

Date: Nov.17, 2020

From: Lee Quintana
To: Town Council
Re: Council Discussion on the Draft Land Use and Community Design Element.

Introduction:

It appears to me that the concept of Missing Middle Housing is somewhat of a paradox in that it looks both forwards and backwards.

It looks to development patterns that evolved organically into compact walkable neighborhoods prior to the development of zoning becoming the norm, which resulted in the separation of uses. It looks forward by incorporating the patterns and characteristics of pre-1940 development into current planning and development concepts that will result in compact, walkable neighborhoods that encourage social interaction, provide a variety of housing types and unit sizes to help meet the need for additional housing and that is within a *5 to 10 minute walk* of retail centers

Missing Middle Housing in more detail:

The following statements are from Missing Middle Housing, Thinking Big and Building Small to Respond to Today's Housing Crisis" by Daniel Parolek. Daniel Parolek developed the concept of "Missing Middle Housing" and the diagram in tonight's Agenda Packet which illustrates the concept.

The term middle has two meanings.

- First, and most important, it represents the middle scale of buildings between single family and large apartment/condo buildings.
- Second, middle relates to affordability or attainability level. Form and scale of building is what matters not the number of units.

Simple definition of Missing Middle Housing is a range of multi units or cluster housing types compatible in scale with single family homes, that help meet the growing demand for walkable urban living, responding to shifting neighborhood demographics and the need for more housing choices and price points. *Many of these types accommodate 4-8 units in a building or lot... At the upper end of the spectrum they can be up to 19 units per building.(emphasis added)*

Characteristics of Missing Middle Housing

- Work best in existing or newly built walkable neighborhoods. Walkable does not mean recreation walking on trails or paths, but walkability to a destination.
- Lower perceived density but enough density to support services and amenities but in forms that are not perceived as high density; multiple units within a structure that is the

scale and mass of a single family structure, i.e. a structure that is perceived as a single family unit even if the structure contains more than one unit.

- Small building footprint
- Smaller homes which are well designed, comfortable and livable.
- Attached units with a private door directly off a stoop or off a porch rather than an entrance through a long interior hallway
- Thoughtful approach to parking (i.e. reduced off site parking requirements)
- May be either rental or ownership
- Simple construction: type V construction, which is comparatively less expensive to build, is less risky and often easier to finance than type I or II construction. Simple form, small size, higher yields, V type of construction help developers to maximize affordability and returns without compromising quality.
- Two/ two and a half stories with a limited number of 4-5 stories in specific areas.

Unfortunately, the solution is not as simple as building more multifamily or single-family housing using conventional housing models, making minor adjustments to our planning and zoning (such as simply increasing density) or making simple refinements to other systems related to building, financing, and selling homes. Rather we need a complete paradigm shift in all these systems and the way we think about and communicate about housing - no small task. “ (Introduction - page 3)

Zoning is too blunt an instrument to implement the concept of Missing Middle Housing.

Not all areas are candidates for increasing density using the concept of missing middle housing. It is necessary to identify specific areas that fall into the following categories:

- Maintain”
- Evolve
- Transform

“Understanding the role and characteristics of Missing Middle Housing types, the barriers to building them that need to be overcome, and how to effectively communicate about these housing choices will enable you to be part of the solution to the growing housing crisis whether you are a planner, architect, politician, developer/builder, city leader, or community member.” (Introduction - page 4)

“After a century of development and planning focused on delivering single-family homes to the detriment of our cities and the earth, and at prices that are less and less attainable to all but the wealthy we all need to act to respond to the housing issues in our communities and deliver housing choices in walkable urban environments at a variety of price points and that deliver more sustainable development patterns. Delivering homes is the goal.I hope this book plays a role in people working together to define a new equitable, attainable, and sustainable American Dream.” (Preface xix:)

“If you walk down any tree lined street in a pre-1940’s neighborhood in any city across the country and look very closely you will notice that some of the buildings are not quite like the others. Some buildings will look and are the scale of single family houses but have two doors or four gas meters, which means they are multiple units. These buildings are often a seamless part of a street and block with mostly single family homes. These housing types, such as duplex, fourplex, cottage courts and courtyard buildings are examples of missing middle housing. . . .They provide some housing choices and can help people stay in the neighborhood as their lifestyle changes. They can provide a broad range of affordability as well. They often consist of smaller but well designed units and are within walking distance to amenities such as restaurants, coffee shops, small grocery stores, transit and more.

“Due to shifting demographics and market interest there is a tremendous mismatch between the available housing stock in the United States and the type of housing people want and need. The post World War II auto-centric, single family developer model no longer meets the needs of a large percentage of the United States population. The household and cultural demographics have shifted dramatically - nearly 30 percent of all households are now single persons. By 2035 one in five Americans will be over the age of 65 and households without children will make over 84% if change in households between 2015 and 2025. Baby boomers and millennials are increasingly saying no to the suburbs and choosing a walkable urban lifestyle.”
(Introduction-pages 1 &2)

“In addition, cities across the country are struggling with the lack of affordable housing, while development pressures are delivering McMansions or other inappropriately scaled housing, and NIMBYs . . . are pushing back strongly against any housing that is not single family detached. It is difficult for developers to deliver homes at attainable prices due to rising costs and increasingly complex entitlement processes.

“The reality in most cities is that their planning and regulatory systems are barriers to delivering the housing choices that communities need. Density - and use based planning and zoning were established to separate uses and create suburban environments, which makes it difficult, or impossible, to mix forms, uses and types that result in walkable mixed-use neighborhoods similar to the ones that formed organically before zoning was common place in the United States before the 1940’s (Introduction - page 2)

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