

ATTAINABLE HOUSING STRATEGIES: WORK SESSION #8
SMALL SCALE ATTAINABLE HOUSING



Attainable Housing Strategies

Description

Work session to discuss and refine the draft Attainable Housing Initiatives Small scale recommendations.

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SUMMARY

- On March 4, 2021, the Montgomery County Council directed Montgomery Planning to review and analyze housing options in the county. To explore these housing options and to provide a comprehensive overview of housing options in the county, Montgomery Planning launched the [Attainable Housing Strategies](#) (AHS), an initiative aimed at evaluating and refining various proposals to spur the development of more diverse types of housing, including Missing Middle Housing, in Montgomery County.
- The Planning Board hosted a public listening session on March 21, 2024, to allow the public to provide comments on the draft AHS report.
- Attainable housing recommendations are broken into three scales: small, medium, and large. This report focuses on the draft recommendations around small scale attainable housing.
- Key recommendations include permitting duplexes, triplexes, and in some places quadplexes in the residential detached zones, the creation of the Priority Housing District, and other code changes that would facilitate the development of small scale attainable housing.

INFORMATION

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Planning Board Information

Work session #8 – Small scale attainable housing

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RECAP FROM WORK SESSION SEVEN

At the AHS work session seven on April 11, 2024, the Board agreed to the following recommendations:

- The final report will not be accompanied by a draft ZTA, however, sufficient detail should be provided, and the Planning Department should maintain momentum and take the lead in drafting the appropriate ZTAs this summer.
- Establish a new building type called a multiplex, to cover 3 - 4-unit buildings, but note a form based approach would be better in the future.
- Update the definition of townhouse to 5 or more units.
- Update the definition of apartment to 5 or more units, and sub-define small apartment as containing 19 or fewer units.
- Use the MPDU optional method procedures and development standards table as a base for AHOM procedures.
- Allow detached house, duplex, multiplex, townhouse, and small apartments in the AHOM.
- Provide density bonuses with a 2% density increase for each 1% decrease in average unit size.
- Require common open space at 10% of the site area.
- Establish an average dwelling unit size of 1,500 square feet per unit, including detached houses.

The Board requested Planning Staff to provide follow-up information on the following topics:

- Study whether an administrative site plan process or other review alternative can be established for smaller AHOM developments.
- Review AHOM geographical eligibility including:
 - Buffers from the Growth Corridors.
 - Applying to the entire Corridor Focused Growth Area, with density varying based on proximity to corridors and centers.
- Explore options that may eliminate minimum usable area from AHOM developments.
- Evaluate different base density alternatives for AHOM with a focus on allowing more density.
- Evaluate additional options for providing parking credits.

Tentative Attainable Housing Strategies Schedule (2024)	
April 11, 2024	Planning Board Work Session #7 – medium scale
April 25, 2024	Planning Board Work Session #8 – small scale
May 9 16 , 2024	Planning Board Work Session #9 – large scale and other policies
May 23 30 , 2024	Planning Board Work Session #10 – wrap-up
June 13 6 , 2024	Planning Board Work Session #11 – wrap-up
Early Summer 2024	Planning, Housing, and Parks Briefing

SMALL SCALE OVERVIEW

The small scale attainable housing recommendations intend to allow house-scale duplexes, triplexes, and in some places quadplexes to be developed by-right through standard method of development, in residential detached zones. These recommendations are intended to provide building and unit type flexibility while maintaining the house-scale character of existing neighborhoods. They would provide an alternative to detached houses in these areas and are intended to complement the other recommendations of AHS to promote medium scale and large scale developments along the county's growth corridors and around transit stations.

This staff report and accompanying work session will walk through the various recommendations from the draft AHS report that pertain to the development of small scale attainable housing. This includes looking at the applicable geographies where zoning reforms would apply, explaining which use and development standards would need to be modified, and explaining some of the other design elements critical to implementing small scale housing including the pattern book. This report will include a sample of graphics created to help illustrate small scale housing, with a substantial portion of the accompanying work session on April 25 being devoted to walking through visuals showing how small scale housing could work across the different applicable zones.

SMALL SCALE GEOGRAPHIES

GEOGRAPHIC APPLICABILITY

The draft AHS report recommends the following zoning applicability for the small scale attainable housing types:

- Duplexes – All of R-40, R-60, R-90, and R-200
- Triplexes – All of R-40, R-60, and R-90
- Quadplexes – R-60, and R-90 within a priority housing district

These zones were chosen as the focus for the small scale recommendations because they represent large portions of our residential detached zoning. The RE-1 and RE-2 zones were left out largely because they are not as centrally located to employment and commercial areas, and often lack access to water and sewer, and other infrastructure to support increased density.

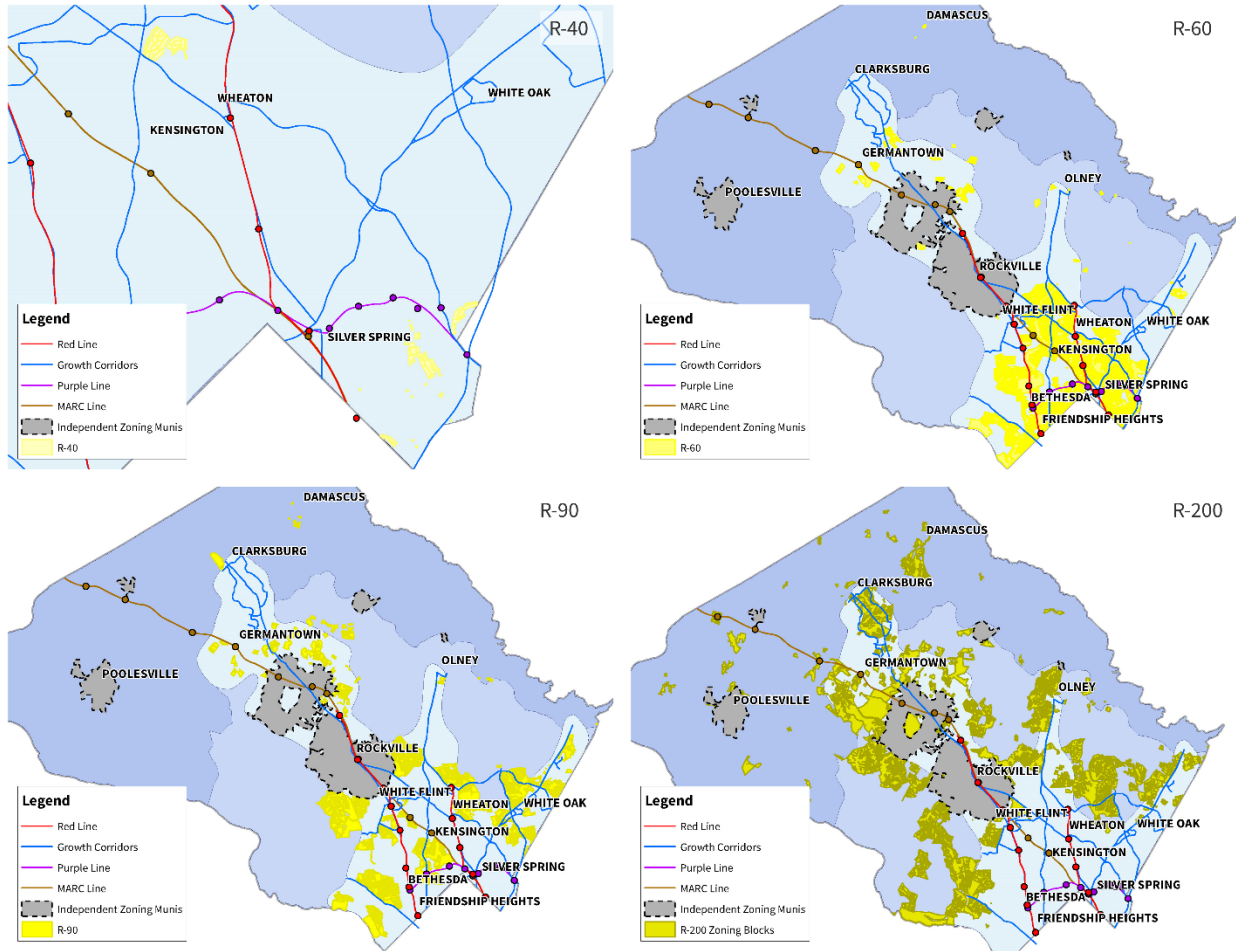


Figure 1 - Location of the R-40, R-60, R-90, and R-200 Zones relative to the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Growth Corridors.

Recommendation: Support the applicability for duplexes triplexes, and quadplexes as listed in the draft AHS report.

PRIORITY HOUSING DISTRICT

The Priority Housing District (PHD) is envisioned as an area where more intensive small scale AHS recommendations would apply, including allowing quadplexes in the R-60 and R-90 zones and further reducing parking. The PHD is recommended to be an area defined by:

- A one-mile buffer from Metro’s Red Line stations, future Purple Line stations, and MARC stations

- A 500-foot buffer from the *Thrive Montgomery 2050* Growth Corridors¹.

These criteria were considered to encourage the most growth in areas with the greatest infrastructure investments, which is consistent with the themes of Thrive.

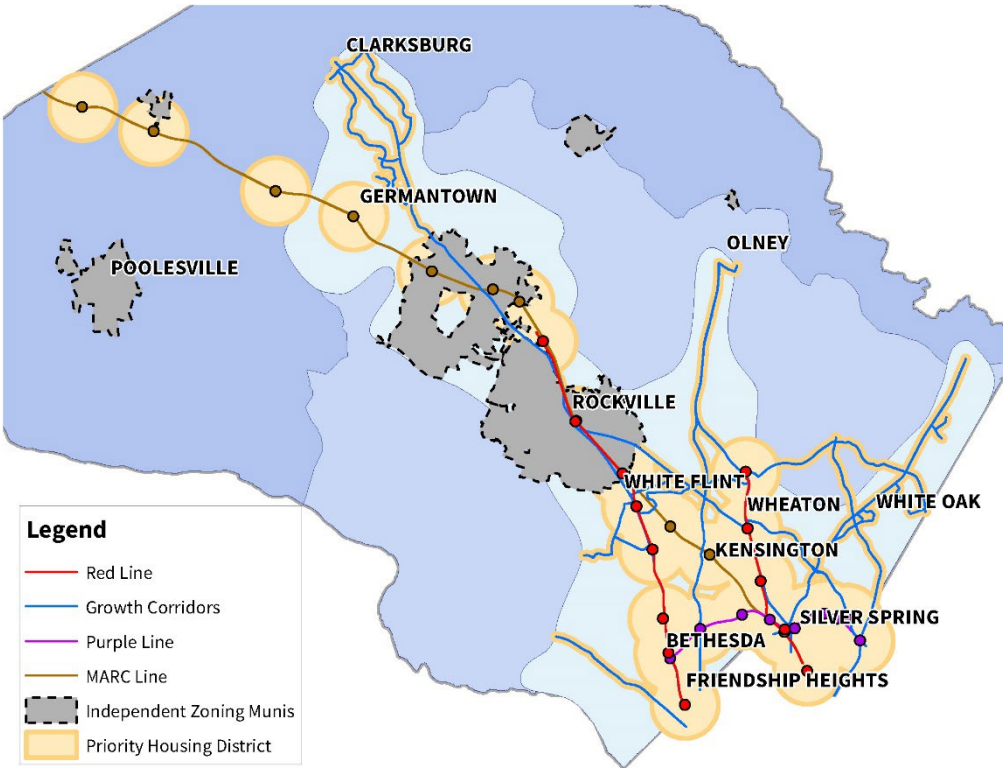


Figure 2 - Map of the Priority Housing District

Recommendation: Support the creation of a Priority Housing District including areas within one mile from Red Line, Purple Line, and MARC stations and 500 feet from any Thrive Montgomery 2050 Growth Corridor.

SMALL SCALE STANDARDS

DEFINITIONS

In work session #7, Planning Staff discussed amendments needed to the building types and their definitions. Another element of the zoning code that would need to be modified is the various use standards that apply to household living under Section 3.3.1. There are currently four types of household living:

¹ The draft AHS report defines the corridors as the BRT corridors from the 2013 *Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan*, plus Connecticut Avenue, and River Road inside the Capital Beltway. The Board agreed to update this terminology to the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Growth Corridors at work session 7.

- **Single-Unit Living** – one dwelling unit contained in a detached house building type.
- **Two-Unit Living** – two dwelling units contained in a duplex building type.
- **Townhouse Living** – three or more dwelling units in a townhouse building type.
- **Multi-Unit Living** – dwelling units in an apartment or multi-use building type.

Unlike the building types discussed with the Planning Board on April 11th where the multiplex building was recommended for introduction, there is no need for a new type of household living to accommodate attainable housing. The draft AHS report recommends amending the definition of Townhouse Living to match the Townhouse Building Type with five² or more dwellings, and Multi-Unit Living to include multiplex buildings.

- **Townhouse Living** – ~~three~~ **five** or more dwelling units in a townhouse building type
- **Multi-Unit Living** – dwelling units in ~~an~~ **multiplex**, apartment or multi-use building type

Recommendations: *Modify the following definitions in Section 3.3.1 of the zoning code:*

- *Townhouse Living: five or more dwellings in a townhouse building type*
- *Multi-Unit Living: to include multiplex buildings*

USE STANDARDS – HOUSEHOLD LIVING

[Use Table](#)

The draft AHS report recommends introducing small scale attainable housing into the applicable residential zones by adding multi-unit living as a limited use in the R-90, R-60, and R-40 zones to allow multiplexes. No changes are proposed for two-unit living, which would enable duplexes because two-unit living is already a limited use in the applicable zones.

[Use Standards](#)

Two-unit living and multi-unit living are proposed as limited uses for implementing small scale attainable housing. There are a few reasons why these uses are introduced as limited rather than permitted uses:

Two-Unit Living

- Mechanism for requiring conformance with the Pattern Book for new construction in standard method development.

Multi-Unit Living

- Mechanism for requiring conformance with the Pattern Book for new construction.

² The draft AHS report recommends townhouse living as four or more dwellings.

- Sets limits for up to three units in a multiplex building type in the R-90, R-60 and R-40 zones generally, and allows up to four units in a multiplex building type when located within the priority housing district.

Recommendations:

- Allow multi-unit living as a limited use in the R-90, R-60, and R-40 zones.
- Set the limited use standards for multi-unit living in the R-90, R-60, and R-40 zones as finding conformance with a pattern book, and allowing up to three units in a multiplex building generally, and up for four units in a multiplex building within the priority housing district.
- Continue allowing two-unit living as a limited use in the R-200, R-90, and R-60 zones.
- Setting the limited use standards for two-unit living in the R-200, R-90, and R-60 zones as conformance with a pattern book.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS - ZONES

This section covers the recommendations for modifying the existing zone’s development standards tables. Generally, the standards tables should remain substantially similar to how they are today, with a few exceptions discussed below. Planning Staff have included in Attachment 3 a marked-up copy of a generic development standards table to better visualize these changes.

Allowed Building Types

At the very top of every development standards table are column headings, titled by the allowed building types by that zone. For the R-200, R-90, and R-60 zones in the standard method, the only building type currently allowed is a detached house. AHS recommends for these zones adding a column for both duplex and multiplex building types. In the [R-40](#) zone duplexes are already allowed, so only the multiplex building type is proposed to be added.

Recommendation – add the duplex and multiplex building types to the standard method development tables to the R-200, R-90, R-60, and R-40 zones.

Building Site and Lot Standards

The first section of the development standards in each of the residential zones is a section called Lot and Density. Within this section are standards for lot area, width, frontage, density as a measure of units per acre, lot coverage, and specifications that may alter the above standards under unique circumstances. The draft AHS report recommends renaming the header of this section as Site and Lot. Planning Staff recommends further clarity to change the header of the section to **building site and lot** since the word site is already a defined term in the zoning ordinance.

There are many reasons for using site standards rather than lot standards especially when considering the duplex and multiplex building types:

- A detached building currently is limited to one per lot, therefore a building site and a lot would be the same.
- A duplex or multiplex may be on one or more lots - but switching the standards to the building site would capture all lot(s) associated with any one duplex or multiplex building.
- The minimum standards for site area and width at front building line³ would be the same as the standards currently for a lot for a detached house.
- Lot width at front lot line⁴ and frontage requirements would remain the same as a per-lot requirement.
- To retain house scale, setbacks and coverage (discussed later) would be based on the site.

Recommendations:

- *Shift from using lot standards to building site standards for minimum area and width at front building line, including removing the minimum lot area standard.*
- *Rename the section ‘building site and lot’.*

Maximum Site Area

The recommendation of the draft AHS report is to place a cap on the maximum site area that can be considered for a small scale development as slightly more than two times the minimum site area. The original intent of this was to discourage an investor from assembling multiple properties on a block and undertaking a larger scale project that may alter the character of the neighborhood substantially. Planning Staff have reconsidered this recommendation in light of comments from housing advocates and the Board and are recommending removing the maximum site area standard. Planning Staff is making this recommendation for a few reasons:

- Data analysis conducted in 2021 suggested the market for creating duplexes and multiplexes in most residential neighborhoods is relatively small.
- Other requirements intended to maintain house scale development (not altering setbacks, coverage, and height, and requiring a pattern book) should be sufficient to maintain residential character.
- The restriction may prohibit any remaining opportunities for new subdivisions from constructing attainable housing types.
- Developments of 20 or more units would still trigger MPDU requirements, recreation requirements, and site plan review.

Recommendation – *Remove the previously recommended site area maximum of slightly more than two times the minimum site area.*

³ Width at front building line is the width of the lot (or building site) in a line parallel to the street where the front of the house or structure is located.

⁴ Width at front lot line is the width of the lot (the frontage length) of the lot at the street.

Density

The existing density standards for the applicable residential detached zones are based on a set number of units per acre. This becomes impractical to quantify if individual building sites may develop as different dwelling types, including a detached house, a duplex, or a multiplex. The number of buildings per acre would not change, but the number of units per acre could, allowing the minimum building site area to become the new control on building density. The draft AHS report therefore recommends removing density from the standards tables and letting the requirement of one building per building site stand as the proxy for density.

Recommendation – *Remove the density row from the development standards table in the applicable residential detached zones.*

Coverage

For the same reasons AHS recommends shifting the area and width standards away from lot to Building Site, the coverage standard should also be shifted from lot maximum to a Building Site maximum. Given the uncertainty on if or how a building site may be subdivided, it's the most simple to base this standard on the new building site geography intended to maintain the existing house scale standards. In the draft AHS report, lot coverage was kept for the detached house and site coverage was added for the duplex and multiplex. This new recommendation is to eliminate lot coverage entirely and rely on Building Site coverage.

Recommendation – *replace lot coverage with Building Site coverage in the standards table.*

Specifications for Building Site and Lot

Most standards tables have sections titled 'Specification for...' which serve in many ways as footnotes to the above development standards. The Residential zones contain such a section specific to Lot and Density (now recommended to be Site and Lot). Within this specification section, the draft AHS report, starting at the bottom of page 23, recommended adding two new specifications. The first provides a minimum site area exception to accommodate attainable housing on existing sub-standard lots, and the second clarifies that minimum lot area is to be measured as an average to provide flexibility when subdividing existing lots into two or more lots for fee simple ownership of duplex or multiplex buildings.

Planning Staff support retaining the policy of the first specification proposed by the draft AHS report that would exempt existing platted lots from meeting the site area minimum. However, to be consistent with other sections of the report where specific code language is being replaced with policy statements, Planning Staff recommends simply stating that the Planning Board encourages an exemption to allow existing lots and parcels that do not meet the minimum building site area to still be eligible for small scale attainable housing types. There are many older neighborhoods, particularly in the southeastern portion of the county where lots do not meet the current zoning standards but are

legal lots with detached houses on them. An exemption to site area requirements would permit them to also convert to a duplex or multiplex, presuming all other standards can be met.

The second specification for calculating lot area as an average lot area is recommended by Planning Staff to be removed, in conjunction with removing the minimum lot area requirements discussed earlier.

Recommendations:

- *Provide policy guidance for an exception from minimum building site area for existing platted lots or parcels that do not meet the minimum building area requirements.*
- *Remove the specification explaining that minimum lot area is expressed as an average.*

Placement, Height, Form, Agriculture

The remainder of the development standards tables for each of the residential zones contains the various requirements for building placement (setbacks), building height, form (architectural elements), and provisions for urban agriculture. The draft AHS report recommends retaining these standards, and applying the specific values required for detached houses to the duplex and multiplex styles. These standards are important to Planning Staff for many reasons:

- Maintains the ‘house scale’ element of the recommendations of allowing additional density without altering the existing form.
- Does not further aggravate concerns about stormwater or urban flooding.
- Is consistent with much of the feedback received from many community members and groups.
- Is not necessary to amend to accommodate attainable housing.

Planning Staff does recommend minor adjustments to some of the setback standards to clarify that when a measurement is given from a lot line, or based on an adjacent lot, that the language instead be lot or Building Site.

Planning Staff have looked at the building envelopes created by typical lots in the residential detached zones considering setback, height, and coverage limitations and finds there is adequate space remaining to create attainable housing types. The following images walk through this analysis, focusing on the R-60 zone.

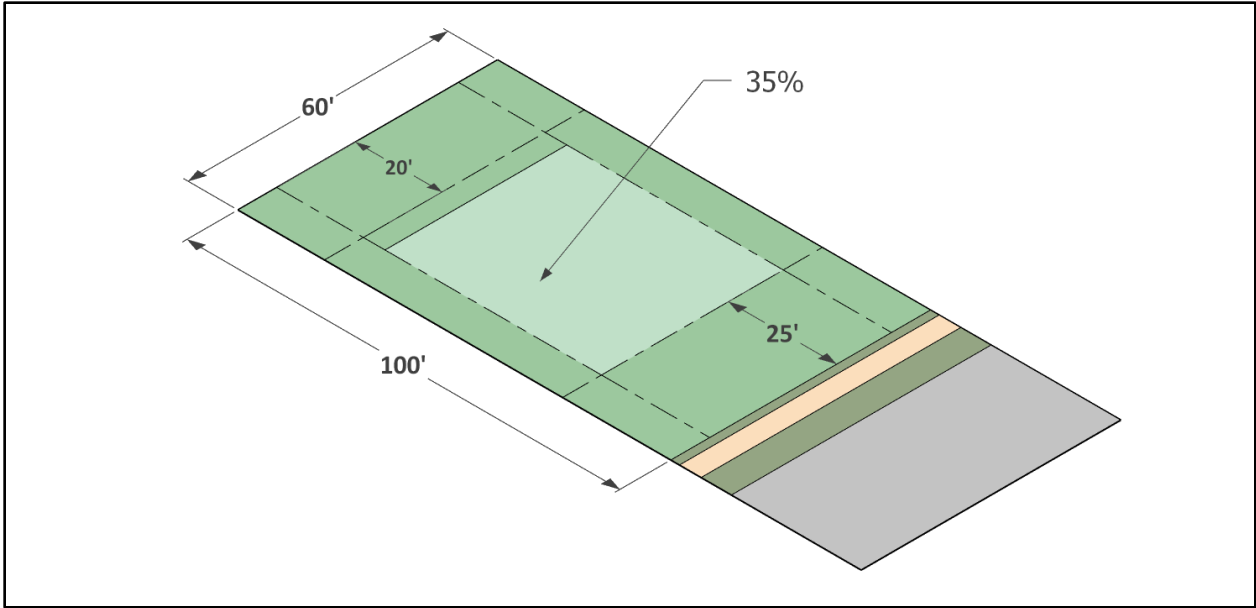


Figure 3: showing the required 25 foot front, sum of 18 foot side, and 20 foot rear setbacks, and 35% lot coverage allowed for a typical R-60 lot. 35% lot coverage for a 6,000 square foot lot is 2,100 square feet.

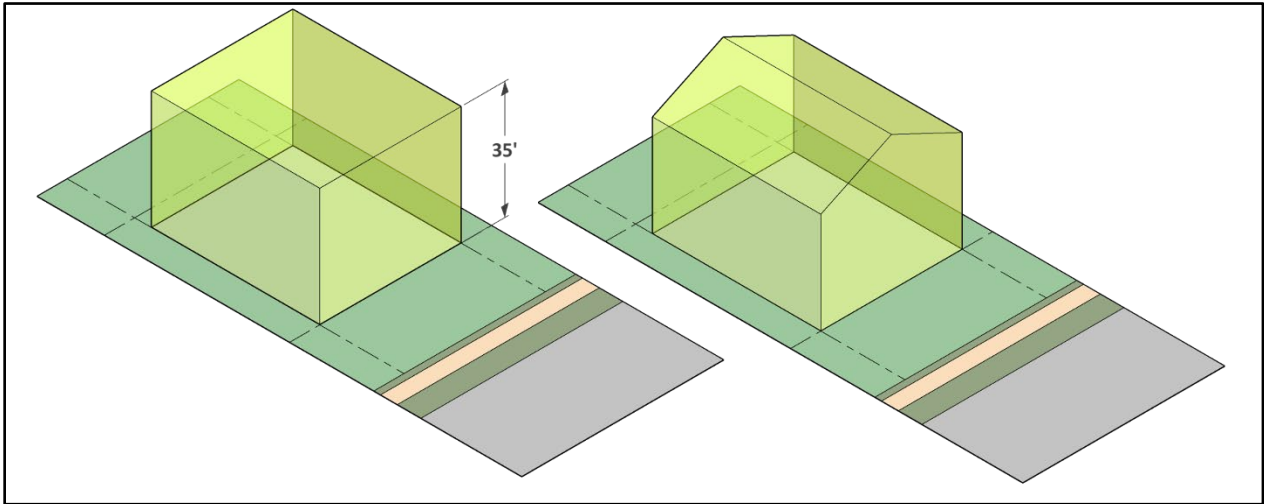


Figure 4: showing the 35 foot building height allowed, establishing a vertical building envelope

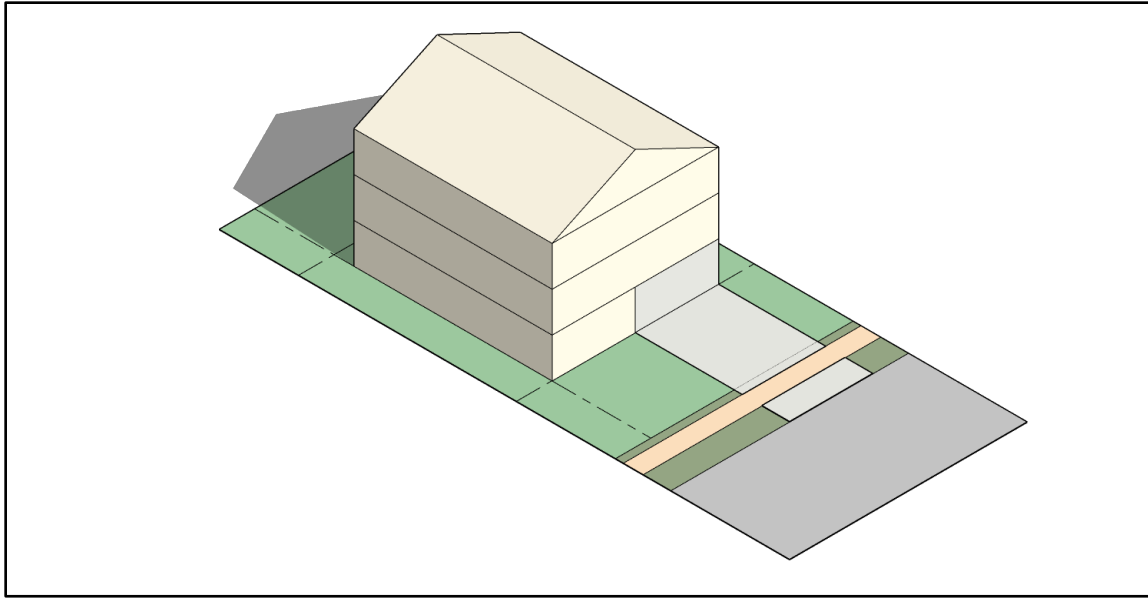


Figure 5: massing broken into three residential floors. Each floor plate could be up to 2,100 square feet, for a total of 6,300 square feet, not including any basement space. Figure above shows an integrated two car garage.

Recommendations: retain the development standards for all development in the following categories:

- 2. Placement: Building placement which includes setbacks from property lines and streets, except to clarify setbacks or placement from lots also includes from Building Sites.
- 3. Height: Maximum building heights.
- 4. Form: Allowed Building Elements, including architectural features such as porches.
- 5. Buildings used for Agriculture Associated with Farming: Provisions for urban agriculture.

PATTERN BOOK

PATTERN BOOK BASICS

The AHS draft recommendations include the creation of, and conformance with, a pattern book. Conformance with the pattern book would be a requirement for new construction or major reconstruction providing small scale attainable housing. Small additions or mostly interior renovations would not need to conform to the pattern book. The pattern book is meant to be a helpful guide, and not a hindrance to building attainable housing types. There are many benefits of a pattern book including:

- The pattern book will create a clear path to getting building permits for small scale Attainable Housing types in each of the four zones.

- The pattern book will collect and clearly represent all requirements relative to getting building permits, including zoning, transportation, environmental regulations, etc. in one place, streamlining the preparation of permit applications.
- The pattern book will graphically demonstrate form-based standards including setbacks, building placement, and massing, and show examples of how to configure small scale housing on various lot sizes and shapes.
- The Pattern Book will ensure that small scale attainable housing contributes positively to the public realm creating attractive streetscapes by providing guidance on:
 - Parking, driveways, and garages
 - Curb cuts, turning radii, and street tree placement.
 - Frontage design including front yard layout and sidewalks.
 - Neighborly details including stoops, awnings, porches etc.
 - Maintaining green area

The intent is to have a set of clear standards that can be reviewed at the time of building permit without the need of specific design review. The pattern book should be created as a separate work item, in coordination with the Department of Permitting Services, before full implementation of the small scale attainable housing recommendations. The pattern book would have a clear set of basic standards and include a checklist to simplify the review needed for issuing building permits.

Recommendations:

- *Require small scale new development or major redevelopment in the applicable Residential Detached Zones to conform to the elements of a pattern book.*
- *Coordinate with the Department of Permitting Services on the creation of a pattern book.*

ADDITIONAL SMALL SCALE RECOMMENDATIONS

In drafting the recommended code changes necessary to implement attainable housing, and thinking in particular about small scale development, a number of other concerns have arisen. Below Planning Staff take a deeper look into two of them; parking and subdivision. In addition to these two, there are many other considerations and possible code conflicts that should be addressed as part of implementing attainable housing which include:

- Residential driveway standards
- Street trees and tree canopy
- Commercial construction code
- Fire Access requirements
- Existing site plan developments

Planning Staff will address these and other policy considerations in a future work session.

PARKING

Parking Minimums

The draft AHS report recommends adjustments to vehicle parking for small scale attainable housing. The draft report outlines many reasons to promote reducing vehicle parking including work done on parking related to accessory dwelling units, acknowledging the high cost of parking, and the impervious surface impacts created by larger parking areas.

The recommended parking reductions are as follows:

- No parking reduction is proposed for duplexes and multiplexes in the R-40, R-60, R-90, and R-200 zones under the following circumstances:
 - In the R-200 zone, a standard method duplex development where on-street parking is not available.
 - In the R-90, R-60, and R-40 zones, a standard method duplex or multiplex development located outside the PHD, where on-street parking is not available.
- A parking reduction of 50% for duplexes and multiplexes in the R-40, R-60, R-90, and R-200 zones under the following circumstances:
 - In the R-200 zone, a standard method duplex development where on-street parking is available.
 - In the R-90, R-60, and R-40 zones, a standard method duplex or multiplex development located outside the PHD, where on-street parking is available.
 - In the R-90, R-60, and R-40 zones, a standard method duplex or multiplex development is located inside the PHD, where on-street parking is not available.
- A parking reduction of 75% for duplexes and multiplexes in the R-40, R-60, and R-90 zones under the following circumstances:
 - In the R-90, R-60, and R-40 zones, a standard method duplex or multiplex development is located inside the PHD, where on-street parking is available.

The following table is another way to visualize the text above.

Table 1: Percent reduction in minimum parking proposed

Zone	No Street Parking, outside PHD	Yes Street Parking, Outside PHD	No Street Parking, Inside PHD	Yes Street Parking, Inside PHD
R-200	0	50	n/a	n/a
R-90	0	50	50	75
R-60	0	50	50	75
R-40	0	50	50	75

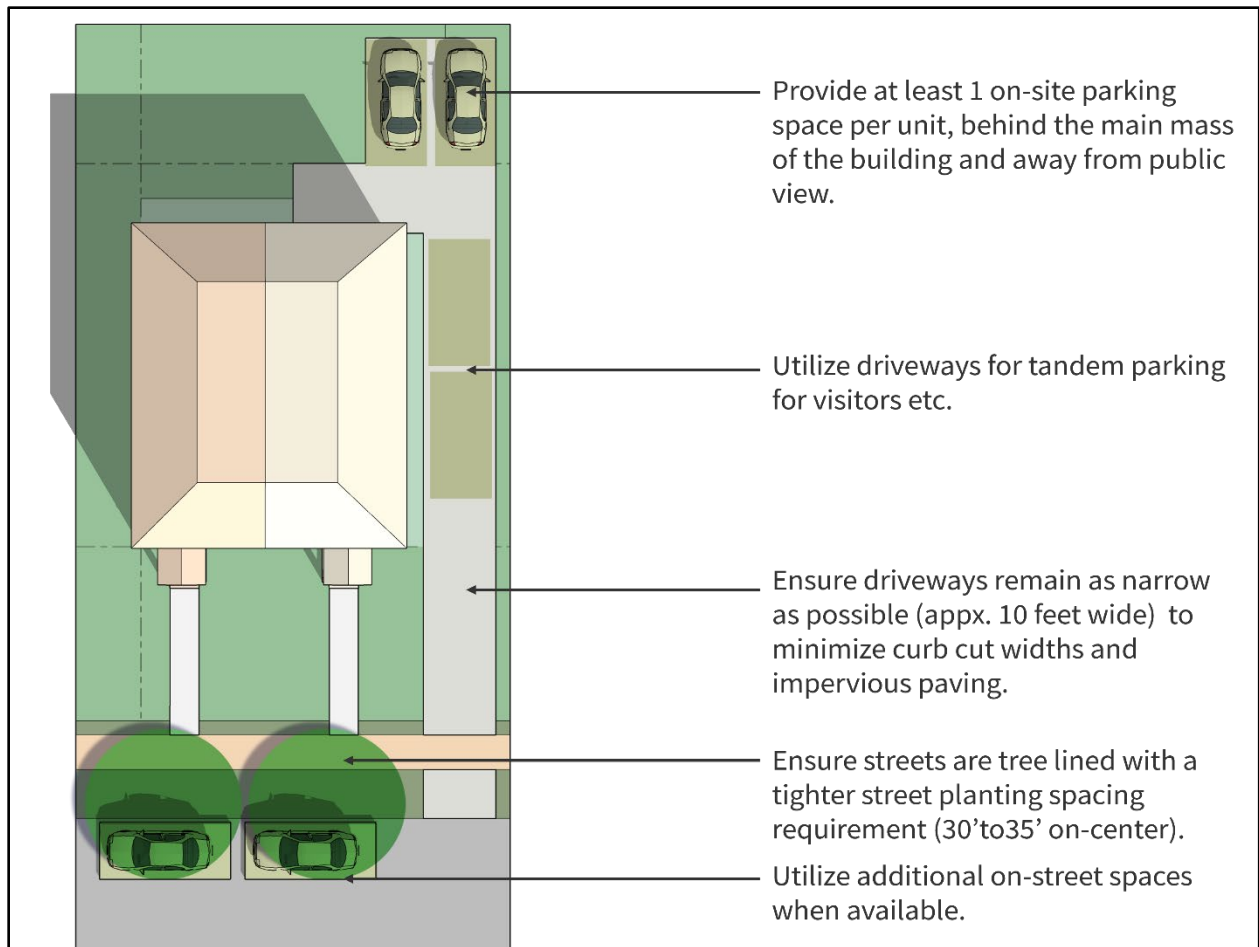


Figure 6 – illustrating the proposed parking requirements and standards from AHS.

Recommendations:

- Reduce the parking minimums by 50% in the R-40, R-60, R-90, and R-200 zones outside the PHD where on-street parking is available, and inside the PHD where on-street parking is not available.
- Reduce the parking minimums by 75% in the R-40, R-60, and R-90 zones where on-street parking is available.

[Parking Design Standards](#)

Additional modifications should be considered to the vehicle parking design standards under Section 6.2.5. of the zoning code. In particular, Section 6.2.5.A exempts detached houses, duplexes, or townhouses that provide parking on individual lots from many of the design standards. This list should be updated to add the multiplex building type. Also, the current code under Section 6.2.5.E.5 allows tandem parking but only if both parking spaces are assigned to the same dwelling unit. Planning Staff recommend modifying this provision to allow tandem parking if the spaces are

assigned to the same building if it is a detached house, duplexes or multiplex. This would help facilitate fewer curb cuts along the street, narrower driveways on lot, and otherwise provide more opportunities for on-site parking without dramatically increasing driveway area.

Recommendations:

- *Modify the list of buildings exempt from most design standards for parking to also exempt the multiplex building type, and*
- *To allow tandem parking based on a per building requirement rather than a per unit requirement for the detached house, duplex, and multiplex.*

SUBDIVISION

The draft AHS Report on pages 35 and 36 thoroughly explains what a subdivision is, and the three primary types of subdivision from Chapter 50: Preliminary Plans, Administrative Subdivision Plans, and Minor Subdivisions.

To incentivize and streamline the production of attainable housing options, the draft AHS report recommends amendments to Chapter 50 establishing more efficient processes for attainable housing options.

Small Scale, Minor Subdivision

The recommendation to facilitate small scale attainable housing is to develop a new Minor Subdivision process for the creation of new lots, in limited instances. Minor subdivisions do not undergo a full review for conformance with the findings of Chapter 50 and currently are limited to lot line adjustments, turning platted outlots into buildable lots, and subdividing commercial properties to create ownership lots. This new minor subdivision could be an option for small scale development where an applicant may want to create fee simple lots for a new duplex or multiplex building. The scope and process would not be substantially different from that of creating Ownership Plats outlined by Section 50.7.1.E except it is intended explicitly for residential dwellings and would not require a site plan or conditional use plan. The draft AHS report recommends allowing a minor subdivision with the assumption that the minor subdivision is to subdivide previously recorded lots. Each minor subdivision plan should be limited to the bounds of one existing platted lot but with no restrictions on how many concurrent and adjacent Minor Subdivisions may be filed.

Recommendation – *Support creating a new Minor Subdivision suitable for small scale attainable housing, eligible for single existing lots that wish to subdivide.*

Administrative Subdivisions and Site Plans

Administrative Subdivisions are discussed as another streamlining subdivision option for creating lots for attainable housing that do not cleanly follow the boundaries of an existing platted lot. Existing Administrative Subdivisions are limited in scale usually to up to three or five lots for detached houses, depending on the underlying zone. The draft AHS report recommends a new procedure for creating up to eight lots, based on the previous recommendation to limit any individual small scale attainable housing project size to that of approximately two adjacent lots. However, Planning Staff is no longer recommending a limit on how many adjacent lots may convert from detached houses to attainable housing options at one time. Planning Staff also are interested in creating a process that could benefit some of the smaller scale AHOM projects.

Planning Staff recommends creating a new administrative subdivision process that is specific to helping facilitate the development of small scale attainable housing. The threshold could be set at creating lots for 19 or fewer dwellings, for standard method, or AHOM developments containing duplexes and multiplexes. At 20 or more dwellings the scope of review changes, including requiring MPDUs and conformance with recreation guidelines. To parallel with the new administrative subdivision, Planning Staff recommends creating an administrative site plan process for AHOM projects that also create 19 or fewer dwellings. Rather than a new plan type, the existing site plan requirements could be modified to allow for director level review of these projects and could set a regulatory deadline of 90 days rather than 120, to match the requirements of the administrative subdivision.

Recommendations:

- *Support creating a new Administrative Subdivision for the creation of lots supporting 19 or fewer dwellings with duplex and multiplex building types.*
- *Creating an administrative site plan process allowing the director to approve site plans with 19 or fewer dwellings, with a 90-day review period.*

CORRESPONDENCE

Since the initiative restarted, Planning Staff has received over 70 pieces of written and verbal correspondence (see Attachment B). Staff compiled a comment matrix to better organize and understand the scope of the comments received. Most comments were general in nature or focused on small scale attainable housing recommendations. Generally, the comments received on the initiative since it was restarted were similar to the comments received during the initial work on the initiative in 2021. Pages 49-52 of the draft report note common stakeholder concerns and the previous Planning Board's response.

While this is not an inclusive list of all concerns heard, the most commonly noted concerns since restarting the initiative are noted below:

Parking concerns: It is important to create policies today that promote the desired future of tomorrow. As envisioned in Thrive, the county's future is expected to be more multimodal and connected. The Board used guidance from Thrive and best practices from transportation literature, which prioritized decreased motor vehicle parking per unit of development and adoption of policies that reflect the economic and environmental costs of driving alone. Reduced parking minimums are appropriate for walkable communities with access to services, amenities, and multiple modes of transportation. Creating housing with reduced parking in these areas will attract households with less of a reliance on personal automobiles.

Environmental concerns (trees/stormwater management): One of the themes in the correspondence about AHS is concern over the loss of trees due to infill development. Relatedly, Planning Staff heard a lot of concerns about stormwater management and issues of flooding, especially in down county neighborhoods. Staff is sympathetic to these concerns and thinks that there should be future action that looks at these issues. Staff, however, believes that any future analysis and action that looks at how to balance new infill development with the protection of tree canopy and prevention of flooding should not single out attainable housing typologies, but instead include all housing typologies, including replacement homes.

Actual attainability: Concerns noted that these units are not going to be attainable. Due to the high cost of land and high cost of construction new attainable housing may be more expensive than existing single-family detached units. However, attainable units would be smaller and accordingly less expensive than the new replacement homes being built throughout the county. If no action is taken, over time the currently attainable properties in the existing housing stock will be slowly transformed by-right under the existing zoning code and development standards into larger custom homes that are less affordable than existing and new attainable housing. There are good reasons to undertake this project beyond the price point of the units. At the root of the AHS initiative is an effort to make the county's communities more equitable and more inclusive by countering the historical exclusionary aspects of zoning.

Recommendations not bold enough: While a lot of concerns voiced were focused on mitigating the impacts of the recommendations, many did voice their concern that the recommendations are not bold enough. Many felt that given the exclusionary aspects of single-family zoning, staff recommendations should more aggressively address the exclusionary history of single-family zoning (e.g., by applying the recommendations everywhere). Additional bolder changes can and should be pursued through the master plan process, using tools like rezoning to increase density and housing diversity.

ZTA is seen as a way to circumvent the Master Plan and Sector Plan process: The recommended zoning modifications are often referred to as a “one size fits all” and “blanket approach” to change zoning without having to go through the normal Master Plan and/or Sector Plan process. This is perceived to be a less comprehensive and detailed process and will result in actions taken (such as zoning changes) that are not well thought out, that haven’t had enough community involvement, and that will favor developers’ agenda rather than the residents living there. Planning Staff believes that the AHS process is comprehensive – and builds upon years of work regarding missing middle housing, and now attainable housing.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – DRAFT Attainable Housing Strategies Report with markup from the previous Planning Board

Attachment B – AHS Comment Matrix

Attachment C – Draft development standards table