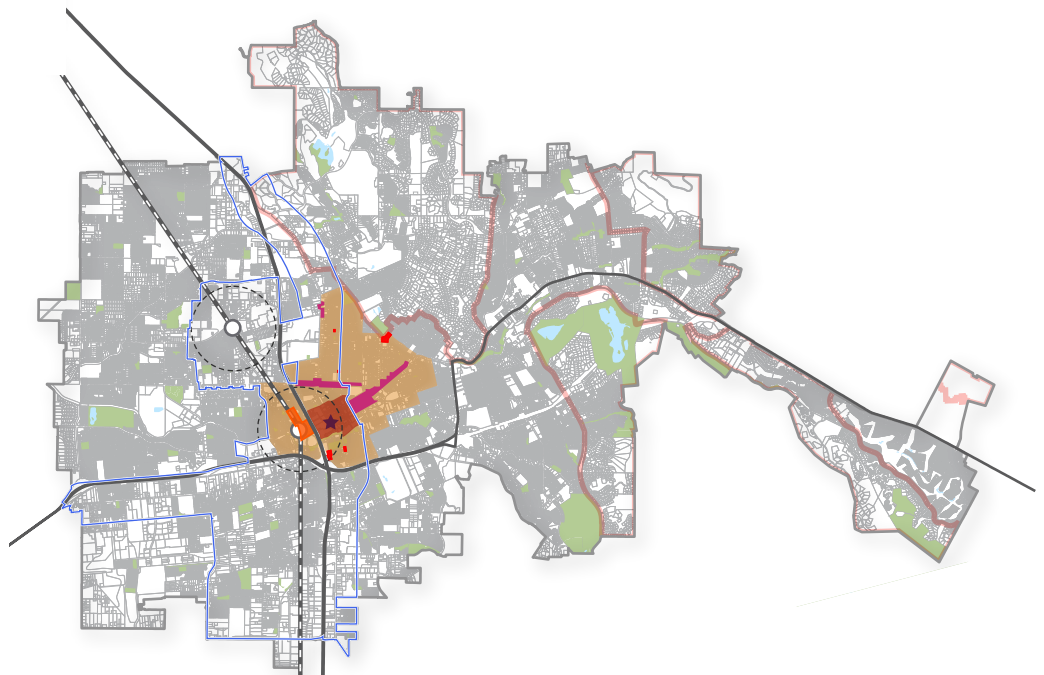


# Missing Middle Housing Initiative

Prepared for:  
City of Santa Rosa  
**October 2021**

## Task 1 Analysis



The concept of Missing Middle Housing was conceived by Opticos Design, Inc. For further information, visit [www.missingmiddlehousing.com](http://www.missingmiddlehousing.com)





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# Purpose + Objectives

CHAPTER

1

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# 1.1 What This Study Is About

**The City of Santa Rosa is working to ensure that growth and reinvestment in the City result in increasing housing choice and affordability.**

## Sources

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Arthur C. Nelson “Missing Middle: Demand and Benefits”, Utah ULI Conference, October 21, 2014

<sup>2</sup>2016 Housing Action Plan, City of Santa Rosa

## The Need for More Housing Choices in Santa Rosa

In the United States, 90% of available housing is located in a conventional neighborhood of single-unit homes, adding up to a 35 million unit housing shortage.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, there is increasing demand nationwide for greater housing choices in walkable environments, with convenient access to amenities and services and reduced dependence on driving for daily needs.

Real estate trends indicate a growing preference, led by Millennials and Baby Boomers, for more variety in housing types. But the choices offered by most housing markets continue to be either

single-unit houses or large apartment projects.

The City of Santa Rosa, similar to most municipalities in the Bay Area, has a severe housing shortage. According to the City's Housing Action Plan, the City needs to add 1,000 housing units per year through 2023 to satisfy unmet demand.<sup>2</sup> This housing cannot be accommodated by larger housing projects alone, and would need a broader, city-wide approach with incremental infill.

The City of Santa Rosa's Missing Middle Housing Initiative is a city-wide effort to increase housing production, encouraging housing of various types,

**Figure 2.1** An example of a Multiplex Large building type with forecourt frontage type in Santa Rosa.



sizes and affordability thresholds at scales compatible with established single-family neighborhoods.

The City's stated objective is to "amend or create policies, standards and fees to accommodate by-right construction, replacement or conversion of standard single-family homes and remodels to produce Missing Middle infill housing". The Initiative is focused on areas generally within walking distance of transit and amenities. The Missing Middle Housing Initiative is aligned with the City's Housing Action Plan that has 31 programs under 5 program areas:

- Increase inclusionary affordable housing
- Achieve "affordability by design" in market-rate projects
- Improve development readiness
- Increase affordable housing investment and partnerships

### The Need for Regulatory Change

Too often, the types and size of new dwellings that the market wants are not allowed by local policy or zoning regulations. This leaves innovative

developments needing to go through complex and uncertain review processes when trying to respond to the shifting market. Regulatory change is needed to make new investment predictable and simple.

Missing Middle Housing (MMH) is intended to be part of low-rise residential neighborhoods, which are typically zoned as "single-family residential" in conventional zoning. In this analysis "single-family" is hereafter referred to as "single-unit." However in some cities, since MMH contains multiple units, it is, by definition, not allowed in single-unit zoning districts. In Santa Rosa, multi-unit developments are allowed in all residential zoning districts. However, allowed General Plan density limits may not allow all Missing Middle types in all zones.

Most multi-family zoning districts in conventional codes allow much bigger buildings (taller and wider) and also typically encourage lot aggregation and large suburban garden apartment buildings. The environments created by these zoning districts are not what is intended by Missing Middle Housing.



**Figure 2.2** Example of a Fourplex Missing Middle type. While the building's scale makes it look like a single-unit house, it contains four units.

# 1.2 Missing Middle Housing In The Future of Communities

**Key national trends point to Missing Middle as an essential strategy for communities to spur reinvestment and housing production.**

## Cities Are Prioritizing Walkability for "Triple Bottom Line" Benefits

- Improved physical health and mental well-being of residents;
- Environmental stewardship; and
- Economic benefits.

## Growing Demand for Walkable Living

- There is a 20-35% gap between the demand and supply of walkable urban living choices, created by the limited variety of housing products being delivered in the housing market;
- 60% of the population favors living in neighborhoods with a walkable mix of houses and stores rather than neighborhoods that require more driving between home, work, and play.<sup>3</sup>
- Office tenants prefer locations in walkable environments over typical suburban office parks by a ratio of 4:1<sup>4</sup>.

## Inadequate Housing Choices

- For the past 75 years, the U.S. has primarily been building detached single-unit houses and mid-rise/high-rise apartments, without addressing the market needs between these two ends of the housing spectrum.
- With an estimated shortage of 3 million units in the U.S., the demand for small-lot and attached housing units is not being met.

## A Changing Population

- **Shrinking household size.** By 2025, 85% of households will not have children<sup>5</sup>, but we are building as if they will. Further, nearly 30% of households today are single-person<sup>5</sup>. Millennials, baby boomers and single woman households are growing segments of the population, and many do not need or want a large yard or house to maintain.
- **Millennials and Baby Boomers.** Among these two fastest growing demographic groups, 56% of Millennials and 46% of Baby Boomers want to live in more Walkable Neighborhoods<sup>6</sup>. 59% of Millennials and 27% of Baby Boomers are looking for MMH<sup>6</sup>.
- **Retirees.** 10,000 Baby Boomers retire every day<sup>7</sup>, and half of them have no retirement savings and depend on their social security payment (avg \$1,341 per month), requiring smaller and more affordable housing choices.

### Sources

<sup>3</sup> National Association of Realtors

<sup>4</sup> NAIOP Commercial Real Estate Development Association

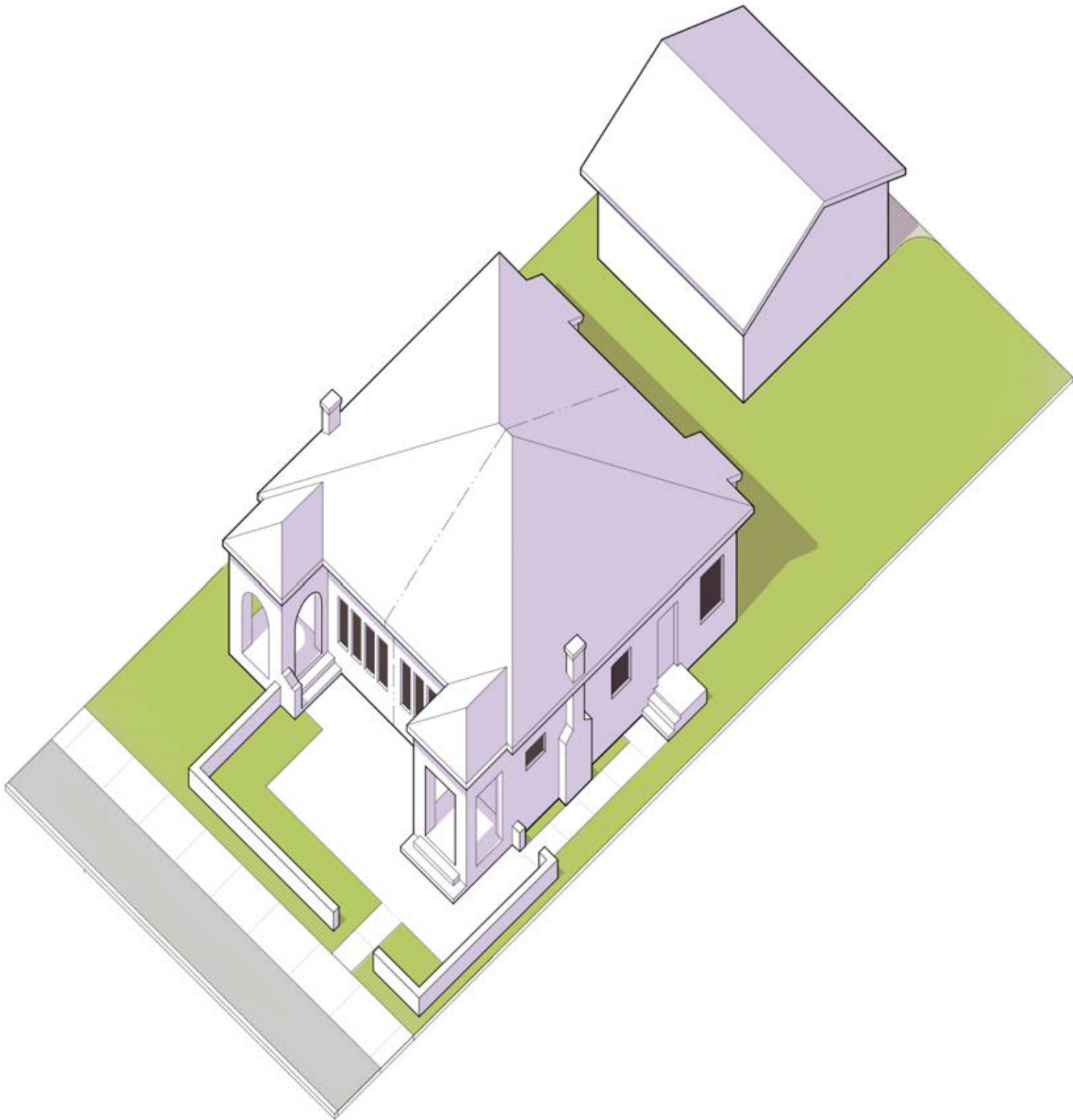
<sup>5</sup> U.S. Census Bureau

<sup>6</sup> American Planning Association

<sup>7</sup> Home.one







# About Missing Middle Housing

CHAPTER

## 2

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## 2.1 What Is Missing Middle Housing?

**Missing Middle Housing is defined as house-scale buildings with multiple units in walkable neighborhoods. For more information visit [www.missingmiddlehousing.com](http://www.missingmiddlehousing.com)**

### Responding to The Demand for Walkable Urban Living

The mismatch between current US housing stock and shifting demographics, combined with the growing demand for walkable urban living, has been poignantly defined by recent research and publications by Christopher Nelson and Chris Leinberger, and most recently by the Urban Land Institute's publication "What's Next: Real Estate in the New Economy."

The solution is not as simple as adding more multifamily housing stock using the same housing typologies that have been built over the past couple of decades. Instead, it will be necessary to shift the

way that we design, locate, regulate, and develop homes. To that end, Missing Middle Housing types such as duplexes, fourplexes, bungalow courts, multiplexes, townhouses, and live-work units, are a critical part of the solution and should be in the toolbox of every architect, planner, real estate agent, and developer.

Well-designed, simple, Missing Middle types achieve medium-density yields and provide high-quality, marketable options between the scales of single-unit homes and mid-rise apartments. They are designed to meet the specific

**Figure 2.3** Downtown Core (top) and Railroad Square (bottom) are examples of walkable neighborhoods in Santa Rosa. Image source: [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)



### Q CLOSER LOOK

#### What is a Walkable Neighborhood?

*These are places where you can easily walk or bike to home, work, or to fulfill most daily needs, including shopping and recreation. "Walkable" does not mean recreational walking such as on paths and trails, but rather walking to everyday destinations such as work, a coffee shop, restaurants, bars, entertainment, and other amenities. The compact form and mix of uses found in a Walkable Neighborhood are anchored by "Walkable*

*Centers" where neighborhood-serving retail, food, services, and employment are located in a pedestrian-oriented environment, affording multi-modal access throughout the area. These environments accommodate but do not depend on the use of automobiles for most daily needs. This was the standard model for urban living prior to the 1940s.*



needs of shifting demographics and new market demands and are a key component in neighborhoods offering diverse housing choices. They are called “missing” because very few of these housing types have been built since the early 1940s due to regulatory constraints, the shift to auto-dependent patterns of development, and the incentivization of single-unit homeownership by the federal government. Before the 1940s, they were a natural part of the housing mix, helping to provide housing choices to people at different stages in their life and income levels. Communities and organizations, including AARP, are realizing that Missing Middle Housing is important in helping neighborhoods thrive while providing housing choices as people age; and can help them downsize and continue to live in their familiar surroundings.

### A Walkable Context

A critical characteristic of the Missing Middle types is that they are most effective when located within an existing or newly created walkable context. Buyers or renters of these housing types are choosing to trade larger suburban housing for less space, less yard to maintain, and proximity to services and amenities such as restaurants, bars, markets, services, and employment.

Figure 2.1 shows examples of “walkable” areas in Santa Rosa. Walkable neighborhoods in Santa Rosa include

Downtown Core, St. Rose, Railroad District, the West End, and the Arts District.

### Medium-Density Product but Lower Perceived Densities

Missing Middle building types typically range in density from 8 du/acre to up to 70 du/acre, depending on the building type and lot size. It is important not to get distracted with the density numbers when thinking about these types. As shown in Figures 2.2 and 2.3, density is an unpredictable factor in determining building form, as it depends on many variables such as lot size, height, etc. Due to the small footprint of MMH types, and the fact that they are usually mixed with a variety of building types, even on an individual block, their perceived density is usually quite low—they do not look like dense buildings.

A combination of these types provides a neighborhood with a minimum average of 16 du/acre. This is generally the threshold at which an environment has enough people to be transit-supportive and when neighborhood-serving, walkable retail, and services become viable.

### Small Footprint and Blended Densities

A common characteristic of these housing types is their small-to-medium-sized building footprints. The largest of the Missing Middle types have a typical main body width of about 50 to 60 feet and can



**Figure 2.4** 60 units, 30 du/ acre  
Building 175' x 165', 3 Stories



**Figure 2.5** 5 units, 29 du/ acre  
Building 40' x 65', 2 Stories

be up to 80 feet overall when secondary wings are included. These sizes are comparable to a large estate home. This makes these types ideal for urban infill and complete neighborhoods, even in older neighborhoods that were originally developed as single-unit environments but could be designated to allow slightly higher intensities.

### Smaller, Well-Designed Units

A common mistake by architects or builders new to the urban housing market is trying to force suburban unit layouts and sizes into urban contexts and housing types. For instance, a Fourplex designed with four 2,000 square foot units cannot be classified as a true Missing Middle type. The starting point for Missing Middle Housing is smaller-unit sizes (500 to 1,000 square feet). The challenge is to create smaller spaces that are well designed, comfortable, and usable. As an added benefit, smaller-unit sizes can

help developers keep their costs down, improving the proforma performance of a project, while keeping the housing available to a larger group of buyers or renters at a lower price point.

### Off-street Parking Does Not Drive The Site Plan

Trying to provide too much on-site parking can make a MMH develop project not viable. If large parking areas are provided or required, these buildings become very inefficient from a development potential or yield standpoint, reducing the 16 du/acre density threshold. As a starting point, these units should provide no more than one off-street parking space per unit. To enable these lower off-street parking requirements, on-street parking is required to be available adjacent to the units. Housing design that forces too much on-site parking also compromises the occupant's experience of entering the building or "coming home" and the

**Figure 2.6** The simple forms, smaller size, and compatibility with Type V construction help maximize affordability and investment returns, and are consistent with the construction strategies familiar to most residential homebuilders, as shown in this under-construction MMH project in Papillion, Nebraska.



relationship with its context, especially in an infill condition, which can greatly impact marketability.

### Simple Construction

As stated in ULI's "What's Next" publication, "Affordability—always a key element in housing markets—is taking on a whole new meaning as developers reach for ways to make attractive homes within the means of financially constrained buyers." Because of their simple forms, smaller size, and Type V construction, Missing Middle building types can help developers maximize affordability and returns without compromising quality by providing housing types that are simple and affordable to build.

### Creating Community

MMH creates community through the integration of shared community spaces within the types, as is the case for Courtyard Buildings or Cottage Courts, or simply from the proximity they provide to the community within a building and/or the neighborhood. This is an important aspect, in particular within the growing market of single-person households (which is at nearly 30% of all households, nationally) and also an aging population, that want to live independently but be part of a community. This has been especially true for single women who have proven to be a strong market for these MMH types, in particular Cottage Courts.

### Marketability

A final critical characteristic is that these housing types are very close in scale to single-unit homes and provide a similar user experience. For example, in these types, you enter through a front porch facing the street instead of walking down a long corridor or anonymous stairway to get to your unit. This makes the mental shift for potential buyers and renters much less drastic than making a shift to live in a large apartment building. This, combined with the fact that many baby boomers likely grew up in or near to similar housing types in urban areas or had relatives that did, enables them to easily relate to these housing types.

What is needed today are immediate, viable solutions to addressing the housing shortage and the mismatch between the housing stock and what the market is demanding: vibrant, diverse, sustainable, walkable urban places. Missing Middle Housing types are an important part of this solution and should be integrated into comprehensive and regional planning, zoning code updates, TOD strategies, and business models for developers and builders who want to be at the forefront of this paradigm shift.



## 2.2 Building Types for Missing Middle Housing



**Figure 2.7** MMH walking tour (top) and example documentation of a MMH type (bottom).

### Why Building Types Are Important for Missing Middle

In order for Missing Middle Housing types to fit the physical form of residential neighborhoods, it is important to understand the elements of building form and design that promote a house-scale look and feel. Designing with building types establishes a common vocabulary that promotes house-scale building design. It's a design tool that makes it easier to visualize built outcomes, compared to metrics such as Floor Area Ratio (FAR) and density.

By providing this high degree of specificity, it is possible to promote more predictable outcomes in terms of what gets built. And higher degrees of predictability make

it easier for the community to support new development projects since clear expectations for building form can be set at the beginning of any development project.

### Q CLOSER LOOK

#### How to Identify Building Types in Santa Rosa

*Taking an inventory of existing MMH types is the first step in creating building type standards. Many Missing Middle types may be non-conforming with existing zoning, or may have been converted into other uses, such as a single-unit home or offices, so it's important to do on-the-ground research to avoid overlooking existing examples. Mailboxes, electrical and gas meters, and window type/composition on the facade can indicate a Missing Middle type.*

*Existing Missing Middle types can provide guidance for calibrating zoning standards. Measuring lot dimensions, building footprints, frontage details, parking configurations, building height, location of units within the buildings, and location of building and/or unit entrances can help to define the unique characteristics of MMH types in Santa Rosa. Photo documentation can also help to inform standards, as well as providing examples of intended building form and character that can inform new development and infill development.*

## Characteristics of Missing Middle Building Types

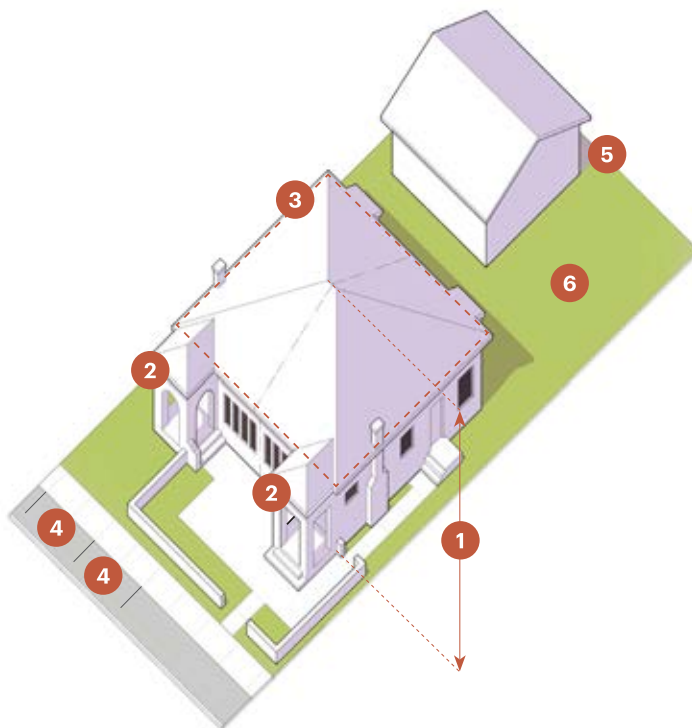
Missing Middle Housing is not a new type of building. It is a range of house-scale building types that exist in cities and towns across the country<sup>1</sup>. These types were a fundamental part of pre-1940s neighborhoods, and many examples exist in Santa Rosa's more historic neighborhoods.

All Missing Middle Housing types share the following characteristics:

- **Height.** Two to two and a half stories maximum (third story as an exception; only to be allowed with careful consideration of form and scale impact)
- **Multiple units per building.** Maximum of nineteen units per building, typically twelve units or less per building.
- **Footprint.** Typical main body width of 50 to 60 feet along the street and can be up to 80 feet overall when secondary wings are included.
- **Off-street parking.** Recommend requiring no more than one off-street parking space per unit. This is viable when near to services, retail, and the availability of on-street parking. Detached parking structures can help to maintain house-scale for the primary building in neighborhoods with narrower houses.
- **On-site open space.** Private open space is not needed and should not be required. Shared open space exists in the form of a rear yard, sometimes as a wide side yard, or a courtyard.
- **Driveways.** Generally, driveway design for MMH types should match the neighborhood context on a per-lot basis. If no alley is present, single-wide driveways are recommended when possible to avoid building frontages dominated by parking.

### Sources

<sup>1</sup>Missing Middle Housing, *Thinking Big and Building Small to Respond to Today's Housing Crisis*, Dan Parolek, Island Press



**Figure 2.8** Important characteristics to regulate.

- 1 Maximum height
- 2 Number of units
- 3 Footprint/ main body dimensions
- 4 On-street parking
- 5 Driveways (if any)
- 6 On-site open space

## 2.3 Importance of Frontage Types for Missing Middle

### Definition

**Frontage Type.** The component of a building that provides an important transition and interface between the public realm (street and sidewalk) and the private realm (building facade).

The ultimate intent of regulating frontages is to ensure, after a building is located appropriately on its lot, that its interface with the public realm and the transition between the two are detailed appropriately.

The names of the frontage types depicted below indicate their particular configuration or function and are based on examples found in cities across the country. Some types may be more

common than others in Santa Rosa, and the most representative types can be established by an on-the-ground survey.

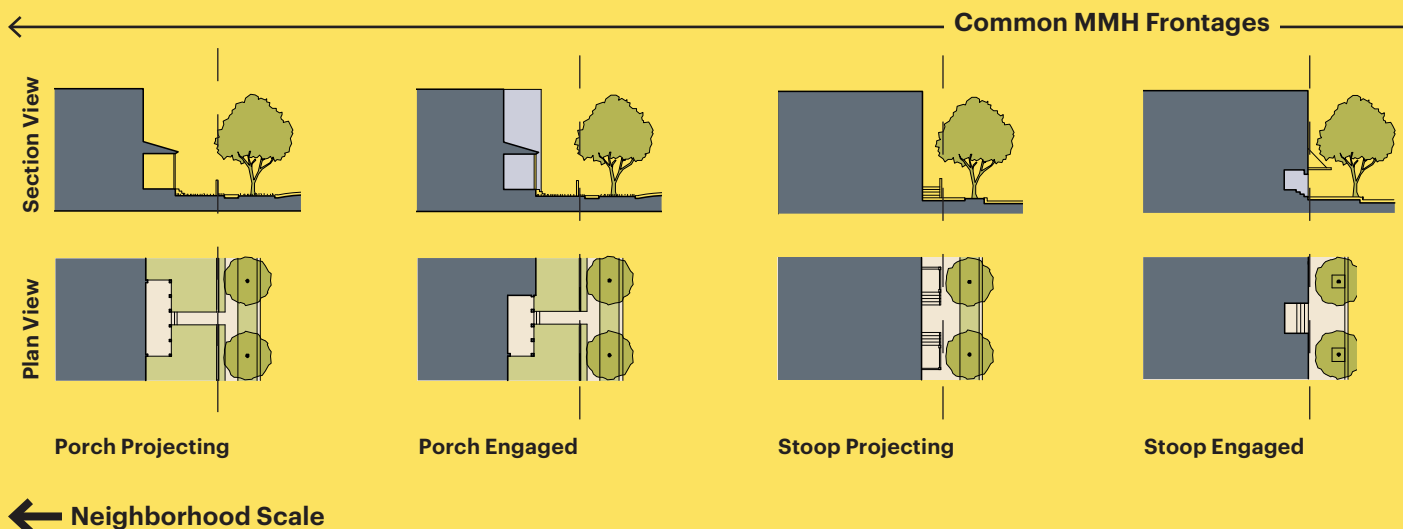
### Why Frontages Are Important for Missing Middle

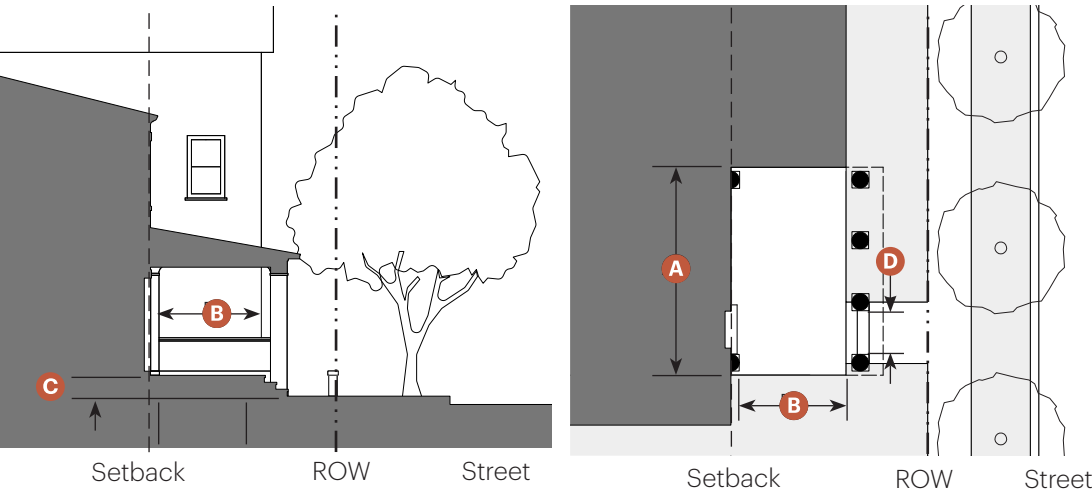
Missing Middle Housing types are house-scale and generally look like they could be a large single-unit home. Frontage types that are consistent with those used on single-unit homes, such as porches and stoops, help Missing Middle types contribute to the residential look and feel of neighborhoods where they are located. A strong sense of community is an important benefit that Missing Middle

### CLOSER LOOK

#### Spectrum of Frontage Types

Source: *Form Based Codes: A Guide for Planners, Urban Designers, Municipalities, and Developers*, Dan. Parolek AIA, Karen Parolek, Paul C. Crawford FAICP, Island Press





Housing types provide to residents and neighbors, and frontage types play a role in supporting this by providing a strong connection to the pedestrian-oriented streetscape.

Buildings with entries that are not visible from the street can appear anonymous. Creating clear, distinct entryways with room for socializing reinforces the neighborhood character of Missing Middle types and provides for a more convivial and welcoming streetscape.

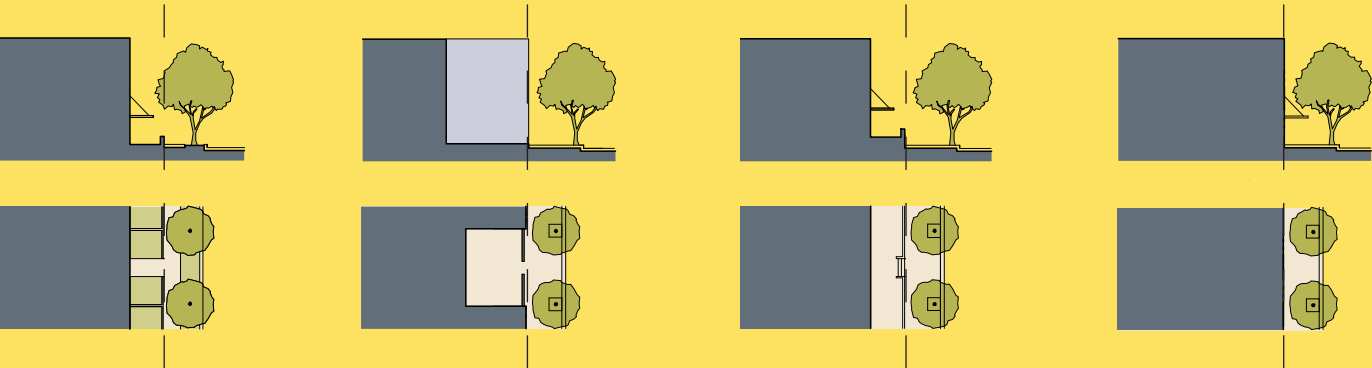
**Important Features to Regulate**

The detailed regulations for frontage types should be based on measurements from good local precedents to ensure they are appropriate. For instance, setting the correct minimum depth for stoops and porches is extremely important in order to ensure that they are actually usable, look like they're from the area, and that they improve the public/private interface by providing residents with a place to sit outside where they can also greet their neighbors.



**Figure 2.10** Example of MMH frontage in Santa Rosa. Multiple units in the building are accessed by a single, shared entry that leads to a hall or small lobby area.

..... **Less Common MMH Frontages** ..... ➔



**Dooryard**

**Forecourt**

**Terrace**

**Shopfront**

**Downtown Scale** ➔



## 2.4 Importance of Lot Width for Missing Middle

### Importance of Lot Width

Existing zoning standards regulate development by using lot area as another way to reinforce maximum allowed density. This approach prevents some housing choices that are physically compatible with single-unit houses.

Lot width can be a more effective regulation than lot area. This is primarily because while a project can comply with the minimum lot area it can still result in a building that is too large for its context. This often happens with low density

housing like a duplex that is allowed to fill up the building envelope and create a building that is within the density limits but is larger than the houses around it.

In contrast, regulating by lot width allows for MMH, increasing housing choice, while providing standards for maximum building footprint that are coordinated with a variety of lot widths that fit well and make sense in lower intensity neighborhoods.

### The Palette of Missing Middle Housing Types with Minimum Lot Width

*The palette of MMH types is provided for reference to the ideal lot width range of each type*



**Duplex Side-by-Side**  
40'-75'



**Duplex Stacked**  
35'-75'



**Cottage Court**  
100'-160'



**Fourplex**  
50'-75'

MMH Types Allowed by Current Lot Width Standards

The yellow bars show the ideal lot width range for each MMH type based vehicle access.

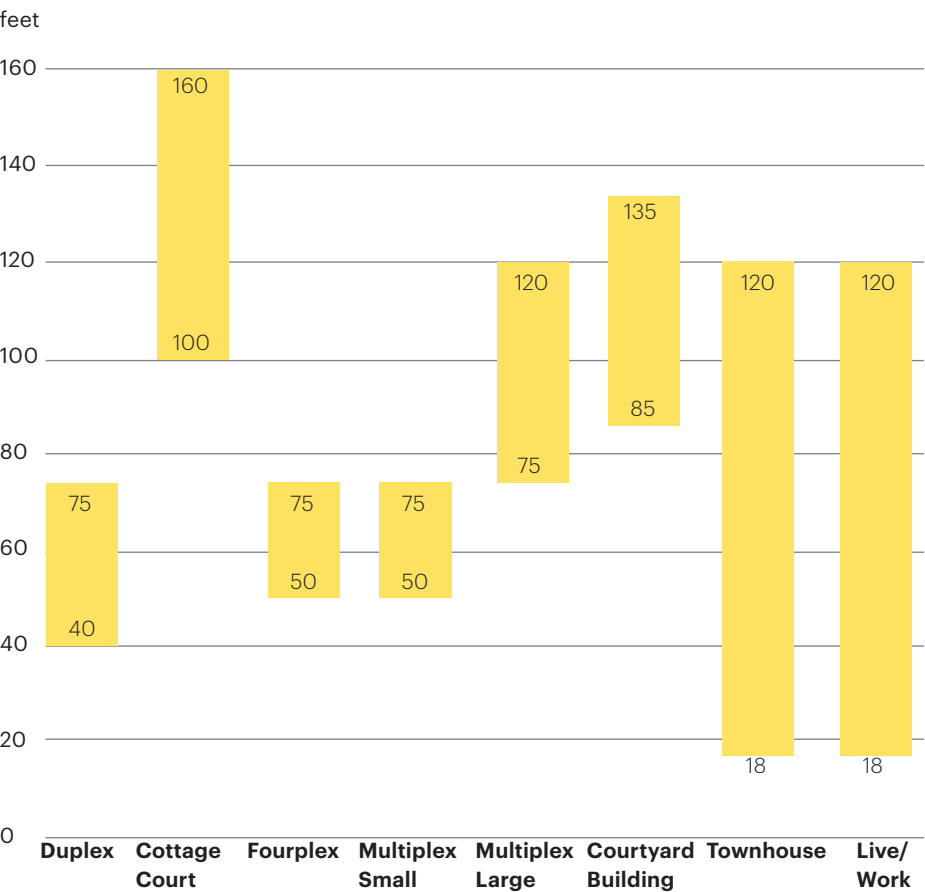
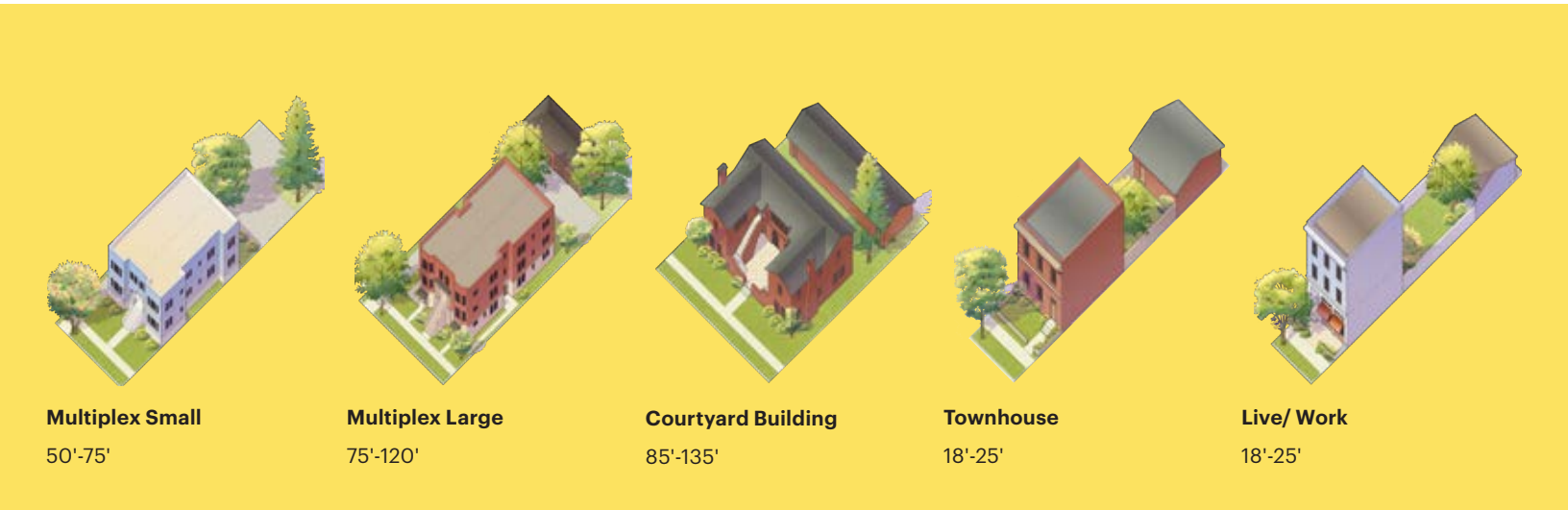


Figure 2.11  
Lot Width Ranges for Missing Middle Types



## 2.5 Palette of Missing Middle Housing Types

### Missing Middle Housing Palette

The palette of Missing Middle Housing (MMH) types below identifies the ideal lot characteristics for each type. Detailed versions of these types are shown on the following pages.

The minimum dimensions shown are what each type needs to provide a high quality living environment for residents, and the maximum is the size beyond which the

lots become too large to deliver the type of compact development that supports walkable environments.

The resultant density is the number obtained from designing units that reasonably fit within each MMH building type. This is different from density regulations that predetermine how many units are allowed without regard for what

### The Palette of Missing Middle Housing Types



**Duplex Side-by-Side**  
2 units



**Duplex Stacked**  
2 units



**Cottage Court<sup>1</sup>**  
5-10 units



**Fourplex**  
3-4 units

### Ideal Characteristics of Missing Middle Housing Types

Vehicular Access	Front	Rear	Front	Rear	Front	Rear	Front	Rear
Max. Height (Stories)	2.5		2.5		1.5		2.5	
Lot Width (ft.)	55' - 75'	40' - 70'	45' - 75'	35' - 70'	100' - 160'	100' - 150'	60' - 75'	50' - 65'
Lot Depth (ft.)	100' - 150'	100' - 150'	100' - 150'	100' - 150'	150'	150'	100' - 150'	100' - 150'
Area of Lot (sq.ft.)	5,500 - 11,250	4,400 - 10,500	4,500 - 11,250	3,500 - 10,500	15,000 - 24,000	15,000 - 22,500	6,000 - 11,250	5,000 - 9,750
<b>Resultant Density</b>								
(ADUs not included)	8 - 16	8 - 22	8 - 19	8 - 25	15 - 19	19 - 22	15 - 22	18 - 26

<sup>1</sup> Variation: Pocket Neighborhood. The lot for this variation is the size of most of a block, and the shared court is much larger, or consists of two or more shared courts. The individual cottages are expanded to include a mix of Duplex and Fourplex buildings.

can actually fit well. In addition, the results vary depending on front or rear vehicular access to parking.

Similarly, although lot area can be used as a regulating factor, it should not be the primary factor. Instead, lot width and the resulting building width should be the primary regulating factors, as these provide more targeted regulations that have a greater impact on the quality of the public realm and help to deliver more predictable building form.

The density ranges for each type correspond to the lower number of units for each with its smaller lot dimensions, and the higher number of units with its larger lot dimensions.

The dimensions shown in the palette below and on the subsequent pages are the result of years of on-the-ground research and design work for private and public sector clients by Opticos. These dimensions are meant to be employed as a starting point, and should be calibrated for each community's existing conditions, lot patterns and desired community form.



**Figure 2.12** Example of existing townhouses in Santa Rosa



**Multiplex Small**  
6-10 units



**Multiplex Large**  
7-18 units



**Courtyard Building**  
6-20 units



**Townhouse**  
1 unit



**Live/Work**  
1 unit

Front	Rear	Front	Rear	Front	Rear	Front	Rear	Front	Rear
2.5		2.5 (3 <sup>2</sup> )		2.5 (3 <sup>2</sup> )		2.5 (3 <sup>2</sup> )		2.5 (3 <sup>2</sup> )	
60' - 75'	50' - 65'	96' - 120'	75' - 100'	100' - 135'	85' - 125'	n/a	18' - 25'	n/a	18' - 25'
100' - 150'	100' - 150'	100' - 150'	100' - 150'	110' - 150'	110' - 150'	n/a	85' - 120'	n/a	85' - 120'
6,000 - 11,250	5,000 - 9,750	9,600 - 18,000	7,500 - 15,000	11,000 - 20,250	9,350 - 18,750	n/a	1,530 - 3,000	n/a	1,530 - 3,000
39 - 44	45 - 52	32 - 44	41 - 52	24 - 43	28 - 46	n/a	15 - 28	n/a	15 - 28

<sup>2</sup>In more intense neighborhoods, this type can be designed to have a third story, or a portion of a third story, depending on the intended physical character of the neighborhood.

# Duplex Side-By-Side

## Description

A small- to medium-sized building that consists of two dwelling units, one next to the other, both of which face and are entered from the street.

A variation of this is the "front-to-back" Duplex. This variation and the side-by-side building type are meant to provide two units within the footprint of a single-unit building. These are distinct from the non-recommended practice of attaching two single-unit houses to form two attached units. This latter approach often results in a building that is larger and is out of scale with its single-unit neighbors.



## Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)

The ADU can be located above the garage building to provide an additional unit separate from the main building.

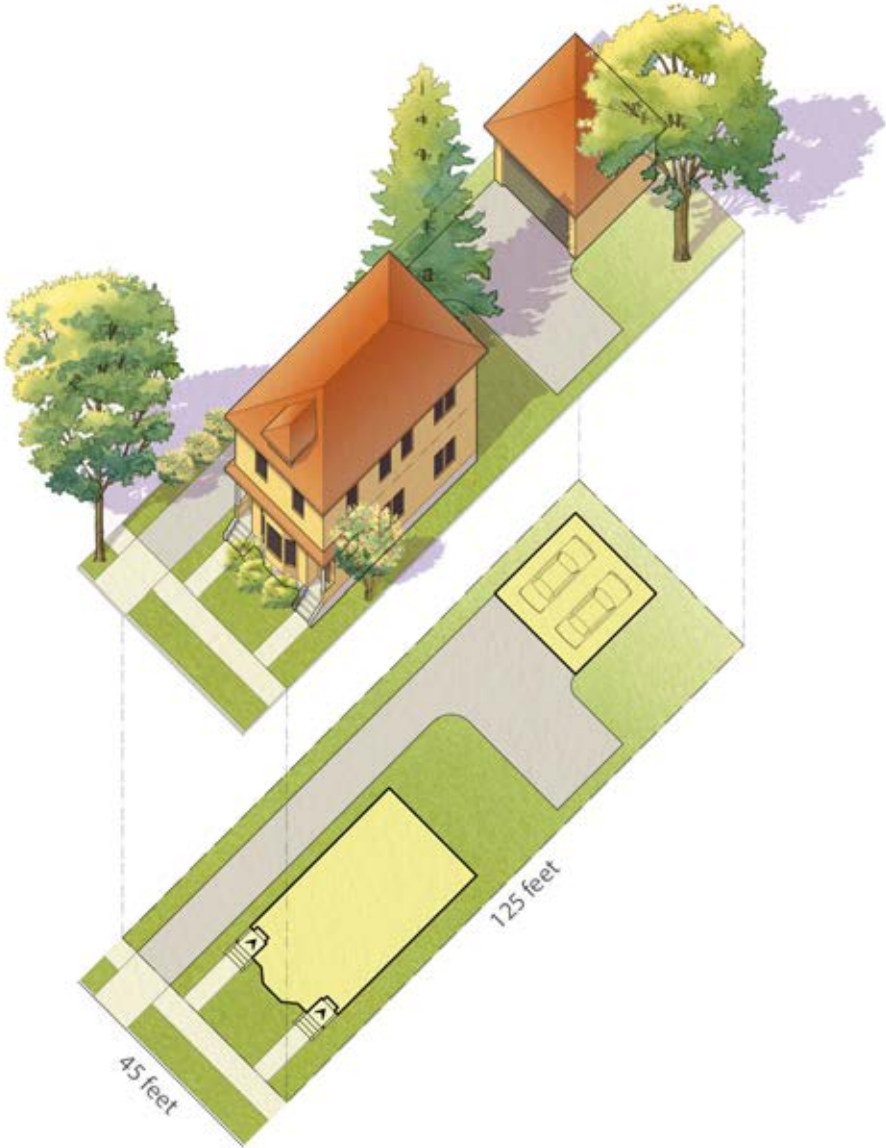
2

### Duplex Side-by-Side

Number of Units	Vehicular Access	
	Front	Rear
Lot Width (ft.)	55' - 75'	40' - 70'
Lot Depth (ft.)	100' - 150'	100' - 150'
<b>Resultant Density (du/acre)</b>		
Without ADU	8 - 16	8 - 22
With ADU	12 - 24	12 - 33



# Duplex Stacked



## Description

A small- to medium-sized building that consists of two stacked dwelling units, one on top of the other, both of which face and are entered from the street.



## Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)

The ADU can be located above the garage building to provide an additional unit separate from the main building.

Duplex Stacked			
Number of Units	Vehicular Access		
	Front	Rear	
2	Lot Width (ft.)	45' - 75'	35' - 70'
	Lot Depth (ft.)	100' - 150'	100' - 150'
	Resultant Density (du/acre)		
	Without ADU	8 - 19	8 - 25
	With ADU	12 - 29	12 - 37



# Cottage Court/ Bungalow Court

## Description

A series of small, detached buildings (typically 5-10) on a lot arranged to define a shared court that is typically perpendicular to the street. The shared court takes the place of a private rear yard and is an important community-enhancing element.

The Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) is not recommended for this type due to the limited number of available off-street parking spaces.

A larger version of this type is known as the **"Pocket Neighborhood"**. This type differs from the Cottage Court primarily by site size. Typically, the Pocket Neighborhood is on a site at least twice as large as the Cottage Court, has larger dwellings and a variety of housing types (Houses, Duplexes, etc.).



### Cottage Court/ Bungalow Court

#### Number of Units

#### Vehicular Access

##### Front

##### Rear

Lot Width (ft.)

100' - 160'

100' - 150'

Lot Depth (ft.)

150'

150'

#### Resultant Density (du/acre)

Without ADU

15 - 19

19 - 22

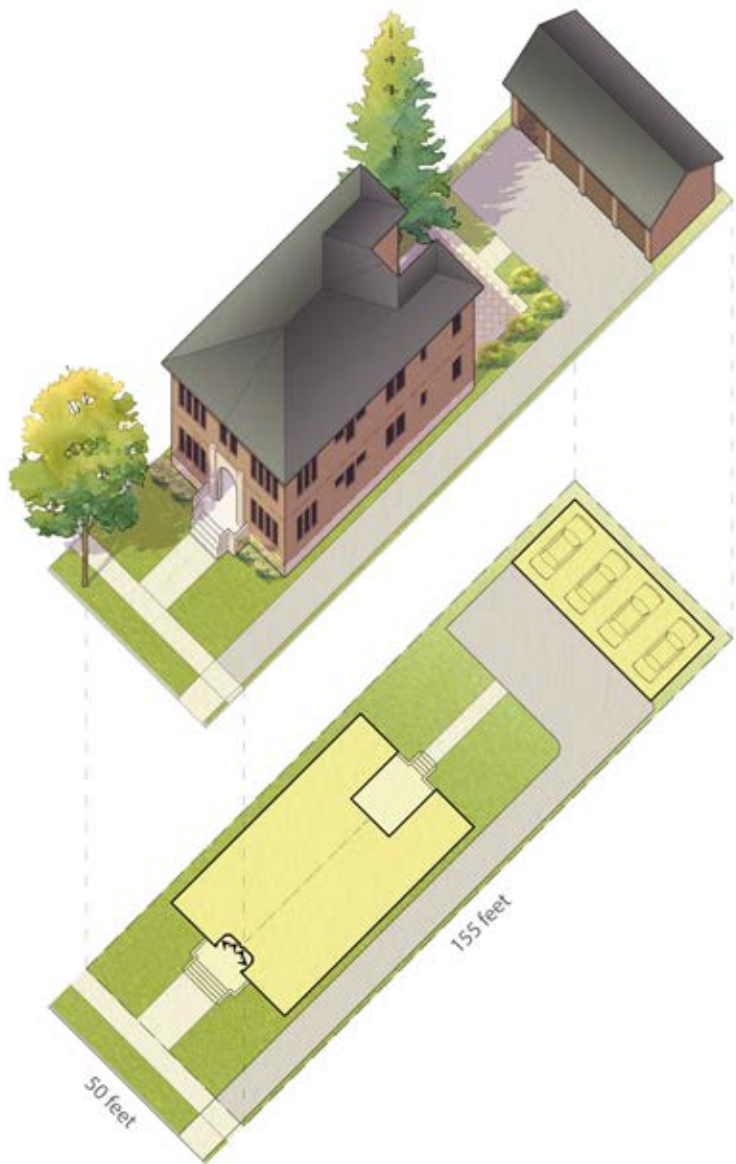
With ADU

n/a

n/a

5-10

# Triplex/ Fourplex



**Description**

A medium-sized building that consists of 3 to 4 units: typically two on the ground floor and up to two above with a shared entry from the street.



Fourplex			
Number of Units	Vehicular Access		
	Front	Rear	
3-4	Lot Width (ft.)	60' - 75'	50' - 65'
	Lot Depth (ft.)	100' - 150'	100' - 150'
	Resultant Density (du/acre)		
	Without ADU	15 - 22	18 - 26
	With ADU	19 - 29	22 - 35

**Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)**

The ADU can be located above the garage building to provide an additional unit separate from the main building.

# Multiplex Small

## Description

A medium-sized building that consists of 6 to 10 side-by-side and/or stacked dwelling units, typically with one shared entry or individual entries along the front and sometimes along one or both sides.

The Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) is not recommended for this type due to the limited number of available off-street parking spaces. In some situations, this type provides 0.5 parking spaces per unit at the lower end of the range of units.



### Multiplex Small (Mansion)

#### Number of Units

#### Vehicular Access

##### Front

##### Rear

Lot Width (ft.)

60' - 75'

50' - 65'

Lot Depth (ft.)

100' - 150'

100' - 150'

#### Resultant Density (du/acre)

Without ADU

39 - 44

49 - 52

With ADU

45 - 61

n/a

6-10

# Multiplex Large



### Description

A medium-to-large-sized structure that consists of 7 to 18 side-by-side and/or stacked dwelling units, typically with one shared entry or individual entries along the front and sometimes along one or both sides. In more intense neighborhoods, this type can be designed to have a third story, or a portion of a third story, depending on the intended physical character of the neighborhood.

The Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) is not recommended for this type due to the limited number of available off-street parking spaces. In some situations, this type provides 0.5 parking spaces per unit at the lower end of the range of units.

Multiplex Large			
Number of Units	Vehicular Access		
	Front	Rear	
7-18	Lot Width (ft.)	96' - 120'	75' - 100'
	Lot Depth (ft.)	100' - 150'	100' - 150'
	Resultant Density (du/acre)		
	Without ADU	32 - 44	41 - 52
	With ADU	n/a	n/a

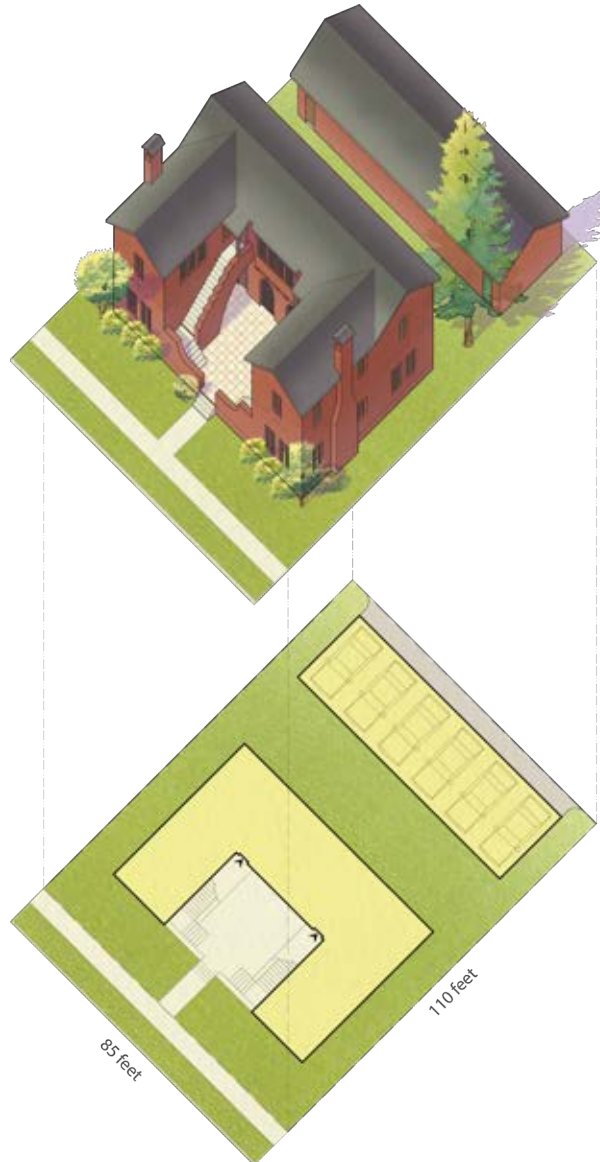


# Courtyard Building

## Description

A medium- to large-sized building or up to three small-to-medium size detached buildings consisting of multiple side-by-side and/or stacked dwelling units arranged around a shared courtyard. Dwellings are accessed from the courtyard. Typically, each unit has its own individual entry or shares a common entry with up to three units. In more intense neighborhoods, this type can be designed to have a third story, or a portion of a third story, depending on the intended physical character of the neighborhood.

The Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) is not recommended for this type due to the limited number of available off-street parking spaces.



## Courtyard Building

### Number of Units

### Vehicular Access

#### Front

#### Rear

Lot Width (ft.)

100' - 135'

85' - 125'

Lot Depth (ft.)

110' - 150'

110' - 150'

### Resultant Density (du/acre)

Without ADU

24 - 43

28 - 46

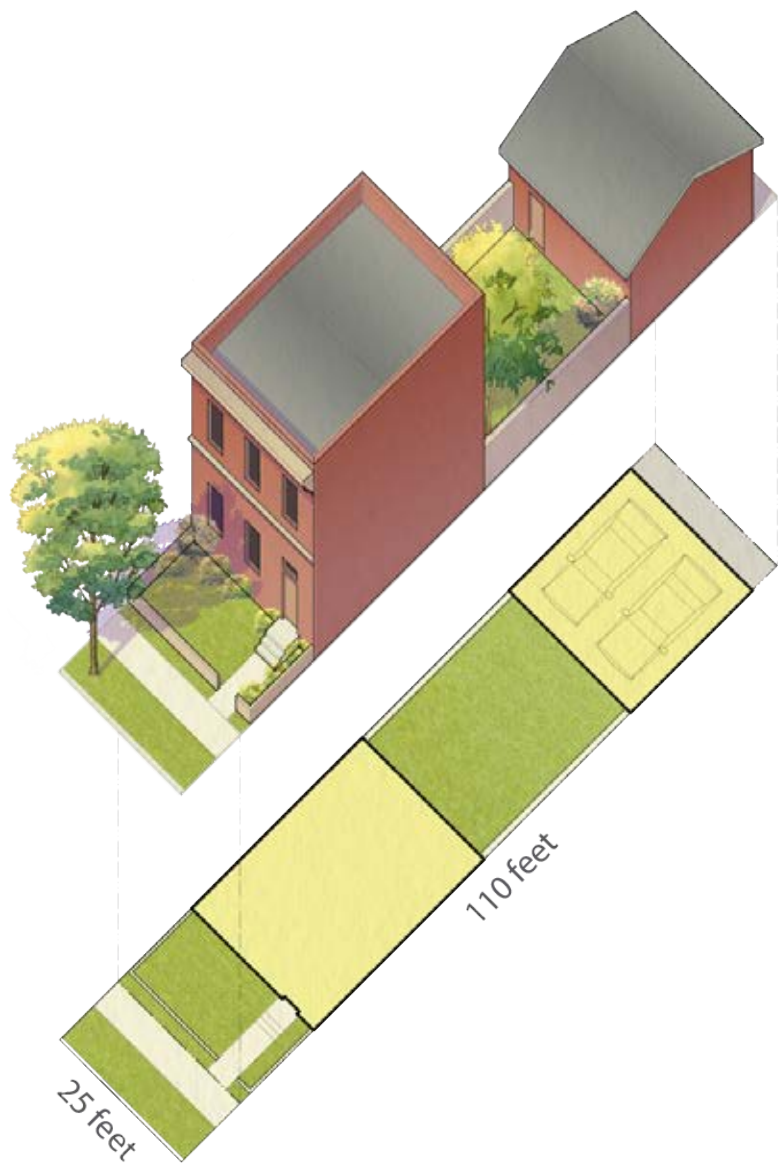
With ADU

n/a

n/a

6-20

# Townhouse



### Description

A small- to medium-sized building with one dwelling that is attached to other Townhouses in an array. Depending on the context, Townhouses can be designed as house-form (two to four attached 2-story units) or block-form (four to six attached units, up to 3 stories tall) depending on its location in a lower- intensity (house-form) or a higher- intensity (block-form) environment.

A more intense version of this type is the “Townhouse Flat” that divides the building vertically into two to three flats.



### Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)

The ADU can be located above the garage building to provide an additional unit separate from the main building.

Townhouse			
Number of Units	Vehicular Access		
	Front	Rear	
1	Lot Width (ft.)	n/a	18' - 25'
	Lot Depth (ft.)	n/a	85' - 120'
	Resultant Density (du/acre)		
	Without ADU	n/a	15 - 28
	With ADU	n/a	29 - 57



# Live/Work

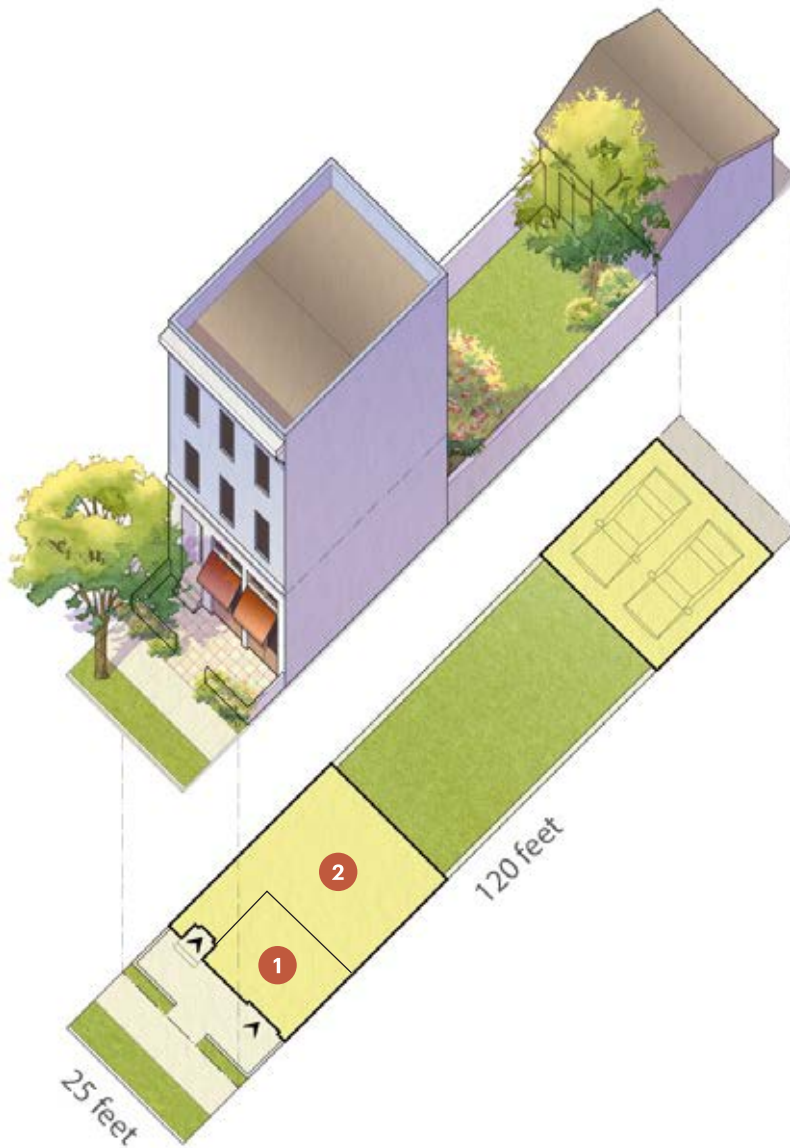
## Description

A small- to medium-sized attached or detached building consisting of one dwelling unit above or behind a flexible ground floor space for residential, service, or retail uses. Both the primary ground-floor flex space and the second unit are owned by one entity.

These types can be arranged to form what looks like a neighborhood main street building.

### Key

- 1 Flex space
- 2 Dwelling unit



## Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)

The ADU can be located above the garage building to provide an additional unit separate from the main building.

1

Live/Work			
Number of Units	Vehicular Access		
	Front	Rear	
1	Lot Width (ft.)	n/a	18' - 25'
	Lot Depth (ft.)	n/a	85' - 120'
	Resultant Density (du/acre)		
	Without ADU	n/a	145 - 28
	With ADU	n/a	29 - 57



## 2.6 Missing Middle Housing in Santa Rosa



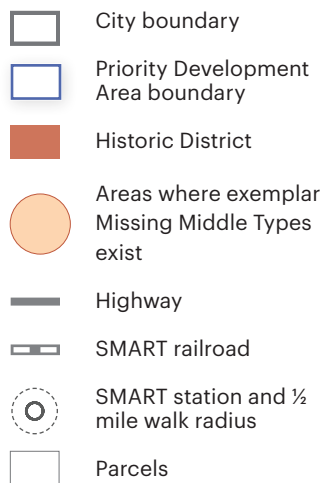
**Figure 2.13** Locations of specific Missing Middle Housing found in the City of Santa Rosa.

### Local Examples

Like most cities built before the 1940's, Santa Rosa includes many examples of Missing Middle types, found primarily in neighborhoods adjacent to Downtown. Before the widespread adoption of automobiles, housing needed to be located close to areas where jobs were concentrated, since long commutes were inconvenient or infeasible. In many US cities, including Santa Rosa, Missing Middle Housing (MMH) was built near

commercial and industrial areas so that employees could have access to housing in close proximity to their place of work. Figure 2.12 shows the general location of MMH types in Santa Rosa. Other examples of multi-family or medium-density housing exist in Santa Rosa outside these areas; however, these examples do not meet the criteria for MMH as identified in previous sections in this chapter.

**Figure 2.14** Missing Middle Housing in Santa Rosa.





## How Were These Built?

Most of the examples documented were built before the 1940's when they were allowed by regulations prevalent at that time. Newer projects have had to use other zoning tools and processes because, depending on the specific zoning, none are allowed or, a very limited range of the MMH types is allowed.

## Why Did They Go Missing?

Changes to the zoning code, incentives from the Federal Government to build single-unit homes at the edge of town, and changes to the real estate finance landscape made building the types of buildings that today we call “Missing Middle” either impossible or financially unattractive. Recent shifts in consumer demand, a need for both more housing in general and a greater variety of housing type options, and new ways of thinking about zoning provide an opportunity to bring these MMH types back to Santa Rosa.



### Duplex

*Davis Street*

*2 units, resultant density: 22 du/acre*

*Existing NMU zoning enables this MMH type*



### Fourplex

*Davis Street*

*4 units, resultant density: 50 du/acre*

*Existing NMU-H zoning enables this MMH type*



### Cottage Court

*Mill Street*

*5 units, resultant density: 23 du/acre*

*Existing R2-PD-0225-H zoning does not enable this type*



### Multiplex Small

*B Street*

*5 units, resultant density: 29 du/acre*

*Existing R-3-18-H zoning does not enable this type*



### Multiplex Large

*B Street*

*12 units, resultant density: 50 du/acre*

*Existing CMU-DSA-H zoning enables this type*



### Courtyard Building

*8th Street*

*14 units, resultant density: 70 du/acre*

*Existing R-3-10-H-SA zoning does not enable this type*

## 2.7 "Almost Missing Middle Housing"

### Getting it Right

Missing Middle Housing is more than just a number of units fitted into a house-scale building form. Where Missing Middle Housing is located and how Missing Middle Housing is oriented to public streets is critical for creating and supporting walkable neighborhoods with a mix of incomes and housing choices. Getting public realm design details right is critical for making neighborhoods walkable and for encouraging community support for new mixed-income development. Missing Middle buildings with high-quality frontages and house-scale building form and architectural details contribute positively to a neighborhood's public realm, and compliment high-quality, pedestrian-oriented street and sidewalk design.



**Figure 2.15** For explanation on characteristics of a MMH type refer to Section 2.2: Building Types for Missing Middle Housing



### Characteristics

- 2 units
- 2 stories, 50% lot coverage
- Ground floor with no street-facing windows
- Frontage dominated by parking, front driveway does not add to public realm

### Not Quite Right

The examples on this and the facing page provide needed housing and at first glance may seem to fit some criteria for Missing Middle Housing, but while these buildings are generally house-scale, or close to house-scale, there are other qualities of Missing Middle Housing that are missing:

- Location of parking at the front of the lot and lack of pedestrian frontages mean that they do not support the type of walkable contexts where Missing Middle Housing is most effective;
- Lack of easily identifiable entrances, street-facing windows, and/or frontages such as porches or stoops mean that they may not be contextually appropriate in Santa Rosa neighborhoods where those types of



Criteria of MMH	
In a Walkable Context	✗
Multiple Units	✓
House-Form Building	✓
Pedestrian Building Frontage	✗
Parking behind Front Facade	✗

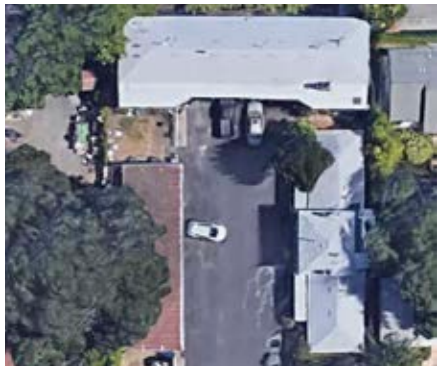
- building details constitute an important element of the physical character, and
- Lack of diversity of building types on a block creates clusters of the same type. Missing Middle Housing works most effectively when a variety of housing types are mixed along a block.

It is important that Missing Middle types demonstrate good design so that they can be perceived as benefiting the architectural quality of a neighborhood. While much of this document describes what to do to create Missing Middle Housing, the following examples show some features to avoid when designing Missing Middle Housing.



**Characteristics**

- 6 units
- 2 stories, 40% lot coverage
- No ground floor frontage articulation
- Street frontage dominated by parking, that eliminates any shared space



Criteria of MMH	
In a Walkable Context	✓
Multiple Units	✓
House-Form Building	✓
Pedestrian Building Frontage	✗
Parking behind Front Facade	✗



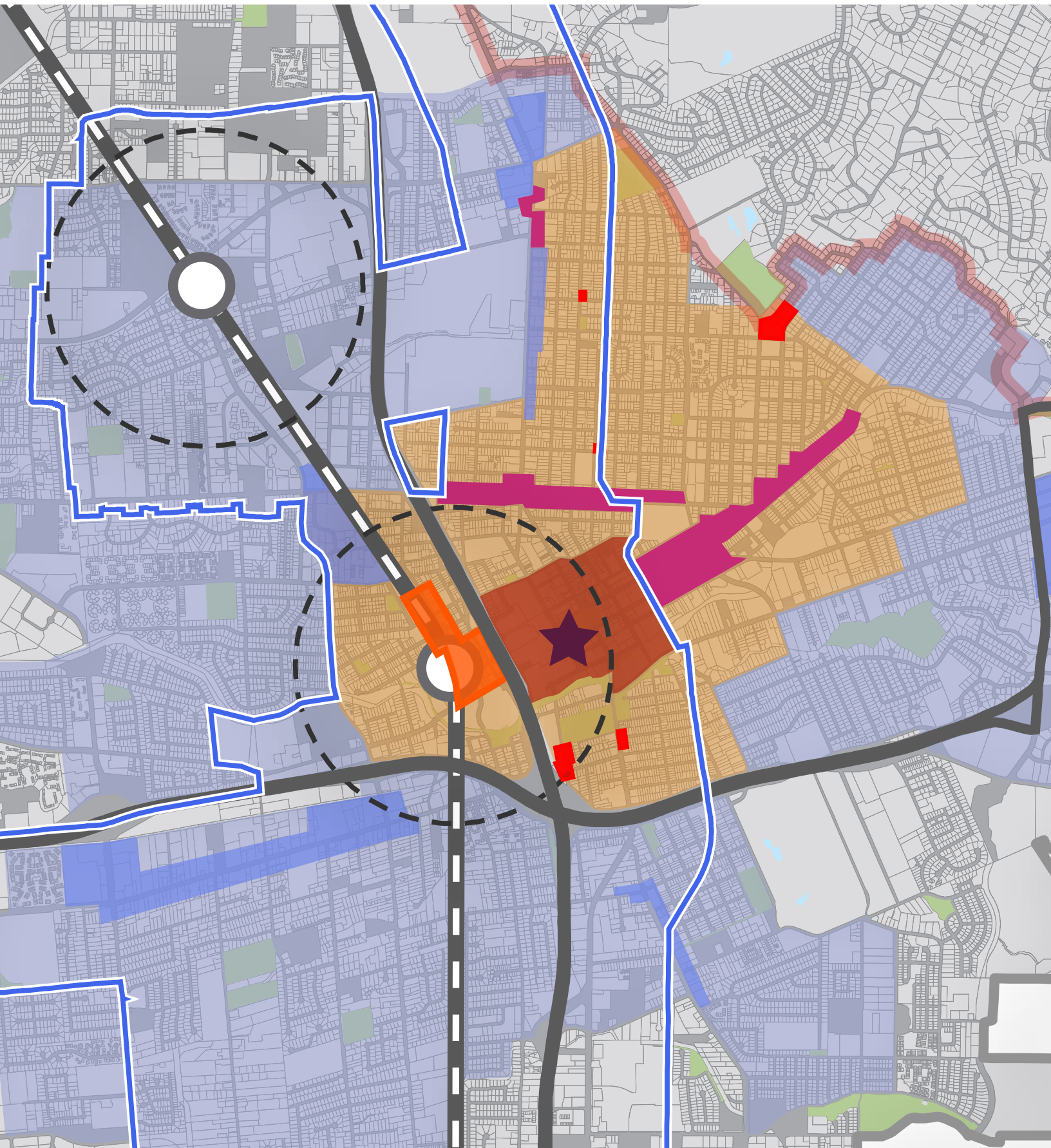
**Characteristics**

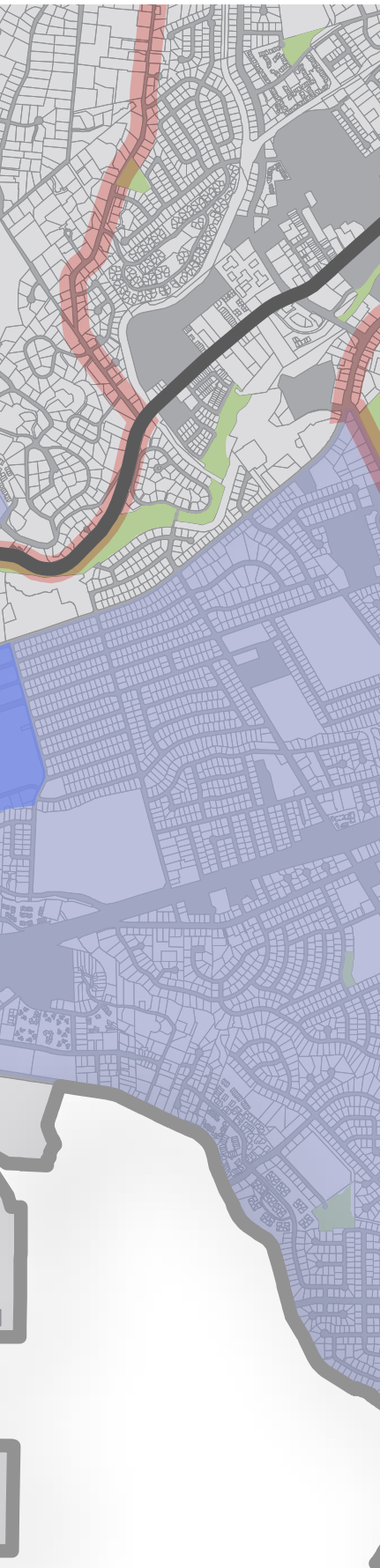
- Limited pedestrian access
- Driveway location does not create pedestrian-friendly public realm
- Frontage dominated by parking



Criteria of MMH	
In a Walkable Context	✗
Multiple Units	✓
House-Form Building	✓
Pedestrian Building Frontage	✗
Parking behind Front Facade	✗







# Existing Conditions

CHAPTER

3

## In this chapter

<b>3.1</b> Santa Rosa's Growth Areas	38
<b>3.2</b> Land Use + Existing Context	40
<b>3.3</b> Lot Characteristics + Number of Residential Units	42
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<b>3.5</b> Established Walkable Centers in Santa Rosa	46
<b>3.6</b> Missing Middle Housing-Ready Neighborhoods	50



## 3.1 Santa Rosa's Growth Areas








### Summary

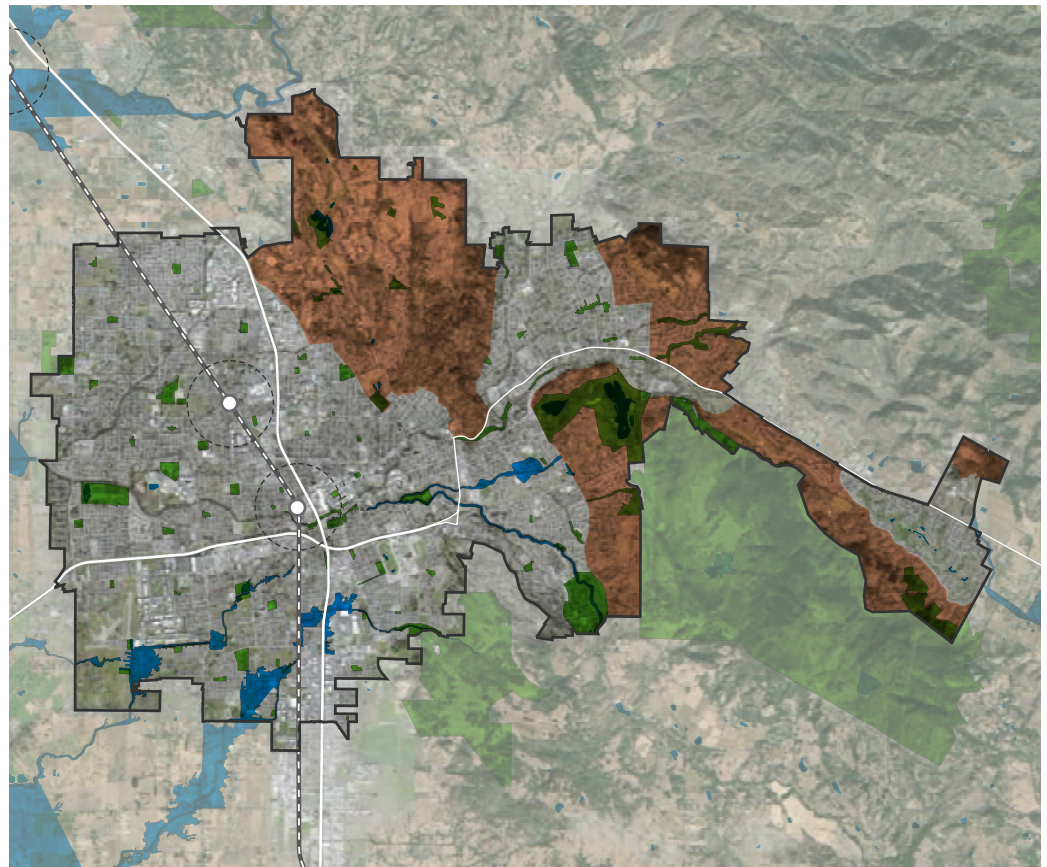
Several factors will determine the areas of future growth and intensification within Santa Rosa's jurisdictional boundaries, including existing development patterns, priority areas for redevelopment, as well as environmental and topographical constraints. Santa Rosa is looking to restrict intensification of residential areas within its Wildland - Urban Interface (WUI), and has created a Priority Development Area (PDA) along its major transportation and transit corridors.

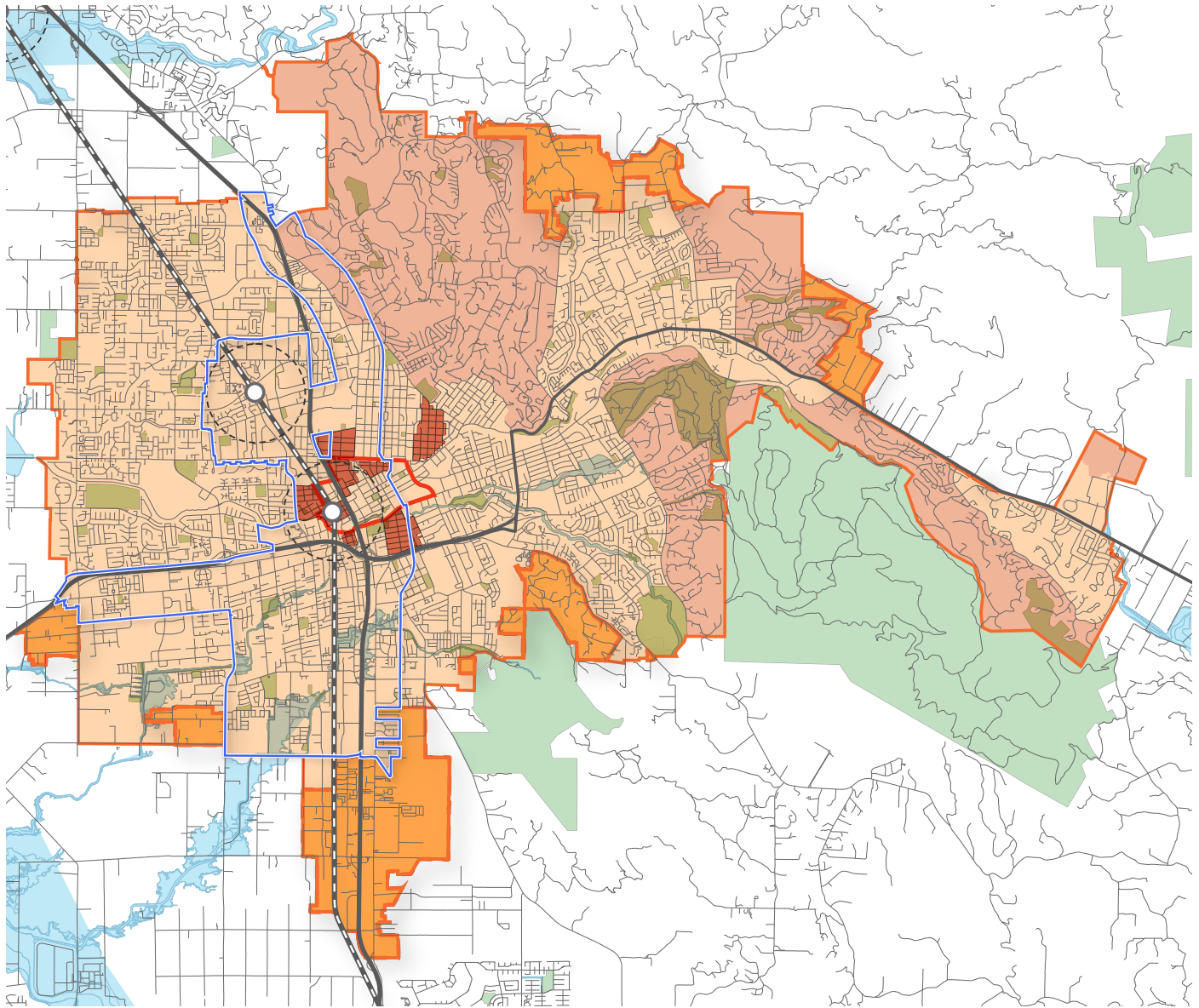
### Existing Context + Environmental Hazards

The map below shows existing urban areas within City limits. Shaped by its geography, parts of Santa Rosa are at increased risk from wildfire and flooding.

**Figure 3.16** Existing urban context and environmental constraints within Santa Rosa.

-  City boundary
-  Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) overlay
-  FEMA Floodplain Overlay
-  Open space/ parks
-  Highway
-  SMART railroad
-  SMART station and 1/2 mile walk radius





## Potential Areas of Growth

Santa Rosa's policies and long-term planning goals indicate that future development will be focused within its Priority Development Area and along existing transportation corridors and nodes. Downtown, downtown-adjacent neighborhoods and SMART Station areas are anticipated to accommodate additional housing, while neighborhoods within environmentally constrained areas, particularly the WUI, will not be prioritized for intensification. There are also several areas away from the City core that may also see urban growth. Opportunities for Missing Middle Housing can exist on infill sites and as part of new development in walkable areas.

**Figure 3.17** Urban context and areas of potential growth



## 3.2 Land Use + Existing Context

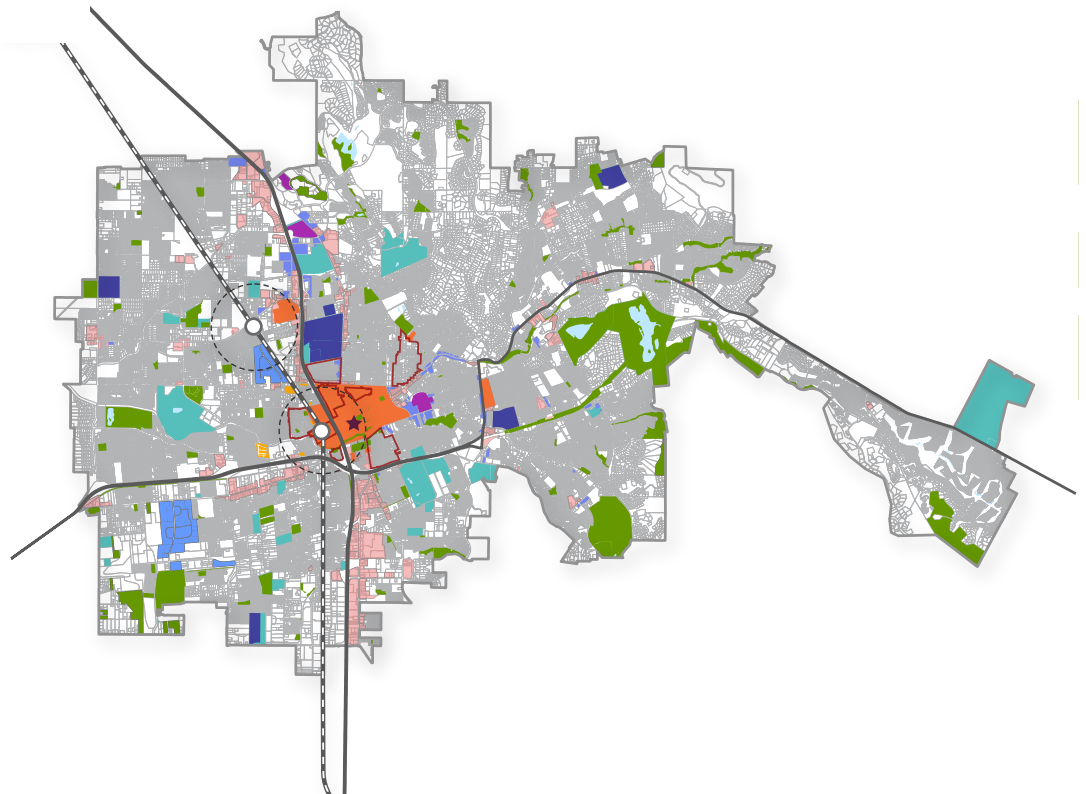
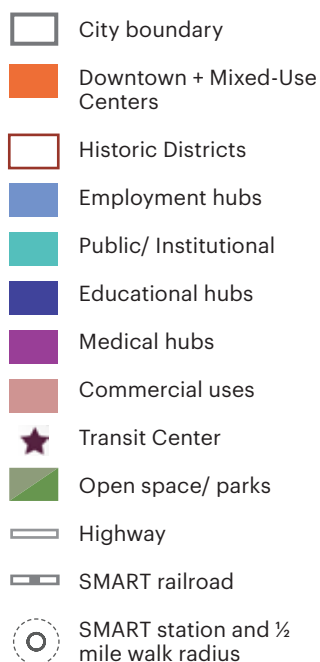
### Summary

To determine areas within Santa Rosa where Missing Middle Housing can be effective, the existing context was analyzed both in terms of the distribution of land uses across the City as allowed by the General Plan; as well as existing community destinations including employment areas, transit hubs, open spaces, and civic and institutional uses. These community destinations are typically mixed-use centers, or have the potential to become one. Mixed-use centers in walkable locations are important in ensuring the success of Missing Middle Housing by providing services and amenities.

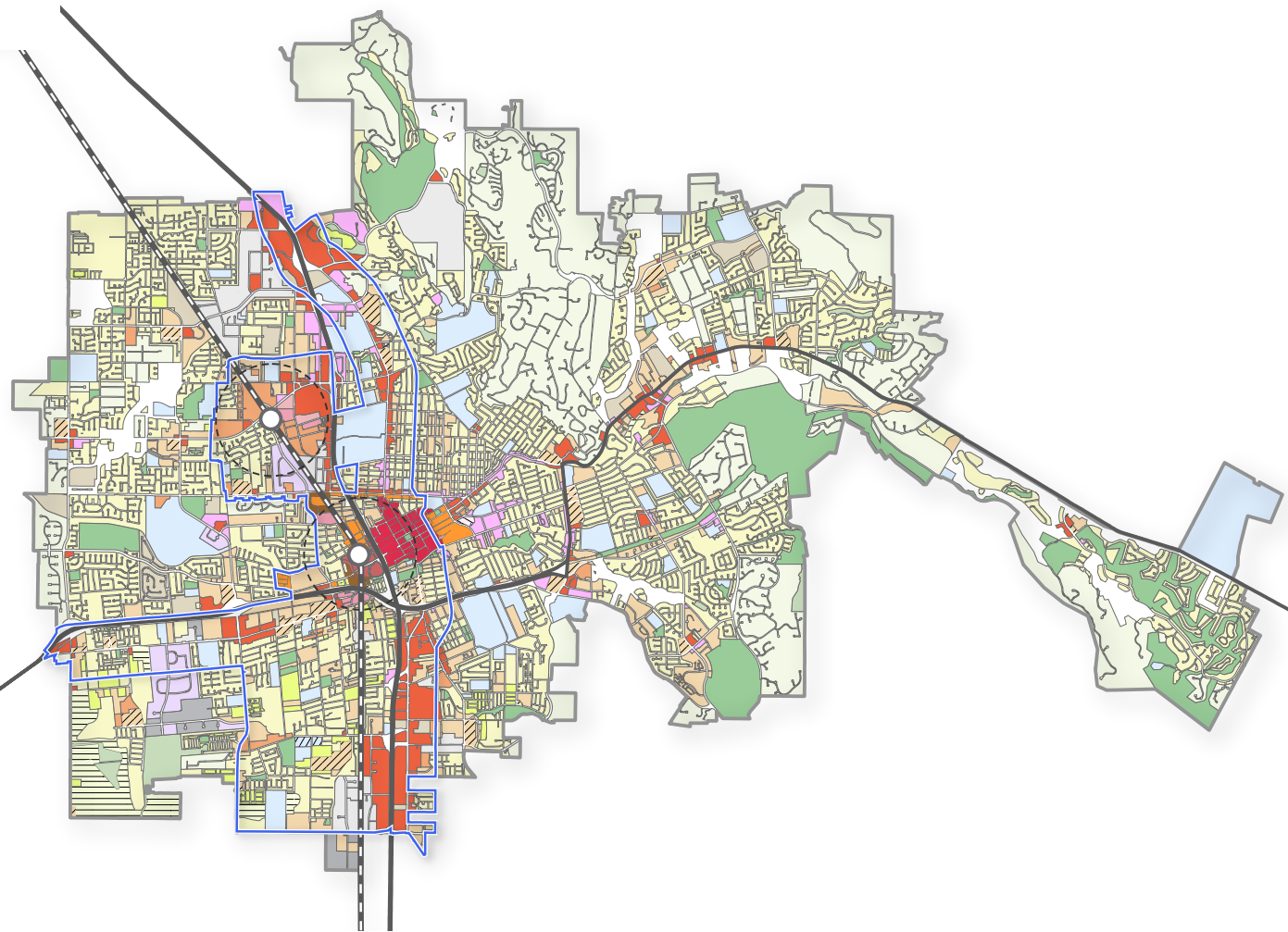
### City Context + Community Destinations

The map below shows a range of community destinations within Santa Rosa. These include Downtown, other mixed-use centers, transit nodes and open spaces. They also include key employment, institutional and commercial areas of the city.

**Figure 3.18** *Destinations, connectivity and transit centers in Santa Rosa.*





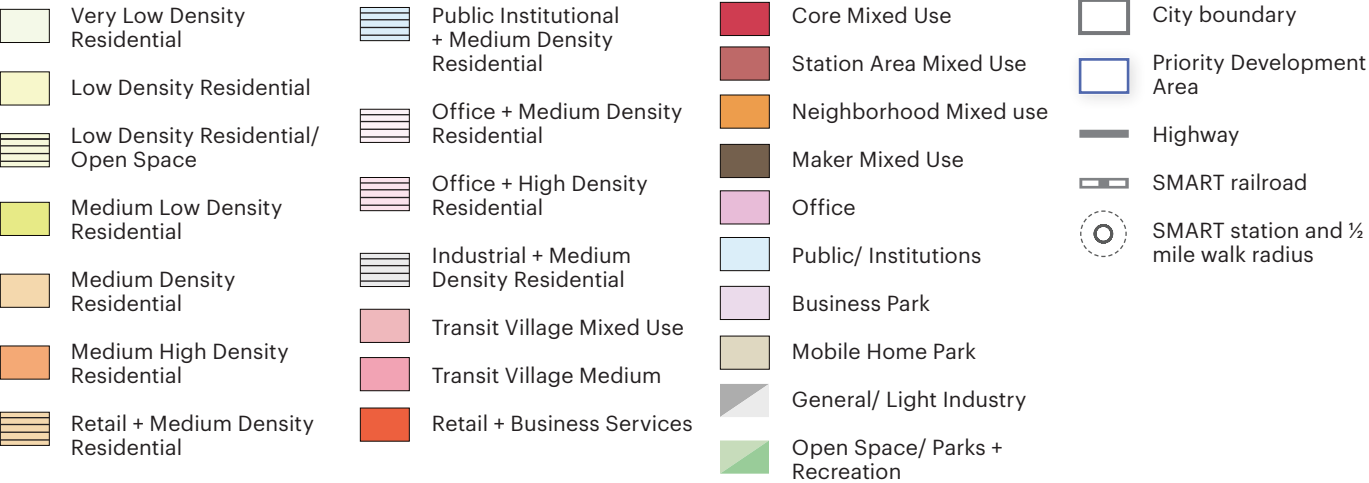


Land Use Map

The distribution of allowed land uses indicate areas where Missing Middle Housing is currently supported. Typically, low-density residential neighborhoods do not offer the right context for MMH. Medium-density residential and mixed-use areas are more supportive of Missing Middle types.

Figure 3.19 Land uses in Santa Rosa as established by the General Plan.

General Plan Land Uses





## 3.3 Lot Characteristics + Number of Residential Units

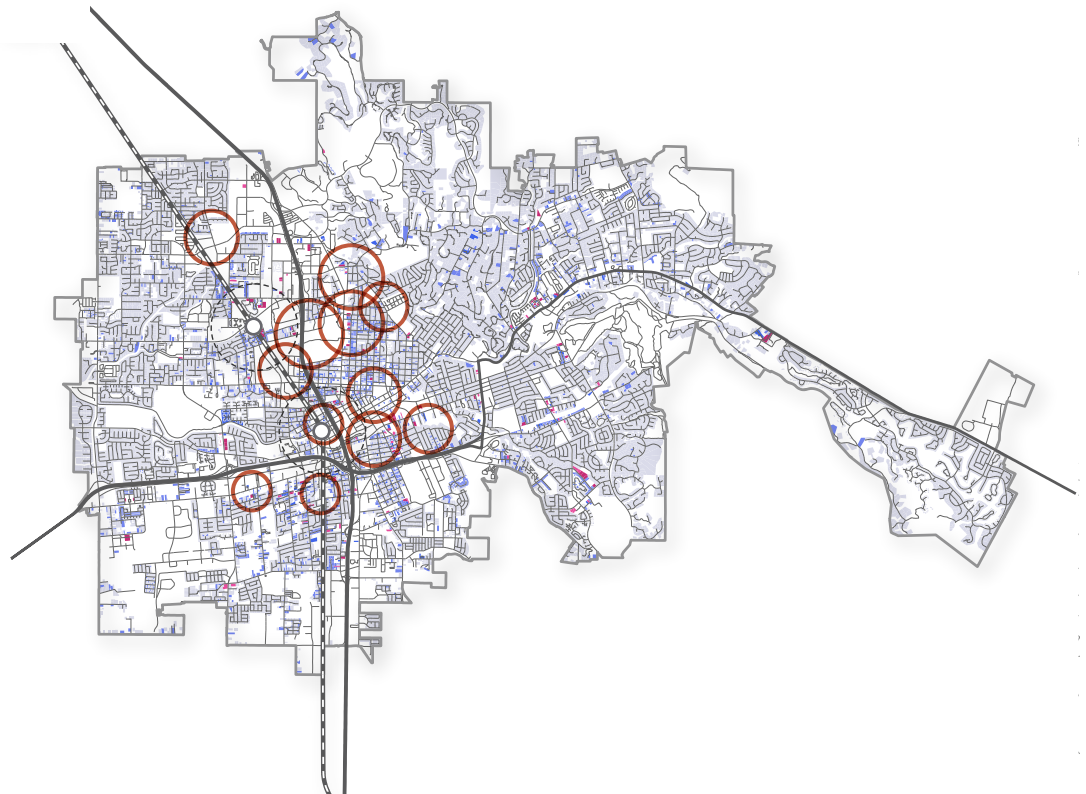
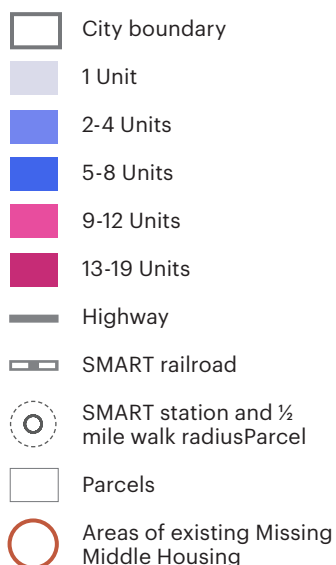
### Summary

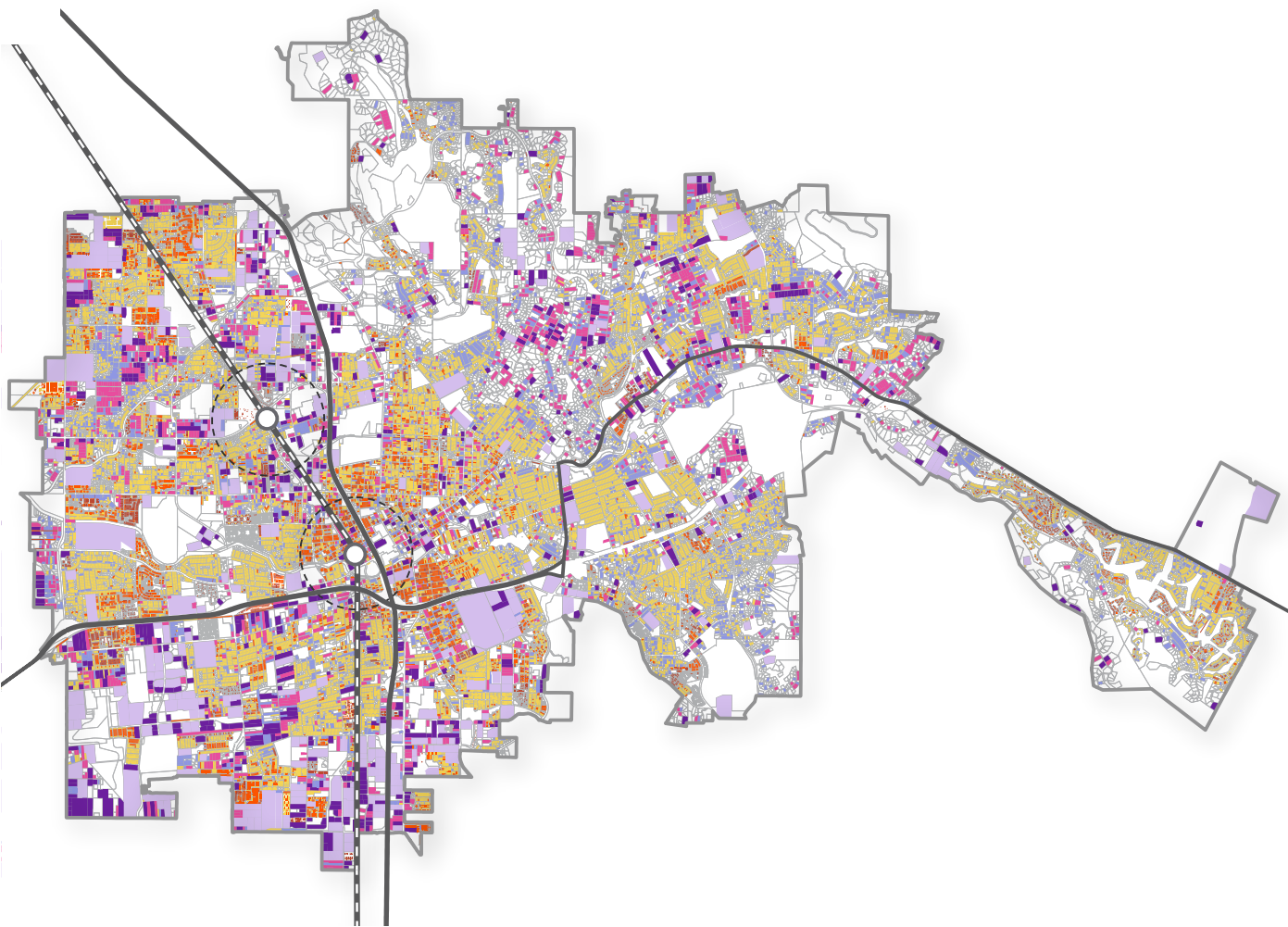
To understand lot characteristics in Santa Rosa, the number of existing units per lot were mapped to identify where Missing Middle types currently exist. Missing Middle types range from 2 to 19 units per lot, so parcels with units higher than that number were excluded from the mapping. Also part of this analysis was mapping existing lot widths city-wide. Since different Missing Middle types have specific lot width requirements, this analysis provides an understanding of the range of Missing Middle types that could be physically accommodated on existing lots.

### Existing Residential Units Per Lot

The map below shows the distribution of units per lot across Santa Rosa. The vast majority have single units, with a modest distribution of higher-intensity parcels with multiple units. Note that parcels with more than 19 units per lot are not shown.

**Figure 3.20** Number of residential units per lot.





Lot Width Map

Missing Middle building types require minimum lot sizes to work effectively. In this, lot width is typically the more limiting factor. The map above shows the range of lot widths across Santa Rosa, and the corresponding Missing Middle types are indicated in the legend below. Note that while smaller Missing Middle types such as duplexes can be built on larger lots, typically this would not happen. Instead, developers and property owners will choose a more intense type that maximizes the development potential of the lot.

Key   Categories	Accommodates MMH Types	Key   Categories	Accommodates MMH Types	
25'-39'	Townhouse, Live/Work	75'-99'	Multiplex Large, Courtyard Building, Townhouse, Live/Work	City boundary
40'-49'	Duplex, Townhouse, Live/Work	100'-149'	Cottage Court, Multiplex Large, Courtyard Building, Townhouse, Live/Work	Highway
50'-74'	Duplex, Fourplex, Multiplex Small, Townhouse, Live/Work	150'-250'	Cottage Court, Pocket Neighborhood	SMART railroad
		> 250'	Pocket Neighborhood	SMART station and ½ mile walk radius
				Parcel

## 3.4 Regulatory Context: Zoning + Allowed Heights

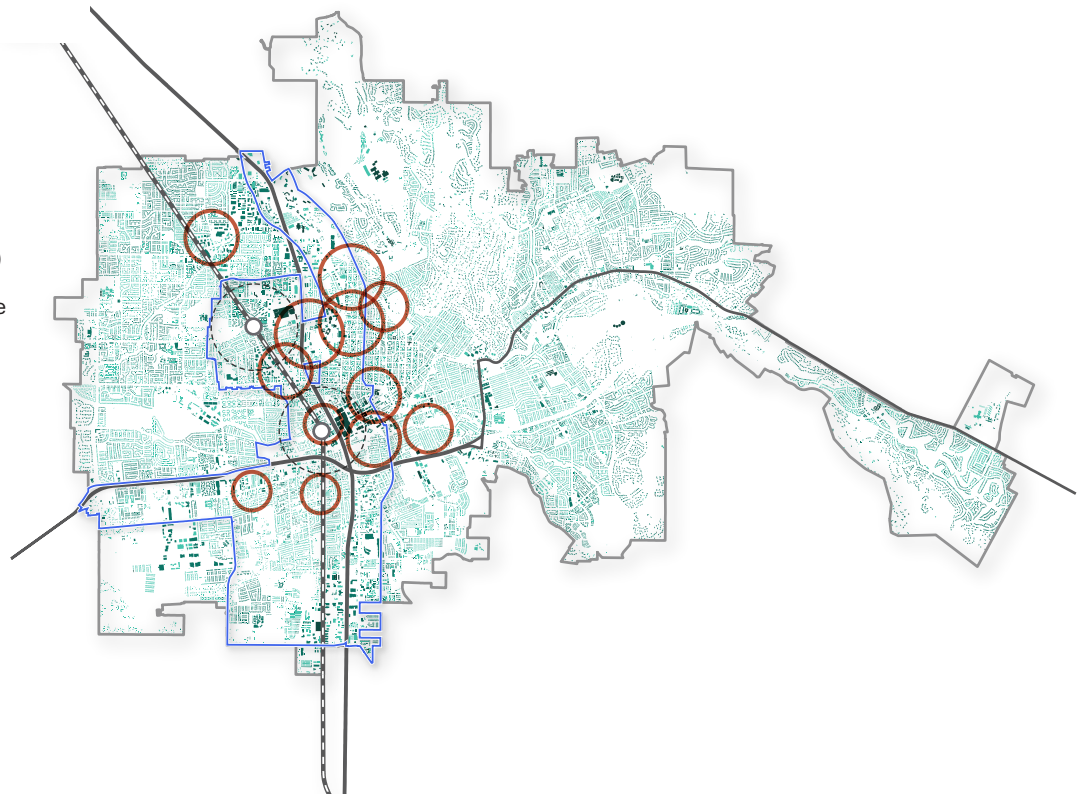
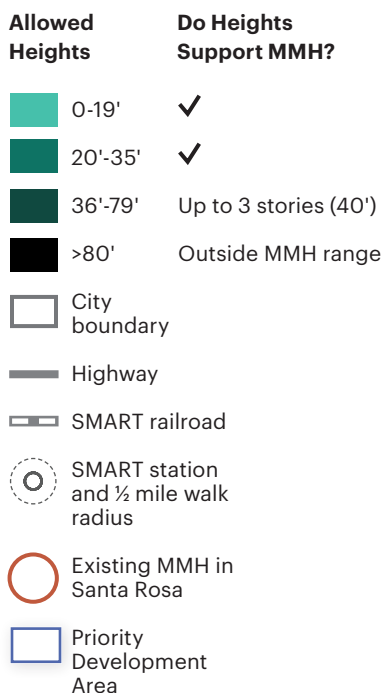
### Summary

Understanding the existing regulatory conditions, specifically zoning and allowed building heights, is key to assessing the viability of Missing Middle Housing types. Missing Middle types are house-scaled and thus typically a maximum of 2.5 stories in height. In terms of zoning, Missing Middle works well in areas permitting multi-family residential as well as supporting retail and services. In Santa Rosa, existing zoning and corresponding building heights were studied to understand the viability of Missing Middle types.

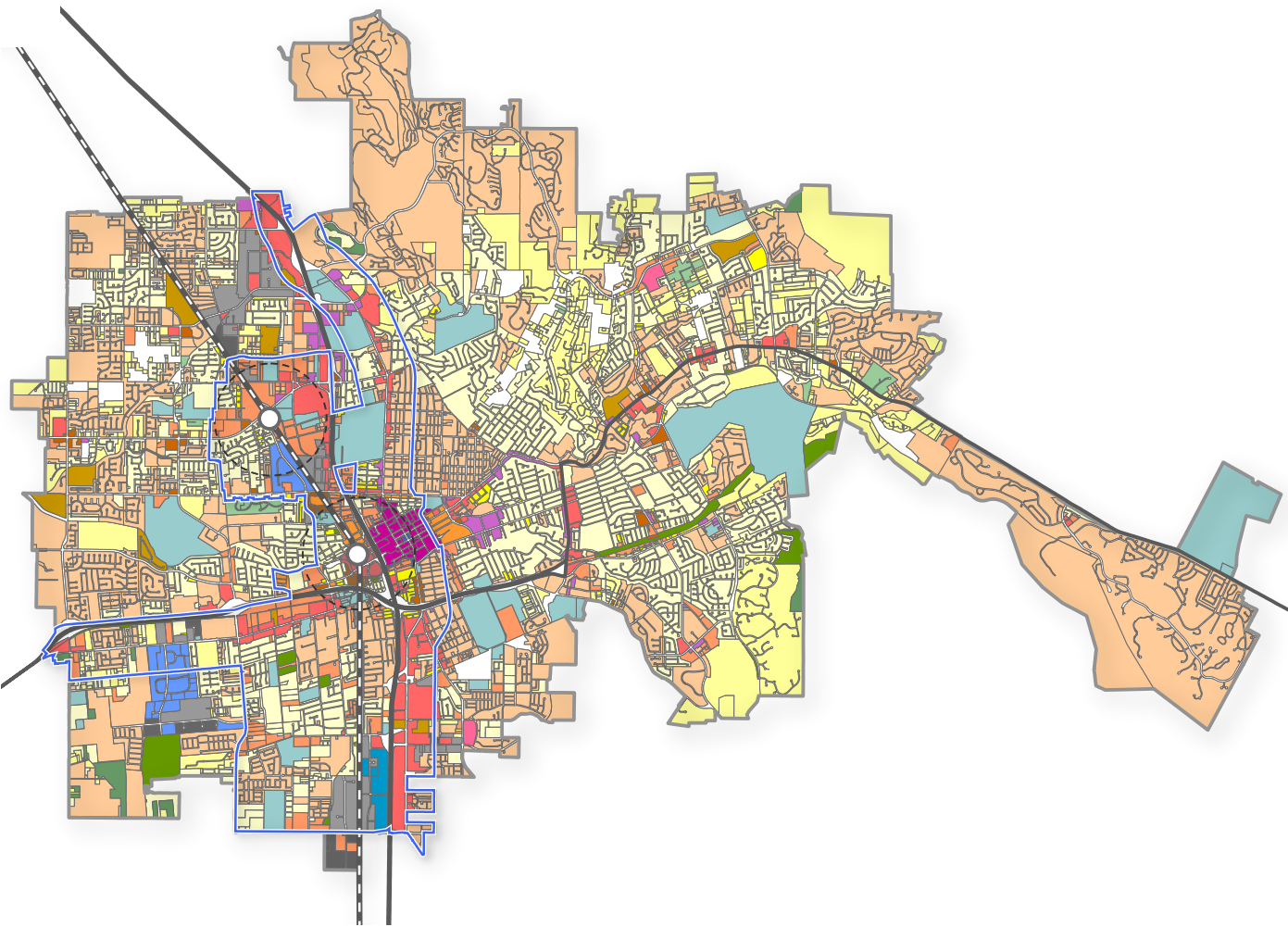
### Allowed Building Heights and Missing Middle

In most of Santa Rosa, allowed heights are supportive of one and two-story structures. In areas where additional heights are allowed, higher intensity built form (and not Missing Middle) is anticipated to occur.

**Figure 3.22** Building heights allowed by current zoning and viability of Missing Middle.







Existing Zoning Map

Of the existing zones in Santa Rosa, the lowest intensity residential zones (RR, R-1) are unlikely to support Missing Middle types. Medium-intensity residential zones (R-2, R-3, TV), mixed-use zones and some of the Planned Development areas offer higher potential for Missing Middle Housing.

Figure 3.23 Existing zones in Santa Rosa.

Existing Zones

Rural Residential	Core Mixed Use	Light Industrial	City boundary
R-1	Neighborhood Commercial	Motor Vehicle Sales	Priority Development Area
R-2	General Commercial	Business Park	Highway
R-3	Office Commercial	Combining Districts	SMART railroad
Transit Village (TV-R,TV-MU)	Maker Mixed Use	Mobile Home Park	SMART station and 1/2 mile walk radius
Station Mixed Use	Planned Development	Open Space Recreation	
Neighborhood Mixed Use	Public Institutional	Open Space Conservation	
Community Shopping Center	General Industrial	County	

## 3.5 Established Walkable Centers in Santa Rosa

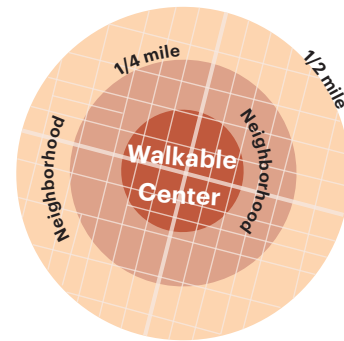
### Established Walkable Centers

Missing Middle Housing works as part of areas that are anchored by Established Walkable Centers that provide amenities such as shopping, dining, services, transit, employment, schools and recreation. For Santa Rosa these can be grouped into three types of walkable centers:

- Downtown (including the Historic Downtown)
- Neighborhood Main Street
- Neighborhood Crossroads

Each type of center is described on the facing page. Other areas that could

support MMH in the future (potential Walkable Neighborhoods and Mixed-Use Centers) are discussed in Section 3.6.



### Q CLOSER LOOK

#### What Is An Established Walkable Center?

As discussed earlier, MMH is best suited for areas that are anchored by **Established Walkable Centers** that provide amenities such as shopping, services, transit, food, and employment. An Established Walkable Center can be either a group or a couple of parcels (such as at a crossroads), or as big as a Main Street or Downtown. The underlying reason is that for MMH to be successful, they need to be proximate to vibrant centers that can deliver social activities, amenities, transit, and entertainment.

The centers are typically well connected to surrounding areas, making them accessible by multiple modes of transportation. Centers are the places

where communities do things together. They can be neighborhood-serving, or places where people from across the city gather to work, shop, learn, play, and celebrate.

Overall, they serve as walkable, bikeable, or "park-once" destinations where community members can meet multiple daily needs in a single trip. When thriving, they are nodes of activity that enliven a neighborhood.

Around the center, 1/4 and 1/2 mile radii correspond to 5 and 10 minute walking distances. These "walksheds" are considered especially good locations for MMH.





## Downtown

A citywide destination for retail, dining options, services, entertainment and recreation that includes significant housing and office that use this center as their amenity.



## Neighborhood Main Street

A neighborhood destination for retail, food uses, and services that is the most common type of center and amenity for adjacent neighborhoods.

- Fourth Street
- College Avenue
- Healdsburg Avenue
- Mendocino Drive



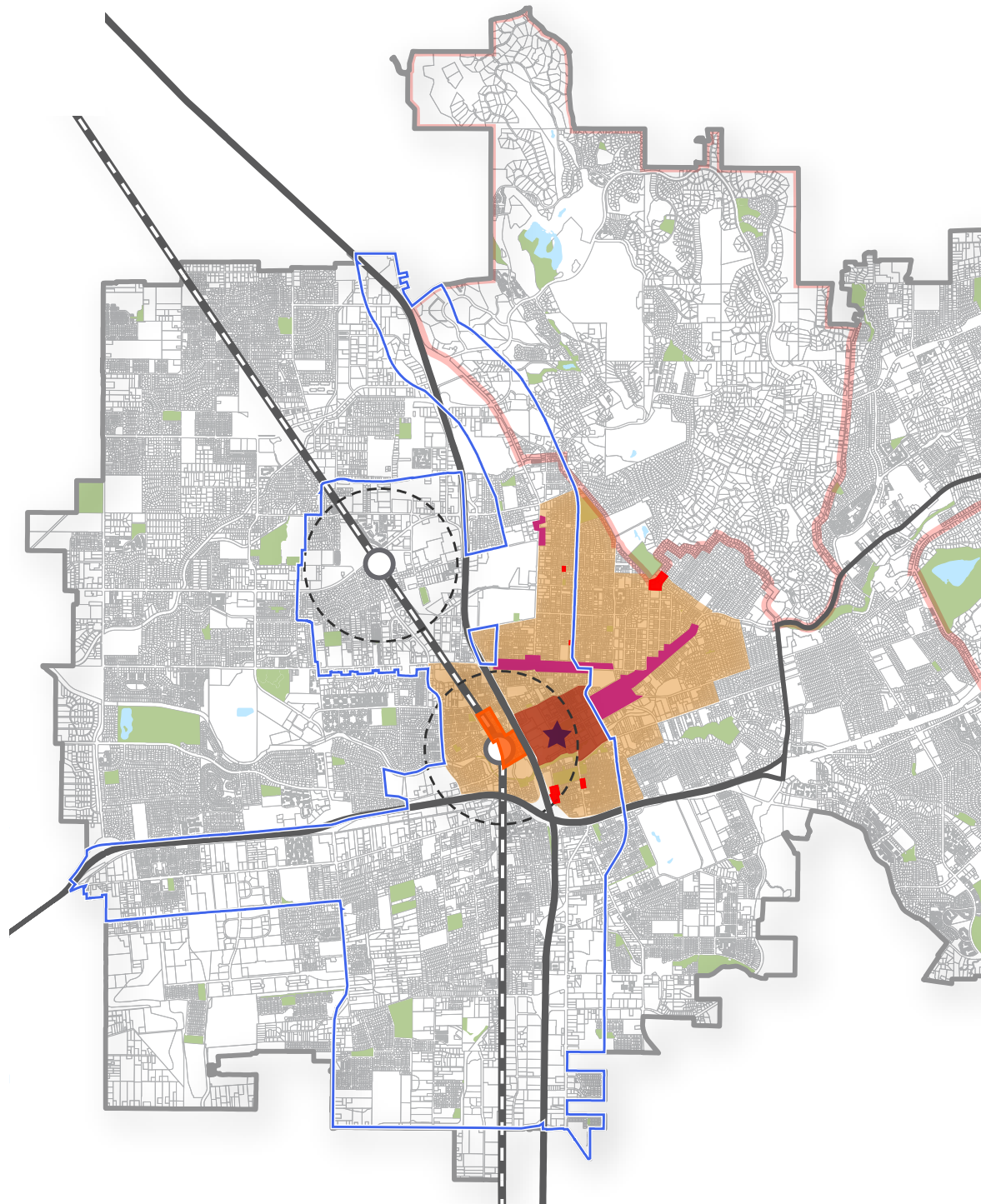
## Neighborhood Crossroads

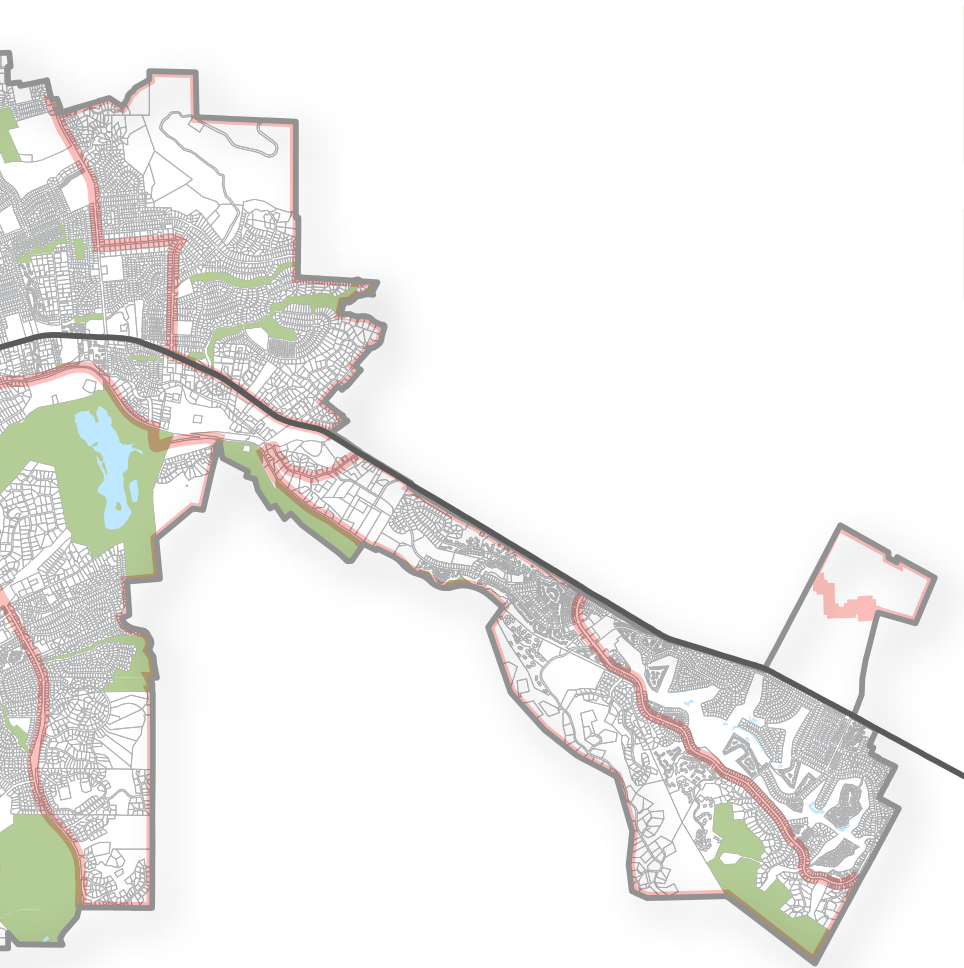
A commercial or mixed-use node at the intersection of two important streets that provides convenient services to the surrounding residential neighborhoods in which they are embedded, allowing neighbors to walk or bike there. Typically it is smaller and less intense than a Neighborhood Main Street.

- Benton Street + Orchard Street
- Pacific Avenue + McDonald Avenue
- S A Street + Sebastopol Avenue
- Wheeler Street + Santa Rosa Avenue

### Walkable Environments within Santa Rosa

The map below shows existing Walkable Neighborhoods in Santa Rosa, identified through the analysis of existing street and block patterns, the diversity of uses, and access to transit and amenities, and the walking distance from an Established Walkable Center. The Established Walkable Centers are typically higher or medium-intensity, mixed-use areas providing a range of amenities and services for the surrounding Walkable Neighborhoods.





**Figure 3.24** Established Walkable Environments in Santa Rosa.

**Established Walkable Centers + Walkable Neighborhoods**

- Downtown/ Historic Downtown
- Neighborhood Main Street
- Neighborhood Crossroads
- Walkable Neighborhood (5-minute walking distance from a Walkable Center)

**Amenities + Other**

- Park/ Open space/ Water
- Parcel
- City boundary
- Priority Development Area
- Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) boundary
- Highway
- SMART railroad
- SMART station and 1/2 mile walk radius



## 3.6 Missing Middle Housing-Ready Neighborhoods

### Q CLOSER LOOK

#### What Does "MMH-Ready" Mean?

*Like most mature cities, Santa Rosa's walkable urban core and traditional neighborhood areas are surrounded by newer neighborhoods characterized by a pattern of development that is more oriented towards automobile use.*

*In many instances, these neighborhoods share many of the same walkable characteristics as the core and traditional neighborhoods to which they are adjacent, but certain walkable elements may be missing or may suffer from under-investment. It is these neighborhoods, where incremental changes can improve walkability, that are "Missing Middle Housing-Ready (MMH-Ready)".*

#### Beyond the Traditional Neighborhood Pattern

Missing Middle Housing types are most successful when located in an existing or newly built walkable context. Buyers and renters of these housing types are looking for walkability and are willing to make trade-offs on other housing features, such as unit size. For most cities, including Santa Rosa, the most walkable neighborhoods are those located near Downtown in the city's historic core.

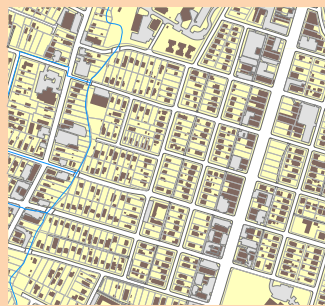
Missing Middle types can be built in an auto-oriented context, but they will not attract the same kind of buyer or renter, will not deliver more compact, sustainable patterns of development, and will not achieve the same returns or rents for developers. The higher the

walkability of a project context, the smaller the units can be, and the less off-street parking is needed, which can improve the attractiveness of Missing Middle types for developers.

#### What Are the Characteristics of a MMH-Ready Neighborhood?

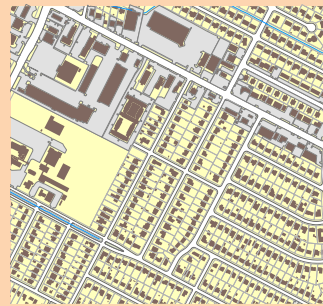
■ **Smaller block sizes** that allow for better street network connectivity. Smaller block patterns encourage walkability by providing more route choices and reducing the walking distance to get between destinations. In general, dead-end streets, cul-de-sacs, and looping streets diminish an area's walkability,

#### Range of environments based on walkability



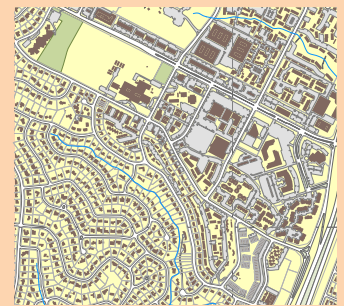
##### **Ideal for MMH** Walkable

- Small block lengths
- Well-connected street network
- Nearby shops and restaurants on a local Main Street



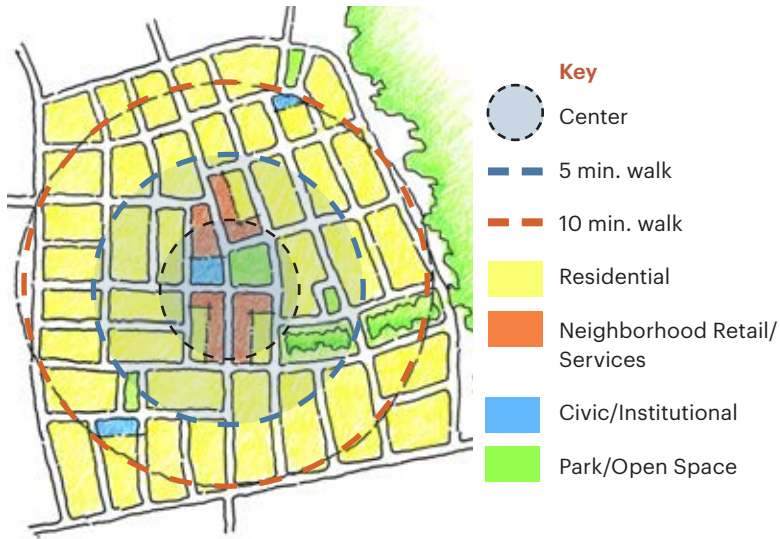
##### **Appropriate for MMH** "MMH-Ready"

- Well-connected street network
- Mix of block lengths to support Missing Middle Housing types and enable redevelopment of adjacent commercial parcels into walkable centers.

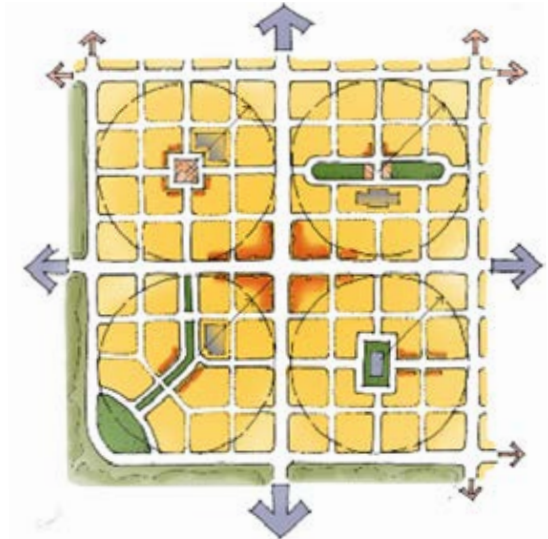


##### **Not Appropriate for MMH** Automobile-Oriented

- Minimally-connected
- Frequent cul-de-sacs
- Commercial areas accessible primarily via higher-speed roadways not supportive of Missing Middle Housing.



**Figure 3.25** Proximity to existing or future neighborhood retail, open space, and civic buildings helps to support walkable, MMH-Ready neighborhoods.



**Figure 3.26** How multiple walkable neighborhoods form a walkable environment around the intersection of two major roadways.

while through-streets tend to increase walkability.

- **Access to bicycle routes** to provide an alternative to driving for longer-distance destinations. Safe, convenient, and well-connected bicycle facilities provide transportation options for destinations that are too far away for walking.

- **Accessible to mixed-use areas** that make it possible to satisfy most daily needs — living, working, playing, shopping, dining, worshiping, and socializing — without needing to leave the neighborhood. While commuting for work, school, and special trips may still require transit or a car, most of the daily needs should be accessible within a ten-minute walk or ½ mile from housing.

- **Appropriate zoning** that allows for a variety of housing types and encourages compact development to support walkability.

- **Small to medium lot sizes** that promote house-scale development and disincentivize large tracts of identical housing types, where repetition of

building forms leads to a diminished public realm.

### Support for MMH-Ready Neighborhoods

To support Missing Middle Housing outside of traditional neighborhoods adjacent to and around Downtown where walkability is high, Santa Rosa should consider making investments in MMH-Ready Neighborhoods to make it more convenient for people to walk and bike from their homes to everyday destinations such as school, work, shopping, and recreation, if they choose to do so. A combination of infrastructure improvements and new or improved amenities can help to signal that MMH-Ready Neighborhoods are available for new housing choices.

### Q CLOSER LOOK

#### Examples of MMH-Ready Neighborhoods

- Proctor Terrace
- Monroe
- Lincoln Manor Association
- Roseland
- South Park
- Montgomery Village



## Creating A New Walkable Center for MMH-Ready Neighborhoods

An key component of Walkable Neighborhoods is a destination to which to walk. Walkable Centers provide that destination by creating space for neighborhood-serving retail, services, institutional and public uses in a pedestrian-oriented environment. These places already exist in and near Santa Rosa's traditional neighborhoods (see Established Walkable Centers in Santa Rosa, Section 3.5). However, in areas outside of the City core, these centers are largely missing, but could evolve with focused infill and revitalization efforts such

as transforming existing underperforming commercial centers and strip malls. In new growth areas or for large-scale redevelopment, Walkable Centers should be required.

New or redeveloped Walkable Centers have the potential to transition an area from an auto-oriented pattern of development to a more walkable environment that can transform nearby areas into MMH-Ready neighborhoods.



### Key Elements of A Walkable Center

An example from Austin, TX shows the transformation of a declining shopping center. While the scale of development in Santa Rosa would likely be different, the following characteristics still apply:

- **Mixed-use** to satisfy the conditions of a vibrant active node that offers a variety of choices, from dining, entertainment, housing and amenities.
- **Pedestrian oriented** and active public spaces to create a more welcoming and safe environment for residents, employees, customers, and visitors.
- **Multi-modal access** that allows people living nearby to access the Walkable Center by biking, walking, or driving.
- **Transition areas** to ensure compatibility with adjacent residential neighborhoods.



## Places in Santa Rosa to Consider for New Walkable Centers

- College Avenue + N Dutton Avenue
- W College Avenue + Marlow Road
- Guerneville Road + Marlow Road
- Mendocino Avenue + Steele Lane
- Sonoma Avenue + Farmers Lane
- Sebastopol Road + Stony Point Road
- Along Sebastopol Road between Stony Point Road and Dutton Avenue



**Figure 3.27** Redevelopment of vacant underutilized parcels between College Ave and W 9th Street could be the catalyst for a new Walkable Center surrounded by Missing Middle neighborhoods.



1

**Mixed-use Center  
as the Destination**



2

**Pedestrian Oriented  
Physical Character**



3

**Multi-modal Access**



4

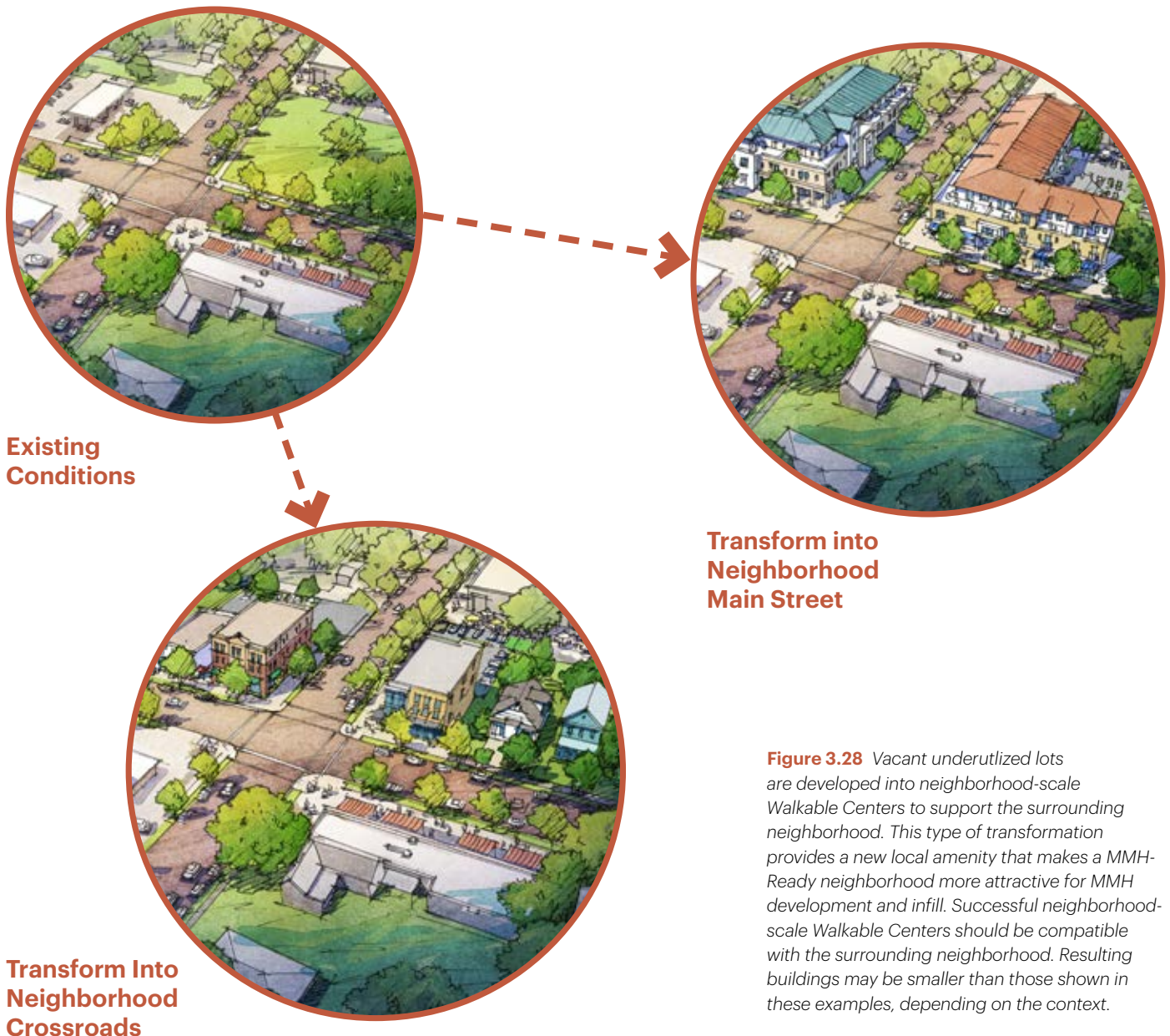
**House-scale  
Transitions to Adjacent  
Neighborhoods**

## One-Size Doesn't Fit All

A Walkable Center is not limited to a certain size. Smaller centers, like a Neighborhood Crossroads, or a small Neighborhood Main Street can do a lot to support nearby Missing Middle Ready neighborhoods. These small mixed-use areas can be easily embedded into or adjacent to residential neighborhoods because they are residential in scale and provide convenient services for nearby residents who can meet multiple daily needs in a single trip made by foot, bike, or car. These neighborhood-scale

Walkable Centers can serve as nodes of local activity that help to enliven a neighborhood and build community.

Surrounded by smaller block sizes that allow for better street network connectivity. A smaller block pattern encourages walkability by providing more route choices and reducing the walking distance to get between destinations. In general, dead-end streets, cul-de-sacs, and looping streets diminish an area's walkability, while through-streets tend to increase walkability.

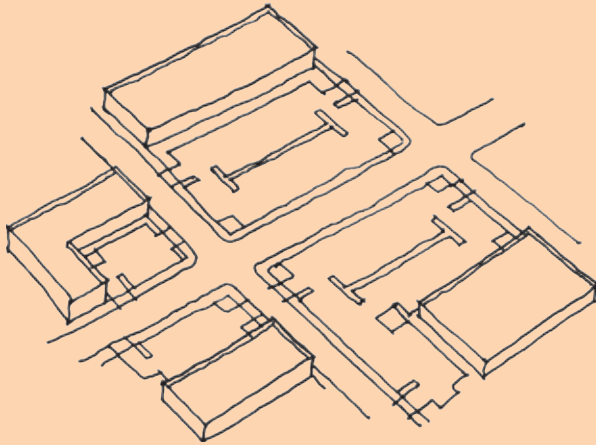


**Figure 3.28** Vacant underutilized lots are developed into neighborhood-scale Walkable Centers to support the surrounding neighborhood. This type of transformation provides a new local amenity that makes a MMH-Ready neighborhood more attractive for MMH development and infill. Successful neighborhood-scale Walkable Centers should be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. Resulting buildings may be smaller than those shown in these examples, depending on the context.

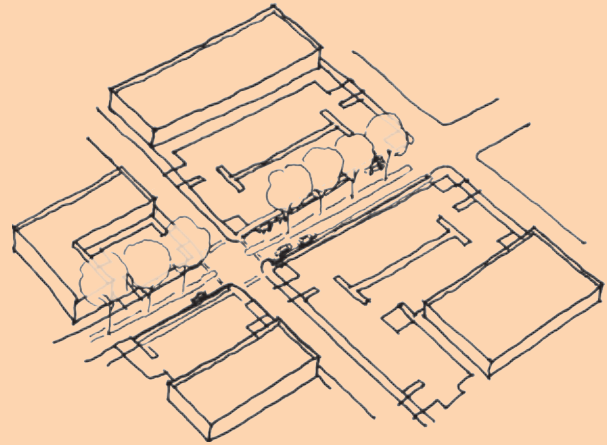


## Incremental Change

Small, incremental changes can be just as important in the long run as big, transformative change. The following incremental changes can lay the groundwork for a Walkable Center that can transform surrounding neighborhoods into MMH-Ready Neighborhoods and create suitable environments for Missing Middle Housing.

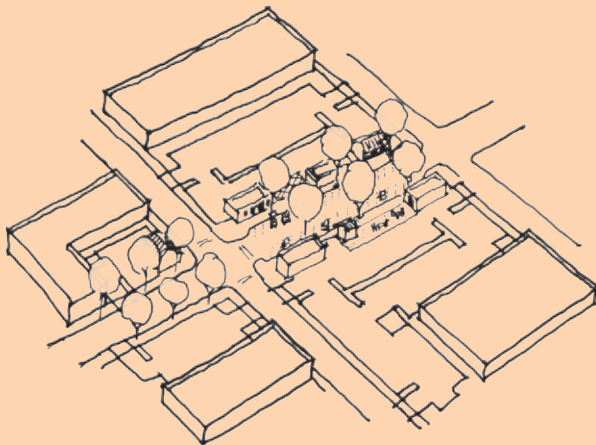


### Existing Conditions



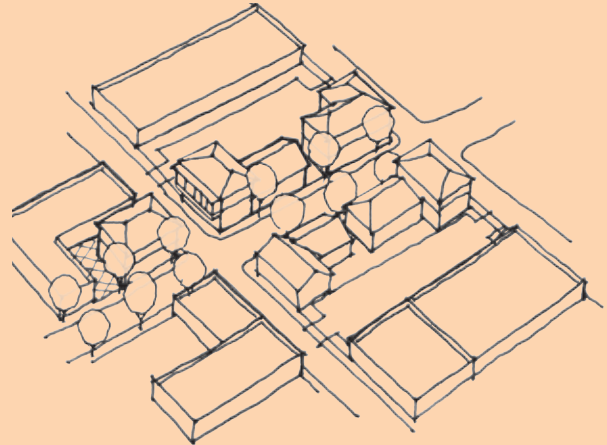
### Step 1

Small changes could include landscaping, streetscape improvements and shared roads for bikes and cars.



### Step 2

Temporary spaces for businesses at sidewalk edge can help form a center of activity. These small changes can be made where buildings and lots are privately owned and where major changes in near term are unlikely.

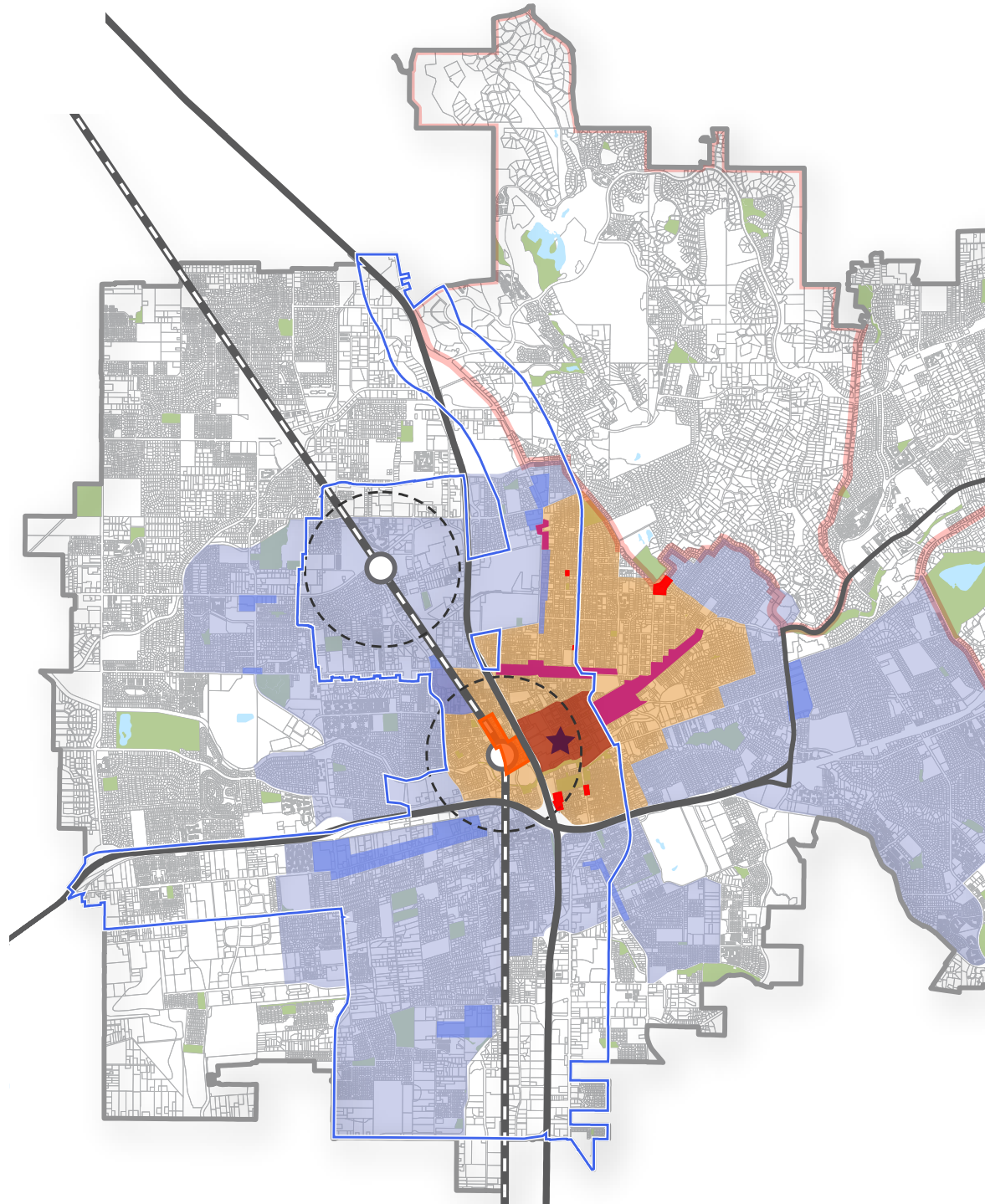


### Step 3

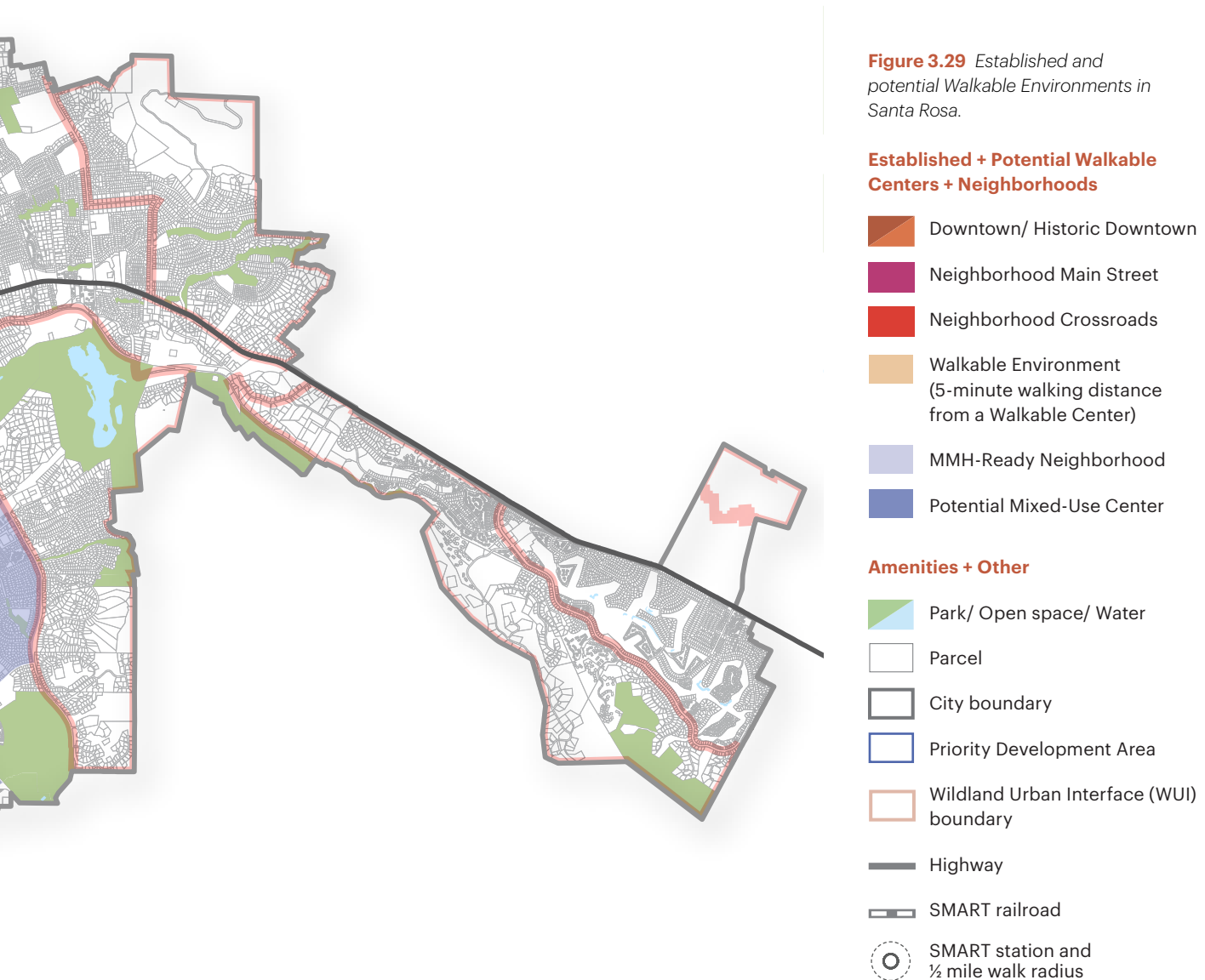
Bigger changes may include infill, new development at the sidewalk edge or around public space in areas where there is a desire for urban character and new buildings.

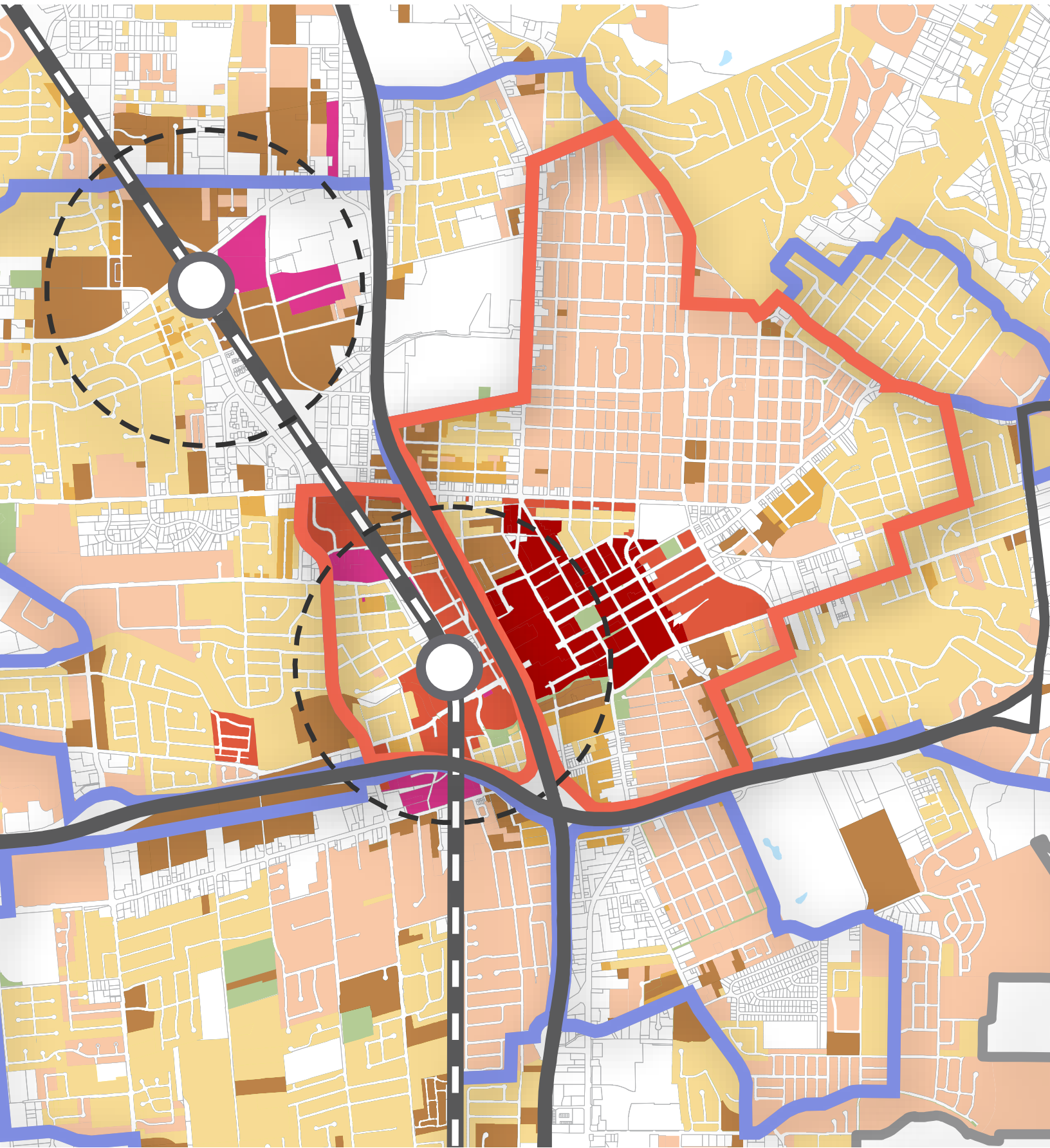
### Established Walkable Centers + "MMH-Ready" Neighborhoods

The map below shows potential areas for MMH in Santa Rosa. This includes the Established Walkable Centers and Walkable Environments discussed earlier, and in addition maps areas of potential transformation. These "potential transition" areas have the attributes needed to support MMH, including a finer-grained street and block pattern that offers high connectivity, the presence of amenities nearby, and nodes that have the potential to become Mixed-Use Centers.











# Potential for Missing Middle

CHAPTER

# 4

## In this chapter

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4.3 Density Restrictions as a Barrier to MMH	66
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## 4.1 Appropriate Lot Sizes for MMH Types

### Summary

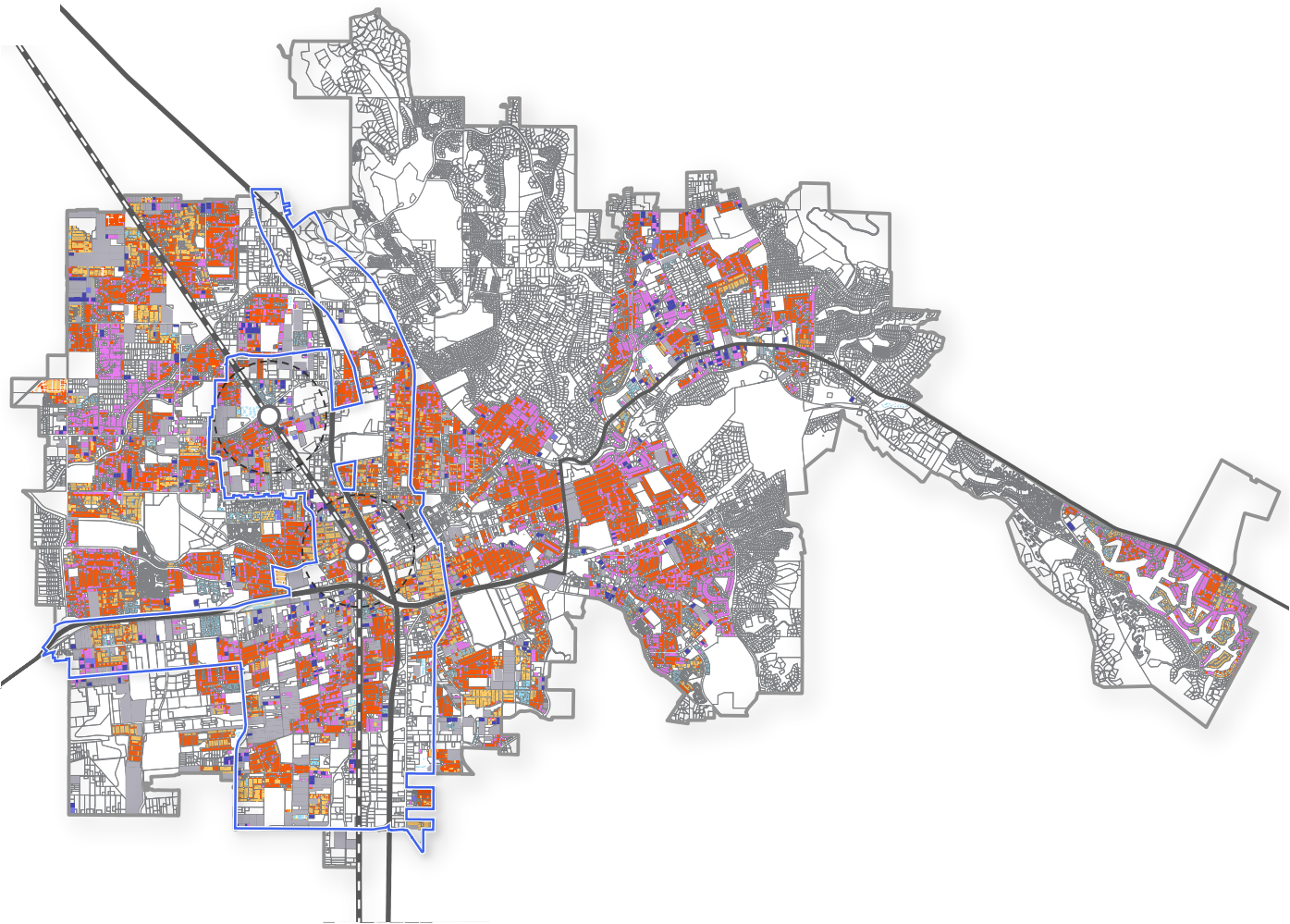
**Having analyzed key characteristics of individual lots such as lot width, an important next step is to create lot categories that would correspond to the range and intensity of Missing Middle types that those lot sizes could support. In other words, the lot categorization enables an understanding of which types from the Missing Middle palette would work in Santa Rosa, and where. While the analysis is largely qualitative, it can be refined to reflect the approximate number of existing lots that fall under each category.**

### Methodology

In determining lot categories, existing lot widths and depths were analyzed to arrive at four simple categories: Extra Small, Small, Medium and Large. The analysis focused on parcels with the following attributes:

- Located within the geographies identified as existing walkable environments (Existing Walkable Centers and Neighborhoods) as well as potential MMH areas (MMH-Ready Neighborhoods and Potential Mixed-Use Centers).
- Allowing medium-density residential and mixed use. Very low density residential parcels were excluded.
- Parcels located outside the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) and other areas of the City that are unlikely to see intensification.
- Outlier parcels that were either too small or too large, or too irregular in shape were excluded from the analysis.





Lot Categories Supportive of Missing Middle Types

The map above shows the four lot categories identified for existing lots in Santa Rosa, based on lot width and depth. Each category of lots supports a range of Missing Middle housing types. The relationship between the lot categories and the range of Missing Middle types that each category can support is shown in the table below. The table also shows the ratio of lots within each category to the total for all four categories.

Lot Size Categories	Single-Family	Duplex	Triplex	Fourplex	Courtyard Apt	Cottage Court	Townhouse	Multiplex	Live/Work	Mid-Rise	Ratio of Total
Extra Small Lots											24%
Small Lots											53%
Medium Lots											22%
Large Lots											1%

Figure 4.30 Prevalent lot widths in Santa Rosa.

- Extra Small Lots
- Small Lots
- Medium Lots
- Large Lots
- Outlier Lots (too small/ large/ irregular in shape)
- City boundary
- Highway
- SMART railroad
- SMART station and 1/2 mile walk radius
- Parcel



## 4.2 Zoning Barriers to Missing Middle Housing in Santa Rosa

### Q CLOSER LOOK

#### Building Scale

*Building Types are categorized into two groups: House-Scale buildings and Block-Scale buildings. The types allowed within these categories should be determined on the basis of the existing neighborhood context and the intended physical character.*

#### House-Scale

**Buildings** are those that match the size of a typical house, in terms of form, height, building footprint, and architectural details.

#### Block-Scale

**Buildings** are those that are individually as large as a block, or most of a block; or, when arranged together along a street, appear as long as most or all of a block.

### Zoning Code Analysis for MMH

This analysis focuses on all zones in Santa Rosa that allow housing. Each of the analyzed zones is summarized below:

#### R-1 Single Family Residential

Residential neighborhoods comprised of detached and attached single-family houses, clustered residential hillside projects, and small multi-family projects, together with compatible accessory uses.

- Zone variations based on minimum lot area generate a range of development intensities.
- ADUs may be added.
- Multi-family development requires a Minor Conditional Use Permit.

#### R-2 Medium Density Residential

Residential neighborhoods of medium density, providing home rental and ownership opportunities and improving access to affordable housing through a full range of choices in housing types.

- Enables lower-intensity, house-scale multi-family development (e.g., duplexes) by right.

#### R-3 Multi-Family Residential

Higher-density residential neighborhoods providing home rental and ownership opportunities and improving access to affordable housing through a full range of choices in housing types.

- Zone variations based on maximum density generate a range of development intensities.
- Enables a greater range of both house-scale and block-scale multi-family building types.

- Densities above 30 du/ac are subject to review by the Planning Department.

#### TV-R Transit Village Residential

Areas within approximately one-half mile of a transit facility that are appropriate for mixed use development.

- Residential uses are required.
- Ground floor neighborhood-serving retail and live-work uses are encouraged.
- Four-story height limit; transitions to three stories adjacent to residential.
- Station Area Combining Districts apply additional standards for building form, placement, etc.

#### NMU Neighborhood Mixed Use

Areas within Downtown Santa Rosa allowing multi-family residential and mixed-use development and a variety of uses that primarily serve local residents.

- Includes low- and mid-rise apartments and condominiums, as well as small-lot single-family attached dwellings (e.g., duplexes, triplexes, townhomes).
- Live-work spaces and maker-oriented uses are permitted, subject to performance standards.
- FAR, lot coverage, and setback standards encourage block-scale buildings (also true in CMU, MMU, SMU).

#### CMU Core Mixed Use

Intended to strengthen Downtown Santa Rosa's role as a regional hub, catalyzing increased activity in a walkable, bikeable environment with easy transit access.

- Block-scale buildings are encouraged.

- High-rise residential and mixed-use development creates a built-in market for retail, service, and entertainment.
- Public gathering places encouraged.

#### MMU Maker Mixed Use

Emphasizes a balanced mix of residential, creative, and maker-oriented uses in Downtown Santa Rosa.

- Block-scale multi-family residential, mixed-use, and live/work buildings are encouraged.
- Permits supportive uses that contribute to a vibrant village atmosphere.

#### SMU Station Mixed Use

Provides for a range of visitor-serving uses near the Downtown SMART station, enhancing the walkable streets and public spaces while respecting the historic character of the Railroad Square area.

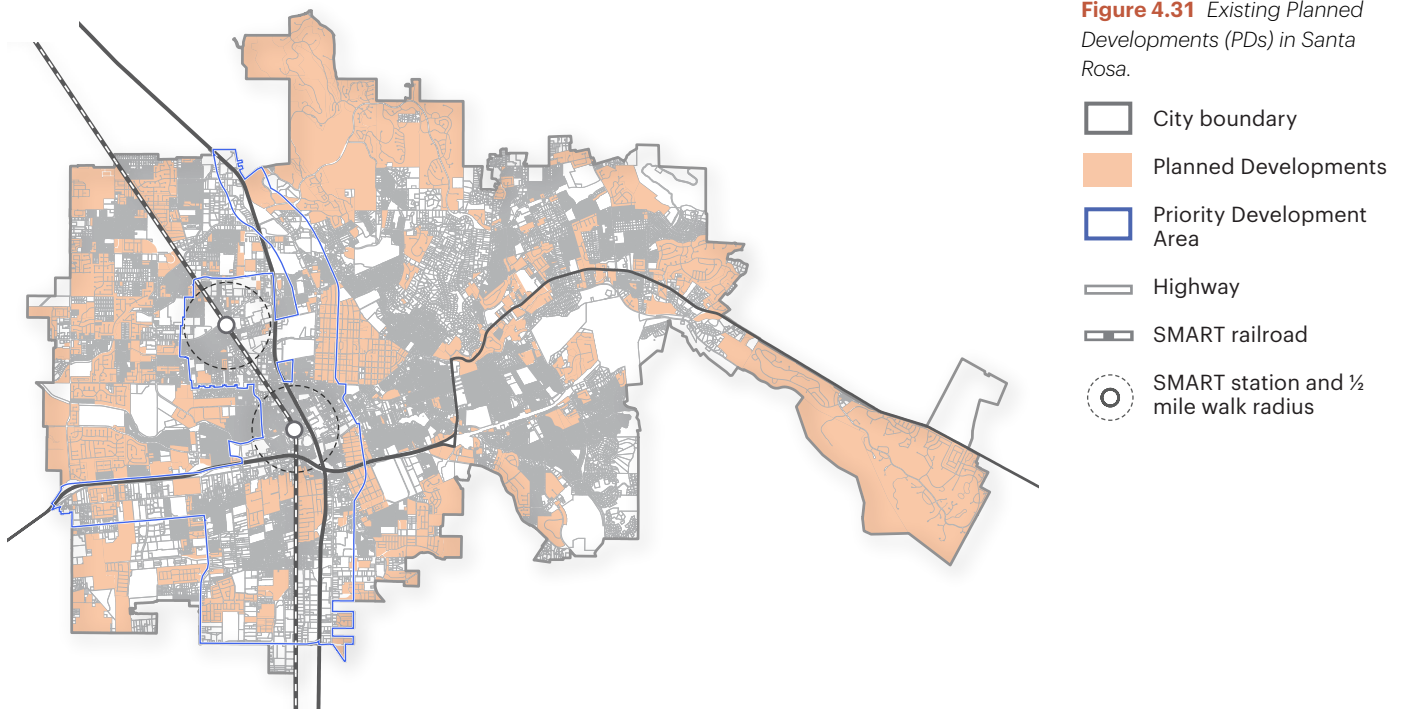
- Commercial and multi-family residential support vitality by day and night.
- FAR, lot coverage, and setback standards encourage block-scale buildings.

#### Planned Development

An uncommonly large proportion of Santa Rosa's land area falls under Planned Development zones. In many cases, the standards within these zones are derived principally from the conventional zones (R-1, R-2, etc.) with modifications intended to adapt them to specific conditions.

A heavy reliance on PD zones is often a signal that the city's base zones are not doing a good job of reflecting either market realities or the community's vision for new development. In such circumstances, Planned Development zones offer an ad-hoc workaround, rather than a comprehensive solution.

When a city adopts the approach of using PD zoning to bypass its own code, this can generate a culture in which negotiation and public involvement are continually required, while rendering the actual built results unpredictable. This is a recipe for a combative attitude between residents and developers, with overtaxed planning staff caught in the middle.



## Summary of Regulatory Barriers to MMH

The table below lists the typical regulatory barriers to enabling Missing Middle Housing, and whether these exist in the zones analyzed. The category of Planned Developments (PDs) have been included in recognition of the fact that Santa Rosa has a significant part of the City under PDs. Since each PD has zoning standards specific to that PD, further analysis is needed and the impact of existing PD standards on MMH cannot be summarized in the table below.

Barriers for MMH in the City of Santa Rosa									
Barriers to MMH	Zoning Code, Title 20								Planned Development
	Core Mixed Use	Maker Mixed Use	Neighborhood Mixed Use	Station Mixed Use	Transit Village	R-1	R-2	R-3	
Is Maximum Allowed Density too low?	.1	.1	.1	.1	●	●	●	●	?
Is Maximum Allowed FAR too high <sup>3</sup> for House-Scale Buildings (MMH)?	●	●	●	●	-	-	-	-	?
Is Maximum Allowed Lot Coverage too high for House-Scale Buildings?	●	●	●	●	●	●	?	●	?
Is Minimum Lot Area too large for MMH?	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	?
Are Minimum Lot Widths too high for MMH?	●	●	●	●	●	?	●	?	?
Are Required Setbacks Too Large?	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	?
Is Minimum Off-Street Parking Too High? <sup>2</sup>	●	●	?	●	?	●	●	●	?
Does Parking Location Create Inactive Frontage? <sup>2</sup>	●	●	?	●	?	?	●	●	?
Is Allowed Height Too High for House-scale Buildings?	?	?	?	?	●	●	●	●	?

1. These zones are regulated by FAR and have no maximum density.

2. Parking access regulations and reduced parking minimums remove these barriers for zoning districts falling within the Downtown Station Area.

3. If allowed FAR is much higher than those that result from house-scaled MMH, it acts as a barrier since developers will tend to build larger building.

### Key



Barrier to MMH



Enables MMH



Unclear/Potential Barrier



Not applicable

## Q CLOSER LOOK

### Why Density and FAR Do Not Favor MMH

A defining characteristic of Missing Middle Housing is that it incorporates multiple dwelling units into buildings whose form and scale are equivalent to the range of single-unit houses found within the same neighborhoods. This characteristic accounts for MMH's seamless integration into these neighborhoods as well as the high esteem in which residents have held these types. Unfortunately, the density-based and FAR-based metrics widely used in today's zoning codes work against this very characteristic, making MMH unattractive to developers where it is not prohibited outright.

While people commonly assume that density limits ensure that new projects will be compatible with their context, this is not actually the case. The number of dwelling units may have no correlation with the size of those units, their arrangement on the lot, or the form of the buildings within which they appear. There is a misconception that high density means big buildings, despite the fact that existing Missing Middle Housing achieves higher densities in smaller, house-scaled buildings. When the lot dimensions are fixed (as in most infill development) a density-based planning and zoning system limits only the number of units that can be built on the lot—incentivizing developers to build as many units as the zoning allows and to make those units as large as possible in order to maximize their financial returns. Thus, such a system inherently discourages smaller, more affordable units, which are common in Missing Middle housing types.

Regulating new construction through FAR addresses building size, but in an indirect manner that is only loosely related to how people will experience the building from the street. This makes FAR a poor tool for ensuring contextual compatibility. By contrast, regulating house-scale building envelopes using dimensional standards informed by local built examples, together with pedestrian-friendly frontage types, accomplishes built forms compatible with existing neighborhood form, while allowing the units within that envelope to adapt to the community's needs.

In order to achieve the benefits of MMH—including attainability, support for neighborhood walkability, and compatibility with context—a thoughtful approach to regulating form, scale, and building types is most important.



**Figure 4.32** Density and FAR are useful outputs but can result in unexpected built outcomes when used as primary metrics to regulate development. In the examples above, the apartment building on top is a 3-story structure with 49 units. The house-scale building below has 5 units and is completely different from the one above in its of massing, scale and intensity. However both have nearly the same density.



## 4.3 Density Restrictions as a Barrier to MMH

### Allowed Maximum Density

Throughout most of Santa Rosa, very few Missing Middle Housing types can be built because the density limits in existing zones are too low. However, simply increasing the maximum allowed

density could create other issues, such as large buildings that are not appropriate for the neighborhood context. Increasing the maximum allowed density needs to be coordinated with carefully identifying the appropriate MMH building types for Santa Rosa's different areas and then

### The Palette of Missing Middle Housing Types as Allowed in Santa Rosa

#### Key:

- Density range of MMH Type
- Density range allowed by zoning



**Duplex Side-by-Side**  
8-22 du/ac



**Duplex Stacked**  
8-25 du/ac

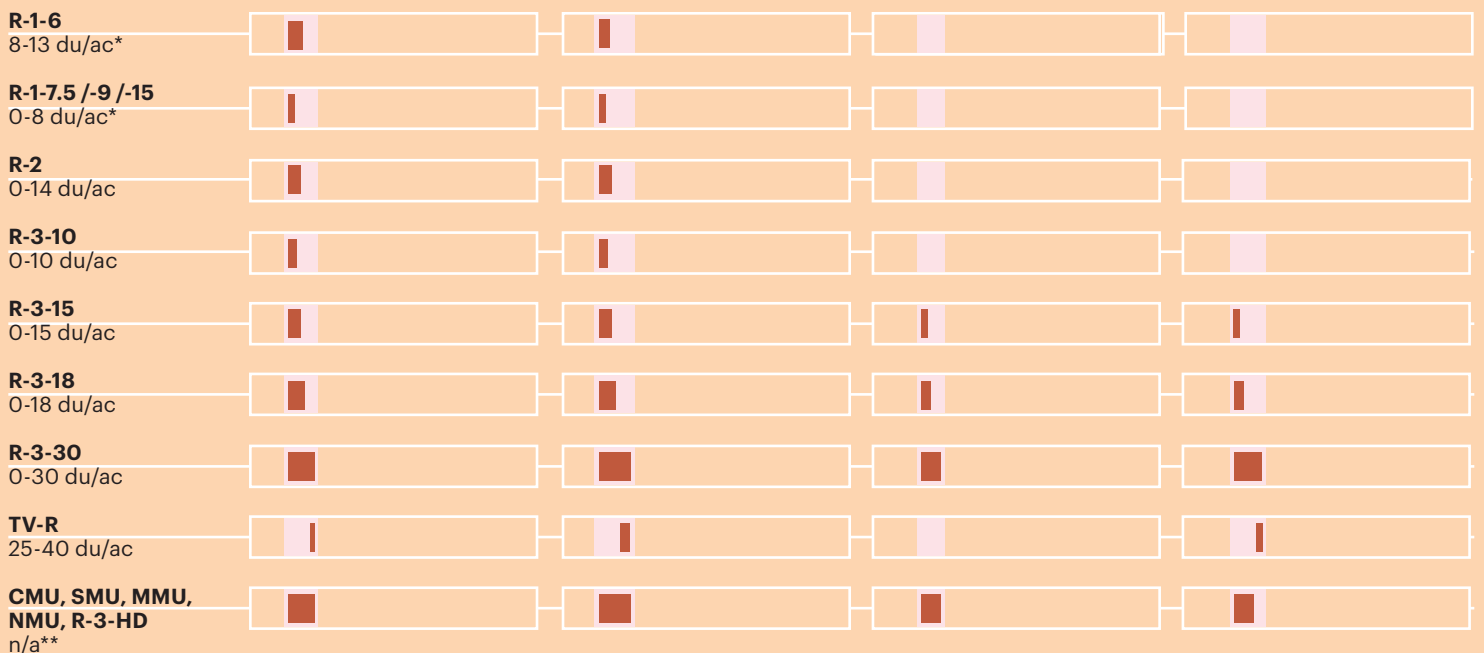


**Cottage Court**  
15-22 du/ac



**Fourplex**  
15-26 du/ac

#### Zoning



\*Max. density determined by General Plan land use category; upper limit shown in R-1-6 is for "Medium Low Density Residential."

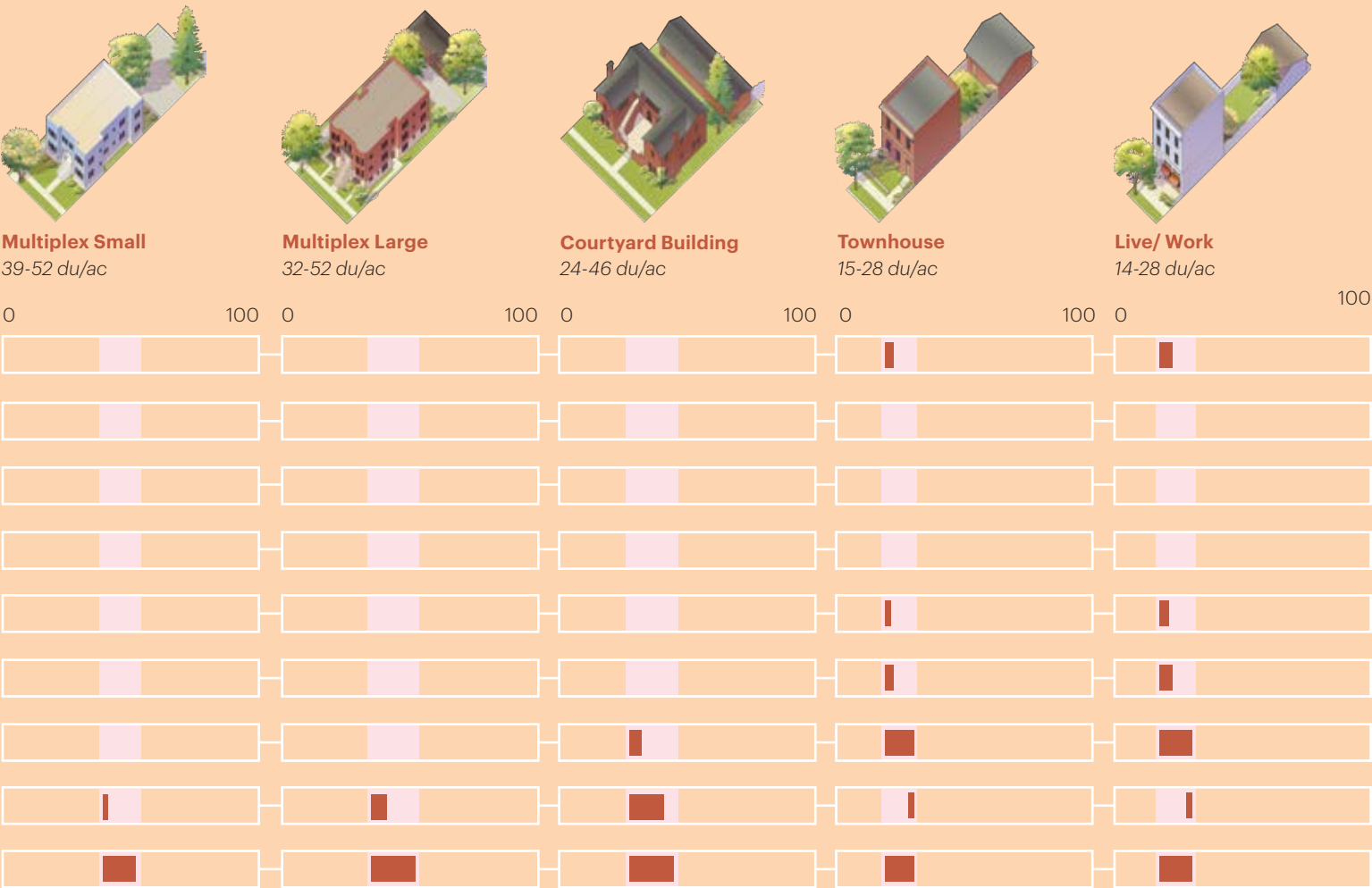
\*\*Determined by FAR limits.

incorporating the resultant density range of those types together with standards for maximum building footprint and lot width.

**MMH Types Allowed by Current Density Standards**

The chart below shows which MMH types are accommodated by each zone based on the maximum allowed density, relative to the typical densities generated by that MMH type. The pink bar indicates the density range generated by the each MMH type. The maroon bar indicates the density range allowed in that zone. Where the pink

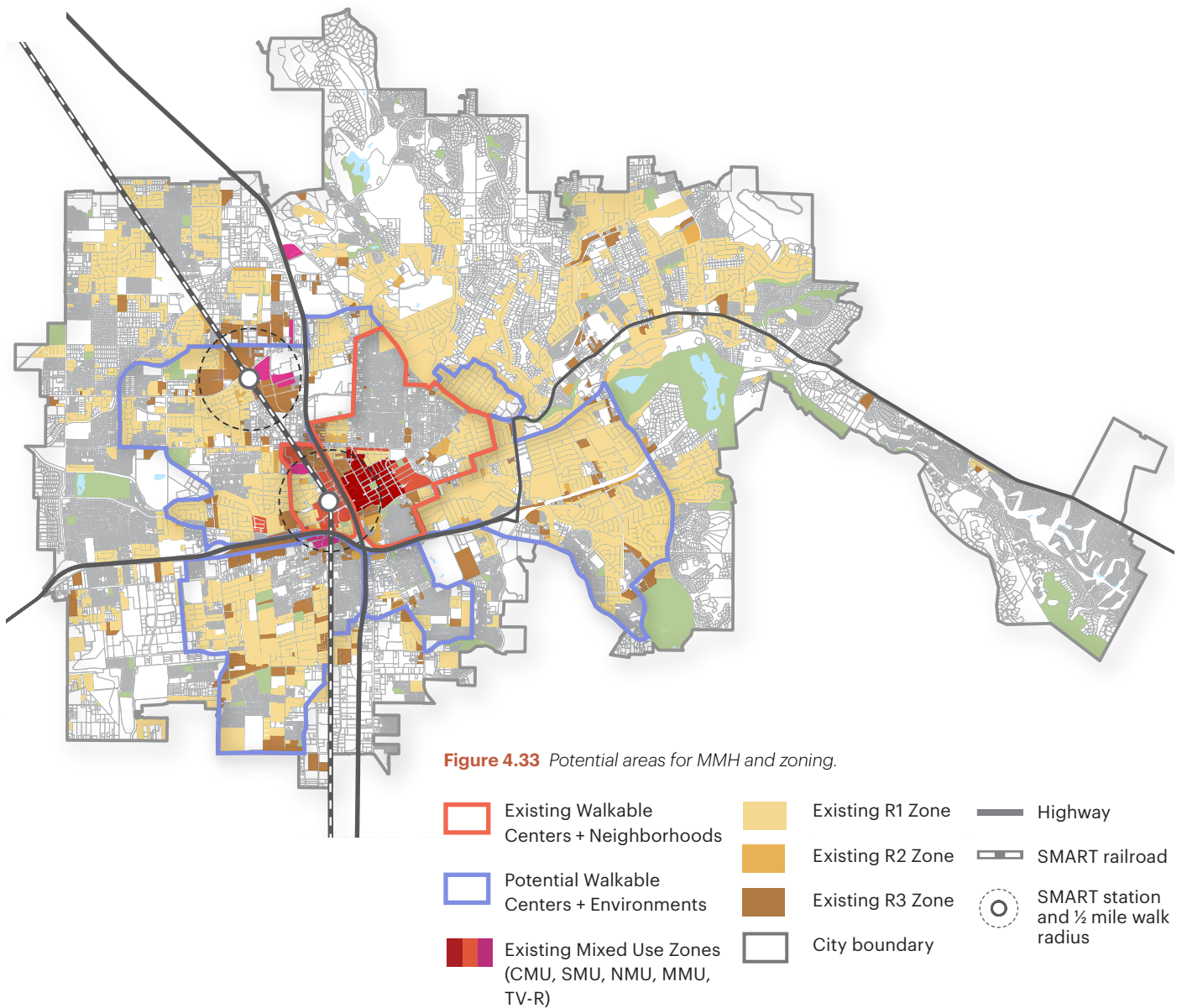
bar contains no maroon, it indicates that the MMH type would not be allowed. If there is little to no support for changing existing zoning, the MMH types and their standards could be adopted as an overlay that only applies to identified walkable neighborhoods. The standards could include density limits or they could be silent on density. In either approach, the characteristics of each MMH type need to be publicly discussed and tested for the specific areas where they want to be used.



## 4.4 Potential Areas for MMH in Santa Rosa

The map below shows the Established Walkable Centers and Walkable Environments discussed in Section 3.5, as well as Potential Areas for MMH (MMH Ready Neighborhoods and Potential Mixed-Use Centers) discussed

in Section 3.6 and superimposes those geographies on the residential zones that are supportive of Missing Middle Housing (R1, R2 and R3). The intent is to see what the underlying zoning is, for areas that have high potential for MMH, and to create



a starting framework for establishing Missing Middle Zones as the next step of the project.

The map on the facing page displays the same information, but with Planned Developments (PDs) also shown. As discussed earlier, Santa Rosa has a higher percentage of its City limits under PDs than commonly seen, and PDs may need to be analyzed as part of establishing Missing Middle Zones. Typically, PDs are not considered ideal for MMH due to the complicated regulatory situation, and

due to the fact that extensive community discussion is needed prior to any change. However, in this case PDs may need to be part of the analysis because of the large area they cover in Santa Rosa.

