



GOAL 03

Increase the Variety of Housing Product Types, Especially Middle-Density

Almost as many multi-family units were built throughout the County in the past ten years as single-family units but as the population grows and shifts, the demand for multi-family, in particular middle density housing will continue. This type of housing is called Missing Middle Housing and includes duplexes, fourplexes, cottage courts, and multiplexes.

The Johnson County Housing Study prioritizes the need to increase the variety of housing product types, especially in middle-density. The Missing Middle Housing types require economies of scale to be profitable for many larger private market developers. The Kansas City metro has many smaller scale developers who could play a crucial role in providing middle density housing.

These house-scale buildings fit seamlessly into existing residential neighborhoods and support walkability, locally-serving retail, and public transportation options. They provide solutions along a spectrum of affordability to address the mismatch between the available U.S. housing stock and shifting demographics combined with the growing demand for walkability.


The majority of Missing Middle Housing types have 4-8 units in a building, or 4-8 units on a lot in the case of a cottage court. Most Missing Middle Housing building types are 2 to 2.5 stories in height, with the exception of the cottage court at 1.5 stories. They have a maximum of one off-street parking space per unit.

Upper Missing Middle Housing types typically have 12 units per building, with a maximum of 19 units. These are typically deeper buildings, and 3-4 stories in height. These buildings should be treated as a separate category of Missing Middle Housing, and used very carefully in low-to-moderate intensity neighborhoods or more liberally in higher intensity neighborhoods.

Carriage houses (also known as Accessory Dwelling Units or ADUs) are not a Missing Middle Housing type but can be a useful tool in increasing housing access and affordability without changing the community's physical character.

Most older households want to age in their cities, but increasing assessed values make that difficult with higher tax burden, on top of the need for home renovation for universal design. The ability to stay in the community also means the option to move to a small, accessible, and attainable dwelling, which options are limited. When this natural cycle is interrupted, housing prices can go up for all ages and income levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS OVERVIEW:

<p>3.A</p>	<p>Facilitate the construction of infill housing by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identifying infill sites and proactively planning ways to aid in site prep, infrastructure up-sizing, and sharing risks in developing new market rate residential units. ■ Developing an infill housing pattern book for Second-Tier Suburbs in KC Metro and using this to create neighborhood design standards that require infill development to complement the existing neighborhood’s character.
<p>3.B</p>	<p>Modify parking requirements and expand shared parking.</p>
<p> 3.C</p>	<p>Encourage and incentivize the development of Missing Middle Housing Types by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Amending ordinances to allow blended densities and encourage developers to create residential products in a range of sizes for a range of income levels. ■ Developing Missing Middle Housing Plans for neighborhoods, corridors, or opportunity sites, such as abandoned malls or brownfield sites. ■ Encouraging more sustainable neighborhoods through smart planning principles that encourage density near commercial activity centers, promote walkability, and integrate green spaces. ■ Amending local ordinances to allow quality, attainable housing, especially in Missing Middle Housing by-right in more zoning districts thereby eliminating the need to rezone, reducing costs and risks associated with public hearings and City Council approval. ■ Developing a Missing Middle Housing Handbook that covers zoning, site selection, design, entitlement, and provides a template to help developers align housing proposals with a city’s comprehensive plan goals and targeted housing needs, increasing the chance for site plan approval. ■ Fast-track approval of development projects containing affordable housing.
<p>3.D</p>	<p>Facilitate adaptation of existing homes and construction of new units that accommodate people of all ages and abilities throughout their lifespan by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Adopting Communities for All Ages and Universal Design standards. ■ Amending ordinance to allow for homes in which eight or fewer unrelated elderly persons reside together in co-housing. ■ Amending ordinances to allow for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) to accommodate multi-generational housing.

 Top recommendation as recommended by Housing Task Force

■ Community for All Ages, see page 23

GOAL 3: Increase the variety of product types, especially middle-density

RECOMMENDATION 3.A

Facilitate the construction of infill housing by:

- Identifying infill sites and proactively planning ways to aid in site prep, infrastructure up-sizing, and sharing risks in developing new market rate residential units.
- Developing an infill housing pattern book for Second-Tier Suburbs in KC Metro and using this to create neighborhood design standards that require infill development to complement the existing neighborhood's character.



CONTEXT:

Some municipalities have underused sites with existing infrastructure prime for development. Often these include vacant commercial shopping centers, old buildings, and abandoned homes. The Johnson County Housing Study recommends municipalities identify infill sites with potential for development of Missing Middle Housing types. By aiding with site prep and infrastructure services, municipalities can reduce the risk for developers, incentivizing development. To achieve our goals, it is important to consider pairing this incentive with affordability requirements. Although infill development has its expenses, existing infrastructure can reduce costs for both the city and the developer. The revitalization of downtowns, such as Overland Park, are creating more diverse housing and spurring economic development and increased property values.

Infill development needs to complement the existing neighborhood's character and provide appropriate transitions where needed. Principles to consider with infill development include transitions, scale, and context. By creating housing types that integrate seamlessly into existing neighborhoods, resident fears and concerns can be eased. The Townhomes east of Olathe West High School and the Townhomes at Buckley Court in Overland Park are good examples of design with density.



BARRIERS ADDRESSED:

Cost of housing, development costs, lack of diverse housing types, limited supply of first-time home buyer options, quality of existing housing stock, restrictions and regulations



COMMUNITY TYPE:

All



IMPLEMENTATION LEAD:

Municipalities, Mid-America Regional Council, developers



IMPLEMENTATION TIMEFRAME:

1 - 5 years



PERFORMANCE MEASURES:

- Number of infill housing sites developed with attainable housing



CASE STUDIES:

Infill housing has been a successful development strategy in many communities and offers many possibilities to reduce costs by utilizing existing infrastructure. [Learn how four different communities have successfully implemented infill developments here.](#)

Creating a toolkit to allow developers and citizens know the expectations of infill housing can help reduce opposition to Missing Middle Housing options in predominantly single-family neighborhoods. [An example of an infill design toolkit can be found here.](#)

The Right Type Right Place report discusses how California can use infill housing projects to increase affordable housing, generate economic prosperity, and meet sustainability goals. [Read the report here.](#)

RECOMMENDATION 3.B

Modify parking requirements and expand shared parking.



CONTEXT:

The cost of developing multi-family housing units is often expensive due to parking requirements. By modifying parking requirements and expanding shared parking options, developers can provide more housing units and make better use of available land. Property owners adjacent to multi-family housing establishments may agree to share parking lots to reduce traffic and the maintenance costs associated with unused spaces.

Off-street parking requirements have a tremendous impact on small-scale residential infill. On most small lots, Missing Middle Housing types work well when parking requirements are reasonable (1 per unit or less). However, when parking requirements are higher, this reduces the developable area, and thereby the economic viability of Missing Middle Housing types.



BARRIERS ADDRESSED:

Cost of housing, development costs, lack of diverse housing types, NIMBY-ism, restrictions and regulations



COMMUNITY TYPE:

All



IMPLEMENTATION LEAD:

Municipalities



IMPLEMENTATION TIMEFRAME:

1 - 3 years



PERFORMANCE MEASURES:

- Number of parking units reduced
- Total number of attainable housing units



CASE STUDIES:

The cost of parking for a rental unit is 17% of a unit's rental cost, reducing development and continued maintenance costs can create more affordable housing options. [Learn more about options to reduce parking costs and discover how other communities are implementing changes to parking requirements here.](#)



RECOMMENDATION 3.C

Encourage and incentivize the development of Missing Middle Housing Types by:

- Amending ordinances to allow blended densities and encourage developers to create residential products in a range of sizes for a range of income levels.
- Developing Missing Middle Housing Plans for neighborhoods, corridors, or opportunity sites, such as abandoned malls or brownfield sites.
- Encouraging more sustainable neighborhoods through smart planning principles that encourage density near commercial activity centers, promote walkability, and integrate green spaces.
- Amending local ordinances to allow quality, attainable housing, especially in Missing Middle Housing by-right in more zoning districts thereby eliminating the need to rezone, reducing costs and risks associated with public hearings and City Council approval.
- Developing a Missing Middle Housing Handbook that covers zoning, site selection, design, entitlement, and provides a template to help developers align housing proposals with a city’s comprehensive plan goals and targeted housing needs, increasing the chance for site plan approval.
- Fast-track approval of development projects containing affordable housing.



CONTEXT:

Missing Middle Housing types were common in pre-war America, but in the last 70 years, housing developments have been primarily single-family and large multi-family projects. Currently, opposition from community members along with restrictive zoning can make adding Missing Middle Housing developments difficult. A handbook can help identify locations where Missing Middle Housing would be most effective, reduce ambiguity for developers, and create buy-in from community members concerned about design.

Municipalities should work to eliminate Conventional (Euclidean) zoning which regulates by land use, dividing neighborhoods into single-family residential, multi-family residential, commercial, and industrial. Conventional zones typically rely on numeric values, such as floor area ratio (FAR) and density, which results in unpredictability and creates barriers to Missing Middle Housing. Instead, municipalities should adopt form-based standards by regulating building forms, massing, and transitions. Communities should implement programs that incentivize development that include affordable housing units.

Going from concept to build can be a lengthy process for developers. Delays in the process can add to the cost of development. These uncertainties increase the level of risk for developers and tend to drive developers to continue creating existing housing types that have evidence of approval, removing their uncertainties and risk.

Public hearings can delay developments, lead to multiple changes in development plans, and create additional costs for developers including soft costs preparing for and attending the meetings. Policy changes allowing for Missing Middle Housing can be implemented in areas to eliminate the additional costs currently associated with attempting to build Missing Middle Housing in single family zoning.



BARRIERS ADDRESSED:

Ability to age in place, cost of housing, development costs, lack of diverse housing types, limited supply of first-time home buyer options, misinformation and social media, NIMBY-ism, political will, restrictions and regulations



COMMUNITY TYPE:

All



IMPLEMENTATION LEAD:

Municipalities, developers



IMPLEMENTATION TIMEFRAME:

1 - 3 years



PERFORMANCE MEASURES:

■ Total number of Missing Middle Housing, attainable housing units constructed in jurisdiction with modified ordinances



CASE STUDIES:

The Housing Study appendix includes a city zoning ordinance review checklist (page 314) to help communities review their current zoning and update policies based on the community’s needs. [View the Ordinance Review Checklist on Page 314 here.](#)

The Twin Cities have utilized mixed-use/mixed-income projects to help create affordable housing as their population grows. [Learn more about the program and examples of projects here.](#)

Two communities in the Washington DC area have utilized inclusionary zoning for 20 and 40 years. [Learn about each community here.](#)

Eugene Oregon has created a Missing Middle Housing handbook to help guide the development of a variety of housing types. [The handbook can be found here.](#)

Chattanooga, Tennessee created a development packet that helps decrease the approval timelines for developers. [Learn more about the packet on Page 304 of the Johnson County Housing Study here.](#)

RECOMMENDATION 3.D

Facilitate adaptation of existing homes and construction of new units that accommodate people of all ages and abilities throughout their lifespan by:

- Adopting Communities for All Ages and Universal Design standards.
- Amending ordinance to allow for homes in which eight or fewer unrelated elderly persons reside together in co-housing.
- Amending ordinances to allow for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) to accommodate multi-generational housing.



CONTEXT:

The Housing for All Task Force identified a lack of housing product suitable for seniors as a major barrier to housing attainability in Johnson County. The aging population in Johnson County is having difficulty downsizing to smaller homes due to lack of availability. Elderly persons who wish to remain in Johnson County and downsize their living space are faced with challenges of finding a smaller home that is affordable, often resulting in elderly persons staying in their current homes. Currently, seniors are staying in their larger single-family homes because they do not want to move away from Johnson County. If Johnson County had smaller, diverse housing options for seniors that are low-maintenance, more single-family homes would become available for young families. Smaller and low or no maintenance developments will help provide solutions to elderly persons.

Many older adults are no longer able to maintain the homes where they lived for years. Housing options such as apartments, duplexes, and condos allow older adults to downsize, eliminate or reduce yard work, and maintain close relationships with neighbors. However, many neighborhoods do not have enough multi-family or ADA compliant buildings to fill the need. Municipalities can adopt Communities for All Ages and Universal Design Standards to require developers to meet criteria that accommodates the needs of all ages and abilities, as well as changing needs over time. Examples of Universal Design elements include no-step entrances, wide doorways, roll-in showers, smooth transitions, and open floor plans that provide a five-foot turning radius in all rooms.



BARRIERS ADDRESSED:

Aging in place, cost of housing, lack of diverse housing types, limited first-time homebuyer options, overall cost of living, restrictions and regulations.



COMMUNITY TYPE:

All



IMPLEMENTATION LEAD:

County, municipalities, developers, non-profits, service providers, and Mid-America Regional Council



IMPLEMENTATION TIMEFRAME:

5 - 7 years



PERFORMANCE MEASURES:

- Total number of housing units occupied by seniors that are under 1,800 square feet per unit and affordably priced
- Total Accessory Dwelling Units constructed
- Total homes built or remodeled to Universal Design Standards
- Number of communities with Community for All Ages Gold Designation



CASE STUDIES:

New Holland, Pennsylvania is home to small homes clustered in neighborhoods that provide housing for seniors that require minimal maintenance and create a sense of community with shared green space and common areas. [Read more about the development here.](#)

Upzoning in communities will help create more density and should result in lower housing costs. [Learn more about the advantages and challenges of upzoning here.](#)

Multiple jurisdictions throughout the Kansas City region have completed the Communities for All Ages program through MARC to help the communities apply an age focused lens to policies and processes. [You can learn more about the program here.](#)

Universal Design guides development to help ensure housing is designed to accommodate all ages and abilities. [Learn more about Universal Design here.](#)

Madison, Wisconsin has successfully retained the diverse housing options that arose organically in the city over decades allowing the needs to be met for a variety of people at various stages of life. [Read more about the success of Missing Middle Housing in Madison here.](#)

Missing Middle Housing allows a variety of housing types intended to accommodate mixed incomes in a community. [Learn more about Missing Middle Housing here.](#)

Communities for All Ages status:

BRONZE LEVEL:

- Johnson County
- Olathe

SILVER LEVEL:

None

GOLD LEVEL:

- Mission
- Roeland Park