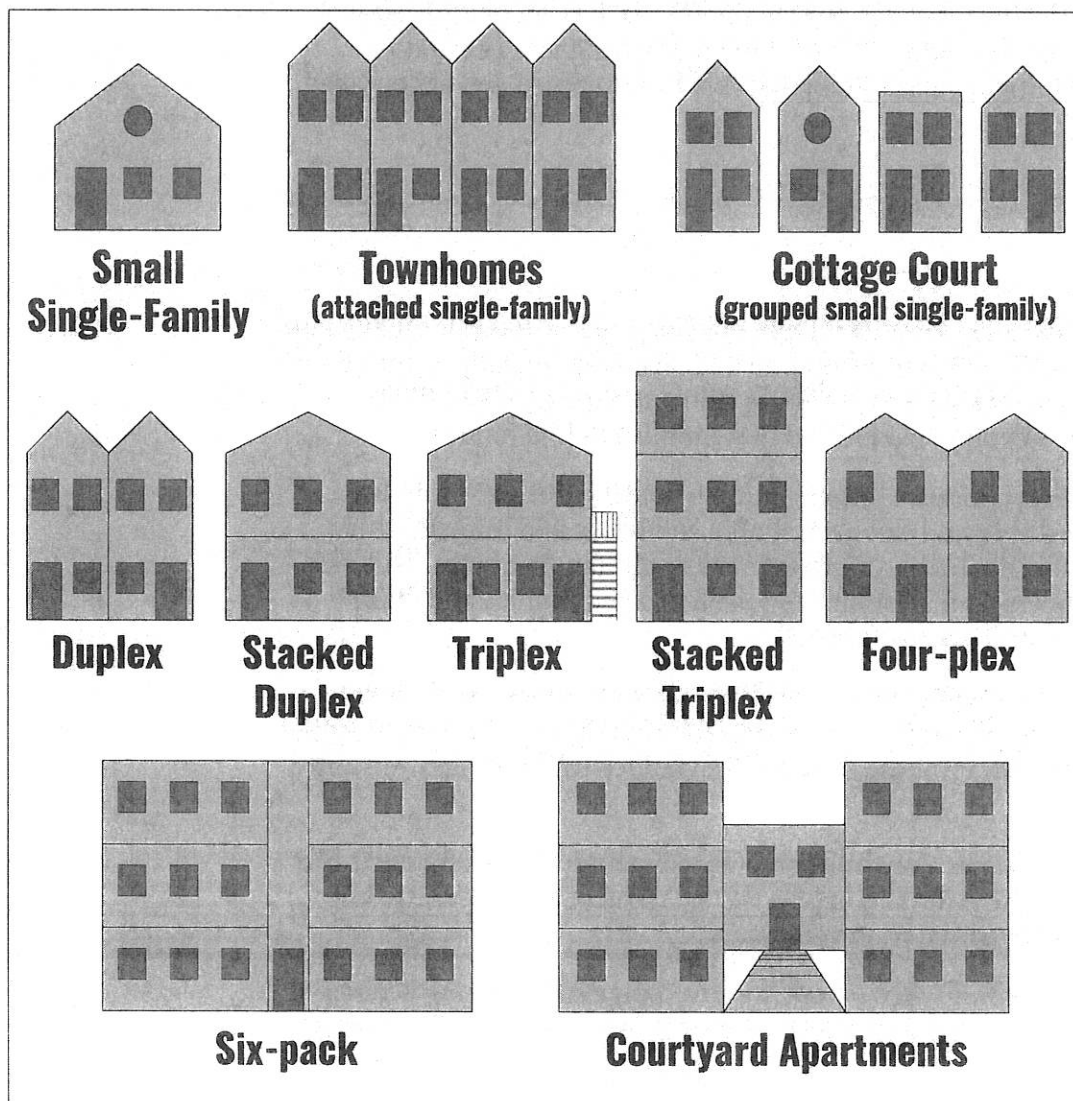


# Missing Middle Housing Types





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## What is it?

Missing middle housing types refer to a range of housing options that are smaller than conventional single-family homes, but are not large apartment buildings. They include various types of attached and detached housing units that are designed to be more affordable than conventional development. These units can include duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, townhouses, and other types of small multifamily housing. Their relative affordability is driven by their “gentle density”—which lowers land cost per housing unit while not requiring the space, circulation areas, or infrastructure required of large apartment buildings—and their smaller square footages require less construction materials.

These housing types are called “missing middle” housing because they fill the gap between single-family homes and large apartment buildings in terms of density, and they can help address the shortage of affordable housing options in many areas.

Many communities have zoning codes and subdivision regulations that do not permit these housing types. Bans on missing middle housing types can be explicit in the codes or they can happen in effect through the combined application of dimensional standards, parking requirements, and subdivision rules. Allowing missing middle housing types includes aligning regulations so that it is truly enabled and encouraged.

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## How can it help?

- Increased housing options: Missing middle housing types provide more housing options for people with different needs and budgets. This can help a community attract and retain a greater mix of residents, allow seniors to age in their community, and allow young people and new families to find homes.
- Increased affordability: Because missing middle housing units are smaller, require less land per unit, and can have shared amenities and infrastructure, they can be more affordable than conventional single-family homes. This can help address the shortage of affordable housing in a community and make it more accessible to a wider range of people.
- Improved walkability: missing middle housing types can make use of public sidewalk and trail infrastructure, making it easier for residents to walk to work, school, and run everyday errands. This can help reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality.
- Preservation of open space: Construction of missing middle housing units can preserve open space and natural areas on the outskirts of a community that would otherwise be pressured by development.
- Economic benefits: missing middle housing developments can bring economic benefits to a community and more concentrated demand for local businesses.
- Sense of community: missing middle housing developments can foster a sense of community by bringing people together in a shared living environment.



- Environmental benefits: Missing middle housing units can be designed to be more energy-efficient and environmentally sustainable, which can reduce energy needs, and greenhouse gas emissions.

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## Getting Started

1. Recognize and promote the impact of missing middle housing types on common master plan goals, like increased housing options, increased affordability, open space preservation, and more.
2. If undertaking a master plan, include missing middle small housing types as a recommendation.
3. Assess the existing built environment, existing parcel sizes and configurations, the community's housing needs, local infrastructure capacity, recent real estate market trends, and property owner and developer interest in non-conventional residential development. Using these assessments, determine which missing middle housing types might be well-suited for different areas of your community.
4. Audit your land use regulations to see what rules would need to be changed to allow (and encourage) missing middle housing development. This should



Classic New England architectural elements applied to the townhouse housing type in Providence, RI.



begin with zoning use tables, dimensional regulations, parking regulations, and subdivision rules.

5. Draft and adopt amendments to land use regulations that proactively support missing middle housing types. These amendments should be targeted toward promoting specific housing types that the community desires, given development constraints like actual lot sizes, rather than blanket increases to density.
6. Promote missing middle housing types among property owners and developers active in your community or nearby.

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## Considerations

- Not all housing types may be appropriate for every community, but there are many housing types and designs. Pursue whatever housing types that are most likely to be embraced by the community.
- Many zoning codes include provisions for multifamily housing, but fail to distinguish between a three- or four-unit building and a hundred-unit building. Even if your community technically allows these missing middle housing types, untargeted rules will not promote their production.
- Depending on the state of the real estate market, allowing more density could increase land values, translating to higher prices for existing homes, particularly in areas where the existing homes have low prices or are in poor condition. Price effects are less likely for properties that are unlikely to “flip” to higher densities.
- In hot real estate markets, increasing allowed densities can contribute to displacement of established communities. Housing production incentives should be paired with restrictions to protect the vulnerable and avoid the social and public health consequences of displacement.
- Consider form-based codes as a method of promoting missing middle housing types more directly, rather than through complex dimensional rules.
- Consider Conservation Subdivisions and Village Plan Alternatives as means to allow these housing types.
- Pre-approving housing types can reduce the guess-work by a town’s developers and zoning board when assessing potential developments.
- Traditional neighborhood design included many types of housing nearby one another. This type of housing mix can reduce actual segregation by race, income, and other factors, and increase feelings of shared community.



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## Issues Addressed

Housing Costs, Housing Options, Affordable Housing, Multigenerational, Sustainable Housing

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## Related Tools

Reduced Zoning and Subdivision Requirements, Wastewater System Alternatives, Inclusionary Zoning, Workforce Housing Ordinance, Village Plan Alternative, Form-Based Codes, Age-Friendly Neighborhoods

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## Resources

- Opticos Design, “Missing Middle Housing” resources and information on small housing types, <https://missingmiddlehousing.com/>
  - Metropolitan Area Planning Council, “Living Little” resources and information on small housing types, <https://living-little.mapc.org/>
  - Strong Towns, “Making Normal Neighborhoods Legal Again,” <https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2019/7/3/making-normal-neighborhoods-legal-again>
  - Strong Towns, “Pre-Approved House Designs Jump-Start Infill Development in South Bend,” <https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2022/10/6/pre-approved-house-designs-jump-start-infill-development-in-south-bend>
  - American Planning Association, Michigan Chapter, “Zoning Reform Toolkit,” [https://www.planningmi.org/assets/images/ZoningReformToolkit/MAP\\_ZoningReformToolkit\\_2022%2008%2002\\_Gradient.pdf](https://www.planningmi.org/assets/images/ZoningReformToolkit/MAP_ZoningReformToolkit_2022%2008%2002_Gradient.pdf)
  - Turner Center for Housing Innovation, “Lessons in Land Use Reform,” [https://turnercenter.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/Lessons\\_in\\_Land\\_Use\\_Reform.pdf](https://turnercenter.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/Lessons_in_Land_Use_Reform.pdf)
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## Case Studies

### Dover, NH

Dover's zoning ordinance has long been a model for aligning zoning rules with housing production needs and traditional neighborhood design. All of its residential districts allow—whether by-right or by Special Exception—homes with up to four housing units





per structure. (In lower-density areas, these housing types are only allowed in cluster housing developments.) Lot size and setback requirements provide reasonable opportunities to produce housing, with minimum lot sizes for missing middle housing types tending to be less than an acre.

- Dover Zoning Code, <https://www.dover.nh.gov/Assets/government/city-operations/2document/planning/Regulations/Zoning%202018.pdf>

## Hanover, NH

In 2022, Hanover town meeting approved a new base zoning district along one street in Downtown Hanover near Dartmouth College. The stated goal of the zoning amendment is "to increase the number of residential units," according to the zoning text itself. The existing neighborhood fabric has a mix of housing types, including missing middle housing types. Under the new rules, single-family, two-family, and multifamily housing is allowed by-right. Importantly, the district's dimensional rules and dimensional rules were also relaxed to enable more infill small multifamily. Main Wheelock's new zoning was accompanied by design guidelines that specify architectural treatment of new housing. The zoning change was at least ten years in the making, with one failed proposal in 2015. In the 2022 effort, Dartmouth students were significantly involved in advancing the proposal and in the Town Meeting vote itself. At least area landowner had plans to add new housing to the area upon the amendment's passage.

- Main Wheelock District zoning text, [http://nhhousingtoolbox.org/resource-archive/2022\\_zo\\_hanover\\_MWD.pdf](http://nhhousingtoolbox.org/resource-archive/2022_zo_hanover_MWD.pdf)
- The Dartmouth, "New Main Wheelock zoning district to expand residential development," May 31, 2022

## Grand Rapids, MI

In 2008, Michigan's second largest city updated their zoning to allow duplexes in previously single-family-only zones. (The amendments also allowed mixed-use development in commercial districts, and included "form-based light" provisions.) Duplexes were allowed by Special Permit on corner lots under the 2008 law. In 2018,

### Suburban Density Multi Residential (RM-SU) District

Amended: 11-28-12 by Ord. No. 2012-11, 14-24, 06-22-2018 by Ord. No. 0-2018.05.08 -- 010



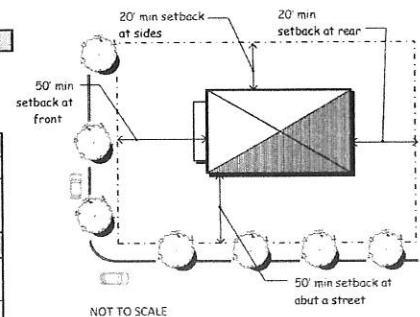
#### Permitted Uses

- ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT
- ADULT DAY CARE
- ASSEMBLY HALL
- CHILD CARE FACILITY
- CHILD CARE HOME
- Conversion of Existing Dwelling to Accommodate 5 or more units [3]
- Conversion of Existing Dwelling to Accommodate not more than 4 units [3]
- Dwelling, 2 Family
- Dwelling, 3-4 Family [3]
- DWELLING, MULTI-FAMILY [3]
- DWELLING, SINGLE FAMILY
- EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION, K-12
- FARM [5]
- FARM ANIMALS FOR FAMILY USE, for non-commercial purposes, on lots containing a one or two family dwelling [6]
- OFFICE [7]
- PUBLIC RECREATION
- Public Utility [8]
- ROADSIDE FARMSTAND [9]

#### Dimensional Regulations [1] [2]

LOT	
Minimum LOT Size [3] [4]	20,000 sf
Maximum LOT COVERAGE	40%
Minimum FRONTAGE	100 ft
PRINCIPAL BUILDING	
Front SETBACK	50 ft
Abut a Street SETBACK	50 ft
Side SETBACK	20 ft
Rear SETBACK	20 ft
OUTBUILDING/ACCESSORY USE	
Front SETBACK	50 ft
Abut a Street SETBACK	50 ft
Side SETBACK	10 ft
Rear SETBACK	10 ft
HEIGHT OF BUILDING	
PRINCIPAL BUILDING	40 ft max
OUTBUILDING	40 ft max

#### Principal Building Placement



#### Uses Permitted by Special Exception

- ELDERLY ASSISTED CARE HOME

#### Sign Regulations

Size	RM-SU District
Total signs permitted	1
Total area permitted	16 sf (CUSTOMARY HOME OCCUPATION SIGN 2 sf max, development identification SIGN 20 sf max)
Type	
FREESTANDING	permitted (10 ft setback required)
PROJECTING	permitted
WALL/ Awning	not permitted
Temporary	not permitted

An excerpt from the Dover zoning code.



the City amended the new code to remove the Special Permit requirement and allow duplexes by-right.

- Next City, “A Decade without Single-Family Residential Zoning in Grand Rapids,” <https://nextcity.org/urbanist-news/a-decade-without-single-family-residential-zoning-in-grand-rapids>

## Bend, OR

In 2019, Oregon passed a law to allow some missing middle housing types in all single-family zones across the State, giving discretion in implementation to a state land use board. In addition to allowing duplexes, fourplexes, and other small multifamily options, the board reduced local parking minimums for small multifamily homes in large Portland-area cities. Bend, Oregon became the first community to comply with the law locally, adjusting its zoning to allow duplexes and fourplexes. Those changes, combined with a strong real estate market, with 650 units under construction in early 2022.

- Planetizen, “Statewide Zoning Changes Adopted in Oregon to Limit Parking, Add Missing Middle,” <https://www.planetizen.com/news/2020/12/111546-statewide-zoning-changes-adopted-oregon-limit-parking-add-missing-middle>
- KTVZ, “Bend’s big shift from single-family homes to more multifamily housing tops city’s expectations,” <https://ktvz.com/news/bend/2022/01/24/bends-big-shift-from-single-family-homes-to-more-multifamily-housing-tops-citys-expectations/>



A prewar duplex in Grand Rapids—the type of housing the city hoped to allow again.

