

# Proposed Ordinance on Missing Middle and Housing Preservation

PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

FEBRUARY 1, 2022

# Agenda

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- Background
- Definitions
- Proposed Changes
- Reasoning
- Request

# Background

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- House prices have been increasing faster than incomes for years
- Affordability problem has many causes
- Fixing the issue requires multiple solutions
- On September 15, 2021, the County Council passed Motion 21-309 which proposed some ideas to the Planning Commission and asked for a recommendation back
- On December 14, 2021, the Planning Commission held a public hearing and made its recommendations back to the Council
- The Missing Middle and Housing Preservation ordinance would allow higher densities and encouraging preservation of existing housing

# Definitions and Key Questions

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## Missing Middle

An idea that many zoning rules have a gap between low density single-family and high-density larger apartment and condo buildings. Types of missing middle housing include small lot single-family, townhomes, triplexes and other small apartment or condo buildings.

## Displacement

Rents can become unaffordable. Homes can be sold to developers who tear them down. Both displace people by forcing them to move.

## Local Context and Questions

Snohomish County allows some types of missing middle in unincorporated urban areas already. Should it encourage more? If so, which types and how much? Is there a way to encourage new development while also reducing displacement by preserving existing, generally more affordable, housing?

# Overview of Proposed Changes

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## Six types of changes are proposed

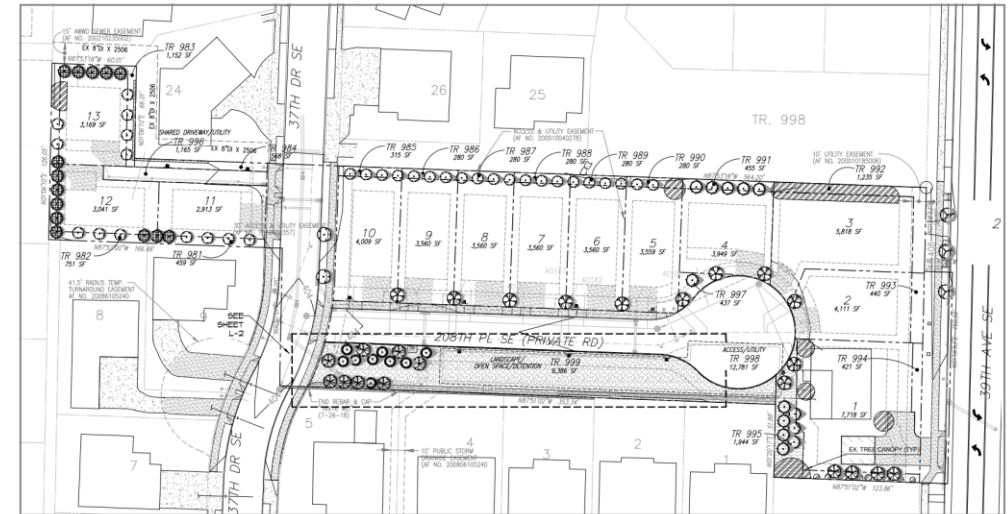
1. Increasing density bonuses for Planned Residential Developments (PRDs) and Townhomes;
2. Exempting retained existing residential units from density calculations;
3. Allowing density bonuses in (1) and (2) to be additive;
4. Increasing the permitted building height in R-7,200 zoning from 30 feet to 35 feet to allow more flexibility in the type of housing built;
5. Adding a new section on setbacks for buildings above 30 feet in R-7,200 zoning to address neighborhood compatibility and fire code issues; and
6. Making townhomes (and mixed-townhomes) a permitted use in R-7,200 zoning rather than an administrative conditional use.

# Change #1: Density Bonuses

Density bonuses for Planned Residential Developments (PRDs) and Townhomes would increase from 20% to 50%

- *PRDs get a density bonus in SCC 30.42B.040 for providing design extras like more common open space and perimeter landscaping than other development types*
- *Townhomes get a density bonus in SCC 30.23.040(65) for having more building design requirements and front entry landscaping than other development types*
- *Both bonuses are currently 20% and proposed to increase to 50%*

Lotus Homes PRD Approved Landscaping Plans



DJ's 44th Avenue Townhomes Building Elevation Drawing

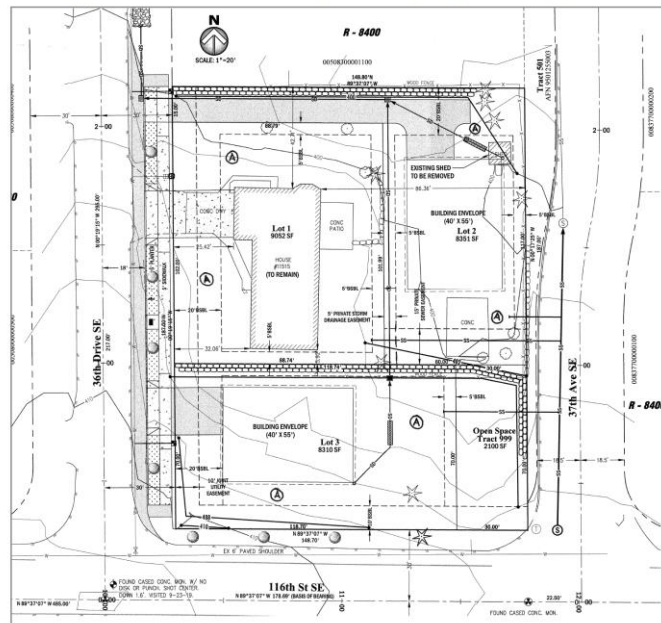


# Change #2: Existing Unit Bonus

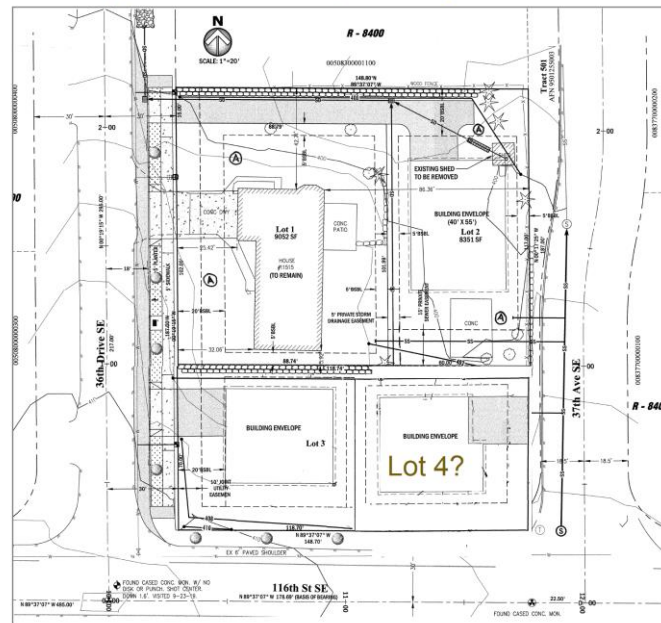
Existing residential units would no longer count against the number of new lots allowed in urban areas

- Existing unit = a building permit issued at least 7 years before new application
- Provisions allow for buildings to be moved to a site too
- Idea refined during outreach after Motion 21-309 passed

Approved 3-lot short plat keeping existing home



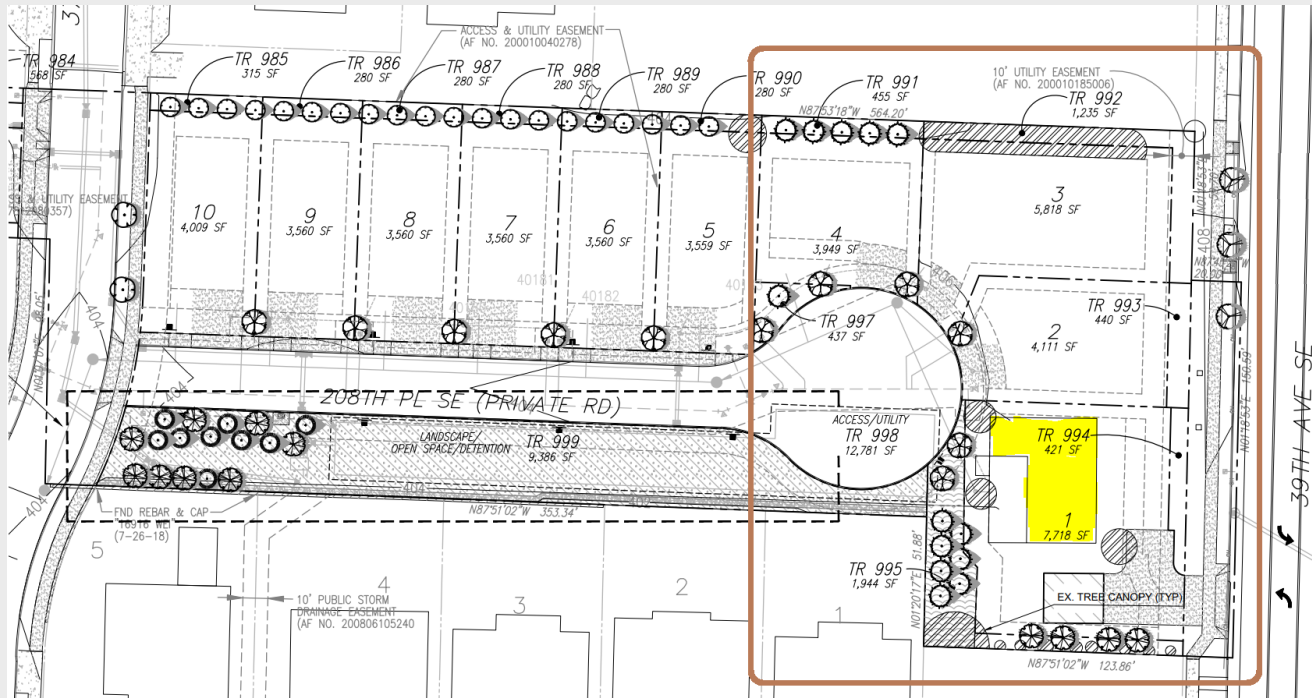
Hypothetical 4-lot layout using new bonus



# Change #3: Bonuses Add Together

Allow bonuses for retaining existing units to add to Planned Residential Development (PRD) and Townhouse bonuses

- *Only type of housing that currently gets an additive bonus is cottage housing*
- *Projects mixing townhomes with detached units known as “mixed-townhouse”*



Suppose a bonus had been given for keeping the existing house on Lot 1 of this PRD. Then Lots 1-4 could have been drawn differently to allow a bonus fifth lot in this area.



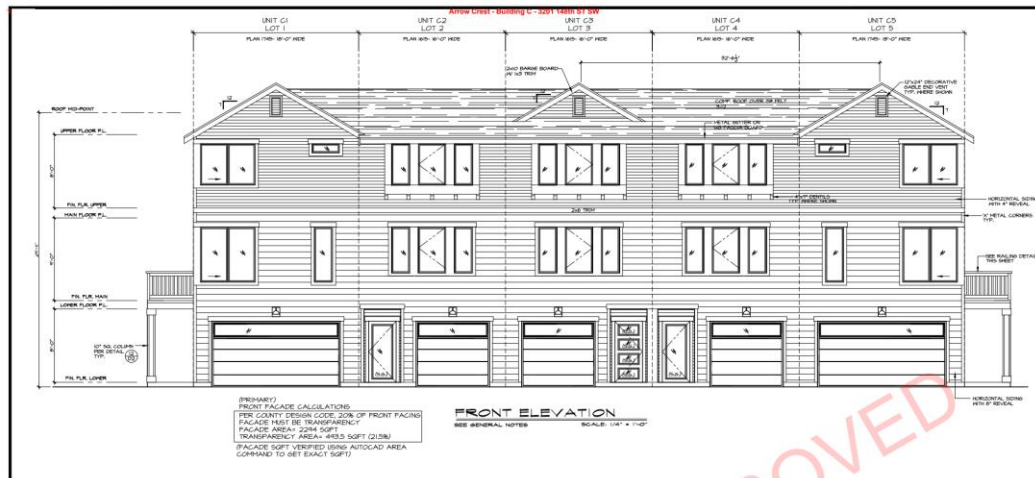
# Changes #4 & #5: Height Limit Increase in R-7,200

#4 Increase maximum height in R-7,200 zoning to allow more design options

#5 Special setbacks to address fire code and building massing

- *Practical effect is to allow 3-story buildings instead of just 2-stories*
- *Special setbacks encourage buildings to step down near neighbors*
- *Idea suggested during outreach after Motion 21-309 passed*

Approved 3-Story Townhomes (Arrow Crest Bldg C)



Existing 3-Story House in a 1970s-era PRD (Picnic Point)



# Change #6: Permit Process Change

Make Townhomes a permitted use in R-7,200 zoning rather than an administrative conditional use

- *Procedural change would reduce duplicative steps*
- *No meaningful difference in final conditions of approval*
- *Idea suggested during outreach after Motion 21-309 passed*

**SCC 30.22.100 Urban Zone Categories Use Matrix**

TYPE OF USE	R- 9,600 <sup>88</sup>	R- 8,400 <sup>88</sup>	R- 7,200 <sup>88</sup>	T	LDMR	MR	NB	PCB	CB <sup>128</sup>	GC <sup>128</sup>	IP <sup>76</sup>	BP	LI <sup>55</sup> . 76	HI <sup>55</sup>	MHP <sup>114</sup>	UC <sup>122</sup>
[Accessory Dwelling Unit through Dwelling, Multiple Family omitted here but included in the Substitute Ordinance without any changes]																
<b>Dwelling, Single Family</b>	P	P	P	P	P	P									p <sup>4</sup>	
<b>Dwelling, Townhouse <sup>5</sup></b>			P((A))	P	P	P	P	P	P	P						P
[Electric Vehicle Infrastructure through All Other Uses Not Otherwise Mentioned omitted here but included in the Substitute Ordinance without any changes.]																

# Reasoning

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## General

- Snohomish County is facing a housing affordability crisis and housing shortage, in part because
  - Not enough missing middle housing is being built
  - New development often redevelops existing units that were relatively affordable
- Ordinance seeks to maintain neighborhood compatibility while promoting higher densities
  - Largest density bonuses proposed for those types of housing that already have special design requirements
  - Retaining existing units also helps maintain existing character

## Policy and Procedural

- Would help implement housing affordability recommendations from the HART Report
- Fits with existing policy directives and requirements
- Includes steps to address fire code and design issues if building heights in R-7,200 are increased
- Easier townhouse permitting process encourages more production

# Consideration

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The **Missing Middle and Housing Preservation** ordinance reflects the Planning Commission recommendations

**Executive Recommendation:** Approve

**Risk Management Recommendation:** Approve

**Request:** Move to General Legislative Session to set time and date for a hearing

**Any Questions?**

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