buildings, and townhouses. Scale would follow existing precedents of detached and missing middle housing in the area. Corresponding zoning districts are R-6, R-10, or RX-3. In some instances, small-scale commercial uses allowed in RX districts are appropriate. Comprehensive Plan Land Use Section policies should be consulted for additional guidance.

Medium Density Scale Residential (no change to text, which already addresses scale rather than density)

Higher Density Scale Residential (no change to text, which already addresses scale rather than density)

Table LU 2 (Adding Moderate Density Residential and accompanying height guidance)

| Table LU-2 Recommend ed Heights Future Land Use Category | Transit Station Type: Emerging Urban Center | Core/Transit | Transit Station Type: Neighborhood Center | General | Edge |
|---|--|-----------------------------|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <u>Moderate Density Residential</u> | <u>Max of 4 stories</u> | <u>Max of 4 stories</u> | <u>Max of 3 stories</u> | <u>Max of 3 stories</u> | <u>Max of 3 stories</u> |

3.8 Neighborhood Conservation and Development

One of Raleigh’s major assets is its tree-lined, historic residential neighborhoods and street-car suburbs within and adjacent to downtown Raleigh. The city also has a number of historic districts. The inner-ring suburbs of the 1950s and 1960s are also well-regarded due to their housing stock, mature trees, and connectivity to surrounding neighborhoods and shopping centers. The outer-ring suburbs of the last generation contain more auto-dependent residential neighborhoods that lack connectivity. However, more recent developments are applying the design principles of early- and mid-20th century neighborhoods with better connectivity to shopping centers, schools, parks, and open space.

The City of Raleigh desires to maintain and conserve its historic residential neighborhoods, maintain and reinvest in its aging inner-ring residential neighborhoods, adapt more recent residential neighborhoods for greater connectivity, guide infill development, and promote

traditional neighborhood development (TND) patterns for new residential developments. Two important tools for preserving neighborhood character are the Historic Overlay District (HOD) and the Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District (NCOD), which provide for neighborhood-specific zoning standards and, in the case of the HOD, design standards. Both, it should be noted, can retain existing scale and architectural details while not prohibiting additional housing types that provide more choices for different household types and more affordable options.

Conserving character does not mean that neighborhoods cannot change or evolve, and in fact such changes may be necessary for a neighborhood's long-term viability. When large families and multi-generational living were more common, Raleigh's historic neighborhoods hosted a higher population density than they do now. When downtown living fell out of favor, many older houses became rentals and were converted to multiple units, changes which likely saved many homes from demolition. More recently, as these neighborhoods have skyrocketed in value, these same structures have returned to single-family use. Now ADUs and second unit additions again have the promise of readapting existing lots and homes for a population with fewer families and more elderly and young households.

As Raleigh continues to attract and retain people looking to make a better life in a welcoming and diverse city, the need for housing will continue to grow. This can and will happen in mixed-use areas, but residential neighborhoods can also evolve to allow more housing choice. These neighborhoods can accommodate more residents while maintaining their existing scale by allowing "missing middle" housing types such as duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, townhouses, and similar buildings (see text box on page 3-33). This approach also can begin to remedy the exclusionary barriers created by low density, detached-house-only zoning, which historically has contributed to economic and racial segregation.

The "missing middle" types, which are common in older neighborhoods such as Oakwood and Boylan Heights, are more affordable than larger detached houses but still reflect the rhythm and scale of existing homes in the neighborhood. This provides more housing choice for diverse households, including younger residents or couples, empty nesters, and people who simply don't need or want a large house. It also better supports nearby neighborhood-serving businesses, such as restaurants, coffee shops, and small-scale retail and service establishments.

Lastly, in addition to providing more choice and affordability, housing types other than detached houses are more energy-efficient, because they share walls and/or ceilings. Allowing them reduces Raleigh's per capita carbon emissions and is a necessary step to meeting the city's carbon reduction goals.

Policy LU 8.1 Housing Variety Accommodate growth in newly developing or redeveloping areas of the city through mixed-use neighborhoods with a variety of housing types. (No change to text, becomes key policy)

Policy LU 8.5 Conservation of Single-family Neighborhoods-Scale Housing ~~Protect and conserve the city's single-family neighborhoods and ensure that their zoning reflects their established low-density character. Carefully manage the development of vacant land and the alteration of existing structures in and adjacent to single-family neighborhoods to protect low-density character, preserve open space, and maintain neighborhood scale.~~

New homes within residential neighborhoods should respect the existing scale. Residential neighborhoods that currently consist largely of detached houses can accommodate additional housing types. These housing types should be at a similar scale to existing detached houses.

~~**Policy LU 8.7 Flag Lots** Generally discourage the use of “flag lots” (lots with little or no street frontage, accessed by a driveway easement or narrow strip of land, and typically located to the rear of another lot) when subdividing residential property~~

Policy LU 8.7 Lot Sizes and Flag Lots Allow flag lots and smaller lot sizes and widths for “missing middle” and other housing types in order to improve housing choice.

Policy LU 8.15 Zoning for Housing Opportunity and Choice (new policy)

All residential zoning categories should accommodate a range of housing types, such as duplexes, fourplexes and other small apartments, and townhouses. Scale, not density, should be the regulating principle. These types, which on average are much more affordable than detached houses, will moderate the cost of housing, reduce residential segregation and allow more people access to high-opportunity areas, accommodate residents in all phases of life, and reduce per capita carbon emissions.

Additional Policy Changes in Land Use Section

Policy LU 4.7 Capitalizing on Transit Access

Sites within walking distance of existing and proposed rail and bus rapid transit stations should be developed with intense residential and mixed uses to take full advantage of and support investment in transit infrastructure. Additional density for housing and employment also is appropriate around current and future frequent transit routes.

Policy LU 5.4 Density Transitions

Low-to-medium ~~density~~ scale residential development and/or low-impact office uses should serve as transitional densities between ~~lower-density~~ lower-scale neighborhoods and more intensive commercial and residential uses. Where two areas designated for significantly different development intensity abut on the Future Land Use Map, the implementing zoning should ensure that the appropriate transition occurs on the site with the higher intensity. (P 3-26)

Policy LU 5.7 Building Height Transitions

When a mixed-use or nonresidential area contemplated for building heights in excess of seven stories abuts an area designated for low or moderate ~~density~~ scale residential on the future land use map, building heights should not exceed a 45-degree plane starting 10 feet from the adjoining lower-density area. When any mixed-use or non-residential area is separated from an area of low or moderate ~~density~~ scale by an intervening street other than a Major Street, building faces along the frontage facing the residential area should not exceed three stories (p 3-27)
Blue box on p 3-27: Higher intensity commercial uses are appropriately buffered from low to moderate ~~density~~ scale residential areas through an intervening area of low-intensity office or medium- to high-~~density~~ scale residential use.

Policy LU 8.16 Accessory Dwelling Units

Provide for and regulate Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) ~~with zoning and overlay regulations that ensure compatibility with surrounding contexts~~ to expand housing options for Raleigh's residents. (p 3-33)

The following amendment applies to Section 5: *Environmental Protection*

Policy EP 1.1 Greenhouse Gas Reduction

Promote best practices for reducing greenhouse gas emissions as documented through the U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement. This includes reducing per-capita carbon emissions by allowing residential building types that are more energy-efficient than detached houses, such as townhouses and apartments, in more places. It also includes allowing more people to live and work in walkable or transit-rich places. Allowing more density in those locations is a critical climate change strategy, because vehicle trips are shorter and less likely in those locations, bringing down per-capita carbon emissions. (Make key policy)

The following amendments apply to Section 11: *Urban Design*

UD 5.3: Improving Neighborhood Connectivity

Explore opportunities to conveniently connect existing neighborhoods to adjacent commercial centers and community facilities and services. Create new and enhance existing safe pedestrian and bicycle networks in residential neighborhoods, particularly high-growth areas. Neighborhoods experiencing increased density from missing middle housing should be prioritized for new networks connecting to transit, commercial and community facilities.

UD 5.9 Successful Residential Neighborhoods

Successfully designed neighborhoods should include a range of building scales and densities to house a diversity of households. High-growth neighborhoods should include sidewalks, open spaces, and close access to commercial and community facilities.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICER'S REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATION:

The following list of considerations for the Planning and Development Officer's review and recommendations regarding a proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment are not all-inclusive. Review and recommendations of proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments may consider whether:

The proposed amendment corrects an error or meets the challenge of some changing condition, trend or fact;

The proposed amendment reflects changing conditions in multiple respects – demographically, economically, and environmentally. It reflects the reality of smaller household sizes, including younger couples without children and empty nesters, and increased desires among residents to live in walkable places. It also reflects the challenge of rising housing prices and the role that exclusionary zoning has played in that process. In addition to allowing more supply, missing middle housing types are by their nature more affordable than detached houses. Lastly, it recognizes the fact that missing middle housing types are more energy-efficient than detached houses, bringing down per capita carbon emissions from energy use. It also allows more people to live in walkable places near transit, which reduces carbon emissions from transportation while also improving community health.

2. The proposed amendment is in response to changes in state law;

n/a

3. The proposed amendment constitutes a substantial benefit to the City as a whole and is not solely for the good or benefit of a particular landowner or owners at a particular point in time;

The amendment has broad benefits to the city as a whole. It helps further the overall objectives and all of the major themes of Comprehensive Plan, including the themes of **Economic Prosperity and Equity, Expanding Housing Choices, Managing Our Growth, Coordinating Land Use and Transportation, Greenprint Raleigh – Sustainable Development, and Growing Successful Neighborhoods and Communities**. Specifically, it benefits the city by improving housing choice, removing barriers created by exclusionary zoning, improving affordability by allowing more affordable housing types in more places, and reducing per capita carbon emissions by allowing housing types that are more energy efficient than detached houses.

4. The proposed amendment is consistent with other identified Plan policies and adopted area plans;

The proposed amendment is consistent with every one of the Comprehensive Plan's six vision themes – the core of the plan itself.

The theme of **Economic Prosperity and Equity** is enhanced by removing the barriers created by exclusionary zoning practices that artificially limit access to living in high-opportunity areas. Similarly, the theme of **Expanding Housing Choices** is enhanced by allowing greater housing choice in neighborhoods across the city, allowing residents to choose from a larger selection of smaller, more affordable units than currently exists.

The theme of **Managing Our Growth** is enhanced by allowing more people to live in walkable places within the city rather than forcing many to move to the region's edge, with the accompanying damage to natural spaces and long-term infrastructure costs that result. Similarly, the theme of **Greenprint Raleigh-Sustainable Development** is strengthened not just by diminishing the demand for far-flung development, but by allowing people to live in more energy-efficient housing types and to live more walkable lifestyles.

The theme of **Coordinating Land Use and Transportation** is enhanced by allowing more people to live near walkable and transit-served areas. While the amendment applies broadly across the city, the high demand for walkability means that many new missing middle homes will likely be built or created in walkable places near transit.

Lastly, the theme of **Growing Successful Neighborhoods and Communities** is greatly enhanced by allowing more housing types. This permits older residents to downsize their homes while staying in their neighborhood, or younger residents or couples to find a small home in a neighborhood they like or even grew up in. Allowing more residents also supports neighborhood-serving businesses, and allows those businesses to adopt a more pedestrian-friendly form that caters to the neighborhood rather than relying on larger parking lots and car-oriented signage.

5. The impact the proposed amendment has with regard to:

A. Established property or proposed development in the vicinity of the proposed amendment;

The amendment applies citywide. However, it supports existing property by allowing more options for property owners.

B. Existing or future land use patterns;

The amendment will tend to allow more people to live in walkable places within the city rather than forcing them to live on the city's or region's edge.

C. Existing or planned public services and facilities;

The amendment would allow services and facilities to operate more efficiently by allowing more infill, rather than relying on new infrastructure that serves fewer people on the city's edge.

D. Existing or planned roadways;

The amendment would not directly impact existing or planned roadways.

E. The natural environment, including air, water, noise, stormwater management, wildlife and vegetation;

The amendment will improve air quality and reduce per capita carbon emissions by allowing people to live in more energy efficient housing types. It will preserve natural spaces on the city's edge by allowing more housing opportunity and choice within the city, rather than forcing people to live on the city's edge.

F. Other policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

The amendment is consistent with a broad range of policies in the plan, as noted above.

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