

City of Fitchburg

Comprehensive Plan Minor Amendment



Due: January 23, 2024

A. Sponsored by

(Sponsors must include a minimum of three alders and/or the mayor. Please list sponsors below. Sponsor's signatures are required in Item E below)

B. Proposed Minor Amendment

(Refer to the page numbers, table numbers or other specific references within the Adopted Comprehensive Plan 2030 that would be changed by the proposed minor amendment. Provide additional documents and maps as needed.)

This amendment proposes to add a future land use category of Medium High Density Residential. The following text added to the comprehensive plan would be as follows:

“This category includes small-lot single-family detached, single-family attached, two-family, three-family, four-family, courtyard multi-family, and small-scale multi-family housing along with churches, educational facilities, utilities, governmental facilities, live-work, and other uses as approved on a conditional use basis. Allowable densities range from 9 to 15 housing units per acre which is suitable for "Missing Middle" housing¹. Medium-High Density Residential falls in the Medium Density Zoning District (R-M), the High Density Zoning (R-H and R-Ha), Planned Development Zoning District – General Implementation Plan (PDD-GIP) and Planned Development Zoning District-Specific Implementation Plan (PDD-SIP).”

This amendment would also modify the High Density Residential text as follows:

~~“All Townhouses, buildings greater than 2 units with individual exterior entrances, condominium developments,~~ and all forms of ~~apartment~~ multi-family buildings are included in this category along with churches, educational facilities, utilities, governmental facilities, correctional facilities and other uses as approved on a conditional use basis. The density ~~is expected to be in this designation should be~~ over 9 15 housing units/acre. Additional density categories that comply with HDR as described may be specified and adopted into the Comprehensive Plan through a

neighborhood planning process. High Density Residential falls in the High Density Zoning District (R-H and R-Ha), Planned Development Zoning District – General Implementation Plan (PDD-GIP) and Planned Development Zoning District-Specific Implementation Plan (PDD-SIP).”

C. Intent of the Minor Amendment

(Refer to [Chapter 5, page 5-4](#) of the Comprehensive Plan for Minor Amendment Review Guidelines. attach proposed site plans and related information to describe the intent.)

The proposed minor comprehensive plan amendments would provide greater flexibility as the city plans for future development and redevelopment. This land use category is designed to encourage middle-housing, a type of housing between large-lot traditional single-family homes and large multi-family buildings. Middle density housing includes small-lot single-family homes, duplexes, triplexes and small-scale multi-family. Resources to understand middle housing can be reviewed at this [link](#).



D. Property Information

(Provide the legal description of the parcel or parcels subject to the change future land use change. Also please provide the Dane County Parcel numbers. If a survey of the parcel(s) is available please attach.)

The proposed land use category will not change the current, Council-adopted future land use map. No individual properties will be designated as Medium High Density Residential through this amendment. Instead, this land use category will be available to the Greenfield Neighborhood Plan, South Stoner Prairie Neighborhood Plan, and future amendments to the Comprehensive Plan.

E. Required Signatures

Property Owner's Signature _____

Alder's Signature _____

Alder's Signature _____

Alder's Signature _____

Mayor's Signature Julia Arata _____

F. Information Regarding the Neighborhood Meeting

(A neighborhood meeting is required and shall be held prior to the Plan Commission meeting. Provide the following information prior to the Plan Commission meeting: 1) Location and date of the meeting; 2) How neighbors were notified; 3) Numbers of people in attendance; 4) Any comments received; and 5) Any changes / modifications made in response to comments received.)

G. Applicant Contact Information

Name Deanna Schmidt, City Planner / Zoning Administrator _____

Company City of Fitchburg _____

Address 5520 Lacy Road, Fitchburg WI _____

Phone Number 609-270-4255 _____

Email _____



January 23, 2024

RE: Proposal for new "Medium-High Density Residential" land use category

Mayor Arata-Fratta, City Council, and Plan Commission,

Planning staff reviewed the City's Growing Fitchburg 2030 Comprehensive Plan and propose a new Future Land Use category (pages 4-17 to 4-21), "Medium-High Density Residential (MHDR)." This new land use category would allow housing densities 9-15 housing units per acre, between the existing Medium Density Residential (MDR) and High Density Residential (HDR) land use categories. The comprehensive full text amendment reads below:

"Medium-High Density Residential (MHDR)

This category includes small-lot single-family detached, single-family attached, two-family, three-family, four-family, courtyard multi-family, and small-scale multi-family housing along with churches, educational facilities, utilities, governmental facilities, live-work, and other uses as approved on a conditional use basis. Allowable densities range from 9 to 15 housing units per acre which is suitable for "Missing Middle" housing¹. Medium-High Density Residential falls in the Medium Density Zoning District (R-M), the High Density Zoning (R-H and R-Ha), Planned Development Zoning District – General Implementation Plan (PDD-GIP) and Planned Development Zoning District-Specific Implementation Plan (PDD-SIP).

¹ <https://opticosdesign.com/missing-middle-housing/>

High Density Residential (HDR)

Townhouses and all forms of multi-family buildings are included in this category along with churches, educational facilities, utilities, governmental facilities, correctional facilities and other uses as approved on a conditional use basis. The density in this designation should be over 15 housing units/acre. Additional density categories that comply with HDR as described may be specified and adopted into the Comprehensive Plan through a neighborhood planning process. High Density Residential falls in the High Density Zoning District (R-H and R-Ha), Planned Development Zoning District – General Implementation Plan (PDD-GIP) and Planned Development Zoning District-Specific Implementation Plan (PDD-SIP)."

Dane County and Fitchburg need additional housing units¹, particularly a broader array of housing types and sizes catering to seniors, first-time homeowners, single-person and low-to-moderate income households². Fitchburg's land use categories in the comprehensive plan were last updated in 2009. The

¹ Dane County Housing Needs Assessment: 2019 Update. Available at: [Dane-County-Housing-Needs-Assessment-2019.pdf](https://www.countyofdane.com/files/2019/01/Dane-County-Housing-Needs-Assessment-2019.pdf) ([countyofdane.com](http://www.countyofdane.com)).

² Regional Housing Strategy Housing Advisory Committee Meeting materials. Available at: [RHS Meetings | Dane County Planning & Development](https://www.dane.gov/files/2019/01/RHS-Meetings-Dane-County-Planning-Development.pdf)

2020 comprehensive plan and subsequent revisions have left the land use categories unchanged. Introducing a new land use category may encourage a wider range of housing styles and create a transitional buffer between lower-density suburban neighborhoods and high-density urban neighborhoods.

Currently, the range for MDR is 5 to 9 units per acre, while the range for HDR starts as 9 units per acre and extends beyond. The proposed MHDR category to insert between them, with a range between 9 and 15 units per acre, holds the potential to facilitate “Missing Middle Housing.” This type of housing aims to bridge the gap between large-scale apartment and mixed-use centers (e.g., Fitchburg’s Ochalla Apartments and Terrace Pointe are 50-60 housing units per acre), and more traditional, suburban housing (between 2-9 housing units per acre). Establishing a density range for “middle housing” density could enable a smoother transition and a broader spectrum of housing types and forms.

The planning staff recommends a reasonable upper limit of 15 housing units per acre for MHDR. SmartCode’s maximum allowable residential density is 14.4 housing units per acre in T4. This density in SmartCode accommodates “middle housing” including rowhomes, other dense single-family residential, and small-scale multi-family residential. Base residential density in Smartcode’s T4 zone (considered Smartcode’s “general urban zone” with 70% minimum residential uses required) requires 6 to 14.4 housing units per acre. To simplify implementation, staff prefers to round up to 15 instead of 14.4 housing units per acre. Many of the attached single-family in Terravessa, pictured below, ranges from 9 to 14.4 housing units per acre.



Figure 1 – Terravessa Single-family and Townhomes (T4) looking Southeast. The three-story buildings in the foreground are T5.³

³ Encore Image. Accessed from: <https://dlqxt4mfnxo6k.cloudfront.net/encorehomesinc.com/aHR0cHM6Ly9zMy5hbWF6b25hd3MuY29tL2J1aWxkZXJjbG91ZC9kNjk4OGJmZTEODI3Zjg3ZTM5Mjc0Y2U0OWYxNzYwYi5qcGVn/exact/2000/1125>

Introducing this category also is aimed at providing Plan Commission and Council with an additional tool in land use planning. Currently, if a property is designated as High Density Residential (HDR), any large-scale multi-family proposal over 9 housing units per acre is deemed compliant with the comprehensive plan, even if it doesn't align with the character of the area. The city's planning goals and the residential market envisions modest densities and generally at a scale similar to single-family housing, meaning the HDR land use category often becomes the default choice for land use categories due to the targeted housing units per acre. Notably, HDR has no upper limits on housing units per acre.

The proposed text amendments for HDR are crucial for establishing the Medium-High Density Residential land use category. The amendment also suggests removing references of "condominiums" to clarify terminology, as the term condominium refers to property ownership and not land use. It is important to note that the planning staff has not suggested any changes to the allowable conditional uses for any residential land use categories.

Please reach out if you have any questions or concerns. My email is deanna.schmidt@fitchburgwi.gov, or I can be reached at (608)270-4255.

Sincerely,



Deanna Schmidt
City Planner & Zoning Administrator