



Middle Housing and ADU Code Amendments

What is Middle Housing?

“Middle housing” is a term used to describe residential development that is more dense than traditional single-family housing but is less dense than a midrise apartment building. Middle housing types are determined by the form of the structure and the number of units.

Types of middle housing structures include: duplexes, triplexes, cottage housing, courtyard apartments, stacked flats, and townhouses.

Why is the Kenmore Municipal Code (KMC) being updated to allow middle housing?

Passed by the State legislature in 2023, House Bill 1110 and 1337 require cities to implement development codes which expand the number and types of housing units permitted in residential areas of Kenmore.

With the enactment of HB 1110, state law mandates that cities such as Kenmore revise their local comprehensive plans and development codes. This requires accommodating up to two housing units per lot (or up to four units per lot within a quarter mile walk of a major transit stop or when at least one unit is affordable) across a variety of housing types.

In addition to single-family homes, R-4 and R-6 residential areas must permit other housing types, including duplexes, triplexes, cottage housing, courtyard apartments, stacked flats, and townhouses. Regardless of the housing development type, lots will remain subject to the maximum permitted density.

Requirements for Tier 2 over 25,000 population

Middle Housing Types - At least six of nine middle housing building types must be allowed.

Base Unit Density - At least 2 units per lot.

Increased Unit Density - At least 4 units per lot when near major transit or when at least 1 affordable housing unit is provided.



Example of an ADU over a garage



Duplex



Triplex



Fourplex

A variety of middle housing types



Stacked Flats



Courtyard Apartments



Cottages



Townhouses

The City recently updated the Comprehensive Plan to comply with state requirements for these housing types. However, the ultimate decision on what gets built will be determined by individual property owners, residential developers, and the housing market.

What about accessory dwelling units (ADUs)?

The legislature has also enacted HB 1337, mandating Kenmore to revise its comprehensive plan and development code to include regulations to allow any combination up to two (2) attached (AADUs) or detached accessory dwelling units (DADUs). These alternative housing forms can be utilized to fulfill the density (additional units) per lot requirements specified in HB 1110.





Middle Housing and ADU Code Amendments

WHEN WILL THE NEW REGULATIONS GO INTO EFFECT?

The City is required to adopt regulations consistent with HB 1110 and 1337 by June 30, 2025. If the City does not adopt new regulations, a model ordinance adopted by the State will take effect on July 1, 2025.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR MY PROPERTY?

For most R-4 and R-6 zoned properties, this will mean that you will be able to have up to 2 ADUs on your lot. This may include allowing 1-2 ADUs, or any other combination of units and structure types that work within the allowable development area.

AM I REQUIRED TO REDEVELOP? WHAT IF I HAVE A HOA?

There is nothing in State law that requires you to redevelop your property, meaning you can keep your property as-is. If you live in a neighborhood that is subject to a homeowner's association, it's important that you understand your HOA rules. Middle housing can be built in neighborhoods with a HOA unless the HOA had rules excluding middle housing before the state passed the middle housing laws in 2023. The city does not enforce HOA rules and therefore it is the homeowner's responsibility to check with their HOA before applying for any middle housing development, including ADUs.

WILL MY NEIGHBORHOOD CHANGE QUICKLY OR DRAMATICALLY?

No. Even with the potential changes, it is unlikely that rapid or dramatic changes in land use would be seen. Development of Middle Housing likely would be slow and incremental over many years.

IS MIDDLE HOUSING AFFORDABLE?

Middle housing is not the same as affordable housing. Generally, middle housing is more affordable than single-family homes but often does not meet the affordability criteria set by many jurisdictions. Affordable housing is typically defined as non-market rate units that are affordable to households earning 80% or less of the area median income. Nevertheless, promoting middle housing adds valuable diversity to the housing market, offering options for those who cannot afford single-family homes and who prefer alternatives to traditional apartments.

CAN MIDDLE HOUSING BE RENTED?

Middle housing can be delivered by a builder to the market as either a rental or home ownership product. A lot may or may not be subdivided depending on the housing market the property owner or builder is catering to, as well as on local development regulations which establish standards for lot size and other standards.

WHAT ABOUT THE PROTECTION OF CRITICAL AREAS AND TREES?

All development within Kenmore, including middle housing, shall comply with critical areas and tree code requirements. Recently, the city updated its tree code requirements.

HOW CAN I PROVIDE INPUT?

We welcome feedback. Comments may be submitted directly to project staff. Comments may also be shared with the Planning Commission and City Council.

UPCOMING MEETING DATES:

April 21: City Council (Planning Commission Recommendations)

May 5: City Council (Discussion)

May 12: City Council (As needed)

May 27: City Council (As needed)

June 9: City Council (Public Hearing, if necessary)

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT MIDDLE HOUSING?

City of Kenmore Middle Housing Webpage
Washington State Department of Commerce
Municipal Services Research Center

Project Contacts:

Debbie Bent, Community Development Director, dbent@kenmorewa.gov

Todd Hall, Principal Planner, thall@kenmorewa.gov

