Policy Options and Alternatives: Housing

Policy Consideration: Missing Middle Regulations and Housing Options (H-A)

Topic: Missing Middle Housing

Policy question: Prioritize Housing Action Plan actions or current neighborhood policies?

There is tension between comprehensive plan neighborhood policies and the Housing Action Plan (HAP) regarding attached housing types. Prioritizing the HAP implementation would increase regulatory uniformity and reduce regulatory barriers for missing middle housing.

History

Redmond's Housing Action Plan includes Action 3.1: *Amend regulations to broaden housing options by promoting middle housing*. "Missing Middle" housing types are often attached dwelling units, like duplexes or triplexes. These differ from detached single-family structures, which have no common or party walls. Attached dwelling units are subject to all land use, density, site requirements and development standards of the underlying zone except for:

1. Minimum lot sizes in some zones
2. Neighborhood restrictions

Minimum Lot Size for attached dwelling units in the R-4, R-5, R-6, and RIN zones are based on a percentage of the minimum average lot size of the underlying zone.

	2-Unit Attached	3-Unit Attached	4-Unit Attached
Percent of the minimum average lot size	150%	200%	250%

Neighborhood Restrictions create additional barriers to attached dwelling units. Not all neighborhoods have additional restrictions and not all neighborhoods have the same types of restrictions. For example, Education Hill limits requires triplexes and quadplexes to be located at least 500 feet from other triplex and quadplex lots. Density limits impact the total potential quantity of multiplexes. Bear Creek, Education Hill, and Southeast Redmond Neighborhoods limit the allowed number of triplexes and quadplexes to not exceed the allowed number of detached single-family dwelling units. Modifying density limits and underlying zoning restrictions would have the effect of allowing more homes per acre.

Trends

Low attached dwelling unit production: Attached dwelling units are allowed in all single-family urban zones. Yet, there were 11,235 single-family detached housing units compared to 132 duplex, triplex, & quadplex attached housing units in 2019. Recent multiplex housing unit production was as follows; 6 (2019), 10 (2018), 0 (2017), 22 (2016), 14 (2015), and 8 (2014).

Stakeholder Feedback

Geographic equity: Expanding housing choices allows diverse people to live in more areas.

Policy Analysis of H-A

H-A: Revise Residential Zone Regulations to Expand Housing Options			
Option	**1: Remove and simplify various policy barriers to attached dwelling units, including neighborhood requirements.**	**2: Remove and simplify various policy barriers to attached dwelling units, excluding neighborhood requirements.**	**3: Retain existing policy language.**
Potential Strategies	Remove Underlying Density Restrictions: Allows attached dwelling unit structures to have the same site requirements as single structures to facilitate conversions of existing homes into multiplexes. Allow attached dwelling units as an outright use in all single-family urban (R-4 to R-8) zones: Removes the conditional use permit requirement. Expedites and reduces the cost of permitting. Remove Neighborhood Restrictions: Streamlines regulatory framework and reduces barriers to attached dwelling units. Includes lot proximity restrictions, housing unit count maximums, density, underlying zone considerations, and more.	Remove Underlying Density Restrictions: Allows attached dwelling unit structures to have the same site requirements as single structures to facilitate conversions of existing homes into multiplexes. Allow detached dwelling units as an outright use in all single-family urban zones: Removes the conditional use permit requirement. Expedites and reduces the cost of permitting.	No Change.
Equity and Inclusion	Expands housing choices and increases geographic equity. Increases ownership opportunities at lower prices relative to options 2 or 3.	Expands housing choices, but not in neighborhoods. Less geographic equity than option 1.	Preserves existing level of E&I.
Sustainability	More dwelling units in the neighborhoods fosters a more sustainable land use pattern. More people living in the city can reduce length of job commutes, which could reduce greenhouse gas emissions of those households.	Land use pattern is less sustainable than option 1.	Preserves existing level of sustainability.
Resiliency	Increases resiliency by improving housing security for people with less resources.	Fewer homes means that fewer households have housing security.	Preserves existing level of resiliency.
Other Considerations	Fulfills Redmond Housing Action Plan Action 3.1. *Amend regulations to broaden housing options by promoting middle housing*. Requires updating neighborhood policies that are incompatible.	Neighborhood policies can articulate different housing allowances and goals. This includes some barriers to housing opportunities.	Does not address stakeholder desire to expand housing choices.

Policy Consideration: Energy Efficiency and Sustainability Requirements (H-L)

Topic: Other Considerations

Policy question: Prioritize environmental performance of buildings or lower costs of construction?

There is a tension between building performance and construction cost. "Green" building incentives and requirements reduce energy use and associated greenhouse gas emissions.

History

Sustainable design and energy efficiency in the building stock is a vital component of reducing Redmond's environmental impact. The residential sector represents 16% of all energy consumption in the United States. In 2015, the three largest categories of residential electricity use in the United States were air conditioning (17%), space heating (15%), and water heating (14%).

Trends

Energy efficiency in housing can offset net increase in energy use due to new homes: The U.S. Energy Information Administration reports that the typical U.S. household now uses more air conditioning, appliances, and consumer electronics than ever before. However, average annual site energy use per home has declined. The reasons for this decline include:

1. Improvements in building insulation and materials
2. Improved efficiencies of heating and cooling equipment, water heaters, refrigerators, lighting, and appliances
3. Population migration to regions with lower heating demand

Most new housing units in the City are multifamily structures: Green multifamily code could reduce energy use per housing units.

Green buildings can have a cost premium: Green buildings can cost more than conventional buildings. One study found the "green" cost premium to, generally, be between -0.4% (less than conventional) to 21% (more than conventional)[1].

Stakeholder Feedback

Residential energy efficiency and sustainability needs more City support: Stakeholders emphasized that the City's environmental goals require a more proactive municipal approach to energy efficient and sustainability. Stakeholders discussed support for both incentives and regulatory requirements.

[1] Dwaikat, L.N. and Ali, K.N. (2016). Green buildings cost premium: a review of empirical evidence. Energy & Buildings, 110, 396-403. doi:10.1016/j.enbuild.2015.11.021

Policy Analysis H-L

H-L: Increase Housing Energy Efficiency and Sustainability			
Option	**1: Strengthen policy support for environmentally friendly green building incentives and requirements .**	**2: Prioritize development cost reduction over green buildings.**	**3: Maintain current building performance requirements.**
Equity and Inclusion	Green building techniques often create healthier spaces. Contributes to reducing environmental injustice.	Compared to option 1, could facilitate development by reducing cost barriers.	Maintains existing building performance and environmental public health impacts.
Sustainability	Directly reduces energy consumption.	Directly reduces energy consumption, but possibly not as much as option 1.	Maintains existing energy consumption.
Resiliency	Reduction in energy consumption helps balance energy grid.	Same as option 1, but to less extent. More resiliency for people through, potentially, higher housing security.	Maintains existing energy consumption and associated grid resilience.
Other Considerations	While green buildings can sometimes be less expensive than conventional construction, that is not always the case. Price premiums can occur due to higher development costs. Cost premiums may be passed onto renters/buyers or may reduce overall housing and commercial opportunities.	Incentives have varying levels of success. Requirements can be more effective in markets with strong demand for development.	
Potential Strategies	Require green building standards AND increase green building incentives: Combining both approaches could yield the most progress towards green building and sustainability goals. Require green building standards OR increase green building incentives: The same potential strategies as above, but with scope to minimize potential impacts to housing supply.	Do not require more rigorous green building standards: The City would not adopt any green building requirements that increase, by an increment to be determined later, the cost of housing. Note: Setting a minimum sustainability standard is in the Climate Emergency Declaration . Explore green building incentives: Incentives could helping offset the cost of the green building premium.	No Change.