



Updating Seattle's Neighborhood Residential zones

A proposal to increase
housing choice and
fulfill requirements of
House Bill 1110



City of Seattle

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Contents

- Introduction 3**
 - Purpose 3
 - A new growth strategy for Seattle 4
 - Goals for updating Neighborhood Residential zoning 5
- Existing rules in Neighborhood Residential zones 6**
- Updating Seattle’s Neighborhood Residential zoning 11**
 - New state legislation on housing 11
 - Zoning changes to implement HB 1110 12
 - A tailored approach for areas at high risk of displacement 20
- Affordable housing bonus 22**
- Corner stores 24**
- Additional changes to development standards 26**
 - Off-street parking 26
 - Open space 26
 - Trees and vegetation 27
 - Other potential changes 27
- Next steps & engagement 28**

Introduction

Purpose

This report describes an initial proposal for updating Seattle's Neighborhood Residential zoning, including visualizations of potential outcomes. Neighborhood Residential represents Seattle's lowest-density residential zoning and consists primarily of detached homes.

New Neighborhood Residential zoning is one part of the City's effort to update our Comprehensive Plan, which guides how our city grows and makes investments. The Plan guides City decisions about where we locate housing and the types of housing allowed in different areas of the city. Our updated Plan, called the [One Seattle Plan](#), will address challenges new and old: racial disparities, increasing housing costs, access to economic opportunity and education, climate change, and more. To address these issues, it will be critical to identify ways to increase the supply, diversity, and affordability of housing and ensure all neighborhoods are accessible to households with a diverse range of incomes and housing needs. Updating our Neighborhood Residential zones, which represent the majority of Seattle, is necessary to ensure that we address this need.

Updating our Neighborhood Residential zones is also required under new state law. Passed in 2023, House Bill 1110 (HB 1110) requires cities across the state to allow a greater quantity and variety of housing in areas currently reserved for detached homes. HB 1110 also provides flexibility to apply a different approach in areas with high displacement risk.

Seattle's Neighborhood Residential zones play an important role by providing opportunities for households to own homes with multiple bedrooms and direct access to outdoor space on relatively calm streets. But these neighborhoods are not accessible to everyone.

Historically, many Seattle neighborhoods had racially restrictive covenants that explicitly prohibited people of color from occupying or owning property. Though ruled legally unenforceable in 1948, these covenants cemented a pattern of racial segregation and exclusion that Seattle's restrictive zoning has sustained over time. Today, the high cost of housing, especially in areas with Neighborhood Residential zoning, continues to limit who can access these neighborhoods and worsens affordability in Seattle overall. The median sales price of a detached home now exceeds \$1 million. Rising housing prices force people to move away from communities they love and make many neighborhoods with access to large parks and schools accessible only to high-income households.

As we envision how Neighborhood Residential zones should grow and evolve, we aim to sustain the positive aspects of these places while ensuring more people can benefit from living there.

More information on the One Seattle Plan including an overview of the proposed overall growth strategy and opportunities to participate in public engagement, are available at the [One Seattle Plan website](#).

A new growth strategy for Seattle

Today, more than two-thirds of the city is zoned Neighborhood Residential, excluding parks and industrial areas. In the One Seattle Plan, the substantial majority of these areas would remain in Neighborhood Residential zoning. Some other areas near transit, shops, and services would change to a different zone.

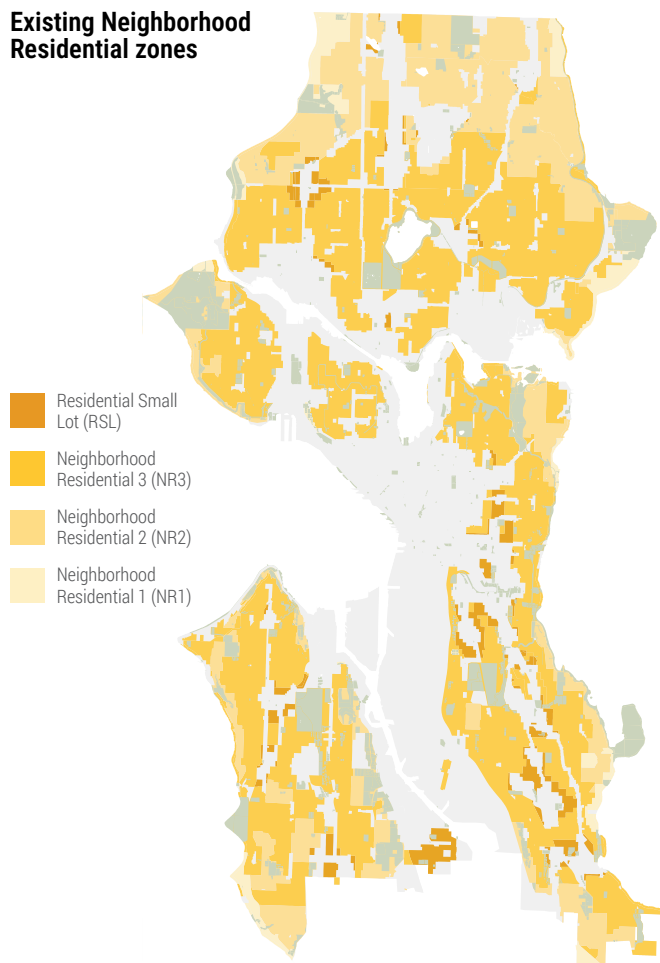
The One Seattle Plan proposes several changes to Seattle's current growth strategy, which focuses jobs and housing in Urban Centers and Urban Villages. The Plan proposes to rename these areas Regional Centers and Urban Centers, respectively, and to expand several of these existing growth centers. The Plan also creates a new designation called Neighborhood Centers near high-capacity transit and existing neighborhood business districts. In these new and expanded centers, areas currently zoned Neighborhood Residential would be changed to other zones (like Lowrise Multifamily) where development of larger buildings could occur.

Our existing centers also contain areas currently zoned Residential Small Lot (RSL). Development standards in RSL zones differ from other Neighborhood Residential zones. We propose to remove RSL as a zoning category. Areas currently zoned RSL with low risk of displacement or within a half mile of a light rail station would be rezoned to Lowrise 1 (LR1), a multifamily zone that allows a similar number of units but more floor area. Areas zoned RSL located elsewhere would be rezoned to one of the updated Neighborhood Residential zones.

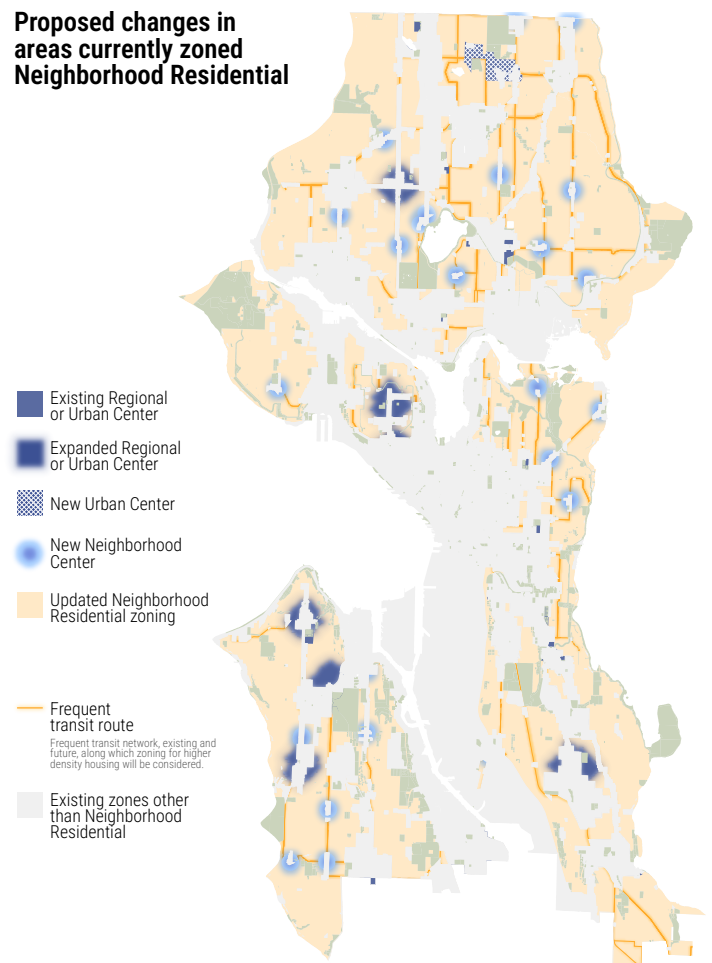
The maps below show the current extent of Neighborhood Residential zoning and our initial proposal for areas that would be rezoned to other zones.

The remainder of this document summarizes the types of development likely to occur in areas that would remain in Neighborhood Residential zoning.

Existing Neighborhood Residential zones



Proposed changes in areas currently zoned Neighborhood Residential



Goals for updating Neighborhood Residential zoning

The City has undertaken a substantial amount of public engagement on housing in recent years. Prior to the One Seattle Plan, our [Housing Choices](#) initiative explored the types of housing people wanted to see more of through surveys, focus groups, and other discussions. A summary of feedback is available on our [project website](#). During the initial phases of the One Seattle Plan, we hosted in-person and online discussions to inform the creation of the draft plan and the Neighborhood Residential concepts shown in this document.

A summary of this process and feedback is available on the [One Seattle Plan website](#). Many comments received during these efforts reflect what people want for Seattle and the broader region, while other comments addressed the unique role of Neighborhood Residential zones.

Based on this input, we developed the following goals that represent specific outcomes updated Neighborhood Residential zones should achieve.

Citywide goals

As part of a new Growth Strategy, updated Neighborhood Residential zones should:

- **Increase the supply of housing** to ease increasing housing prices caused by competition for limited supply
- **Increase diversity of housing options** in neighborhoods throughout Seattle to address exclusion and so more people can live and stay in the neighborhoods they love
- Allow **more affordable rental and ownership** types in neighborhoods throughout Seattle
- Create more opportunities for **income-restricted affordable housing**, especially permanently affordable homes
- **Reduce residential displacement** and support existing residents, particularly low-income households, who are struggling to stay in their neighborhood as it grows
- **Address past and ongoing harms from housing discrimination**, racial disparities, and exclusionary zoning
- **Create more complete, walkable neighborhoods** throughout the city where more people can walk or bike to everyday destinations such as local shops, parks, transit, cultural amenities, and services
- Comply with **new state rules** about housing

Zone-specific goals

We should develop updated Neighborhood Residential zones that specifically:

- Create more opportunities for **smaller, lower-cost homes**
- Increase the feasibility of **income-restricted affordable housing**
- **Discourage one-for-one replacement** of existing homes, which reduces the number of smaller homes without increasing housing choices
- Create opportunities for ground-related **open space and trees**
- Create **well-designed buildings** compatible with the existing urban fabric

Existing rules in Neighborhood Residential zones

Today, Seattle has four Neighborhood Residential zones: Neighborhood Residential 1 (NR1), Neighborhood Residential 2 (NR2), Neighborhood Residential 3 (NR3), and Residential Small Lot (RSL).

In **NR1, NR2, and NR3 zones**, one principal dwelling unit is allowed per lot, and new lots can be created only if they meet a minimum lot size. For example, in NR3, a 7,000-square-foot site can have only one principal unit because it cannot be divided into two lots that both meet the minimum lot size of 5,000 square feet. However, a 10,000-square-foot site can be divided into two lots, each of which could have a principal unit.

In **Residential Small Lot zones**, multiple principal dwelling units are allowed on a lot. Development is regulated by a maximum density limit of one dwelling per 2,000 square feet of lot area and by a minimum lot area of 2,000 square feet, which prevents the creation of small lots to circumvent the density limit.

All four existing NR zones allow **accessory dwelling units (ADUs)**, small, secondary residences on the same lot as a principal unit. ADUs are subject to different size and location standards than principal units and cannot be sold separately from the principal units except as part of a condominium that comprises the entire lot. An attached ADU (AADU) is an ADU located within or attached to the principal unit, and a detached ADU (DADU) is an ADU located in a separate accessory structure.

As described on the following page, the size and scale of buildings in NR1, NR2, and NR3 zones is currently regulated primarily through standards for floor area ratio (FAR), height, lot coverage, and setbacks. The Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) has a [detailed description](#) of the development standards for these zones.

Current Neighborhood Residential development standards

	Description	NR1	NR2	NR3	RSL
Minimum lot size (square feet)	Minimum land area required to create a new lot	9,600	7,200	5,000	2,000
Dwelling units allowed	Number of homes allowed on a site	1 principal and 2 accessory dwelling units per lot			1 principal unit and 1 ADU per 2,000 sq ft of lot area
Maximum density	Effective maximum density at minimum lot size (principal units and ADUs)	1 unit per 3,200 sq ft of lot area	1 unit per 2,400 sq ft of lot area	1 unit per 1,667 sq ft of lot area	1 unit per 1,000 sq ft of lot area
Floor area ratio (FAR)	Ratio of maximum building floor area to lot area	Effective FAR for a 5,000-square-foot site: ¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0.55 FAR without ADUs 0.75 FAR with one ADU 0.95 FAR with two ADUs 			0.75 FAR
Lot coverage	Percentage of the lot that can be covered by structures	35 percent for lots 5,000 sq ft or larger. 1,000 sq feet plus 15 percent lot area otherwise.			50 percent
Height limit	Maximum height from ground to the highest point of the structure	30 feet plus up to 5 feet for a pitched roof			30 feet plus up to 5 feet for a pitched roof
Front setback	Minimum distance from front lot line to building	Average of adjacent buildings or 20 feet, whichever is less			10 feet
Rear setback	Minimum distance from rear lot line to building	25 feet or 20 percent of lot depth, whichever is less			10 feet without alley None with alley
Side setback	Minimum distance from side lot line to building	5 feet			5 feet

¹ These are not codified numbers and would differ on sites of other sizes.

Detached house with garage (existing NR)

A new single detached house with a detached or attached garage under existing Neighborhood Residential development standards.




Street-level view

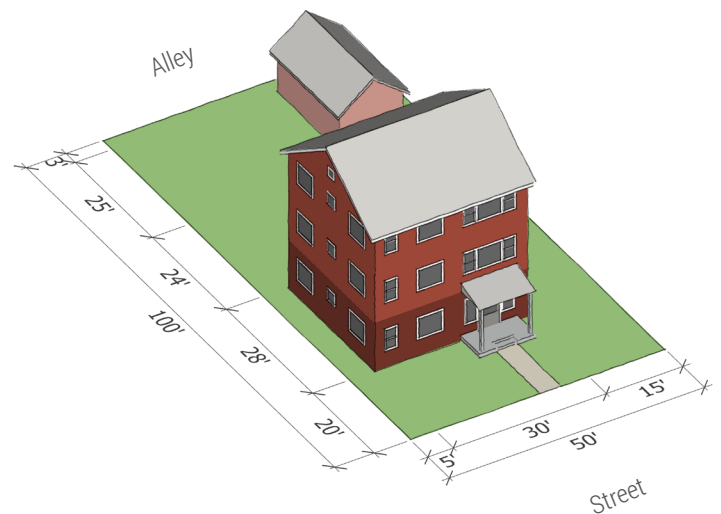
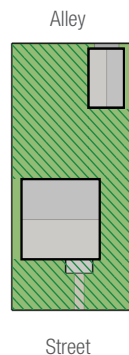


Existing precedent


Example with alley

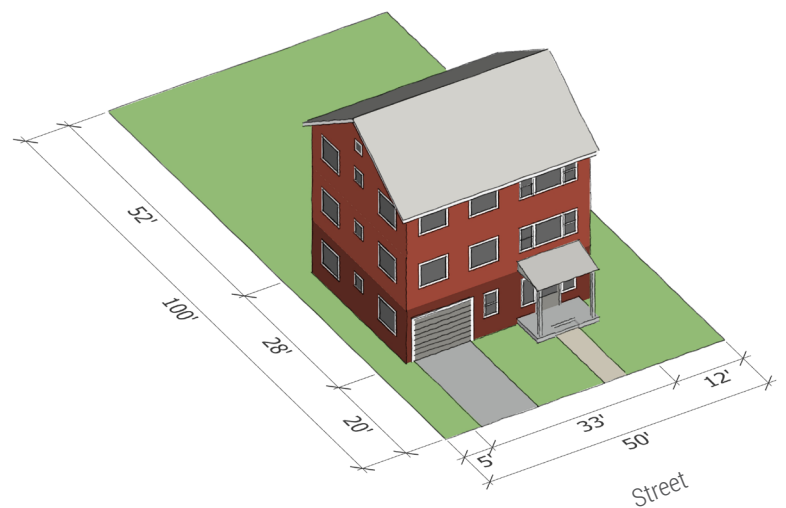
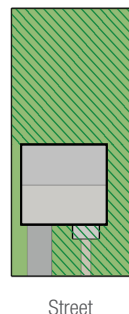
Total units	1
Floor area ratio (FAR)	0.55
Unit size*	2,500 sq ft
Stories	3
Lot size	5,000 sq ft
Building coverage	22%
Usable open space 	65%
Building plus paving	32%
Parking spaces	1

* Note: Does not include 250 sq ft garage



Example without alley

Total units	1
Floor area ratio (FAR)	0.55
Unit size	2,750 sq ft
Stories	3
Lot size	5,000 sq ft
Building coverage	18%
Usable open space 	72%
Building plus paving	21%
Parking spaces	1



Detached house with DADU (existing NR)

A new single detached house with a detached ADU in the rear yard under existing Neighborhood Residential development standards.



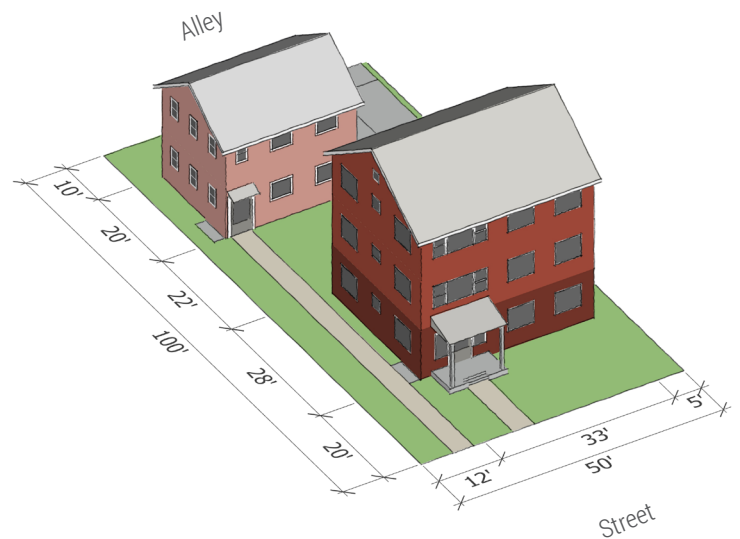
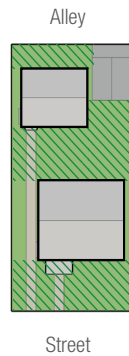
Street-level view



Existing precedent

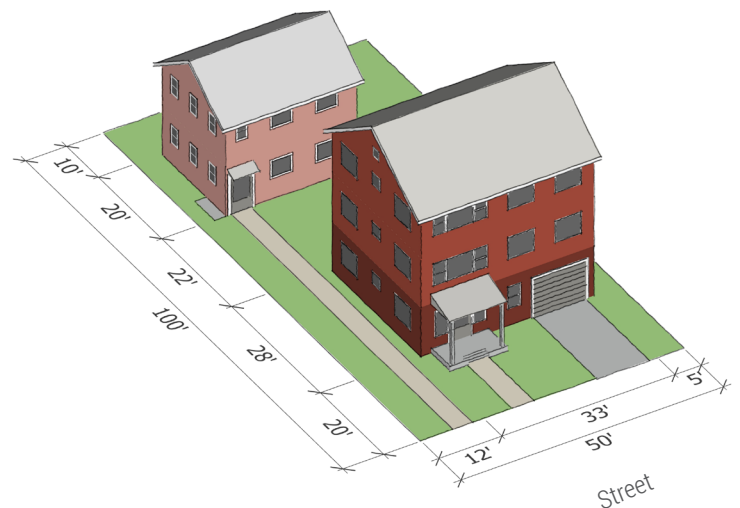
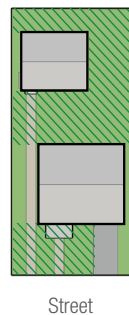
Example with alley

Total units	2
Floor area ratio (FAR)	0.75
Average unit size	1,875 sq ft
Stories	2-3
Lot size	5,000 sq ft
Building coverage	29%
Usable open space	50%
Building plus paving	44%
Parking spaces	2



Example without alley

Total units	2
Floor area ratio (FAR)	0.75
Average unit size	1,875 sq ft
Stories	2-3
Lot size	5,000 sq ft
Building coverage	29%
Usable open space	52%
Building plus paving	41%
Parking spaces	1



House with attached and detached ADUs (existing NR)

A new house with an attached ADU and a detached ADU under existing Neighborhood Residential development standards.




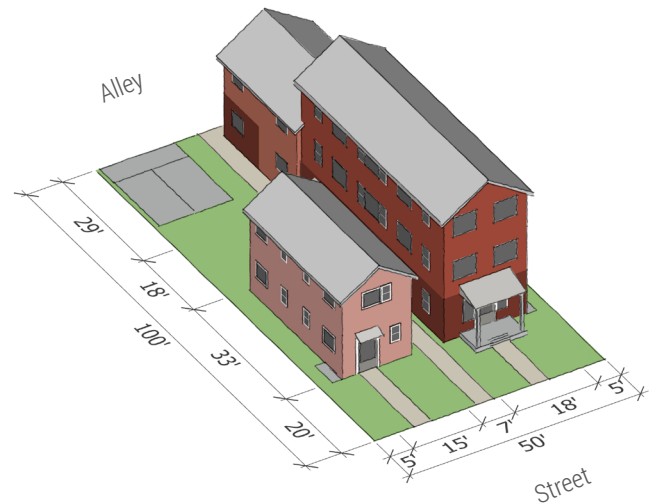
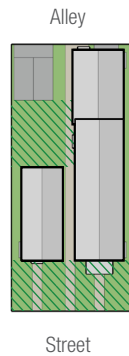
Street-level view




Existing precedent

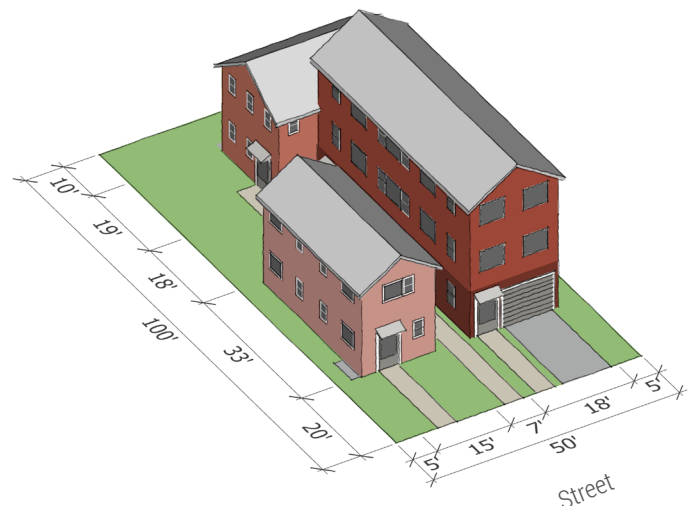
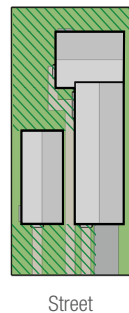
Example with alley

Total units	3
Floor area ratio (FAR)	0.95
Average unit size	1,583 sq ft
Stories	2-3
Lot size	5,000 sq ft
Building coverage	38%
Usable open space 	30%
Building plus paving	58%
Parking spaces	2



Example without alley

Total units	3
Floor area ratio (FAR)	0.95
Average unit size	1,583 sq ft
Stories	2-3
Lot size	5,000 sq ft
Building coverage	38%
Usable open space 	27%
Building plus paving	54%
Parking spaces	1



Two detached houses and two DADUs (existing RSL)

Two new detached houses with two detached ADUs under existing Residential Small Lot (RSL) development standards.

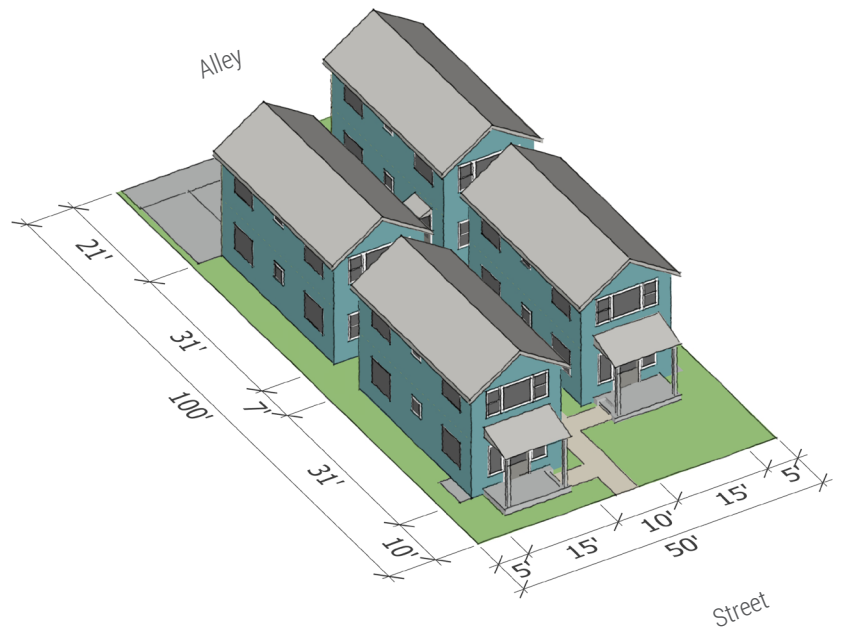
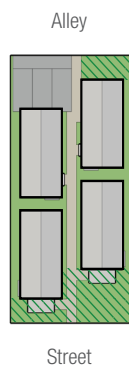


Street-level view



Existing precedent

Total units	4
Floor area ratio (FAR)	0.75
Average unit size	937 sq ft
Stories	2
Lot size	5,000 sq ft
Building coverage	37%
Usable open space	21%
Building plus paving	60%
Parking spaces	3



Updating Seattle's Neighborhood Residential zoning

New state legislation on housing

In 2023, the Washington State Legislature adopted [House Bill 1110 \(HB 1110\)](#), often referred to as the Middle Housing Bill. HB 1110 requires cities in Washington to allow **middle housing** throughout residential areas and limits how cities can regulate this housing. The bill defines middle housing as “buildings that are compatible in scale, form, and character with single-family houses and contains two or more attached, stacked, or clustered homes including duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, fiveplexes, sixplexes, townhouses, stacked flats, courtyard apartments, and cottage housing.”

In Seattle, the bill requires zoning that allows:

- At least four units on all residential lots
- At least six units on residential lots within a quarter mile of major transit stops (such as light rail and bus rapid transit)
- At least six units on residential lots if two units are income-restricted affordable housing

The bill also provides an alternative approach wherein cities can exclude up to 25 percent of existing lots dedicated to detached housing if those excluded areas meet certain criteria. This can include areas at high risk of displacement. The concepts described in this document are intended to comply with the requirements of HB 1110.



Example middle housing types: eight-unit courtyard housing (left) and fourplex (right)

Zoning changes to implement HB 1110

The proposal for updated Neighborhood Residential zoning would increase the number of units allowed on a lot to expand housing choices and comply with state law, while generally maintaining the number of stories and amount of floor area allowed today. The proposed development standards focus on increasing access to these neighborhoods by encouraging construction of more smaller homes that have comparatively lower prices.

Neighborhood Residential zones would continue to use FAR to regulate the scale of development, with the maximum FAR progressing based on the number of units on the site to encourage housing choices and discourage underdevelopment. We would modify several other development standards to create better outcomes for development at this scale:

- Lot coverage would increase to 50 percent, compared to 35-40 percent for most lots today. This would help accommodate two-story buildings, which are less common today because the current lot coverage limit requires three-story buildings to achieve the maximum FAR.

- Front and rear setbacks would be reduced to allow a wider range of layouts and more usable open spaces for residents in the interior of a site. The larger setbacks and separations between buildings required today often result in cookie-cutter layouts with little or no usable open space in the middle of the project. We would encourage porches by allowing them in the front setback.
- Unit lot subdivision would be allowed, as required by new state law. This would allow straightforward fee simple sale and ownership of homes, compared to the more complex condominium arrangements used currently when multiple homes are built and sold on one site.
- New open space requirements would result in more usable open space for residents.

Together, these changes will help achieve the goals outlined earlier in this document.

Key standards in updated Neighborhood Residential zones

Maximum density	1 unit per 1,250 square feet of lot area except that, consistent with state law, at least four units are allowed on all lots, regardless of lot size, and six units within a quarter-mile walk of major transit or if two units are affordable
Floor area ratio (FAR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.9 FAR for density of at least 1 unit per 2,200 sq ft (e.g., three or four units on a 5,000 sq ft lot) • 0.7 FAR for density between 1/4,000 and 1/2,200 sq ft (e.g., two units on a 5,000 sq ft lot) • 0.5 FAR for density below 1/4,000 sq ft (e.g., one unit on a 5,000 sq ft lot)
Lot coverage	50 percent
Height limit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 stories for market-rate development • 4 stories for development with income-restricted affordable homes
Minimum open space requirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 percent of lot area • The minimum dimension for usable open space is 10 feet or, if the open space includes a circulation pathway serving multiple buildings, 13 feet • Open space may be private or shared
Minimum setbacks and separations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Front: 10 feet • Rear: 10 feet without an alley and zero feet with an alley • Side: 5 feet • Separation between buildings within property: 6 feet • Covered porches may extend up to 6 feet into setback, with up to 100 sq ft per porch allowed in setback • Bay windows and balconies may extend up to 2 feet into setback if limited to 8 feet in width • We are considering reduced setbacks for development meeting a higher standard open space

Three detached houses

Three detached houses, each three stories. Open space is along the front of the houses (with an alley) or between the houses (without an alley).



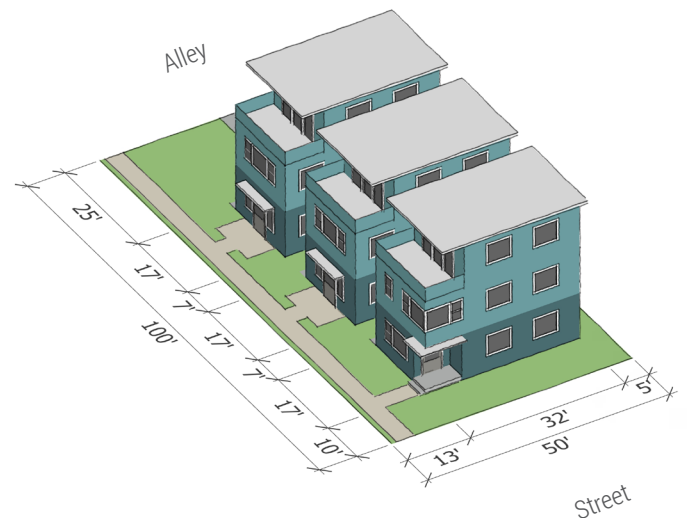
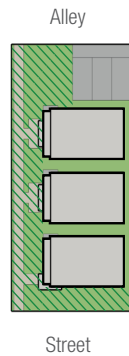
Street-level view



Existing precedent

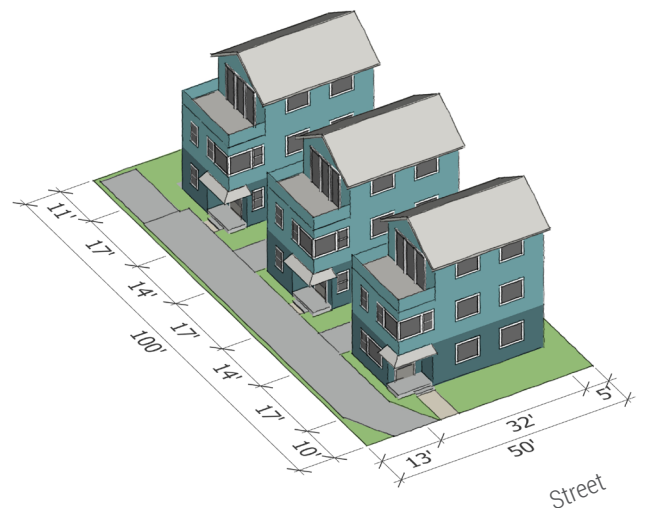
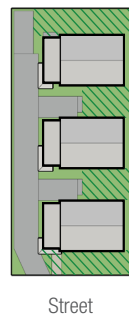
Example with alley

Total units	3
Floor area ratio (FAR)	0.9
Average unit size	1,500 sq ft
Stories	3
Lot size	5,000 sq ft
Building coverage	33%
Usable open space 	36%
Building plus paving	57%
Parking spaces	3



Example without alley

Total units	3
Floor area ratio (FAR)	0.9
Average unit size	1,500 sq ft
Stories	3
Lot size	5,000 sq ft
Building coverage	33%
Usable open space 	28%
Building plus paving	61%
Parking spaces	3



Semi-attached housing with autocourt

One two-story detached home facing the street and two three-story attached homes in the rear. All units have garages off a shared autocourt in the middle of the site.

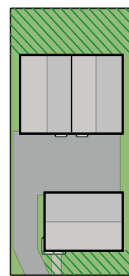


Street-level view

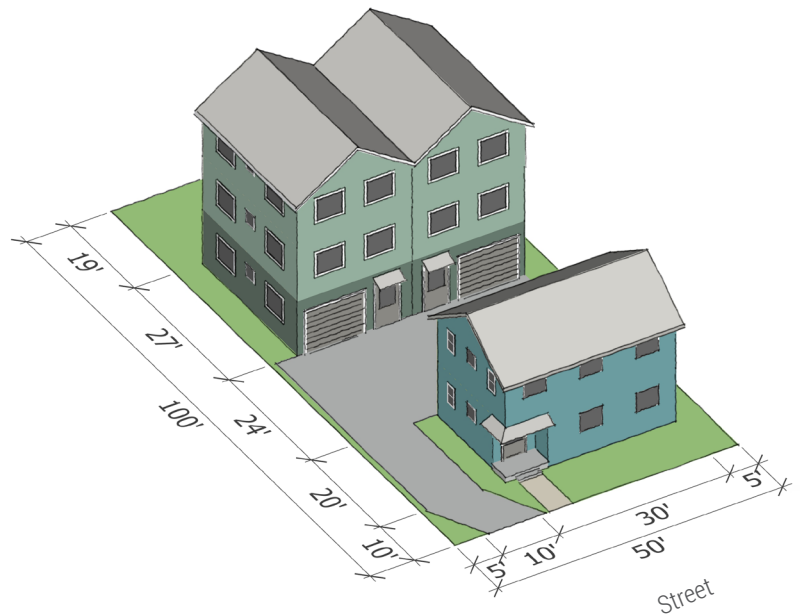


Existing precedent

Total units	3
Floor area ratio (FAR)	0.9
Average unit size	1,500 sq ft
Stories	2-3
Lot size	5,000 sq ft
Building coverage	34%
Usable open space	26%
Building plus paving	61%
Parking spaces	3



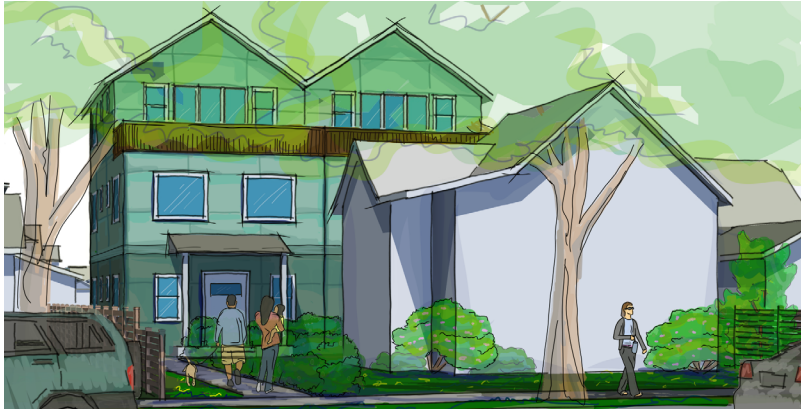
Street



Street

Preserved house and duplex

Two three-story attached homes are added behind an existing home. Half of the floor area in the existing home is exempt from the FAR limit.



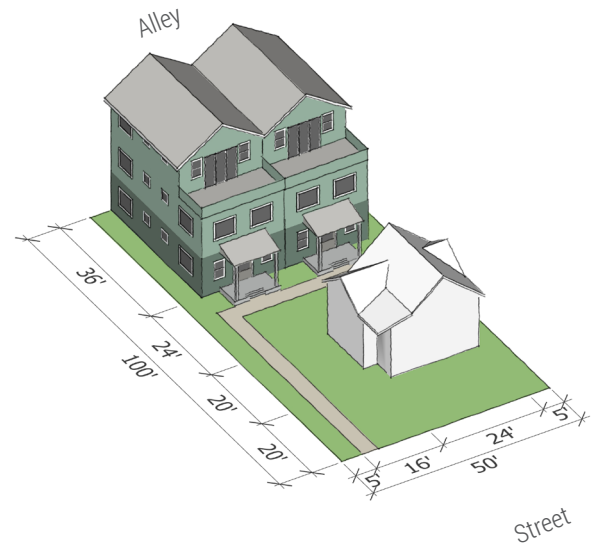
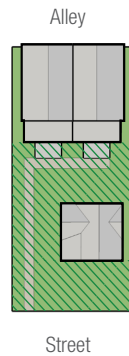
Street-level view



Existing precedent

Example with alley

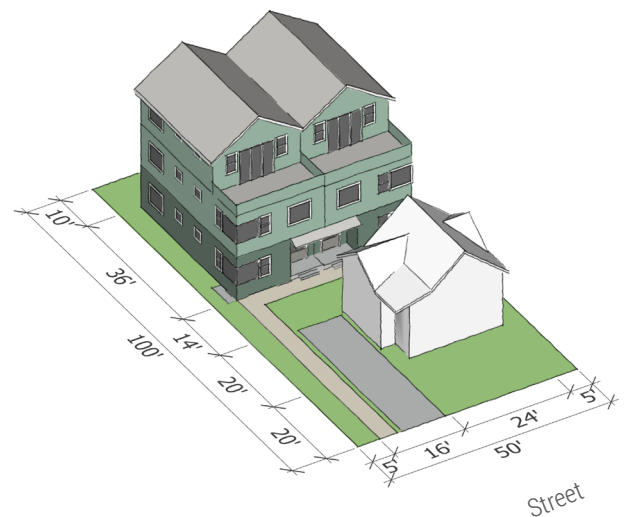
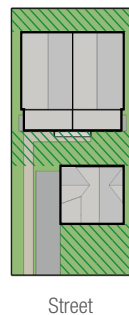
Total units	3
Floor area ratio (FAR)	1.0
Average unit size*	1,666 sq ft
Stories	2-3
Lot size	5,000 sq ft
Building coverage	39%
Usable open space	45%
Building plus paving	52%
Parking spaces	2



* Note: The average includes the preserved home

Example without alley

Total units	3
Floor area ratio (FAR)	1.0
Average unit size	1,666 sq ft
Stories	2-3
Lot size	5,000 sq ft
Building coverage	39%
Usable open space	36%
Building plus paving	56%
Parking spaces	1



Triplex


Three attached homes with a shared open space in the rear half of the site.

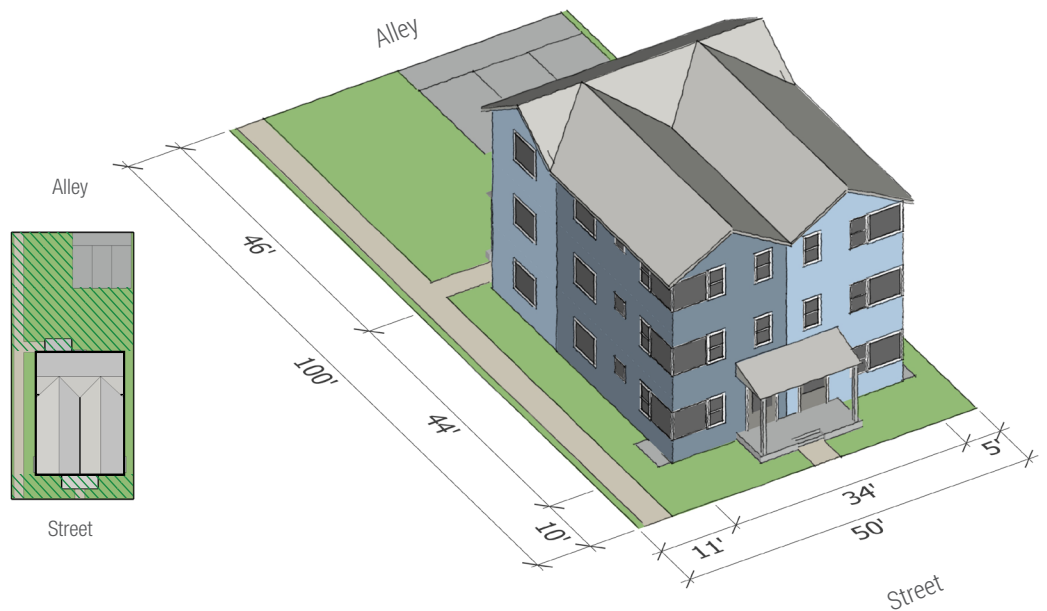


Street-level view



Existing precedent

Total units	3
Floor area ratio (FAR)	0.9
Average unit size	1,500 sq ft
Stories	3
Lot size	5,000 sq ft
Building coverage	30%
Usable open space 	44%
Building plus paving	53%
Parking spaces	3



Four detached houses

Four detached homes, two facing the street and two facing the alley, with narrow open space running lengthwise between the buildings.

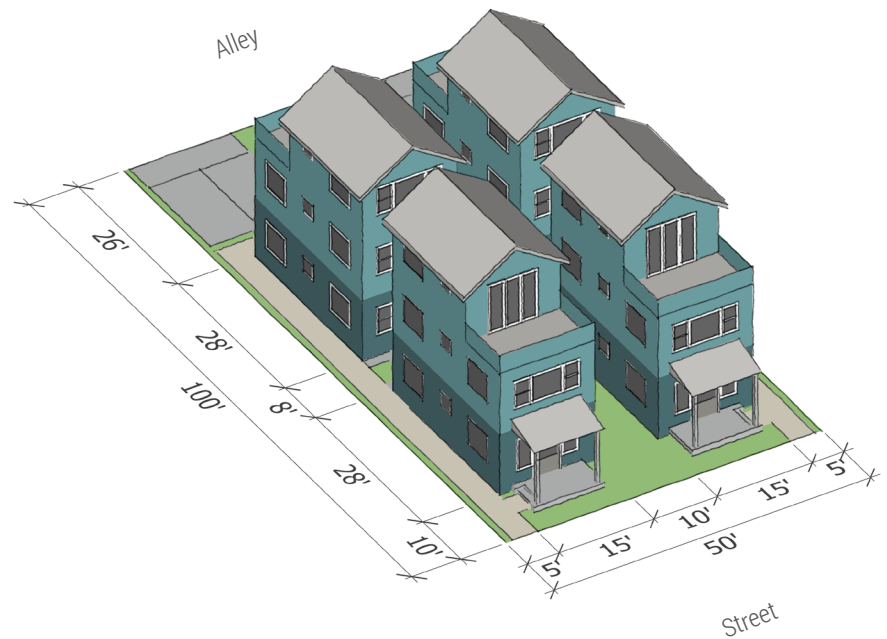
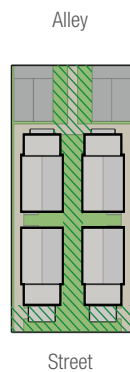


Street-level view



Existing precedent

Total units	4
Floor area ratio (FAR)	0.9
Average unit size	1,125 sq ft
Stories	3
Lot size	5,000 sq ft
Building coverage	34%
Usable open space	22%
Building plus paving	68%
Parking spaces	4



Two duplexes without alley


Four homes in two duplexes resulting in a mix of two- and three-bedroom homes.

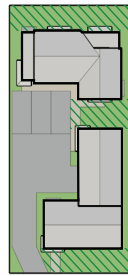


Street-level view

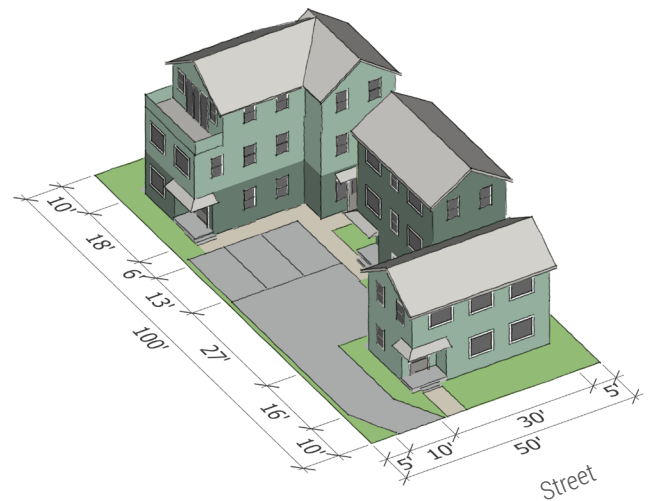



Existing precedent

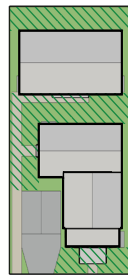
Total units	4
Floor area ratio (FAR)	0.9
Average unit size	1,125 sq ft
Stories	2-3
Lot size	5,000 sq ft
Building coverage	35%
Usable open space 	22%
Building plus paving	64%
Parking spaces	4



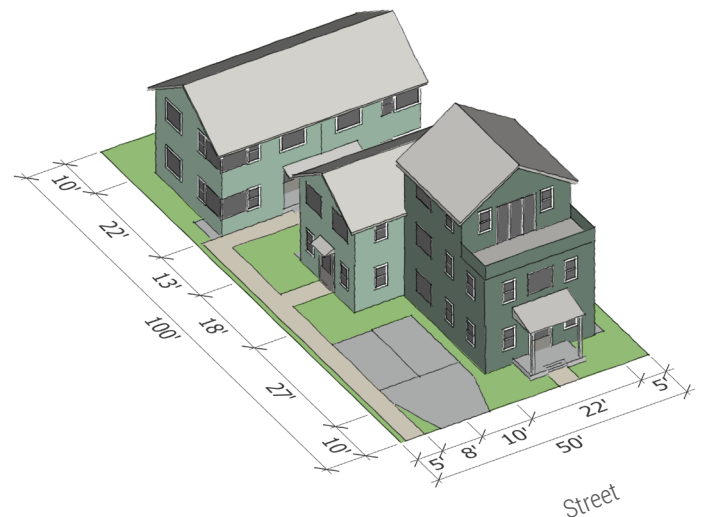
Street



Total units	4
Floor area ratio (FAR)	0.9
Average unit size	1,125 sq ft
Stories	2-3
Lot size	5,000 sq ft
Building coverage	41%
Usable open space 	35%
Building plus paving	62%
Parking spaces	2



Street



Two duplexes with alley


Four homes in two side-by-side duplexes on an alley site.

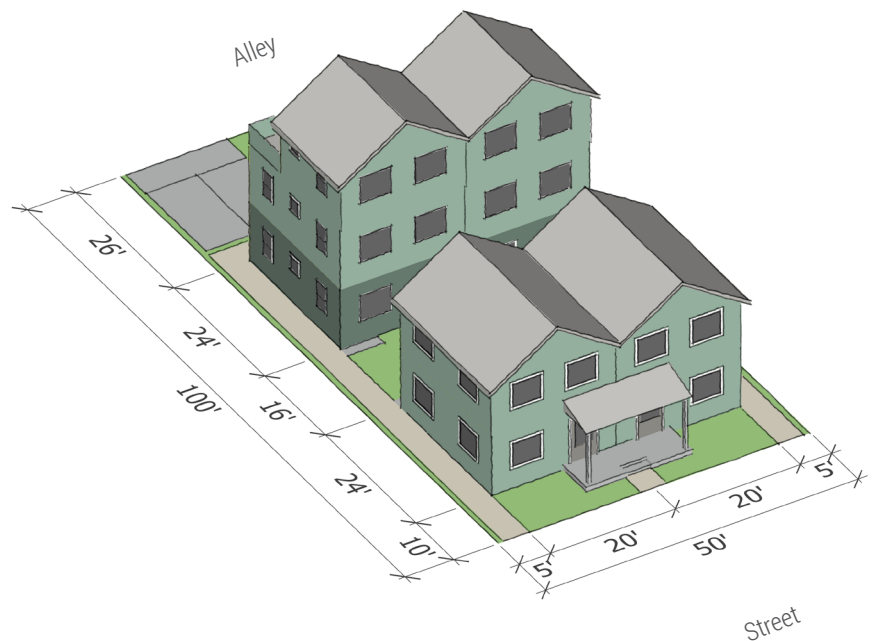
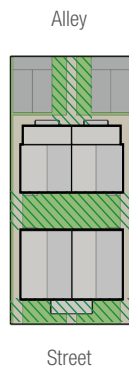


Street-level view



Existing precedent

Total units	4
Floor area ratio (FAR)	0.9
Average unit size	1,125 sq ft
Stories	2-3
Lot size	5,000 sq ft
Building coverage	38%
Usable open space 	31%
Building plus paving	65%
Parking spaces	4

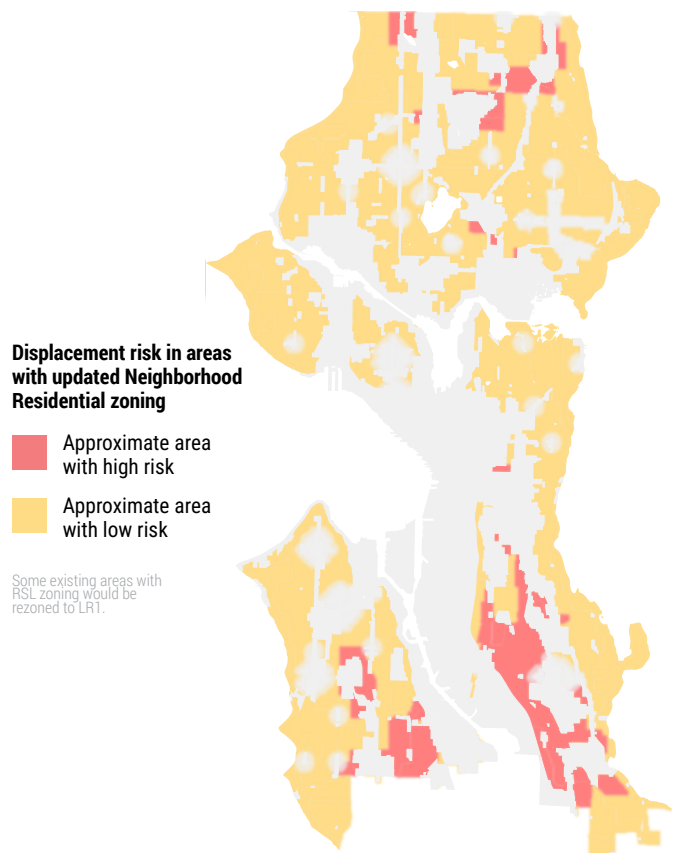
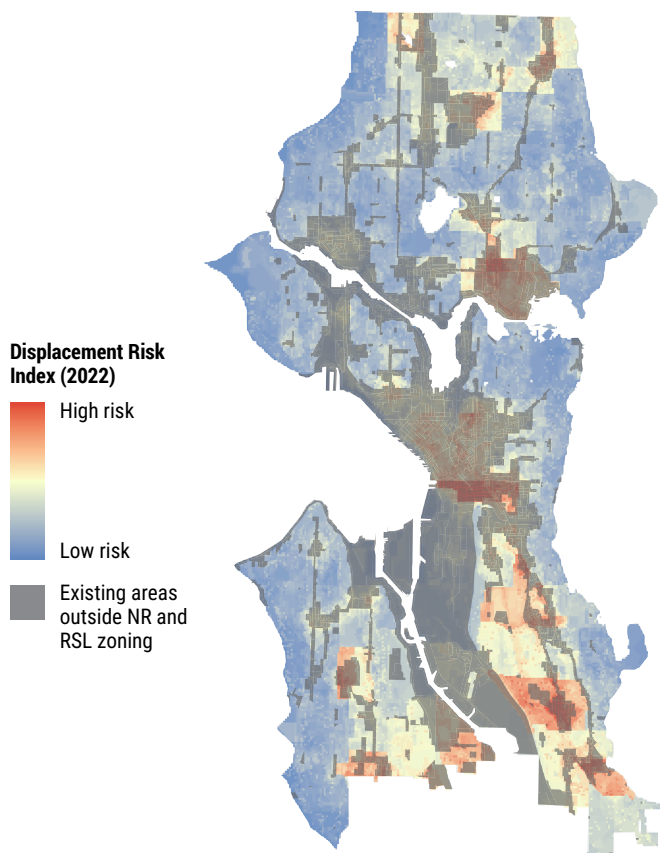


A tailored approach for areas at high risk of displacement

Central to the vision of the One Seattle Plan is minimizing displacement, defined as the relocation of residents, businesses, or institutions from an area due to forces outside their control. Displacement can occur when households and businesses cannot afford the cost to rent or maintain ownership of their existing space, must leave due to other precipitating events, and cannot afford other available spaces that would let them remain in their community.

As part of the One Seattle Plan, we have updated the City's **Displacement Risk Index**, which identifies areas where displacement may be more likely due to the share of people and households who are more vulnerable to displacement, the presence of amenities and infrastructure that can generate market pressure, and economic conditions that affect the likelihood of displacement. The maps below show the City's analysis of displacement risk across Seattle and in areas with updated Neighborhood Residential zoning.

Low- and moderate-income homeowners, particularly homeowners of color, often face challenges to staying rooted in their community. These challenges can be particularly acute in communities of color, which historically formed in part because people of color were denied access to other parts of Seattle. These residents often own homes that have remained in their family for generations despite past and ongoing discriminatory practices like redlining and predatory speculation. We often hear these homeowners express interest in adding housing to their property, but uncertainty about their ability to do so and concern that the more profitable and likely outcome for their neighbors could be selling their homes and leaving the community. Over time, this phenomenon contributes to ongoing cultural displacement.



In areas with high displacement risk, we propose to create a distinct zone with development standards that differ from other Neighborhood Residential zones. This proposal uses flexibility allowed under HB 1110 for a different approach to zoning in areas of high displacement risk.

The purpose of a distinct zone in these areas is to increase opportunities for homeowners to add units to their property while encouraging the preservation of existing homes. This zone would support homeowners wishing to stay in place and add housing to their property to offset the cost of homeownership, build wealth, or create space for family or community members. Applying different standards in these areas

could also shift development toward areas of low displacement risk. This zoning strategy complements others that the Plan supports to stabilize vulnerable households and communities and empower existing homeowners to stay in place and thrive.

Most development standards for Neighborhood Residential zoning in areas at high risk of displacement would mirror the citywide standards. The table below shows proposed departures from those standards to achieve the goals outlined above. The map on the previous page provides general guidance on where this zone may be applied. Actual zone boundaries for areas at risk of displacement would be refined through further analysis and engagement with affected communities.

Zoning standards in areas with high displacement risk

	Difference	Rationale
Density	1 unit per 1,650 square feet of lot, compared to 1 unit per 1,250 square feet in areas with low risk. This would allow three rather than four units on a 5,000-square-foot lot.	It is generally impractical to add more than two units to a property while preserving an existing home. A lower density would not discourage homeowners from adding units to their property but would encourage preservation of existing homes when units are added.
Floor area ratio (FAR)	0.8 FAR, compared to 0.9 FAR in areas with low risk, with the exemption for preserving an existing home increased from 0.1 to 0.2 FAR.	These changes would reduce the amount of floor area allowed when demolishing an existing building but generally provide the same amount of floor area when preserving an existing home. This approach would further encourage the preservation of existing homes.

Affordable housing bonus

Neighborhood Residential zones are some of the most expensive and exclusive areas of Seattle. The updated Neighborhood Residential zones would help address this pattern by increasing housing supply overall and allowing smaller housing types in particular. But most new market-rate housing in these areas will remain unaffordable to low-income households due to factors like the high cost of development. Achieving more racial and economic inclusion in Neighborhood Residential areas – a central objective of the One Seattle Plan – requires proactive policies to encourage creation of housing affordable to low-income people in these neighborhoods.

One way to support this goal is with development standards that increase the feasibility of low-income housing. Today, restrictive zoning limits its feasibility

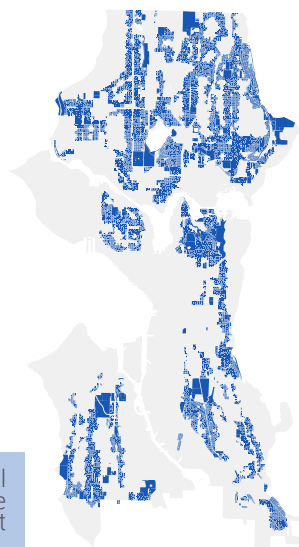
in Neighborhood Residential areas. Under House Bill 1110, cities like Seattle must allow six units per lot if at least two are affordable to low-income households. The proposed Neighborhood Residential zones would further increase the feasibility of low-income housing by allowing additional height, floor area, and density on sites within a quarter-mile of frequent transit.

Most low-income housing created with these provisions would likely be permanently affordable homeownership developments as it is difficult to do affordable rental housing at this small scale. Recent examples of permanently affordable homeownership projects in Seattle include cottage-style development in Residential Small Lot zones and stacked affordable condos in Capitol Hill.

Development standards used for modeling

Affordable housing development would be subject to all standards for NR zones with the following exceptions:

Maximum height	4 stories
Maximum lot coverage	60 percent
Maximum density	1 unit per 400 square feet
Floor area ratio (FAR)	1.8



Neighborhood Residential sites within a quarter-mile walk of frequent transit



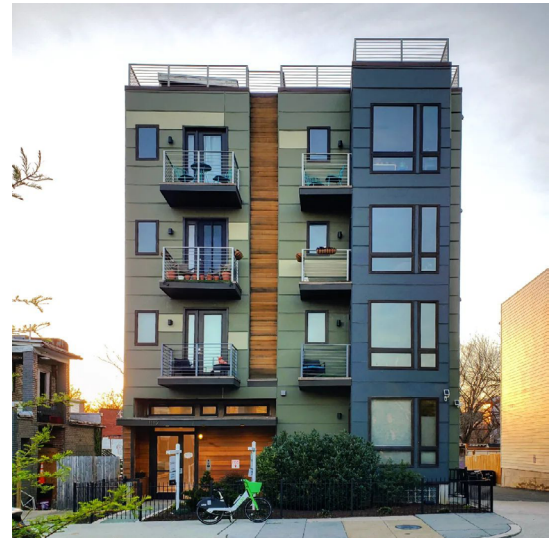
Ballard Flats
Architecture and photography credit: BUILD LLC

Affordable housing with bonus

A small apartment that includes homes affordable to low-income households. Units would likely be owned as permanently affordable condominium units. A single stair provides access to the units on each floor.

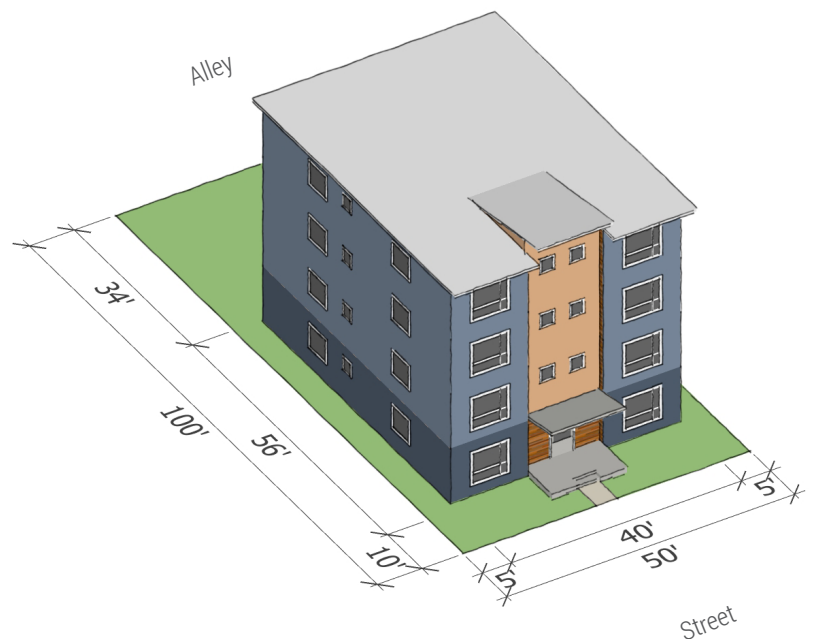
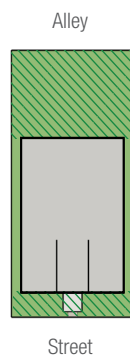


Street-level view



Existing precedent

Total units	8
Floor area ratio (FAR)	1.8
Average unit size	1,125 sq ft
Stories	4
Lot size	5,000 sq ft
Building coverage	45%
Usable open space	44%
Building plus paving	47%
Parking spaces	0



Corner stores

One goal of the One Seattle Plan is to create neighborhoods where people can walk and bike to everyday needs. Corner stores help to achieve this goal by providing services and retail in primarily residential areas that may be far from larger business districts. Allowing small commercial uses in residential zones also allows entrepreneurs to start small businesses that contribute to neighborhood vibrancy and cohesion. Relics of the era when small corner stores were ubiquitous exist throughout Seattle’s residential areas, though most have since been converted to residential uses due to changes in zoning intended to create more separation of uses.

We propose to allow limited commercial uses, such as retail and food and beverage services, on corner lots in Neighborhood Residential zones. Commercial uses would be limited to the ground floor and basements, although ancillary uses such as storage and office spaces could be allowed on the upper floors. Rules would apply regarding hours of operation, delivery, noise, odor, and the location and screening of solid waste and other outdoor activities.

New corner stores would most likely result through conversion of existing residential structures, including reestablishing commercial uses in structures previously used as a business. Depending on the size and layout of the structure, residential uses could be maintained on site. For example, an existing two-story structure could be converted into a small corner store with storage and offices on the second floor, or the second story could remain in residential use for the operator’s home or as a rental unit. Alternatively, a garage in the front of a unit could be converted into a commercial use such as a cafe – common in Seattle’s Residential-Commercial (RC) zones – while maintaining the existing home behind it. Some new development with purpose-built commercial could be built on corners with heavier pedestrian and traffic volumes. However, development of this type would likely occur infrequently due to the high cost of new construction and the relatively lower value of commercial space outside business districts.

Development standards used for modeling

Development with commercial uses on corner lots would have to meet all Neighborhood Residential standards with the following exceptions:

Setback and separations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduced setback of two feet from street lot lines for commercial spaces on the ground floor• Upper floors would still be required to set back 10 feet
Height and Noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Two additional feet of height for the ground floor to allow for taller ceilings and additional soundproofing for residential use above



Credit: Samuel Kraft

Corner store


A mixed-use building with ground-floor commercial space that serves the surrounding neighborhood and four homes in the two stories above. The ground floor would be subject to a reduced setback while the upper floors would still need to meet the 10-foot setback requirement. This type of development would be allowed only on corner lots.

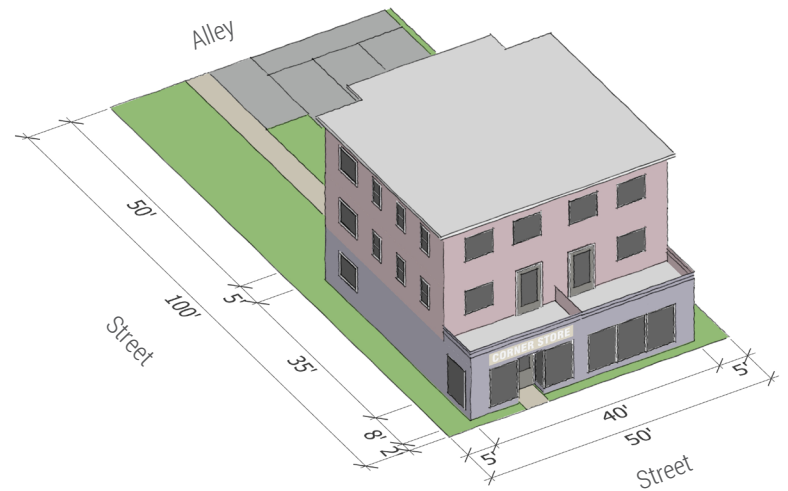
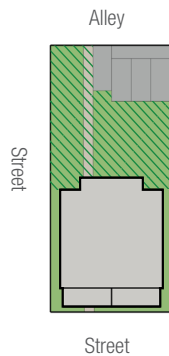


Street-level view



Existing precedent

Total units	4
Floor area ratio (FAR)	0.9
Average unit size	700 sq ft
Commercial size	1,750 sq ft
Stories	3
Lot size	5,000 sq ft
Building coverage	34%
Usable open space 	36%
Building plus paving	56%
Parking spaces	3



Additional changes to development standards

Off-street parking

Off-street parking requirements can have significant impacts on the design and cost of housing and increase car usage and greenhouse gas emissions. While off-street parking can reduce competition for parking on the street, it also increases the cost of construction; reduces the amount of space available for housing, open space, and trees; increases hardscape and runoff; and encourages vehicle ownership and use. On small lots, driveways, maneuvering areas, and parking stalls can take up a substantial portion of the site and dictate the layout of everything else on the site. In many cases, these areas end up occupying the entire interior of a site, leaving only small areas of open space at the front and rear. However, off-street parking can also support goals like providing space for electric vehicle charging.

Currently, Neighborhood Residential zones require one off-street parking space per principal dwelling unit, unless the lot is smaller than 3,000 square feet, less than 30 feet in width, or located in an Residential Small Lot zone near frequent transit. Given that ADUs do not require parking, Neighborhood Residential zones effectively require one parking space per three dwelling units.

New state law also prohibits cities from requiring off-street parking within one-half mile walking distance of a stop on a light rail, commuter rail, bus rapid transit, or trolley bus line.

We are considering whether to remove parking requirements in remaining areas where they are present today. Even if not required, many if not most new homes in Neighborhood Residential zones are likely to include parking. Sites with alley access will likely include parking for most or all units due to the ease in parking directly off the alley. On sites without alley access, a broader range of outcomes are possible, including development with a parking space for every home and development with no parking at all. Rather than bring vehicles into the center of a site, some builders may offer a mix of units with and without dedicated off-street parking, with the latter offered at a slightly lower price point. The development examples in this document illustrate a range of parking outcomes given these possible scenarios.

Open space

Open space on lots in Neighborhood Residential zones creates space for residents to be outside and for trees and vegetation. Our proposal is a requirement that 20 percent of the lot be set aside as open space. Open space would include areas outside building footprints, driveways, and parking stalls with a width and depth of at least 10 feet or, if they contain a pathway accessing multiple units, 13 feet. Covered porches would count towards open space, but balconies and roof decks would not. Open space may be shared between multiple units or private.

During public engagement, many people supported creating more homeownership options that allow for usable green space. This proposed standard aims to ensure a reasonable amount of open space in new developments, while giving builders flexibility in how they integrate it into different designs. To create the development examples in this document, we tested different approaches to open space. The 20 percent requirement was achievable under all scenarios but required careful design in many situations. Each development example in this document includes an open space calculation and identifies where the open space is located on the lot.

Trees and vegetation

Trees in Neighborhood Residential zones are protected by multiple regulations:

- The Tree Protection Code limits the number, size, and type of trees that may be removed from private property and establishes requirements for replacing trees that are cut down.
- Tree planting requirements require planting of trees as part of development.
- Street tree requirements limit removal of street trees and require planting of new street trees as part development.
- Environmentally Critical Areas (ECA) and Shoreline regulations protect trees and vegetation around shorelines, creeks, wetlands, and steep slopes.

The tree protection and street tree requirements were recently updated in May 2023 to lower the size thresholds and provide stronger protections for trees subject to regulation, require mitigation when trees are removed, and require the planting of street trees as part of development in Neighborhood Residential zones. As part of the One Seattle Plan, the City is considering updating the tree planting requirements and available departures in Neighborhood Residential zones. The purpose of this update would be to help meet citywide tree canopy within the new context of development allowed in these areas.

Other potential changes

Other changes that could considered as part of developing new Neighborhood Residential zones include:

- **Height:** Height limits could be changed slightly to encourage more livable units and better design outcomes within the existing three-story limit. Specifically, the City is considering increasing the height limit from 30 feet to 32 feet. The current height limit pushes builders to locate the first floor at grade and have minimum separation between floors in order to achieve reasonable floor to ceiling heights. A higher limit could allow the first floor to be raised above grade to create privacy and separation for residents, provide more acoustic separation between floors, and/or result in higher floor to ceiling heights which allow in more light and create better living space.
- **Pitched roof exemption:** Pitched roofs are allowed extend up to five feet above the height limit if they meet a minimum pitch of 4:12. But it is often difficult to fit a pitched roof within this height, resulting in flat or minimally pitched roofs. This provision could be increased to eight feet to make it easier to accommodate pitched roofs. We would also allow a height exception for shed roofs (roofs slanted in only one direction) since they support solar panels.
- **Design standards:** Updated Neighborhood Residential zones could include new requirements that support ensure quality design. These standards could foster clear entrances facing the street, encourage high-quality materials, and improve the design of corner units.

Next steps & engagement

The purpose of this document is to communicate possible outcomes for updating Neighborhood Residential zones to solicit feedback that guides the development of a more detailed proposal. The City of Seattle is looking for feedback on these concepts and the draft Comprehensive Plan during winter and spring 2024. Comments can be submitted online on the Comp Plan Engagement Hub at engage.one-seattle-plan.com or by email at OneSeattleCompPlan@seattle.gov.

We will also host in-person open houses so community members can talk directly with staff. More information on the Comprehensive Plan Update and events is available at seattle.gov/opcd/one-seattle-plan/get-involved.

After this engagement period, several additional rounds of public engagement will follow before changes to zoning and development standards occur.

