



PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

June 21, 2022

Location: Citywide

Request for: Study Session on Proposed Zoning Code and Map Amendments Associated with the Housing Element Update, including zoning code changes to facilitate Missing Middle housing and amendments to the Mixed Use Districts to increase housing opportunities.

CEQA: This is a study session and the Commission is taking no action at this time, and environmental review for the Housing Element update and associated Zoning Ordinance and Municipal Code amendments will be completed prior to approval.

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Reason for the Request: The purpose of this study session is to provide background and information to the public and Planning Commission regarding the Housing Element update required by state law, and to obtain comments and feedback on the Zoning Ordinance and Municipal Code changes required to implement the updated Housing Element Goals, Policies, and Programs and which are intended to encourage additional housing construction to meet the Regional Housing Needs Allocation target.

Key Considerations: Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) target, diversity of housing options, consistency of zoning and general plan densities, competitiveness of residential construction with alternative uses.

Public Notice: Public notice of this meeting was posted on the website, sent to property owners of potentially rezoned properties along Woodside and Veterans, and published in the newspaper on June 17, 2022.

Staff Recommendation:



No action required for a Study Session.

No action is required. Individual comment is requested.

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BACKGROUND

The proposal includes updates to Redwood City's General Plan, Zoning Map and Ordinance, and Municipal Code. Due to the size and complexity of these actions, staff has been holding a series of study sessions with both the Housing and Human Concerns Committee (HHCC) and the Planning Commission. These study sessions provide an opportunity to discuss the changes in more detail, hear public comment, commission and committee feedback.

To date, staff has held a series of study sessions with the Planning Commission and/or the HHCC on:

- Overview of the Housing Element Process (May 18 and May 25, 2021)
- Proposed Housing Element strategies, including zoning changes (October 19, 2021)
- Proposed Environmental Justice goals, policies and programs (January 25, 2022)
- Proposed goals, policies and programs specific to the draft Housing Element for 2023-2031 (February 25, 2022)
- Proposed rezoning maps, housing opportunity sites and the entirety of the Draft Housing Element (March 15, 2022)

This study session will build on the previous study sessions and focus specifically on Zoning Ordinance text amendments to implement the Housing Element. These changes will also be reflected in the new areas that are proposed for Mixed Use Corridor and Mixed Use Neighborhood Zoning, as shown in Attachment 1. Additional minor changes may be made to the Municipal Code, which regulates subdivisions, to achieve the proposed Housing Element programs. Those changes are not being discussed as part of this study session.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Staff is proposing three categories of zoning amendments. These include amendments that:

1. Facilitate missing middle development in the R-2, R-3, R-4 and R-5 zoning districts,
2. Promote and streamline residential development in residential and mixed use zoning districts and clarify land use definitions and permitting processes
3. Allow increased densities in Mixed Use districts to facilitate residential projects, which requires adjustments to building heights and side-yard setbacks, and development standards that encourage all-residential or mixed-use projects that include substantial housing.

ANALYSIS

Missing Middle Development – Missing Middle Housing is a term used to describe duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes that are compatible in scale with single-family homes that has not been commonly constructed in recent years and is now “missing” from many neighborhoods. Missing Middle Housing generally includes house-scale buildings with multiple units in walkable neighborhoods and tends to be more affordable for moderate and middle income families.

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Figure 1: Photos of Existing Missing Middle Housing in Redwood City



The existing neighborhoods in Redwood City’s multifamily neighborhood zoning districts (R-2, R-3, R-4, and R-5) developed missing middle housing naturally between the 1910s and 1960s (see Attachment 1 – Maps of Rezoning Areas). Some examples are shown in Figure 1. The zoning framework adopted for the R-2 through R-5 Zoning Districts in the early 1960s limited the development potential of missing middle housing by imposing lot area, lot width, and parking requirements that were incompatible with many existing lots. The R-2 through R-5 Zoning Districts have been largely unmodified since they were adopted in 1964. As described in the [staff report from August 20, 2019](#), over 75% of existing lots were too small or too narrow to allow a duplex under the rules established in the 1960s.

Staff recommend modernizing the zoning district regulations to achieve a goal of increased housing, especially affordable housing. In 2019, staff partnered with the Housing and Human Concerns Commission and the Planning Commission to study the barriers to missing middle housing and develop potential solutions. This initiative is reinforced by the draft Housing Element program. Moreover, recent legislation called the Housing Crisis Act (2019) prohibits cities from adopting new subjective zoning regulations in order to avoid traditional barriers to missing middle housing (e.g., subjective findings). The Housing Crisis Act also states that cities cannot require legislative rezonings for projects that are consistent with applicable objective General Plan standards. For example, if the General Plan allows 20 du/acre, but the zoning district has standards for lot size and lot width that limit density to 10 du/acre, the General Plan density overrides zoning standards. The recommended zoning amendments will now ensure consistency between General

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Plan and Zoning and further the policy goals of allowing moderate density increases in existing neighborhoods.

The proposed amendments will modify the zoning code sections that address lot area, lot width, parking, open space and corner lot sides setbacks for these Zoning Districts. The intent of the amendments is to enable density consistent with the General Plan and remove restrictions that impede development of missing middle housing on existing lots. With these goals, the development standards would retain existing neighborhood character, with lot coverage, pervious area, and height requirements unchanged. New subdivisions will still be required to create lots that meet the minimum size and width of the zoning district.

Table 1: Proposed Changes to Development Standards in R-2 through R-5 Districts

	Current Standard	Proposed Standard
Lot Density	5,000 square feet for 1 unit 7,500 sq. ft. for a duplex, 10,000 square feet for 3 units, more lot size required for additional units, in some Zoning Districts.	The number of dwelling units allowed would be based on existing General Plan Density. Minimum lot size of 5,000 square feet for new subdivisions is still required.
Lot Width	50' minimum average lot width for single-family homes and duplexes, 75' minimum average lot width for 3 or more units.	Lot width does not determine allowed density for existing lots. New subdivisions would still be subject to a 35' minimum frontages and an average lot width of 50'.
Parking	2 spaces per dwelling unit with guest parking required for multifamily, covered parking required (except for duplexes), tandem configuration not permitted, and no parking allowed in the side or rear setbacks.	1 space per unit, consistent with SB 9. Tandem configuration allowed if serving the same unit, parking allowed in the front and side setbacks, but not rear.
Open Space	300 square feet per unit if studio or 1 bedroom, plus an additional 100 square feet required for each additional bedroom.	No additional open space required for more bedrooms. Open space counted the same if private or common.

Question: Does the Planning Commission have any concerns or recommendations with the proposed amendments to address missing middle housing?

Promote and Streamline Residential Development – With the proposed amendments intended to address missing middle housing as well as the SB 9 process, certain types of home construction are proposed for streamlining, including “by-right” or ministerial development. Streamlining review reduces costs and makes more development feasible for construction, increasing the total homes built and making it easier for the City to achieve its Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) goals.

Adjusting the zoning code to streamline housing approvals and allow more locations for care facilities and to further address needs identified in the Housing Element: an aging population, need for housing for adults with disabilities, and increased flexibility for living arrangements. The zoning amendments therefore propose the following:

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- **Streamline 100% Affordable Housing** – Streamlining 100% affordable housing, with a faster staff-level process prior to submitting for building permit.
- **Streamline Other Residential Projects** - Currently, Buildings greater than 35 feet or three stories are required to go to Planning Commission, regardless of environmental review. Under new rules under staff consideration, residential structures of any height to be considered at the Zoning Administrator level if it qualifies for a CEQA exemption and meets all other development regulations.
- **Allow Care Facilities in More Locations** - Identifying “Senior Residential Care” and “General Residential Care” as uses allowed conditionally in the R-2 through R-5 Zoning Districts. These uses will not be permitted in R-1 or RH Zoning Districts. Senior Residential Care is restricted to adults age 60 and over. “General Residential Care” would be a new land use category open to younger adults or adults with either physical or developmental disabilities.
- **Define and Allow Skilled Nursing Care** - Conditionally allowing Skilled Nursing Care in the R-4 and R-5 Zoning Districts.
- **Define and Allow Adult Day Programs** - Creating a new use category for “Adult Day Programs” in zoning districts and permitting similarly to Child Care Centers. Adult Day Programs are licensed care uses that provide activities, medical services, and other supportive care to seniors on a daily basis.

Question: Does the Commission have any questions or concerns with these changes?

Allow Increased Densities in Mixed Use Districts – The Housing Element has a program to consider increasing densities for all Mixed Use Districts. While many of these mixed use districts exist, staff is also proposing new areas which would be rezoned to Mixed Use Corridor or Mixed Use Neighborhood (see Attachment 1, Maps with Rezoning Areas). Each district would allow increased densities of an additional 20 du/acre. To facilitate the increased densities and further encourage residential uses over office uses, the following amendments may be required to the development standards:

- **Increase in height of an additional 10-25 ft. for residential projects and remove references to stories.** The additional height will facilitate the increased density. In the past several years, staff has reviewed projects that met the building height limit but exceeded the story limit (primarily due to lower-height parking levels). Removing the limitation on stories allows for additional lower-height flexibility in design and consistency in allowable building heights as needed.

Table 2: Proposed Height Changes to Mixed Use Districts

	Current Height Standard	Proposed Height Standard
Mixed Use Corridor	50 ft. for residential 85 ft. for mixed use 60 ft. for commercial	85 ft. for residential 85 ft. for mixed use 60 ft. for commercial
Mixed Use Neighborhood	40 ft. for residential 50 ft. for mixed use	60 ft. for residential 60 ft. for mixed use
Mixed Use Transitional	40 ft. for residential, commercial, or mixed use.	60 ft. for residential 40 ft. for commercial and mixed use

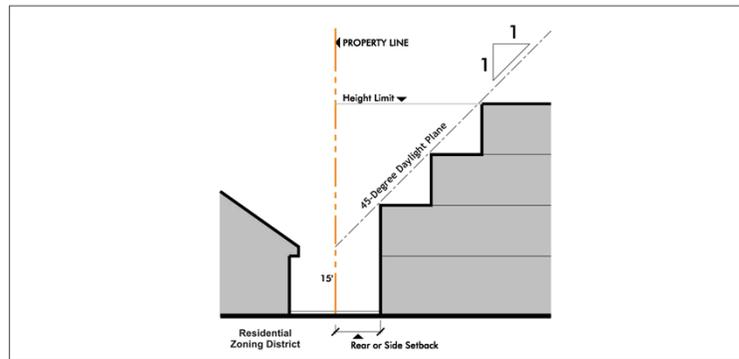
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	60 ft. for community benefits	
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- **Encourage residential uses in mixed use projects.** The Mixed Use zone does not state a minimum amount of residential uses to qualify, and may be vertically or horizontally integrated uses on the same site. Staff suggests amending the definition of “mixed use” to projects where 50% minimum of floor area is devoted to residential use.
- **Reduce parking** by eliminating Guest Parking spaces. Leave all other parking requirements the same. (See [Section 30.4](#) of the Zoning Ordinance).
- **Simplify the side and rear setback requirements.** Currently, the residential zoning districts and mixed use zoning districts have different ways of ensuring additional setbacks on upper floors of buildings three stories or more. Substantial minimum setbacks for the third story and above can limit overall building area and make the building more expensive to build. Residential zoning districts require a minimum setback of one-half of the wall height at the base of the third story. ([Section 32.3\(C\)](#)) Mixed Use Districts have daylight plane requirements for projects adjacent to residential uses. Staff is proposing to reduce the setback requirements on the upper stories for residential projects.
- **Simplify façade composition requirements.** Mixed use districts have very specific requirements for façade composition, including entrances at mandated minimum distances, wrapping parking on side streets, and related requirements. Staff will consider removing some of these requirements for all-residential development to facilitate more residential development.

Figure 2 – Daylight Plane Requirement for Mixed Use Districts



Upper-Story Stepback Adjacent to a Residential Zoning District

Question: Does the Planning Commission have any additional concerns or questions with the possible changes to Mixed Use Development Standards?

GENERAL PLAN CONFORMANCE

These proposed amendments are consistent with the Draft Housing Element programs, including:

Program H4-3: Middle Housing Development. Duplexes, triplexes, and smaller multi-family developments can provide affordable housing options to renters and owners, increasing the supply of housing and assisting Redwood City in meeting its regional share of housing growth. To remove constraints and better encourage

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small multi-family developments in the R-2, R-3, R-4, and R-5 zoning districts, zoning text amendments will be pursued.

Program H1-6: Densities in Mixed Use Zoning Districts. To respond to the continued housing demand, Redwood City proposes to increase density in the Mixed Use Zoning Districts. Objective: Complete a zoning text amendment to increase densities in the Mixed Use zoning districts as follows:

- Increase MU-C from 60 du/ac to 80 du/ac
- Increase MU-N from 40 du/ac to 60 du/ac
- Increase MU-T from 20 du/ac to 40 du/ac for base zoning and 40 du/ac to 60 du/ac for projects that propose community benefits

Program H3-1: Senior Housing Needs. The changing needs of the aging baby boomer population include new housing needs and preferences, housing affordability, walkable communities, and access to public transportation, in addition to housing design features that meet the needs of older adults. Redwood City recognizes the changing housing needs of its population, including aging seniors in need of supportive services. To meet such needs, the City encourages the provision of more innovative housing types that may be suitable for the senior community, including shared housing arrangements, community care facilities, supportive housing, and assisted living for seniors. Objectives:

- Continue to support organizations that facilitate shared housing arrangements.
- Review, revise and consolidate, as needed, the definitions for assisted living, including Residential Care, Senior and Housing for the Elderly.
- Consider amending the Zoning Ordinance to ensure that assisted living, senior living, and cottage-style housing are permitted uses in residential zoning districts. Identify necessary development standard revisions to facilitate these housing types.

Program H3-2: Residential Care Facilities and Group Homes. Redwood City encourages the development of residential care facilities and group homes. During the previous planning period, the City amended the Zoning Ordinance to remove inconsistencies in definitions and ensure compliance with State law. Additional measures will further facilitate clarity and support housing for persons with disabilities. Objectives:

- Review, and revise as needed, the Zoning Ordinance to provide more clarity on the provisions of residential care for non-seniors in larger group settings.
- Consider other opportunities for group housing and a wider variety of residential care facilities.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The study session is not a project under CEQA.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Proposed Rezoning Maps

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