

From: BRIAN CHAMBERS

Sent: Monday, November 22, 2021 11:02 AM

To: Lenart, Brett <BLenart@a2gov.org>; Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>

Subject: Missing Middle Housing and Zoning Challenges to Address It - Responding to a Commission Request

Brett and Planning Commissioners:

In listening to the recent Planning Commission meeting, I heard the call for literature on Planning approaches to closing the gap on housing in the Missing Middle, as it is now being called for more measured approaches to density increases in current single family districts.

I also understand there is a 2-year initiative to "uncode" the Ann Arbor's Unified Development Code, to simplify and update the UDC overall. In prior discussions, I also believe there is an initiative to address the City's 'exclusionary zoning' ordinances, in ways that can lead to new approaches to zoning.

While these seem together to call for a formal update to the City's Comprehensive Land Use Plan, I understand that COVID does not allow for it, under current circumstances, as the ability to hold large format public engagements is not feasible. Regardless, the need to address the Missing Middle challenges in Ann Arbor is critical, and I will subsequently send you a more formal 'needs analysis' on Ann Arbor's Missing Middle challenge regarding the housing market, employment, and income issues using US Census and Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

The material I will send on the Needs Analysis is meant to define the need for removing exclusionary zoning without getting bogged down in debates over racial disparities. Knowing the racial basis of exclusionary zoning is critical history, but I am not sure that it will necessarily develop the goodwill necessary to make the required changes to zoning for current issues of equity, let alone carbon neutrality.

For now, here is some introductory material on the Missing Middle and the role of Form-based zoning in addressing it, as it was requested. Understand, I do realize a number of you on the Commission are urban design and planning professionals, yourselves, so this is submitted with that humility in mind.

1. For an introductory overview of the "Missing Middle" construct in housing affordability circles here is a 1-hour presentation by the author of the initial text on the Missing Middle:

<https://islandpress.org/videos/planning-zoning-and-legislation-enable-missing-middle-housing>

Dan Parolek, Founding Principal of Opticos Design, is one of the foremost urban designers and architects working to meet the growing demand for walkable urban living. He is co-author of [*Form-Based Codes \(2008\)*](#) and [*Missing Middle Housing \(2020\)*](#)

2. Michigan communities are active across the State on both "Missing Middle" and Form-based initiatives:

Traverse City's experiences as of 2017: <http://blogs.mml.org/wp/cc/2017/03/30/tackling-michigans-missing-middle-housing-issues/>

Hirzel Law's Real Estate Law Blog : <https://michiganrelaw.com/2017/11/29/the-growth-of-form-based-codes-in-michigan-zoning/>

Here is the City Commissioner from Marquette, Michigan, who developed his own 'blog campaign' as a communication strategy on GentleDensity:

<https://www.evanbonsall.com/what-is-missing-middle-housing-and-how-do-we-create-more-of-it/>

3. Form-based Code Changes for Missing Middle - Iowa City Example:

<https://www.planetizen.com/news/2021/10/114883-missing-middle-housing-form-based-code-added-zoning-menu-iowa-city>

4. A2 City Planning is supportive of AARP Living Communities initiative for aging-in-place, so an AARP reference on the Missing Middle, and how they position its benefits is good to have

<https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/housing/info-2020/missing-middle-housing-affordability.html>

5. While developers are viewed negatively in many Ann Arbor communities who are resistant to density, it would be good to connect with the local Builders and Remodelers Association of Greater Ann Arbor (BRAG Ann Arbor), that has a foundation chartered to support home ownership (See: <https://www.bragannarbor.net/home-page-2/bragaa-foundation/>) .

Below is a link to the National Association of Home Builders, which advocates for doing away with Single Family Zoning Districts, in favor of Form-based an other approaches. The National Association is now call it "Land-Use 101".

<https://www.nahb.org/advocacy/industry-issues/land-use-101/what-is-the-missing-middle-of-housing>

<https://www.nahb.org/-/media/NAHB/advocacy/docs/industry-issues/land-use-101/state-local-affordability/missing-middle-housing-overview.pdf>

6. County Coalition Building: Arlington, VA, outside of Washington DC is taking a multi-faceted approach, with non-profit organizations and County and City working in common cause to raise community awareness and their receptivity to these zoning changes:

<https://dcist.com/story/21/11/18/arlington-virginia-missing-middle-housing/>

<https://www.allianceforhousingsolutions.org/blog/five-things-to-know-about-missing-middle-housing>

7. Form-based Codes Aligned to Close the "Missing Middle" gap in housing:

<https://missingmiddlehousing.com/form-based-codes/>

See also:

- - <https://housingallies.org/guide/minimize-barriers/form-based-zoning/>

[Form-Based Codes Institute](#)

Massachusetts Smart Growth Toolkit: [Form-Based Codes](#)

Missing Middle: [How to Regulate](#)

MRSC: [Form-Based Codes and Traditional Neighborhood Development](#) – contains overview and thorough list of links to policy guides and local code examples.

PSRC: [Form-Based Zoning](#)

I hope this is helpful.

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