A City for Everyone
Promoting Housing Equity and Diversity
Through Seattle's 2024 Comprehensive Plan Major Update

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Abstract

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Like many U.S. cities, Seattle's built environment has been shaped by both public policy and market forces which have created a racially and economically segregated city. Up to 70 percent of land zoned for residential use is set aside for detached single-family structures. This has artificially limited the housing supply which has exacerbated the increasing demand for housing and has driven up the cost of living. Those most affected and facing displacement by these issues include long-term residents, low-income communities, and communities of color. The harms of overly restrictive zoning can be categorized using six main issues: 1) affects affordability, 2) racial and economic inequalities, 3) environmental impacts, 4) economic impacts, 5) limits housing choices and diversity, and 6) contributes to homelessness. Yet, exclusionary zoning laws and practices like minimum lot size requirements, parking minimums, and restrictions on density continue to exist. Thus, restructuring zoning policies is both a racial justice and a climate justice issue. By examining Seattle, this thesis aims to provide an examination of increasing housing density and diversity as a means to increase housing accessibility and affordability. This thesis will examine the current state of Seattle's housing crisis, dive into Seattle's land-use history, outline current proposed solutions, review case studies, and explore what densifying Seattle could look like with a series of recommendations for the city of Seattle to consider.

“History has shown that passively waiting for gradual change towards integration is not—and never will be—enough. De jure segregation can only be rectified through de jure integration, and a great deal remains to be done.”

Kim, Michael.
“Exclusionary Economic Zoning: How The United States Government Circumvented Prohibitions On Racial Zoning Through The Standard State Zoning Enabling Act.” 2021.

A CITY FOR EVERYONE

PROMOTING HOUSING EQUITY AND DIVERSITY

THROUGH SEATTLE'S 2024 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

VERONICA RESTREPO MASTERS THESIS | CHAIR RICK MOHLER | COMMITTEE BRAD KHOURI

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The Issue

The Seattle Housing Crisis

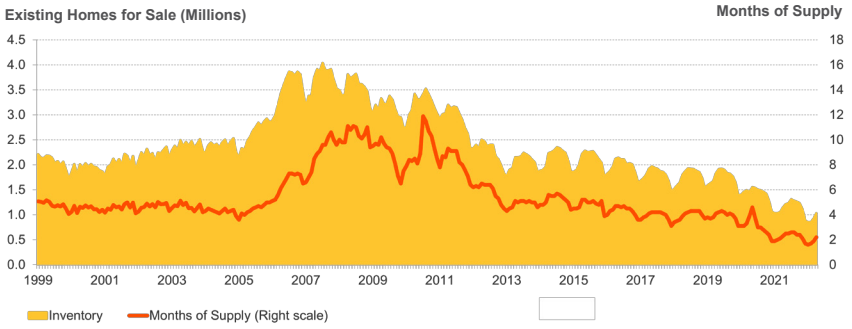
Limitations

The Issue

The United States has been grappling with a long-standing housing crisis for many years. According to Harvard University's 2022 State of the Nation's Housing report, the U.S. has a current deficit of 3.8 million homes, with the greatest supply shortages affecting low- to middle-income families (Rep. The State of the Nation's Housing, 2022). This shortage is a result of various factors, including rising demand for housing, and a lack of new construction (See Figure #1 and #2 showing housing supply and demand). The shortage has also led to significant consequences for individuals, families, and communities as it drives up costs, exacerbates inequities, and limits access to housing. Despite the increased need for housing around the country, there continues to be debate over densification. Some cities are beginning to embrace policies that encourage densification, while others continue to reject them. Understanding the root causes and implications of the housing shortage is critical for developing effective and urgent solutions.

Like many U.S. cities, Seattle's built environment has been shaped by both public policy and market forces which have created a racially and economically segregated city. Up to 70 percent of land zoned for residential use is set aside for detached single-family structures (now allowing a maximum of 2 accessory dwelling units) (Seattle Planning Commission Neighborhoods For All, 2018). This has artificially

Supply of Homes on the Market has Reached New Lows
1999-2021



Note: Months of supply measure how long it would take homes on the market to sell at the current rate, where six months are typically considered a balanced market.

Figure #1.
Graph showing National housing inventory and months of supply. Rep. The State of the Nation's Housing. Cambridge, MA: the President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2022.

limited the housing supply which has exacerbated the increasing demand for housing and has driven up the cost of living. Currently, Seattle's housing is about 111 percent more expensive than the U.S. average. (Rentcafe, 2023). This has also contributed to the ongoing separation of Seattle's neighborhoods in which some have better access to transit, schools, and open spaces, while others do not. Those most affected and facing displacement by these issues include long-term residents, small businesses, low-income communities, and communities of color (*Ibid*). The harms of overly restrictive zoning can be categorized using five main issues: "1) makes housing less affordable, 2) make the economy less productive, 3) exacerbates income and racial inequities, 4) imposes increased environmental harms, and 5) limits the types of housing available for different living arrangements, including different stages of life" (Kazis, 2020). Yet, exclusionary zoning laws and practices like minimum lot size requirements, excessive parking requirements, and restrictions on density continue to exist. Thus, restructuring zoning policies is both a racial justice and a climate justice issue. By examining Seattle, this thesis aims to provide an examination of increasing housing density as a means to increase housing accessibility and affordability. This thesis will examine the currently state of Seattle's housing crisis, dive into Seattle's land-use history, outline current proposed solutions, review case studies, and explore what densifying Seattle could look like.

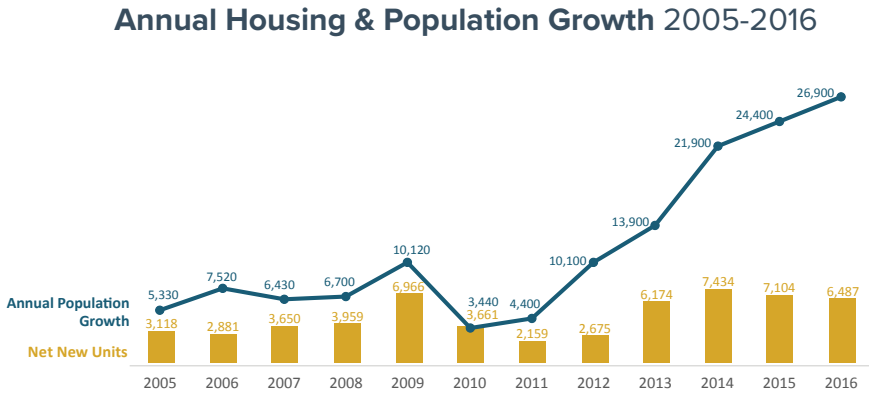


Figure #2.

Graph showing Seattle's annual new housing units lag behind annual population growth from 2005 - 2016. Seattle Planning Commission, "Neighborhoods for All: Expanding Housing Opportunity in Seattle's Single-Family Zones, Fall 2018, 25.

The Seattle Housing Crisis

According to Seattle's Office of Planning & Community Development (OPCD), Seattle is currently experiencing a severe housing shortage (One Seattle Comprehensive Plan, 2021). This is a complex issue and can be attributed to many different factors. For the sake of this paper, the examination will focus on housing density as a means to increase supply. Due to Seattle's restrictive zoning policies which only allow multi-family housing density in about one-third of residentially zoned land, affordability has become a huge issue (See Figure #4 and #5). To understand Seattle's housing crisis, this section will follow the structure of a six-part analysis of the harms of its anti-density policies:

1. **Affordability**
2. **Racial and economic inequities**
3. **Environmental impacts**
4. **Economic impacts**
5. **Limits housing choices and diversity**
6. **Contributes to homelessness**

One of the major problems Seattle has been dealing with is that both the ownership market and the rental market of housing supply are not keeping up with demand (See Figure #2). Although the rate of housing construction has increased in the last few years, Seattle's production of new jobs has triggered an increase in its population. "Between 2005 and 2019, Seattle would have needed to produce an additional 9,000 housing units to maintain its baseline ratio of jobs to housing units" (Ramsey et. al., 2021). Additionally, the Puget Sound Regional Council projects that the region will need an additional 810,000 housing units to accommodate the growing population in the next 20 years (Regional Housing Strategy, 2022). This unbalanced relationship creates competition and drives up costs. In the last decade, "Seattle's median home values have increased by 80% compared to only a 55% increase in the country median family income" (*Ibid*).

The lack of housing supply due to regulations that limit density throughout the entire city have also contributed to the exclusion of both low-income communities and

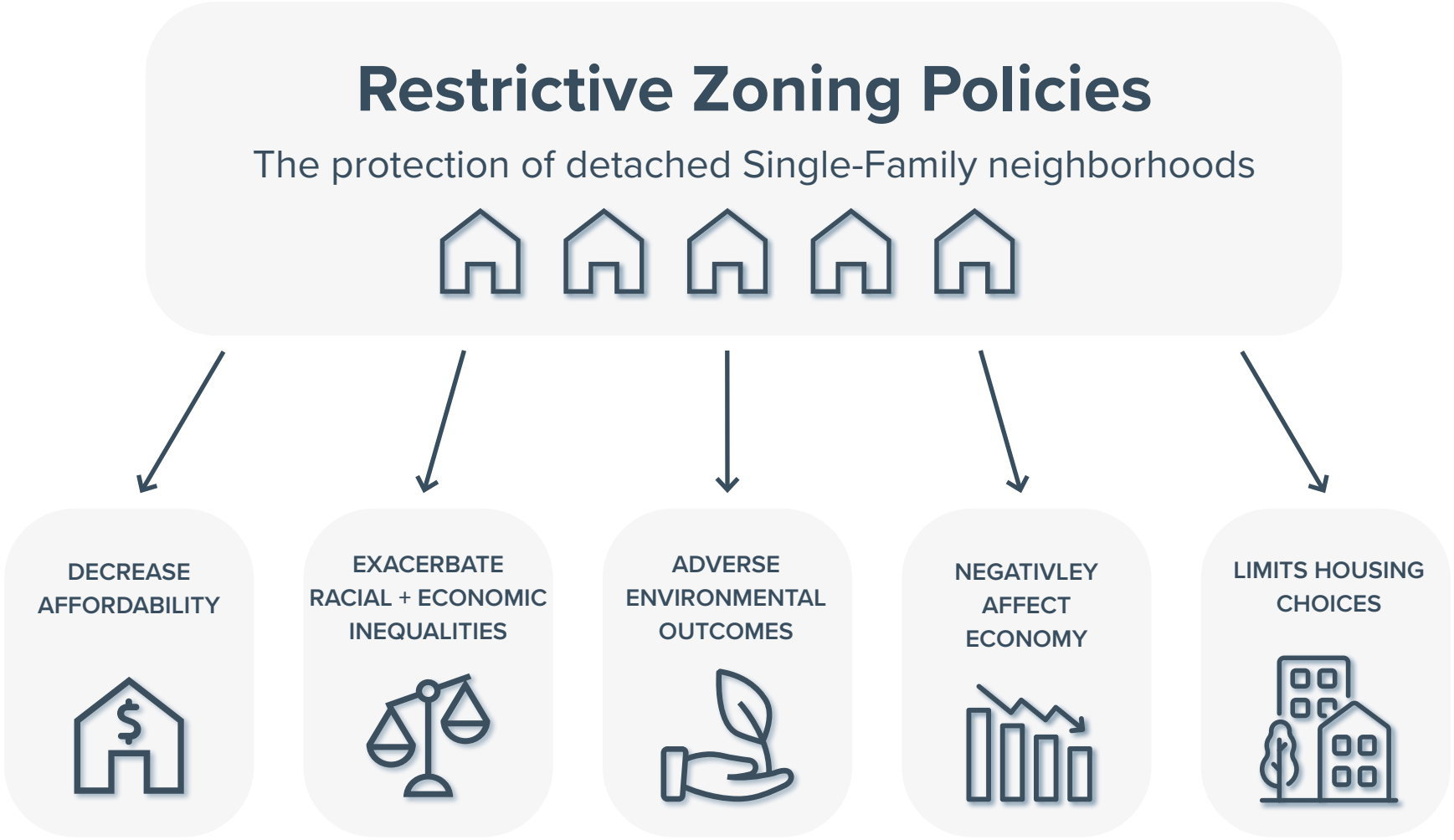


Figure #3.
Non-exhaustive list of effects caused by restrictive zoning polices, otherwise known as exclusionary zoning (including the protection of detached single-family neighborhoods).

Distribution of Zoning that Allows Residential Uses
City of Seattle, 2018

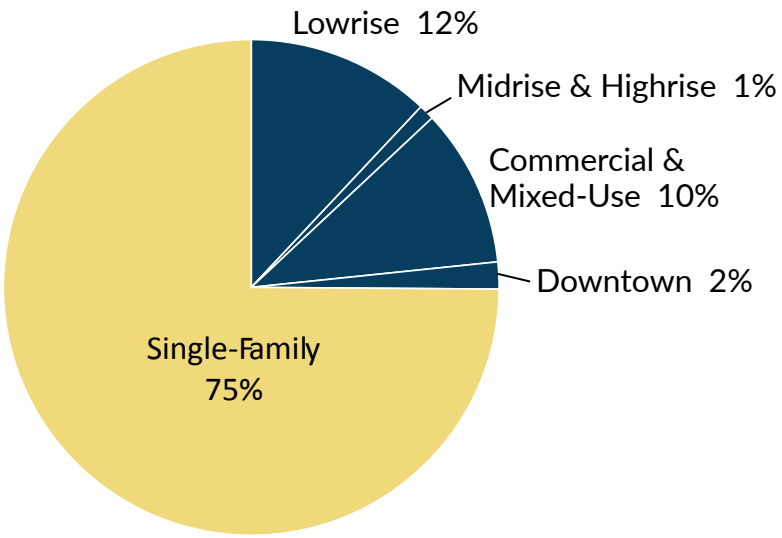


Figure #4.
Three-quarters of all the land that Seattleites can live on is zoned for single-family. Seattle Planning Commission, "Neighborhoods for All: Expanding Housing Opportunity in Seattle's Single-Family Zones." City of Seattle, 2018.

Where Multifamily Housing is Allowed
City of Seattle, 2018

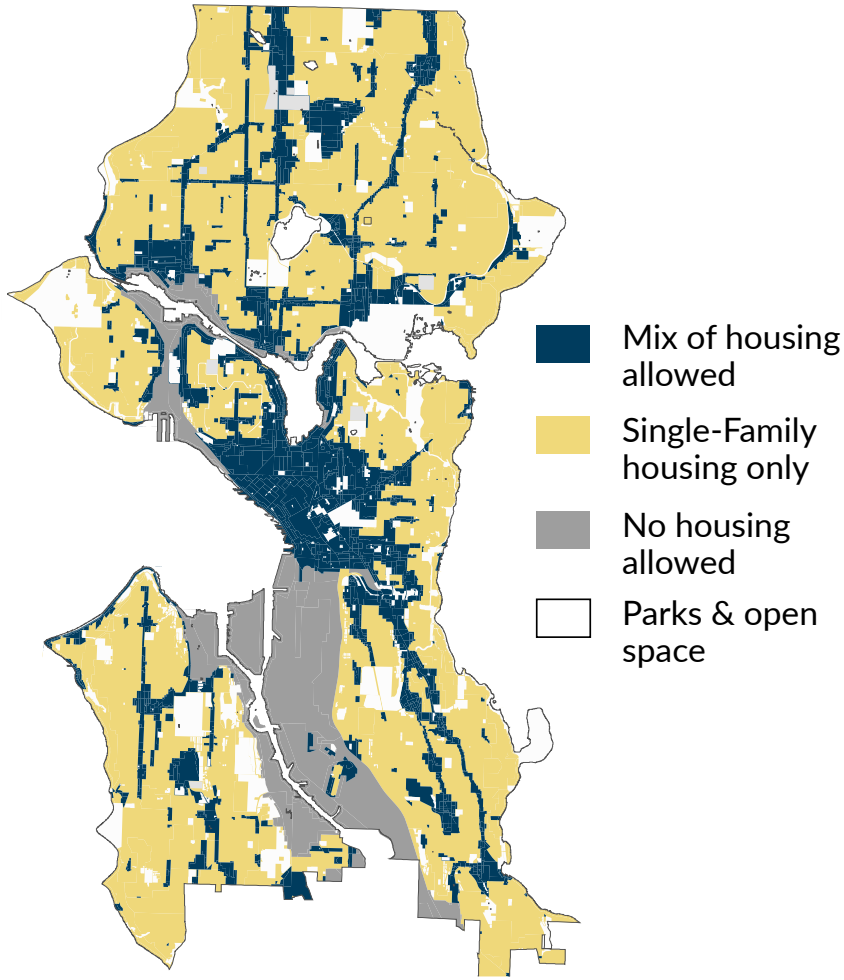


Figure #5.
Households who cannot afford, or want a more affordable option are limited ot the areas of the city shaded blue-- those zoned for a mix of housing including multi-family zoning. Seattle Planning Commission, "Neighborhoods for All: Expanding Housing Opportunity in Seattle's Single-Family Zones." City of Seattle, 2018.

Distribution of Gross Acres by Land Use
City of Seattle, 2018

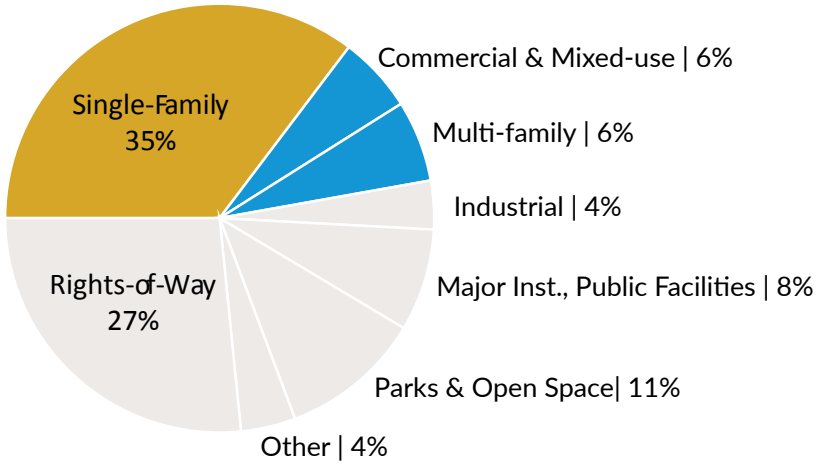


Figure #6.

"Land use" refers to how land is currently being used, while "zoning describes the range of uses that are allowed. If all of Seattle's land is considered, including rights-of-way, parks, and industrial lands, over a third is in use as single-family parcels. Only 6% is multifamily (lowrise, midrise, highrise) and 6% is commercial or mixed-use. Seattle Planning Commission, "Neighborhoods for All: Expanding Housing Opportunity in Seattle's Single-Family Zones." City of Seattle, 2018.

Race/Ethnicity of Householder per Housing Density
Seattle, 2018

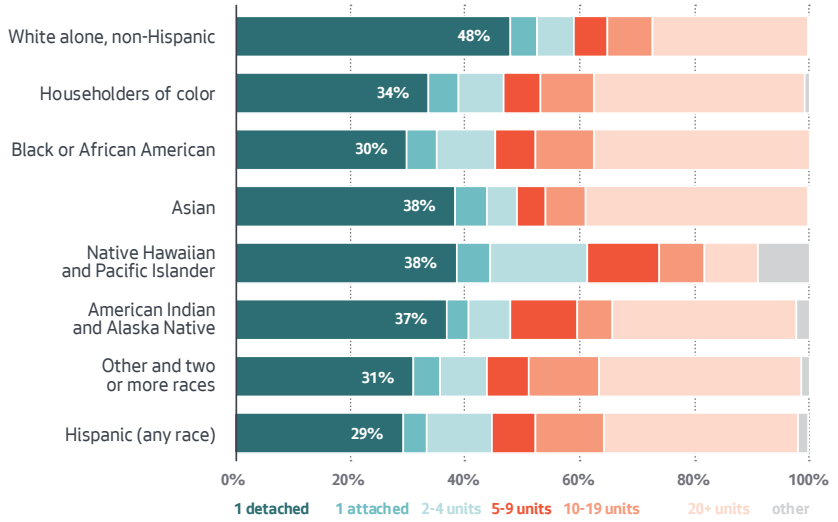


Figure #7.

The type of housing a household occupies varies by race. Almost half of white non-Hispanic households live in detached one-unit structures. City of Seattle, "Accessory Dwelling Units: Final Environmental Impact Statement." City of Seattle, 2018.

communities of color. First, the lack of affordability has contributed to the growing homelessness crisis and exacerbated the city's social and economic challenges. Unlike people who are displaced by natural disasters and who are typically seen as victims, people who are forced into homelessness due to a lack of housing affordability are typically blamed for their hardships. Lower-income households, younger households, and Black households are disproportionately affected by the housing affordability crisis as well. About 62 percent of Black residents have reported being housing cost-burdened, compared to about 30 percent of white residents (See Figure #8) (King County Department of Community and Human Services, The Regional Affordable Housing Dashboard, 2019). This leads to housing landscapes which detached single-family dwellings are dominated by white residents, contributing to contemporary segregation (See Figure #7). As prices of housing continue to rise, many middle and low income households are being displaced and forced to move away from the city.

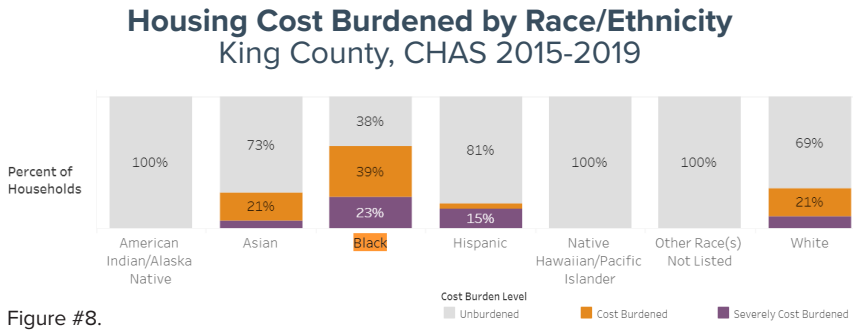


Figure #8.

About 62 percent of Black residents have reported being housing cost-burdened, compared to about 30 percent of white residents. King County Department of Community and Human Services. The Regional Affordable Housing Dashboard, 2019.

According to the Puget Sound Regional Council, one in three residents live and work in different counties, which means that many of the region's residents commute long distances to get to work (*Ibid*). This has both negative individual health and environmental implications. Longer commutes contribute to increased air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions (Kazis, 2020). Anti-density policies can also lead to higher rates of energy usage. The detached single-family typology is exposed to a higher degree of exterior walls which increases its heating and cooling loads. Water quality can also become an issue in low-density development. The sprawl required to develop detached single-family neighborhoods require increased

Figure #9.

Missing middle housing is a range of house-scale buildings with multiple dwelling units. This includes Duplexes, Triplexes, Fourplexes, Courtyard buildings, Cottage court buildings, Townhouses, Multiplexes, and Live-work units. Parolek, Daniel G. Missing Middle Housing: Thinking Big and Building Small to Respond to Today's Housing Crisis. Amsterdam: Island Press, 2020.

paving, which has negative effects on pollutants carried by stormwater runoff and has implications on natural habitats (*Ibid*). Additionally, the average size of newly constructed detached houses have been growing in size, which has intensified the environmental issues (Seattle Planning Commission Neighborhoods For All, 2018).

Regulations favoring low-density development in Seattle can have implications on the local economy as well. Following concepts of mixed-use urban development and city vitality discussed by Jane Jacobs in her book "The Death and Life of Great American Cities," the integration of different building types and uses promotes successful and more productive cities (Jacobs, 1961). By reserving the majority of its residential land for the detached housing typology, the city has created distance from residential and commercial uses. As a result, commercial spaces in certain areas have seen high levels of vacancy rates due to a lack of foot traffic and potential customers (Baragona, 2022). Lack of density and mixed-use development has made it challenging for small businesses to thrive, as they often rely on nearby residents to function. This argument is often made by advocating for a 15-minute city: a place where residents can access all their daily needs within a 15-minute walk or bike ride from their homes. Exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the result of current policy is that many neighborhoods in Seattle lack the vibrancy and economic activity that comes with mixed-use development which can be detrimental to both local cultures, and the wider economy.

Lastly, Seattle's anti-density policies artificially limit the creation of diverse housing options to accommodate different living arrangements, including different stages of life. This issue is often referred to as missing middle housing (See Figure #9 illustrating missing middle housing). Due to the restriction on housing density in the majority of the city, Seattle is prohibited from building housing types like duplexes, fourplexes, cottages, and small apartment buildings in single-family zones. Although non-conforming housing structures which fall into the missing middle typology exist as artifacts from previous—more

flexible—zoning codes, Seattle's current regulations forbid the new construction of these types of units. Seattle's current housing supply mainly occupies two typologies: expensive detached single-family structures in low-density neighborhoods, and very dense apartment buildings along urban hubs and corridors (Seattle Planning Commission "Neighborhoods For All," 2018). This is particularly difficult for older households who want to remain in their communities, but can no longer live in multi-story units or keep up with the maintenance of large properties. This can lead to social isolation, reduced access to services and amenities, and a decreased quality of life.

Limitations

While zoning reform is one approach to addressing Seattle's housing crisis, it is important to note that it is not sufficient on its own. There are many limitations to what zoning reform can achieve. Zoning reform may allow for increased density and flexibility in land use, but it does not necessarily address the underlying economic factors that drive housing affordability issues such as housing commodofication, income inequality, and the high cost of construction. Although zoning reform is necessary for the effort to address Seattle's housing crisis, it must be part of a broader strategy to address issues of equity.

To fully understand the limitations of relying solely on zoning reform to address Seattle's housing crisis, it is necessary to examine the history of zoning policies in the city. Zoning has played a significant role in shaping the development of Seattle, determining where and how different land uses and building types are allowed, and contributing to current housing affordability and supply challenges. The city has a long-standing tradition of downzoning its neighborhoods in an attempt to preserve the character of single-family communities, despite the growing demand for housing (Morales, 2017). Understanding the origins and evolution of Seattle's zoning policies can provide valuable insights into the current state of housing in the city and inform future strategies for addressing these issues.

CHAPTER TWO

Analysis

Research

Seattle's Land-use History

- Overview
- Zoning in the United States
- Seattle Pre-1920
- 1920 to 1923
- 1923 to 1957
- 1957 to 1980
- 1980 to 1994
- 1994 and later

Looking Forward

- OPCD's 2024 Comprehensive Plan Major Update
- WA State HB 1110 Middle Housing Bill
- Limitations

Seattle's Land-Use History

Zoning is a critical component of urban planning, functioning as a tool to regulate the built environment and has been referred to as a tool for social control. At a basic level, zoning refers to municipal laws or regulations that govern how property can be used. Zoning typically defines and dictates a piece of land's permissible use, density, and form of development through the enforcement of a zoning ordinance. Zoning ordinances typically state regulations in written text with an accompanying map that divides a municipality into zones. The fundamental goal of zoning is to manage the physical and environmental development of communities. Without it, many fear that uncontrolled growth would lead to incompatibility of new development with existing buildings and uses, loss of community character due to unregulated form and size of buildings, and ultimately lower property value. Simultaneously, scholars have demonstrated that excessive land restrictions can "1) make housing

Figure #10.
Holmberg, John. "Car passing cacant houses on Capitol Hill." Digital image. Mohai Museumof History & Industry, April 13 1982. Accessed June 8, 2023. https://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/digital/collection/imlsmohai/id/10009/rec/1

Figure #11.
"Seattle, looking north." Digital Image. University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, [Order Number SEA1379, Negative Number UW2144], Between 1920 and 1950. Accessed June 8, 2023. https://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/digital/collection/seattle/id/555/rec/2

less affordable, 2) make the economy less productive, 3) exacerbate income and racial inequalities, 4) impose increased environmental harms, and 5) limit the types of housing available for different living arrangements, including at different stages of life." Incompatibility of uses, however, was a very pertinent issue in the early 20th century, as urban centers were responding to industrialization, the growth of cities, and wider access to the automobile. Early zoning codes across the United States sought to address a variety of different issues including race, public health, safety, and perceived welfare of the community. Zoning quickly spread throughout the United States. Over time, zoning has evolved to encompass a wide range of uses and regulations including height and density restrictions, environmental protections, the promotion of affordable housing, protection of historic districts, and much more. Despite its evolution, zoning remains a foundation of land use planning, as it—somewhat silently— seeks to shape the built environment and influence the lives of urban residents.

With growing urban populations, some say that outdated zoning ordinances may now be artificially limiting the housing supply, affecting housing availability and affordability within urban settings. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, cities across the globe have seen a boom in population, with the current 55% of the world's population living in urban settings expected to rise to 80% by 2050. However, upzoning historically low-density neighborhoods in urban settings has proved to be a contentious issue, with many residents opposing upzones. In light of the recent debate over upzoning as means of expanding housing opportunities, this paper will briefly examine the origins of zoning in the United States and explore the history of zoning in Seattle since 1919. Then, it will discuss the relationships between zoning policy and redlining, racial covenants, and deed restrictions, to understand the link between equity and different forms of land use regulations to demonstrate the urgency of this issue. This paper will end with discussing how the City of Seattle is addressing the consequences of inequitable policies, and how it plans to address them with the upcoming comprehensive plan update.

Zoning in the United States

The origin of zoning in the United States was prompted by two main issues: the relationship between industrialization and health, as well as the demand for regulating racial and economic diversity in white neighborhoods (Rothstein 2017). One of the earliest zoning ordinances was passed in Baltimore in 1910, enforcing racial segregation, by maintaining separation between white and minority neighborhoods (Schindler, 2015). The Baltimore ordinance served as a model for exclusionary regulations in many Southern cities. Atlanta enacted a racial zoning ordinance three years later in which "its mayor stated that '[B] lacks should be quarantined in isolated slums in order to reduce the incidents of civil disturbance, to prevent the spread of communicable disease into the nearby white neighborhoods, and to protect property values among the white majority'" (Schindler, 2015). By 1917, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected the constitutionality of racial zoning, noting that it violated the due process clause of the 14th amendment, in Buchanan v. Warley (1917). However, this precedent did not entirely stop regulatory discrimination, and many Southern cities continued enacting and enforcing racial zoning ordinances through 1950 (Wittemore, 2021). Additionally, cities began to develop alternative ways to maintain racial and economic segregation in cities. The impetus behind the creation of many exclusionary policies

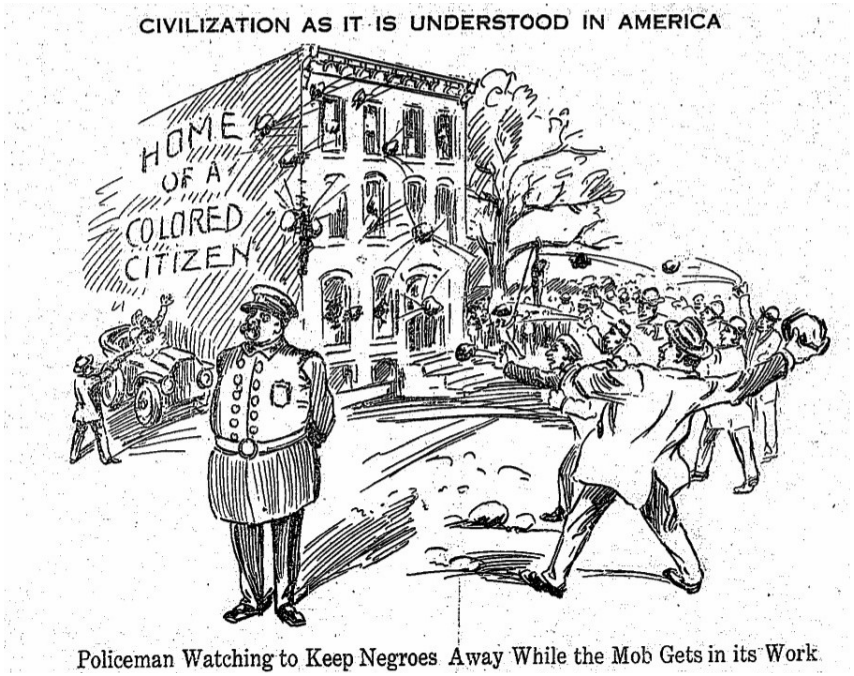


Figure #12.

A comic from the 1913 Afro-American newspaper showing a group of white Americans in Baltimore throwing stones at a rowhouse labeled "Home of a Colored citizen" while a police offer stands by ignoring the crowd. This shows attitudes towards Black Americans and their neighborhoods at the time. Heritage, Baltimore. "1885-1929: Segregation and the Fourteenth Amendment." Baltimore's Civil Rights Heritage. Baltimore Heritage Club, 2022. https://baltimoreheritage.github.io/civil-rights-heritage/1885-1929/.

restricting property focused around maintaining property values and neighborhood stability (Gotham, 2000). In an effort to exclude minority and low-income families, land-use policies began to regulate property value by controlling minimum lot size requirements, maximum density, height restrictions, and more (Wittemore, 2021). This has now been coined as exclusionary zoning. Scholars note that "in its most traditional incarnation, exclusionary zoning involves seeking to exclude poor and minority residents by adopting measures designed to drive up land prices. Traditional land use barriers restricting supply include, for example, large minimum lot sizes, off-street parking requirements, density limits, and prohibitions on multi-family housings" (Serkin, 2020). By decreasing affordability through form, those not part of the wealthy elite are subsequently excluded from regulated areas.

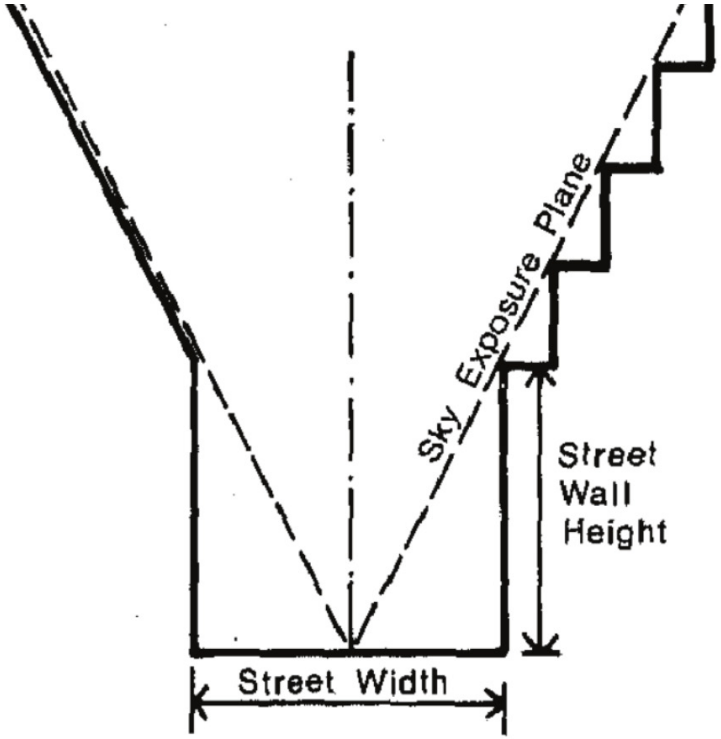


Figure #13.
New York City 1916 Zoning Ordinance prescribing street wall height and sky exposure plan to allow daylight into the street and buildings. Source: Lighting Design and Application: LD and A. 16(6), Bryan, H. & Stuebing, S., Natural light as an urban amenity, 44-48, copyright 1986.

New York City is a good example form-based regulation which achieved industrial, racial, and economic separation in land-use. New York City had been experiencing problems related to the loss of light and air, as well as industrial uses encroaching along prominent retail districts since the late 19th century (New York City Planning History, 2023). Rapid urbanization and severe congestion were believed to have caused major disease outbreaks in the city. In response, NYC enacted its first comprehensive zoning ordinance in 1916, separating land

uses into three categories: residential, commercial, and unrestricted (otherwise understood as industrial), as well as establishing height and setback requirements for buildings (Silver, 2016). “Zoning advocates early on noted how height and bulk restrictions could effectively shut immigrant-packed tenements out of single-family districts, whether in New York City or suburban Boston” (Wittemore, 2021). This is often incorrectly regarded as the nation’s first zoning ordinance in an American city. As a leading American city, NYC’s zoning ordinance set the stage for widespread zoning adoption across the country.

It is important to understand that although NYC’s 1916 comprehensive zoning ordinance did not explicitly address race and class in its language, the context and environment at that time was still deeply racist and prejudice against immigrant communities. It was the era of segregation, the Great Migration, and the Great Wave of Immigration, and these regulations were not being developed in a vacuum. Although NYC’s zoning did not directly govern neighborhoods by race like other American cities had, it still achieved social segregation through sorting regulating land use, building height, bulk, and density in an attempt to protect property values for wealthy landowners (Ingram, 2018). One of the goals of zoning advocates was to protect and cater to the wealthy elite of NYC which feared that the proximity to manufacturing lofts and the immigrant workforce might affect the value of their properties (Ingram, 2018). Besides explicit forms of land-use discrimination like redlining and racially restrictive covenants, it was common for cities to use more covert language restricting properties development rights to maintain property values through zoning, while still under the umbrella of exclusionary practices.

Figure #14.
High density living in tenement housing in New York City. Source: Detroit Publishing Co. Mulberry Street, New York City. Photograph. Library of Congress, Photochrom prints. ca. 1900. https://www.loc.gov/item/2016794146/

History of Land-use in Seattle: A Focus on Zoning

Introduction

It is evident that exclusionary land-use practices do not necessarily require explicit racist language to assure the segregation of a city. Much like New York, Seattle's history of land-use and zoning refrained from using racial language but achieved outcomes similar to cities which had explicitly outlined racially discriminatory zoning. Seattle's early zoning codes relied heavily on fire prevention but evolved into form-based regulations which helped ensure that property values remained high, which effectively excluded low-income and minority communities from most of its residential landscape. Understanding Seattle's zoning history is crucial for developing future growth proposals that aim to promote equitable policies. The city's past demonstrates how policies, even when not explicitly discriminatory, can perpetuate segregation and inequity. Examining how zoning laws have been used to create and preserve segregation can help designers and policymakers identify the underlying causes of economic and social disparities and develop strategies to address them.

Figure #15.
Residential development in Seattle in 1947. Source: Harris, Kenneth. Aerial view of houses in Seattle, Washington, December 1947. Photograph. University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections. 1947. https://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/digital/collection/seattle/id/5596/rec/100

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ZONING IN SEATTLE

1909 The first Building Ordinance in Seattle is published.
The city is divided into “districts” to specify the construction type of new buildings, but not uses.

1920’s Some residential areas begin establishing **racially discriminatory** covenants to prevent people of color, and other ethnic and religious groups from buying houses. The Supreme Court validates the use of restrictive covenants in 1926, making them even more common.

1923 Seattle’s first zoning ordinance is passed, which establishes two residential districts: one that allows detached, single household structures, and another that allows apartments and other housing types. No minimum lot size is required.

1934 The Federal Housing Authority establishes a system of **“redlining”** certain neighborhoods when determining whether to approve a mortgage. Generally, mortgages were denied in neighborhoods where households of color were predominant, undermining property values for African-Americans and Asian-American households. This practice worked to further segregate Seattle’s residents along racial lines.

1957 Seattle adopts a new Zoning Ordinance, which includes three categories of residential zones: single-family, duplex, and multifamily. It sets out strict development standards for minimum lot sizes. Whereas historic neighborhoods were platted with lots smaller than 5,000 square feet, the new regulations set a 5,000 square foot minimum lot size. Many duplex areas were rezoned to single-family.

1960’s + 70’s Successive changes to the land use code continue to downzone areas from multifamily and duplex to single-family as land use regulations in single-family areas become increasingly exclusionary.

1994

Accessory dwelling units are legalized.

Seattle's implements the Urban Village Strategy, which concentrates jobs, housing, and services into four categories of "urban villages."

2009

Detached accessory dwelling units are legalized for lots over 4,000 square feet. Restrictions make construction of these units challenging and costly to homeowners.

2011

An overhaul to the zoning code replaces the duplex zone with the "lowrise" zone, which allows townhouses, rowhouses, and apartments, and trades in lot coverage restrictions for floor area ratio.

2018

Mandatory Housing Affordability program triggers efforts to allow more density in some zones and expand the boundaries of some urban villages in exchange for a required contribution to affordable housing. This triggers questions about anti-displacement measures.

2023

Currently developing HB 1110 Middle Housing Bill

2024

Currently developing Comprehensive Plan Update

Figure #16.

Graphic showing history of zoning in Seattle. Based on information from the Seattle Planning Commission's Neighborhoods for All Report. Seattle Planning Commission, "Neighborhoods for All: Expanding Housing Opportunity in Seattle's Single-Family Zones." City of Seattle, 2018.

Seattle Pre-1920

In comparison to many other cities in the United States, Seattle is fairly young. Originally home to the Duwamish people, amongst other indigenous tribes, the city was officially founded by early settler-colonists in 1851 (Sale, 2019). Seattle's location and resources demonstrated its potential to become a prosperous city, despite slow growth during its first three decades. Its proximity to the Puget Sound harbor made Seattle an ideal location for shipping, and the city's abundant timber resources combined with a growing population helped it develop into a major economic center focused on logging, milling, and fishing (Findlay, 2015). Early land use regulations were written as building ordinances, revised every couple of years (Ochsner, 2002). These ordinances included passing early municipal taxes, regulations on liquor sales, regulations on nuisances, and to prevent fires (Prosch, 1901). In 1865, the city passed Ordinance No. 5 which barred indigenous people from residing in Seattle. In 1909 the first building ordinances were published, and compiled together as a city-wide building code, which was then updated every two to five years (Seattle Municipal Archives, 2023). This early building-code document regulated things like construction materials, fire prevention strategies, height limits, and a very early rendition of building districts (The Building Ordinances of the City

1917 Building Districts Map
City of Seattle

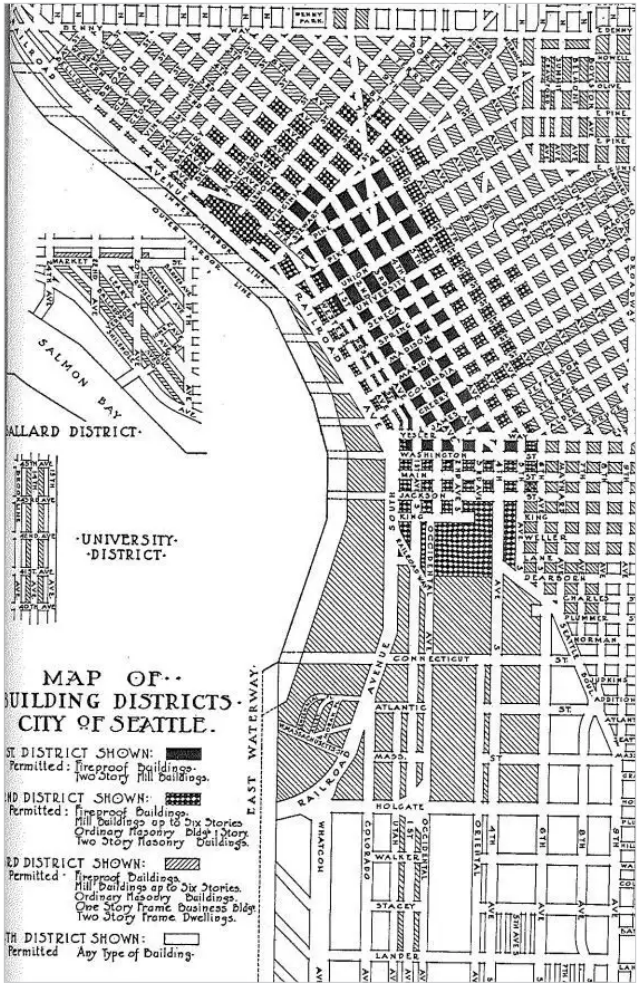


Figure #17.

Seattle 1917 Building Districts Map. The Building Ordinances of the City of Seattle, the City of Seattle. The Seattle Municipal Archives. § (1917). http://clerk.seattle.gov/~F_archives/documents/Doc_18.pdf.

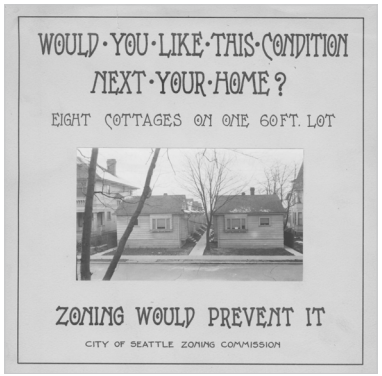
of Seattle, 1909). These districts specified what types of materials could be used to construct buildings in certain areas. Closer to the city's downtown core, fireproofing standards were more stringent, while areas farther away from downtown had more lenient requirements. These early regulations echoed the fear that the city had following the years of the Great Fire (1889).

The city updated the building code in 1917, changing the building district boundaries, and added regulations such as allowable lot coverage, yard variances, and setbacks (The Building Code of the City of Seattle, 1917). Despite these early district designations based on fire safety, the city did not have any formal zoning regulations in place (Seattle Municipal Archives, 2023). Locations of industry, for the most part, had been heavily influenced by modes of transportation. In Seattle, this meant that the majority of its industry was conducted along its waterfronts (Carlson, 1950). This was dictated by the technology available at the time and meant that other uses were naturally able to distance themselves from industry. The 1917 building code, thus, had no restrictions on where different types of homes (apartments, detached single-family residences, hotels, dormitories), and commercial space could be located (Eliason, 2018). This is why we often see non-conforming (duplex, triplex, and apartment) residential structures in single-family zones today. However, as the city continued to grow, and the rise of the automobile detached the reliance of industrial transportation from the waterfront and the railroad, industrial uses starting having the ability to appear closer to previously residential and commercial areas. As many other cities across the United States began adopted zoning codes, Seattle's new mix of uses, and lack of regulations on where things could be built triggered the beginning of regulatory change.

Figure #18.
Downtown Seattle in 1911. "First Avenue, Street Scenes: Pike Street from First Avenue. The Seattle Municipal Archives. 1911.

Seattle 1920-1923

Discussion of Seattle's first zoning ordinance began in 1919. By 1920, Seattle passed Ordinance 40407 which established the Seattle Zoning Commission (Seattle Municipal Archives, 2023). The ordinance sought to "make a survey of the City of Seattle with a view of dividing [it] into zones or districts, and report to the City Council a zoning or districting ordinance which shall specify the uses to which property in each district may be devoted . . . for the promotion of the public peace, health, convenience and welfare" (Seattle Ordinance No. 40407, 1920). This language can be compared to language used in Baltimore's "Segregation Ordinance" in 1911, which also expressed the need to preserve the peace to prevent conflict in order to achieve racial segregation (Benson, 1915). Addressing issues of an increasing



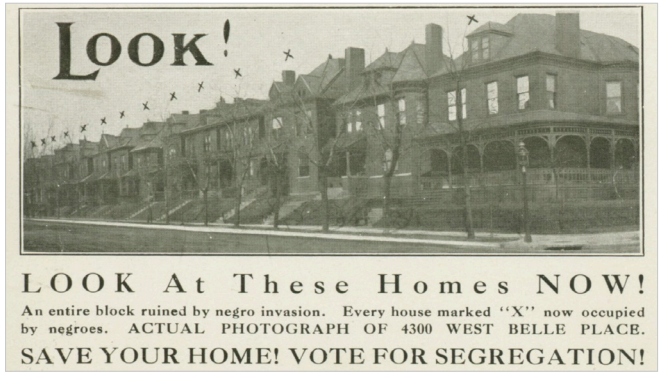


Figure #19. Poster promoting Seattle's original 1923 zoning ordinance and its introduction of "single-family" zoning. City of Seattle. Mohler, Rick. "A Reckoning With Single-Family Zoning's Impact on Racial Equity—and on Architects' Livelihood." Architect Magazine, 2020. https://www.architectmagazine.com/practice/rick-mohler-a-reckoning-with-single-family-zonings-impact-on-racial-equityand-on-architects-livelihood_o.

Figure #20. 1916 leaflet proposes to segregate St. Louis. This measure was developed in collaboration with Harland Bartholomew. https://www.unz.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/ScreenShot2015-02-17at6.53.16PM-1.png

mix of uses and largely unregulated city, the Zoning Commission began "restricting the location of trades and industries; regulating and limiting the use of buildings and premises and the heights and size of buildings; providing for yards, courts or other open spaces; establishing districts for the said purposes; defining offenses; prescribing penalties and repealing all ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict therewithin" (Seattle Ordinance No. 45382, 1923). Part of the motivation for the Seattle Zoning Commission was to begin to regulate housing density. This is seen on a flier promoting the Seattle Zoning Commission (Figure #19 which illustrates "eight cottages on one 60 ft lot" and asks "would you like this condition next to your home? Zoning would prevent it." As the newly established

Zoning Commission began to work on the new zoning policy, they consulted with Harlan Bartholomew, a then influential urban planner from St. Louis. Bartholomew assisted Seattle's Zoning Commission with its work, creating a "Zoning Program for Seattle" where he advised the city to create a "residential use map," dividing residential neighborhoods by density (Seattle Municipal Archives, Zoning Commission: A Zoning Program for Seattle prepared by Harland Bartholomew, 1921). Having made his mark as an urban planner, Bartholomew had been hired by many cities across the country to help develop zoning and comprehensive plans. "Bartholomew advocated for racial segregation to preserve neighborhood property values" (Benton, 2017). It is unclear the depth of Bartholomew's involvement in creating Seattle's first zoning ordinance. Evidence indicates Seattle's early planners saw zoning as a tool to "preserve the more desirable residential neighborhoods" and prevent movement into "finer residential districts by colored people" (Rothstein, 2017).

In 1923, after many public meetings, the proposed zoning ordinance was finalized by city staff, was presented to City Council, and became a law (Seattle Municipal Archives, 2023). The new zoning ordinance included a written document explaining regulations, as well as many zoning maps which illustrated Seattle's new zones. At this point, virtually all of Seattle was subdivided—regardless of whether it had been developed or not. The majority of Seattle's street pattern had existed prior to the passing of the 1923 zoning ordinance which effectively codified it. These papers were available for the public to access, as a standard for future development. Previously, building code regulations in Seattle had been centered around fire-prevention strategies. With a growing city that had concerns related to industry and urbanization, the new zoning ordinance addressed new issues associated with building use and size. The new ordinance abandoned the previously established districts based on fire-safety level, and instead organized zones based on six use districts: first residence (primarily SF), second residence (SF and MF), business, commercial, manufacturing, and industrial (Seattle Ordinance No. 45382, 1923). Additionally, the new

ordinance also established building height maximums, lot coverage maximums, and setbacks based on the new district areas. The new code essentially analyzed existing land-use patterns in Seattle and ratified what had historically existed. This was the first time that the city of Seattle began to see regulations on preserving and promoting the concept of the single-family neighborhood. Previously, a mixture of residential density development was allowed to coexist throughout the city; detached single-family homes had been allowed to exist alongside multi-family buildings. Although the separation of density through zoning may have been due to Bartholomew's influence of racial prejudice, nearly all whites at that time shared the belief that cities had to restrict the growth of minority populations to preserve the city's white neighborhoods (or "public safety and order"). Some argue that the preservation of detached single-family structures was a response to the increasing demand for this housing typology, and was meant to provide residents with more privacy and space, based on contemporary planning theories which emphasized the importance of separating land uses. Regardless of the motivations behind the ordinance, research conducted by scholars have found that areas which had

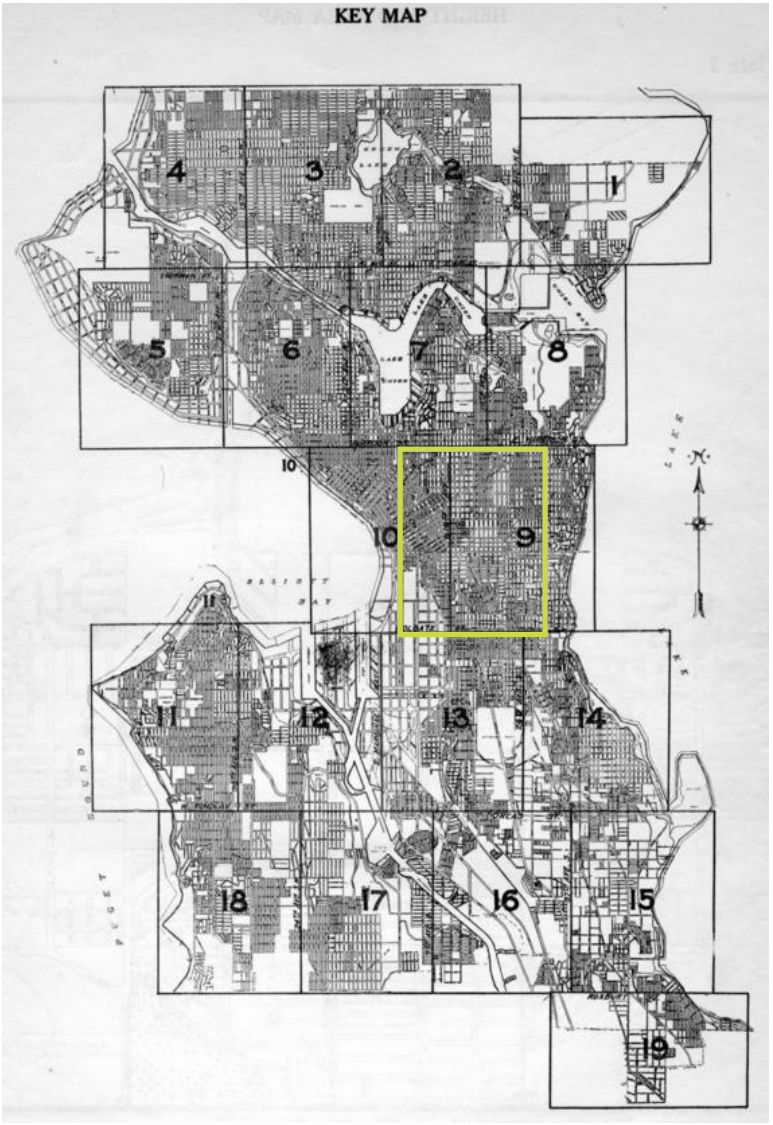


Figure #21.
Seattle's 1923 Zoning Map Key. Source: City Zoning Commission. Key Map [graphical index to zoning maps]. Seattle Municipal Archives Digital Collections. 1923. http://archives.seattle.gov/digital-collections/index.php/Detail/objects/20810

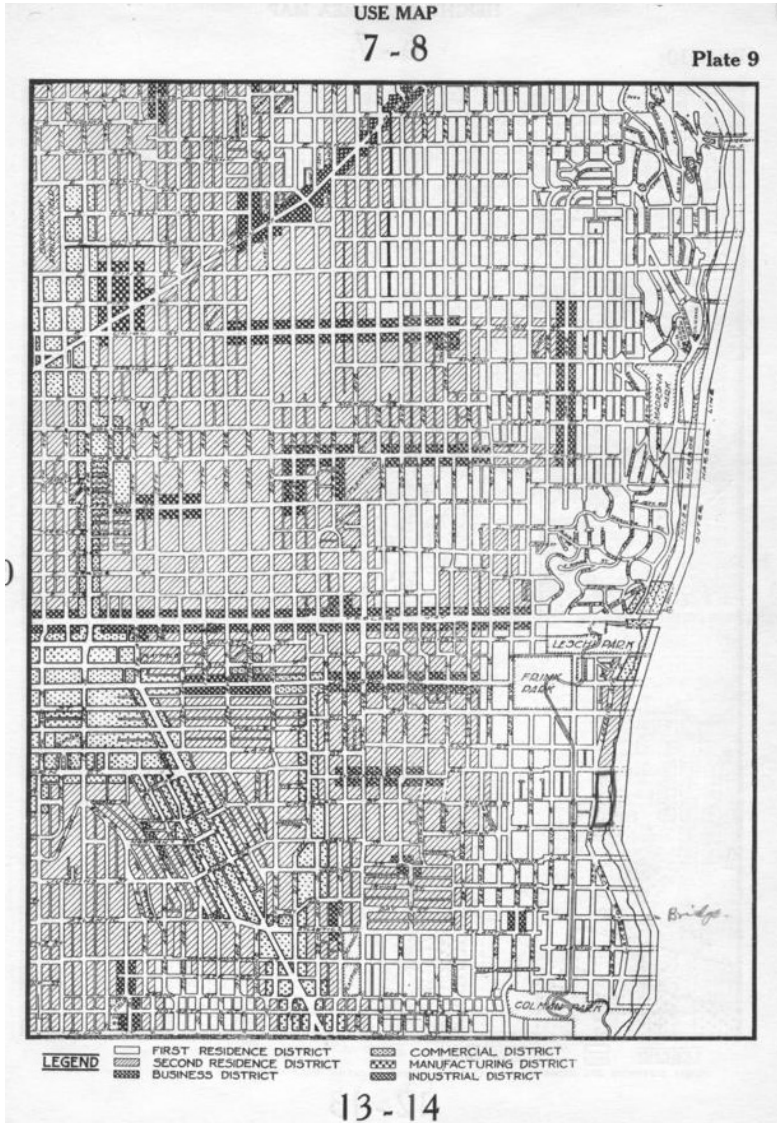


Figure #22.

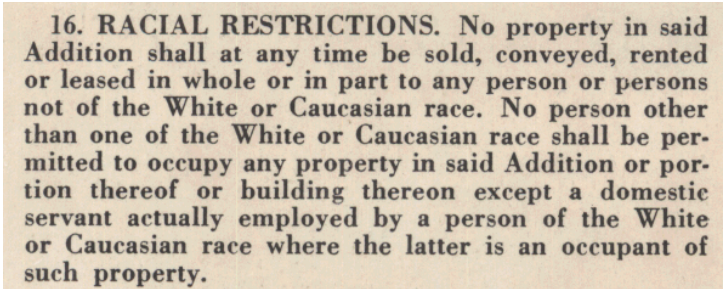
Seattle's 1923 Zoning Use Map for plate 9. Source: City Zoning Commission. Plate 9 / use map [1923 zoning]. Seattle Municipal Archives Digital Collections. 1923. http://archives.seattle.gov/digital-collections/index.php/Detail/objects/20828

greater Black or Chinese American populations in Seattle were disproportionately likely to receive commercial zoning, and thus were isolated in undesirable neighborhoods. (Rouse et al., 2021).

It is important to note that there was no explicit language within public policy which excluded people of color from living in certain areas in Seattle's at this point. Racial restrictions exclusively existed within private agreements. At this time, Seattle's Black population was growing quickly. Seattle's 400 Black residents in 1900 grew to about 2,300 in 1910; "African Americans found it impossible to rent or buy housing outside [the International District, Capitol Hill, and the Central District], and in many parts of the city they were not allowed in theaters, nightclubs, and restaurants" (Lesson Twenty-One, 2021). Additionally, those who held positions of power in the 1920 Zoning Commission directly benefited from other forms of exclusionary land-use practices. For example, Clarance B. Blethen, the permanent president and member of the commission lived in a home within a restricted subdivision which noted "property herein described shall not be sold, conveyed, leased or given to any person or persons other than that of the Caucasian race" (City of Seattle Zoning Commission Meeting Minutes, April 1920).

Seattle 1923-1957

After the Supreme Court found that segregation through city ordinances was illegal in Buchanan v. Warley (1917), the use of racially restrictive covenants emerged. Not only was this method of racial discrimination permissible, but it allowed cities to continue segregation without placing any blame on municipal leaders (Silva, 2023). Private agreements in the form of covenants that prohibited the sale, lease, or occupancy of a piece of land by individuals of a specific race gained popularity after Corrigan v. Buckley (1926), ruled that racially restrictive covenants were legal (Corrigan v. Buckley, 1926). Private covenants are often referred to as deed restrictions and are tied to the land. When a property was sold or transferred, the covenants were included in the deed and became a binding agreement between the property owners and the buyer. The implementation of racial restrictions in these private agreements helped perpetuate racial segregation and discrimination in housing around Seattle (Silva, 2023). Typically, land developers and real estate companies would write the racially restrictive covenants before the parcels were sold and developed (Silva, 2023). The government would not directly enforce private agreements, but violating the covenants usually resulted in legal



16. RACIAL RESTRICTIONS. No property in said Addition shall at any time be sold, conveyed, rented or leased in whole or in part to any person or persons not of the White or Caucasian race. No person other than one of the White or Caucasian race shall be permitted to occupy any property in said Addition or portion thereof or building thereon except a domestic servant actually employed by a person of the White or Caucasian race where the latter is an occupant of such property.

Figure #23.

A racial restriction on the Blue Ridge neighborhood of Seattle, one of several neighborhoods developed by Bill and Bertha Boeing.. Silva, Catherine. “Racial Restrictive Covenants History.” The Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project. University of Washington, 2023.

New World

Vol. 9, No. 4. Seattle, Wash., Thurs., Jan. 15, 1948 5 Entered as Second Class Matter at Seattle P. O.

Map of “Ghetto” Page 3:

Seattle Is Blighted By Restrictive Covenants

Figure #24.

A New World Map Shows Seattle’s “Ghetto,” 1948. Silva, Catherine. “Racial Restrictive Covenants History.” The Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project. University of Washington, 2023.

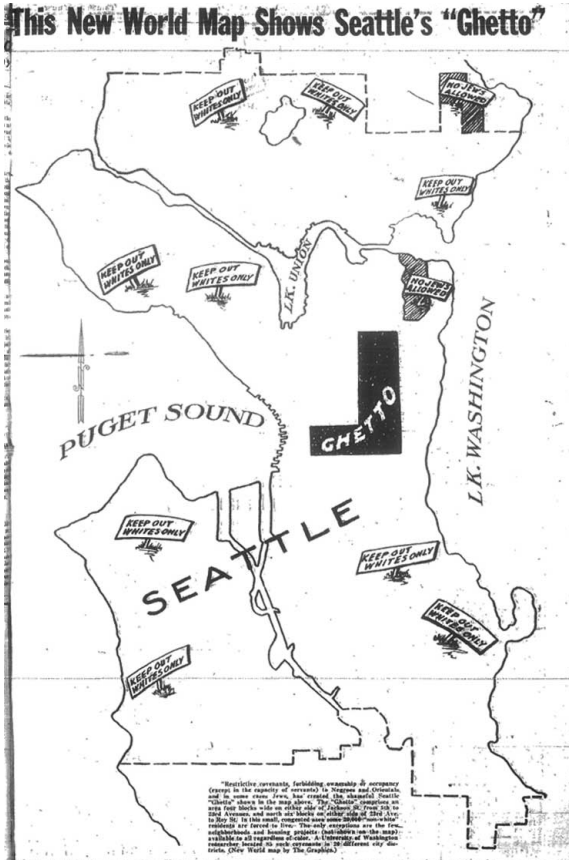


Figure #25.

A New World Map Shows Seattle's "Ghetto," 1948. Silva, Catherine. "Racial Restrictive Covenants History." The Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project. University of Washington, 2023.

actions from real estate boards and neighborhood associations. Discrimination from banks, insurance companies, and the federal government through the denial of financial services such as loans or insurance to minority communities also became a popular way to ensure segregation in the late 1930's. This has become a topic of conversation amongst contemporary proposals for change, noting that private covenants may be a barrier and used as a tool to contest future proposals for increasing density.

A year following the first zoning ordinance, the city of Seattle decided to replace the Zoning Commission with a City Planning Commission (1924) to adopt a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to urban planning that could go beyond the limited scope of zoning regulations (Seattle Planning Commission Annual Reports, 1928-2016). At this time, the federal government had organized an Advisory Committee on Zoning which developed the Standard State Zoning Enabling Act (SZEA), establishing a model for planning and zoning statues that could later be adopted by states (Standard State Zoning Enabling Act, 2022). This was developed by the Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, as "a concerted effort by the federal government officials to effectively achieve racial segregation by circumventing Buchanan's prohibition on explicit racial zoning ordinances through economic zoning measures" (Kim, 2021). The newly formed City Planning Commission had broader powers to consult the City Council on

Digitized Version of Seattle's 1923 Zoning Ordinance
City of Seattle

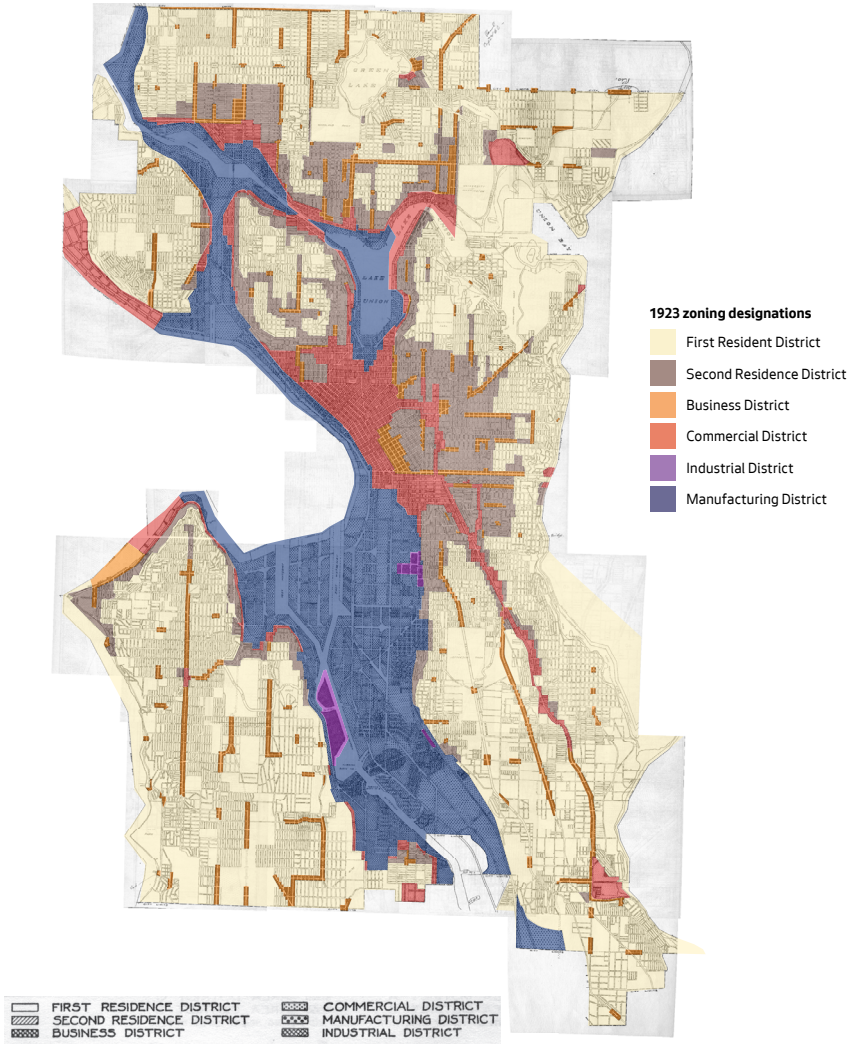


Figure #26.
1947 Zoning Map Key. Created by the Seattle Planning Commission. http://archives.seattle.gov/digital-collections/index.php/Detail/objects/20879

the physical development of the city, including transportation, public utilities, parks, and housing, civic improvements, in addition to zoning (Seattle Ordinance No. 59625, 1920). By 1929, the Planning Commission grew to 25 members and consisted of "the city engineer, a Councilmember, and other officials and business leaders" (Seattle Municipal Archives, 2023). In 1930, there were concerns that Planning Commission was too large and influenced by special interests, leading to its reduction in size to just nine members (Seattle Municipal Archives, 2023). This refined group included "five community members, the City Engineer, Superintendent of Buildings, President of Park Board and a member of City Council" (Seattle Municipal Archives, 2023). During this time, the city began developing zoning maps which organized the city into section grids, otherwise known as plates, and established eight use districts and four area districts, among other regulations. The use districts included R1 (first residence), 2F (two family residence), R2 (second residence), B (business), C (commercial), 1M (first manufacturing), 2M (second manufacturing), and I (industrial). This furthered the

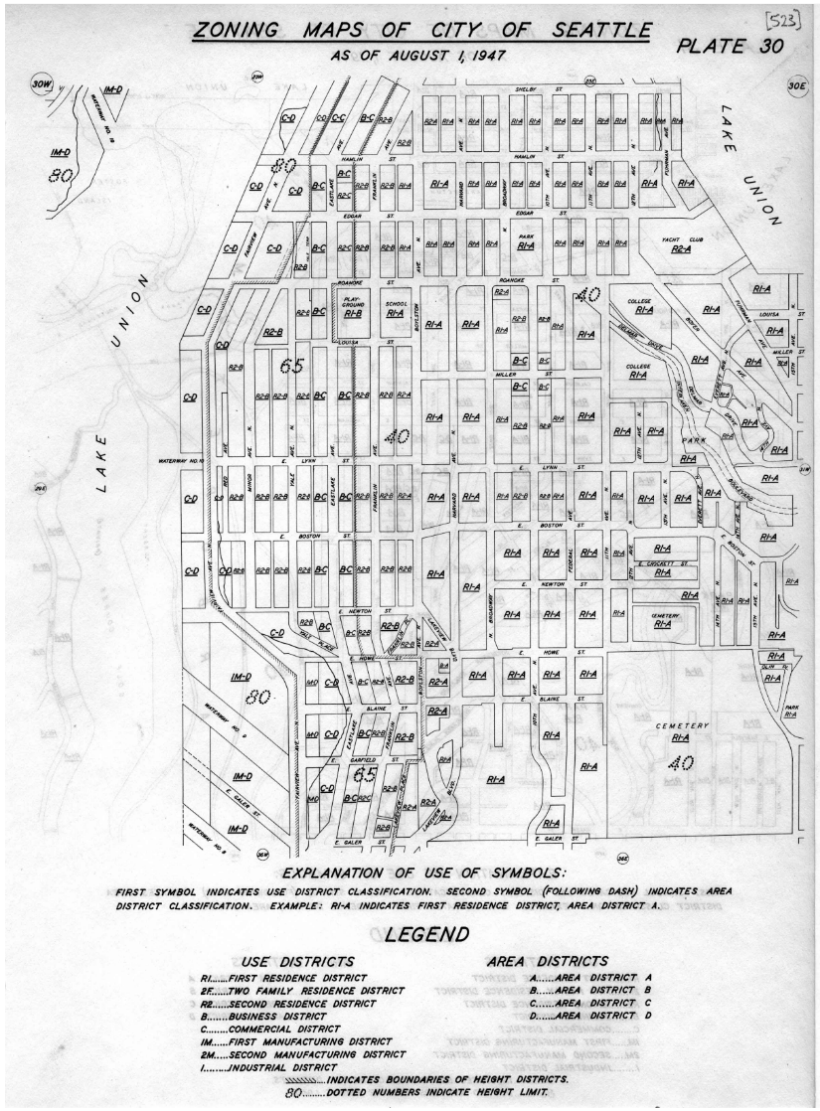


Figure #27.

1947 Zoning Map of the Eastlake neighborhood in Seattle. Created by the Seattle Planning Commission. http://archives.seattle.gov/digital-collections/index.php/Detail/objects/20879

separation of uses, by classifying levels of intensity. By 1947, the city had directed more funds towards the Planning Commission (Seattle Municipal Archives, 2023). A set of zoning maps were developed soon after the city hired its first director of planning. These new zoning maps further separated the 1923 residential zones; what used to be called the “second residence district” had now been split into two separate categories: “two family district” and the “second residence district.” The creation of the two-family district offered a middle ground between the city’s multi-family and single-family areas, thereby providing a way to gradually rezone large areas of Seattle’s multi-family zones. This meant that significant downzones occurred in the city during this time, taking areas which had previously allowed multi-family buildings and limiting them to a maximum of duplex-triplex buildings. As city planning became more complex, Seattle turned its attention to comprehensive planning. With plans to develop a coordinated approach to planning, the city hired a planner to lead the development of an all-encompassing plan for the city, which was eventually approved as the Comprehensive Plan in 1957 (Seattle Municipal Archives, 2023).

16 The Seattle Times Wednesday, October 31, 1956

CITY OF TOMORROW: Merlin C. Brown, left, chairman of the City Planning Commission, and Mayor Gordon S. Clinton examined a map showing the commission's comprehensive plan for the city. Brown presented the map to the mayor today. Copies of the handmade map will be given all city departments and other agencies. The comprehensive plan reflects several years of study and an investment of some $500,000 in Planning Commission staff costs.

Figure #28.
1947 Zoning Map Key. Created by the Seattle Planning Commission.
http://archives.seattle.gov/digital-collections/index.php/Detail/objects/20879

Seattle 1957-1980

From 1957 there is a distinction between Seattle's zoning ordinance and the comprehensive plan. After 1957 these became two different planning tools serving different purposes in Seattle. The zoning ordinance strictly regulates land use and development in the city, whereas the comprehensive plan outlines broader goals for the city's development. The idea was that the comprehensive plan would inform subsequent zoning ordinances, and thus, courts would only enforce the latter. The development of Seattle's first comprehensive plan represented a shift from a narrow emphasis on zoning to a more general strategic framework to guide decision-making about future growth and development in the city. In 1957, Seattle's Planning Commission adopted its first Comprehensive Plan which sought to enhance "present desirable qualities of Seattle, improve the environment for living and working, relate private and public facilities for maximum economy and service, and coordinate the development of the city with that of the metropolitan area and the Puget Sound region" (Comprehensive Plan Resolution No. 17488, 1957). According to the plan, it would serve as a basis for ordinances that guide the development of

both public and private land, including zoning subdivision regulations, and the official street plan.

The three main elements of the plan were, (1) the Land Use Plan, (2) the Arterial Thoroughfare Plan, and (3) the Community and Neighborhood Plan (Comprehensive Plan Resolution No. 17488, 1957). The Land Use Plan effectively advised future zoning codes by outlining suggested uses of both private and public land (Figure #29) (Comprehensive Plan Resolution No. 17488, 1957). The Arterial Thoroughfare plan outlined the location of “a network of freeways, expressways, and major streets, to accommodate future traffic volumes without congestion, (Figure #30). As suburban communities became more accessible, the city started

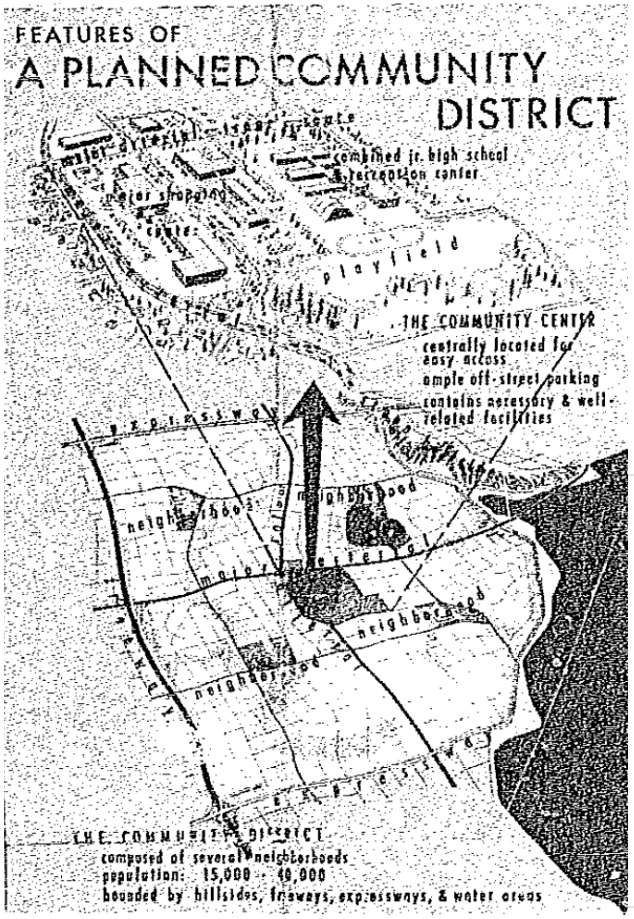


Figure #29.
Community and Neighborhood Plan Illustration from Seattle’s 1957 Comprehensive Plan. http://clerk.seattle.gov/~archives/Resolutions/Resn_17488.pdf

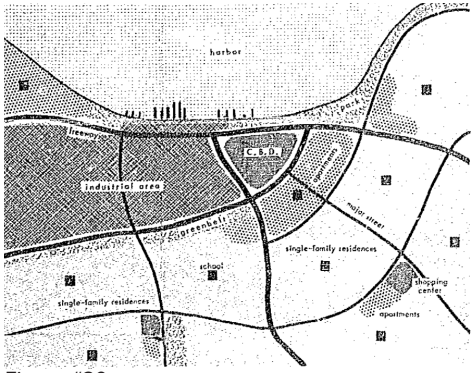


Figure #30.
Land Use Plan Illustration from Seattle’s 1957 Comprehensive Plan. http://clerk.seattle.gov/~archives/Resolutions/Resn_17488.pdf

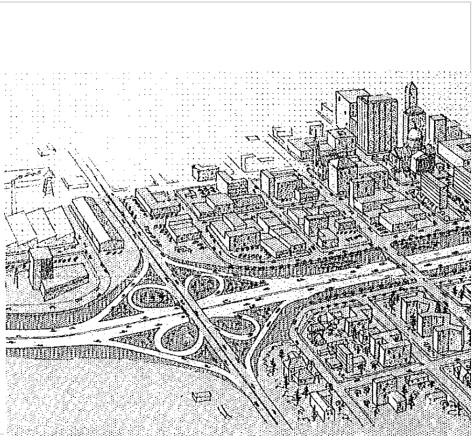


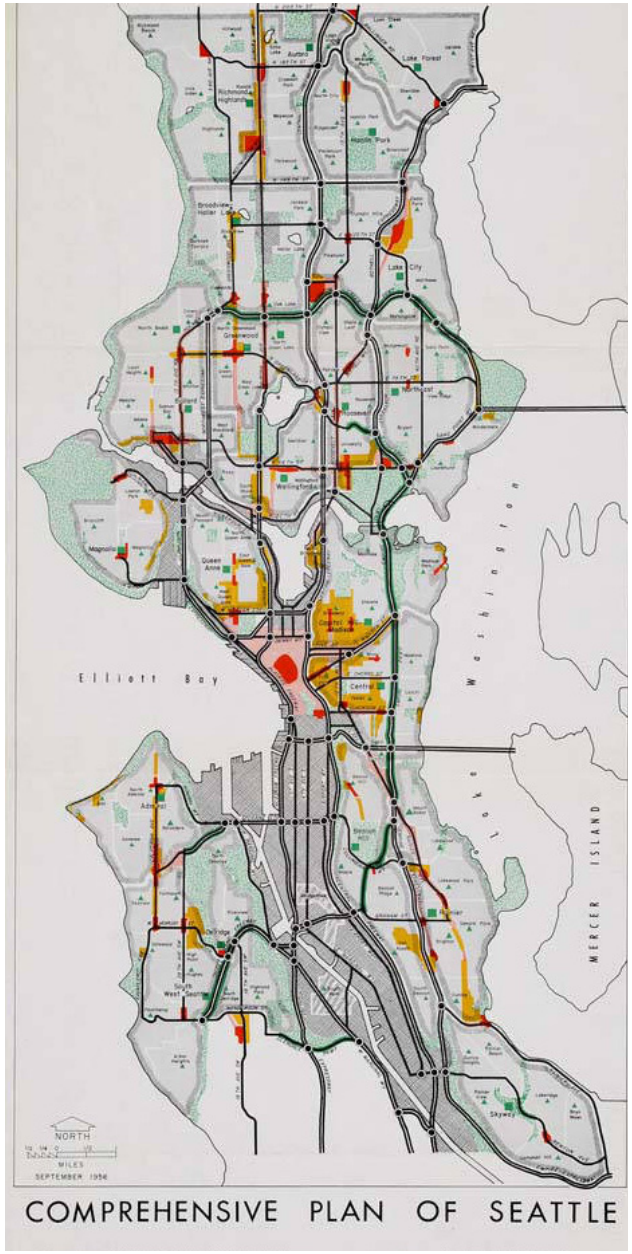
Figure #31.
Street Thoroughfare Plan Illustration from Seattle’s 1957 Comprehensive Plan. http://clerk.seattle.gov/~archives/Resolutions/Resn_17488.pdf

to see many of its urban residents move to the surrounding suburbs (Boswell & McConaghy, 1996). The urban sprawl resulted in increased traffic congestion, and as the city dealt with issues of decentralization and urban decline, the Comprehensive Plan sought to address congestion through more effective urban arterial streets. Lastly, the Community and Neighborhood Plan provided organization of the residential areas of the city based on size and population. It effectively managed the location of public facilities such as schools, playgrounds, parks, and other amenities, (Figure #30). The plan manifested itself in the form of a singular map which outlined all three elements coordinated together, (Figure #32 and #33). In the map, the commission proposed seven areas, in which the zoning code could then outline associated regulations. These areas included low-density residential, high-density residential, major business centers, commercial areas, industrial areas, future industrial areas, and public or semi-public areas. Other elements of the plan included a guide for "future development of urban renewal studies aimed at preserving the quality of Seattle's residential areas." Similar to the 1947 plan, the 1957 plan also made reductions in the amount of land available for multi-family

Figure #31.
The Seattle Planning Commissioners creating Seattle's first Comprehensive Plan of 1957. SOURCE: Seattle Municipal Archives, Researching Historic Land Use and Zoning (2023). City of Seattle.

buildings. By this point, multi-family housing options (except for duplexes) were “outlawed in over half the city” (Eliason, 2018).

A year after the creation of the Comprehensive Plan in 1958, the city codified and published its ordinances as the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC), and Ordinance 86300, the Zoning Ordinance was placed in Title 26, the Zoning Code (Seattle Municipal Archives, 2023). The idea was that the zoning ordinance was to be updated based on the new comprehensive plan (Seattle City Planning Commission, 1956). Seattle experienced many changes in the years that followed. The city created the Department of Community Development (DCD) in 1969 and merged the Planning Commission into the new department. First addressing issues of city vibrancy and growth, and then tackling historic preservation, the city created an urban investment



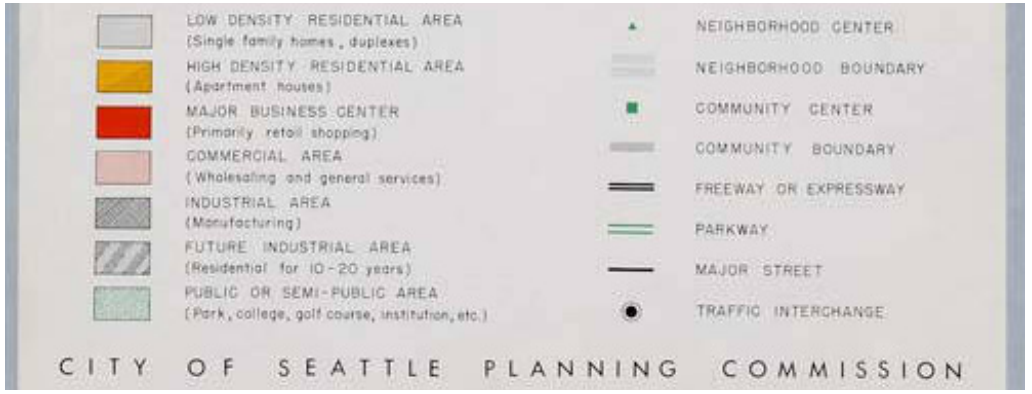
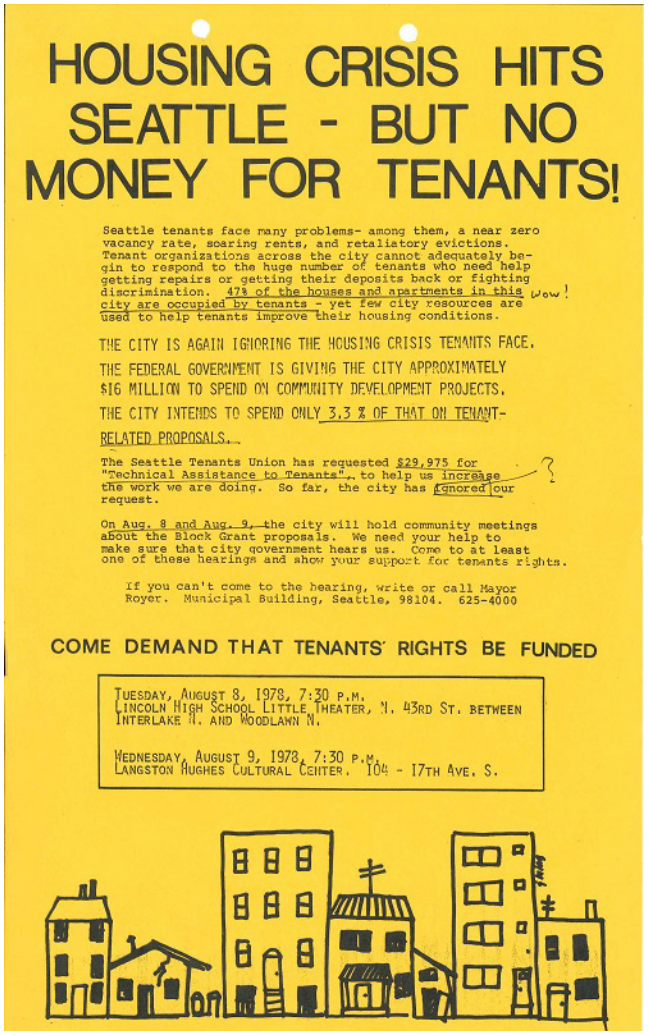


Figure #32 (left) and #33 (right)

1957 Comprehensive Plan of Seattle. Source: Seattle City Planning Commission. Comprehensive Plan of Seattle, September 1956. Maps. Museum of History & Industry Collection. 1956. https://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/digital/collection/imlsmohai/id/13453/

program titled Forward Thrust in 1968 (Mullins, 2022). The program undertook the task of urban reform in Seattle by investing in public works including the construction of the King Dome, various arterial highways, youth centers, recreation facilities, parks, fire stations, and sewer systems (Ochsner, 2023). However, not all proposals within this program moved forward including a proposed rapid transit system, county stormwater upgrades, and low-income housing proposals. As a response to growing urban renewal proposals including projects which would have demolished Pike Place Market, and parts of Pioneer Square, the city began delineating special districts in 1970. This included historic districts and landmark districts which helped protect historically relevant areas (Seattle's Historic Districts, 2023). In the mist of the creation of historic districts, the city created the Office of Urban Conservation to help manage and administer these programs (Seattle Planning Commission Annual Reports, 1928-2016). Critics note that although the Forward Thrust program produced a large number of public projects benefiting the city, their position had a distinctly "middle-class (really, upper-middle-class) focus," and failed to sponsor the creation of social programs or address urban poverty (Mullins, 2022). Like many publicly funded projects, Forward Thrust was aimed at handling predicted growth, rather than addressing existing issues of the underclass



HOUSING CRISIS HITS SEATTLE - BUT NO MONEY FOR TENANTS!

Seattle tenants face many problems- among them, a near zero vacancy rate, soaring rents, and retaliatory evictions. Tenant organizations across the city cannot adequately begin to respond to the huge number of tenants who need help getting repairs or getting their deposits back or fighting discrimination. 47% of the houses and apartments in this city are occupied by tenants - yet few city resources are used to help tenants improve their housing conditions. Wow!

THE CITY IS AGAIN IGNORING THE HOUSING CRISIS TENANTS FACE.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS GIVING THE CITY APPROXIMATELY $16 MILLION TO SPEND ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS.

THE CITY INTENDS TO SPEND ONLY 3.3 % OF THAT ON TENANT-RELATED PROPOSALS.

The Seattle Tenants Union has requested $29,975 for "Technical Assistance to Tenants", to help us increase the work we are doing. So far, the city has ignored our request. ?

On Aug. 8 and Aug. 9, the city will hold community meetings about the Block Grant proposals. We need your help to make sure that city government hears us. Come to at least one of these hearings and show your support for tenants rights.

If you can't come to the hearing, write or call Mayor Royer. Municipal Building, Seattle, 98104. 625-4000

COME DEMAND THAT TENANTS' RIGHTS BE FUNDED

TUESDAY, AUGUST 8, 1978, 7:30 P.M.
LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL LITTLE THEATER, N. 43RD ST. BETWEEN INTERLAKE N. AND WOODLAWN N.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 9, 1978, 7:30 P.M.
LANGSTON HUGHES CULTURAL CENTER, 104 - 17TH AVE. S.

Figure #34. Seattle Tenants Union Flyer, August 1978. Box 13, Folder 11, Charles T. Royer Legal Subject Files (Record Series 5274-03), Seattle Municipal Archives

already residing in the region. Growth continued for a while, and both the zoning code (now part of the SMC) and the city's Comprehensive Plan continued to receive updates until 1978 when the city began to rely on land use policies instead of issuing their own comprehensive plan (Seattle Municipal Archives, 2023).

While departmental change was occurring within city organizations, its residents were dealing with the beginnings of a major housing crisis. Because of the Boeing Bust (1970) and a global oil crisis (1973), Seattle began to see an "overall downturn in investment and construction" in housing (Seattle Municipal Archives, 2023). Many of its multi-family rental units were being converted to condominiums; and because the majority of the city had been zoned exclusively for single-family and duplex residential buildings, many residents were displaced and had nowhere to go. Tenants began to protest the lack of affordable housing in the city; however, they were met with pushback from homeowners, builders, and rental owners who were in favor of "free-market economics" (Seattle Municipal Archives, 2023). Seemingly reflecting issues we still see today, the Mayor's office addressed the housing crisis in 1978 by stating that "Seattle is thought of as being a city of single-family houses, but the fact is, that nearly a third of our people are tenants in multi-family housing" (Mayor Charles Royer, 1978). By acknowledging that Seattle's residential landscape had been dominated by single-family houses despite the need for denser and more affordable housing options, it appears that city leaders and policymakers were aware of the issues that zoning was having on housing supply.


Downtown Housing Situation:
Bad and It's Getting Worse

Figure #35.
Seattle Post-Intelligencer Article Title (published as SEATTLE Post-Intelligencer EXTRA) - July 22, 1973 - page 10.

Seattle 1980-1994

The 1980s and 1990s brought significant change. As the city phased away from issuing its own comprehensive plan in the late 1970s, land use regulations continued to influence the adoption of new zoning policies, “including regulations that supported mixed-use development through the 1980s.” Dating back to the 1920s, many modernist planners had previously thought the separation of uses and creation of exclusive residential sectors would create successful cities. Under the influence of writers like Jane Jacobs and others, Seattle architects and planners began to challenge this. Seattle’s regulations began to partially turn away from the enforced separation of uses through the support of mixed-use development in new zones designated Neighborhood Commercial (NC), as well as through the development of a new Downtown Land Use and Transportation Plan.

However, despite the new interest in mixed-use development, new zoning policies refrained from encroaching on single-family neighborhoods with multi-family housing. Instead, the opposite occurred. In a research article by Sightline Institute, author Margaret Morales notes the consecutive downzoning of a Wallingford block, typical of its neighborhood, beginning from the 1923 zoning designation of

1923 Zoning: Multi-Family

Figure #36. 1923 Zoning of a Wallingford Block. Image Courtesy of Seattle 1923 zoning map. plate 7. from Seattle Municipal Archives Map Index.

1960 Zoning: Duplex Residential

Figure #37. 1960 Zoning of a Wallingford Block. Image Courtesy of Seattle 1960 zoning map. plate 22E. from Seattle Municipal Archives Map Index.

1980 Zoning: Single-Family

Figure #38. 1980 Zoning of a Wallingford Block. Image Courtesy of Seattle 1980 zoning map. plate 22E. from Seattle Municipal Archives Map Index.

multi-family to the 1960s zoning designation of residential duplex, to finally, the 1980s designation of single-family residential (Figures #36, #37, and #38) (Morales, 2017). The preservation and protection of single-family residential zoning remained a priority for policymakers through the 1980s. Figures #39 through #41 show the type of structures residual from a more flexible building code, no longer allowed due to downzones. The 1980s also brought major zoning changes to commercial zones, creating the designation of "the High Rise" (later Downtown) zone in the city through several ordinances. Under the authority of the City Council, the Planning Commission became an independent entity again, "no longer review[ing] site-specific land use applications and permits" (Seattle Planning Commission Annual Reports, 1928-2016).

Previously having been dominated economically by Boeing, Seattle began to see a resurgence in economic stability due to the growing technology industries beginning in the 1980s. Microsoft emerged as a leading tech company in Seattle after Bill Gates and Paul Allen moved its headquarters from New Mexico to Bellevue (a Seattle suburb) in 1979 (Paul Allen's Life and Legacy, 2023). Other globally known companies such as Starbucks (1971), Nordstrom (1973), and Costco (1983) also contributed to the ongoing growth in the city. In 1994, Jeff Bezos founded Amazon from his garage in Bellevue, and later expanded to Seattle (Clifford, 2018). The region's post-industrial success helped put Seattle on the map as a hub for technology and innovation and contributed to the city's growth and wealth.

Figure #39. Duplex at 1927 25th Ave E (1928) in Current Single-Family Zone. by King County Assessor (public domain).

Figure #40 Triplex at 1436 E Ward St (1957) in Current Single-Family Zone. by King County Assessor (public domain).

Figure #41. 5-Unit Residential Building at 943 24th Ave (1901) in Current Single-Family Zone. by King County Assessor (public domain).

Seattle 1994 and later

The State of Washington passed its Growth Management Act (GMA) in 1990, which required the city to develop a new 10-year comprehensive plan. The GMA required all cities and counties in Washington to designate and protect wetlands and critical areas, designate agricultural, forest, and other natural resource lands, require evidence of potable water before issuing permits, and determine if new residential developments have appropriate provisions for public services and facilities (Growth Management Acts 1990, 1991). Their objective was essentially to provide set of guidelines for approximately 20 years of growth and development needs for a particular area. The GMA noted that the comprehensive plan needed to "protect forested areas and create density policies in urban areas based on neighborhood plans" (Seattle Municipal Archives, 2023). In 1994 Seattle established their new Comprehensive Plan and titled it "Toward a Sustainable Seattle" (City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan, 1994). The new plan established Seattle's general goals for the city and organized itself into several elements including: land use, transportation, housing, capital facilities, utilities, economic development, and neighborhood planning. The most notable idea in the plan was the emphasis on an "urban village strategy" to accommodate the expected population growth of the city, while also preserving what they call "sustainable development." The urban village strategy aimed to create self-sustaining, mixed-use communities that encourage walking, biking, and public transportation. At this time, policymakers were worried that the city infrastructure could not handle more traffic, so new zones were adopted to promote areas which could rely less on the automobile—transit and land-use were intended to work together. It focused concentrated density of housing and commercial development, or "growth centers," in about 30 locations land throughout the city (Centering Racial Equity in the One Seattle Plan, 2022). Although the idea of tying density to public transit has value, today this approach to density is contested. The strategy has led to all new housing occurring in small pockets of the city, while the majority of residential zones have seen little growth. The city acknowledges that the strategy has led to

1994: Comprehensive Plan

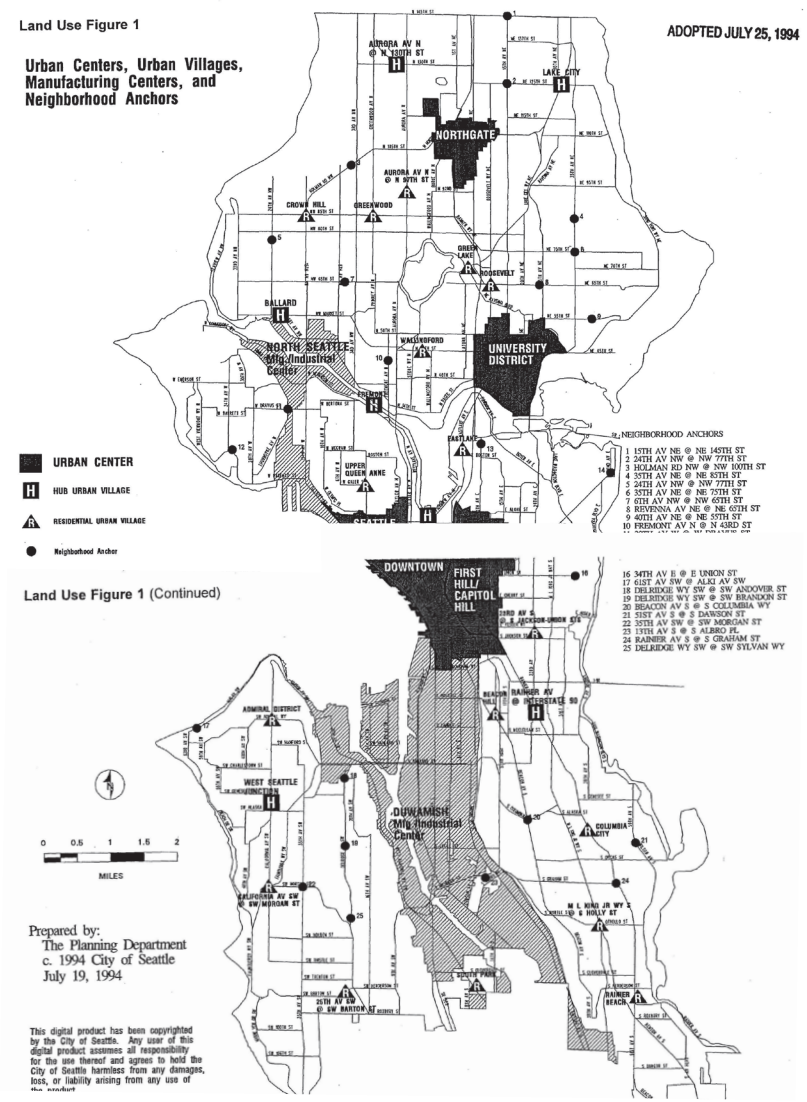


Figure #42.
Seattle's 1994 Comprehensive Plan. Urban Centers, Urban Villages, Manufacturing Centers, and Neighborhood Anchors Map. Source: "The City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan: Toward a Sustainable Seattle." (Seattle City Council, 1994).

2015: Comprehensive Plan

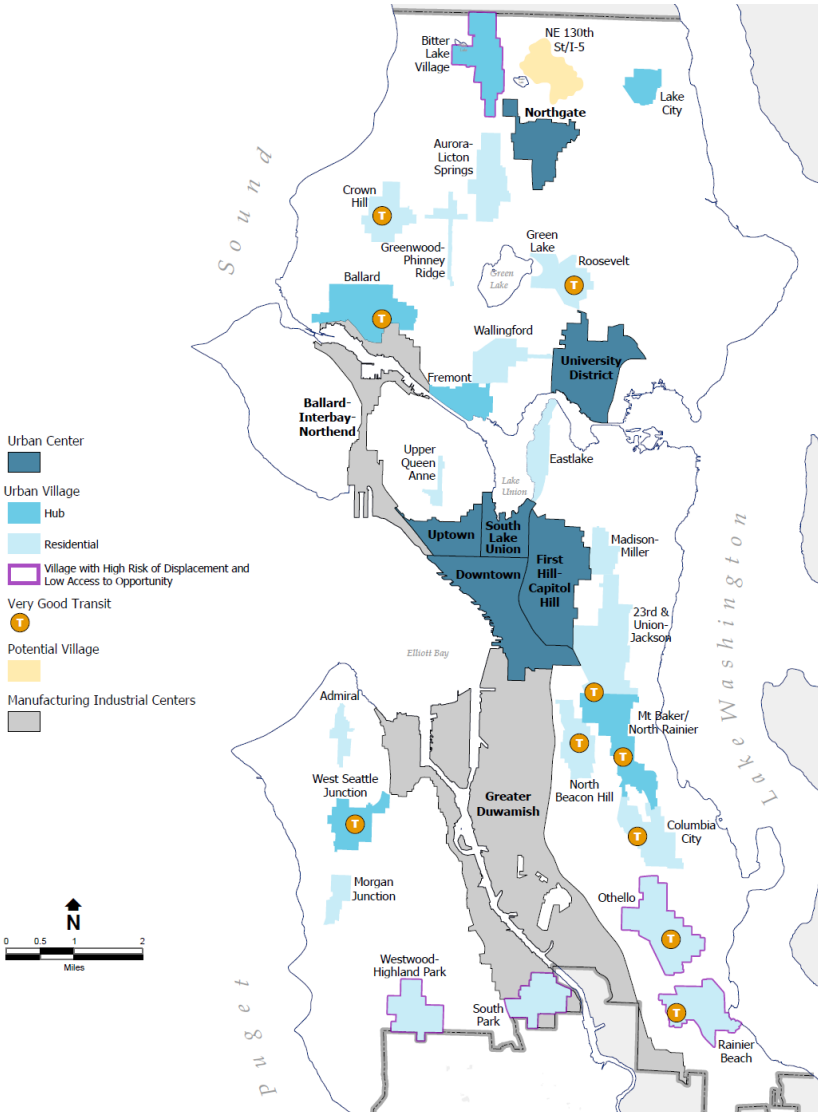


Figure #43. Seattle's 2015 Comprehensive Plan, "Seattle 2035," Not much has changed since the 1994 plan in relation to growth centers. Source: "The City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan: Seattle 2035." (Seattle Office of Planning and Community Development, 2015).

patterns of segregation, artificial constraints on affordability and housing diversity, and fueled displacement by concentrating new housing in limited areas (Centering Racial Equity in the One Seattle Plan, 2022). The plan states that it “retains Seattle’s commitment to preserve the character of its many, diverse neighborhoods, [and] its strong single-family areas” (Centering Racial Equity in the One Seattle Plan, 2022). Arguments on protecting “neighborhood character” in this context may refer to “white” and “affluent” neighborhoods and must be questioned for their potential to perpetuate systemic inequalities and exclusionary practices. After the approval of the Comprehensive Plan, the city established a Neighborhood Planning Office which addressed issues and impacts of the urban village strategy on neighborhoods. Seattle has been developing a Comprehensive Plan ever seven to ten years ever since the re-implementation in 1994. (Seattle Municipal Archives, 2023). The city typically updates and amends their zoning ordinance to match the Comprehensive Plan soon after any updated plan is proposed.

The last major comprehensive plan update occurred in 2015 and was titled “Seattle 2035” (City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan, 2015). As the previous Comprehensive Plan of 1994 centered much of its strategies on sustainability and environmental design, the 2015 plan focused on race

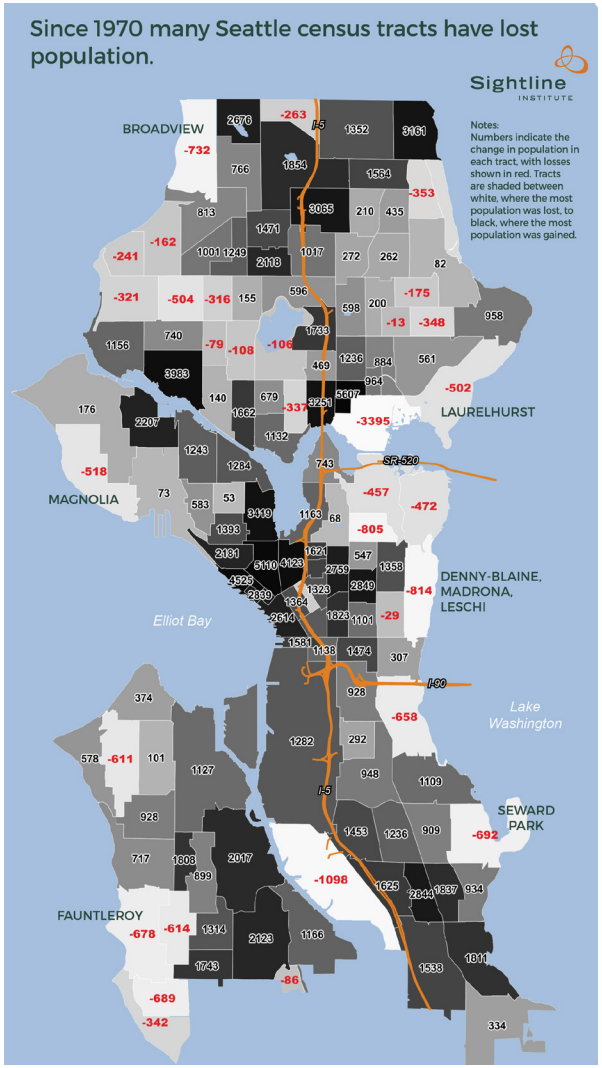


Figure #44.
Bertolet, Dan. Some Neighborhoods Losing Population, Despite the Boom. Sightline Institute. 2017. https://www.sightline.org/2017/05/04/some-neighborhoods-losing-population-despite-the-boom/

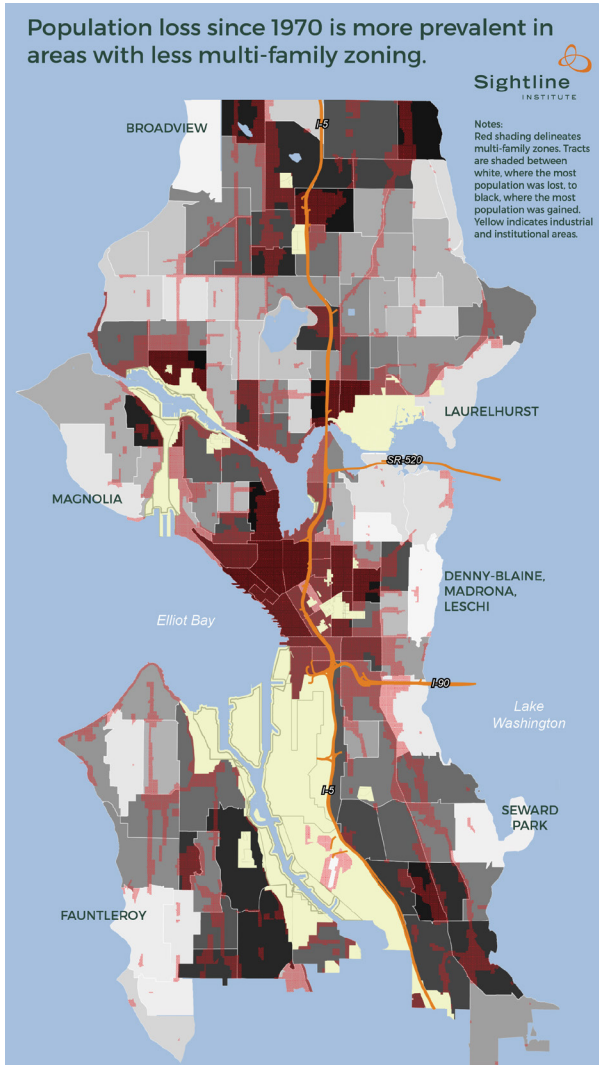


Figure #45.
Bertolet, Dan. Some Neighborhoods Losing Population, Despite the Boom. Sightline Institute. 2017. https://www.sightline.org/2017/05/04/some-neighborhoods-losing-population-despite-the-boom/

and social justice as a primary focus (Seattle Municipal Archives, 2023). Despite this, the urban village strategy remained. “Since 2012, more than 80 percent of new housing has gone to these compact, mixed-use areas near transit and services. That also means that, despite rapid population growth in recent years, many areas outside urban villages have fewer residents today than they did decades ago” (City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan, 2015). See, for example, Figure #44, which notes the population loss in neighborhoods noted in white, and population gain in neighborhoods noted in dark gray and black. The neighborhoods which have seen the most amount of population loss are those without affordable and diverse housing options due to their zoning designation. In Figure 45, we see an overlay in red which represents multi-family zones as of 2017. It’s seemingly obvious that neighborhoods with denser zoning allowances would see an increase in population, but policy that has historically protected the detached single-family typology has created an imbalance. Additionally, due to the small amount of area allocated for population growth in the city, when development occurs, it risks existing affordable housing options in older buildings. The justification for isolating density into small areas in the city typically has to do with available resources and infrastructure. However, a new study conducted by Nat Henry analyzed Seattle’s walkability in terms

2015: Comprehensive Plan, Note Urban Centers + Urban Villages

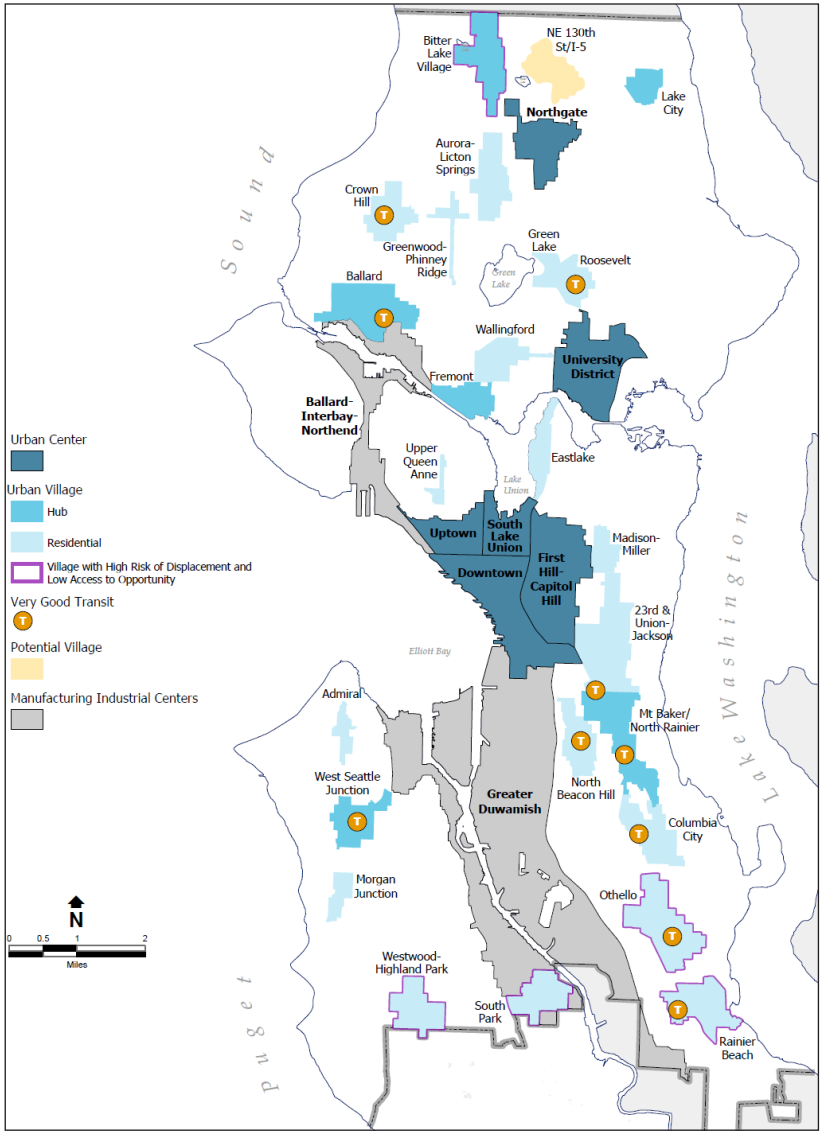


Figure #46.
"The City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan: Seattle 2035." (Seattle Office of Planning and Community Development, 2015).ComprehensivePlanCouncilAdopted2021.pdf

2023: Walking Time to Bus Stops accessing Downtown Seattle

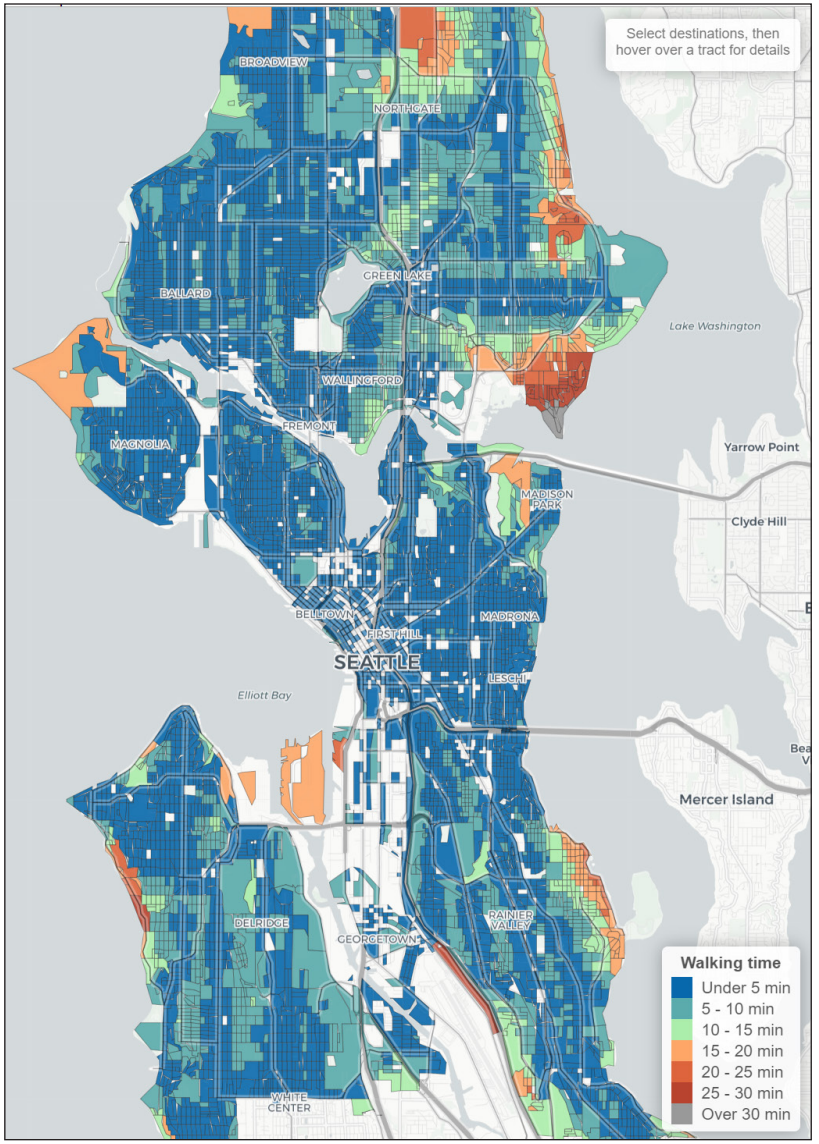


Figure #47.
Henry, Nat. "Is Seattle a 15-Minute City? It Depends on Where You Want to Walk." 2023. https://nathenry.com/writing/2023-02-07-seattle-walkability.html.

2023: Walking Time to Parks

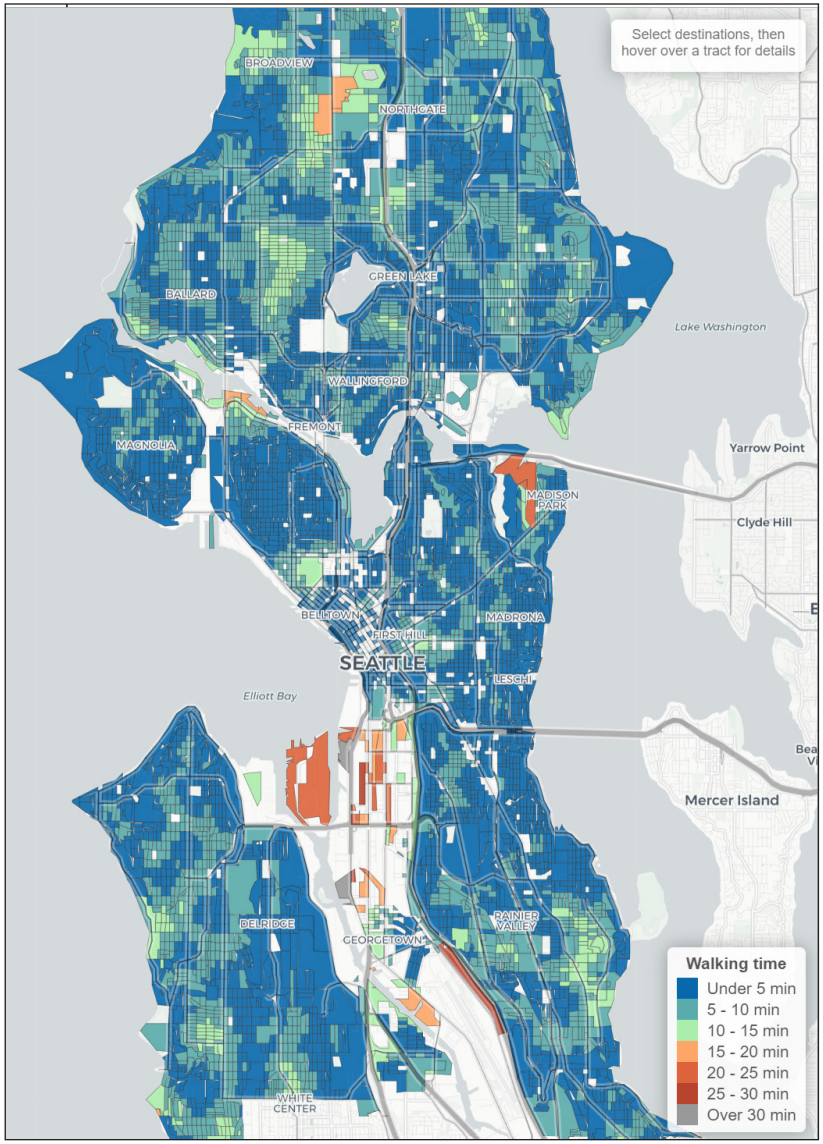


Figure #48.
Henry, Nat. "Is Seattle a 15-Minute City? It Depends on Where You Want to Walk." 2023. https://nathenry.com/writing/2023-02-07-seattle-walkability.html.

2023: Walking Time to Restaurants

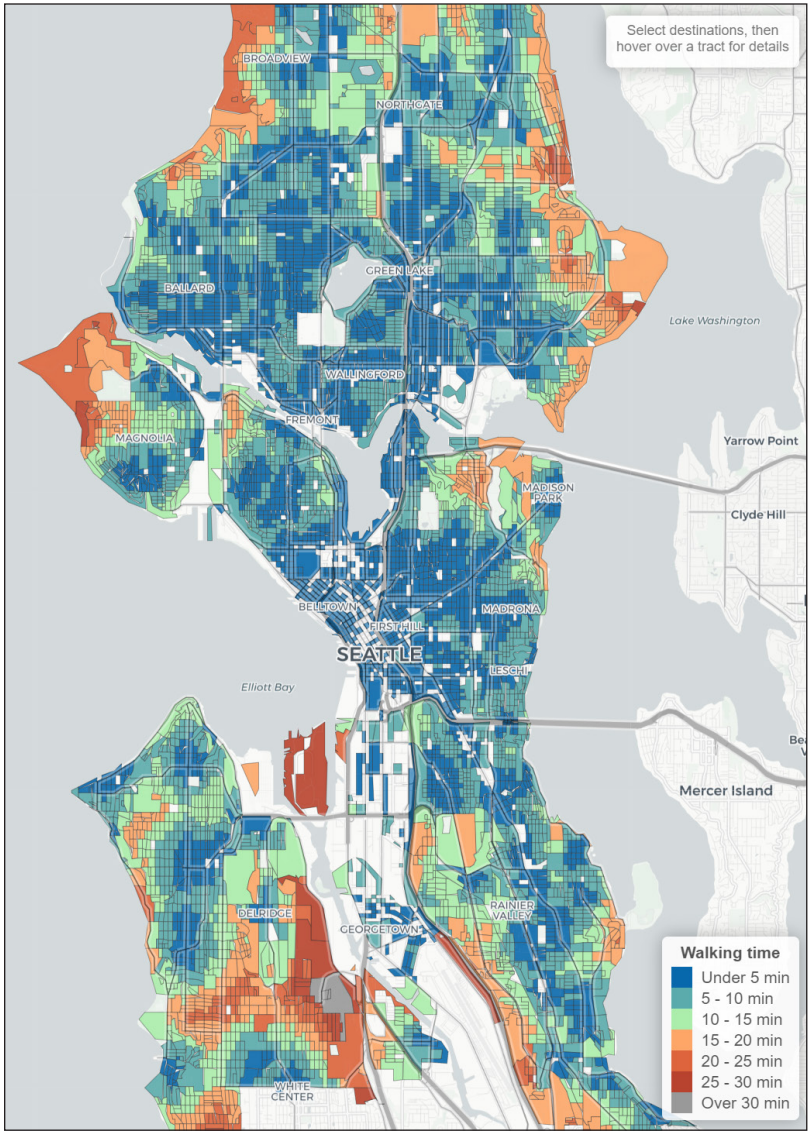


Figure #49.
Henry, Nat. "Is Seattle a 15-Minute City? It Depends on Where You Want to Walk." 2023. https://nathenry.com/writing/2023-02-07-seattle-walkability.html.

of proximity to bus stops, parks, and restaurants. He found that nearly all of Seattle can access these elements within a 5-minute walk, arguing that Seattle already has the infrastructure to be a 15-minute city (Henry, 2023).

This is demonstrated in Figures #47, #48, and #49. In comparison, Figure #46 shows the current Comprehensive Plan's urban village strategy isolated areas of growth and density in small pockets of the city, with the justification that these areas "can better accept growth" (City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan, 2015). According to Henry's study, over 99% of Seattle's residents have walking access to parks, and 97% have walking access to bus stops which access the city's downtown core (Henry, 2023). It is important to note that in relation to transit, this study only highlights the accessibility to transit stops, and does not address travel time or service frequency. This highlights that these systems are deeply reliant on integration between one another, and investment in improving public transit and other infrastructure is integral to arguing for successful cities. It's clear that the city of Seattle is on its way to accommodate growth in more areas of the city than those outlined by previous zoning and comprehensive plans. "Blocks with 15-minute walking access to basic amenities extend far beyond the boundaries

TABLE #1: Seattle's Zoning Classifications

Zones	Abbreviated
Residential, Neighborhood 1	NR1
Residential, Neighborhood 2	NR2
Residential, Neighborhood 3	NR3
Residential, Neighborhood, Small Lot	RSL
Residential, Multifamily, Lowrise 1	LR1
Residential, Multifamily, Lowrise 2	LR2
Residential, Multifamily, Lowrise 3	LR3
Residential, Multifamily, Midrise	MR
Residential, Multifamily, Highrise	HR
Residential-Commercial	RC
Neighborhood Commercial 1	NC1
Neighborhood Commercial 2	NC2
Neighborhood Commercial 3	NC3
Master Planned Community—Yesler Terrace	MPC-YT
Seattle Mixed—South Lake Union	SMU-SLU
Seattle Mixed—Dravus	SM-D
Seattle Mixed—North Rainier	SM-NR
Seattle Mixed - Rainier Beach	SM-RB
Seattle Mixed—University District	SM-U
Seattle Mixed—Uptown	SM-UP
Seattle Mixed—Northgate	SM-NG
Commercial 1	C1
Commercial 2	C2
Downtown Office Core 1	DOC1
Downtown Office Core 2	DOC2
Downtown Retail Core	DRC
Downtown Mixed Commercial	DMC
Downtown Mixed Residential	DMR
Pioneer Square Mixed	PSM
International District Mixed	IDM
International District Residential	IDR
Downtown Harborfront 1	DH1
Downtown Harborfront 2	DH2
Pike Market Mixed	PMM
General Industrial 1	IG1
General Industrial 2	IG2
Industrial Buffer	IB
Industrial Commercial	IC

of the urban villages targeted in Seattle's previous Comprehensive Plan. These [neighborhoods] of walkability could be the starting point for targeting more inclusive growth across the city" (Henry, 2023).

In terms of zoning, classifications have evolved. There are more zoning designations than previous codes, with 10 residential categories, 3 neighborhood commercial categories, various mixed, commercial, downtown classifications, and 4 industrial categories (Table #1). Out of the current residential zoning designations, NR-1 -2 and -3 (Neighborhood Residential, previously single-family residential) allow for only 1 single-family dwelling unit per lot, and two accessory dwelling units (ADUs). Between the three NR designations, they vary in the minimum lot size required for each dwelling unit. These zones also have FAR, lot coverage, height limit, setbacks, and parking requirements (Seattle's Neighborhood Residential Zones, 2019). RSL (Neighborhood Residential Small Lot) are zones that allow for the

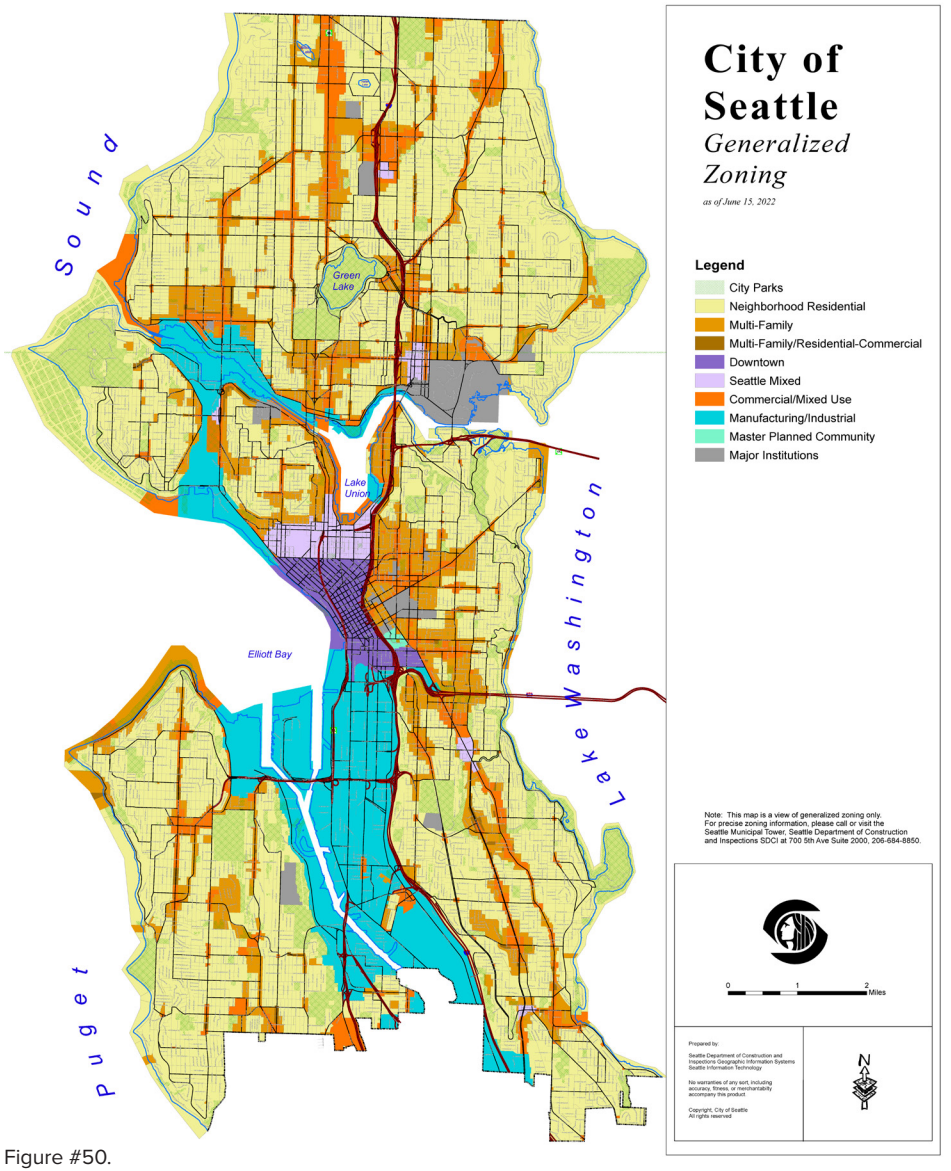


Figure #50.
City of Seattle Generalized Zoning Map. 2022. City of Seattle. https://www.seattle.gov/dpd/cms/groups/pan/@pan/documents/web_informational/dpds022048.pdf

development of one or more dwelling units in small-scale structures in urban villages. Density restrictions in this zone is based on 1 dwelling unit per 2,000 sf, and looks towards attached housing, cottage style housing, and stacked flats as housing typologies. The rest of the residential zones including residential multifamily and residential commercial zones allow for more density but are limited to only one-quarter of residential land (See Figure #50). Current zoning policies are limiting Seattle's potential to address issues of equity and affordability. Currently, its restrictive zoning creates economic incentives to demolish smaller and relatively affordable units to build larger and more expensive structures leading to a lack of economic diversity. With increasing demand and growing pressures from parts of the community, it's essential to re-examine historic and existing zoning policies to understand their flaws. Different levels of the government have been doing just this with both the 2024 Comprehensive Plan update, as well as the Middle Housing Bill (HB 1110) at the state level.

A Major Update

Figure #51.
Office of Planning & Community Development. One Seattle Comprehensive Plan Nov 14 Poster. City of Seattle. 2023. https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/OPCD/SeattlePlan/OneSeattlePlanNov14PosterENGLISH.pdf

Looking Forward
2024 Comprehensive Plan Update

Looking forward, Seattle's Office of Planning & Community Development (OPCD) is currently in the process of updating its comprehensive plan once more. The city has an opportunity to re-imagine what policy might look like if it finally embraced density in its urban neighborhoods. The new plan is titled the "One Seattle Plan," and is scheduled to be completed in 2024. OPCD has conducted several public engagement sessions to gather community input since early 2022 (See Figure #52). Like previous comprehensive plans, it intends to guide the city on growth strategies, land use, transportation, housing, capital facilities, utilities, economic development, shorelines, container ports, environmental concerns, parks and open space, arts and culture, community well-being, and community involvement (Office of Planning & Community Development, 2022). The plan is driven by four core values: community, environmental stewardship, economic opportunity and security, and race and social equity (Office of Planning & Community Development, 2022). It hopes to address both new and old challenges relating to racial equity, housing costs, access to economic opportunities and education, climate change, growth and investment, and strategies to reduce investment (Office of Planning & Community Development,

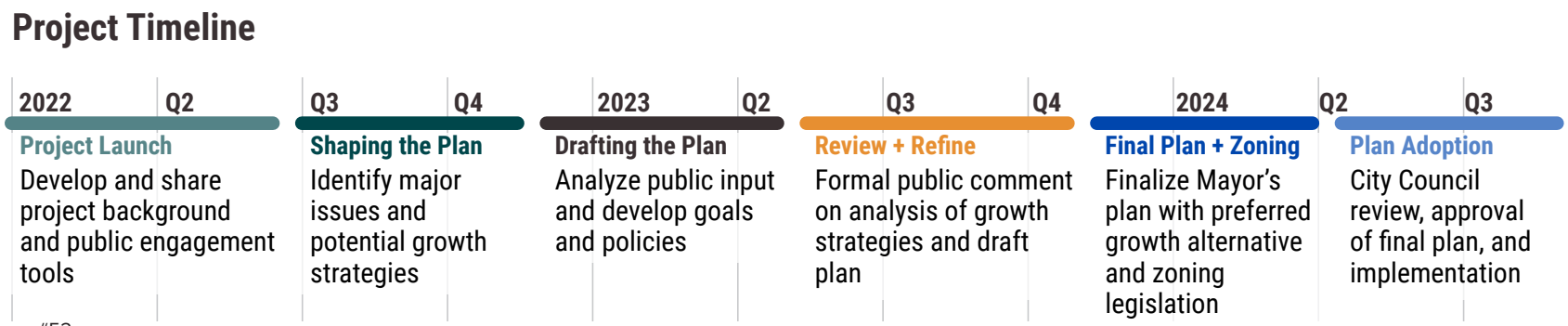


Figure #52.
Office of Planning & Community Development. One Seattle Comprehensive Plan Nov 14 Poster. City of Seattle. 2023. https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/OPCD/SeattlePlan/OneSeattlePlanNov14PosterENGLISH.pdf

2022). It's also updating the urban village strategy, attempting to address issues of affordability and housing diversity. The city conducted a racial equity analysis and found "that the Urban Village Strategy perpetuates a historical pattern of exclusion and increases displacement pressures on communities of color," and is expecting that various proposed growth alternatives will allow for more housing supply and choices across the city (Office of Planning & Community Development, 2021). Given this, the city has offered 5 potential growth models as alternatives to the urban village strategy and part of their Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and will be studying their effects on the city. Those 5 alternatives include Alternative 1: No Action, Alternative 2: Focused, Alternative 3: Broad, Alternative 4: Corridors, and Alternative 5: Combined (See Figures #53 and #54) (Office of Planning & Community Development, 2022). Their plan is to choose a final growth strategy by 2024, likely being a "hybrid approach that draws from the strategies and locations in the alternatives" (Office of Planning & Community Development, 2022). Each alternative offers a different approach to growth locations, scale, and density. This has implications on both housing and jobs. Through community engagement outreach, OPCD has found that community

Potential Future Growth Models

Matrix of Conceptual Alternatives

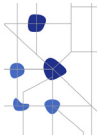
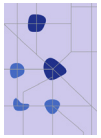
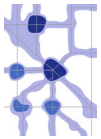
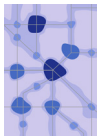
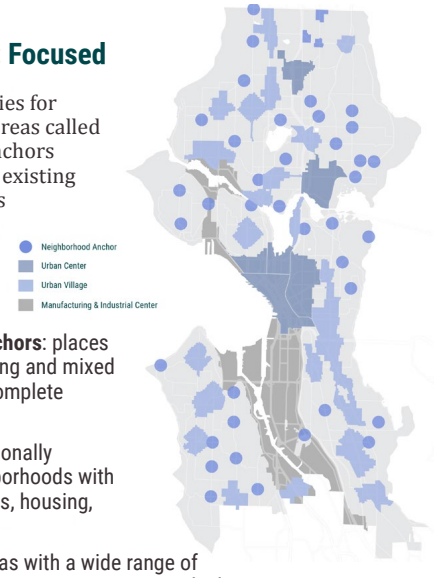
Conceptual Alternatives	Description	Housing	Jobs
Alternative 1: No Action 	• Required under SEPA • Assumes no changes to the Comprehensive Plan are made • Maintains strategy of focusing most housing and jobs within the existing **urban centers** and **urban villages** with no change to land use patterns	• New housing is primarily rental apartments concentrated in existing mixed-use areas • Most land outside urban villages remains limited to high-cost detached houses • No new strategies to increase housing supply and exclusivity • Assumes 80,000 new housing units over 20 years	• Predominately in existing urban centers and villages • Similar mix to past growth • Most office in Downtown and South Lake Union • Assumes 132,000 new jobs over 20 years
Alternative 2: Focused 	• Adds areas of focused growth, including new and expanded urban villages and/or new **smaller nodes** • Addresses City Council's request for an alternative that supports the development of "15-minute neighborhoods" where more people can walk to everyday needs	• Creates greater range of housing options near amenities and services in more neighborhoods • New housing remains primarily rental apartments	• Similar level of jobs as No Action Alternative • Slight increase in at-home and retail businesses due to a larger number of people living in Seattle • Additional retail jobs likely in more neighborhood centers
Alternative 3: Broad 	• Allows a wider range of low-scale housing options, like triplexes and fourplexes, in all **Neighborhood Residential zones** • Addresses City Council's request for an alternative that provides additional housing capacity and housing type diversity in neighborhood residential areas	• Expands housing choices in all neighborhoods • Increases production of homeownership options • Addresses exclusionary nature of current zoning • Allows more housing options near existing large parks and other neighborhood amenities	• Similar level of jobs as No Action Alternative • Slight increase in at-home and retail businesses due to a larger number of people living in Seattle • Additional retail jobs likely spread throughout Seattle
Alternative 4: Corridor 	• Allows a wider range of low-scale housing options only in **corridors** near frequent transit and amenities	• Expands housing choices in areas near frequent transit and amenities • Increases production of homeownership options with some additional rental options	• Similar level of jobs as No Action Alternative • Slight increase in at-home and retail businesses due to a larger number of people living in Seattle • Additional retail jobs likely spread throughout Seattle, but with focus near transit and amenities
Alternative 5: Combined 	• Assumes more housing growth over 20 years to better meet demand. • Distribution of housing would combine other alternatives, resulting in more areas identified as appropriate for more housing and mixed uses	• Promotes abundant housing in neighborhoods across the city • Promotes greater range of rental & ownership housing • Addresses past underproduction of housing and rising housing costs • Supports complete neighborhoods across more of the city	• Similar level of jobs as No Action Alternative • More increase in at-home and retail businesses due to a larger number of people living in Seattle • Distribution of jobs would be combination of alternatives 2, 3, and 4

Figure #53.
Office of Planning & Community Development. One Seattle Comprehensive Plan Nov 14 Poster. City of Seattle. 2023. https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/OPCD/SeattlePlan/OneSeattlePlanNov14PosterENGLISH.pdf

Alternative 2: Focused

More opportunities for housing in new areas called neighborhood anchors centered around existing business districts



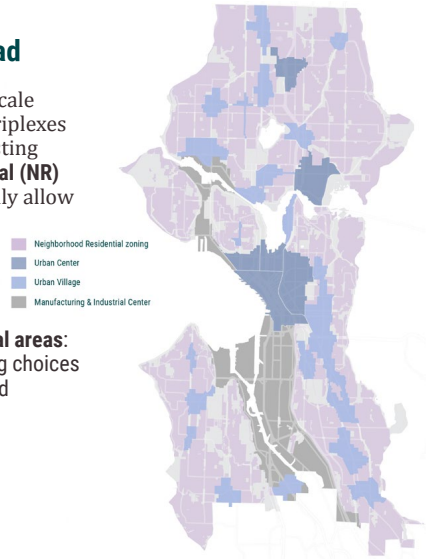
Neighborhood anchors: places with diverse housing and mixed uses to support complete neighborhoods

Urban Center: regionally designated neighborhoods with diverse mix of uses, housing, and employment

Urban Village: areas with a wide range of housing types and transit, amenities, and jobs

Alternative 3: Broad

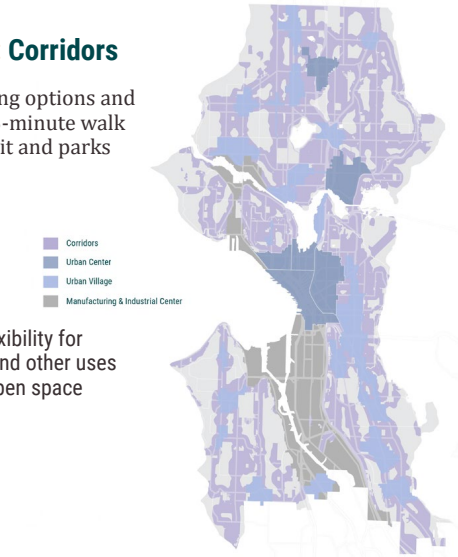
A wider range of low-scale housing options, like triplexes and four-plexes, in existing **Neighborhood Residential (NR) zones** that currently only allow detached homes



Neighborhood residential areas: new flexibility for housing choices throughout Neighborhood Residential areas

Alternative 4: Corridors

Additional housing options and services within 5-minute walk of frequent transit and parks



Corridors: new flexibility for housing choices and other uses near transit and open space

Alternative 5: Combined

A mix of strategies to provide more housing choices and access to services

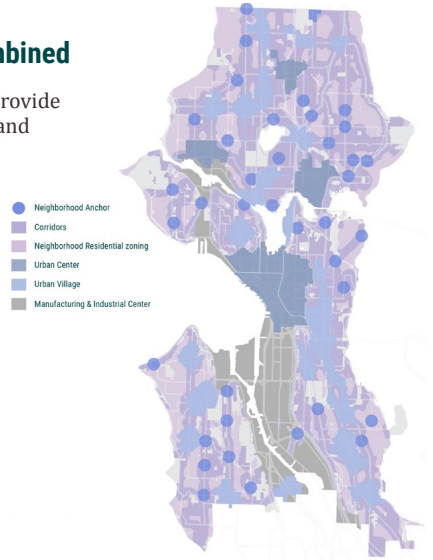


Figure #54.

Office of Planning & Community Development. One Seattle Comprehensive Plan EIS Scoping Fact Sheet. City of Seattle. 2023. https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/OPCD/SeattlePlan/OneSeattlePlanEISScopingFactSheet.pdf

members have increasingly supported the idea of increasing density everywhere (see Figure #55). Community members acknowledge that "historically marginalized communities should not bear all the expanded development and associated burden" which comes from the urban village strategy (Office of Planning & Community Development, 2022). Organizations like Share the Cities and Real Change have challenged the proposed alternatives, and expressed the need for a more radical approach, recognizing the need for innovative options. They've called this Alternative 6, posing the idea that Seattle must rezone "for denser housing throughout the city, not just in nodes or corridors" (Sethi, 2022). Alternative 6 also calls for investment in permanently affordable housing options, eliminating parking mandates for both business and residential developments, support for anti-displacement policy through community leadership, utilizing surplus urban land, expanding protected bike lanes and public transportation options, and supporting concepts of the 15-minute city (Real Change, 2022). In light of OPCD's developments in the comprehensive plan update, Real Change has urged them to focus on allowing more housing outside of just urban villages, and increase density in neighborhoods where typically only single-family homes are available.

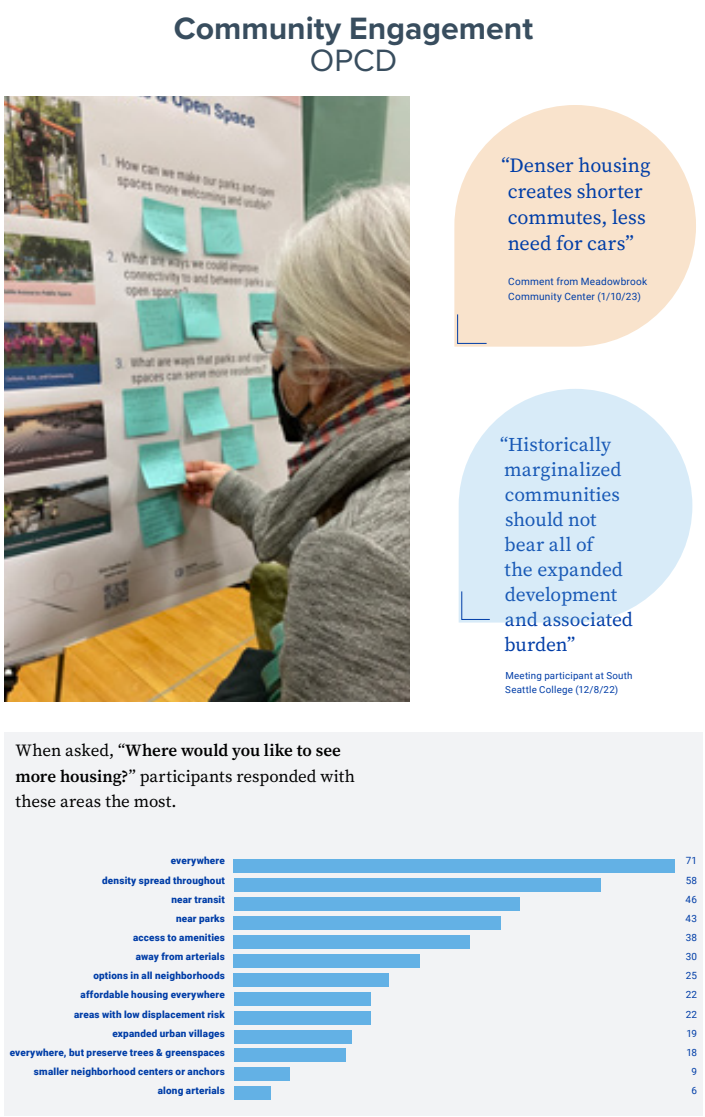


Figure #55.
Office of Planning & Community Development. One Seattle Comprehensive Plan Community Meetings Report. City of Seattle. 2023. https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/OPCD/SeattlePlan/OneSeattlePlanCommunityMeetingsReport.pdf

HB 1110 Middle Housing Bill

Washington has been trying to address these issues at the State level as well. The state of Washington recently passed the Middle Housing Bill HB 1110 - 2023-24 which aims to increase affordable and diverse housing options by allowing the development of missing-middle housing city-wide. This includes duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, townhomes, and small apartment buildings, in all residential areas—including those currently zoned for detached single-family homes. The bill has undergone various changes due to pressures from state legislators and other local interests. Currently, for cities with at least 25,000 residents but less than 75,000 residents, the bill proposes setting a minimum of two homes per lot on every residentially zoned lot, and four homes per lot on every residentially zoned lot if one home is affordable or the property is within a half-mile of a major transit stop or community amenity (H.B. 1110, 2023). For cities with at least 75,000 residents or any city in a contiguous urban growth area with a city above 200,000 residents, a minimum of four homes per lot on all residentially zoned lots, and six homes per lot on all residentially zoned lots if two homes are affordable or if the property is within a half-mile of a major transit stop or community amenities (H.B. 1110, 2023). Additionally, this bill addresses off-street parking requirements, a very contested issue within growth management proposals. Starting with a more radical approach, this section has de-radicalized from its original suggestion that for middle housing, off-street parking shall not be required within a half-mile of a major transit stop, and that no more than one off-street parking spot shall be required per lot on lots smaller than 6,000 sf, and no more than two off-street parking spaces shall be required per

Development Estimate of Middle Housing Production
Puget Sound Regional Council HB 1110 Analysis

Parcels within major transit stop areas	Development multiplier	Dwelling units	Parcels outside major transit stop areas	Development multiplier	Dwelling units
Residential–27,000	3.0x	82,000	Residential–81,000	1.5x	121,000
Mixed use –1,000	2.0x	2,000	Mixed use–1,000	1.0x	1,000
Net total units:		84,000			122,000
				TOTAL:	206,000

Note: This scenario represents a probable estimate of middle housing production that may be incentivized under the proposed legislation. The analysis does not account for additional dwelling units that may be created through the bill's density bonus provision for affordable housing. The development would likely occur over a period of up to 20 years.

Figure #56.
Puget Sound Regional Council. HB 1110 Analysis. 2023. https://www.scribd.com/document/627765265/Puget-Sound-Regional-Council-HB-1110-Analysis-February-2023#

lot on lots greater than 6,000 sf (H.B. 1110, 2023). The bill has been amended, and now notes that the original suggestion only applies if a professional study with empirical evidence that demonstrates that less off-street parking in a defined area would make on-street parking unfeasible or significantly unsafe for middle housing (H.B. 1110, 2023). As a whole, this bill has re-legalized denser housing options amongst larger cities across the state. According to an analysis conducted by the Puget Sound Regional Council, the bill will create approximately 200,000 additional dwelling units categorized as middle housing within the next 20 years (Puget Sound Regional Council HB 1110 Analysis, 2023). This bill is setting a statewide baseline for housing density policies, requiring cities to comply. Cities, such as Seattle, could then expand upon this baseline, but could not enforce or enact zoning policies less dense than the bill outlines. The will take effect six months after the 2024 major comprehensive plan update.

Figure #57
McNichols, Joshua. Seattle has some middle housing, but it's not allowed in most parts of the city. KUOW. 2023. https://www.kuow.org/stories/middle-housing-bill-passes-major-milestone-in-Olympia

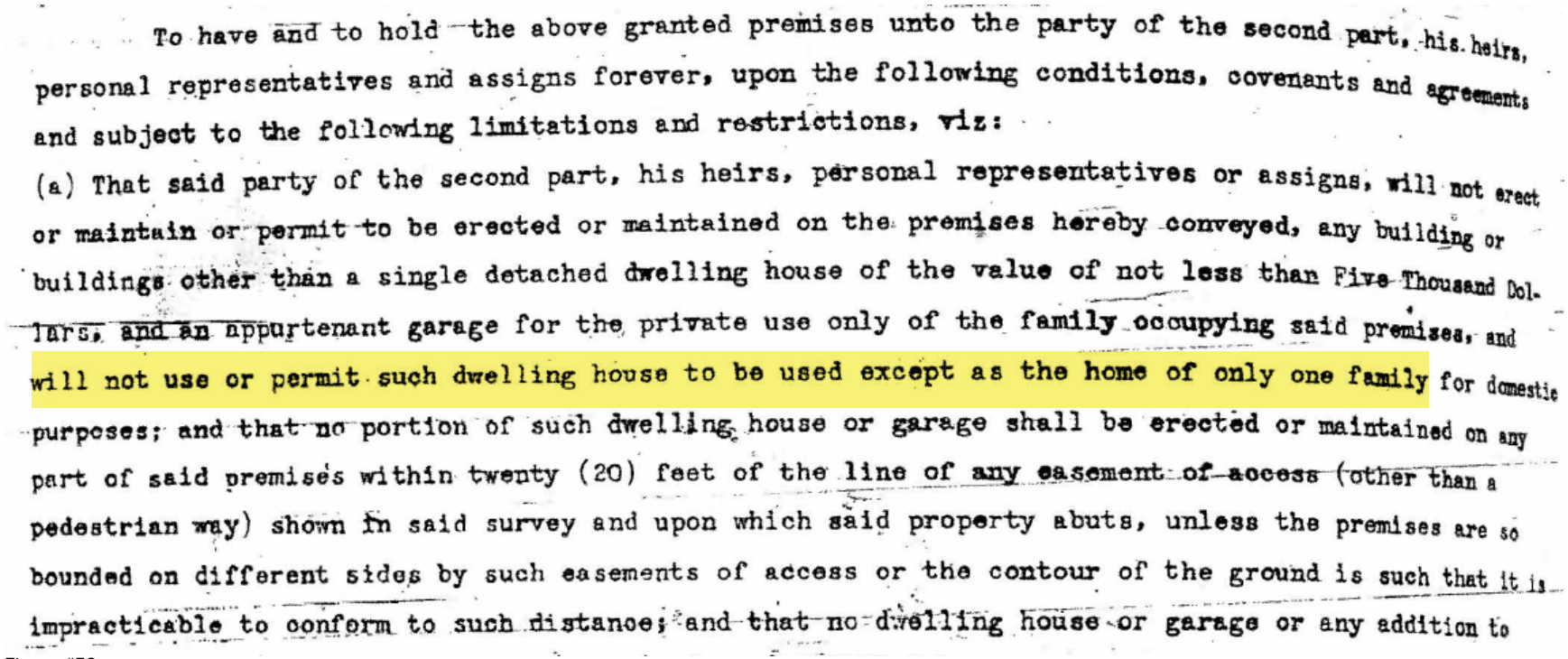
Figure #58
Stanton, Melissa. A single-family home and small apartment building are neighbors along urban greenway in Providence, Rhode Island. AARP. 2020. https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/housing/info-2020/barriers-to-missing-middle-housing.html.

Limitations

As cities continue to densify, more people have chosen to live in urban areas versus rural ones—and "for the first time in history, more humans live in cities than outside" them (Sisolak, 2011). Issues of urban density are both a racial equity issue, as well as an environmental one. Initially, the purpose of zoning aimed to separate incompatible uses and to preserve and protect property values as a method to protect certain neighborhoods. Zoning evolved into a tool to discriminate both economically and racially (Schindler, 2015). There are disagreements around the question of whether Seattle's zoning and planning history was intended to be racially discriminatory. Regardless of intent, it's clear that Seattle's land-use policies have produced issues of equity and both racial and economic discrimination. Access to homeownership and in turn generational wealth has affected marginalized communities, particularly communities of color. With policies that did not address issues of housing access, and instead, downzoned many neighborhoods and exacerbated housing affordability, Seattle's zoning laws have been highly criticized for perpetuating economic and racial segregation. While single-family zoning only covered roughly one-third of Seattle's 1923 landscape, today they take up about 70 percent of the city's residentially zoned land (Seattle Ordinance No. 45382, 1923). The legacy of inequitable land-use policy has recently been acknowledged, as the city notes they're "now looking at how [the urban village strategy] has benefited some people and bordered others in inequitable ways and [they're now] exploring new ways to grow that achieve more equitable and affordable housing and neighborhood choice for all" (Centering Racial Equity in the One Seattle Comprehensive Plan, 2022). Currently, these issues are being addressed at both the city-scale through the "One Seattle" Comprehensive Plan Update of 2024, as well as at the state level through the Middle Housing Bill HB 1110. Both approaches have the opportunity to encourage the development of missing-middle housing to increase density as a means to increase housing affordability. However,

these proposed changes face limitations, particularly in the realm of private covenants that may be enforced to resist change.

Private covenants, as mentioned previously, are deed restrictions that are tied to the land. Some private covenants in largely white affluent neighborhoods in Seattle contain language which restricts density. For example, the Broadmoor neighborhood of Seattle still contains a restrictive covenant that states its properties "will not use or permit such dwelling house to be used except as the home of only one family" (See Figure #59) (The Seattle Civil Rights & Labor History Project, 2021). Private land



To have and to hold the above granted premises unto the party of the second part, his heirs, personal representatives and assigns forever, upon the following conditions, covenants and agreements and subject to the following limitations and restrictions, viz:

(a) That said party of the second part, his heirs, personal representatives or assigns, will not erect or maintain or permit to be erected or maintained on the premises hereby conveyed, any building or buildings other than a single detached dwelling house of the value of not less than Five Thousand Dollars, and an appurtenant garage for the private use only of the family occupying said premises, and will not use or permit such dwelling house to be used except as the home of only one family for domestic purposes; and that no portion of such dwelling house or garage shall be erected or maintained on any part of said premises within twenty (20) feet of the line of any easement of access (other than a pedestrian way) shown in said survey and upon which said property abuts, unless the premises are so bounded on different sides by such easements of access or the contour of the ground is such that it is impracticable to conform to such distance; and that no dwelling house or garage or any addition to

Figure #59

Density restrictions written in the subdivision plat or accompanying restrictive covenant of the Broadmoor neighborhood of Seattle. Source: The Seattle Civil Rights & Labor History Project. The University of Washington. 2021. http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/covenants/Broadmoor(5).PDF

use controls may pose a threat to policies which increase density because they may be used as legal justification to maintain the status quo. SHB 1110, begins to address this issue in Sections 13 and 14, which prohibits new private covenants that do not allow middle housing densities (H.B. 1110, 2023). Additionally, some legislators have discussed adding an amendment that would retroactively invalidate any private covenant that prohibits middle housing, but there are probably not enough votes to adopt that amendment (H.B. 1110, 2023). It is unclear whether private covenants are a significant barrier to both the missing middle bill, as well as Seattle's developing comprehensive update. If they prove to be a major barrier, passing a state law invalidating them may be the safest solution.

Regardless of the potential limitations in current proposals that increase density in Seattle, more than half of the city's residents support rezones which would place multi-family homes in historically single-family neighborhoods (Groover, 2017). Additionally, other arguments against increasing density include the need to protect a neighborhood's aesthetic character. However, no action does not prevent a neighborhood's character from erosion, as new construction—even if it maintains single-family densities—will disrupt form, size, and aesthetic qualities. The need for increased density is apparent, and zoning has a complex and nuanced history that reflects the social and political climate of the city over the past century. Despite an increased understanding of land-use inequities, and some recent proposals towards more equitable and inclusive zoning policies, there is still much work that needs to be done to address historic land-use discrimination and to promote more affordable and diverse housing options throughout the city. Seattle must aim to correct policies that perpetuate segregation. "History has shown that passively waiting for gradual change towards integration is not—and never will be—enough. De jure segregation can only be rectified through de jure integration, and a great deal remains to be done" (Kim, 2021).

CHAPTER THREE

Case Studies

Research

- National Issue
- Minneapolis (2019)
- Portland (2020)

National Issue

Seattle is not alone in dealing with issues of historical low-density development influenced by policy. The New York Times published an article in 2019 titled “Cities Start to Question an American Ideal: A House With a Yard on Every Lot,” which outlined 11 cities that are seemingly dominated by single-family neighborhoods. The article notes that “it is illegal on 75 percent of residential land in many American cities to build anything other than a detached single-family home” (Badger and Bui, 2019). As this issue extends beyond Seattle, similar patterns of detached single-family development which limit the housing supply can be seen in other cities like Minneapolis, Atlanta, Portland, Denver, Los Angeles, and more. These cities, like Seattle, have also faced the impact of zoning regulations that favor low-density development which has affected affordability, sustainability, and racial equity. There have been various cities that have begun to address these issues including Minneapolis and Portland, with varying approaches and outcomes.

Minneapolis, Minnesota

In an effort to “mend the damage wrought in pursuit of segregation” through zoning, in 2018, Minneapolis became the first city in the country to re-legalize duplexes and triplexes citywide (Grabar, 2018). It adopted an updated Comprehensive Plan titled “Minneapolis 2040” which focused on a citywide effort to address racial equity which began in 2016. A team of historians, geographers, librarians, and community activists put together a project titled “Mapping Prejudice,” which outlined the ongoing effects of redlining, restrictive covenants, and zoning in Minneapolis. This work sparked conversations in the city about how zoning reform could be used as a tool to begin to mend existing inequitable policy. Specifically, the plan permits up to three dwelling units on each parcel in the city. However, various barriers have been identified since the celebration of Minneapolis’ pioneering change. First, as of April 2023, the city’s zoning codes have not been fully updated to align with the elimination of single-family zoning proposed nearly four years prior (Due, 2023). The slow process of updating codes to match with

Cities Start to Question an American Ideal: A House With a Yard on Every Lot

By EMILY BADGER and QUOCTRUNG BUI JUNE 18, 2019

Townhomes, duplexes and apartments are effectively banned in many neighborhoods. Now some communities regret it.

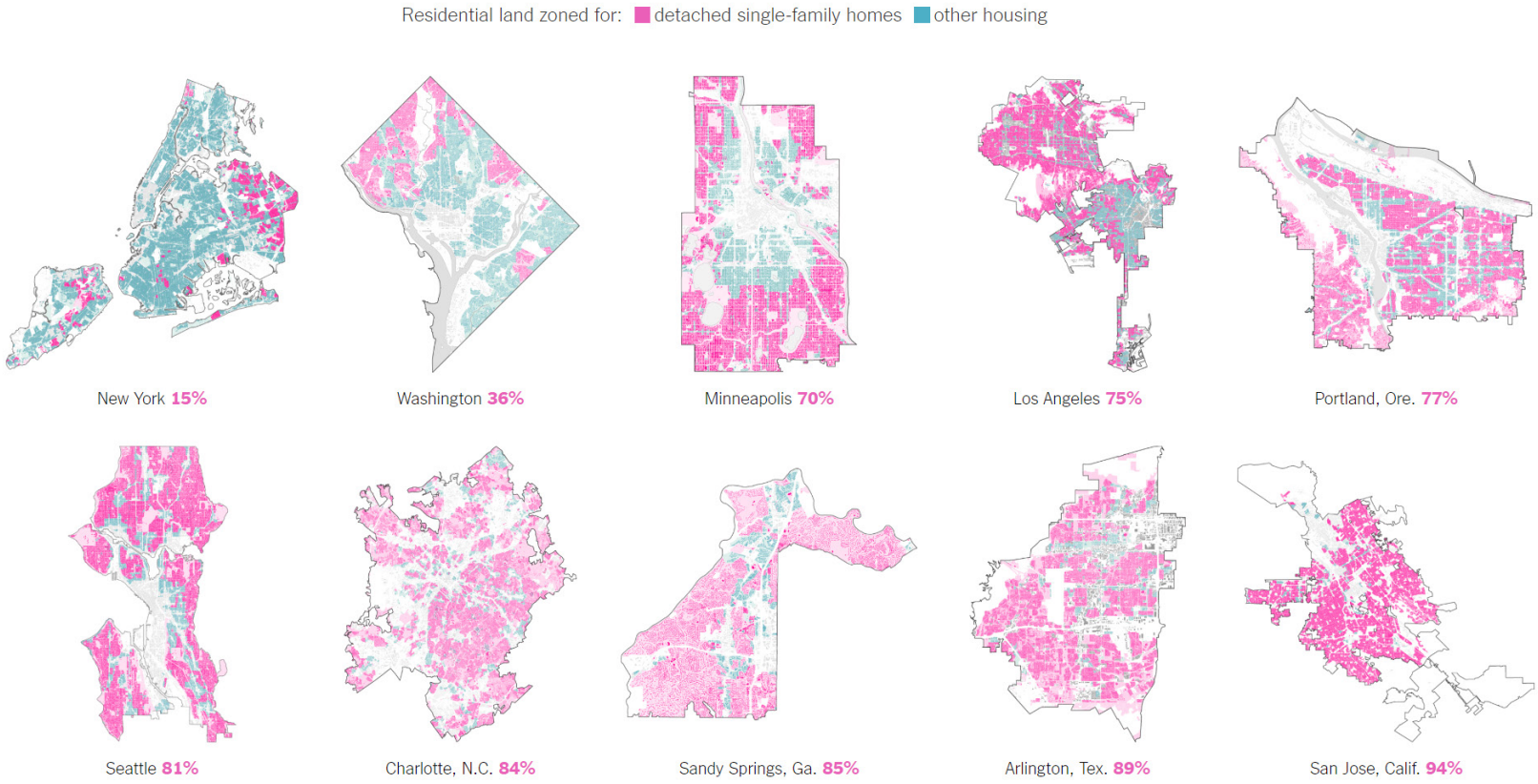


Figure #60
Badger, Emily, and Quoctrung Bui. "Cities Start to Question an American Ideal: A House With a Yard on Every Lot." The New York Times. June 18, 2018. https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/06/18/upshot/cities-across-America-question-single-family-zoning.html.

comprehensive plans sheds light on the urgency to address issues of increasing density as soon as possible. Second, barriers such as small lot sizes have limited the practicality of constructing new units due to the difficulty of fitting dense housing on small lots without addressing other regulatory issues like FAR incentives, height limitations, setbacks, etc (Due, 2023). The city is currently undergoing a Land Use Rezoning Study and hopes to turn to other zoning code updates to reduce the regulatory barriers for the production of middle housing at the end of the summer (Minneapolis 2040, Land Use Rezoning Study, 2023).

Portland, Oregon

Similarly, Portland Oregon has also been a leader in zoning reforms and reintroducing housing density into its city. In 2020, Portland re-legalized up to four dwelling units on any residential lot in the city, and in some cases sixplexes (Andersen, 2020). This was achieved through the implementation of the "Residential Infill Project," which has attempted to expand Portland's available housing types through the integration of middle housing through regulatory reforms. Alongside the reintroduction of multi-unit housing, Portland also introduced density bonuses through increased floor area ratio (FAR) (Andersen, 2020). This incentivizes developers to incorporate more housing units in their projects by allowing them to construct larger structures, as well as making middle housing more economically feasible on small lots. With Portland's zoning updates, "FAR varies by the number of proposed dwelling units" (Portland Residential Infill

Figure #61
Mervosh, Sarah. "Minneapolis, Tackling Housing Crisis and Inequity, Votes to End Single-Family Zoning." The New York Times, December 13, 2018. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/13/us/Minneapolis-single-family-zoning.html.

Project, 2023). The Residential Infill Project has also ended the off-street parking requirement in single-dwelling zones. This change allows for the future of reduced reliance on private vehicles which contribute to the climate crisis. These various approaches to zoning reform have contributed to the relative success of Portland's approaches. By addressing not only density but also FAR and parking mandates, Portland has expanded its possibilities of what can exist in "single-family" zones.

Conclusion

Urban areas nationwide are increasingly acknowledging the necessity of addressing zoning codes that disproportionately prioritize single-family homes. When comparing Portland's efforts to the Minneapolis 2040 plan, both cities have demonstrated a dedication to increasing housing density and promoting diverse housing options. However, Portland's approach of increasing density coupled with density bonuses through FAR, and the elimination of parking requirements offer a more comprehensive approach that has demonstrated more success. By challenging conventional norms and embracing a wide variety of strategies, regulatory evaluation, and change can lend themselves to mending inequitable housing landscapes.

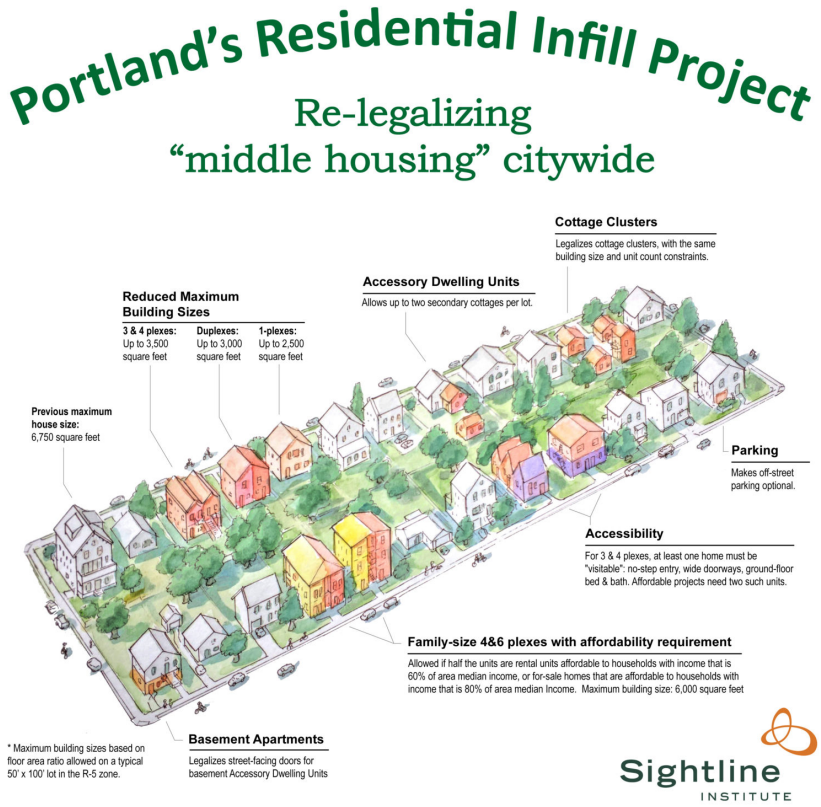


Figure #62
Andersen, Michael. "Portland Just Passed the Best Low-Density Zoning Reform in US History." Sightline Institute, August 17, 2020. https://www.sightline.org/2020/08/11/on-Wednesday-Portland-will-pass-the-best-low-density-zoning-reform-in-us-history/.

CHAPTER FOUR

Designs + Recommendations

Proposal: Seattle's Evolution

- Possible Changes in NR Zones
- Opportunities in Lot Variability
- New Zoning Suggestions
- Design Possibilities

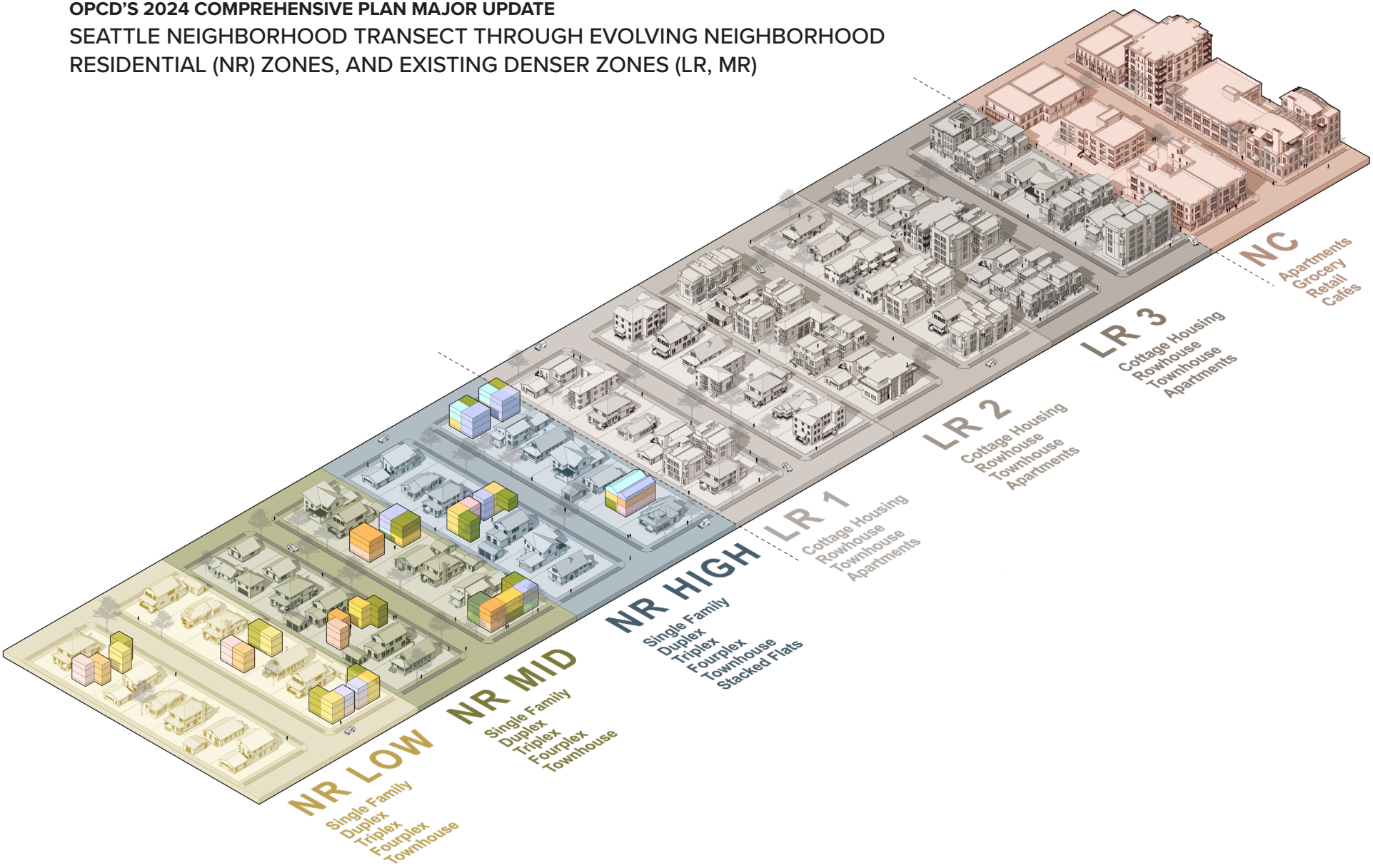
Seattle's Evolution

Possible Changes in NR Zones

In considering the future of Seattle's Neighborhood Residential (NR) Zones, this project consulted with the Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) to understand the metrics that were being used by the city in the 2024 Comprehensive Plan Major Update. Using OPCD's baseline proposal for three key NR zones: Low, Mid, and High, as well as their preliminary density and FAR metrics, this thesis explores the possible changes in NR zones. As Seattle's least dense residential areas, the NR zones offer significant potential and opportunities for accommodating additional housing units within their existing urban form. First, as discussed, these neighborhoods have long-standing traditions of racial and economic exclusion. Mending these exclusionary practices is key to creating a more equitable future for housing. By prioritizing density and diversity in these areas, rectifying these inequities and fostering inclusive communities can be pursued. Second, increasing housing density in these areas, which account for 70 percent of residentially zoned land (Seattle Planning Commission, Neighborhoods for All, 2018) can alleviate the strain on high-demand areas outlined by previous Comprehensive Plans as "urban villages." This can begin to address issues of decreased population in low-density neighborhoods outlined earlier (Bertolet, 2017). Lastly, focusing on Seattle's least dense neighborhoods aligns with the principles of sustainable urban development by utilizing existing urban neighborhoods that have access to transportation, services, green space, and amenities nearby (Henry, 2023). This will curtail urban sprawl, reduce commuting distances, and foster a more balanced distribution of resources. The focus on the three NR zones facilitates the efficient utilization of existing resources, fosters equity in housing opportunities, and supports sustainable development practices to provide for a more inclusive, resilient, and livable city. Using OPCD's baseline proposal for the three NR zones, as well as their preliminary density and FAR metrics, this

OPCD'S 2024 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN MAJOR UPDATE

SEATTLE NEIGHBORHOOD TRANSECT THROUGH EVOLVING NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTIAL (NR) ZONES, AND EXISTING DENSER ZONES (LR, MR)



thesis proposes that with the context of the WA State Middle Housing Bill (HB 1110) and the opportunity that OPCD currently has, it can push further. First, this thesis will examine the opportunities within lot variability within OPCD's three NR zones, then it will provide examples of housing designs that fit within some of the proposed suggestions, and lastly, it will discuss additional considerations that may be relevant in some neighborhoods. The goal is to strike a careful balance between these elements while achieving a transformative impact on Seattle's housing landscape that fosters increased housing choices.

Possibilities in Lot Variability

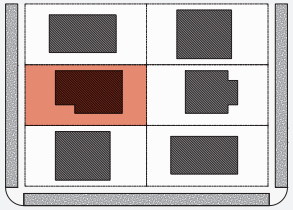
Analyzing the possibilities within different lot types and their opportunities for increasing housing diversity and density is important for various reasons. First, studying different lot configurations allows for an exploration of a variety of housing options. By examining four lot conditions: midblock infill lots, midblock infill lots with alleys, corner lots, and corner lots with alleys, there can be an understanding of varying degrees of access which can shape the design and regulatory approach for potential residential structures. Each of these lot types has various levels of access, which could influence regulations like maximum density and FAR. For example, midblock infill lots can be characterized by their narrower frontages and may necessitate inventive design solutions to optimize daylight, fresh air, and shared open space to accommodate additional housing units. Conversely, corner lots provide greater flexibility in terms of design and layout, as they have longer frontages facilitating heightened density and larger structures due to more inherent access to sidewalks, daylight, and fresh air.

The presence of alleys further increases the opportunities for increased density and FAR. Midblock infill lots with alleys allow for a second frontage for dwelling entries, parking, or shared amenities. Corner lots with alleys offer even greater accessibility, facilitating the most possibilities for circulation, residential entries, parking, and outdoor spaces. These characteristics collectively enhance the functionality and possibilities of housing diversity in detached single-

LESS ACCESS

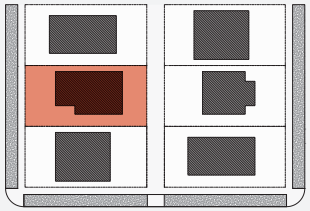
MORE ACCESS

MIDBLOCK INFILL



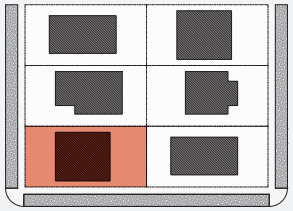
Least amount of edge access
Blending into landscape
Increasing density

ALLEY



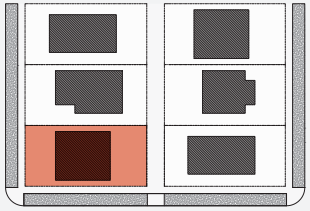
Medium edge access
Two edge access
Alley improvement opportunities
Midblock access opportunity (assuming easement)

CORNER



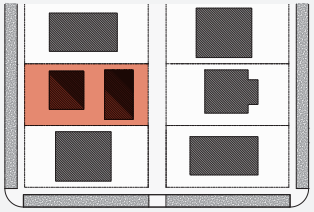
Medium edge access
Two edge access
Potential flexibility on ground floor uses

CORNER WITH ALLEY



High edge access
Three edge access
Alley improvement opportunities
Potential flexibility on ground floor uses

KEEP (E) HOUSING



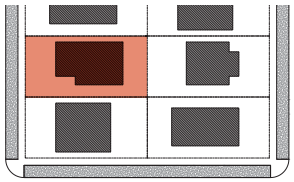
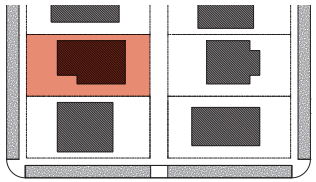
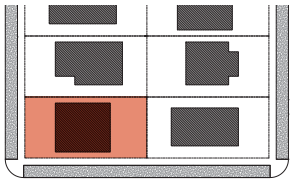
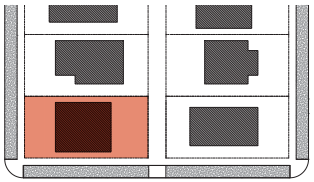
family neighborhoods.

By analyzing lot variability and its implications for density and FAR, tailored strategies can be devised for each condition. This allows us to take advantage of existing low-density neighborhoods to create housing options that amplify density, equity, and diversity and foster a cultivation of diverse and sustainable communities. However, considering the possibility of retaining existing housing structures while adding density on the same lot is also critical for approaching increased density sustainably. It is well understood that “the greenest building is. . . one that is already built.” (Elefante, 2007), thus it is important to consider the integration of new housing units without sacrificing the existing housing stock for both environmental and displacement concerns. This approach proves particularly advantageous on lots with alleys, as it enables new units to have frontages and contributes to an improved and less car-centric alley space. In cases where alleys are absent, pathways can be created using the side yard setback to access new housing structures that can be constructed behind the existing single-family home. This strategy fosters even more diverse

NR ZONING SUGGESTIONS, EXPANDED BASED ON LOT TYPE

LESS ACCESS → MORE ACCESS

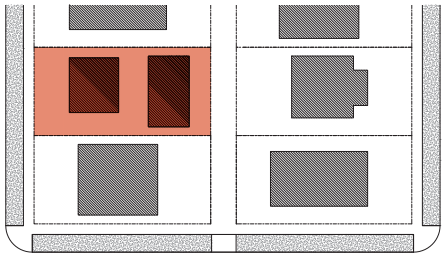
LESS FLEXIBILITY → MORE FLEXIBILITY

LOT TYPOLOGY	 MIDBLOCK INFILL	 MIDBLOCK INFILL W/ ALLEY	 CORNER	 CORNER W/ ALLEY
NR - LOW	**Density** 4 dwellings per lot **FAR** 1.0 **Height** 30 ft height maximum **Other** none	**Density** 6 dwellings per lot **FAR** 1.0 **Height** 30 ft height maximum **Other** none	**Density** 6 dwellings per lot **FAR** 1.2 **Height** 30 ft height maximum **Other** Ground floor uses: live/work, corner stores, daycares, cafes	**Density** 8 dwellings per lot **FAR** 1.2 **Height** 30 ft height maximum **Other** Ground floor uses: live/work, corner stores, daycares, cafes
NR - MID	**Density** 4 dwellings per lot **FAR** 1.0 **Height** 30 ft height maximum **Other** none	**Density** 6 dwellings per lot **FAR** 1.2 **Height** 30 ft height maximum **Other** none	**Density** 8 dwellings per lot **FAR** 1.2 **Height** 30 ft height maximum **Other** Ground floor uses: live/work, corner stores, daycares, cafes	**Density** 10 dwellings per lot **FAR** 1.5 **Height** 30 ft height maximum **Other** Ground floor uses: live/work, corner stores, daycares, cafes
NR - HIGH	**Density** 6 dwellings per lot 8 stacked dw / lot **FAR** 1.0 (detached) 1.2 (stacked) **Height** 30 ft height maximum **Other** none	**Density** 6 dwellings per lot 8 stacked dw / lot **FAR** 1.2 (detached) 1.5 (stacked) **Height** 30 ft height maximum **Other** none	**Density** 8 dwellings per lot 10 stacked dw / lot **FAR** 1.5 **Height** 30 ft height maximum **Other** Ground floor uses: live/work, corner stores, daycares, cafes	**Density** 12 dwellings per lot **FAR** 1.5 **Height** 30 ft height maximum **Other** Ground floor uses: live/work, corner stores, daycares, cafes

KEEP EXISTING HOUSING
ADA INCENTIVE

+

MIDBLOCK INFILL W/ ALLEY



Density	**6** dwellings per lot
FAR	**1.2**
Height	40 ft height maximum
Other	none

housing options. Using this framework, this thesis created a matrix that offers zoning suggestions for each lot type in the three Neighborhood Residential (NR) zones: Low, Mid, and High. The matrix outlines recommended maximum density, floor area ratio (FAR), height restrictions, and other possible considerations for ground-level uses. By customizing zoning suggestions to specific lot types, the thesis aims to optimize land use and promote suitable levels of density and development in each zone, taking into account lot possibilities. After developing the matrix of zoning recommendations, this thesis then examined six housing design options, one in each lot type and NR zone, as well as one focused on preserving existing housing stock and integrating considerations for possible ADA incentives. Exploring diverse design options is critical as it discovers potential housing outcomes in terms of functionality, aesthetics, and accessibility. By analyzing various design approaches, the thesis aims to identify innovative solutions that cater to the needs of diverse populations and

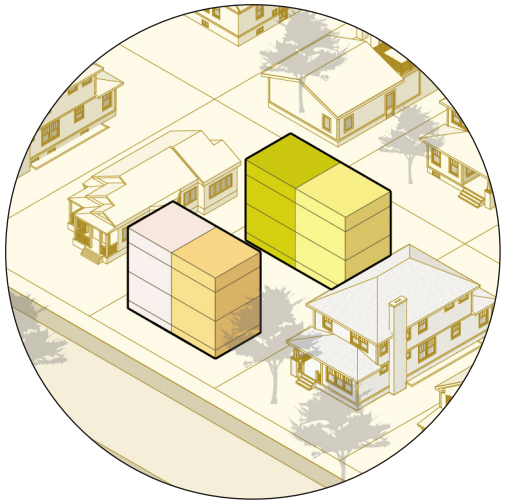
contribute to a more inclusive and equitable city. The development of the six housing design options began by developing a series of massing studies, which helped determine the most effective utilization of space, natural sunlight, fresh air, and general access for each lot. Various arrangements and configurations were explored to optimize land usage while adhering to the developed matrix of regulations. Following massing, the design process focused on dwelling adjacencies to ensure that each unit's experience had good visual and physical access to green space and views outward. Consideration was given to the placement of windows, balconies, and shared spaces. By strategically arranging units in relation to one another and considering site orientation, the designs aimed to create a cohesive living environment that fosters a strong connection to its surroundings. Each design option provides a diagram of context, a unit diagram demonstrating access and paths to each unit, current zoning, proposed zoning, unit floor plans, as well as various renderings. The stacked flat units are all two-story dwellings with living spaces on the entry-level and bedrooms on the upper or lower level. It is important to acknowledge that while this thesis presented six housing design options, the range of possibilities and variations not shown is extensive. Each design option serves as an illustration, highlighting one potential outcome among numerous alternatives. The design process embraces the possibilities and limitations of each site and responds to the developed matrix. This approach offers a view into what typologies could potentially be developed by designers once the city re-zones its NR areas.


NO ALLEY
ALLEY
NO ALLEY
ALLEY
NO ALLEY
NR HIGH
Single Family
Duplex
Triplex
Fourplex
Townhouse
Stacked Flats
NR MID
Single Family
Duplex
Triplex
Fourplex
Townhouse
NR LOW
Single Family
Duplex
Triplex
Fourplex
Townhouse

NR DESIGNS, EXPANDED BASED ON LOT TYPE

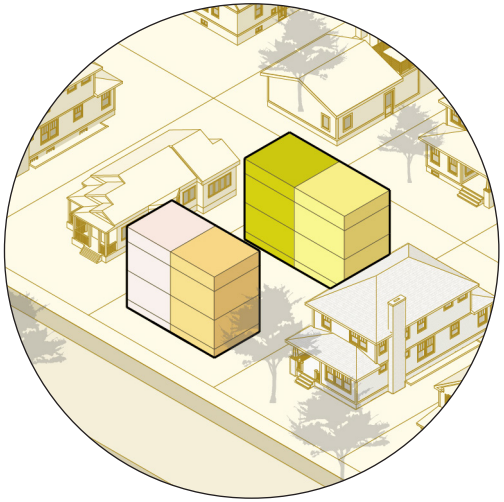
NR - LOW

MIDBLOCK INFILL



NR - LOW

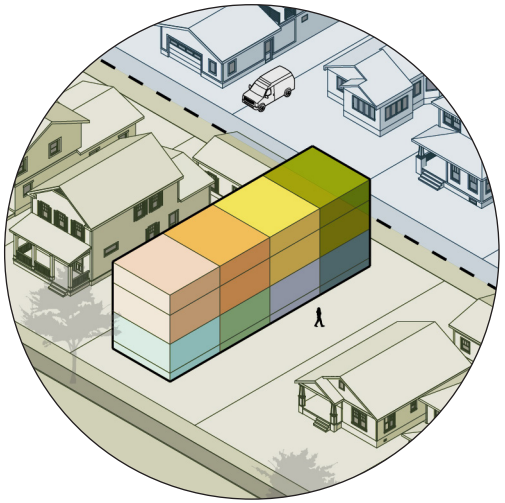
MIDBLOCK INFILL



WITH PARKING

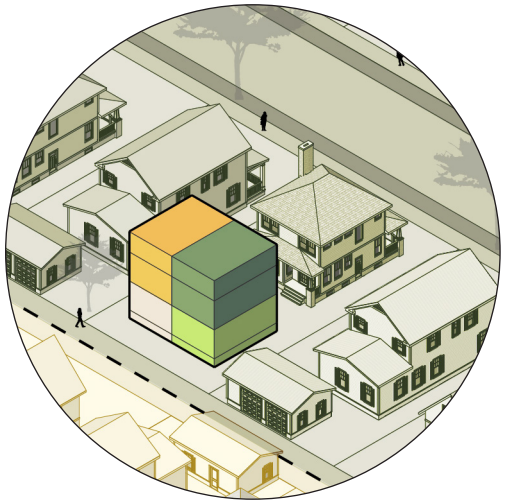
NR - MID

MIDBLOCK INFILL W/ ALLEY



NR - MID

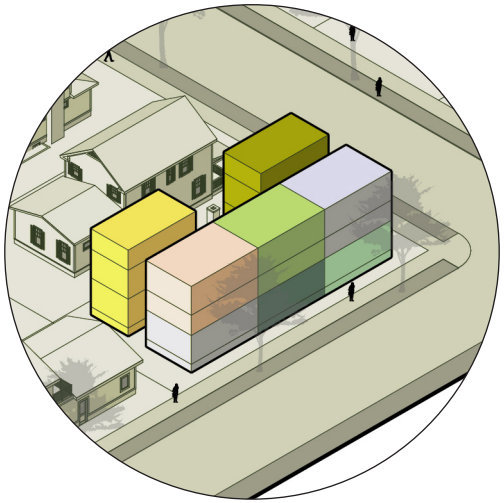
MIDBLOCK INFILL W/ ALLEY



WITH (E) HOUSING
ADA OPTION

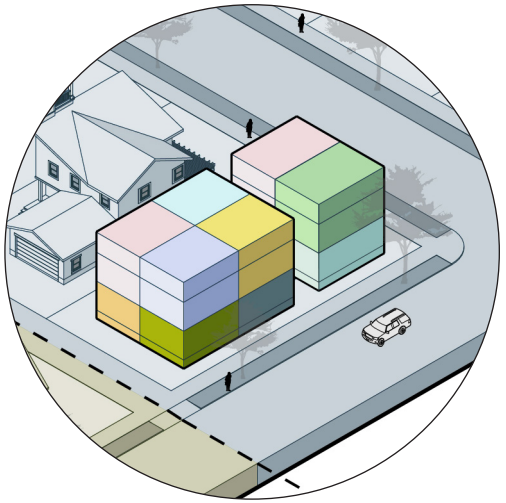
NR - MID

CORNER



NR - HIGH

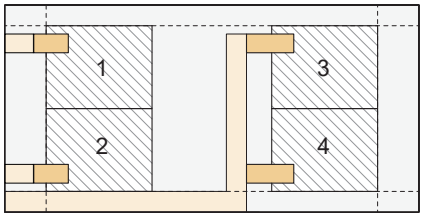
CORNER W/ ALLEY



NR - LOW | **MIDBLOCK INFILL** | 4-UNIT

UNIT DIAGRAM

(4) TOWNHOMES



CURRENT ZONING

DENSITY: **3 UNITS (1 + 2 ADUS)**

FAR: **.5**

HEIGHT: **25 to 30 FT**
PLUS 5 FT TO T.O. SLOPED ROOF

PROPOSED ZONING

DENSITY: **4 UNITS**

FAR: **1.0**

HEIGHT: **30 FT**
PLUS 5 FT TO T.O. SLOPED ROOF

BUILDING STATS

DENSITY: **4 UNITS (TOWNHOMES)**

FAR: **1.0**

HEIGHT: **30 FT**
PLUS 5 FT TO T.O. SLOPED ROOF

TOTAL FLOORS: **4**

PARKING: **0 STALLS**

UNIT STATS

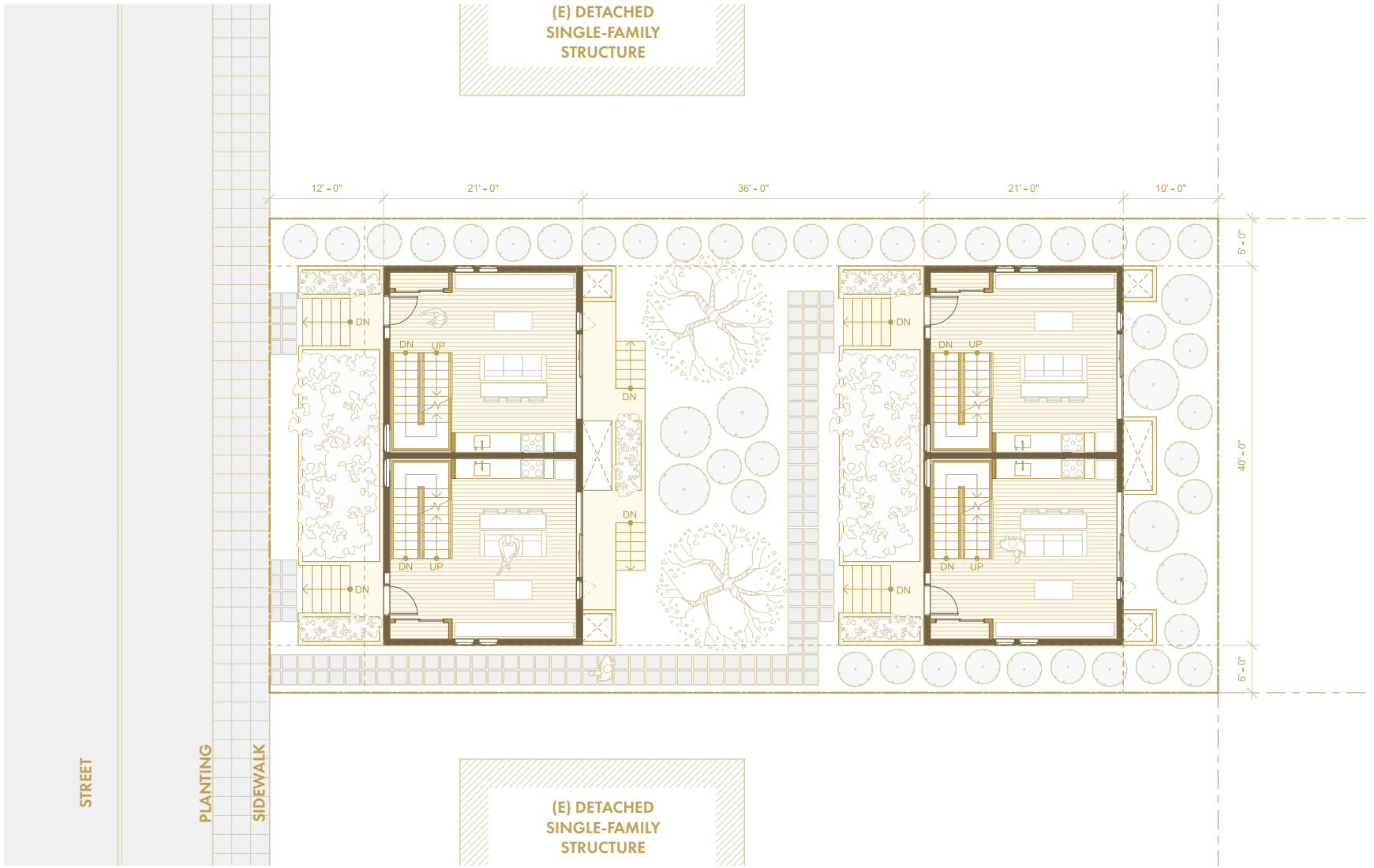
ALL UNITS THE SAME

FLOOR AREA: **1,238 SF**

BEDROOMS: **4**

BATHS: **3**

VIEW FROM STREET



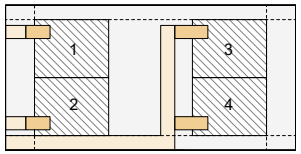
GROUND LEVEL FLOOR PLAN

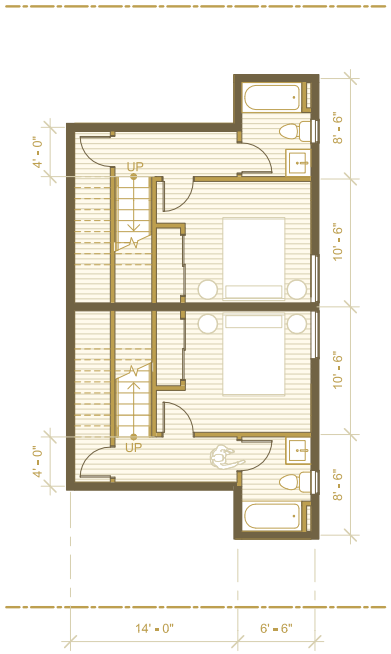
4-UNIT | NR LOW | MIDBLOCK INFILL

0′ 4′ 8′ 16′ 32′

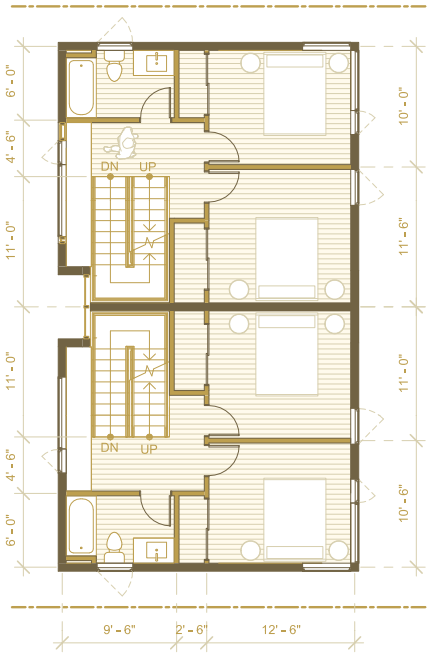
UNIT DIAGRAM

(4) TOWNHOMES

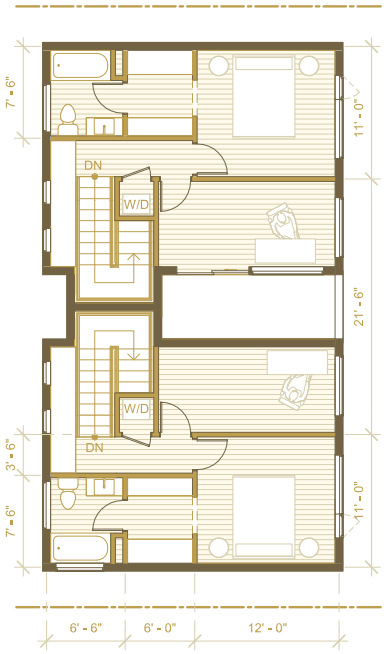




BASEMENT



SECOND LEVEL

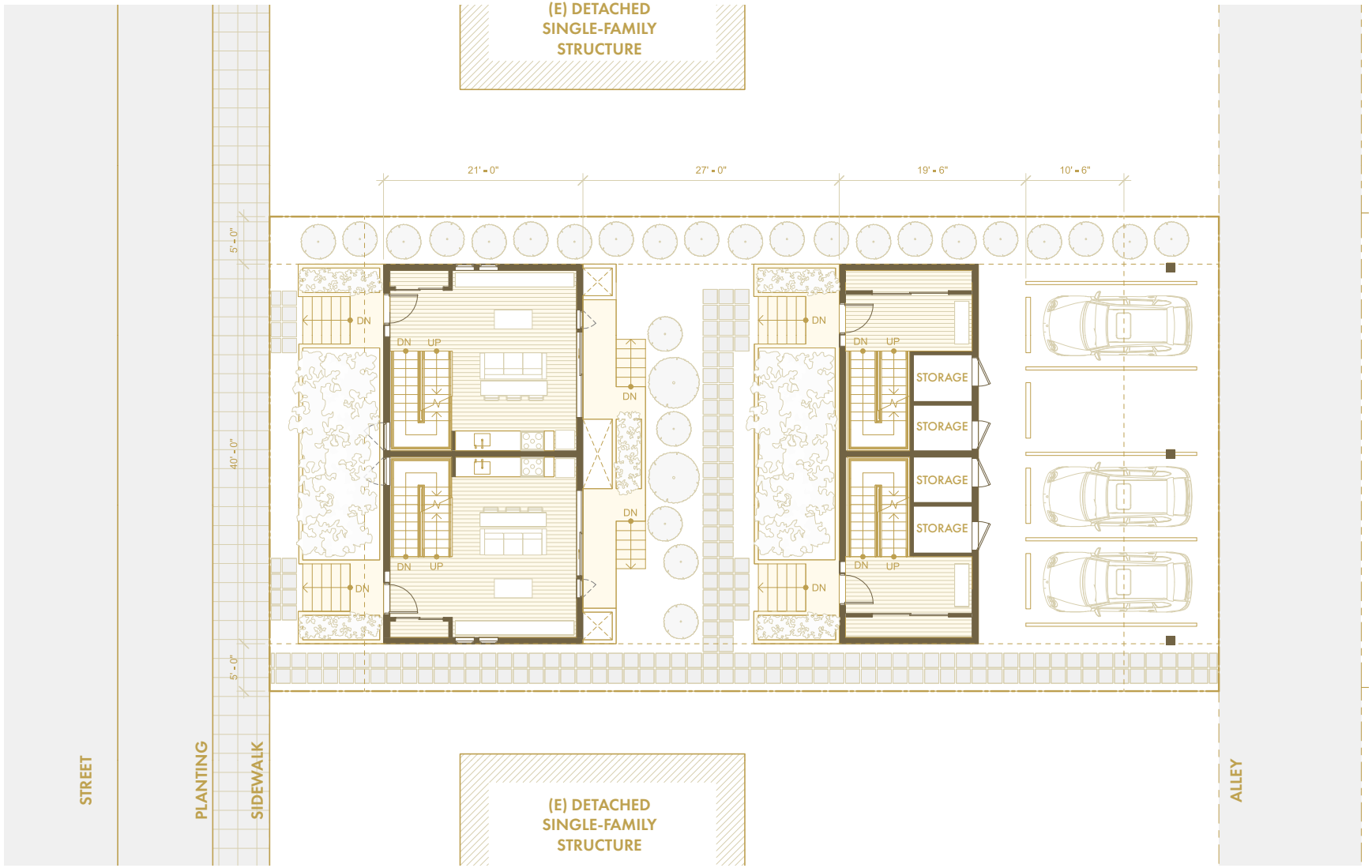


THIRD LEVEL

FLOOR PLANS

4-UNIT | NR LOW | MIDBLOCK INFILL

0′ 4′ 8′ 16′



GROUND LEVEL FLOOR PLAN

4-UNIT | NR LOW | MIDBLOCK INFILL WITH ALLEY

0′ 4′ 8′ 16′ 32′

BUILDING STATS

DENSITY: **4 UNITS (TOWNHOMES)**

FAR: **1.0**

HEIGHT: **30 FT**
PLUS 5 FT TO T.O. SLOPED ROOF

TOTAL FLOORS: **4**

PARKING: **4 STALLS**

UNIT STATS

UNITS OVER PARKING

FLOOR AREA: **929 SF**

BEDROOMS: **2**

BATHS: **2**

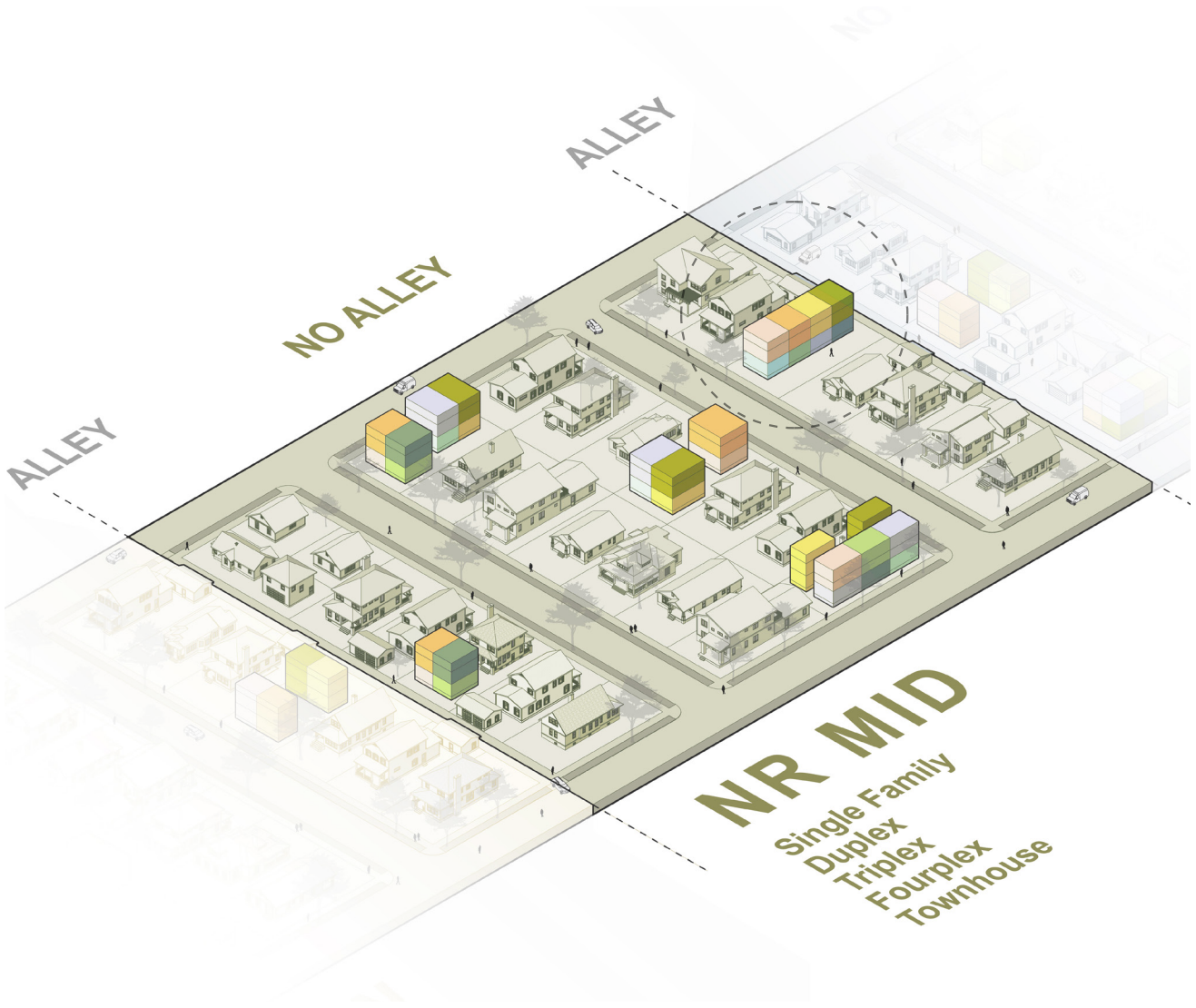
PARKING: **1 STALL EACH**

VIEW FROM ALLEY

VIEW FROM STREET

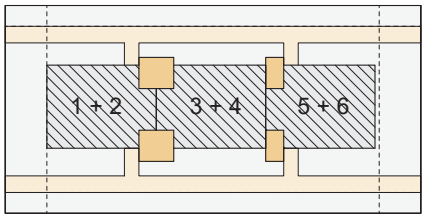
VIEW OF SHARED COURTYARD

NR - MID | MIDBLOCK INFILL WITH ALLEY | 6-UNIT



UNIT DIAGRAM

(6) STACKED FLATS



CURRENT ZONING

DENSITY: **3 UNITS (1 + 2 ADUS)**

FAR: **.5**

HEIGHT: **25 to 30 FT**
PLUS 5 FT TO T.O. SLOPED ROOF

PROPOSED ZONING

DENSITY: **6 UNITS**

FAR: **1.2**

HEIGHT: **30 FT**
PLUS 5 FT TO T.O. SLOPED ROOF

BUILDING STATS

DENSITY: **6 UNITS (STACKED FLATS)**

FAR: **1.2**

HEIGHT: **30 FT**
PLUS 5 FT TO T.O. SLOPED ROOF

TOTAL FLOORS: **4**

PARKING: **0 STALLS**

UNIT STATS

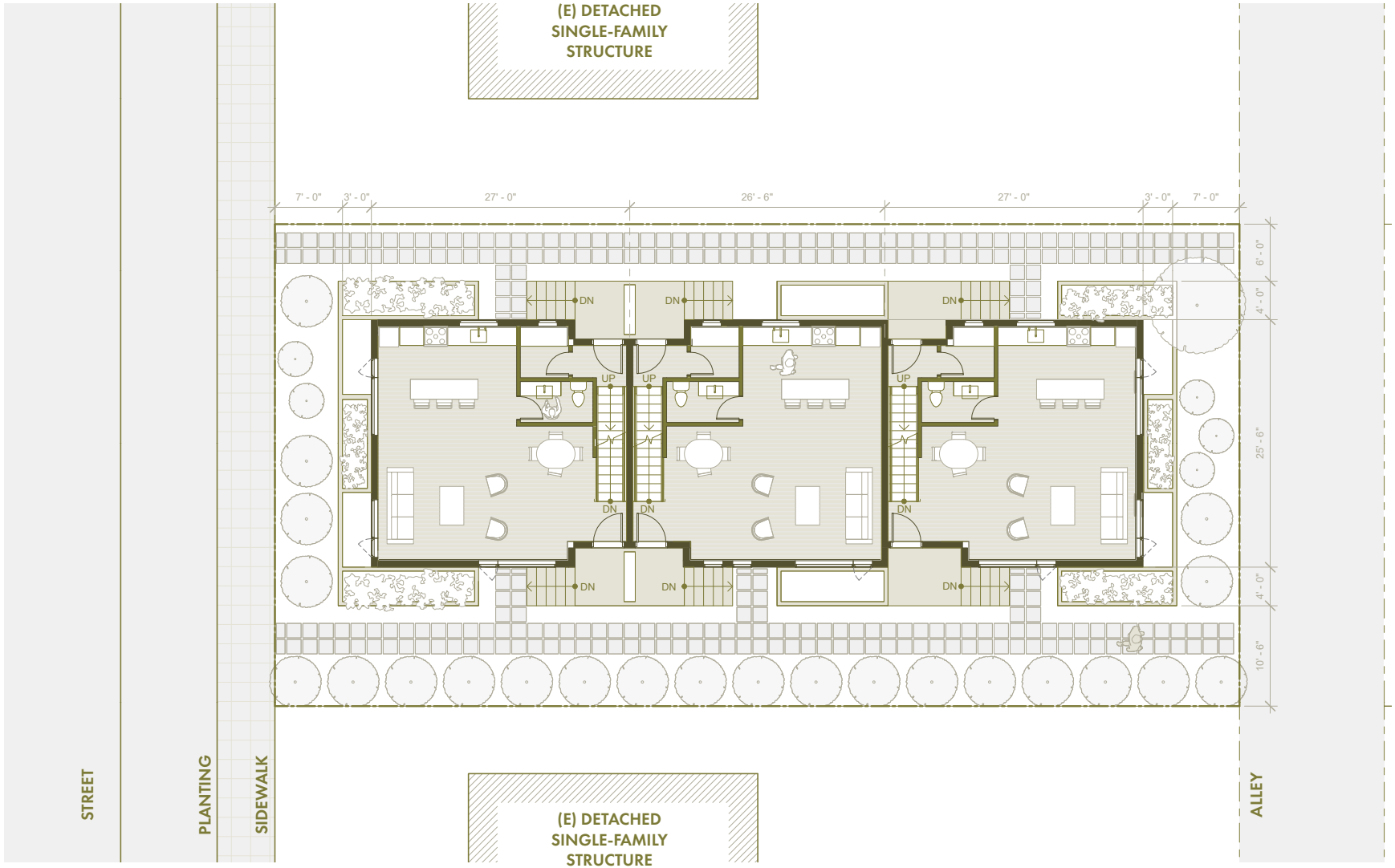
ALL UNITS THE SIMILAR

FLOOR AREA: **1,206 SF**

BEDROOMS: **2 + DEN**

BATHS: **2.5**

VIEW FROM STREET



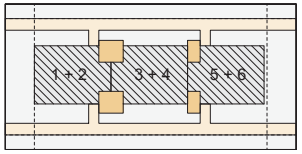
GROUND LEVEL FLOOR PLAN

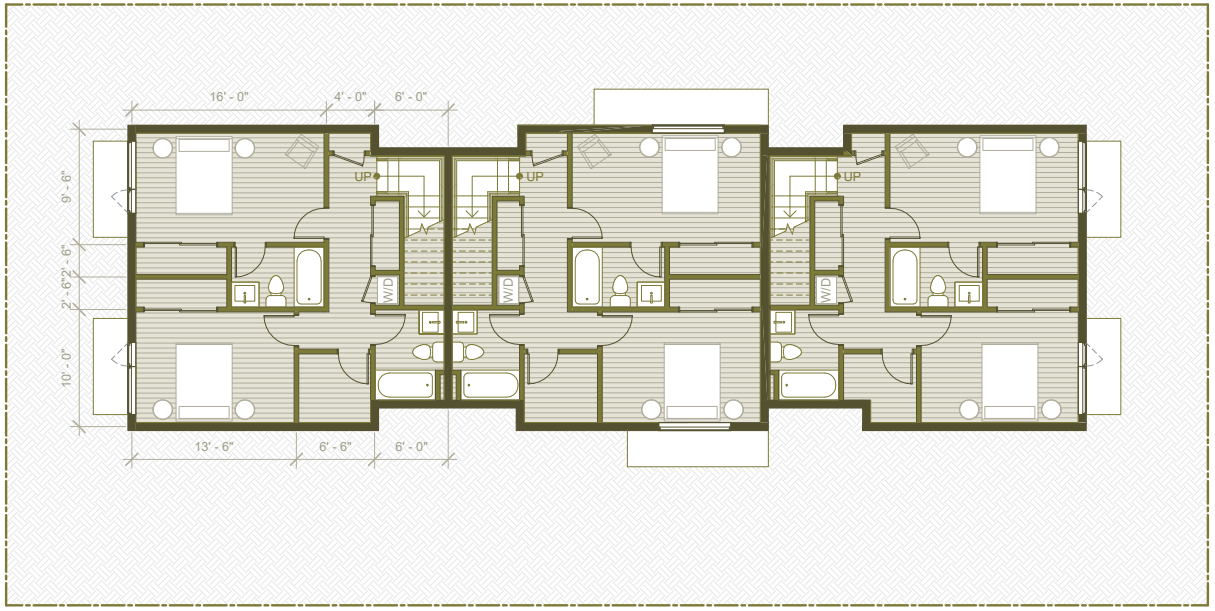
6-UNIT | NR MID | MIDBLOCK INFILL WITH ALLEY

0′ 4′ 8′ 16′ 32′

UNIT DIAGRAM

(6) STACKED FLATS





BASEMENT / BEDROOM FLOOR PLAN

6-UNIT | NR MID | MIDBLOCK INFILL WITH ALLEY

0′ 4′ 8′ 16′ 32′

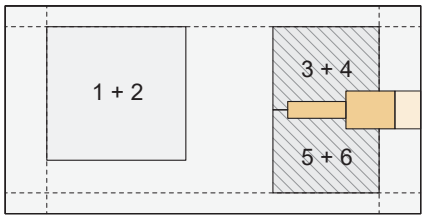
VIEW OF MIDBLOCK WALKWAY

VIEW OF UNIT ENTRIES

NR - MID | **MIDBLOCK INFILL WITH ALLEY** | KEEP EXISTING HOUSING STOCK + ADA | 6-UNIT

UNIT DIAGRAM

(4) STACKED FLATS
(1) EXISTING HOME + (1) ADU



CURRENT ZONING

DENSITY: **3 UNITS (1 + 2 ADUS)**

FAR: **.5**

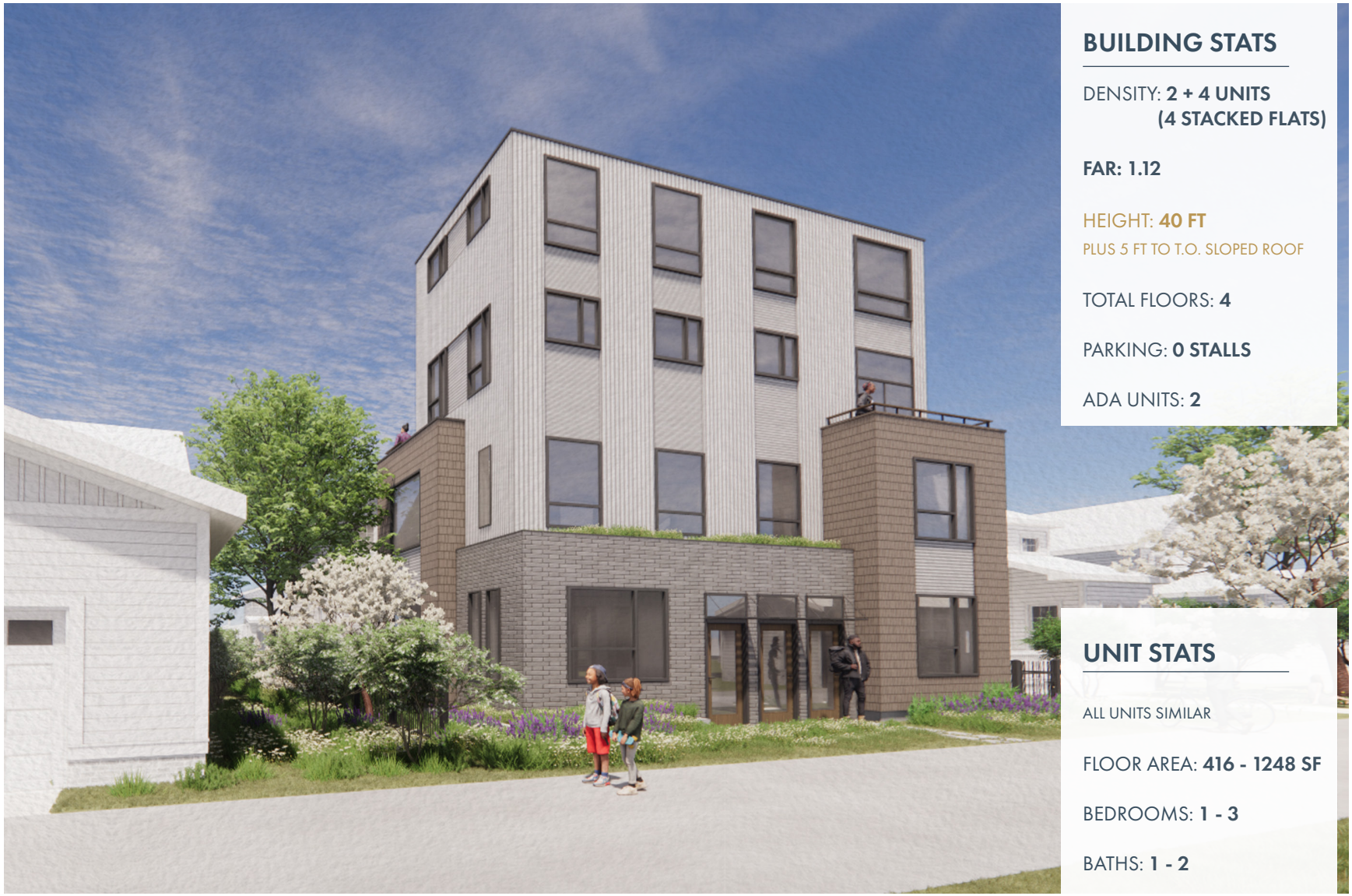
HEIGHT: **25 to 30 FT**
PLUS 5 FT TO T.O. SLOPED ROOF

PROPOSED ZONING

DENSITY: **6 UNITS**

FAR: **1.2**

HEIGHT: **40 FT**
PLUS 5 FT TO T.O. SLOPED ROOF



BUILDING STATS

DENSITY: **2 + 4 UNITS**
(4 STACKED FLATS)

FAR: 1.12

HEIGHT: **40 FT**
PLUS 5 FT TO T.O. SLOPED ROOF

TOTAL FLOORS: **4**

PARKING: **0 STALLS**

ADA UNITS: **2**

UNIT STATS

ALL UNITS SIMILAR

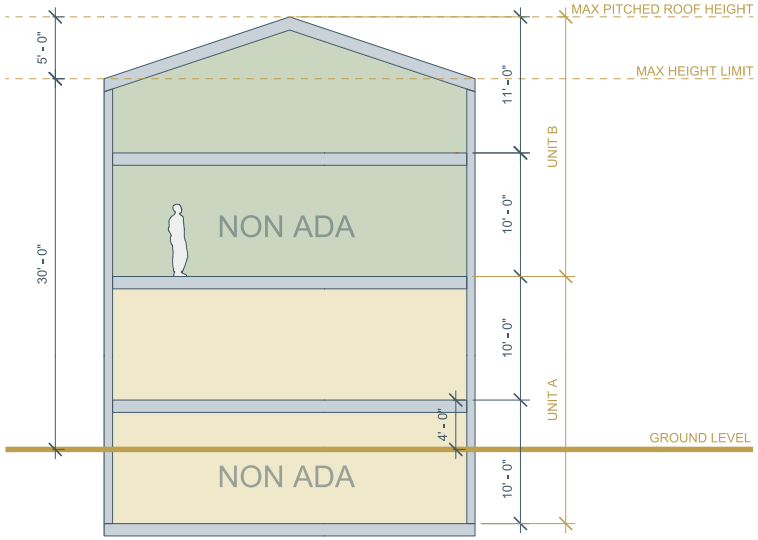
FLOOR AREA: **416 - 1248 SF**

BEDROOMS: **1 - 3**

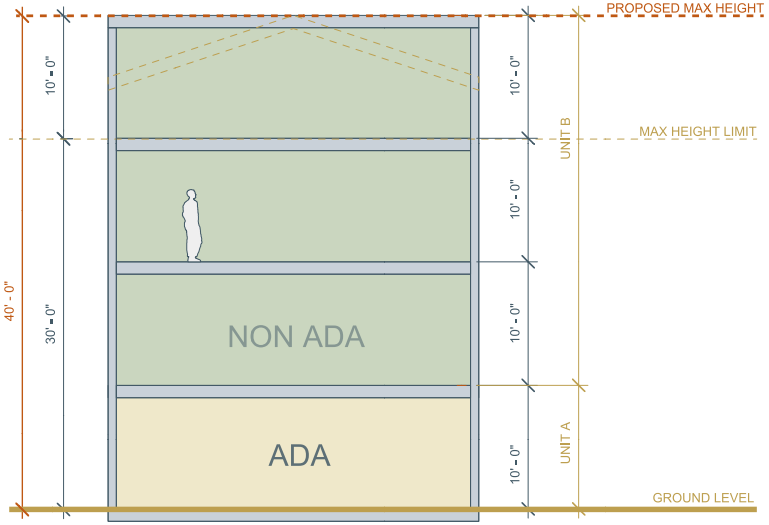
BATHS: **1 - 2**

VIEW FROM ALLEY

CURRENT HEIGHT LIMITATIONS



ADA OPTION

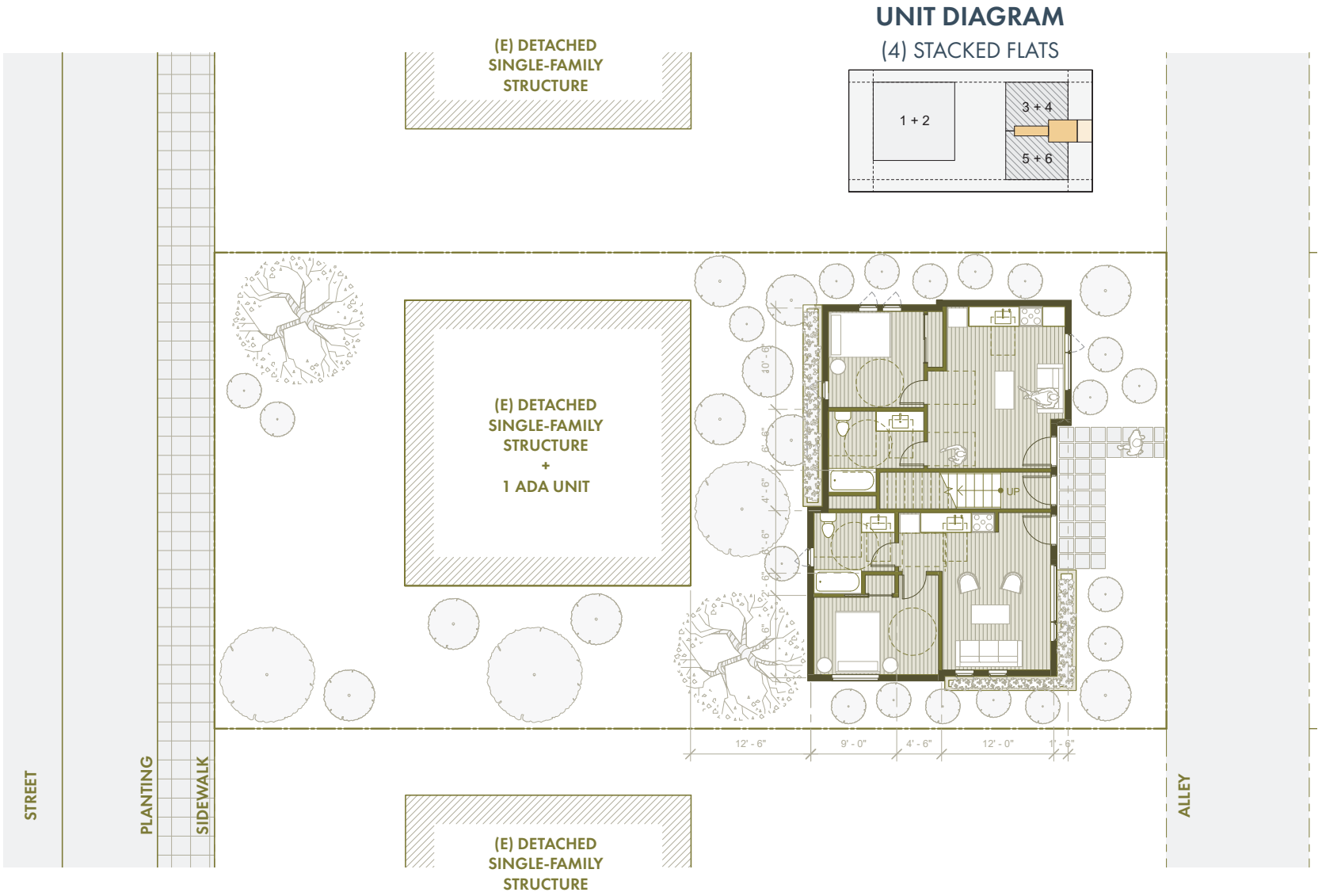


TYPICAL SECTION DIAGRAM

NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTIAL HEIGHT LIMITATIONS

ADA Height Incentive

Considering incentives for ADA accessibility when developing new regulations is vital for promoting equal access and inclusivity in housing design. Developers often prioritize maximizing floor space, often leading to basement floors. This can result in non-ADA-accessible units due to the need for stairs to access the elevated ground level required to bring in daylight into the basement floor. To address the potential lack of ADA accessibility in new housing structures, it is crucial to explore ADA incentives. One potential incentive is to allow for increased building height when the basement floor level is eliminated. This approach involves keeping the finished floor level of the ground floor at grade, making it ADA-accessible. This would work in situations where stacked flats are pursued, where the above floors would serve as a separate dwelling unit. The extra height ensures that the developer has the incentive to provide the ADA unit, as they would not lose any occupiable floor space by eliminating the basement floor plate. By introducing ADA incentives, we can ensure that new housing structures cater to all individuals, including those with mobility impairments.



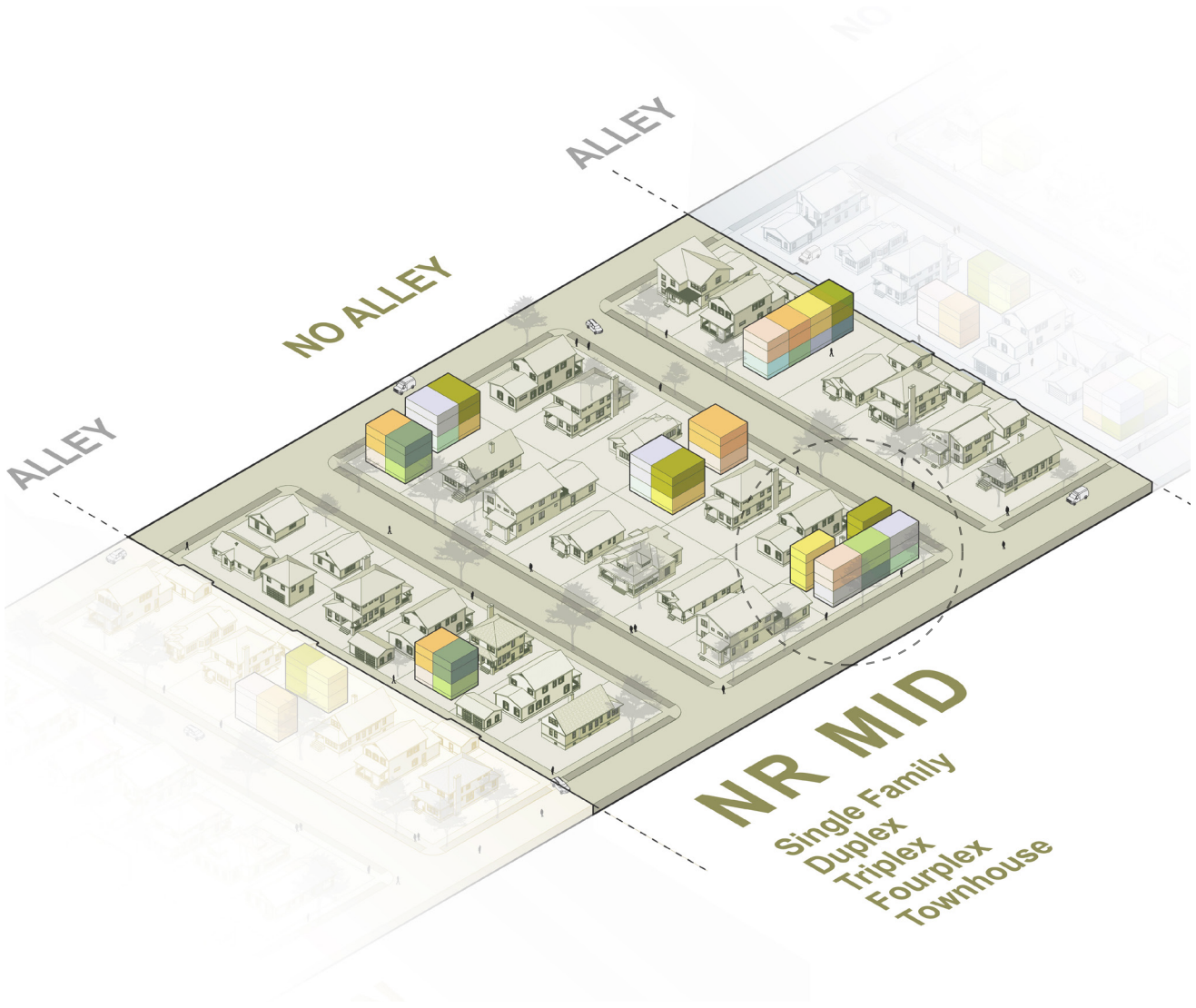
GROUND LEVEL FLOOR PLAN

6-UNIT | NR MID | MIDBLOCK INFILL WITH ALLEY | KEEP EXISTING HOUSING STOCK + ADA

0′ 4′ 8′ 16′ 32′

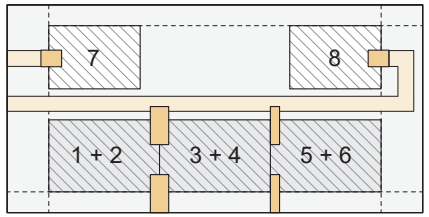
VIEW FROM NEIGHBORING HOME

NR - MID | **CORNER** | 8-UNIT



UNIT DIAGRAM

(6) STACKED FLATS
(2) TOWNHOMES



CURRENT ZONING

DENSITY: **3 UNITS (1 + 2 ADUS)**

FAR: **.5**

HEIGHT: **25 to 30 FT**
PLUS 5 FT TO T.O. SLOPED ROOF

PROPOSED ZONING

DENSITY: **8 UNITS**

FAR: **1.2**

HEIGHT: **30 FT**
PLUS 5 FT TO T.O. SLOPED ROOF

BUILDING STATS

DENSITY: **8 UNITS**
(6 STACKED FLATS)
(2 TOWNHOMES)

FAR: **1.2**

HEIGHT: **30 FT**
PLUS 5 FT TO T.O. SLOPED ROOF

TOTAL FLOORS: **4**

PARKING: **0 STALLS**

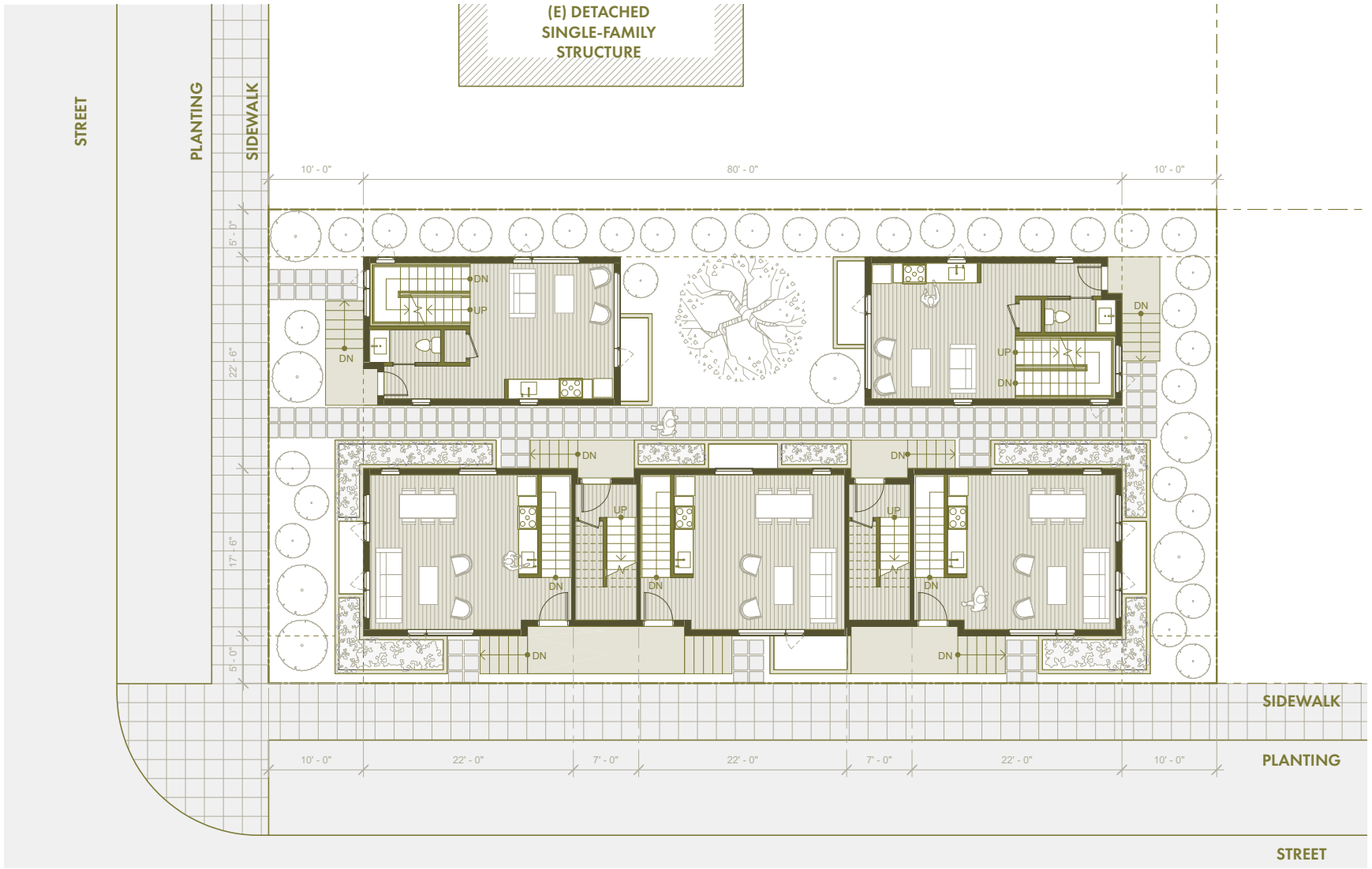
UNIT STATS

FLOOR AREA: **674 - 1472 SF**

BEDROOMS: **1 - 4**

BATHS: **1 - 4**

VIEW FROM STREET



GROUND LEVEL FLOOR PLAN

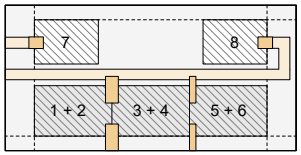
8-UNIT | NR MID | CORNER

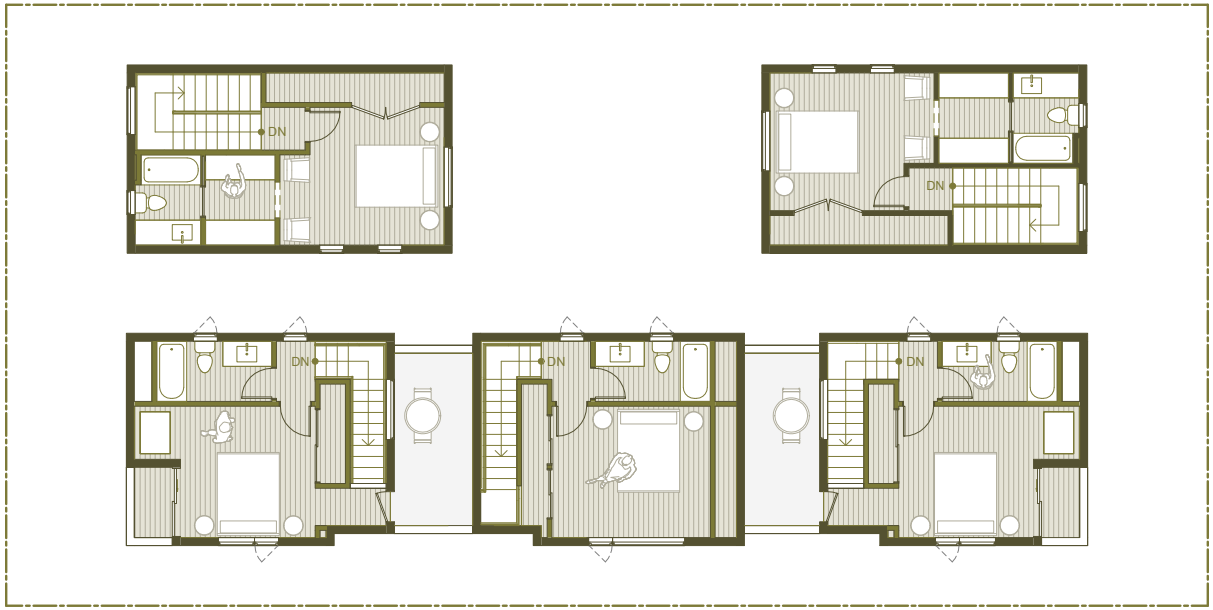
0′ 4′ 8′ 16′ 32′

UNIT DIAGRAM

(6) STACKED FLATS

(2) TOWNHOMES





UPPER LEVEL / BEDROOM FLOOR PLAN

8-UNIT | NR MID | CORNER

0′ 4′ 8′ 16′ 32′

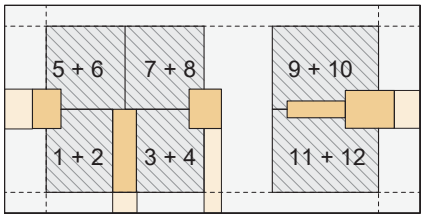
VIEW FROM STREET

VIEW FROM SHARED COURTYARD

NR - HIGH | CORNER WITH ALLEY | 12-UNIT

UNIT DIAGRAM

(12) STACKED FLATS



CURRENT ZONING

DENSITY: **3 UNITS (1 + 2 ADUS)**

FAR: **.5**

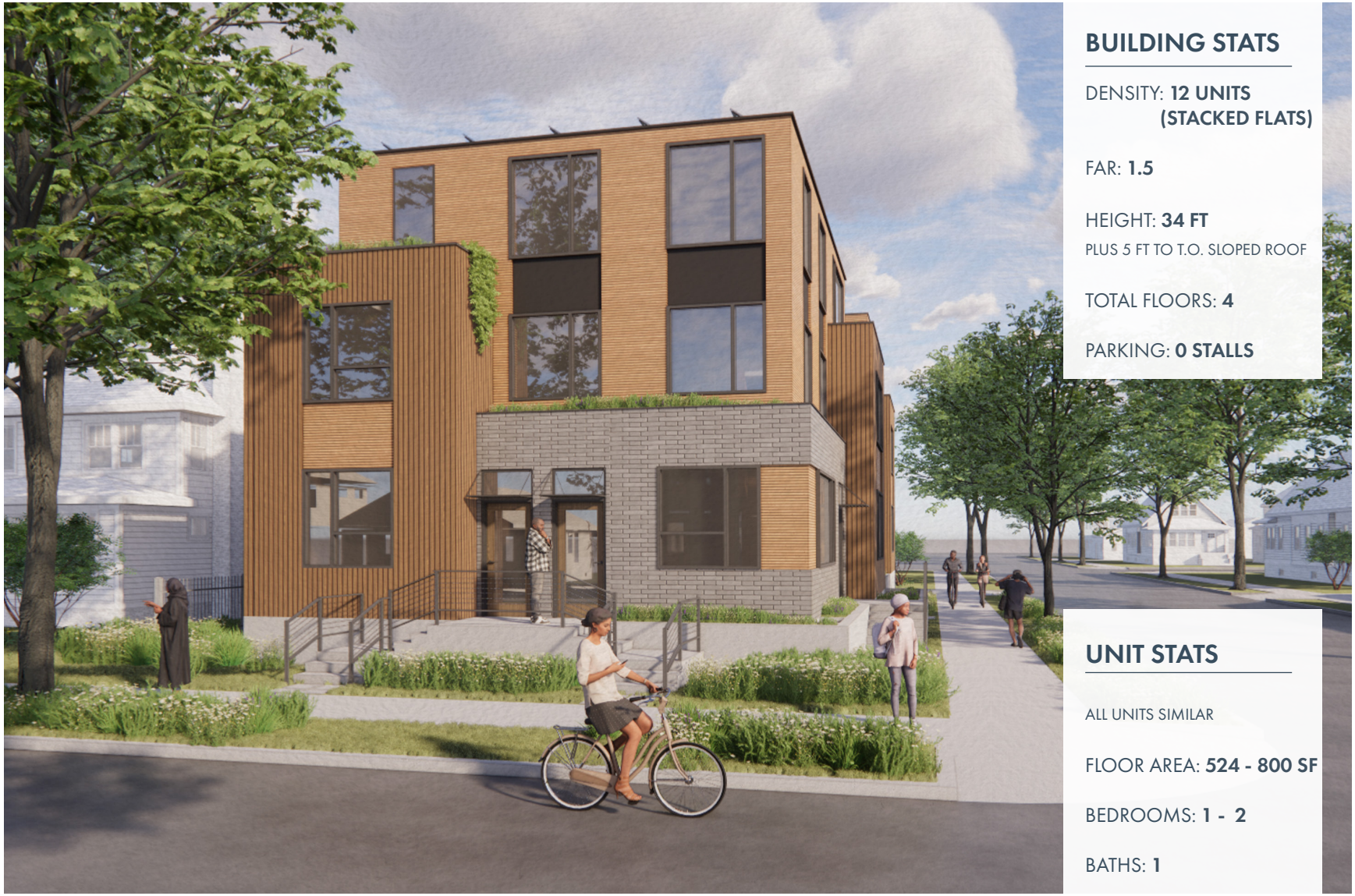
HEIGHT: **25 to 30 FT**
PLUS 5 FT TO T.O. SLOPED ROOF

PROPOSED ZONING

DENSITY: **12 UNITS**

FAR: **1.5**

HEIGHT: **30 FT**
PLUS 5 FT TO T.O. SLOPED ROOF



BUILDING STATS

DENSITY: **12 UNITS (STACKED FLATS)**

FAR: **1.5**

HEIGHT: **34 FT**
PLUS 5 FT TO T.O. SLOPED ROOF

TOTAL FLOORS: **4**

PARKING: **0 STALLS**

UNIT STATS

ALL UNITS SIMILAR

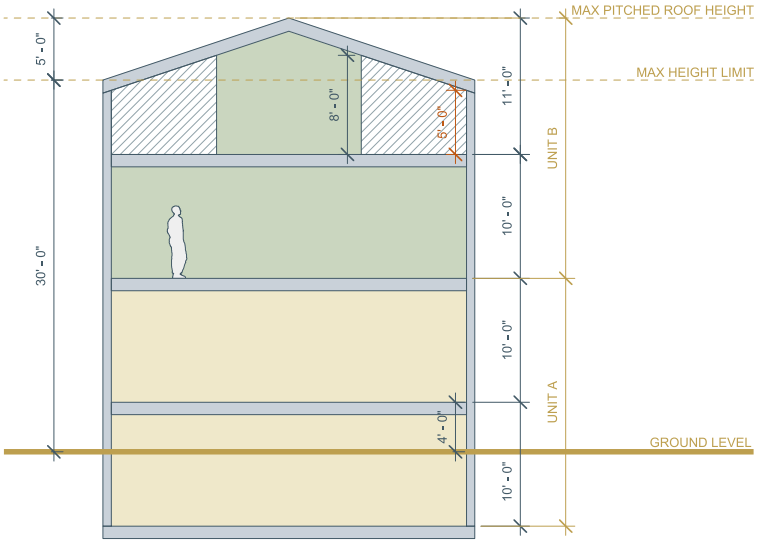
FLOOR AREA: **524 - 800 SF**

BEDROOMS: **1 - 2**

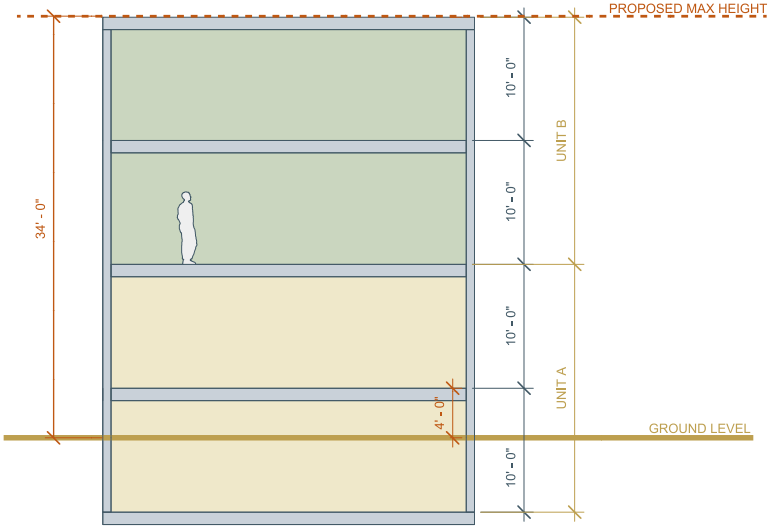
BATHS: **1**

VIEW FROM STREET

CURRENT HEIGHT LIMITATIONS



FLEXIBLE OPTION



TYPICAL SECTION DIAGRAM

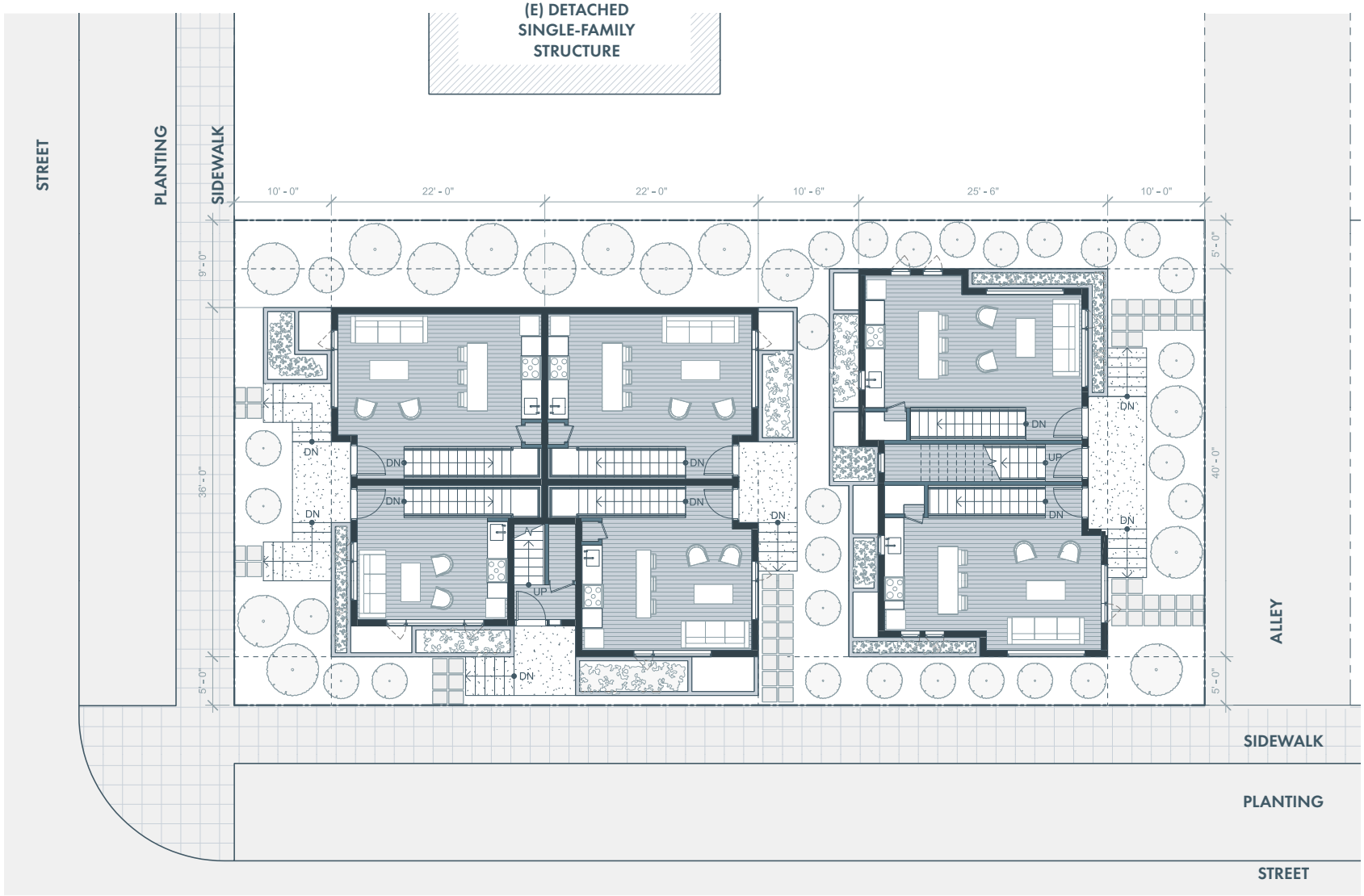
NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTIAL HEIGHT LIMITATIONS

Density Height Incentive

Similar to increasing the prevalence of ADA units, high-density units may also need additional consideration to provide construction incentives. The current limitation of 30-foot maximum building height, with an additional 5 feet for pitched roofs creates a challenge when occupying the top floor. About two-thirds of the top floor in pitched roof structures is unoccupiable due to head height clearances. This restricts the usable floor area of the top floor of stacked flat units which rely on the extra height allowed by pitched roofs. Consequently, this leads to reduced livable spaces and fewer bedrooms in the upper units of stacked flats. Additionally, smaller unit sizes can pose difficulties as they may not adequately meet the needs of families.

To overcome these issues, this thesis proposes the consideration of density incentives within Neighborhood Residential (NR) zones. These incentives would allow units to reach a maximum height of 30 feet, plus the distance between the finished floor of the ground level and the average grade. In the case of this diagram, this would be a maximum of 34 feet, without a pitched roof. Eliminating the pitched roof would optimize the efficiency of stacked flat units, facilitating the inclusion of family-sized units. IT would also enable the replication of floor plans between lower and upper units, maximizing space utilization and providing for economical designs.

NR - HIGH | CORNER WITH ALLEY | 12-UNIT



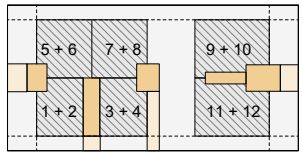
GROUND LEVEL FLOOR PLAN

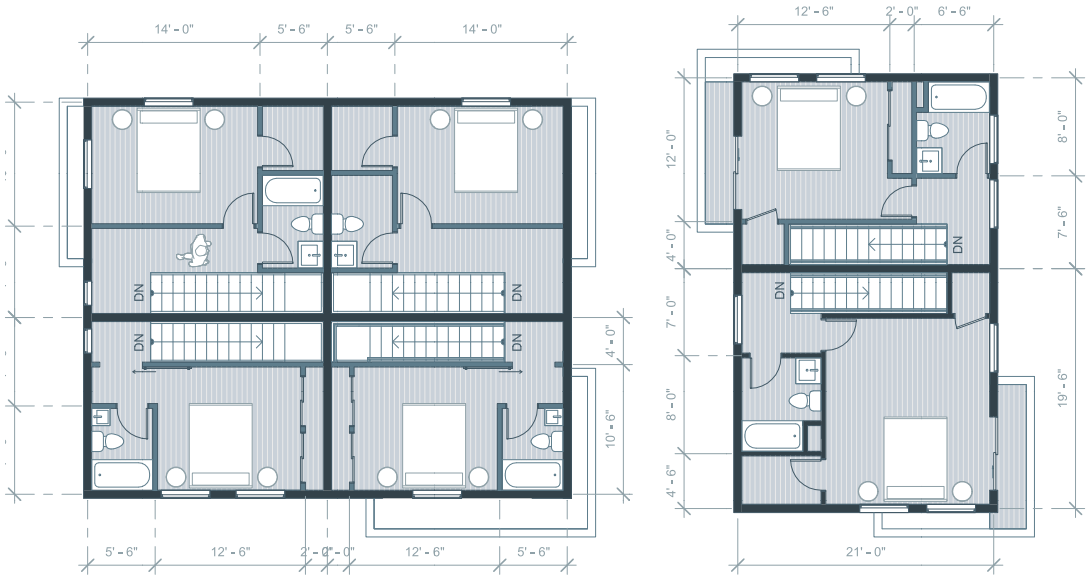
12-UNIT | NR MID | CORNER WITH ALLEY

0' 4' 8' 16' 32'

UNIT DIAGRAM

(12) STACKED FLATS





LEVEL 3 / BEDROOM FLOOR PLAN

12-UNIT | NR MID | CORNER WITH ALLEY

0′ 4′ 8′ 16′ 32′

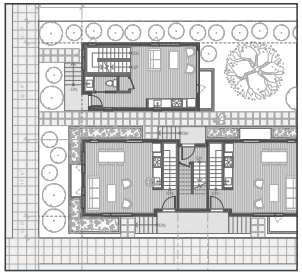
VIEW FROM STREET CORNER

VIEW FROM STREET ENTERING ALLEY

Additional Considerations

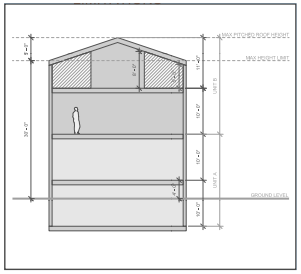
Developing a range of housing design possibilities in existing detached single-family neighborhoods is essential for envisioning the opportunities and challenges for increasing neighborhood density and providing equitable, diverse, and affordable housing choices. By exploring various design approaches, housing solutions can cater to a wider population. This ensures that housing can be more accessible. However, to achieve greater housing equity and diversity in Seattle, it is crucial to consider a wide variety of strategies. Minneapolis' linear approach to density has limited their new housing production, and in contrast, Portland's multi-scaled approach has seemingly been more successful. Key factors that Seattle should consider for the future of Neighborhood Residential (NR) zones include increased floor area ratios, increased height maximums, lot type variability, flexibility in ground-level uses, ADA incentives, elimination of parking requirements, alley considerations, and materiality incentives. First, allowing for higher floor area ratios can help with the construction of multi-family structures on small lots, and can help increase housing capacity. Allowing for increased height is especially important in stacked flat units, as reconsidering maximum height allowances can provide more housing options and increase the number of bedrooms in top-floor units. Lot variability can be very important when considering the opportunities that different lot types afford, and can encourage diverse housing options. Allowing flexibility in ground-level uses by incorporating small coffee shops or community spaces can enhance neighborhood vibrancy, and livability while supporting local businesses. This can bolster the idea of the 15-minute

city, and provide a framework for more sustainable neighborhoods in Seattle. Reducing parking requirements can also promote alternatives to car-dependent lifestyles and enhance walkability to support sustainable urban development as well. Parking requirements often limit the amount of housing that can be constructed on a lot, so eliminating this like Portland has done can also increase the construction of new housing. Alley considerations can enhance the human experience by exploring how housing frontages adjacent to alleys can improve the vibrancy and opportunities within alleys. Lastly, materiality incentives could help the perceived impact on human-scale development, and increase the visual appeal of new neighborhood development.



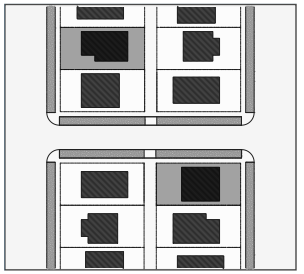
1

INCREASED FAR ALLOWANCES



2

INCREASED HEIGHT (STACKED FLATS ESPECIALLY)



3

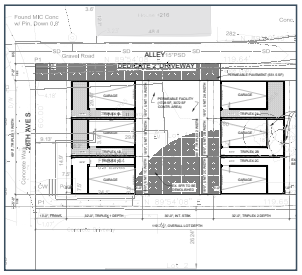
LOT TYPE VARIABILITY

4

FLEXIBILITY OF USES

5

ADA INCENTIVES

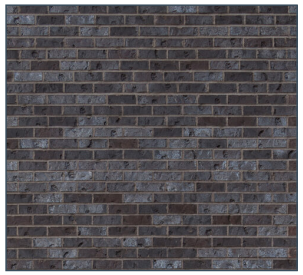


6

PARKING FLEXIBILITY

7

ALLEY CONSIDERATIONS



8

MATERIALITY INCENTIVES

CHAPTER FIVE

Findings + Conclusion

Goals

Recommendations + Conclusion

Goals

The primary goals of this thesis have revolved around exploring and presenting diverse design options for housing in Seattle's current detached single-family neighborhoods as a means to increase housing opportunities and envision Seattle's future. The significance of this project is its potential to foster increased density, affordability, equity, and housing diversity. By embracing various designs and methods to approach increasing density, this thesis challenges conventional low-density housing development to demonstrate the possibilities of equitable neighborhoods. In doing so, housing scarcity is addressed, but also it envisions a more inclusive and socially dynamic urban housing landscape. The options and recommendations outlined in this thesis hold the possibility of offering insights to Seattle's Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD), which is currently engaged in the development of Seattle's 2024 Comprehensive Plan Major Update. By considering these design explorations in their planning process, OPCD can have a better understanding of how new housing designs might unfold given the regulations outlined. OPCD has a unique opportunity to reshape historical patterns of racial inequity and segregation, and by recognizing the significance of housing equity as a central aspect of their next Comprehensive Plan Update, they can establish policies and regulations that better bolster the creation of inclusive communities. The ultimate aim of this project is to open a conversation and ongoing collaboration between academia, practitioners, and policymakers, all working together to influence the future of Seattle. By actively engaging with stakeholders, the goal is to shape the future trajectory of housing development in Seattle. The zoning suggestions and additional recommendations outlined in this thesis are intended for Seattle's Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) to consider during the city's comprehensive plan update. It is crucial for the city to adopt an approach that takes into account a variety of elements beyond solely relying on increased

density limits as the sole driver for diverse housing production in currently low-density neighborhoods. While density plays a significant role and requires increases, it is equally as important to acknowledge the influence of other factors in creating sustainable, equitable, and diverse communities. The OPCD should prioritize the incorporation of design strategies that address quality and livability alongside increased density. This can include things outlined like increased FAR considerations, human-scaled alley considerations, and the shift away from vehicle reliance and parking minimums. By adopting a holistic approach to housing development, the city can foster vibrant neighborhoods that not only focus on maximizing density but also cultivate livability, diversity, equity, and a strong sense of place and community. By embracing these recommendations and adopting various strategies, the city can begin to mend historic patterns of segregation and inequitable planning practices in the built environment.

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