

Levy County 2050 Comprehensive Plan Update

Future Land Use Element Supplement

Proposed Moderate Density Residential / Missing-Middle Housing Category

MDR-10: Moderate Density Residential - Up to 10 Dwelling Units per Gross Acre

Prepared as a working supplement for County consideration. The language below is intended to provide a policy framework for discussion and is not intended as final adopted text until reviewed by County staff, the County Attorney, the Planning Commission, and the Board of County Commissioners.

Source note: This supplement converts the preliminary MDR-10 concept into a structured Future Land Use Element amendment package, including a proposed category definition, goal, objective, policies, locational criteria, compatibility standards, safeguards for springs/water resources, and implementation notes.

1. Purpose and Planning Rationale

The purpose of this supplement is to provide Levy County with a targeted land use tool for low-rise, missing-middle residential development within appropriate portions of the Municipal Service District (MSD). The proposed category is intended to bridge the gap between the County's existing Medium Density Residential category, which currently allows up to 5 dwelling units per acre, and more urban multifamily or mixed-use categories that may be inappropriate for much of unincorporated Levy County.

The proposed MDR-10 category is not intended to create a broad upzoning of lands within the MSD. Instead, it is intended to function as a carefully limited future land use category that may be applied through future map amendments where adequate public facilities, transportation access, compatibility, and environmental conditions are present or programmed.

Planning Need	Proposed Response	Policy Intent
<u>Need for attainable/workforce/senior housing options near services</u>	<u>Create MDR-10 as a compact, low-rise residential category</u>	<u>Expand housing choice without creating urban-scale apartment development</u>
<u>Existing 5 du/ac category may be too limited for missing-middle housing</u>	<u>Allow up to 10 du/ac where criteria are satisfied</u>	<u>Support duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, townhomes, cottages, and small multifamily buildings</u>
<u>Concern for springs, farms, rural character, and conservation lands</u>	<u>Require suitability, compatibility, utility, stormwater, and buffering criteria</u>	<u>Ensure added housing capacity is paired with higher environmental and site-planning performance</u>

2. Proposed Future Land Use Category

Appendix A: Insert Text for Future Land Use Category Table

<u>Future Land Use Category</u>	<u>Primary Uses</u>	<u>Maximum Density / Intensity</u>	<u>Special Criteria</u>
<u>Moderate Density Residential (MDR-10)</u>	<u>Low-rise residential uses, including missing-middle housing forms such as duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, townhomes, cottage courts, courtyard housing, small-scale multifamily buildings, senior housing, and accessory dwelling units, where otherwise permitted.</u>	<u>Up to 10 dwelling units per gross acre. Actual density may be limited by infrastructure, compatibility, environmental constraints, and adopted land development regulations.</u>	<u>Limited to appropriate MSD locations or other designated urban service areas; requires adequate public facilities; protects springs, wetlands, floodplains, conservation lands, significant recharge areas, agricultural lands, and rural residential areas; requires compatibility transitions and enhanced stormwater/wastewater safeguards.</u>

Optional note for table: MDR-10 is not intended to be mapped broadly. Application of the category should occur through site-specific amendments to future land-use maps that demonstrate consistency with the adopted criteria.

Moderate Density Residential (MDR-10)

The Moderate Density Residential (MDR-10) category is intended to provide for compact, low-rise residential development within designated Municipal Service Districts where public facilities, transportation access, and environmental conditions are suitable to support a greater range of housing types than conventional low-density residential development.

The category is intended to accommodate missing-middle housing forms, including duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, townhomes, cottage courts, courtyard housing, small-scale multifamily buildings, senior housing, accessory dwelling units where otherwise permitted, and similar low-rise residential forms designed to be compatible with surrounding neighborhoods and nearby rural, agricultural, and conservation lands.

Residential development within the MDR-10 category may be permitted at a maximum density of 10 dwelling units per gross acre, subject to the availability of central potable water and sanitary sewer, adequate transportation access, compatibility with adjacent land uses, protection of environmentally sensitive lands, and compliance with adopted land development regulations.

3. Proposed Category Parameters

Parameter	Recommended Standard / Guidance
<u>Maximum Density</u>	<u>Up to 10 dwelling units per gross acre. The maximum density is not automatic; actual density should depend on utilities, access, environmental suitability, compatibility, and adopted land development standards.</u>
<u>Primary Use</u>	<u>Low-rise residential development and related accessory uses.</u>
<u>Preferred Housing Types</u>	<u>Duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, townhomes, cottage courts, courtyard housing, small-scale multifamily buildings, senior housing, and accessory dwelling units where otherwise permitted.</u>
<u>Building Height</u>	<u>Generally, 2 stories. Up to 3 stories may be considered where compatible with surrounding development and not directly adjacent to rural residential, agricultural, or conservation lands unless appropriate transitions are provided.</u>
<u>Utilities</u>	<u>Central potable water and sanitary sewer should be required where available. Within springs or water resource protection areas, conventional septic systems should not be relied upon to support MDR-10 densities.</u>
<u>Open Space</u>	<u>Minimum 20 percent open space recommended, with credit for preserved native habitat, perimeter buffers, connected common open space, and stormwater areas designed as community amenities.</u>
<u>Stormwater / LID</u>	<u>Enhanced stormwater treatment, low-impact development practices, native landscaping, and avoidance of untreated discharge to wetlands, surface waters, or sensitive recharge areas.</u>
<u>Connectivity</u>	<u>Internal pedestrian circulation should be required. Interconnection to adjacent neighborhoods, parks, civic uses, and commercial areas should be encouraged where feasible and compatible.</u>
<u>Buffers / Transitions</u>	<u>Enhanced buffers, setbacks, transitional building placement, dark-sky lighting, and landscape screening should be required where adjacent to agriculture, conservation, rural residential, or springs protection areas.</u>

4. Proposed Future Land Use Element Goal, Objective, and Policies

The following draft objective and policies may be inserted into the Future Land Use Element as a new section addressing moderate-density, missing-middle housing within the MSD. Numbering should be adjusted to match the final Future Land Use Element format.

Goal FLU-X: Moderate Density Residential / Missing-Middle Housing. Provide for a limited, context-sensitive Moderate Density Residential future land use category within designated Municipal Service Districts to expand attainable, workforce, senior, and missing-middle housing opportunities while directing compact residential growth to areas served by adequate infrastructure and protecting Levy County's springs, rural character, agricultural lands, conservation areas, and environmentally sensitive resources.

Objective FLU-X: Moderate Density Residential. The County shall provide a limited and criteria-based opportunity for compact, low-rise, missing-middle residential development within appropriate locations in the Municipal Service District in order to expand housing choice, support workforce and senior housing opportunities, make efficient use of public facilities, and maintain compatibility with Levy County's rural character, agricultural economy, springs, conservation lands, and environmentally sensitive resources.

Policy FLU-X.1: Establishment of MDR-10 Category. The County shall establish a Moderate Density Residential (MDR-10) future land use category that allows residential development of up to 10 dwelling units per gross acre, provided the applicant demonstrates consistency with applicable infrastructure, compatibility, environmental protection, and land development criteria.

Policy FLU-X.2: Purpose and Intended Housing Forms. MDR-10 is intended to accommodate low-rise missing-middle housing forms, including duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, townhomes, cottage courts, courtyard housing, small-scale multifamily buildings, senior housing, and accessory dwelling units where otherwise permitted. The category is not intended to encourage large-scale, isolated, single-use apartment complexes that lack connectivity, transition, or compatibility with surrounding development.

Policy FLU-X.3: Limited Application within the MSD. MDR-10 shall be considered only within the Municipal Service District or other County-designated urban service area where public facilities and services are available or programmed. The category shall not be mapped broadly and shall be applied only through future land use map amendments that demonstrate suitability for the proposed density and development form.

Policy FLU-X.4: Locational Criteria. Applications for MDR-10 shall demonstrate that the site is located near existing or planned residential, mixed-use, commercial, civic, employment, or municipal development; has adequate access to collector or arterial roadways or an interconnected local street network; is not isolated from existing development; and provides a logical transition between more intensive land uses and lower-density residential, agricultural, or conservation lands.

Policy FLU-X.5: Adequate Public Facilities. MDR-10 shall only be approved where adequate public facilities are available or programmed, including potable water, sanitary sewer, transportation access, stormwater management, emergency services, and other facilities necessary to serve the proposed development without creating premature or inefficient public infrastructure extensions.

Policy FLU-X.6: Discouragement of Urban Sprawl. MDR-10 amendments shall be reviewed for consistency with the County's adopted policies and applicable statutory criteria for discouraging the proliferation of urban sprawl, including compact development, efficient use of existing and planned public facilities, protection of natural resources, protection of agricultural lands, and avoidance of isolated, radial, strip, or leapfrog development patterns.

Policy FLU-X.7: Springs and Water Resource Protection. MDR-10 shall be applied and developed in a manner that protects springsheds, wetlands, floodplains, conservation lands, listed species habitat, significant groundwater recharge areas, and other environmentally sensitive resources. Within an Outstanding Florida Springs basin management action plan area, Priority Focus Area, springshed, or other mapped water resource protection area, MDR-10 development shall demonstrate that wastewater treatment, stormwater management, open space, and site design will avoid adverse impacts to spring water quality, recharge functions, and adopted nutrient reduction strategies.

Policy FLU-X.8: Wastewater and Nutrient Reduction. Connection to the central sanitary sewer shall be required where available. Where a central sewer is not available, MDR-10 shall not be approved unless the applicant demonstrates consistency with applicable state requirements for onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems, nutrient reduction, water quality protection, and County-adopted springs or water resource protection standards. Conventional septic systems should not be relied upon to support MDR-10 densities in sensitive water resource areas.

Policy FLU-X.9: Agricultural Compatibility. Where MDR-10 is adjacent to active agricultural or silvicultural lands, the development shall be designed to minimize land use conflicts and shall not be used as a basis to restrict lawfully existing agricultural or silvicultural operations. Compatibility measures may include enhanced setbacks, buffers, building orientation, access management, notice provisions, dark-sky lighting, and open space transitions.

Policy FLU-X.10: Conservation and Rural Residential Transitions. Where MDR-10 is adjacent to conservation lands, rural residential areas, or environmentally sensitive lands, development shall incorporate transitional design measures, which may include reduced building height along the edge, increased setbacks, native landscape buffers, clustered building placement, preserved open space, stormwater treatment areas, and limitations on access or lighting as necessary to protect adjacent lands.

Policy FLU-X.11: Development Form and Design. Development within MDR-10 shall emphasize low-rise residential building forms, pedestrian connectivity, internal circulation, common open space, native landscaping, enhanced stormwater treatment, and compatibility with surrounding development. The County shall establish land development regulations to implement these design expectations.

Policy FLU-X.12: Site-Specific Density Determination. The maximum density of 10 dwelling units per gross acre shall not create an entitlement to the maximum density on every parcel. The density approved for a specific site may be lower based on infrastructure capacity, environmental constraints, transportation access, compatibility, buffering needs, public facilities, or other adopted review criteria.

NOTES:

5. Recommended FLUM Amendment Review Criteria

To avoid the perception that MDR-10 is a broad entitlement, the County may wish to include the following criteria in either the Future Land Use Element or the implementing land development regulations. A proposed MDR-10 amendment should demonstrate:

- Location within the MSD or another County-designated urban service area;
- Existing or programmed central potable water and sanitary sewer service, with particular attention to springs and water resource protection areas;
- Adequate transportation access and safe internal circulation;
- Compatibility with adjacent rural residential, agricultural, silvicultural, conservation, and municipal lands;
- A development pattern that is compact and contiguous to existing or planned development and does not promote isolated, strip, radial, or leapfrog development;
- Protection of wetlands, floodplains, springsheds, listed species habitat, conservation lands, and significant recharge areas;
- Provision of open space, buffers, and transition areas where needed to protect adjacent rural, agricultural, or conservation uses;
- Consistency with County-adopted level of service standards and public facility planning; and
- Consistency with the County's overall growth strategy, housing policy, and future land use map framework.

6. Implementation Considerations

A. Do Not Map Broadly at Initial Adoption

The County may establish MDR-10 as an available future land use category without broadly mapping the category during the initial comprehensive plan update. This would allow the category to be applied later through site-specific FLUM amendments, where the applicant and County can evaluate utilities, access, compatibility, environmental suitability, and public facility capacity.

B. Pair the Category with Land Development Regulations

The category should be implemented through land development regulations that address allowable housing types, building height, open space, buffers, pedestrian circulation, stormwater design, access management, lighting, and compatibility transitions. These standards are especially important because MDR-10 is intended to deliver missing-middle housing forms rather than conventional garden apartment development.

C. Coordinate with Municipalities and Utility Providers

Because the category is intended for the MSD and edge areas near municipal services, the County should coordinate with affected municipalities and utility providers before approving MDR-10 amendments. This coordination should address water, sewer, transportation access, emergency services, school capacity, where applicable, and potential annexation or interlocal service arrangements.

D. Use Suitability Criteria Rather Than Blanket Prohibitions

The supplement is framed as an enabling and criteria-based housing tool. It should be presented as a way to expand housing options where appropriate, rather than as a restrictive overlay or broad prohibition. This framing is particularly important during the County Attorney's review of current state law constraints on more restrictive or burdensome local land development regulations following recent hurricanes.

7. Statutory and Policy Consistency Notes

The proposed MDR-10 framework is intended to align with the structure of Florida's comprehensive planning requirements by identifying the intended land uses, maximum density, suitability criteria, public facility considerations, natural resource protection standards, and anti-sprawl safeguards. Section 163.3177, Florida Statutes, requires future land use elements and map amendments to address suitability, facilities and services, natural resources, and discouragement of urban sprawl.

The springs and wastewater provisions should also be reviewed against current state requirements for Outstanding Florida Springs basin management action plans, enhanced nutrient-reducing onsite sewage treatment systems, and requirements to connect to central sewer where available. The specific implementation language should be confirmed by the County Attorney and coordinated with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Commerce, and utility providers as appropriate.

8. Optional Alternative Naming

If the County wishes to avoid the perception that MDR-10 is simply a higher-density category, the following alternative names could be considered:

- Moderate Density Residential (MDR-10)
- Compact Residential / Missing-Middle Residential
- Neighborhood Residential - Moderate Density
- MSD Compact Residential

Recommended name: Moderate Density Residential (MDR-10). This name is clear, easily mapped, and distinguishes the category from the existing Medium Density Residential category while avoiding the more urban connotation of High Density Residential.

9. Summary Recommendation

The County should consider making MDR-10 available as a Future Land Use Map category, but apply it only through targeted future map amendments in appropriate MSD locations. The category should be paired with strong public facility, environmental, compatibility, and design criteria. This approach would allow Levy County to support attainable, workforce, and senior housing while maintaining protection for springs, farms, conservation lands, and rural character.

10. Reference Notes for County Review

- Section 163.3177, Florida Statutes - required and optional elements of comprehensive plans; future land use element; map amendment analysis; discouragement of urban sprawl.
- Section 373.811, Florida Statutes - requirements related to onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems within basin management action plan areas for Outstanding Florida Springs.
- Section 381.0065 and Section 381.00655, Florida Statutes - onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems and connection to available sewerage systems.
- SB 180 / Chapter 2025-190, Laws of Florida - local government emergency-related restrictions and related land use regulation considerations. County Attorney review is recommended before finalizing any restrictive or mandatory language.