



Committee of the Whole Report

For the Meeting of November 21, 2019

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** November 7, 2019
From: Andrea Hudson, Acting Director, Sustainable Planning and Community Development
Subject: Missing Middle Housing Forms

RECOMMENDATION

That Council direct staff to:

1. Establish zoning regulations, design guidelines and policy updates for missing middle housing forms city-wide;
2. Conduct engagement to provide opportunities for the community to help shape the missing middle regulatory framework;
3. Identify suitable locations for missing middle housing forms;
4. Report back with recommendations for City-initiated rezoning.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with a recommended approach for undertaking a citywide planning process for missing middle housing choices (e.g. townhouses and houseplexes) in Victoria. The project addresses multiple actions from both the 2019-2021 Strategic Plan and the Victoria Housing Strategy 2016-2025 Phase Two: 2019-2022, as well as a Council motion from April 11, 2019 regarding houseplexes in Fairfield.

Recent neighbourhood planning processes generated a considerable amount of relevant community input as well as more detailed policies for missing middle housing forms. This initiative will build on outcomes from recent neighbourhood planning processes, summarizing “what we’ve heard so far” and what policies are currently in place, and will provide an opportunity for community members to share input to help advance the existing regulatory framework for applications. Guided by existing policy, objectives, community input, and technical analysis, this project will result in design guidelines, zoning options and associated amendments to other City documents (e.g. the Official Community Plan, neighbourhood plans) to better facilitate development of missing middle housing forms.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to present a proposed approach for the city-wide Missing Middle Housing initiative.

BACKGROUND

Council directed staff to explore how to accommodate missing middle housing in Victoria through several strategic directions, motions, and policy documents summarized below.

Strategic Plan and Related Council Motions

The 2019-2021 Strategic Plan, includes the following actions, listed under “Strategic Objective #3: Affordable Housing,”

- a. Undertake a citywide planning exercise to identify suitable locations for townhouses and houseplexes (2019)
- b. Support houseplexes as a form of multi-unit housing that provide a sensitive transition within neighbourhoods (2019)
- c. Support more family housing including townhouses and rowhouses (2019)
- d. Support new ground-oriented housing forms and lock-off suites (2019)
- e. Consider a comprehensive amendment to the Zoning Bylaw to permit all “Missing Middle” housing forms as of right without need for rezoning or development permit. [building on “a.” above] (2020)

Additionally, the Strategic Plan specifies a measurable outcome associated with “Strategic Objective #3: Affordable Housing” as follows:

- Quadruple the number of ‘Missing Middle’ housing units

Further, on April 11, 2019 Council approved the following motion relating to Houseplexes in Fairfield:

6. That Council direct staff to prepare a zoning bylaw amendment that would allow fourplexes as a right on lots between 6000 and 7499 square feet and sixplexes as a right on lots 7500 square feet or larger as long as:
 - a. The proposed buildings conform to Design Guidelines for Attached Residential Development: Fairfield Neighbourhood.
 - b. At least half the units in each building are affordable to very low to moderate income households on either a rental or ownership basis depending on the tenure of the building.
 - c. There are provision for onsite cycling storage and consideration of a car share.
 - d. Proposed new buildings meet the BC step code step 5 standard.
 - e. Direct staff to bring economic modeling and information on the viability of these types of projects back to Council with bylaws and that this information reflect Council’s desire to have the most affordability for very low to low income households.

Victoria Housing Strategy

The Victoria Housing Strategy Phase Two incorporated all housing related Strategic Plan actions. The Housing Strategy’s section titled “Category Three: Housing Choice” contains the following actions specifically related to missing middle housing:

- **Missing Middle Housing**
Implement the OCP by undertaking a citywide exercise to identify suitable locations for townhouses and houseplexes, and prepare design guidelines to support more family and ground-oriented housing forms that fit well within neighbourhoods.
- **Missing Middle Zoning Amendments**
Consider a comprehensive amendment to the Zoning Regulation Bylaw to permit Missing Middle housing forms as of right without a need for Council approval.

Official Community Plan Implementation

The Official Community Plan (OCP) provides broad direction for Traditional Residential Areas (see Attachment A: Map of Land Use Designations) to accommodate a mix of ground-oriented housing types including single detached and attached dwellings (e.g. townhouses and houseplexes). As the OCP is a high level guiding document, it does not create specific criteria for ground-oriented housing, with the exception of Appendix A which includes development permit area designations and design guidelines. To date, design guidelines for missing middle housing forms are provided for duplexes city wide, and for attached residential housing forms (3 or more units) in the Victoria West and Fairfield neighbourhoods.

Neighbourhood Planning Outcomes

While neighbourhood plans created prior to the OCP (2012) did not anticipate the range of housing types supported by the OCP, recent neighbourhood planning processes have generated more detailed policies and design guidance for ground-oriented housing, including townhouses and houseplexes. With approval of the Victoria West and Fairfield Neighbourhood Plans, new policies are now in effect for Traditional Residential areas of Victoria West and Fairfield. These policies enable the City to provide greater clarity for community members and developers alike about the desirable characteristics of new ground-oriented development, including townhouses and houseplexes.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

Context and Objectives

The term *missing middle* was coined by architect Daniel Parolek to refer to multi-unit housing types, compatible with detached single-family homes, which help meet the growing demand for walkable urban living. The range of housing types considered by missing middle planning initiatives in North America has varied according to context, but commonly includes duplexes, larger houseplexes, townhouses, and low-rise apartment buildings. Through this project, the City of Victoria will define the range of housing types that characterize the missing middle for Victoria.

This project will seek to uphold and balance relevant objectives established by the City's Official Community Plan, Strategic Plan, Housing Strategy, Sustainable Mobility Strategy, Climate Leadership Plan, Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan, Urban Forest Master Plan, and other relevant City plans, policies, and strategies. The following set of key objectives are synthesized from the aforementioned City-plans, policies, and strategies, and provide a non-exhaustive, but orienting set of objectives for this project:

- Increase the supply and variety of ground-oriented housing choices
- Improve options for families to stay in the city and seniors to downsize
- Support car-light lifestyle, public transit service, and walkable neighbourhood centres
- Support social interaction, walkability, and sense of place
- Support conservation of heritage value and re-use of character homes
- Encourage construction of sustainable, energy efficient homes
- Support a healthy urban forest
- Seek an equitable distribution of missing middle housing in Victoria
- Engage with a diversity of perspectives, foster mutual learning and healthy dialogue

Implementing Existing “Missing Middle” Policies

The OCP’s broad support for missing middle housing forms in Traditional Residential areas, and the more detailed policies and design guidelines resulting from recent neighbourhood planning processes provide a significant foundation for missing middle housing in Victoria. The Missing Middle initiative, as recommended in this report, can be understood as a process for implementing existing policy through improving the regulatory framework (zoning and design guidelines), ensuring alignment amongst plans, and simplifying the development process.

The Design Guidelines for Attached Residential Development, which currently only apply in Victoria West and Fairfield, promote the characteristics of houseplexes and townhouses identified as desirable through considerable community input and technical analysis undertaken as part of recent neighbourhood planning processes. This initiative proposes to adapt these design guidelines for city-wide use to inform all relevant (townhouse and houseplex) development applications. Additionally, the more detailed policy guidance for townhouses and houseplexes (including duplexes with suites) in neighbourhood plans is already guiding the drafting of new zoning for rezoning applications, and will be an important input to the process of missing middle zoning and identifying suitable locations.

Process Overview

The planning process outlined below reflects lessons learned through neighbourhood planning, Council’s direction for this initiative to be a citywide planning exercise, and understanding of this initiative as a process for thoughtful implementation of the City’s existing policy framework related to missing middle housing.

Relevant lessons learned through neighbourhood planning include:

- More clear communication (e.g. storytelling approach) of city-wide vision, goals, policy, and scope of process at hand helps participants understand what to expect from process and how their input can influence outcomes.
- Providing a more complete picture of how policy would be implemented through regulation (e.g. zoning and design guidelines) when seeking feedback on draft policies/recommendations helps participants give more meaningful input, with greater confidence.
- Fewer, but more comprehensive rounds of engagement helps avoid engagement fatigue, and better reflects input from many community members who may only engage once or twice – especially those with less capacity to engage.

This process will begin by providing clear communication of the city-wide policies relating to missing middle housing, as well as clarity on the focused scope of this initiative. Noting that recent neighbourhood planning processes generated a considerable amount of relevant community input, the initiative will summarize “what we’ve heard so far,” in addition to providing an opportunity for all community members to share input. Guided by existing policy and objectives, community input, and technical analysis staff will develop draft recommendations for missing middle zoning and policy updates, as well as suitable locations and considerations associated with potential City-initiated rezoning for missing middle. Council’s April 11, 2019 motion directs undertaking economic analysis to understand the viability of houseplex projects including desired community benefits such as affordable housing units and meeting higher levels of STEP code, so this project will explore these considerations.

Prior to presenting Council with the draft recommendations, staff will seek feedback from City advisory committees, including the Advisory Design Panel, Renters Advisory Committee, Heritage Advisory Panel, Accessibility Working Group, and Active Transportation Advisory Committee.

Following presenting Council with the draft recommendations, including Council turning their mind to consultation required for any proposed OCP amendments, staff will undertake engagement with community members to get feedback on the proposed policy and regulatory changes. Following community engagement, staff will present community feedback as well as a revised set of recommendations and amendments for Council's consideration at a public hearing.

Draft Process for Missing Middle Housing Initiative



Anticipated Timeline

Pre-work, early engagement, and drafting regulatory framework	Winter 2019/2020
Council considers draft recommendations	Spring 2020
Engagement on recommended approach and refinements thereof	Spring/Summer 2020
Council considers community feedback, advances to public hearing	Fall 2020

Engagement

Engagement will follow the City's Engagement Framework and include the following specific considerations:

Inclusivity: Engagement activities will support the participation of people of different ages, incomes, and backgrounds. Efforts will be made to reach both renters and homeowners, youth, young families, working individuals, and seniors.

Transparency: Engagement tools will clearly identify what decisions are being considered, opportunities to participate, and how engagement will be used in decision-making.

Clear and engaging information: Plain language information, engaging visuals, and easy to understand data will be presented to help people understand the decisions being considered, regardless of their educational background or knowledge of City processes.

Reach People Where They Are: Engagement activities will be designed to allow for easy participation of individuals across the city.

Shared Understanding: Engagement material and activities will support opportunities for people to understand different perspectives, trade-offs, and opportunities.

Project Deliverables:

This project will result in:

- OCP amendments (to adopt design guidelines, align policy guidance if necessary)
- Updates to housing policies within neighbourhood plans for consistency with the OCP
- Model zones

- Considerations for City initiated rezoning
- Other bylaw amendments to be determined (e.g. Land Use Procedures Bylaw for process streamlining)

Linkages with Other Projects

This work will seek alignment with other City initiatives and Strategic Plan actions, including but not limited to the following:

- Village and Corridor planning
- Family Housing Policy
- House Conversion Regulations update
- Equity Lens development
- Small Scale Housing Ambassador
- Go Victoria – Sustainable Mobility Strategy (implementation actions)
- Urban Forest Master Plan Implementation (and associated Urban Forest work)
- Zoning Regulation Bylaw updates
- Other Housing Strategy implementation actions
- Stormwater and other Utility Planning

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

Accessibility Impact Statement

The creation of policies, design guidelines, and zoning for townhouses and houseplexes will be informed by city-wide policies for considering accessibility, including the upcoming Accessibility Framework, as well as engagement with the Accessibility Working Group.

2019 – 2022 Strategic Plan

This project is focused on implementing actions 14 and 17 listed under Strategic Plan Objective 3, Affordable Housing.

Impacts to Financial Plan

The proposal does not impact the financial plan. Council has already allocated funding for this project through the through the Victoria Housing Strategy Implementation budget.

Official Community Plan Consistency Statement

The proposal is consistent with the OCP, in particular Section 6: Land Management and Development, which envisions a range of ground-oriented housing types within Traditional Residential Areas.

CONCLUSION

The City of Victoria has a strong foundation of policy to support missing middle housing forms in the city. Council has directed staff to implement these policies, further removing barriers to the creation of these housing choices by improving the regulatory framework and recommending suitable locations for City-initiated rezoning. The Missing Middle initiative outlined in this report provides a process for efficient implementation of overarching policy, guided by community input and technical analysis.

Respectfully submitted,



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Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:



Date:

Nov 13, 2019