



## INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM

TO: Tukwila Planning Commission

FROM: Nora Gierloff, Community Development Director

BY: Neil Tabor, Senior Planner, DCD and Isaac Gloor, Senior Planner, DCD

DATE: March 27, 2025

SUBJECT: Middle Housing Code Discussion

### **ISSUE**

The City is required to update middle housing regulations by June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025. As a continuation of the February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025, Planning Commission meeting, staff would like to discuss and seek further feedback on items identified for further review.

### **DISCUSSION**

Based on feedback from the Planning Commission, staff has compiled additional information on various topics requested for further review and discussion. Presentation materials reviewed in the February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025, Planning Commission meeting can also be found in the [City's Digital Records Center](#).

### ***Community Residential Development Standards***

General proposed standards for the Community Residential zoning district can be found in Table 1. These standards are not exhaustive, but represent an update of the "Basic Development Standards" found within the Low Density Residential (LDR) District chapter of the Tukwila Municipal Code, similar to other basic development standard tables found within other zoning district chapters.

*Table 1. Proposed Community Residential Standards*

|                          | Community Residential   |   |
|--------------------------|---|---|
|                          | No transit proximity or affordable unit   | 1/4 Mile of Major Transit, or at least 1 unit affordable  |
| <b>Minimum Lot Size</b>  | 5,000 sq. ft.   |   |
| <b>Minimum Lot Width</b> | 40 feet   |   |
| <b>Density</b>           | (3) units per parcel, plus 1 unit per 1,500 SF of parcel area over 5,000 SF, whichever is greater, up to 5 units                      | (4) units per parcel, plus 1 unit per 1,500 SF of parcel area over 5,000 SF, whichever is greater, up to 5 units                      |
|                          | 2 units per parcel can be designated as accessory residences, provided they meet ADU requirements (ADUs count toward maximum density) | 2 units per parcel can be designated as accessory residences, provided they meet ADU requirements (ADUs count toward maximum density) |
| <b>Development Area</b>  |   |   |
| <b>Impervious Area</b>   | 75%   |   |

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b>Building Footprint</b> | 50%  |
| <b>Setbacks</b>           |  |
| <b>Front</b>              | 15 feet  |
| <b>Porch Bonus</b>        | 7' (if porch of at least 25 square feet, with no dimension less than 5 feet) |
| <b>Side</b>               | 5 feet   |
| <b>Rear</b>               | 5 feet   |
| <b>Rear (Alley DADU)</b>  | 0 feet   |
| <b>Building Height</b>    | 35 feet  |
| <b>ADU Area</b>           | 1,400 sq. ft. livable  |
| <b>ADU Height</b>         | 28 feet  |
| <b>Parking</b>            | 1 per unit (not required within 1/2 mile of qualifying transit)              |
| <b>ADU parking</b>        | Not required   |

### ***Open Space/Recreation Space***

The Planning Commission requested that staff provide additional information on open space and recreation space, with an emphasis on how different levels of requirements could affect potential middle housing development. The presentation depicts examples of how maximum building footprints may be affected by recreation space requirements ranging from 0-400 ft<sup>2</sup> per unit. Generally, a requirement of 250 ft<sup>2</sup> of recreation space per unit, or less, did not require a reduction in building footprint to accommodate the recreation space requirement. A recreation space requirement of 400 ft<sup>2</sup> per unit reduced the building footprint and potential unit sizes by several hundred square feet per unit.

The examples used an 8,000 ft<sup>2</sup> (50'x160') lot with two duplex units and a single ADU. Unit lot lines are depicted in the presentation slides to demonstrate the optional component allowing individual unit ownership. Setbacks from unit lot lines are included, as well as setbacks from property lines. Additional detailed standards that could be applied to a recreation space requirement include considerations such as minimum dimensions for qualifying open space, screening or buffering, and ability to use required setbacks areas to meet recreation space requirements.

### **Current Standards**

The Tukwila Municipal Code has definitions for open space as well as several types of recreation space, listed below.

#### **18.06.595 Open Space**

*“Open space” means that area of a site which is free and clear of building and structures and is open and unobstructed from the ground to the sky.*

#### **18.06.665 Recreation Space**

*“Recreation space” means covered and uncovered space designed and intended for active and/or passive recreational activity including but not limited to tennis courts, swimming pools, cabanas, playgrounds, playfields, or wooded areas, and specifically excluding any parking area, driveway, or rockery.*

#### **18.06.670 Recreation Space, Covered**

*“Covered recreation space” means an area of ground covered or overlaid by an artificial or manmade surface, such as rooftops or pavement.*

**18.06.675 Recreation Space, Uncovered**

*“Uncovered recreation space” means an area of ground characterized by a natural surface, such as lawn, forests, or sandboxes (for children’s play).*

An example of the application of recreation space requirements for the Medium Density Residential (MDR) zoning district can be seen in TMC 18.12.030 copied below. This is similarly required for residential development of various housing types in other zoning districts.

**18.12.030 Recreation Space Requirements**

*A. In the MDR zoning district, any proposed multiple-family structure, complex or development shall provide, on the premises and for the use of the occupants, a minimum amount of recreation space according to the following provisions:*

**1. Required Area.**

- a. For each proposed dwelling unit in the multiple-family development and detached zero-lot-line type of development, a minimum of 400 square feet (100 square feet for senior citizen housing) of recreation space shall be provided. Any multiple-family structure, complex or development shall provide a minimum of 1,000 square feet of total recreation space.*
- b. Townhouse units shall provide at least 250 square feet of the 400 square feet of recreation space as private, ground level open space measuring not less than 10 feet in any dimension.*
- c. The front, side and rear yard setback areas required by the applicable zoning district shall not qualify as recreation space. However, these setback areas can qualify as recreation space for townhouses if they are incorporated into private open space with a minimum dimension of 10 feet on all sides.*

**2. Indoor or Covered Space.**

- a. No more than 50% of the required recreation space may be indoor or covered space in standard multi-family developments. Senior citizen housing must have at least 20% indoor or covered space.*
- b. The Director may grant a maximum of two square feet of recreation space for each one square foot of extensively improved indoor recreation space provided. Interior facility improvements would include a full range of weight machines, sauna, hot tub, large screen television and the like.*

**3. Uncovered Space.**

- a. A minimum of 50% of the total required recreation space shall be open or uncovered, up to 100% of the total requirement may be in open or uncovered recreation space in standard multi-family developments. Senior citizen housing allows up to 80% of recreation space to be outdoors and has no minimum outdoor space requirement.*
- b. Recreation space shall not exceed a 4% slope in any direction unless it is demonstrated that the proposed space design clearly facilitates and encourages the anticipated use.*
- c. The Director may grant a maximum credit of two square feet of recreation space for each one square foot of outdoor pool and surrounding deck area.*

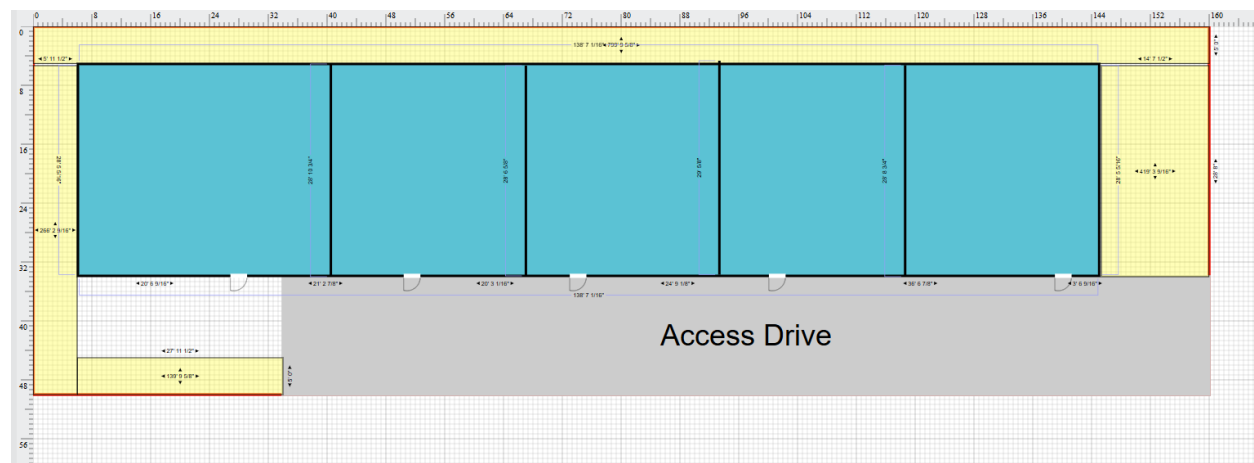
**4. General Requirements.**

- a. Multiple-family complexes (except senior citizen housing, detached zero-lot-line and townhouses with nine or fewer units), which provide dwelling units with two or more bedrooms, shall provide adequate recreation space for children with at least one space for the 5-to-12-year-old group. Such space shall be at least 25% but not more than 50% of the total recreation space required under TMC Section 18.12.030 (1), and shall be designated, located and maintained in a safe condition.*
- b. Adequate fencing, plant screening or other buffer shall separate the recreation space from parking areas, driveways or public streets.*

c. The anticipated use of all required recreation areas shall be specified and designed to clearly accommodate that use.

### **Massing Example**

The Planning Commission requested a visual example of the maximum building massing and development coverage permitted in a potential development. The rough example below depicts an 8,000 square foot lot (50' x 160'), with a 4,000 square foot building footprint delineated into five attached units in a townhouse or fiveplex development style. Setback requirements are depicted in yellow.



While this represents an approximate maximum buildout of the site, it is extremely unlikely that a footprint such as this would be proposed. Features such as garages and associated access drives, shared or private open space and visual design would likely reduce the overall massing of building footprint on the site. A slightly wider site would also provide more flexibility in unit placement and orientation.

### **Middle Housing Definitions**

In response to commissioner questions, staff has compiled the definitions related to middle housing and various middle housing types below from [RCW 36.70A.030](#). Please note, duplex through sixplex multiplex housing types are not defined terms within the cited RCW. The RCW defers to jurisdictions in how they choose to define middle housing types not defined in the RCW, and it is acknowledged that, in practice, some housing developments could qualify as multiple middle housing types.

#### RCW Definitions

"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.

"Cottage housing" means residential units on a lot with a common open space that either: (a) is owned in common; or (b) has units owned as condominium units with property owned in common and a minimum of 20 percent of the lot size as open space.

"Courtyard apartments" means attached dwelling units arranged on two or three sides of a yard or court.

"Stacked flat" means dwelling units in a residential building of no more than three stories on a residential zoned lot in which each floor may be separately rented or owned.

"Townhouses" means buildings that contain three or more attached single-family dwelling units that extend from foundation to roof and that have a yard or public way on not less than two sides.

### ***Parking Map & Considerations***

A question was raised during the February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025, Planning Commission meeting regarding the restrictions and limitations on the amount of the parking that can be required for certain housing types in proximity to certain public transit stations or stops with specific frequencies of service. These limits and restrictions can generally be categorized into three categories detailed below: middle housing; accessory dwelling units (ADUs); and multifamily housing (further detailed below). A map representing areas affected within the transit buffers is also available in Figure 1.

*Table 2. Parking Restrictions*

| <b>Housing Type</b>                               | <b>Transit Buffer Distance</b> | <b>Maximum Parking that can be required per unit (within buffer)</b> | <b>Qualifying Transit Types</b>   |
|---|--------------------------------|--|---|
| Middle Housing                                    | 1/2 Mile                       | 0 spaces   | Link Light Rail, Sounder Station, Rapid Ride Stops  |
| Accessory Dwelling Units                          | 1/2 Mile                       | 0 spaces   | Link Light Rail, Sounder Station, Rapid Ride Stops, Bus Stops with stops at least 4 times per hour for at least 5 hours per weekday |
| Multifamily (Market Rate)                         | 1/4 Mile                       | 0.75 spaces per studio, or 1 space per bedroom                       | Link Light Rail, Sounder Station, Rapid Ride Stops, Bus Stops with stops at least 4 times per hour for at least 12 hours per day    |
| Multifamily (Affordable to 0-50% AMI)             | 1/4 Mile                       | 0.75 spaces per studio, or 1 space per bedroom                       | Link Light Rail, Sounder Station, Rapid Ride Stops, Bus Stops with stops at least 4 times per hour for at least 12 hours per day    |
| Housing for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities | 1/4 Mile                       | 0 spaces (reasonable staff and visitor parking requirements allowed) | Link Light Rail, Sounder Station, Rapid Ride Stops, Bus Stops with stops at least 2 times per hour for at least 12 hours per day    |



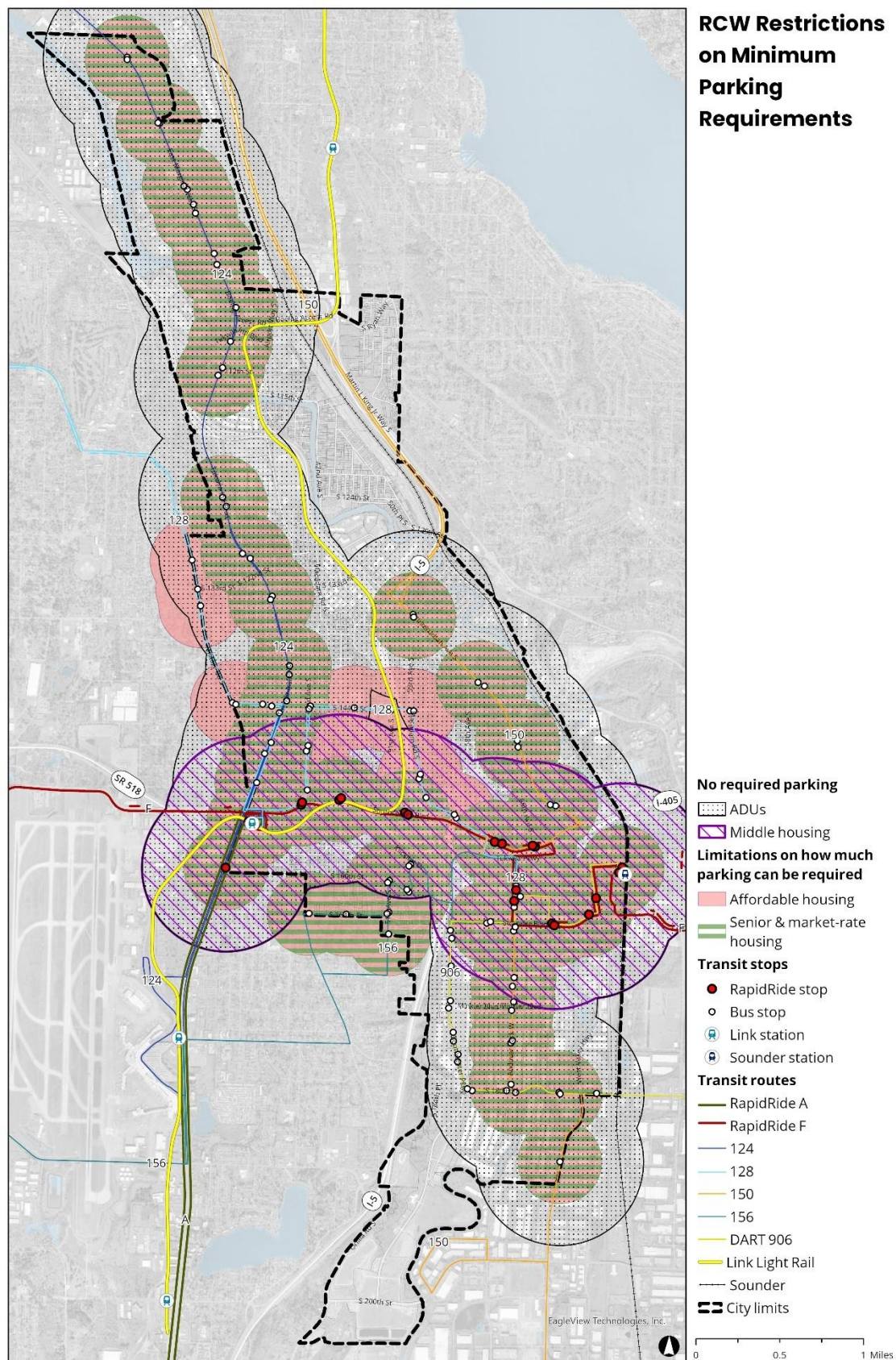


Figure 1. Legal restrictions on requiring parking for multifamily housing types, Middle Housing and ADUs

**Street Standards**

TMC Title 17 contains access requirements for new parcels, as well as standards for new public and private streets, and defines the requirements for improving existing streets during land division. These rules govern when applicants are required to install sidewalks, as well as the width of any new roads and driveways. Current standards are relatively inflexible and require large amounts of paving and roadway space, even for small residential projects. They also lack standards for landscaping or trees, do not provide for the possibility of on-street parking, and result in poor pedestrian safety outcomes.

**Proposed Street Standards**

These standards require amendments to align with middle housing changes. The proposal includes the addition of two new non-arterial residential street types: "Neighborhood Yield Streets", which feature sidewalks, parking lanes, and landscaping; and narrower "Living Streets", which are shared streets that use pavement stamps or materials to indicate that the roadway space is shared for all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, and motor vehicles. See Table 3, below for approximate dimensions of these street types and their components.

*Table 3. New Proposed Street Standards*

| Proposed Street Type                              | Width          | Vehicle Lane Width | Sidewalks                                 | Landscaping / Buffer Zone Width | Parking / Flex Zone Width |
|---|----------------|--------------------|---|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Neighborhood Yield Street - Single Side Parking   | 40'            | 11'                | 6'+6' = 12'<br>Total                      | 5'+5' = 10'<br>Total            | 7'                        |
| Neighborhood Yield Street - Parking on Both Sides | 50'            | 12'                | 6'+6' = 12'<br>Total                      | 6'+6' = 12'<br>Total            | 7'+7' = 14'<br>Total      |
| Living Street - Through                           | 20'<br>Minimum | Vehicle Clear Zone | Landscaping / Furniture Islands / Parking | Parking Area Widths (optional)  |                           |
|   |                | 10'                | 10'                                       | 7'                              |                           |
| Living Street - Dead End                          | 20'<br>Minimum | 16'                | 4'  |                                 |                           |

The street standards are also proposed to be modernized in the following ways:

- Establishing minimum sidewalk widths at 6 feet, in accordance with recommendations from NACTO (National Association of City Transportation Officials).
- Amending the thresholds at which the City requires new streets to be dedicated as ROW, to create more flexibility for applicants and the City.
- Creating new standards for the provision of on-street parking for new and existing streets that require improvements.
- Requiring pedestrian safety features such as continuous sidewalks, curb cut consolidation, intersection daylighting, and curb bulbs.
- Other minor amendments to conform with the requirements of state law.

Anticipated Schedule

Staff anticipates the following timeline for public hearings and City Council deliberations.

- Middle Housing work continuation at Planning Commission (March 27<sup>th</sup>)
- Middle Housing Public Hearing at Planning Commission (April 24<sup>th</sup>)
- Middle Housing & Design Code Ordinances at Council (May-June)

Staff will forward the proposed revisions to the Washington Department of Commerce for their 60-day review prior to the Council vote and will also conduct environmental review under the State Environmental Policy Act.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Middle Housing Presentation





# Middle Housing Discussion

## Planning Commission

March 27, 2025



# Schedule 2025

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- Wednesday March 5<sup>th</sup>, 4:30-7pm
  - Open House
- March 27<sup>th</sup> Planning Commission Meeting
  - Middle Housing continuation
- April 24<sup>th</sup> Planning Commission Meeting
  - Public Hearing on Draft Code Package
- June
  - Vote and adoption of Regulations by City Council



# Middle Housing Code Update

- The Middle Housing code update will contain several areas of amendments:
  - Zoning changes
  - Density & use allowances
  - Changes to development standards
  - Updated road standards
  - Design review changes
  - Definitions & consistency



# Density

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- Establish minimum lot size of Community Residential (CR) at 5,000 square feet
  - LDR currently 6,500 sqft
  - MDR currently 8,000 sqft
- Baseline density allowance of 3 units per lot (ADUs) count toward total units
  - Additional unit allowance for each additional 1,500 sqft of lot area, up to 5 units
  - 8,000 sqft parcel can have 5 units
  - Bonus density for site with at least 1 affordable unit (60% AMI rental, 80% AMI ownership) & within ¼ mile from transit



# Proposed Community Residential Development Standards Table

|                           | Community Residential  |  |
|---------------------------|--|--|
|                           | No transit proximity or affordable unit  | 1/4 Mile of Major Transit, or at least 1 unit affordable   |
| <b>Minimum Lot Size</b>   | 5,000 sq. ft.  |  |
| <b>Minimum Lot Width</b>  | 40 feet  |  |
| <b>Density</b>            | (3) units per parcel,<br>plus 1 unit per 1,500 SF of lot area over 5,000 SF,<br>whichever is greater, up to 5 units                  | (4) units per parcel,<br>plus 1 unit per 1,500 SF of lot area over 5,000 SF,<br>whichever is greater, up to 5 units                  |
|                           | - 2 units per lot can be designated as accessory residences, provided they meet ADU requirements (ADUs count toward maximum density) | - 2 units per lot can be designated as accessory residences, provided they meet ADU requirements (ADUs count toward maximum density) |
| <b>Development Area</b>   |  |  |
| <b>Impervious Area</b>    | 75%  |  |
| <b>Building Footprint</b> | 50%  |  |
| <b>Setbacks</b>           |  |  |
| <b>Front</b>              | 15 feet  |  |
| <b>Porch Bonus</b>        | 7 feet (if porch of at least 25 square feet, with no dimension less than 5 feet)   |  |
| <b>Side</b>               | 5 feet   |  |
| <b>Rear</b>               | 5 feet   |  |
| <b>Rear (Alley DADU)</b>  | 0 feet   |  |
| <b>Building Height</b>    | 35 feet  |  |
| <b>ADU Area</b>           | 1,400 sq. ft. livable  |  |
| <b>ADU Height</b>         | 28 feet  |  |
| <b>Parking</b>            | 1 per unit (not required within 1/2 mile of qualifying transit)  |  |
| <b>ADU parking</b>        | Not required   |  |





# Parking Requirements

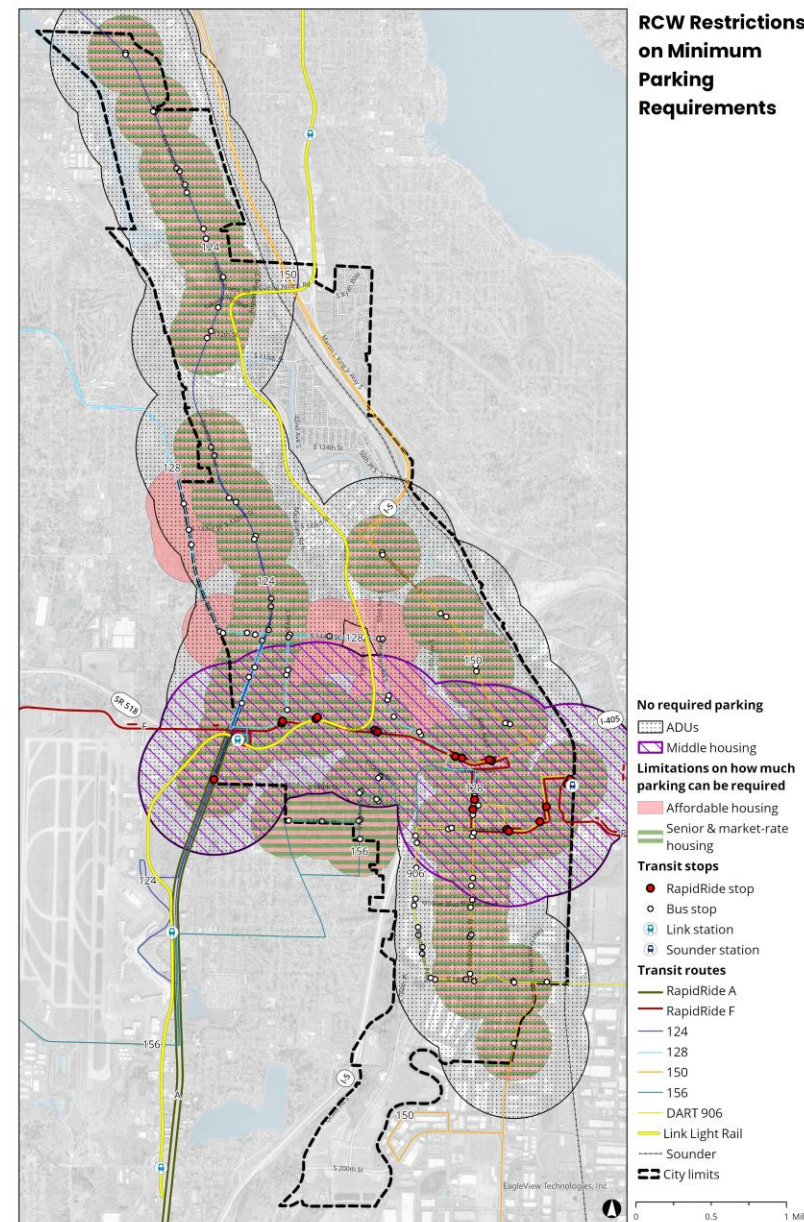
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- 1 parking space per middle housing unit, outside of the 1/2 mile buffers in which parking cannot be required
  - Developers may elect to provide additional parking on-site, especially in certain housing types
- No parking requirements for accessory dwelling units



# Parking Restrictions

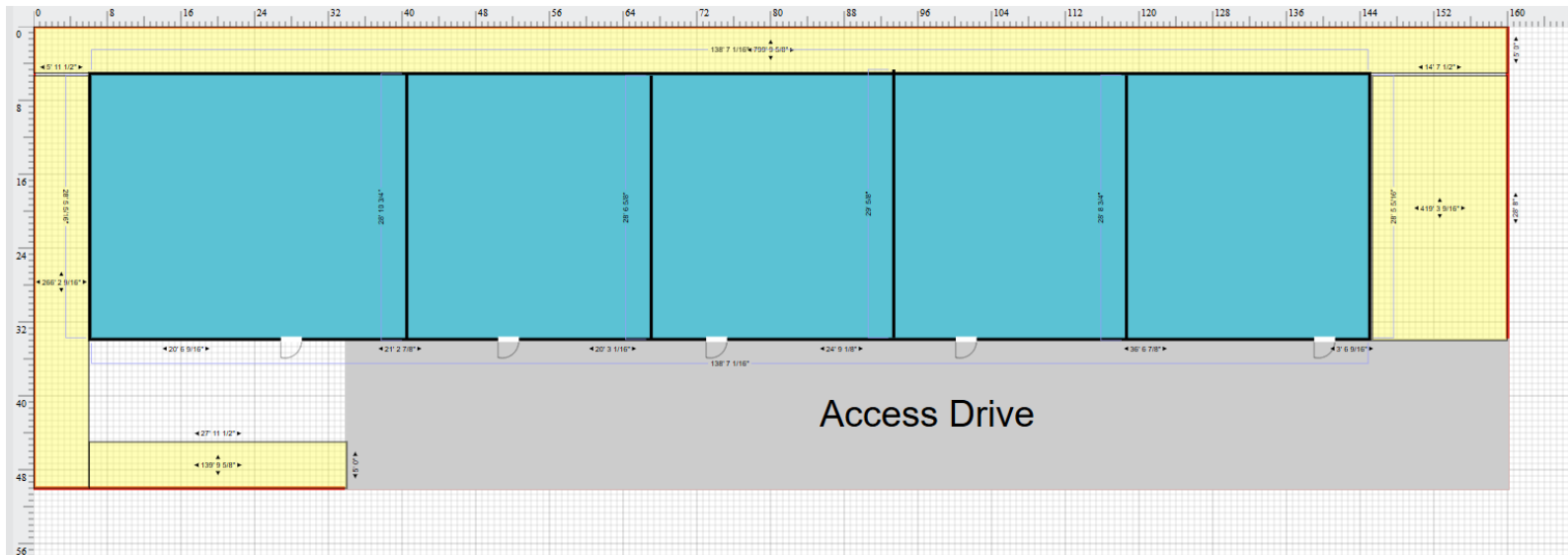
- Middle Housing
  - Cannot require within ½ mile of Rapid Ride Stop, Sounder Station, Link Station
- ADUs
  - Cannot require within ½ mile of aforementioned stations and stops or qualifying bus stops (4 stops per hour for at least 5 hours during the week)





# Massing Example

- The site plan below represents a generalized maximum building coverage and impervious surface coverage on an 8,000 ft<sup>2</sup> lot
- The building is approximately 4,000 ft<sup>2</sup> of footprint overall in a townhouse/fiveplex configuration with unit footprints ranging from 750 ft<sup>2</sup> to 1,000 ft<sup>2</sup>
- This building out is very unlikely, with no separation between the access drive and unit entries





# Massing Example

- The Burien duplex/townhouse development visited in the August 24, 2024, Planning Commission middle housing tour had some similar features as the theoretical example
- Based on a larger lot width and overall size, this development included a wider access drive, full length driveways, tandem garage parking and larger backyards







# Phasing Examples

- The following examples from the Washington Department of Commerce illustrate the potential phasing of infill middle housing predominantly single-family neighborhoods over time

Typical phasing: Phase 1 (0-5 years)







# Phasing Examples

Typical phasing: Phase 2 (5-10 years)





# Phasing Examples

Typical phasing: Phase 3 (10-15 years)





# Open/Recreation Space Requirements

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- The City's current standards for recreation space have been cited as an impediment to new middle housing and multifamily development
- The following slide illustrates an example of townhouse recreation space requirements based on current standards
- Full text of MDR zoning recreation space can be found in the informational memo



# Townhouse Example Recreation Space Requirements (Existing)

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## General Requirements

- 400 ft<sup>2</sup> per unit
- 1,000 ft<sup>2</sup> minimum total per development

## Minimum 50% of Recreation Space must be

- Open space or uncovered recreation space

## Additional Requirements

- Specific recreation space for children 5-12 years old (25-50% of total recreation space)
- Buffering of space from parking and access drives



# Open/Recreation Space Requirements

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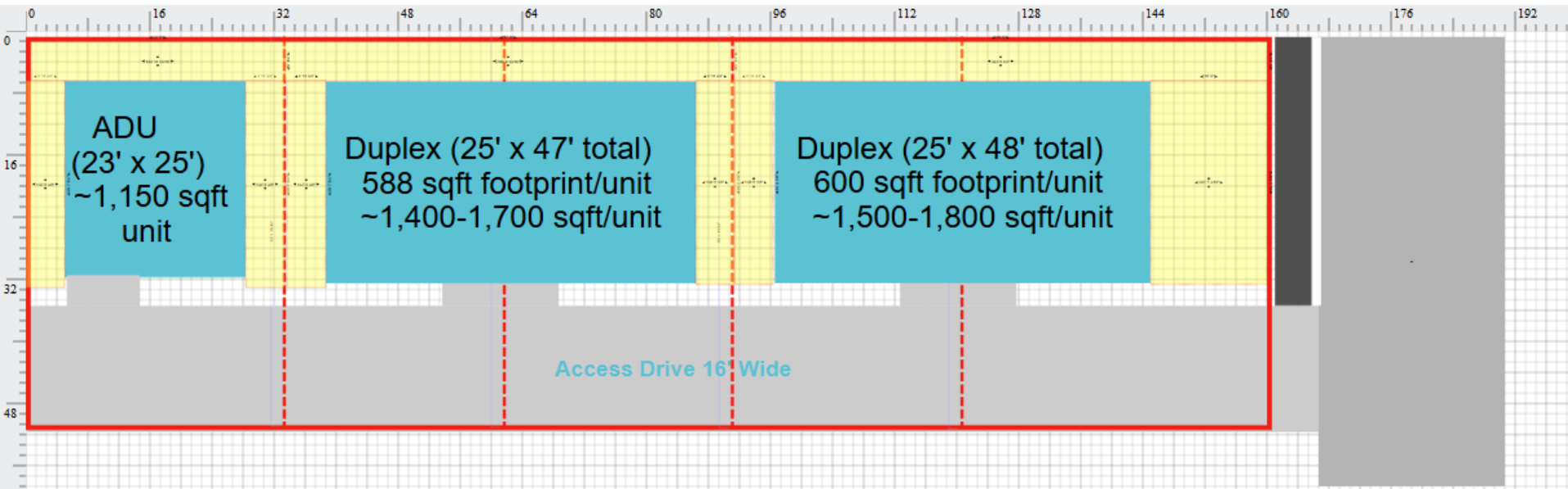
- In updating standards for middle housing recreation space, staff aims to balance high quality development and development feasibility
- The following slides demonstrate potential impacts of different open space requirements on potential development





# Example Development

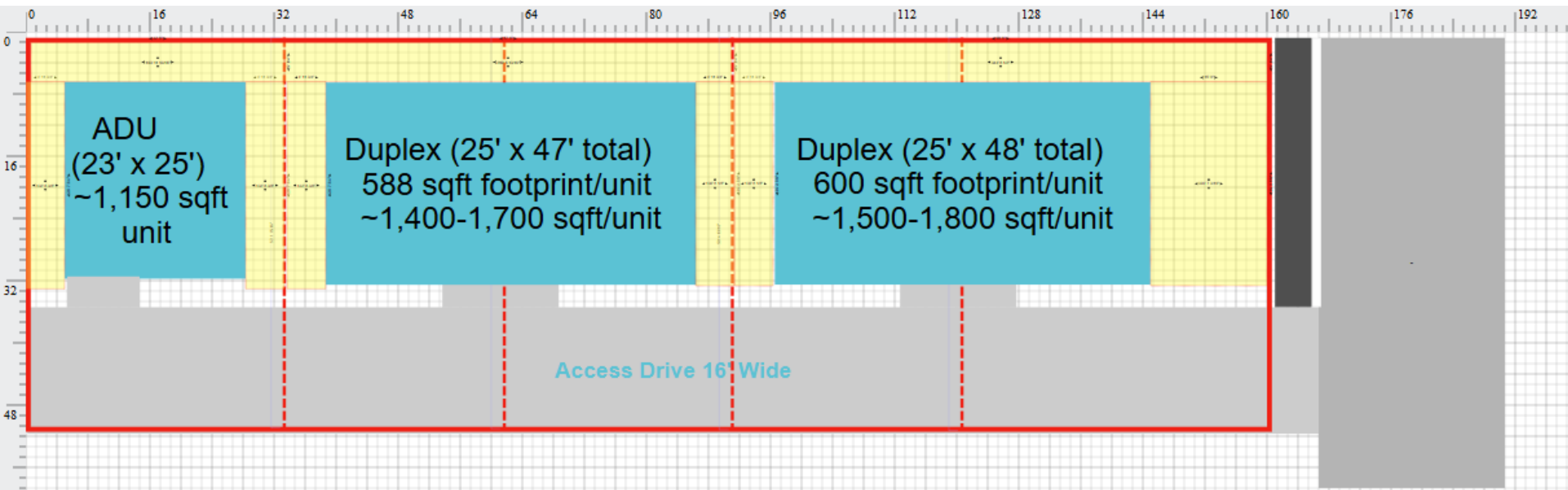
- Red solid lines: Parcel lines
- Red dashed lines: Possible unit lots
- Yellow blocks: Pertinent setback/recreation space areas
- 50' wide by 160' deep, 8,000 ft<sup>2</sup> parcel





# Example 1

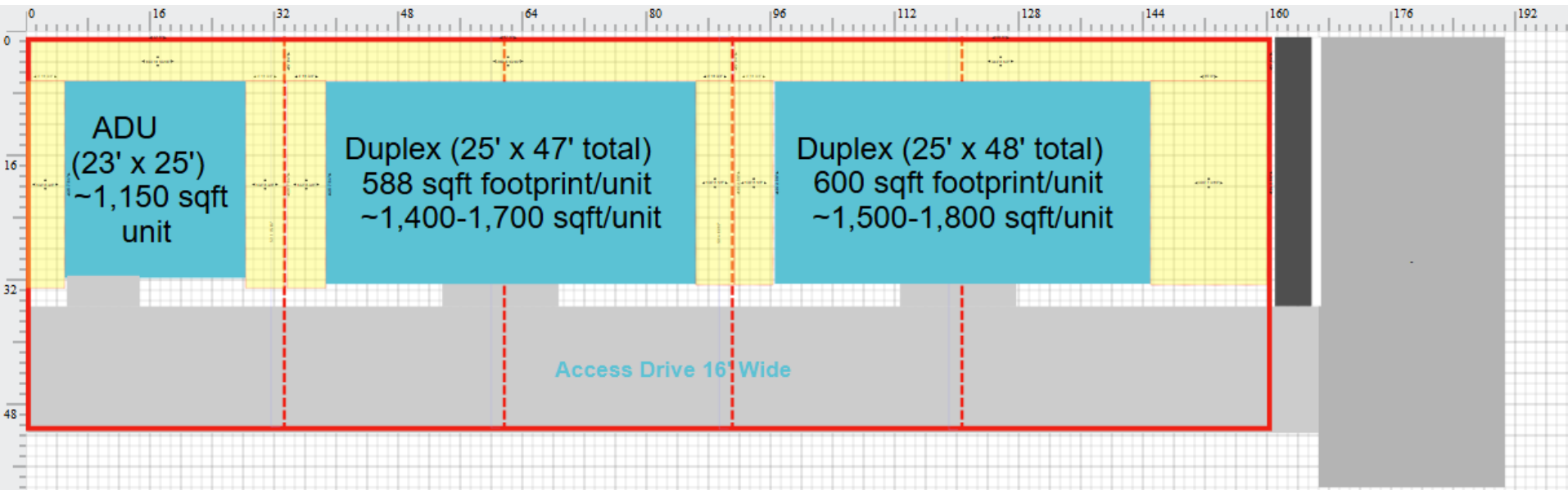
- No recreation space requirement
- The setbacks (in yellow) generally represent 1,850 ft<sup>2</sup> of area where structures cannot be constructed, or 23% of the 8,000 ft<sup>2</sup> parcel





# Example 2

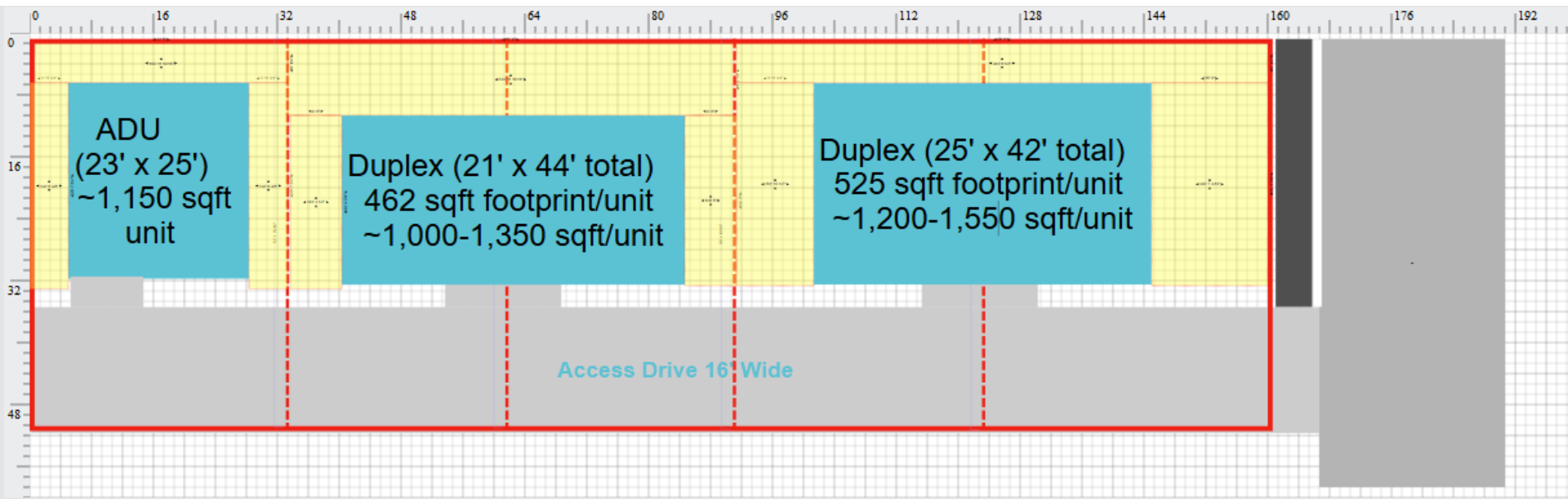
- 250 ft<sup>2</sup> of recreation space required per unit, no dimension less than 5'
- No reduction in unit size from baseline example
- The setbacks (in yellow) generally represent 1,850 ft<sup>2</sup> of area where structures cannot be constructed, or 23% of the 8,000 ft<sup>2</sup> parcel





# Example 3

- 400 ft<sup>2</sup> of recreation space required per unit, no dimension less than 5'
- Duplex units reduced by several hundred ft<sup>2</sup> per unit to comply with requirements
- Recreation space areas represent ~2,000 ft<sup>2</sup> of area, or 25% of the 8,000 ft<sup>2</sup> parcel, assuming no additional impervious surfaces





# Recreation Space Options

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- Not require a minimum recreation space
- Require some amount of recreation space per unit
  - Set minimum dimension per qualifying space?
  - Require buffering of this space?
  - Apply other requirements?





# Streets Standards

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- Existing street standards require updates
  - Relatively inflexible regarding widths and dedication requirements
  - Require large amounts of pavement for small residential projects
  - Lacking in standards for landscaping or trees
  - Do not provide for on-street parking
  - Result in poor pedestrian safety outcomes (for example: no sidewalks)



# Proposed New Streets

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- Neighborhood Yield Streets
  - Low speed
  - Low volume
  - Provide access to:
    - Residences
    - Community amenities such as parks, schools, and gathering spaces
- Living Streets
  - Designed for sub-15 mph
  - Shared Streets
    - Drivers, Pedestrians, Cyclists share roadway space.



# New Street Dimensions

| Neighborhood Yield Street - Single Side Parking   | Total Width: 40' | Vehicle Lane Width | Sidewalks                                 | Landscaping / Buffer Zone Width | Parking / Flex Zone Width |
|---|------------------|--------------------|---|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
|   |                  | 11'                | 6'+6' = 12' Total                         | 5'+5' = 10' Total               | 7'                        |
| Neighborhood Yield Street - Parking on Both Sides | Total Width: 50' | 12'                | 6'+6' = 12' Total                         | 6'+6' = 12' Total               | 7'+7' = 14' Total         |
| Living Street - Through                           | Total Width: 20' | Vehicle Clear Zone | Landscaping / Furniture Islands / Parking | Parking Area Widths (optional)  |                           |
|   |                  | 10'                | 10'                                       | 7'                              |                           |
| Living Street - Dead End                          | Total Width: 20' | 16'                | 4'  |                                 |                           |



# Other Street Standard Changes

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- Setting minimum sidewalk widths at 6 feet
- Amending thresholds for new street dedication as public
- Allowing on-street parking for new / improved streets
- Requiring pedestrian safety features:
  - Continuous sidewalks
  - Curb cut consolidation
  - Intersection daylighting
  - Curb bulbs



# Questions & Discussion

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