



Technical Memo

To City of Ruston Planning Commission

From: Kirsten Peterson, Consultant Planner

Date: January 8, 2025, Planning Commission Meeting

Subject Middle Housing – Review of Gap Analysis and Code Updates

SUMMARY

As discussed during the Planning Commission meeting of December 11, the City of Ruston has been identified as a Tier 3 City by the State of Washington. This means that the City will need to comply with various house bills around the topic of “middle housing.”

Several documents were provided with the previous agenda report, including a technical memo which provided an explanation of the State’s housing legislation. Draft documents were also provided which depicted various amendments to the Ruston Municipal Code.

During this upcoming work session, the gap analysis and code amendments will be discussed in further detail with the Planning Commission. City Staff and the consulting firm will be reviewing these documents both for informational purposes, and for seeking guidance from the Commission on areas where the City has the ability to consider options.

As a reminder the gap analysis is being provided in excel format, and it is a simplified way to track potential edits to the Ruston City Code. The actual code amendments are being provided in a separate Word document depicted in TrackChanges, with comments that correspond to the gap analysis.

BACKGROUND

As a reminder the House Bills require that the City of Ruston adopt regulations allowing for middle housing on all lots zoned predominantly for residential use, including minimum unit per lot standards, maximum parking requirements, and requiring administrative design review, in cases where design review is used.

The adopted definition of “Middle housing” found within RCW 36.70A.030 is as follows:

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

As a Tier 3 city, Ruston has fewer requirements than the Tier 1 and 2 cities, and are only required to allow for a minimum of two units per lot. As noted in the RCW definition, there are nine (9) types of housing that are identified as middle housing. Tier 3 cities are only required to accommodate for the housing unit types which can reasonably accommodate two units per lot. By default the State is now limiting the required housing types for Tier 3 cities to the following:

- Duplexes
- Stacked flats
- Cottage housing
- Courtyard apartments

Within each zone where lots are zoned predominantly for residential use, Tier 3 cities should amend allowed use standards to permit at least those four housing types listed above. The code amendments include definitions for each of the four housing types, as well as additions to the Use chart within Chapter 25.07 of the code.

The gap analysis is included as the first exhibit to this report, with the Draft Code Amendments as Exhibit #2. The updated land use chart is included as Exhibit #3. The formatting still needs to be updated to allow for copying and pasting into the full code amendment. The draft zoning map, depicting the proposed new zoning districts is Exhibit #4.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

The primary purpose of the Planning Commission meeting is to review the various code amendments in more detail and provide feedback. In advance of the meeting, the following is a summary of some of the proposed changes in order of appearance in the Code amendment document:

- RMC 25.01 Definitions – The definitions are being moved from this section to a new location in a new Chapter 25.99.
- RMC 25.01.020 Purpose of Zones – The list of zones will be updated in subsection (b) and the new zoning map will be provide in subsection (c).
- RMC 25.01.030 RES District – This will be updated to change the title of the district, and add language regarding unit density. Other edits are being made to accommodate state requirements regarding ADU's.
- RMC 25.01.051 Point Ruston MDP – Two new allowable uses are being added, and the parking requirements are updated to reflect the RCW.
- RMC 25.01.080 Parking requirements – This section is being modified to reflect the State limitations on parking.
- RMC 25.06.040 Building architectural standards – This section is being revised to include design standards for residential development. This section was proposed by city staff. This is allowable per state so long as the requirements for middle housing are not more restrictive than the standards for all other residential housing types.

- RMC 25.07 Land Use Matrix – Several amendments have been made to this matrix, including the elimination of the three existing zoning districts (RES, COM and COM-P), and the addition of several new zoning districts. New housing types have been included as new rows within the chart. The housing types required to be allowed by the State are depicted as Permitted uses. The other new housing types are depicted as allowable only through approval of a Conditional Use Permit.
 - Please note that the Use Chart is currently attached as a separate document, Exhibit #3
- RMC 25.99 Definitions – This is the new location for the definition section. New or modified definitions have been provided for the following:
 - Administrative Design Review
 - Dwelling, Cottage Housing
 - Dwelling, Courtyard Building
 - Dwelling, duplex-stacked
 - Dwelling, duplex – side by side
 - Dwelling, fourplex
 - Dwelling, fiveplex
 - Dwelling, high-rise multifamily
 - Dwelling, rowhouse
 - Dwelling, triplex
 - Live-Work Unit
 - Major Transit Stop
 - Marine-Related Uses
 - Middle Housing
 - Mixed Use Building
 - Mobile Food Vending
 - Sales Level 1
- Chapter 29.02.030 – New section for Unit Lot Subdivisions

Attachments:

Exhibit #1 – Gap Analysis in MS Excel format

Exhibit #2 – DRAFT Code amendments in MS Word

Exhibit #3 – DRAFT Updated Land Use Chart

Exhibit #4 – DRAFT Zoning Map