



Date: June 6, 2018

To: Members of the Joint City-County Planning Committee
Through: Patrick O. Young, AICP, Planning Director
From: Hannah Jacobson, AICP, Senior Planner
Michael Stock, AICP, Senior Planner
Subject: Expanding Housing Choices

Summary

This memo and presentation are intended to provide the background, scope of issues, and anticipated workflow associated with a new Planning Department initiative called Expanding Housing Choices. This project is designed to explore a suite of potential changes to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), as well as potential changes to policies and/or practices that can influence the supply and affordability of housing in a context-sensitive manner.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Joint City-County Planning Committee (JCCPC) provide comment. No additional action is required.

Background

Fast-paced population growth, limited availability of developable tracts, and a renewed preference for in-town living has led to a housing availability and affordability challenge for Durham. Over time, zoning rules have restricted development in many neighborhoods almost exclusively to single-family dwellings, eliminating many of the small-scale and often more affordable multifamily options that once existed. Often referred to as “Missing Middle” housing, this project will explore ways to eliminate regulatory barriers and expand the choices that people have when it comes to housing types. See Attachment 1 for additional background.

Issues and Analysis

The Expanding Housing Choices project has been highlighted as a component of a strategy for housing affordability in Durham. A long-term aspirational outcome of this project is to address the housing shortage that is driving escalating costs in Durham as a whole, and particularly in the Urban Core neighborhoods. This project aims to contribute to market-rate affordability by removing certain regulatory barriers that restrict the supply and type of housing, often referred to as “Missing Middle” or “affordable by design” solutions. Additional flexibility could be built in

to the regulations for affordable housing that meets the UDO's definition of an affordable housing dwelling unit.¹

The project is anticipated to be completed within one-year. Already, staff has begun compiling and evaluating regulatory impediments with the help of both affordable housing and market-rate developers, as well as partner departments. Public engagement in the form of surveys and pop-up workshops are planned for this summer and fall. Draft text amendments, along with recommendations for further actions other than amendments to the UDO, are anticipated for review during fall/winter of 2018-2019. Maintaining this timeline requires careful consideration of the overall scope of proposed amendments. Therefore, staff intends to prioritize which UDO changes to carry forward based on impact and practicability.

Staff Contacts

Hannah Jacobson, AICP, Senior Planner, 919-560-4137 ext. 28247;
Hannah.Jacobson@DurhamNC.gov

Michael Stock, AICP, Senior Planner, 919-560-4137 ext. 28227; Michael.Stock@DurhamNC.gov

Attachment

Attachment 1: Expanding Housing Choices Presentation

¹ The UDO defines an Affordable Housing Dwelling Unit as one that is affordable to a household earning 60 percent or less of the Area Median Income.