Getting to Middle Housing

Civic Lab Housing Series

October 27th, 2020
Agenda

1. What is Middle Housing?
2. Where it Exists, Where it Doesn’t, and Why
3. Benefits of Middle Housing
4. Six Steps to a Middle Housing Friendly Code
What is Middle Housing?
Anatomy of Middle Housing

1. Small units (higher per sqft costs, lower overall costs)
2. Low parking
3. Ground-related
4. Integrate private and shared open space
5. Detached or common walls
6. Small developers
Middle Housing is Everywhere!

FOLSOM

MARYSVILLE

PLACERVILLE

WOODLAND

SACRAMENTO
Where it Exists,
Where it Doesn’t,
and Why...
Middle Housing in the SACOG Region

Every county has it!
Middle Housing in Sacramento’s “Streetcar Suburbs”

Right: Map of the PG&E Streetcar network circa 1925 with 2-8 unit residential parcels overlayed.
Middle Housing’s Heyday (1890 - 1950)

Woodland, CA - Parcels Coded by Year Built

Woodland, CA - 2 to 8 unit structures
Middle Housing’s Heyday (1890 - 1950)

Legend
- Existing Middle Housing
- Year Built
  - pre-1920
  - 1921 - 1950
  - 1951 - 1970
  - 1971 - 1990
  - 1991 - 2010
  - 2011 - 2020

Winters, CA - Parcels Coded by Year Built

Winters, CA - 2 to 8 unit structures
Why did Middle Housing go “Missing”?

Middle housing is considered “missing” because relatively little of this housing has been built since the 1940s. Middle housing was common in neighborhoods in most communities prior to World War II.

- Post-war prosperity and federal policies
- Rise of auto-dependent development
- Single-family zoning made many middle housing types illegal to build

Above: Wyer’s End Cottage Court in White Salmon, WA (town of 2,000 people)
“Illegal” Middle Housing

In cities across the country, much of the middle housing stock that exists could not be replicated today.

The irony is that this “gentle infill” is often held up as an ideal of neighborhood character.

Fourplex
7,500 sq. ft. lot

Above: Typical pre-war fourplex, Portland, OR
“Illegal” Middle Housing

In Laramie, WY, zoning code amendments made in the 1950s require a minimum of 16,500 square feet of lot area for a fourplex, more than double lot area in the previous example.

The result? Developers need to purchase an impractical amount of land which is rarely available without lot assembly. This makes middle housing difficult to achieve and expensive to build.
3

Benefits of Middle Housing
Middle Housing is Sustainable

- Lower VMT
- Less water and energy use
- Emerging construction techniques and low carbon materials
- Stormwater management opportunities

Source: UrbanFootprint
Middle Housing is Fiscally Responsible

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development Program</th>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Price per Unit</th>
<th>Total Value</th>
<th>Value per Acre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle Housing Cluster</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$310,000</td>
<td>$8.68 Mil.</td>
<td>$4.34 Mil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detached SF Subdivision</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>$550,000</td>
<td>$24.75 Mil.</td>
<td>$275 Thou.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Middle Housing is More Affordable

**Big House**
- Price: $576,000
- 2,350 Sq Ft
- 4 BR / 2.5 Bath

**Cottage**
- Price: $311,000
- 620 Sq Ft
- 2 BR / 1 Bath
Middle Housing is Attractive

ABOVE: Ankeny Row, Portland, OR
TOP LEFT: The Cannery, Davis, CA
BOTTOM LEFT: Greenwood Ave. Cottages, Seattle, WA

#CUTE
#WANT 😍 amore
#COTTAGELYFE
Middle Housing is COVID-19 Friendly!

Left: Cully Grove
Above: Cooper Townhome Court

AMPLE OUTDOOR SPACE

BUILT IN SOCIAL DISTANCING
Six Steps to a Middle Housing Friendly Code
Six Steps to a Middle Housing Friendly Code

1. Get to know your neighborhoods
2. Take an inventory of your code
3. Daylight the barriers to middle housing
4. Focus more on form, less on density
5. Apply predictable and flexible design standards
6. Prioritize housing for people over storage for cars
1. Get to Know Your Neighborhoods

Existing Middle Housing
1. Get to Know Your Neighborhoods

Block and Lot Patterns

- 6,900 sq. ft.
- 125'
- 55'
1. Get to Know Your Neighborhoods

Typical Lot Sizes

- **Opportunity Site/Prototype Ideas**
  - Small/narrow lot single-family prototype that could work on lots as small as 3,000 sf
  - Cottage cluster prototype that could work on 5,000 sf and up - integrate into larger opportunity sites?
  - Multiplex/townhome prototype that could work on 7,000 sf

Bar chart showing:
- 42% of lots less than 5,000 sf
- 42% of lots between 5,000 and 9,500 sf
- 15% of lots more than 9,500 sf
1. Get to Know Your Neighborhoods

Building Forms
2. Take an Inventory of Your Code

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Permitted Uses/Housing Types</th>
<th>Large Lot Residential</th>
<th>Low Residential</th>
<th>Medium Residential</th>
<th>Traditional N’hood</th>
<th>Missing Middle</th>
<th>Multifamily</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RL</td>
<td>R1 - 9600</td>
<td>R1 - 4800</td>
<td>R2 - 2400</td>
<td>R2 - 1200</td>
<td>R3 - 6250</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residential</th>
<th>Single-Family</th>
<th>ADU</th>
<th>Duplex</th>
<th>Triplex/Fourplex</th>
<th>Townhomes</th>
<th>Multifamily</th>
</tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

(● indicates permitted, ● indicates not permitted)
## 2. Take an Inventory of Your Code

### Development/Design Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RR</th>
<th>RR-A</th>
<th>R1</th>
<th>R1-A</th>
<th>R-2</th>
<th>MR</th>
<th>MR-A</th>
<th>MHP</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DENSITY</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Maximum (units/acre)</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>20.7/8.7</td>
<td></td>
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<td>5 1/2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>LOT DIMENSIONS</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min lot area (sf)</td>
<td>2 acres</td>
<td>5 acres</td>
<td>11,250</td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>2100/5000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Min lot width (ft)</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>8 (3)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BUILDING PLACEMENT</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Min front yard setback (ft)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min side yard setback (ft)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
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<td>(1)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min rear yard setback (ft)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td></td>
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<td>(1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corner lot</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BUILDING FORM</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max height (ft)</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Daylight the Barriers to Middle Housing

Diversity of zones ≠ diversity of housing types
3. Daylight the Barriers to Middle Housing

Minimum Lot Size

- R5 Zone
- 7% of lots eligible for a 12-plex (>36,000 sf)
How many lots are available for different types of housing?
How many lots are available for different types of housing?
How many lots are available for different types of housing?

- 13% of lots eligible for a duplex (>9,500 sf)
- 0.2% of lots eligible for a fourplex (>16,500 sf)
3. Daylight the Barriers to Middle Housing

Minimum Lot Size

New housing prohibited: 31% of lots

Single-Family House: 68% of lots

Duplex: 13% of lots

Fourplex: 0.2% of lots
3. Daylight the Barriers to Middle Housing

A developer would need to acquire up to 5 adjacent lots in order to construct this building.

This is a significant barrier because it is unlikely that a lot this large is available or multiple property owners will sell simultaneously.
3. Daylight the Barriers to Middle Housing

Max Density

**Duplex**
- Density: **17** units per acre
- Floor-Area-Ratio: **0.55**
- Lot Coverage: **42%**

**Single-Family House**
- Density: **8** units per acre
- Floor-Area-Ratio: **0.53**
- Lot Coverage: **41%**
3. Daylight the Barriers to Middle Housing

Max Density

Density: 7 - 55 du/acre!

Image Credit: Opticos Design
3. Daylight the Barriers to Middle Housing

Max Density

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone Standards</th>
<th>Sales Price Per Unit</th>
<th># of Units</th>
<th>Monthly Mortgage Payment</th>
<th>Monthly Rent Per Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard single-family home</td>
<td>$575,800 (181% AMI)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$2,473</td>
<td>$3,361 (180% AMI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current cottage cluster standard</td>
<td>$334,000 (107% AMI)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$1,434</td>
<td>$2,900 (155% AMI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove density limit</td>
<td>$231,000 (82% AMI)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$992</td>
<td>$2,061 (110% AMI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce setbacks and separation standards</td>
<td>$216,300 (77% AMI)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>$929</td>
<td>$1,888 (101% AMI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce private and shared yard standards</td>
<td>$207,100 (74% AMI)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>$889</td>
<td>$1,773 (95% AMI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow on-street parking to count</td>
<td>$202,100 (72% AMI)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>$868</td>
<td>$1,674 (90% AMI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase height to two full stories</td>
<td>$199,600 (71% AMI)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>$857</td>
<td>$1,643 (88% AMI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow attached unit types</td>
<td>$191,000 (68% AMI)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>$820</td>
<td>$1,538 (82% AMI)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Feasible sale price drops by ~$100k
3. Daylight the Barriers to Middle Housing

**Max Density**

*R-3 Zone*  **Multiplex**

Reducing the minimum lot size to allow a 6-plex on a standard lot reduces achievable rents by 21%

Land costs dropped by 50% compared to the lot size required by existing zoning.
3. Daylight the Barriers to Middle Housing

Reducing parking requirements to 0.5 spaces per unit enables 2 additional units and rents to drop to about $1,400/month.

This rent level is 24% lower than achievable rents under the existing zoning.
3. Daylight the Barriers to Middle Housing

Parking

1 parking space consumes land that could be used for up to 1,600 SF of floor area. 1,600 SF equates to approximately 3 housing units or 2 retail spaces.

- 200 SF for access
- 200 SF for storage

Need total of 400 SF for every space.
3. Daylight the Barriers to Middle Housing

For lots without alley access, high off-street parking requirements are a significant barrier.

- 2 BR units: 5 off-street spaces, 1 on-street space
  - Very little usable yard space

- 3 BR units: 7 off-street spaces, 1 on-street space
  - Building reduced to make room for parking and drive aisle

Parking
3. Daylight the Barriers to Middle Housing

Setbacks and Open Space

- Front site setback: 15 ft
- Side site setbacks: 5 ft each side
- Rear site setback: 15 ft
- Space between cottages: 10 ft
- Minimum front yard depth: 10.5 ft
- Minimum rear yard depth: 7.5 ft
- Cottage other setback: 5 ft
- Minimum private open space per cottage: 100 sq ft
- Minimum dimensions of all sides of private open space: 10 ft
- Minimum common open space area per cottage: 100 sq ft
- Minimum dimension of one side of common open space: 20 ft

Beware of open space accumulation
4. Focus more on form, less on density

Set minimum lot size and density standards to promote infill of middle housing

- Align minimum lot sizes with typical existing lot sizes (or a multiple thereof)
- Increase maximum density to allow for targeted middle housing types
- Trade density increases for new bulk and scale controls
- Seek alternative ways to mitigate the impacts of density
4. Focus more on form, less on density

- House
- House + ADU
- Duplex

- House + 2 ADU
- Duplex + 1 ADU
- Triplex
- Fourplex

Max FAR

Image Credit: City of Portland
4. Focus more on form, less on density

**Max Building Width**

**EXISTING CODE: NO MAX WIDTH**

**PROPOSED CODE: MAX WIDTH 50'**
4. Focus more on form, less on density

EXISTING CODE: NO MAX DEPTH

PROPOSED CODE: MAX DEPTH 65'
4. Focus more on form, less on density

**TABLE 6. CLUSTER HOUSING DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standards</th>
<th>Low-density neighborhoods</th>
<th>Transit-connected locations</th>
<th>Commercial and multifamily zones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOME TYPES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building types allowed</td>
<td>Detached houses containing 1-4 homes</td>
<td>Detached and Attached</td>
<td>Detached and Attached</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOME SIZE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max building footprint per home</td>
<td>1,000 sf</td>
<td>1,200 sf</td>
<td>1,200 sf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max total footprint per building</td>
<td>1,650 sf</td>
<td>no requirement</td>
<td>no requirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max floor area per home</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,600 sf</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max average floor area per home</td>
<td>1,000 sf</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Focus more on form, less on density
4. Focus more on form, less on density

Write height standards to encouraged pitched roofs and house-scale buildings.
5. Apply predictable and flexible design standards

Encouraged

Discouraged

Pedestrian-Oriented
5. Apply predictable and flexible design standards

4.1.5 Articulation

A. Intent. The intent of this standard is to promote visually interesting building facades by prohibiting large expanses of blank walls facing the street.

B. Standards. All buildings shall incorporate design elements that break up all street-facing façades into smaller planes, as follows:

1. For buildings with 25-50 ft of street frontage, a minimum of 2 of the following elements shall be provided along the street-facing façades:
   a. A porch at least 6 ft deep.
   b. A balcony that is at least 3 ft deep and is accessible from an interior room.
   c. A bay window that extends at least 2 ft wide and 1 ft deep.
   d. A section of the façade that is recessed by at least 2 ft deep and 6 ft long.
   e. A dormer that is at least 4 feet wide. (...)

16.4.2 Massing and Articulation.

Utilizing a hierarchy of forms, the principle structures will create the mass that will be used to define the space along a street or common area. Secondary to the principle structure will be architectural features such as porches, dormers, bay windows, etc., that will provide the street articulation to give interest and variety to the streetscape (see below).
5. Apply predictable and flexible design standards

Provide multiple paths to satisfy a design goal to allow for flexibility and preserve economic feasibility

Incorporate at least 4 of the following:

1. Covered front porch: not less than 6 ft in depth and not less than 30 percent of the width of dwelling, excluding the landing for dwelling entrance.
2. Dormers: not less than 4 feet wide and must be a functional part of the structure, for example, providing light into a living space.
3. Recessed entrance: not less than 3 ft deep.
4. Window trim: minimum 3.5-inch width (all elevations).
5. Window recesses, in all windows, of at least 3 inches as measured horizontally from the face of the building facade.
6. Eaves: overhang of not less than 12 inches.
7. Bay window: projects from front elevation by 12 inches.
8. Balcony: one per dwelling unit facing street.
9. Decorative top: e.g., cornice or pediment with flat roof or brackets with pitched roof.
6. Prioritize housing for people over storage for cars

For maximum feasibility and affordability, do not require parking.

If required, scale requirements based on housing type and location.
6. Prioritize housing for people over storage for cars

Provide multiple options for reducing parking requirements:

- On-street parking adjacent to the site
- Proximity to transit
- Affordable units
- Fee-in-lieu
- Shared parking
- Off-site parking
- Bike parking
Summary of Middle Housing Code Best Practices

**Focus more on form, less on density**
- Align minimum lot sizes with typical, existing lot sizes to promote infill
- Trade density increases for new bulk and scale controls
- Use max FAR, building width/depth, and other tools to control bulk/scale

**Apply predictable and flexible design standards**
- Stay focused on pedestrian-oriented design
- Use clear and objective standards
- Provide multiple paths to satisfy a design goal

**Prioritize housing for people over storage for cars**
- For maximum feasibility and affordability, do not require parking.
- Provide multiple options for reducing parking requirements
Questions?

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Jamin@Cascadia-Partners.com