

PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM

CITY OF SHORELINE, WASHINGTON

AGENDA TITLE: 2024 Comprehensive Plan: Discussion of Middle Housing
DEPARTMENT: Planning & Community Development
PRESENTED BY: Elise Keim, Senior Planner
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Public Hearing
 Discussion

Study Session
 Update

Recommendation Only
 Other

INTRODUCTION

The update to the 2024 Comprehensive Plan is underway. One component of the Comprehensive Plan update is evaluating policies and code amendments to allow middle housing types in low-density residential zones. Tonight, staff will provide an update to the Planning Commission on the middle housing related work and engagement activities to date. Staff will also be seeking direction from the Commission on the development of draft policies.

BACKGROUND

At the [February 2, 2023](#) Planning Commission meeting, staff introduced the workplan for the middle housing grant.

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, courtyard apartments, and townhomes. These types are typically “house-scale”; that is, the buildings are about the same size and height as detached houses.



The workplan on this topic includes studying 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 primary components of this study include an existing conditions report, a racially disparate impacts analysis, and public engagement. The preparation of draft policies and Development Code amendments for middle housing

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will be informed by this analysis and will be considered as part of the Comprehensive Plan update.

Existing Conditions Report

A draft existing conditions report is being prepared. The report examines Shoreline's demographics and housing trends. Early findings in the report note that housing choices are influenced and guided by location, income and expenditures, and life stages. Cities need to plan for flexibility and variety when considering housing choices so that households can find housing that meets their needs and their budget.

Over the past decade, low for-sale unit availability within the region has created upward pressure on prices, making median-priced homes less affordable. Housing is considered affordable if the household is spending no more than 30% of its income on housing costs; otherwise, the household is deemed cost-burdened. The majority of the city's housing stock (68%) is single-family detached residences. The 2022 median home price of \$822,990 is not affordable for approximately 66% of Shoreline households. For renters, a household must earn at least \$65,000 to afford the city's median rent of \$1,635.

Once completed, the existing conditions report will be shared with the Planning Commission at a future meeting, anticipated in July.

Racially Disparate Impacts Analysis

The racially disparate impacts analysis is also being prepared to evaluate how historic laws, regulations, and development practices have created housing inequity, displacement, and exclusion of racial groups. The Growth Management Act was recently updated requiring jurisdictions to address racially disparate impacts resulting from historic and current housing policies and develop new policies to implement the most appropriate actions to mitigate housing inequity.

The report will examine historic and existing housing regulations, policies, and practices which result in systemic inequalities of:

- Racially disparate impacts,
- Displacement, and
- Exclusion in housing.

Each of these terms, are briefly defined below:

Racially disparate impacts: Occur when policies, practices, rules or other systems result in a disproportionate effect on one or more racial groups. Racial disparities exist when policies disproportionately confer benefits to one group and burdens to another. Racially disparate outcomes of housing and land use policies and programs occur regardless of intent. Many policies that appear to be race neutral interact with existing inequalities that continue to perpetuate inequitable outcomes in housing opportunity and choice. These inequities are reproduced over time, leading to larger racial discrepancies in who can attain safe, stable, and secure housing.

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Displacement: The process by which a household is forced to move from its community because of conditions beyond their control. Comprehensive Plans must now establish antidisplacement policies, with consideration given to the preservation of historical and cultural communities.

Exclusion: The act or effect of shutting or keeping certain populations out of housing within a specified area, in a manner that may be intentional or unintentional, but which leads to non-inclusive impacts.

Data from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy is being utilized to evaluate metrics like income, housing tenure and housing cost burden by racial and ethnic group.

Preparation of the Racially Disparate Impact Analysis and analysis of data is ongoing and will be shared with the Planning Commission in July. The analysis will be used to inform draft Comprehensive Plan housing policies addressing moderate, low, very low, and extremely low-income housing as well as policies to mitigate housing inequity.

Public Engagement

A Public Participation Plan for the Comprehensive Plan update at large (Resolution 506) was prepared and was approved by Council on [February 27, 2023](#). A standalone Public Participation Plan for middle housing was prepared with the focus of engaging on the topic of housing. The Middle Housing public participation plan included:

- Working with community-based organizations,
- Convening focus groups, and
- A virtual public meeting

Through these efforts the City is spreading awareness of middle housing and hearing different perspectives on housing priorities in Shoreline.

The City focused its outreach efforts on community-based organizations, focus groups of likely impacted or interested individuals and the general public.

A community-based organization (CBO) is an organization that represents different vulnerable populations in Shoreline as defined by RCW 70A.02.010. These include racial or ethnic minorities, low-income populations and populations disproportionately impacted by environmental harms.

To date, the City has engaged with the following CBOs:

- Banchemo Disability Partners
- Black Coffee NW/Grounded
- Center for Human Services
- Lake City Partners

On the topic of housing, the following insights were shared:

- Affordability as a significant barrier to housing. Affordability doesn't just mean monthly rent, but also move-in costs.

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- Discrimination in housing still occurs on the basis of physical or intellectual ability, immigration status, English proficiency, and race.
- Displacement can occur due to job loss, high housing costs, redevelopment and familial change. Impacts of displacement are felt economically, physically, and culturally.
- Current housing policies really aren't adequately addressing these issues and communities that are most impacted are still not being reached.

The City hopes to continue the relationship with these CBOs throughout the Comprehensive Plan update.

Focus groups convened on the topic of middle housing included developers, renters, frontline workers (e.g. service workers, educators etc.), and seniors. Among focus group participants there was general support for middle housing, however, there was also skepticism about the rate of affordability of new developments. Remodels of existing homes to add more units was seen as a viable option since remodels allow older homeowners to stay in place, encourage multi-generational housing and may be more affordable than brand new buildings. This will be an important consideration in writing regulations whether they are written for new buildings, or remodels/adaptations of existing buildings.

The public meeting has not yet been convened, but it is scheduled for May 24, 2023. The purpose of this meeting will be to bring awareness to the public about what middle housing is and how Shoreline may use it to meet the needs of residents. The meeting is going to be held virtually over zoom and people are encouraged to RSVP. The meeting is being advertised through news releases, promotional emails to the interested parties mailing list and social media. For more information and to get a link to the meeting people can go to www.shorelinewa.gov/middlehousing

House Bill 1110 – Middle Housing

[House Bill 1110](#) has been signed into law by the Governor. The bill's impacts vary based on the size of a city. For Shoreline, the bill requires:

- Development of at least two units per lot for all lots predominately zoned for residential use.
- Development of at least four units per lot for all lots predominately zoned for residential use within one-quarter mile walking distance of a major transit stop (i.e. light rail stations and bus rapid transit stops).
- Development of at least four units per lot for all lots predominately zoned for residential use if at least one unit is affordable housing, available for either sale or lease for a minimum period of at least 50 years.
- Off-street parking for middle housing within one-half mile walking distance of a major transit stop is not required.
- The bill includes an alternative compliance provision which could "exempt" or extend the implementation timelines for some areas within the City based on displacement risk, lack of infrastructure, among others.

Please note, if zoning permits a higher density of development in any of these cases, that higher-density zoning still applies. This provision is especially important in areas

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already upzoned in and around the two light rail stations and areas immediately adjacent to Aurora. A map showing the city's current zoning and an area of effect of HB 1110 is attached as Attachment A.

Furthermore, a city must allow at least six of the nine types of middle housing. The forms of middle housing mentioned in the bill include:

- Duplex
- Triplex
- Fourplex
- Fiveplex
- Sixplex
- Townhouses
- Stacked Flats
- Courtyard Apartments
- Cottage Housing

A Summary sheet of each type of middle housing is attached to this report as Attachment B.

The bill details additional standards for parking, design, and development for middle housing. Technical guidance for cities from the Washington State Department of Commerce, including a model ordinance, will be provided six months after the bill becomes effective.

Cities will need to enact a development code compliant with this bill no later than six months after the Comprehensive Plan update is completed, which is scheduled at the end of 2024. For Shoreline, this deadline would require middle housing regulations in place no later than mid-2025.

Cottage Housing Update

Council is considering Planning Commission's recommendation on cottage housing. With the changes in state housing policy Council is more closely examining the density bonus program and whether it will meet the state requirements. Anticipated changes in state code may result in the proposed density bonus program and other regulations being refined. These refinements could occur as part of the Comprehensive Plan and middle housing code update.

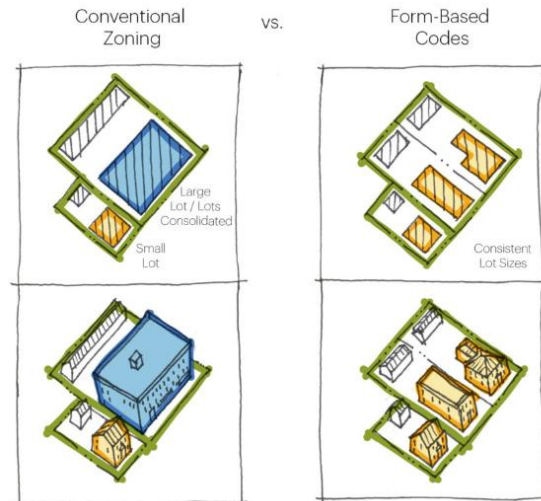
Council also had similar concerns to Planning Commission about permitting a fee-in-lieu of construction of affordable cottage units. How Shoreline approaches affordable housing is an important ongoing discussion. House Bill 1110 leaves open the option of development paying a fee-in-lieu of constructing affordable units. Whether this is something Shoreline wants to allow in light of this new bill is an important consideration.

Form Based Regulations

House Bill 1110 signals a shift away from regulating development by its use and density. The City's low density residential areas predominantly regulate both use (single-family detached) and density (dwelling units per acre). Regulating residential building form (orientation, scale and massing) could be an alternative to focusing on uses and density.

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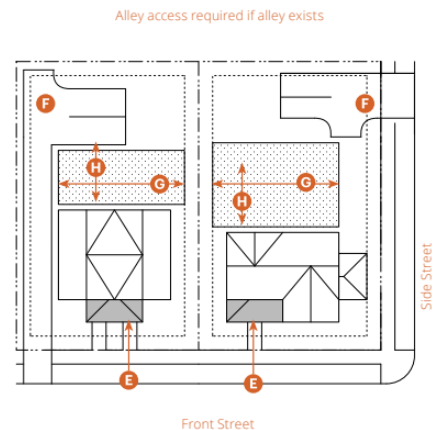
For middle housing, form-based regulations may remove barriers to allow smaller, more affordable forms of housing. It is hoped that by focusing regulatory efforts on the size, location and orientation of a building toward the street will address many of the critiques residents have of newer developments integrating into established residential areas. Meanwhile, objectively regulating the building form fosters predictable built results and focusing on a high-quality physical form, rather than a separation of uses. By ensuring the building form meets the desired results, other regulations such as the use occurring or number of units inside the building become less relevant. An owner or developer would have the flexibility to “right size” the configuration and number of units within the building as long as the form met the requirements.



There are countless examples of form-based codes throughout the country with varying degrees of the extent of what elements are regulated. The state is working with Opticos Design to prepare objective model design standards for middle housing that focus on building form, rather than density. When finalized, this work product could be incorporated in whole or in part by the City. Below are some examples dealing with building orientation and building size and massing.

Building Orientation

To establish a cohesive streetscape and integrate new/repurposed buildings into existing neighborhoods a building’s front should be oriented to the primary street that it is abutting.



Key

- ROW/ Design Site Line
- Building Setback Line
- Frontage
- ▨ Shared yard

4. Pedestrian Access

Main Entrance Location Front Street³ E

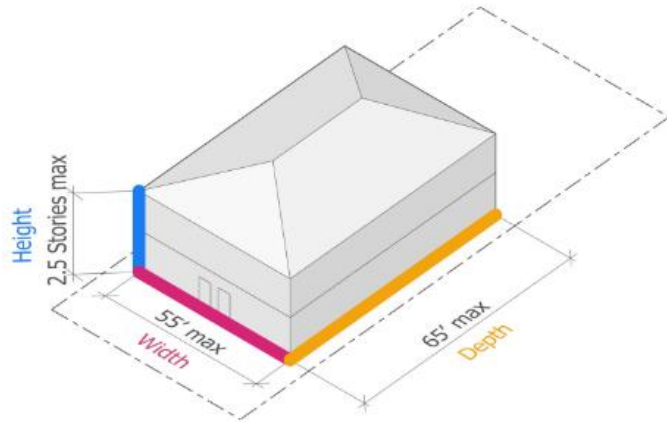
Each unit shall have an entry on or within 20' of the front facade.

³ On corner design sites, each unit shall front a different street.

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Building Scale and Massing

The building scale generally relates to its size and how it “reads” to a casual observer. Regulating a building’s width and depth as well as height promotes buildings that are house scale.



Discussion Questions

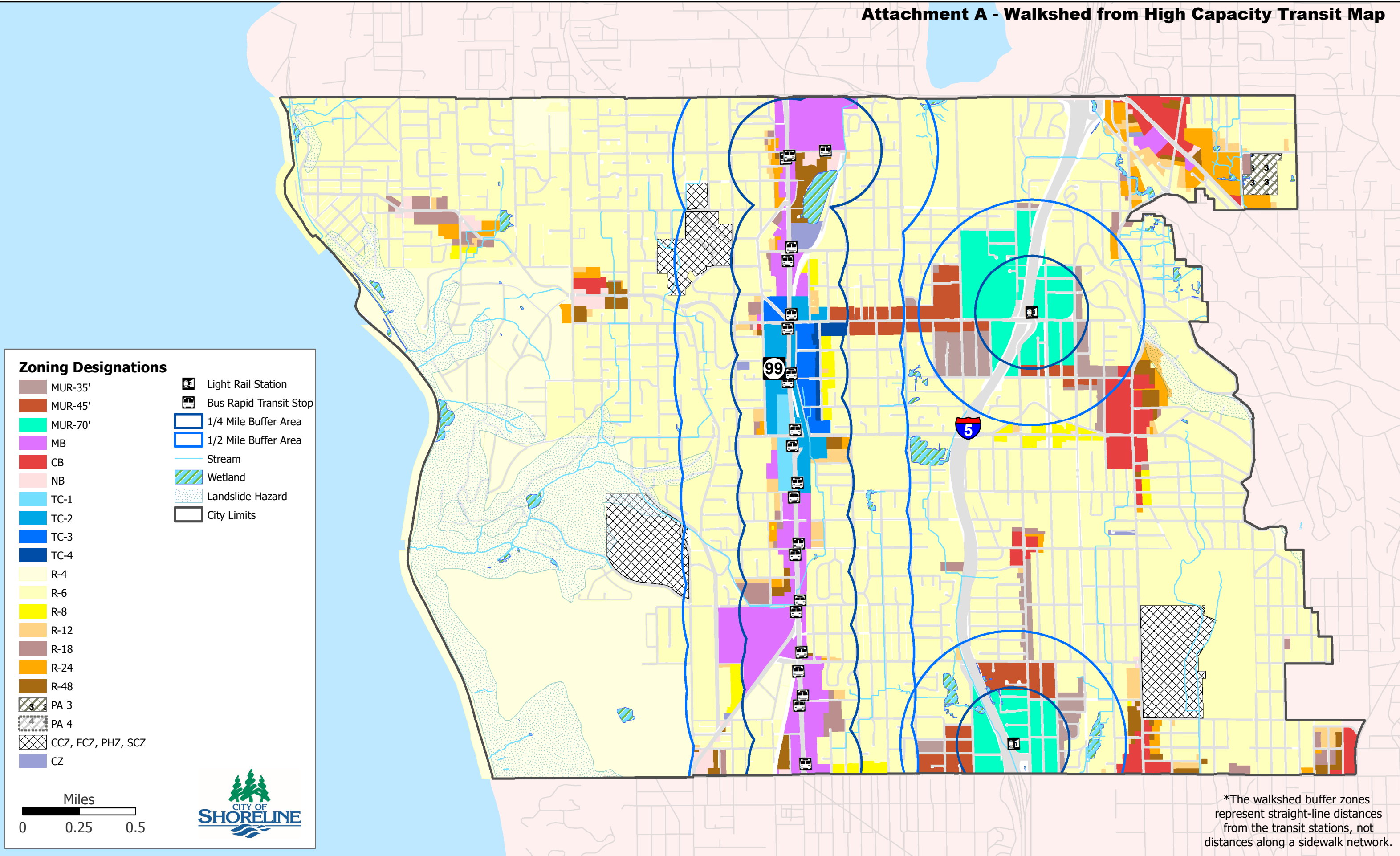
1. Should staff explore policies and regulations that shift away from density and use as a basis for residential regulations and more towards building form (building envelope, building orientation, scale)?
2. House Bill 1110 states that a city must allow six of the nine forms of middle housing. Which forms of middle housing should staff further explore?

Next Steps

Public outreach, data analysis and report finalization is ongoing. Staff will return in July to share the results of these efforts as well as other materials and guidance that is anticipated from the Department of Commerce including a toolkit of communication materials (posters, informational videos, etc.) to share with the public, objective design standards for middle housing and financial analysis for middle housing development.

Attachments

Attachment A – Walkshed from High Capacity Transit
Attachment B – Middle Housing Forms Summary



1/4 Mile / 1/2 Mile Walkshed from High Capacity Transit

Duplex

What is a Duplex? A duplex is one structure with two separate units.

The units may either stack on top of each other or are side-by-side with a dividing common wall.

What is it intended to look like?

- Two two-story, large units are common
- Looks like two identical homes
- Entry for both units may face the street
- Shared stoop or porch may be located at the center of the building
- Or, units have their own stoop or porch



Triplex

What is a Triplex? A triplex is a building with three separate units

Usually in “stacked” style, but can be side-by-side on wide lots.

What is it intended to look like?

- Small to medium sized structure
- Three to three- and one-half stories
- Similar to townhomes



Fourplex

What is a Fourplex? A two-story structure with four dwelling units.

Two units are on the ground floor and two are above, with a shared or individual entry to the street.

- Usually in “stacked” style
- Popular along small lots, renters, and buyers
- Scale often compatible with neighborhoods

What is it intended to look like?

- Depth similar to a single-family home
- Dwelling type similar to single unit house
- Two and a half to three stories maximum



Multiplex

What is a Multiplex?

A single detached structure with five to twelve dwelling units that are arranged side-by-side and/or stacked.

The structure has one shared entry from the right-of-way.

- Also known as a “Mansion Apartment”
- More units = more varieties in physical form
- Dwelling type like medium-large home

What is it intended to look like?

- Form and scale of large estate house
- Wider than they are deep
- Units typically facing street



Townhouse

What is a Townhouse?

Buildings with three or more attached units sharing a vertical wall.

In a “row” or side-by-side style

Individual entries to individual units

What is it intended to look like?

- Medium sized structure
- Three to three- and one-half stories
- Units have their own stoop or porch
- Front doors facing the street



Courtyard Apartment

What is a Courtyard Apartment?

A building with attached units arranged around a courtyard.

Structure is 1-3 stories

Units are side-by-side and/or stacked

All ground floor units directly access courtyard

Upper floor units see into the courtyard

What is it intended to look like?

- Medium size building 1-3 stories
- L shaped, U shaped or O shaped building
- Front doors face the courtyard



Cottages

What is a Cottage?

Multiple small units on one lot with common open space
Units face the open space

Also known as a “pocket neighborhood”

What is it intended to look like?

- Several one- or two-story homes
- Clustered around open space
- Large front porch “outdoor room”
- Parking off to the side or rear

