



MEMO TO CITY COUNCIL

Request to Include Topic on the City Council Agenda

From: Caleb Hood, Community Development **Meeting Date:** November 15, 2022
Presenter: Caleb Hood **Estimated Time:** 30 Minutes
Topic: Attainable Housing

Recommended Council Action:

Receive update and give Staff further direction to improve housing mix and attainability.

Background:

In April, Staff presented Council with several tools that could be explored by City Staff with the goal of improving housing attainability. On November 15th, Staff will provide Council with an update including a list of housing-related codes Staff is proposing to amend. These changes are primarily related to codes in the Unified Development Code (UDC)(zoning and subdivision ordinance) and the entitlement process and policies, with potential minor changes to other sections of City Code. This discussion does not include what a housing program, funding mechanisms or partnerships with for-profit developers and/or non-profit organizations could look like.

There is more and more local, state and federal data and case studies available on this topic; it is ever-evolving. Earlier this year, an Urban Land Institute (ULI) Technical Assistance Panel produced a report with findings and recommendations for addressing the housing affordability challenges in Boise (<https://knowledge.uli.org/-/media/files/technical-assistance-panels/2022/boise-at-a-crossroads-report.pdf?rev=48fb99a78f9d49dbb9cc367b7924a68a&hash=4AA5D169E0A5A882C99E0D23B55A61A9>) Further, in July, COMPASS produced a Missing Middle Housing Typology Guidebook for the region. The COMPASS review process and the guidebook produced recommendations regarding ideal dwelling form and scale, densities and lot sizes, parking requirements and setbacks, among others. Even more recently, AARP, with the help of WGI, prepared a code audit of the UDC. They identified code sections that could be improved, focusing on affordable housing, missing middle housing and cluster development. These reports, and previous Council direction, were considered as Staff prepared the request below; the below does not include all recommendations from those efforts.

Request:

Staff is requesting additional feedback on the proposed next-steps in the attached table. The table includes a list of identified tools (code/policy) that Staff is proposing be amended, expanded or otherwise created. The table is set up into 3 sections. The first section includes changes Staff would move forward with relatively quickly. The second section will take more collaboration and time. And the third section includes changes that are longer term. Each effort includes coordination, but some of the changes are more complex and likely more controversial than others. As most of the changes are related to UDC Planning Staff intends to largely rely on the UDC Task Force (list of current members attached.)

| Code / Standard / Policy | Summary | Notes / Thoughts | Staff Recommendation |
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| Tier 1 - Immediate | | | |
| Accessory or Secondary Dwelling Units (ADUs) | The City's UDC (Title 11-4-3-12) allows a secondary dwelling unit (aka – guesthouse, granny flat, tiny house, carriage house, caretaker unit, etc.) on the same property as a single-family dwelling. | <p>Allowing an additional dwelling unit on a lot is probably the most popular tool used by cities currently to combat the housing crunch.</p> <p>Many CCR's may restrict these types of dwelling units.</p> <p>If an ADU is attached, could be as beneficial without much of the regulation (addition vs. new dwelling).</p> | <p>Move forward with additional changes to 11-4-3-12 (amended in August to allow bigger units and multiple bedrooms).</p> <p>Need direction from Council and the Community about parking requirements, setbacks, size limits, and owner-occupied requirement.</p> <p>Could potentially allow "lot split" to encourage more use and homeownership. Would require variations (or rezones) to standard dimensional standards in most cases.</p> |
| Small Houses | The City has a minimum house size in the R-2 (1,500 sf) and R-4 (1,400 sf) zoning districts. Smaller structures could reduce the overall costs to construct a dwelling. | Fairly straight-forward change to remove minimum dwelling size in all zones. | <p>Amend UDC Chapter 2 to remove minimum house size requirements.</p> <p>Review construction and Building Code requirements that may drive the cost to construct higher in residential zones and explore opportunities to limit that barrier by local amendment.</p> |
| Development Fee Waivers or Credits or Deferrals | Reduction or waiver of fees typically charged to develop. Could be planning, development review, inspection and/or impact fees. | <p>If impact fees are not paid by a developer/builder, they would need to be paid by someone.</p> <p>Need to better understand what "hard" and "soft" costs could be waived, credited or delayed. (Even just delaying the collection may be an incentive to develop specific dwelling types and price points.)</p> <p>To grant may need to be decided on a case-by-case basis by Council and not a "by right" in code.</p> | There is current Code (MCC 10-7-8) that exempts affordable housing projects from police, fire and parks impact fees. Could expand to other fees (eg – application and/or development review). Need to work with Legal and Finance (primarily) on a proposal for fees that could otherwise be offset for certain types of projects (need to define or reinforce that "affordable", non-market rate projects are the eligible projects (or include other eligibility requirements)). |

| Tier 2 – Mid-term | | | |
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| <p>“Tiny” Homes</p> | <p>Related, but different than the ADU, Small House and Missing Middle standards, definitions for “dwelling” and “recreational vehicle” limit what dwelling/vehicles people can live out of in R-zones.</p> | <p>The term varies and means different things to different people. Most people equate a tiny home to a small unit on wheels.</p> <p>City Code requires all dwellings (except manufactured/mobile homes) to be constructed on a foundation and connected to municipal services.</p> | <p>Staff does not believe that the answer for Meridian is to allow RV’s to serve as dwellings on residentially-zoned lots. However, there may be an opportunity to allow tiny home sub-communities or pods on lots/blocks within existing or proposed developments.</p> <p>Need to review and maybe amend/add definitions for dwelling, RV, tiny homes, etc. and how these units should be addressed (constructed/parked) in Meridian.</p> |
| <p>Density Bonuses and/or Transfer of Development Rights</p> | <p>Allow additional dwelling units for projects that set-aside housing for low-moderate income families (or other groups like the elderly or veterans).</p> | <p>This is a relatively common practice in other communities outside Idaho.</p> <p>Would need to be a volunteer program, couldn’t require a set-aside.</p> <p>Is density enough (or even a good) incentive to obtain non-market-rate housing?</p> <p>Density bonuses and TDRs could be addressed in a revised PUD Ordinance (see below.)</p> | <p>Explore how this may work with the UDC Focus Group. Expand group to invite other developers to share insight and how this works (or doesn’t) in other places.</p> |
| <p>Missing Middle Housing (duplex, tri-plex, fourplex, cottage courts/cluster homes)</p> | <p>Meridian has essentially two dominant housing types: single-family detached (approx. 80% of current housing stock) and multi-family (4 or more units on a single parcel; approximately 20%.) There is a need/market for other dwelling types. Zoning, including use, setbacks and parking are limiting factors in where many can be built.</p> | <p>The City’s Planned Unit Development (PUD) ordinance is outdated. A PUD may be a way to get more variety in housing stock throughout the City.</p> <p>Open space and amenities as well as other development standards and location (to jobs, parks, services, etc.) will be important to factor in as we look at where we’d like to see higher-density infill.</p> <p>Many communities have relaxed parking requirements and/or open space and/or amenity standards when a developer provides the type(s) of housing desired. Similarly, communities have agreed to allow more density, height or less parking when a project proposes to set-aside low-income housing units. (See Waivers or Exceptions below).</p> | <p>Develop changes to the UDC, likely in the PUD section, that allow and even promote more housing options throughout the City. This will need to be done thoughtfully and may dictate a separate subcommittee effort.</p> <p>A survey or similar outreach to the community would help determine how best to incorporate missing middle housing in infill situations – both process and standards wise.</p> <p>Review definitions for dwelling types; consider including cottages, clusters, etc.</p> <p>Review schedule of use table for appropriateness of dwelling types in the various R-zones and where cottages, du, tri, quad, and multi-plex’s may be allowed. (See Tier 3, Residential Zoning below)</p> |

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| Waivers or Exceptions for Affordable Housing Projects | Like the City’s PUD process, relief from standard code requirements like lot size, parking, height, frontage, density could be granted in exchange for affordable dwelling units. | This is similar to Density Bonuses and Missing Middle Housing in this table. A case-by-case negotiation would likely occur with each project as standards would be difficult, but maybe not impossible, to develop via PUD ordinance. | Explore and amend the UDC as appropriate to relax specific development standards for affordable dwelling units. |
| Tier 3 – Longer Term / Track | | | |
| Residential Zoning Districts (remove “single” family from some/all districts) | Some, typically large, cities have removed dwelling type restriction from their code. Instead, they often use a form-based approach which largely deals with building mass and location on a parcel, not the density or use. | In Meridian, our codes currently prevent some “middle” housing types in single-family residential districts. For example, a tri-plex is currently prohibited in the R-4 district (except through a PUD). Further, a multi-family development requires a Conditional Use Permit in most zones where a MF project can be built, only in the traditional neighborhood districts are MF projects principally permitted. This current process may not be ideal for Meridian forever, but allowing multi-family as a principally permitted use in most/all residential districts does not seem to be what our community currently desires. | Maintain current standards, but track for future opportunities when/if the community desires. Not for Meridian, at least right now. |
| State Code, Emerging Trends and Opportunities | As previously discussed, there may be additional, future tools that enable more to be done in Meridian that affects housing attainability and choice. | There are other “tools” out there. Housing is going to be an ongoing topic and the City needs to stay involved in the conversation. | Track and as appropriate support legislation that makes housing more attainable in Meridian and throughout Idaho. Stay abreast of what other communities are doing to positively affect housing and bring forward Meridian-appropriate solutions. |

UDC FOCUS GROUP MEMBERS (Does not include City Staff)

Annette Alonso

Ashley Ford-Squyres

Brad Miller

Cornel Larson

Dave Bailey

Dave McKinney

Dave Yorgason

David Turnbull

Jason Densmer

Jim Conger

Jon Wardle

Kent Brown

Laren Bailey

Steve Vlassek