

**PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM**  
CITY OF SHORELINE, WASHINGTON

**AGENDA TITLE:** 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update: Discussion of Middle Housing Work Plan

**DEPARTMENT:** Planning & Community Development

**PRESENTED BY:** Elise Keim, Senior Planner  
Andrew Bauer, Planning Manager

Public Hearing  
 Discussion

Study Session  
 Update

Recommendation Only  
 Other

**INTRODUCTION**

On November 7, 2022 Council adopted Resolution No. 502, establishing the scope and schedule for the 2024 major update to the Comprehensive Plan. The scope includes an evaluation of policy and code amendments to allow middle housing types in low density residential zones. Tonight, staff will introduce to Planning Commission the work plan for middle housing.

**BACKGROUND**

What is Middle Housing?

Housing is built in a variety of different forms. Middle housing is a term used to describe types of housing that lie somewhere on the spectrum between detached single-family homes and high-rise apartment buildings. Examples include duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, cottages, townhomes, live/work and low-rise apartments.

Middle housing can take many forms. Sometimes they are a cluster of separate units (cottages), or multiple units attached to one another (duplex or triplex). These units are compatible in scale with single-family homes. Middle housing can help meet: the demand for more housing in walkable neighborhoods; the need for more housing choices at different price points; and the need for housing that fits the needs of a growing and diversifying population.



*Image of the missing middle housing spectrum*

## 6a. 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update - Middle Housing Work Plan

This type of housing is often called “*missing* middle housing” because it is not legal to build in most cities today. Houses like duplexes, cottages and small apartments were once common in America, and played an important role in providing housing choices and affordable options. As a result of zoning barriers and financial incentives after World War II, detached single-family homes were built at the expense of other housing types, leading to middle housing disappearing from new construction in the 1940s. Today residents of a city typically have a choice between detached single-family homes or a unit in a large apartment building. In many cities regulations have eliminated the spectrum of housing choices in between these two extremes.

With the creation of the two light rail station areas Shoreline is beginning to see an additional form of housing come to market, the townhouse. Through a separate planning effort, the Planning Commission is reviewing code amendments to allow cottages, a form of middle housing, to be built in Shoreline<sup>1</sup>. As part of the broader 2024 Comprehensive Plan update, the City will be studying other forms of middle housing, like duplexes and triplexes, for low density residential areas.

### Why is Shoreline looking at middle housing?

Simply put, it is a matter of population growth and the need for more diverse and affordable types of housing.

A recent statewide housing survey<sup>2</sup> conducted by Puget Sound Regional Council and the Washington State Department of Commerce found that housing, especially housing cost, is an issue of serious concern in Washington State. Some highlights of the survey are listed below:

- 78% of survey respondents in King County agreed rents are too high and increasing too much.
- 81% of survey respondents in King County agreed it costs too much to buy a home.
- 72% of survey respondents in King County agreed their community needs more diverse and affordable housing types
- 83% of survey respondents in King County said they want more housing options

The City’s 2022 Resident Satisfaction Survey<sup>3</sup> indicates mixed views from residents on the topic. The survey asked residents if they support changing the City’s zoning code to allow denser housing options in single family zones:

- 49% of survey respondents in the City would support allowing denser housing options in single family zones.
- 16% of survey respondents in the City identified “Don’t know” as whether they would support allowing denser housing options in single family zones.
- 39% of survey respondents in the City would not support allowing denser housing options in single family zones.

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<sup>1</sup> Learn more about cottage housing at [www.shorelinewa.gov/cottagehousing](http://www.shorelinewa.gov/cottagehousing)

<sup>2</sup> The full survey results can be found online here: <https://www.psrc.org/media/7324>

<sup>3</sup> See the full [2022 City of Shoreline Resident Satisfaction Survey Findings Report](#)

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Middle housing is one of several strategies identified in the City's 2021 Housing Action Plan<sup>4</sup> to address the City's housing needs. Shoreline must plan for 13,330 new households by 2044<sup>5</sup>. The City is tasked by the Growth Management Act<sup>6</sup> to plan for these new residents. This planning occurs through updates to the city's Comprehensive Plan, a 20-year plan that reflects the community's vision and values<sup>7</sup>.

Approximately 66% of the City's land is designated low density residential. Broadening the range of housing types that can be built in low density residential areas would allow for the ability to create not only more housing, but more choices in the types of housing available.

### **WORK PLAN**

Grant funding from the state Department of Commerce will be utilized to study the appropriateness of middle housing types in low density residential areas and to develop draft policies and implementation concepts that can be further studied and considered concurrently with the 2024 Comprehensive Plan update.

The work plan and schedule for middle housing through the first half of 2023 will include the following:

<b>Existing Conditions Report:</b>	Current demographics, policies, regulations, fee structures, incentives and permitting procedures
<b>Informational Material for the Public:</b>	What is middle housing?
<b>Middle Housing Policy Analysis:</b>	What local policy changes are needed to support middle housing? This includes reviewing the Comprehensive Plan
<b>Racial Equity Analysis:</b>	Review the history of housing development in North King County/Shoreline through a racial equity lens. Include a review of anti-displacement policies
<b>Public Engagement &amp; Summary:</b>	Meet with Community Based Organizations and stakeholders, hold a public meeting and summarize community feedback
<b>Draft Policies and Implementation Concepts:</b>	Draft middle housing Comprehensive Plan policies and implementation concepts, to be considered as part of the 2024 Comprehensive Plan update

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<sup>4</sup> See the full [City of Shoreline Housing Action Plan](#)

<sup>5</sup> See the [King County Urban Growth Capacity Report](#)

<sup>6</sup> The full text of the Growth Management Act is in [Chapter 36.70A RCW](#)

<sup>7</sup> View a copy of Shoreline's current [Comprehensive Plan](#)

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The grant-funded portions of the work are to be completed by June of 2023 and will be conducted with a team consisting of staff and consultants.

The grant does not require middle housing policies or regulations be adopted. The draft goals and policies developed as part of the middle housing work will be incorporated for consideration with the applicable elements of the Comprehensive Plan update and would be considered as part of the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, anticipated by the end of 2024.

The City team anticipates working closely with the Commerce technical team that will be providing additional support to Shoreline for both technical/research work and expertise on racial equity analysis. In addition, Commerce is working with a firm called Opticos Design with special expertise in middle housing. They will be preparing a toolkit of communication materials (posters, informational videos, etc.) to share with the public, objective design standards for middle housing as well as financial analysis for middle housing development.

While completing this work staff will continue to check in with Planning Commission to report back on findings and request guidance.

### **COORDINATION WITH ONGOING PLAN UPDATES**

The middle housing work will overlap in some areas with the Comprehensive Plan update<sup>8</sup>. For example, middle housing policies have the potential to influence the Land Use, Housing, and Community Design Elements of the Comprehensive Plan. Aligning the engagement and policy work with the broader Comprehensive Plan update is imperative to avoid potential conflicts or misalignment between the goals and policies of the plan.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Do you have any questions on middle housing, the work plan, or the Commerce grant?
2. Are there specific points of emphasis to consider as the public engagement gets underway?
3. Are there topics to incorporate into the racial equity analysis, or policy analysis?
4. Commerce staff have offered to present materials on middle housing, racial equity analysis or other topics related to middle housing, would Planning Commission be interested in a presentation from Commerce (this would likely occur in April or May 2023)?

### **SCHEDULE AND NEXT STEPS**

The Public Participation Plan for both the Comprehensive Plan and middle housing are anticipated to be completed for the Commission to be briefed at the February 16<sup>th</sup> meeting.

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<sup>8</sup> Visit the [Comprehensive Plan Update webpage](#) to learn more.

## **6a. 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update - Middle Housing Work Plan**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

There is no recommendation at this time. The purpose of tonight's meeting is to update the Commission on the scope of work for middle housing.