

# Planning for Middle Housing in Washington State

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Specialist, Middle Housing Technical Team  
Growth Management Services



Washington State  
Department of  
**Commerce**



## HB 1220 adopted in 2021 session added requirements for Housing Elements codified at RCW 36.70A.070(2)

(2) A housing element ensuring the vitality and **character** of established residential neighborhoods that:

(a) Includes an inventory and analysis of existing and projected housing needs that identifies the number of housing units necessary to manage projected growth, as provided by the department of commerce, including:

- (i) Units for moderate, low, very low, and extremely low-income households; and
- (ii) Emergency housing, emergency shelters, and permanent supportive housing;

.....

(c) Identifies sufficient capacity of land for housing including, but not limited to, government-assisted housing, housing for moderate, low, very low, and extremely low-income households, manufactured housing, multifamily housing, group homes, foster care facilities, emergency housing, emergency shelters, permanent supportive housing, and **within an urban growth area boundary, consideration of duplexes, triplexes, and townhomes;**



# In 2022 session, ESSB 5693 created Middle Housing Grant Program

This budget proviso allocated \$7.5 million for the eighty-two cities in Central Puget Sound to consider **middle housing** policies and regulations.

*“For purposes of this subsection, “middle housing types” include duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, fiveplexes, sixplexes, townhouses, courtyard apartments, cottage housing, and stacked flats.”*



Duplex



Fourplex



Courtyard Apartments



Cottage Housing



Townhouses



## Middle Housing Technical Team (MHTT)

To help administer the Middle Housing Grant Program, Commerce created a **Middle Housing Technical Team** of three former city planning directors to provide technical assistance to grantee cities.

- Shane Hope, former Edmonds and Mountlake Terrace director
- Dave Osaki, former Fife and Mukilteo director
- Joe Tovar, former Shoreline and Kirkland director



## Technical Assistance from Middle Housing Team

- **Meet with City staff and consultants**
- **Review draft documents/deliverables**
- **Attend meetings, including planning commission and city council**
- **Help draft staff reports**
- **Research and provide information about middle housing**
  - Examples of other jurisdictions' work (e.g., Walla Walla, Spokane, Pasco, Olympia)
  - Photos and graphics that city staff may use
- **Provide data assistance**
- **Prepare draft design and development regulations that cities may use or adapt**



## Research: lessons from Oregon HB 2001 and California SB 9

- Meeting the housing needs of all state residents is a compelling state interest.
- Absolute local control elevates local interests above compelling state interests.
- Making locally unpopular decisions is difficult for local governments.
- HB 2001 and SB 9 compel local actions that otherwise would not be taken.
- HB 2001 and SB 9 require that permits be reviewed through a ministerial process.
- HB 2001 and SB 9 require application of objective development standards.
- HB 2001 and SB 9 exempt local actions from appeals.



## Commerce recommended definition of Middle Housing

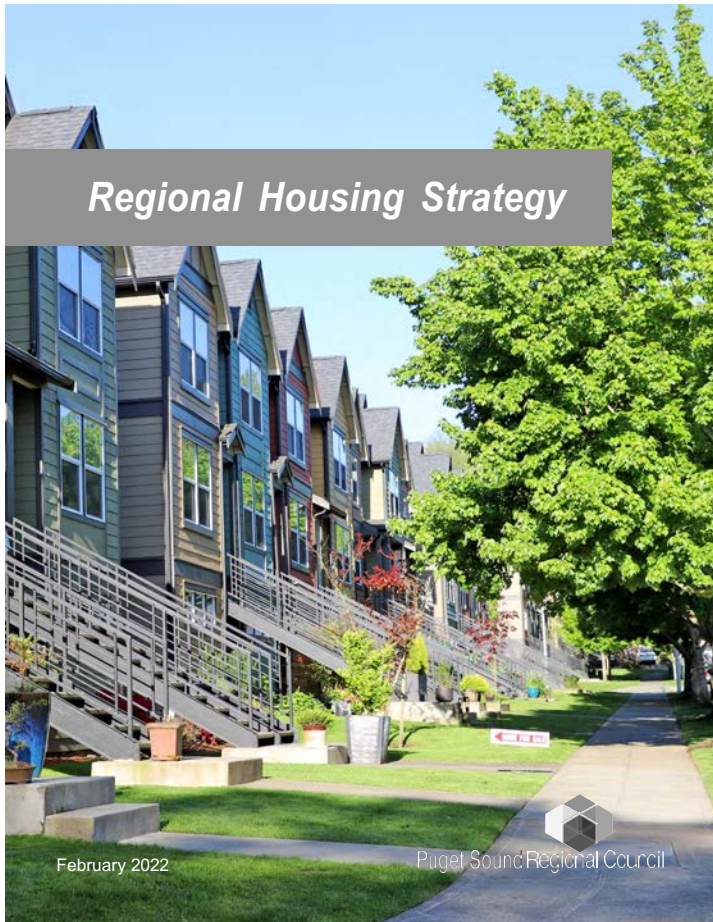
*“Middle housing types means buildings that are compatible in scale, form, and character with single-family houses, and contain two or more attached, stacked, or clustered homes. This includes duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, sixplexes, townhouses, courtyard apartments and cottage housing.”*





Puget Sound Regional Council

## Regional Housing Strategy



*“Increase zoning that allows for moderate density **“missing middle”** housing to increase opportunities for townhomes and multiple units in neighborhoods with infrastructure, services, and amenities .... Reform single-family zoning to increase opportunities for small lots, zero-lot line, accessory dwelling units, cottage homes, and up to six units per lot that serve a wider range of households, including singles, couples, seniors, and smaller families.”* Regional Housing Strategy, pages 6-7.





**Objective Design  
Standards Toolkit**

**Objective Standards Case  
Study: Marin County  
Objective Design and  
Development Standards**

## **What is the purpose of objective design and development standards?**

Objective design standards are intended to make the requirements that apply to eligible projects more predictable and easier to interpret for all stakeholders, including decision makers, staff, applicants, and members of the public. The purpose of objective design standards is for everyone to know beforehand what requirements apply to a proposed development and for the applicant to be able to design a project that meets those requirements before submittal.



**Objective Design and Development Standards** are standards that involve no personal or subjective judgment by a public official and are uniformly verifiable by reference to an external and uniform benchmark or criterion available and knowable by both the development applicant or proponent and the public official before submittal.



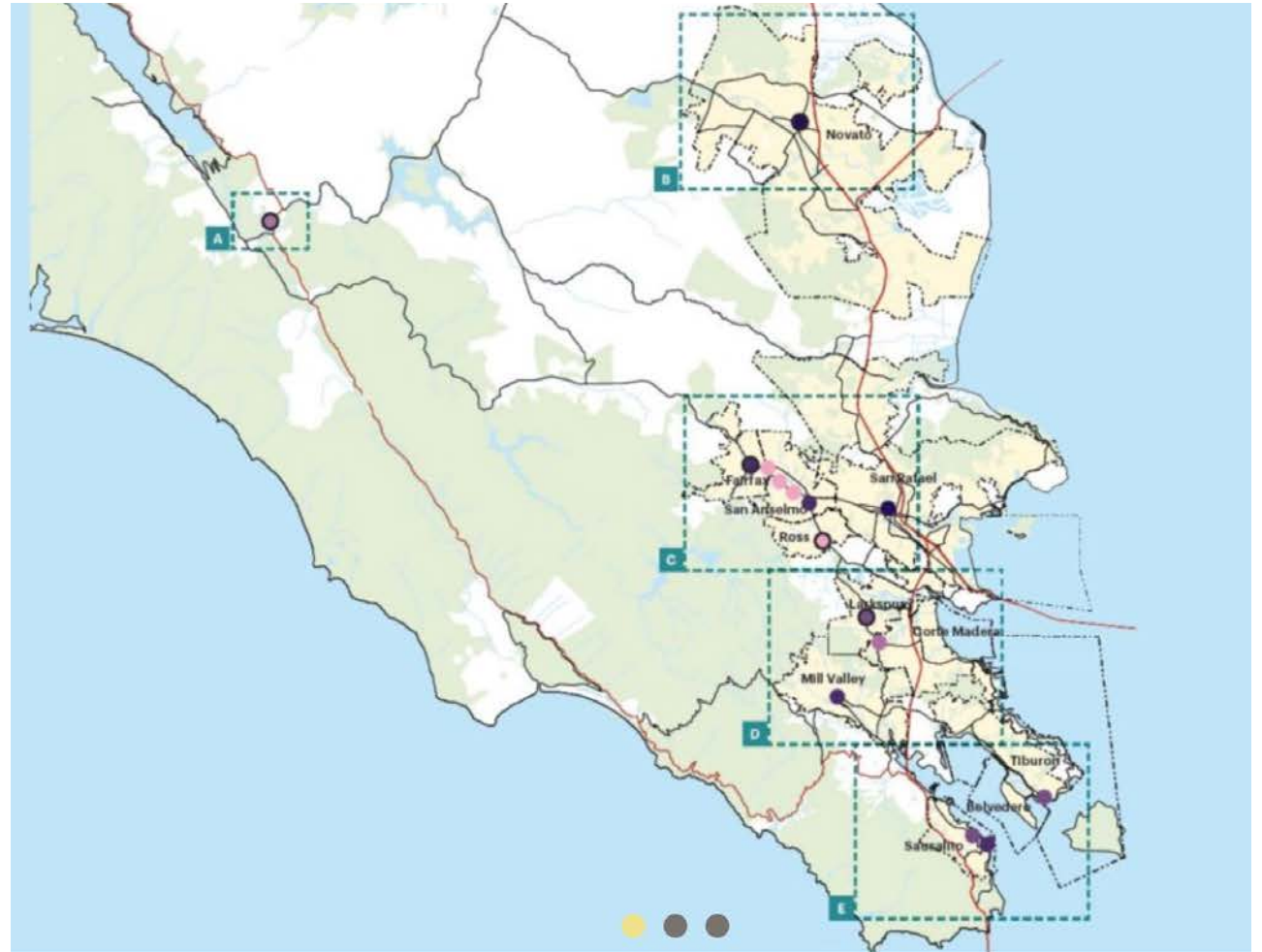
Design Guidelines	Design Standards
Subjective	Objective
Recommendations, which may not be enforceable or have “teeth” of regulations	Requirements, which are enforceable as regulations
Open to interpretation, difficult to measure or verify	Measurable and verifiable
Use words such as “may” or “should”	Use words such as “shall” or “must”
Usually administered by Design Review Board	May be administered by staff

# OBJECTIVE DESIGN + DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

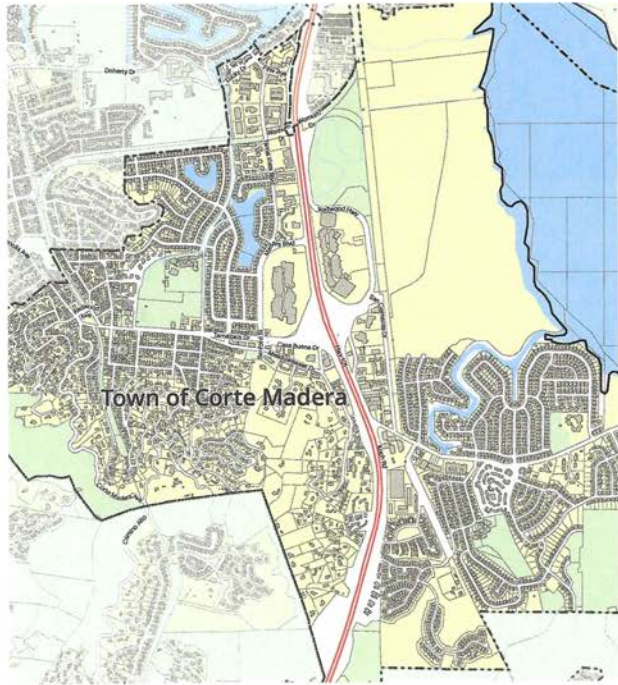
Marin County and ten cities and towns in Marin are collaborating on development of a toolkit for Objective Design and Development Standards. The tools will include design and development standards and review procedures. Each of the participating jurisdictions may customize the standards for their community and then officially adopt for local usage.



- |             |              |
|-------------|--------------|
| Belvedere   | Corte Madera |
| Fairfax     | Larkspur     |
| Mill Valley | Novato       |
| San Anselmo | San Rafael   |
| Sausalito   | Tiburon      |





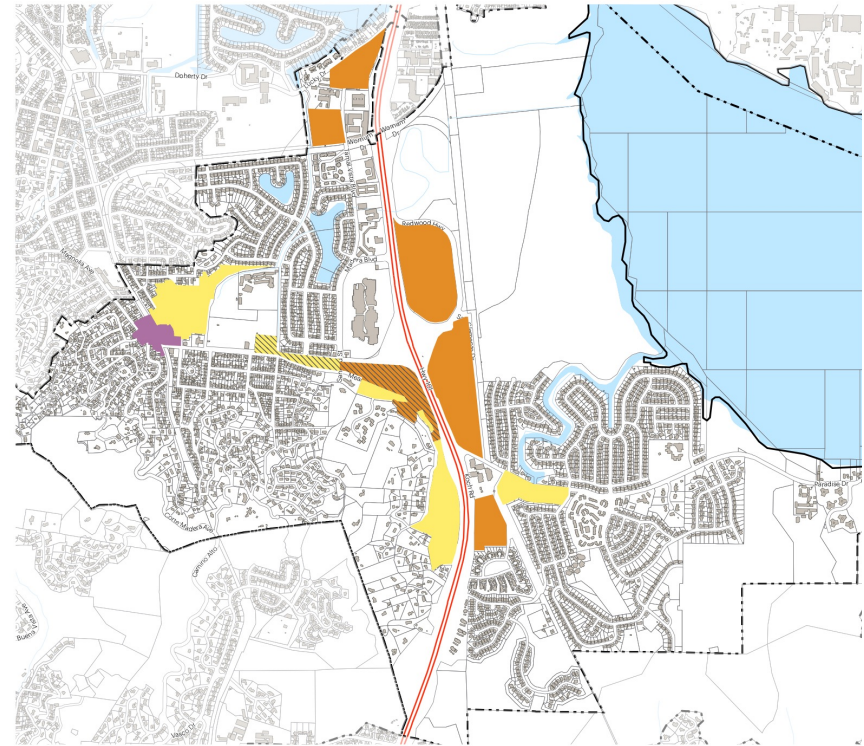






## Title 22: Objective Design and Development Standards

Town of Corte Madera  
Public Review Draft  
November 8, 2021



## Corte Madera Objective Design Standards Zones



Area <sup>1</sup>	ODDS Zones
	T4 Suburban Neighborhood.Small
	T4 Core Neighborhood.Medium
	T4 Suburban Main Street.Small
	Open Sub-zone

For development sites of at least 3 acres, see Title 22 (Objective Design and Development Standards) Section 22.08.030 (Walkable Neighborhood Plan).

# Implementing Middle Housing in Kirkland



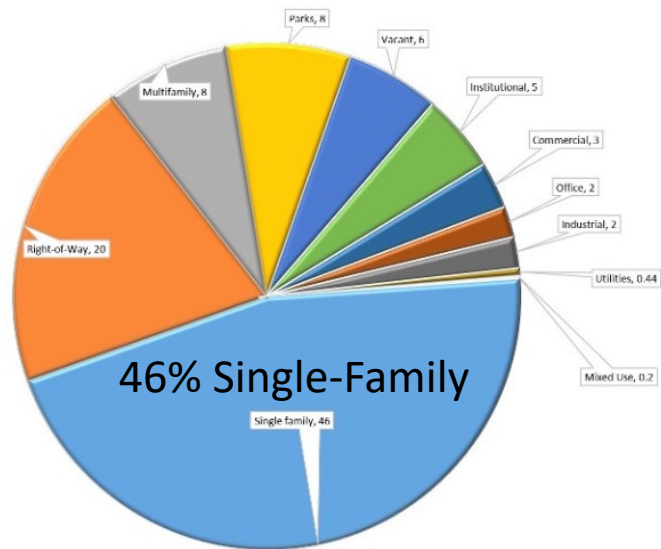
Washington State Senate Housing and Local Government Committee  
October 19, 2022





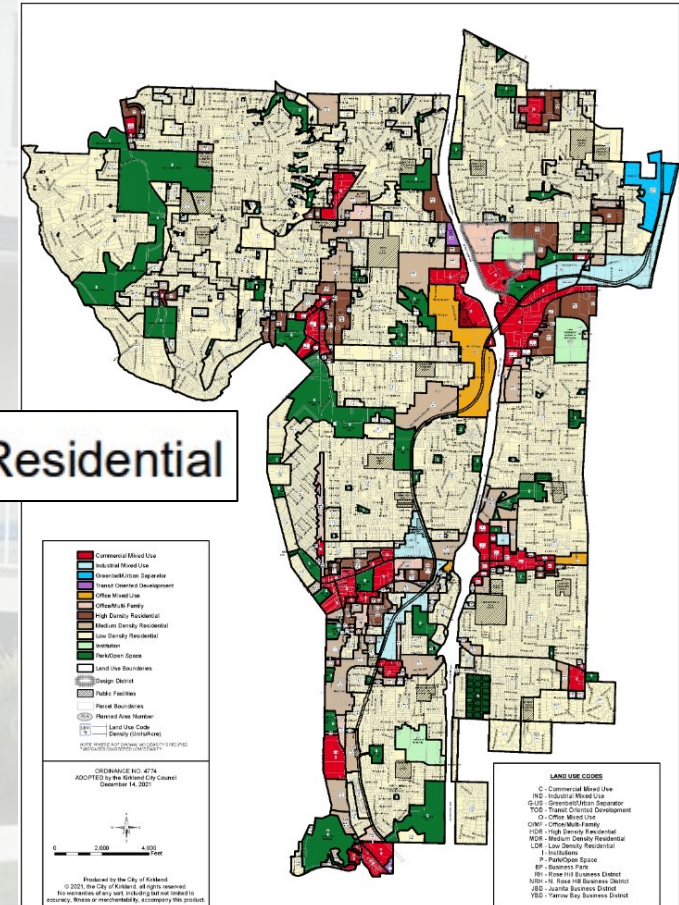
# Insight #1: Middle housing in all “single-family” districts

Table LU-1: 2013 - Land Use by Percent of the City's Total Land Area



Source: City of Kirkland and PSRC estimates

 Low Density Residential

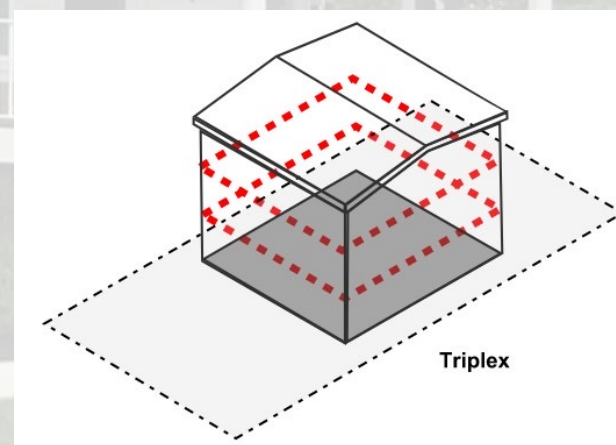
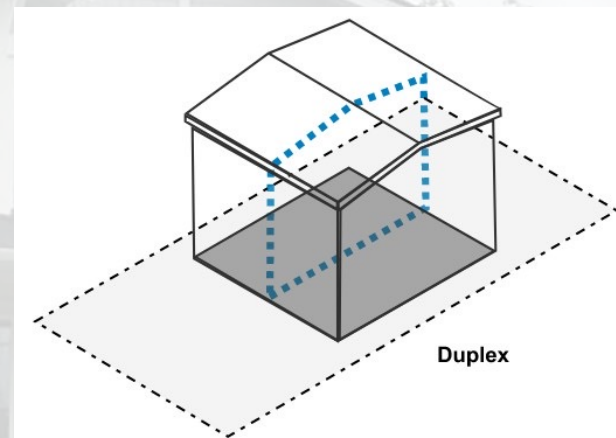




## Insight #2: Focus on the building envelope, not density

This scale-based concept ensures neighborhood compatibility. If someone can build a 3,000-square-foot single-family house, allow by-right:

- three 1,000-square-foot triplex units; or
- two 1,500-square-foot duplex units; or
- two 1,000-square-foot duplex units + two 500-square-foot ADUs







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# Recommendations for State Legislation

SECTION

# R

## Removing Barriers to Enable More Attainable Housing Choice

**MIDDLE HOUSING POLICY PROPOSALS**

**10/19/22**

**DANIEL PAROLEK  
PRINCIPAL, OPTICOS DESIGN  
SENATE HOUSING & LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE**

17



## About providing choice (not more density)

Not forcing anyone to live a certain way. Form and scale is important



Cottage Court: 18 du/acre: Considered high density in many places, but it is not what people think about when they hear the term high density

Union Studio Architecture and Community Design

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### MIDDLE HOUSING POLICY PROPOSALS

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18





## 3 Units, but looks like a house

“house scale”

Thoughtful form and scale  
are important to the effective  
implementation of Missing  
Middle Housing.

Not about increasing density.  
About providing more  
housing choices.



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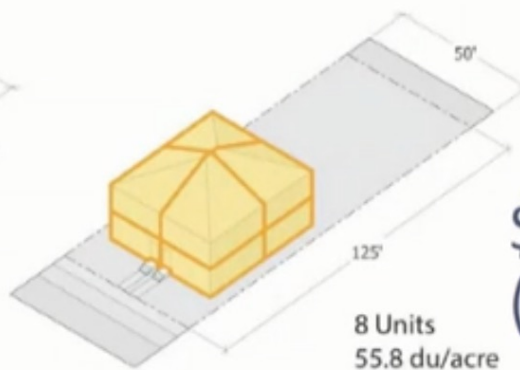
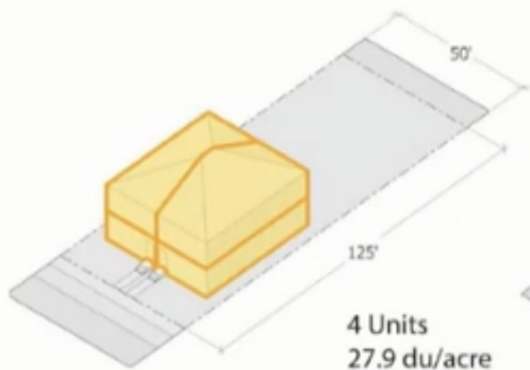
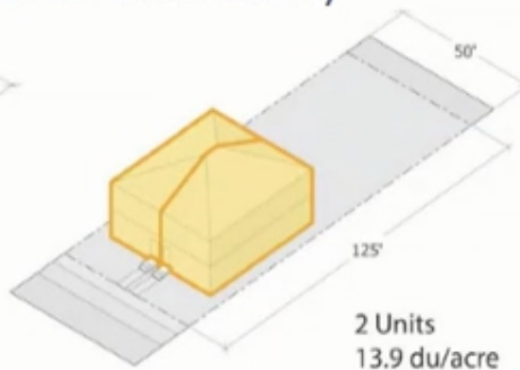
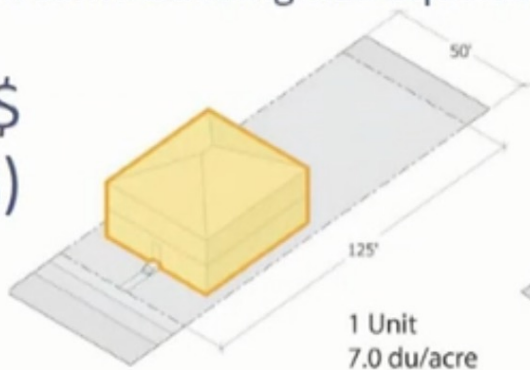




# More units does not have to equal bigger building

More units in same building size equals more attainability

\$\$\$\$\$\$  
(prices)



\$\$  
(Prices)

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## MIDDLE HOUSING POLICY PROPOSALS

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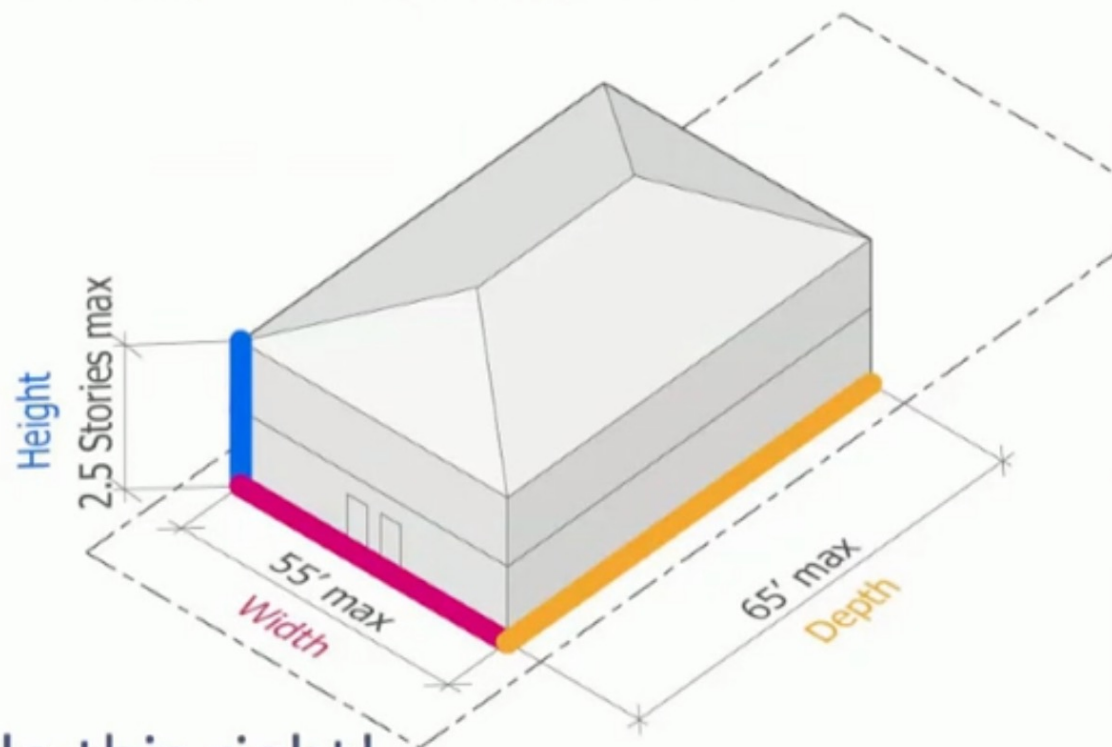
## Tip: Put cap on building size not number of units

Allow any number of units within that clearly defined envelope/container



Why:

1. Encourage smaller, more attainable units
2. Allow neighborhoods to evolve with less perceived change
3. Ensure house scale



Be the first state to do this right!

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21



# Thank You!

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