

MIDDLE HOUSING  
CONTEXT ANALYSIS

# MILTON

LIGHT WA





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# Introduction

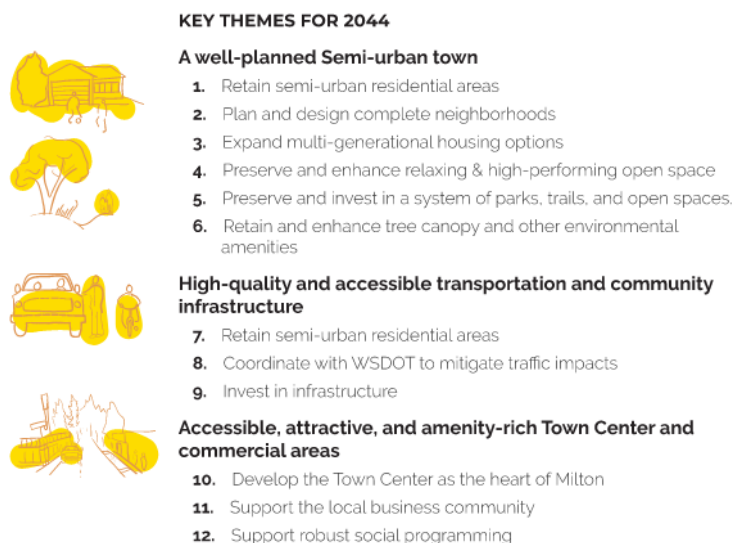
The City of Milton is required to allow middle housing in residential zoning districts under new state legislation under HB 1110. Milton is a Tier 3 city and is required to allow two units per lot and three units under HB 1337 with allowances for two accessory dwelling units (ADUs) per lot.

HB 1110 and HB 1337 include some prescriptive requirements but also allows some discretion for communities to establish development standards to ensure middle housing is done successfully for infill within existing neighborhoods and new development. The context analysis of Milton's existing neighborhoods is intended to inform updates to the zoning and development code and alignment with the updated Comprehensive Plan that includes goals and policies regarding more diverse and affordable housing.

# Vision Highlights

Milton's 2044 Comprehensive Plan includes an updated vision statement focused on the physical characteristics that define Milton now and in the future. These key themes (see Figure 1) express these qualities including the desire to maintain a more rural character within what is an urban environment. Expanding housing diversity within the City is a key part of the vision and required by the Growth Management Act (GMA) and recent housing legislation.

Figure 1. Vision Statement Themes



Framework, City of Milton, 2024



## Housing Policy Highlights

The following goals and policies are in the draft Housing Element for the Comprehensive Plan update and should inform Milton's approach to the middle housing code.

HO 1 TYPES, DENSITIES, AND LEVELS OF AFFORDABILITY TO MEET THE DIVERSE NEEDS OF RESIDENTS, AND TO ADDRESS MILTON'S AFFORDABILITY GAP.

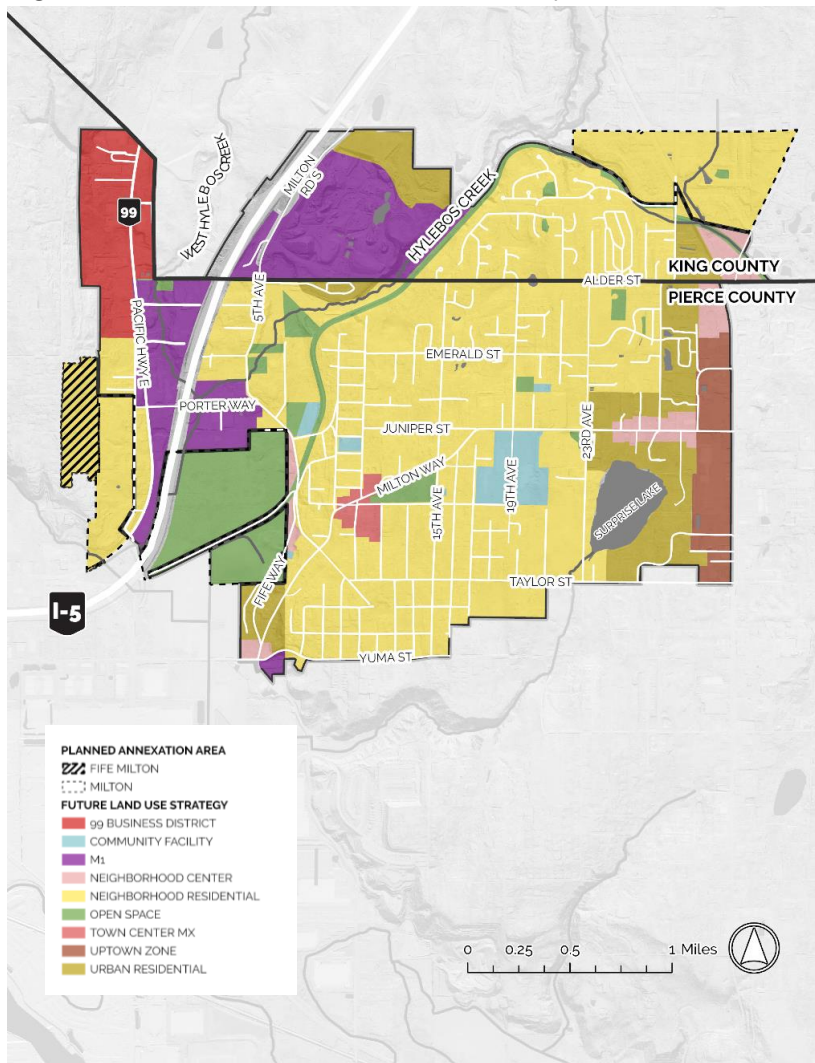
HO 1.1 Consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy and HB 1110, the City will update regulations and strategies to reduce barriers to the development and preservation of mid-density housing, such as duplexes, multiplexes, townhomes, and cottage courts, in all residential areas, to address the need for housing between single family and intensive multifamily, and to encourage a higher residential density still in keeping with Milton's existing fabric.

HO 1.2 Strive to set the conditions, including providing adequate public facilities and utilities, to encourage the development of a variety of housing types and densities, including middle housing.

HO 1.3 The City shall provide for accessory dwelling units in residential zones for low to moderate income, small family, single persons, or seasonal occupants, as long as the unit maintains the appropriate residential character and quality living environment.

Milton currently has three zoning districts that are predominantly for residential use including the RS, RMD, and RM zones.

Figure 2. Draft 2044 Future Land Use Map



City of Milton, Framework, 2024

## Key Findings

- The existing 8,000 square foot minimum lot sizes in the RS and RMD work well for meeting the middle housing and accessory dwelling unit requirements to allow 3 units per lot.
- The current minimum lot size of 4,000 sq ft in the RMD would increase allowable density for middle housing beyond what is allowed in the RM due to the smaller lot size (RM requires an 8,000 sq ft lot).
- The current minimum lot width of 75' in the RS works for middle housing types, but limits flexibility for subdividing smaller or oddly shaped parcels. The narrower minimum lot width of 60' in the RM provides more flexibility.

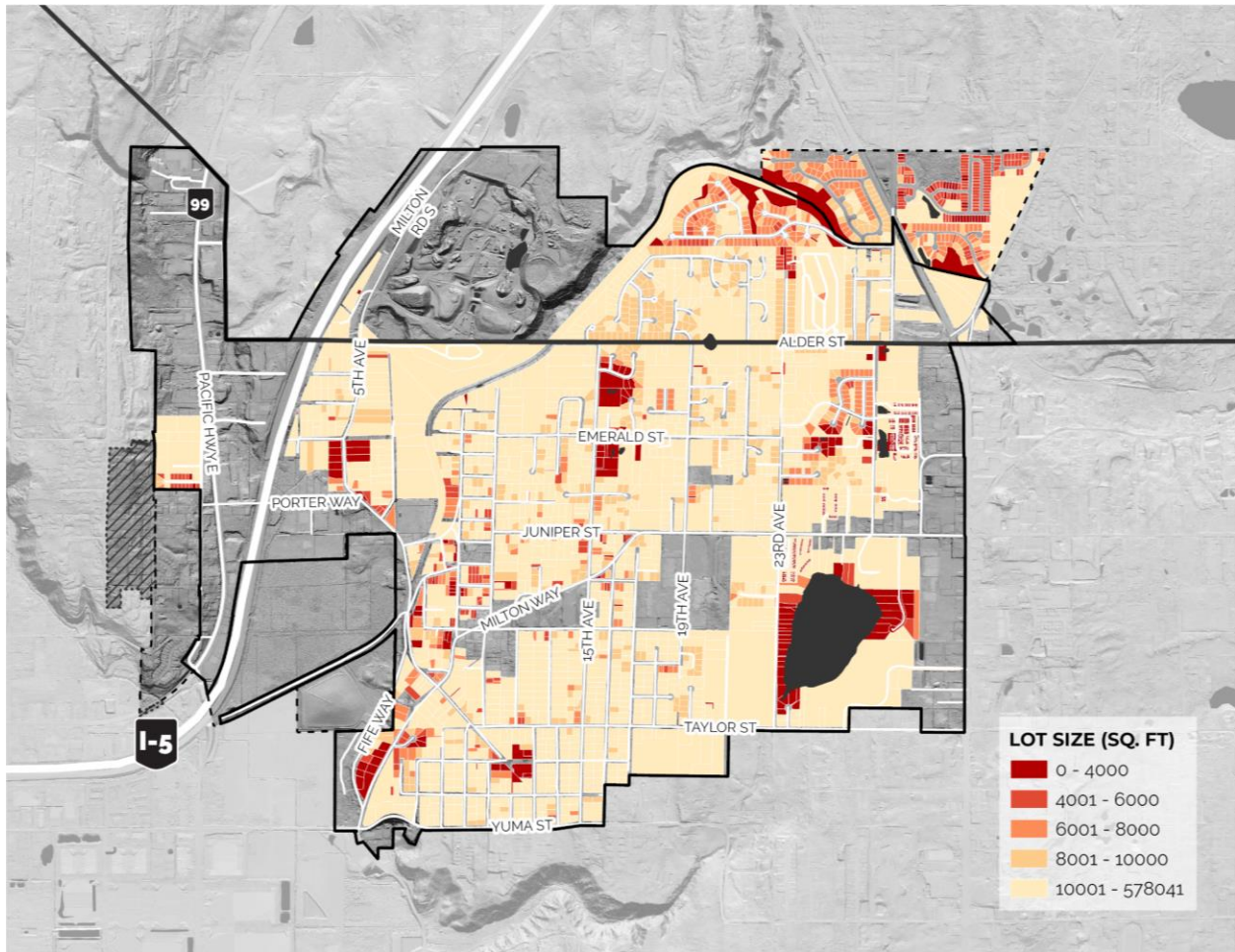
- The current development standards do not include some standard approaches to regulating middle housing such as a building footprint maximum, driveway width standards, flexible parking standards, and open space requirements.
- Current setback requirements are feasible for middle housing but may be more than is necessary for compatibility between properties. Reducing setbacks would provide greater flexibility for site specific conditions.

## Neighborhood Context Summary

Milton's residential neighborhoods have a variety of housing types and varied development patterns including lot sizes and configurations, street patterns and connectivity, trees and landscaping, the locations and design of parking, and building scale and architecture. The opportunities for middle housing differ between blocks and lots within the City due to the varied patterns of existing development. The purpose of the context analysis is to understand how to best fit middle housing within existing neighborhoods while accomplishing other City goals such as preserving tree canopy, solar access, reducing the impacts from traffic, making it safe to walk and bike, and maintaining a high quality of life.



Figure 3. Parcels by Square Footage Map\*

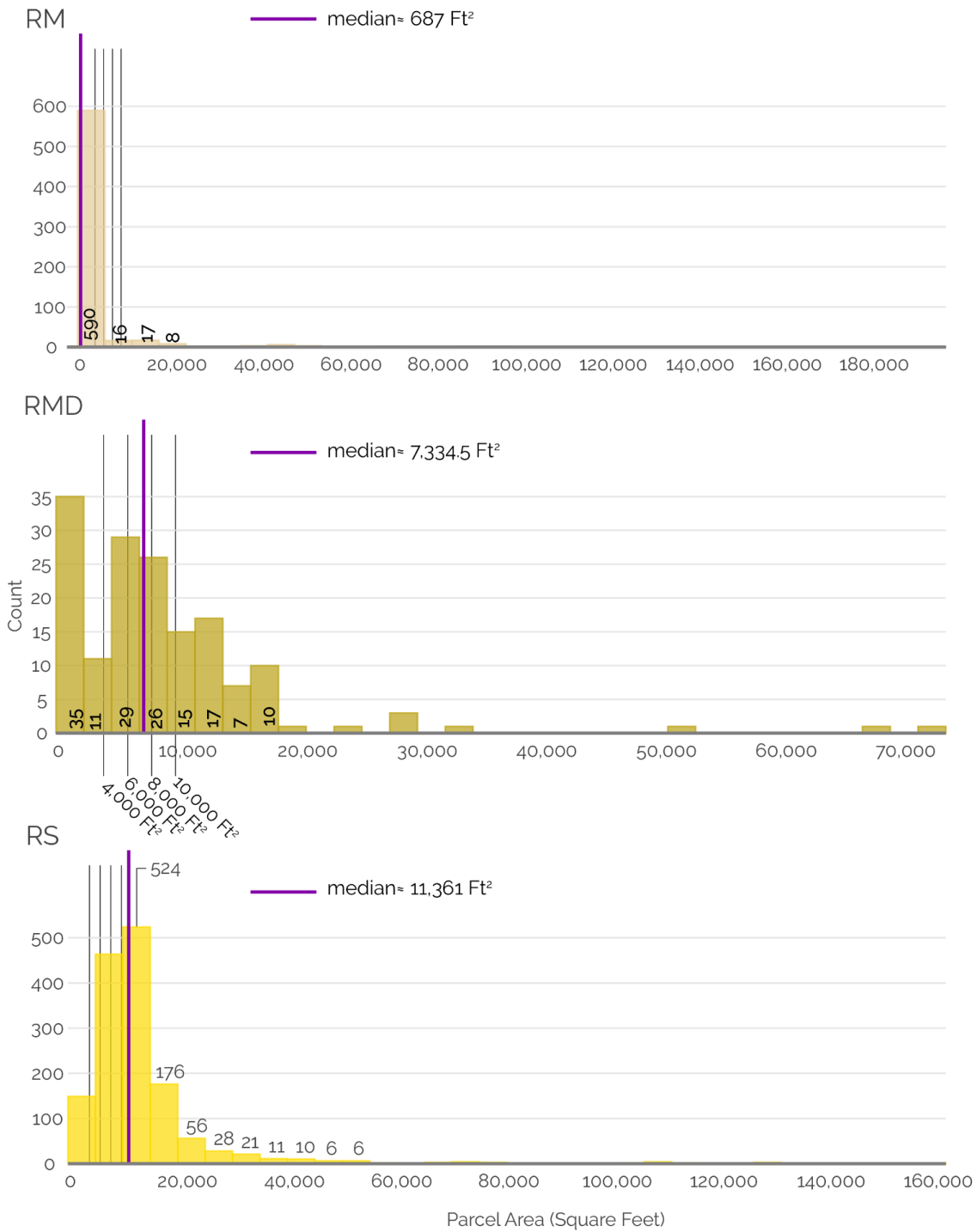


King County Buildable Lands Data, Pierce County Buildable Lands Data, 2022  
 \*Residential Net SF (accounting for environmental encumbrances)

The map above shows net square footage for residential parcels in the City of Milton based on existing zoning. It includes King County PAA parcels but excludes Pierce County PAA parcels because of data organization provided by each county respectively. As the map demonstrates, most of the residential land in Milton falls within parcels greater than 10,000 square feet. The histogram below shows the distribution of incorporated Pierce parcels of varied sizes by existing zoning district. The median single-family parcel is around 11,000 square feet. Residential Multifamily (RM) on the other hand, is much smaller, around 700 square feet. This very low median square footage is probably due primarily to data management of townhome developments on small individual parcels.



Figure 4. Distribution of Parcels by Net Square Footage and Zoning\*



Pierce County Buildable Lands, 2022

\*Parcels with net square footage over 200,000 sq ft have been removed to improve data visualization.

## Compact Residential Block

Milton neighborhoods include compact lots like those shown in the example below and large lots with a more rural character. The minimum lot size in the Residential Moderate Density (RMD) zone is 8,000 sq ft while some of the lots shown below are approximately 6,000 square feet.

Figure 5. Compact Residential Block



Pierce County, 2024

One of the lots already includes middle housing (shown in the lower left corner of the block in the aerial photo below), others have smaller scale buildings and accessory buildings that could be converted to middle housing, while newer large scale homes have limited opportunities for middle housing other than within the existing home as there is not sufficient land for infill development.

Figure 6. Aerial Photo of Compact Residential Block (same as above)



Google Earth, 2024

## Larger Lot Residential Block

Milton has areas within residential neighborhoods that have larger semi-urban lots. Several of the lots shown below are just under an acre in size and could accommodate middle housing infill in a variety of potential configurations. The block example below is within the Residential Single-Family (RS) zone with a minimum lot size of 8,000 square feet.

*Figure 7. Larger Lot Residential Block*



Pierce County, 2024

The larger lots afford more options and flexibility for middle housing development including infill on existing lots and subdivision. Access to the rear yard is an important consideration particularly for subdivision which includes access requirements for new lots. Larger lots provide more flexibility for tree protection and a variety of configurations for middle housing including attached, detached, and stacked units within the three-story height limit.

Figure 8. Aerial Photo of Larger Lot Residential Block (same as above)



Google Earth, 2024



## Site Design, Access, and Housing Types

Milton's residential neighborhoods are predominantly single-family but also include a range of housing types and architectural styles that have varied over time. Older homes tend to be smaller scale with detached garages while newer homes tend to be larger in scale and include garages integrated with the main house. Newer homes on smaller lots therefore have less opportunities for infill but could leverage the existing square footage to add units within the principal building or convert an existing garage.

The example property below could be expanded with a second story or in the rear yard where the existing accessory structure is located. The site could also be redeveloped to add three units under recent housing legislation.

Figure 9. Small-scale Single-Family home with detached garage



Framework, 2024

The example below shows existing middle housing within a residential neighborhood in Milton. The property is located on a corner lot and has shared parking off the residential side street. Units are ground related and common open space is shared amongst residents.

*Figure 10. Middle Housing within Existing Neighborhood*



*Framework, 2024*



Many streets in residential neighborhoods have on-street parking strips within the public right-of-way that could be leveraged for new additional housing. Some on-street parking areas are more formal than others do serve an important purpose within the neighborhoods as shown in the two examples below. The on-street parking area in the second example is more formal and continues along the entire frontage of the private street. Utilizing on-street parking reduces costs for developing housing, requires less impervious surface and results in less runoff than off-street parking, and provides more flexibility.

*Figure 11. Informal On-Street Parking*



Framework, 2024

Figure 12. Gravel On-Street Parking Area



Framework, 2024



## Landscape and Natural Systems

Many areas in Milton's residential neighborhoods include undeveloped critical areas such as Hylebos Creek and larger more rural lots with significant trees. These character defining features could be incorporated into new development with the right flexibility within the development code.

*Figure 13. Large Lot with Significant Trees*



Framework, 2024

# Code Summary

The following tables summarize the existing development standards and allowed uses in the three predominantly residential zoning districts. The feasibility concepts in the next section are intended to test the feasibility of middle housing under existing development standards to inform updates to the code. Milton may also adopt additional development standards but they must not be more strict than those that apply to single-family dwellings.

Figure 14. Existing Residential Development Standards

STANDARDS	RS	RMD	RM
Maximum Height	35 ft.	35 ft.	35 ft.
Maximum Building Coverage <sup>1</sup>	40%	50%	n/a
Maximum Net or Phased Floor/Lot Ratio: Square Feet <sup>2</sup>	n/a	n/a	n/a
Minimum Setback from Right-of-Way <sup>3, 4</sup>	20 ft.	20 ft.	20 ft.
Minimum Side Yard Setback <sup>5</sup>	7.5 ft.	7.5 ft.	7.5 ft.
Minimum Rear Yard Setback <sup>6</sup>	25 ft.	10 ft.	25 ft.
Minimum Rear Yard Setback: Accessory Structure <sup>6</sup>	7.5 ft.	7.5 ft.	7.5 ft.
Minimum Rear Yard Setback: Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit	25 ft.	10 ft.	25 ft.

City of Milton, 2024

The standards listed below include the minimum lot size for each of the residential zoning districts which range from 4,000 sq ft to 8,000 sq ft. Under recent state legislation Milton will no longer be permitted to require more land area for a duplex.

Figure 15. Existing Density Standards

STANDARDS	RS	RMD	RM
Minimum Lot Area	8,000 sq. ft.	4,000 sq. ft.	8,000 sq. ft.
For a Duplex Unit	12,000 sq. ft.	10,000 sq. ft.	n/a
Standard Net Density for Multiple Units	n/a	12 du/ac	12 du/ac
Maximum Net Density <sup>1</sup>	5.45 du/ac <sup>1</sup>	18.00 du/ac <sup>2</sup>	18.00 du/ac <sup>2</sup>
Minimum Lot Width	75 ft.	45 ft.	60 ft.

City of Milton, 2024

The RS zone allows single and two-family dwellings while the RM zone allows multi-family as a permitted use and the RMD allows multi-family as a conditional use.



Figure 16. Existing Residential Land Uses

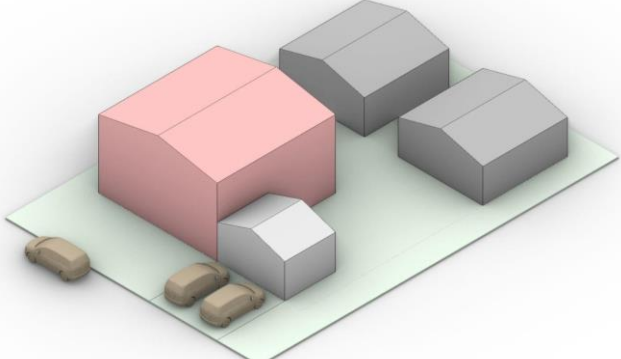
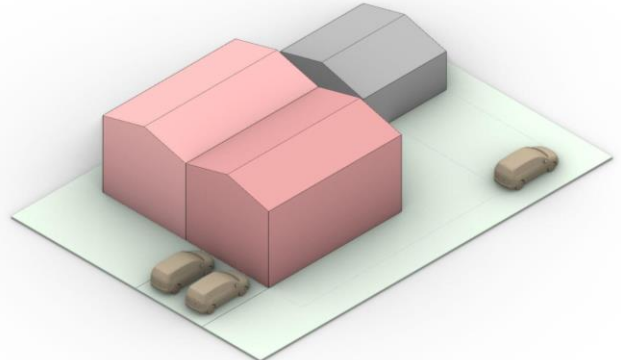
Description of Use	RS	RM	RMD
Residential Use Category			
Accessory structure larger than principal building	cup		
Adult day care facility	cup	au	au
Adult family home	au	au	au
Adult retirement community		au	au
Apartment		au	cup
Assisted living facility		cup	cup
Carport	acc	acc	acc
Dwelling, accessory1	acc	acc	acc
Dwelling, multifamily		au	cup
Dwelling, single-family	au	au	au
Dwelling, two-family	au2	au	au
Emergency housing			
Emergency shelters			

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## Middle Housing Feasibility Concepts

The following middle housing test cases are based on the minimum lot sizes and dimensions for the RS, RMD, and RM zones. The test cases focus on accommodating up to three units per lot within the existing development standards. Concepts that require exceeding an existing development standard highlighted in red.

Figure 17. RS 8,000 sq ft Lot

RS: 8,000 sq ft; Lot (75' width); Buildable Area of 3,660 sq ft		
<p>Single Family + 2 ADUs</p>		<p>Primary Unit: 1,525 sq ft ADU: 625 x 2 sq ft</p> <p><b>Building Coverage: 34.70%</b></p>
<p>Duplex + 1 ADU</p>		<p>Primary Unit: 2,000 sq ft ADU: 625 sq ft</p> <p><b>Building Coverage: 32.8%</b></p>

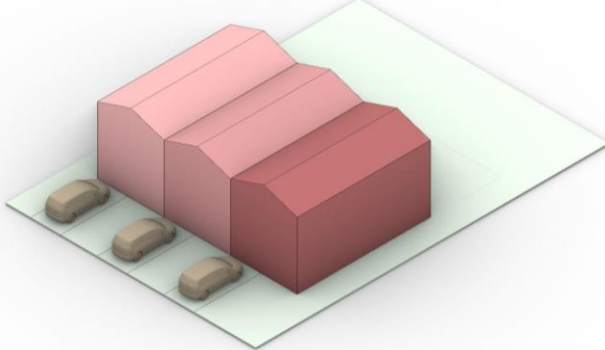
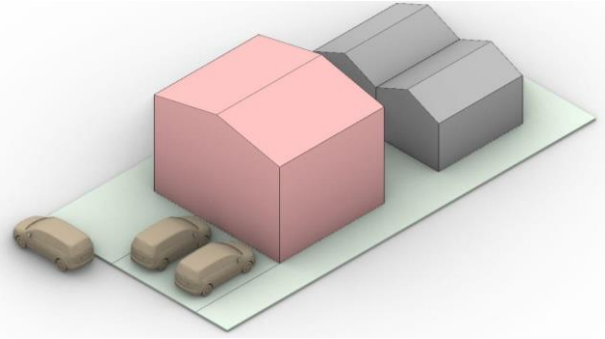
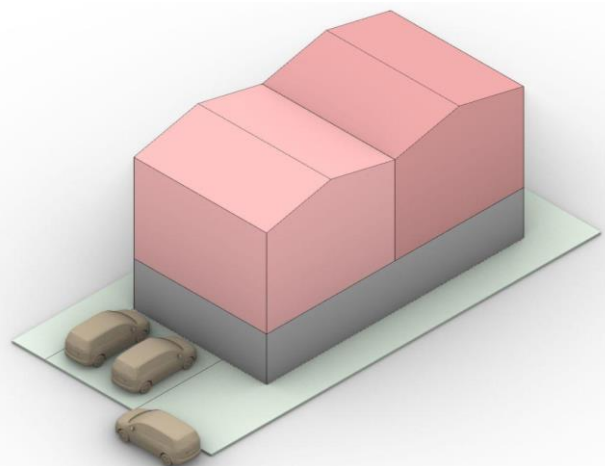
<p>Triplex / Stacked Flats</p>		<p>Primary Unit: 8,00 x 3 sq ft</p> <p><b>Building Coverage: 30%</b></p>
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Figure 18. RMD 4,000 sq ft Lot

<p>RMD: 4,000 sq ft, Lot (45' width); Buildable Area of 1,740 sq ft</p>		
<p>Single Family + 2 ADUs</p>		<p>Primary Unit: 750 sq ft ADU: 300 x 2 sq ft</p> <p><b>Building Coverage: 33.75%</b></p>
<p>Duplex + 1 ADU</p>		<p>Primary Unit (and ADU): 1,740 sq ft</p> <p><b>Building Coverage: 43.5%</b></p>



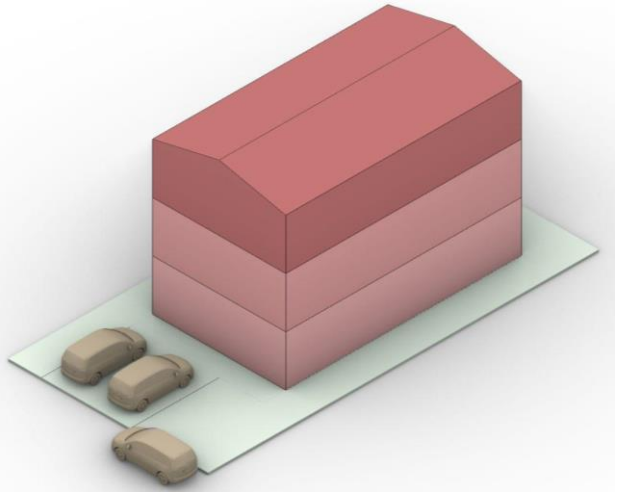
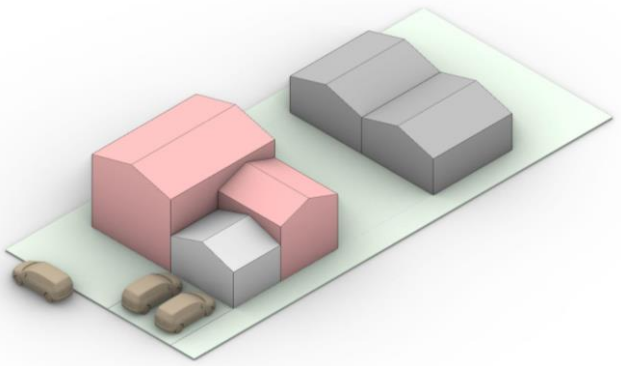
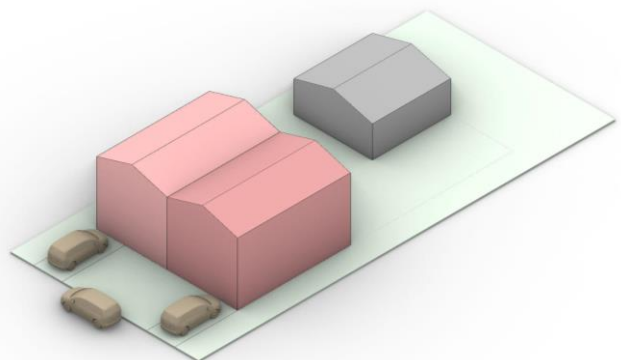
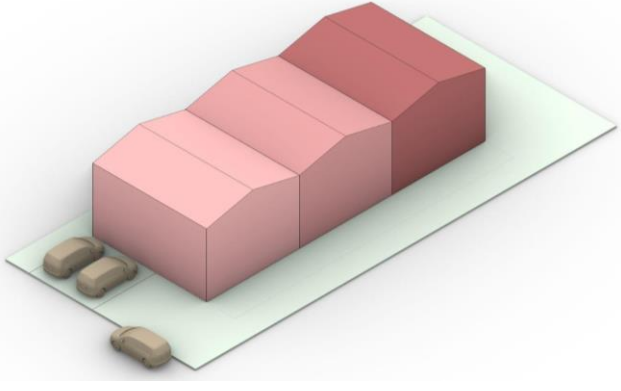
<p>Triplex / Stacked Flats</p>		<p>Primary Unit: 1,590 sq ft</p> <p><b>Building Coverage: 39.75%</b></p>
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Figure 19. RM 8,000 sq ft Lot

<p>RM: 8,000 sq ft, Lot (60' width); Buildable Area of 3,960 sq ft</p>		
<p>Single Family + 2 ADUs</p>		<p>Primary Unit: 1,490 sq ft ADU: 570 x 2 sq ft</p> <p><b>Building Coverage: 32.90%</b></p>
<p>Duplex + 1 ADU</p>		<p>Primary Unit: 810 x 2 sq ft ADU: 625 sq ft</p> <p><b>Building Coverage: 28.05%</b></p>

<p>Triplex / Stacked Flats</p>	 A 3D architectural rendering of a triplex or stacked flats building. The building is shown in a light red color and consists of three distinct units stacked vertically. The units are arranged in a row, with the middle unit being slightly taller than the two flanking units. The building is situated on a light green rectangular base. In front of the building, three small, brown, toy-like cars are parked on a light-colored surface.	<p>Primary Unit: 1,056 x 3 sq ft</p> <p><b>Building Coverage: 39.60%</b></p>
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Framework, 2024

## Existing Blocks and Lots

The following test cases look at the potential for middle housing within existing blocks in Milton's residential neighborhoods.

### Block South of City Hall

The block south of City Hall has opportunities for small scale infill of ADUs as shown in the example graphic below.

*Figure 20. Detached ADUs at the rear of existing lots*



Framework, 2024

Figure 21. Detached ADUs in the RMD zone at the back lots and carve outs of existing housing



Framework, 2024

## Larger Lot Block

Milton has areas in residential neighborhoods with larger lots that provide different opportunities for middle housing than smaller lots. The example below includes lots just under an acre in size that could accommodate infill or subdivision to individual smaller lots. In some cases access to rear lots is necessary for subdivision into smaller lots.

Figure 22. Infill concept for middle housing on larger lots



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Figure 23. Middle housing concept with subdivision of larger lots



Framework, 2024

Figure 24. Middle housing infill concept aerial oblique



Framework, 2024