



CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MEETING

AGENDA SECTION	WORK SESSION ITEMS
MEETING DATE	MARCH 2, 2026

ITEM:	Yes to Homes Discussion							
<i>Presenting Item: Aaron Chirpich, City Manager</i>								
DEPARTMENT: Administration		BY/DATE: Aaron Chirpich / February 26, 2026						
<p>CORE CITY STRATEGIES: <i>(please indicate areas that apply by adding an "X" in front of the selected text below)</i></p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; border: none;">_Community that Grows with Purpose and Equity</td> <td style="width: 50%; border: none;">X Engaged, Effective and Forward-Thinking</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border: none;">X High Quality Public Spaces</td> <td style="border: none;">_Resilient and Prosperous Economy</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border: none;">_Safe, Accessible and Built for Everyone</td> <td style="border: none;">_Inclusive and Connected Community</td> </tr> </table>			_Community that Grows with Purpose and Equity	X Engaged, Effective and Forward-Thinking	X High Quality Public Spaces	_Resilient and Prosperous Economy	_Safe, Accessible and Built for Everyone	_Inclusive and Connected Community
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BACKGROUND

Staff from the Yes to Homes MN coalition have reached out to Council members requesting support for their legislative agenda during the 2026 session. Staff has reviewed the 2026 legislative priorities advanced by Yes to Homes, a bipartisan statewide effort focused on expanding housing choices across Minnesota. The collations stated goal is to address Minnesota’s housing shortage by allowing a greater variety of housing types and reducing regulatory barriers that increase housing costs.

The coalition’s proposal, referred to as the “Starter Home Act,” promotes statewide standards intended to expand housing supply and affordability. Key elements include:

- **Allowing More Housing Types:** Expanding access to duplexes, fourplexes, townhomes, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), apartments, and mixed-use residential above commercial spaces.
- **Restoring Main Streets:** Permitting residential units above retail and office uses to encourage reinvestment in downtown areas.
- **Parking Flexibility:** Reducing or eliminating minimum parking mandates in favor of more flexible, locally responsive standards.
- **Reducing Costly Mandates:** Limiting certain design and homeowners’ association requirements that may increase construction costs.

The coalition argues that these changes would create housing options for residents of all stages of life and better reflect changing household sizes and demographics.

Staff support many of the overarching goals identified by Yes to Homes, including expanding housing choice, improving affordability, encouraging mixed-use development, and modernizing land use regulations. These

objectives are largely aligned with existing City priorities related to housing diversity, reinvestment, and economic vitality.

However, staff also notes that our advisory partners at the League of Minnesota Cities have previously cautioned that similar legislative efforts in recent years have included provisions that preempt local control over zoning and land use decisions. The coalition's past proposals have, in some instances, sought to establish statewide mandates that limit municipal discretion in regulating residential development. While statewide standards may create consistency, they may also reduce the City's ability to tailor zoning regulations to the specific conditions, infrastructure capacity, and neighborhood dynamics unique to Columbia Heights.

Importantly, the City is scheduled to begin a Comprehensive Plan update later this year. This process will provide a structured and community-driven opportunity to evaluate land use policy, zoning regulations, housing supply strategies, and redevelopment priorities. Through this effort, the City can consider many of the same housing strategies promoted by Yes to Homes, such as allowing additional housing types and revisiting parking requirements, but in a manner that reflects local context and community input.

SUMMARY OF CURRENT STATUS

Staff reached out to Yes to Homes to obtain a draft of any bills they are putting forward this session. At the time of this report, drafts were not available for distribution.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

1. Acknowledge alignment between many Yes to Homes goals and existing City housing priorities.
2. Refrain from formally supporting the coalition's legislation until draft bill language is available so staff and the Council can evaluate the degree to which local control may be preempted.
3. Utilize the upcoming Comprehensive Plan update process to proactively consider tailored land use and zoning changes that expand housing opportunities while maintaining appropriate local authority.

Waiting to review the specific legislative language will allow the Council to make an informed decision regarding whether the proposal preserves sufficient municipal flexibility or imposes a one-size-fits-all framework that may not fully reflect the needs of Columbia Heights. Staff will continue to monitor developments and return to Council with additional analysis once draft legislation is introduced.

Requested Council Action/ Discussion Topics / Key Questions

(Briefly state the specific action staff is requesting of the City Council, if any. For example: provide direction, discuss options, or review information.)

Staff are seeking feedback on the Council's position regarding support for the Yes to Homes legislative agenda.

ATTACHMENT(S)

- **Yes to Homes Platform Summary**