

## **Suggested Policy Changes to Remove Barriers to Housing**

### **Outcome Based Suggestions**

- Establish a requirement or goal for the City to approve permits for single-family homes, ADUs, duplexes, and other missing middle housing within 14 days.
  - A typical duplex plan can be roughly 70 pages and is certified and stamped by a license professional prior to being submitted to the City for review and approval. As a result, there is no reason it should take longer for the City to review the application within 14 days.
- Create a master plan program for missing middle and infill builders similar to the Volume Builder Program.
  - The Volume Builder Program is an optional expedited review process that enables volume builders to receive a faster turnaround on residential permit applications for new construction.
  - Creating a similar program for missing middle builders and infill builders would make it easier for builders to reuse building plans to reproduce a similar home on multiple lots across the city.
- Direct City Staff to review all current regulations required for the construction of new housing and identify any regulations that are in conflict, no longer relevant, or act as barriers to housing.

### **Code, Rule, and Process Suggestions**

- Site Regulation Suggestions
  - Allow all residential construction to use pervious concrete, or other city approved pervious materials, for driveways, sidewalks, and patios that do not count against a property's impervious cover.
  - Increase the unit threshold for the site plan requirement from 3 units to somewhere between 5-10 residential units.
    - Or create a site plan light for small lots and missing middle housing projects.
  - Amend Affordability Unlocked to waive the site plan provision for properties who participate in the program.
  - Allow for the construction of more duplexes by:
    - reducing the minimum lot area from duplex residential use from 7,000 square feet to 5,750 square feet;
    - reviewing and revising non-public safety requirements for duplex residential use, including the common wall requirements.
- Utility Regulation Suggestions
  - Direct Austin Energy to roll back Austin Energy Rule Number R161-21.13 and adopt a minimum 10' radius clearance around overhead distribution lines, which aligns with OSHA requirements, as opposed to the current 15' radius clearance from both overhead distribution lines and neutral conductors.

- The increased radius clearance requirement set by AE limits the amount of land available to construct new residential units.
  - Direct staff to create a greater coordination and sharing of easements between utilities, including the ability to stack utilities easements instead of requiring additional land that could be used for residential units.
- Transportation Regulation Suggestions
  - Review and revise regulations and costs requiring property owners to make improvements to existing or platted alleyways when constructing residential units.
    - Requiring property owners to make improvements to alleys drives up the cost to construct new residential units.
- Tree Regulation Suggestions
  - For residential construction, allow more flexibility with tree regulations to allow property owners to remove certain types of existing trees that are limiting the housing capacity of a site in exchange for the property owner to replace the removed trees with 2-4 more hardier trees elsewhere on site.
    - This help property owners access their property's existing development rights while also increasing and improving the future tree canopy.
    - The certain types of trees that could be given greater flexibility could include trees that are less desirable, detrimental to the urban forest, or that are not as beneficial to the urban canopy.
- Process and Administrative Suggestions
  - Provide City Staff the authority to make additional administrative variances for some development regulations.
    - Example: Provide greater flexibility for setbacks in order to save a tree but also allow the construction of the new residential units.
  - Adopt new Success Metrics for DSD to better inform the development community and the public about the time it takes to complete the development review process.
  - Increasing the number of expedited review teams in DSD.
  - Adopt standard rule interpretations to allow DSD staff to administratively approve portions of development review that traditionally require sign off from other departments.
  - Direct City Staff to provide recommendations on how to make the expedited review process and time the standard process for all applications.