

From: [Tom McCormick](#)
To: [Keith Scully](#); [Betsy Robertson](#); [Chris Roberts](#); [Doris McConnell](#); [Laura Mork](#); [Eben Pabee](#); [John Ramsdell](#)
Cc: [John Norris](#); [agenda comments](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Reject the \$100k grant for middle housing on at least 30% of lots currently zoned low-density SFR
Date: Sunday, November 6, 2022 7:08:13 PM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the City of Shoreline. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Councilmembers:

During its 4/11/2022 meeting, Council barely adopted a last-minute addition to the 2022 Comprehensive Plan amendment docket that reads as follows:

“Amend the Land Use Element to explicitly allow duplexes and triplexes and allow with conditions other dwelling types that are similar in scale with single family detached homes, *in low density residential zones.*” (*Italics added for emphasis.*)

Per SMC 20.40.030 (Residential zones) and 20.50.020 (Dimensional requirements), "low density residential" R-4 and R-6 zones currently allow one SFR unit on a minimum lot size of 7,200 square feet, plus an ADU. "The purpose of low density residential, R-4 and R-6 zones, is to provide for a mix of predominantly single detached dwelling units and other development types, such as accessory dwelling units and community facilities that are compatible with existing development and neighborhood character." SMC 20.40.030(A). In contrast, "The purpose of medium density residential, R-8 and R-12 zones, is to provide for a mix of single-family homes, duplexes, triplexes, townhouses, and community facilities in a manner that provides for additional density at a modest scale. SMC 20.40.030(B).

The above (controversial) proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment would essentially convert all low density residential zones into medium density.

Council expressed reservations about this policy shift during its 4/11/2022 meeting. The vote was 4-3 in favor of adding the above (controversial) proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment to the docket. As the meeting minutes disclose, Deputy Mayor Robertson and Councilmembers McConnell and Mork voted against. While Mayor Scully did not vote against, he expressed hesitancy, remarking about how the proposal could triple density and radically change the character of our City. He did add that he is not concerned about making changes to allow a few more duplexes here and there.

The above (controversial) proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment has no upper limit. Every low-density SFR lot could become a duplex or triplex.

With Councilmembers having expressed reservations about such a wide-open policy with no upper limits, I believe that it would be disingenuous, and not in good faith, to accept the Department of Commerce grant which carries with it an expectation that the City is willing to allow middle housing on at least 30% of lots currently zoned as low-density single family residential.

Action to be taken: Please (1) remove from the consent calendar for Council’s 11/7/2022 meeting, the Department of Commerce grant for middle housing on at least 30% of lots currently zoned low-density single family residential; then (2) please vote to reject the

Department of Commerce grant, just like the Edmonds City Council did at its 6/21/2022 meeting. See below for excerpts from an article about the Edmonds vote.

The upside: Discussing and taking a vote on the Department of Commerce grant for middle housing gives Council an opportunity to define the outer limits of its tolerance for duplexes and triplexes throughout the City. Let's assume that Council (presumably like most residents) is okay with loosening somewhat the City's policies to allow a small increase in the number of duplexes or triplexes, so that perhaps up to 10% of low-density SFR lots could be used to build a duplex or triplex, but Council is *not* okay with allowing duplexes and triplexes on 30% or more of current low-density SFR lots. If so, then Council should vote against accepting the Department of Commerce grant for middle housing. As noted above, to vote in favor of accepting the grant would be disingenuous, and not in good faith. Council should not vote in favor of a grant designed to encourage the adoption of new City policy to allow duplexes and triplexes on at least 30% of current low-density SFR lots, if Council does not favor the idea.

Another upside: A vote against the grant would effectively narrow the scope of staff's study of the above (controversial) proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment. Staff could take direction from such a vote, as follows: Instead of staff studying a new policy to allow duplexes and triplexes on every low-density SFR lot in the City (a very broad study requiring substantial staff resources), staff would limit the scope of its study of the above (controversial) proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment to study a new policy of allowing duplexes and triplexes on no more than 29% of the low-density SFR lots in the City.

A final note, about cottage housing: The City is already addressing the middle housing issue by studying, with public engagement, whether to re-authorize cottage housing. The City had cottage housing regulations and permitted some cottage housing developments from 2000-2004. Some developments were more successful than others. The old regulations were repealed in 2006. To date there are 56 cottage homes across seven developments in Shoreline. For more information, see the Cottage Housing portal page on the City's website: <https://www.shorelinewa.gov/government/departments/planning-community-development/long-range-planning/cottage-housing>

Thank you.

Tom McCormick

===

Excerpts from article appearing in My Edmonds News ...

Council votes to reject 'missing middle' housing grant; OKs interim design standards
Posted: June 22, 2022

After hearing numerous public comments in opposition, the Edmonds City Council voted 5-1 Tuesday night to reject a Washington State Department of Commerce grant that would have funded the evaluation of "missing middle" housing in Edmonds.

The lone vote supporting the grant application came from Councilmember Susan Paine. Both Councilmember Laura Johnson and Edmonds Mayor Mike Nelson were absent from the meeting. ...

The city's intention to apply for the \$100,000 Department of Commerce grant was first announced during the council's Public Safety, Personnel and Planning committee last week. Under the grant, available to Puget Sound cities, Edmonds would have been required to "evaluate and consider" allowing missing middle housing on 30% of lots zoned single family, and also to conduct a racial equity analysis.

"Middle housing types" include duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, fiveplexes, sixplexes, townhouses, courtyard apartments, cottage housing and stacked flats.

Development Director Susan McLaughlin said during the June 14 committee meeting that it made sense to apply for the grant money since the city would need to conduct this type of analysis as part of its 2024 Comprehensive Plan update.

McLaughlin reiterated that point during Tuesday night's business meeting, and also stressed that accepting the grant didn't commit the city to adopt zoning changes. "Any approach will be Edmonds driven and not dictated by outside agencies," she added.

During discussions Tuesday night, some councilmembers expressed reservations about the plan to seek the grant funding. Councilmember Neil Tibbott said he objected to starting with a premise of adding 30% missing middle housing, stating that percentage may not be the right amount for Edmonds. Tibbott also said the grant work would be redundant because the Edmonds Citizens Housing Commission already studied the missing middle housing issue and has made its own recommendations on the topic.

Councilmember Vivian Olson pointed out that the Department of Commerce has many resources available to staff that don't require applying for a grant.

Councilmember Kristiana Johnson then made a motion to reject the grant, stating that "land use control is a local responsibility." Those voting to reject the grant were Johnson, Tibbott, Olson, Diane Buckshnis and Will Chen.

[The full article can be accessed here: <https://myedmondsnews.com/2022/06/council-votes-to-reject-missing-middle-housing-grant-oks-interim-design-standards/>]