

Residential Development and Compatibility Issue Paper

Topic:

Multi Dwelling Allowances and Density

Issue:

This topic explores policy regarding appropriate locations for multi-dwelling residential development at low (20 units/acre) to medium (40 units/acre) densities.

Problem Statement:

Current Comprehensive Plan policies direct higher density development, including multi-dwelling residential, to areas that are generally well-served by transit, such as town centers, main streets and key transportation corridors. However, in some cases, multi-dwelling map designations have been applied in areas that are somewhat distant from collector streets with frequent transit service, in areas where transportation infrastructure is not fully developed, and in other areas that lack community services within nearby walking distance. There is a potential disconnect between some areas where dense housing is allowed or encouraged, and the ability to serve these places with high-quality transportation services, and convenient retail and private and public services. In addition, for some areas, development of higher density residential has resulted in increased school enrollment which has strained capacity.

Background:

Multi dwelling designations allow development at higher residential densities to provide a variety of housing opportunities for Portlanders. They also provide for an efficient use of land and can help meet housing supply and affordability goals.

According to the current Comprehensive Plan, multi-dwelling designations are to be applied in areas that have good public services, including good transit service; have no development constraints; and are located near commercial services. The Corresponding Comprehensive Plan designations are: Townhouse Multi dwelling (R3 zone); Low Density Multi Dwelling (R2 zone); Medium Density Multi Dwelling (R1 zone); High Density Multi Dwelling (RH zone); Central Residential (CX zone).

During the Comprehensive Plan process and in subsequent area plan updates, multi dwelling designations have been applied in a variety of locations, some of which may not fully meet the locational goals expressed in the current Comprehensive Plan. Examples include areas designated for low- and medium-density multi dwelling (R2, R1 zones) in parts of East Portland near SE 122nd Avenue that lack complete urban infrastructure, and are located some distance from commercial or community services. Other locations include the area near the delayed Harold MAX station areas, and other locations in parts of North, Northeast, Southeast, East and Southwest Portland.

Challenges/Issues:

Placement of multi dwelling designations in areas that lack services can create clusters of dense housing where people must travel greater distances or use personal transportation to meet daily needs for shopping, services, schools, etc. In other cases, the location of dense development in areas that lack infrastructure places an additional burden on existing systems. In some areas where development has already occurred, there may be a need to review service access and provision issues. In less developed areas, an approach may be to reevaluate the appropriateness of medium or high density multi-dwelling residential designations given the other challenges of meeting needs. The location and density of residential uses is also closely linked to the viability of local neighborhood-oriented commercial uses - this is an issue being explored by the neighborhood centers PEG as well.

Health Connection:

These include:

- Placement of multi-dwelling development in areas where transit and services are easily accessible to residents provide best health benefits
- Consider the tradeoffs of higher density residential locations: easy access to transportation and services vs. potential air quality issues of some locations.

Equity Connection:

- Provisions and allowances are not applied evenly throughout Portland neighborhoods.
- Consider the potential for unintended consequences of any policy direction.
- Understand citywide implications of a new policy and its effect geographically and if it has any effect on the provision of affordable housing or housing types geographically.

Expected Outcomes:

DRAFT Policy: Limit the application of multi-dwelling residential plan designations and zones in areas beyond 1000 feet of transit streets or in places where infrastructure is severely lacking.

Implementation Tools: Application of plan and zone designations; support with regulatory tools and financial incentives.