
4.6 MIDDLE HOUSING STANDARDS

Middle Housing types are residential structures containing more than one unit, with building footprints and overall scales comparable to single-family houses. Middle Housing types are permitted in RN-1, RN-2, RN-3, and RN-4 zoning districts, and shall be located in land use areas designated Traditional Neighborhood Residential (TDR). The standards in this Section are intended to promote the development of neighborhood-scale housing forms which are compatible with existing housing in the surrounding area. To help increase housing options within the City, Middle Housing standards are intended to allow more flexible development of land than is possible under the base district zoning regulations. The dimensional, design, and parking standards of Section 4.6 apply to new construction of Middle Housing types. Standards for conversions of existing buildings to Middle Housing types are subject to the requirements in Section 4.6.F. Flexibility and/or relief from certain standards is provided in Section 4.6.G. The standards of Article 4.6 may not be combined with those of the base zone of the property for principal uses; new principal use projects must either be submitted under Article 4.6 subject to Middle Housing Standards or under the base zone subject to the base zone requirements.

4.6.A. Middle Housing Types

Project ~~s~~ applications using the Middle Housing standards and review process are required to use only the Middle Housing types as defined below:

Duplex, side-by-side: a structure up to two stories, containing two dwelling units next to each other with one shared wall. This type of duplex has a building depth, width, and height similar to a typical single-family house. Both units may share a stoop or porch at the center of the building; or each unit may have its own stoop or porch. One unit may face the street with another facing the ~~interior or~~ corner side or rear yard.

Duplex, stacked: a structure up to two stories, containing two dwelling units, with one on the ground floor and the other on top. This type of duplex has a building depth, width, and height similar to a typical single-family house. Both entries may face the street, or one unit may face the street with another facing the ~~interior or~~ corner side or rear yard.

Triplex: a structure up to three stories, containing three dwelling units typically stacked on top of each other, in locations where there is a transition from a commercial corridor and/or higher intensity area into single-family neighborhoods. Within neighborhoods, away from transition areas adjacent to corridors, a ~~2.5-story~~ triplex with up to 2.5 stories may feature other configurations to accommodate three units. A triplex does not include a townhouse type.

Fourplex: a structure up to 2.5 stories, containing two units on the ground floor and two units stacked directly above. The type has a building depth, width, and height similar to a single-family house.

Townhouse (small): a small-to-medium sized structure up to two stories with ~~three or four~~ up to four attached units, featuring shared side walls between units. The narrow sides ~~s~~ of the units ~~faces~~ the street, with ~~an entry~~ all entries oriented towards the street, and the larger attached sides ~~s~~ along the depth of the lot.

Townhouse (large): a medium-sized structure up to 2.5 stories ~~with up to eight~~ containing between five and eight units, featuring shared side walls between units. The narrow sides ~~s~~ of the units ~~faces~~ the street, with ~~an entry~~ all entries oriented towards the street, and the larger attached side along the depth of the lot.

Multiplex (small): a small-to-medium-sized structure that consists of five to ten units arranged side-by-side and ~~for~~ stacked, often with a shared entry on the ground floor. A multiplex does not include a townhouse type.

4.6.B. Middle Housing Uses

1. Middle Housing types are permitted based on the zoning district and housing type in Table 4-3, and conformance to the applicable standards in Article 4.6. Proposals which do not meet the dimensional

standards in Table 4-4 default to the dimensional standards of the base zoning district, subject to the requirements in Article 4.6.G.

Table 4-3: Middle Housing Development Types

Middle Housing Type	Permitted Use + Planning Staff Review
Duplex (side-by-side)	RN-1, RN-2, RN-3, RN-4
Duplex (stacked)	RN-1, RN-2, RN-3, RN-4
Triplex*	RN-2, RN-3, RN-4
Fourplex	RN-2, RN-3, RN-4
Townhouse (small)	RN-2, RN-3, RN-4
Townhouse (large)	RN-3, RN-4
Multiplex (small)	RN-3, RN-4

2. Location criteria ~~for triplexes~~:

a. Middle Housing types are not permitted on flag lots or lots that are accessed by access easements instead of having direct frontage on a street.

b. Three-story triplexes are only permitted on lots with frontage on arterial roads as defined in the Major Road Plan. Three-story triplexes are not permitted on flag lots.

4.6.C. Middle Housing Dimensional Standards

- The dimensional standards of this Section supersede the base zoning district dimensional standards as defined in Article 4.
- Table 4-4: Middle Housing Dimensional Standards establishes the dimensional standards for new construction of Middle Housing types within the permitted area.
- Building setbacks:
 - Front setbacks for Middle Housing types shall be the average of the blockface, plus or minus five feet, in no case less than 10 feet.
 - Rear setbacks for Middle Housing types shall be no less than 15 feet.
- Building heights shall not exceed the maximum building height of the base zoning district, or the maximum height in stories as noted in Table 4-4, whichever is less. For Middle Housing types, story and half-story are defined below.
 - Story: the portion of a building included between the surface of any floor and the surface of the next floor above it, or if there is no floor above, the space between the floor and the ceiling above. If the finished floor level directly above a basement or cellar is more than six feet above grade for more than 50 percent of the total perimeter, such basement or cellar shall be considered a story.
 - Half-Story: conditioned space that rests primarily underneath the slope of the roof, usually having dormer windows. The half story is identified by the ".5" in the description of maximum height (e.g., 2.5). A half-story is considered a story when its top wall plates, on at least two opposite exterior walls, are four feet or more above the floor of such story.
- Dormers:
 - The combined width of dormers shall not exceed 50% of the width of the wall area beneath.
 - Dormers shall be set back from the nearest rake or eave by at least two feet.

6. Porches/stoops: The following standard supersedes the permitted encroachment standards as defined in Table 10-1, Article 10.4. A porch or stoop is permitted to encroach into the minimum allowed front setback (five feet less than the average of the blockface) up to eight feet. Porches or stoops shall be set back from the front lot line by at least five feet.
7. Building width for Middle Housing types is defined as follows: the length of the building façade wall that does not include permitted encroachments, as measured along the foundation that generally faces the front lot line or a public space.
78. Building depth for Middle Housing types is defined as follows: the length of the building façade wall that does not include permitted encroachments, as measured along the foundation that generally faces an interior or corner side lot line or a public space.

Table 4-4: Middle Housing Dimensional Standards

Middle Housing type	Lot width with alley (min., ft.)	Lot width without alley (min., ft.)	Building height (max. stories)	Building width (max., ft.)	Building depth (max., ft.)	Interior side setbacks	Corner side setbacks
Duplex (side-by-side)	45' 40'	50' 45'	2	40'	55'	5'	8'
Duplex (stacked)	45' 35'	50' 40'	2	35'	50'	5'	8'
Triplex	45' 40'	50' 45'	2.5 -3	40'	55'	5'	10'
Fourplex	45' 40'	50' 45'	2.5	45'	60'	5'	10'
Townhouse (small)	18'/du	20'/du	2	25'/du	50'	5'	12'
Townhouse (large)	18'/du	20'/du	2.5	25'/du	55'	5'	12'
Multiplex (small)	70'	80'	2.5	75'	80'	5'	12'

4.6.D. Middle Housing Parking Standards

1. The parking requirements below apply to Middle Housing types. Where applicable, the below parking requirements supersede the off-street parking requirements in Table 11-2.
2. No off-street vehicle parking is required within one-fourth of a mile of a transit route.
3. Off-street vehicle parking: each dwelling unit requires 0.70 spaces.
4. Specific to triplex, fourplex, townhouse, and multiplex developments: parking areas must be set a minimum of five feet from the interior side and rear lot lines, and may be grouped in shared parking areas per Article 11.8.
 - a. Where applicable, landscape buffers required by Section 12.8 may be reduced to five feet with the use of a wall or solid fence.
5. Location:
 - a. Parking must be located in the interior side or rear yards.
 - b. Where operable alleys are present, the alley must serve as the primary means of vehicular ingress and egress unless Planning staff determines that special site circumstances or conditions prohibit alley access.

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- c. Middle Housing types may be designed to back into an alley. Egress directly from parking spaces to alleys may be allowed when the aisle width, including the alley width, meets the minimum aisle width specified in Table 11-4.
 - d. Where parking is located in a side yard, the spaces must be located behind the front building façade line of the principal building. When a driveway extends through a front yard, the driveway must extend at least 20 feet behind the building façade line, to provide parking behind the street-facing elevation of the structure.
 - e. Front-facing garages are not permitted as part of the primary structure on Middle Housing types.
 - f. Circular driveways located in a front yard are not permitted.
 - g. Driveway access: the driveway shall be at least 10 feet wide and not more than 14 feet wide.

4.6.E. Middle Housing Design Standards

- 1. The following standards apply only to new construction of Middle Housing types and are intended to promote the development of neighborhood-scale housing forms which are compatible with existing housing in the surrounding area.
- 2. New construction and certain expansion and exterior alteration actions within the IH, NC, and H overlays, as described in Sections 16.6 and 16.8, are subject to review and approval by the Design Review Board or Historic Zoning Commission, per Sections 16.6 and 16.8.
- 3. The principal use standards for two-family, multi-family, and townhouse dwellings, as described in Sections 9.3.I and 9.3.J, apply alongside the below design standards.
- 4. In order to generate new Middle Housing buildings that are similar in footprint, height, and setbacks with the existing neighborhood and increase visual interest, yet allow for flexibility in design, the following requirements apply to all Middle Housing types:
 - a. Rooflines must be either:
 - i. Flat, featuring a cornice, parapet, or decorative band to serve as a building cap for portions of the roof visible from the street;
 - ii. Steep, with a roof pitch of 6/12 or more;
 - iii. Articulated, with at least two pitches, planes, or ridge line directions, or displaying hips and valleys.
 - b. ~~Recesses or projections in the building wall are required in the horizontal plane of any front or side elevation that exceeds a length of 50 feet. Each recess or projection shall be at least two feet.~~ When a front or side elevation exceeds a length of 50 feet, vertical breaks or offsets to reduce visual mass are required for 20% of the building elevation.
 - c. The front façade must contain (1) a porch or stoop, and (2) at least three of the following design elements:
 - i. Dormer(s);
 - ii. Eave overhangs, a minimum of 12 inches;
 - iii. Decorative cornice;
 - iv. Covered porches at least eight feet in depth, composing a minimum of 25% of the width of the street facing elevations (this item may satisfy the requirement for a porch or stoop, and one design element);

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- v. A recessed or projecting entry feature of 18 inches or more in depth, and of at least six feet in width;
 - vi. A bay window projecting a minimum of 12 inches from the front façade;
 - vii. Articulated window and door trim, a minimum of 3.5 inches in width, to include projecting window sills;
 - viii. Brick masonry composing at least 25% of any street-facing elevation.
5. Building Orientation to Street
- a. Middle Housing types shall be oriented with their front elevations facing the street. At least one ground-level entrance must be oriented towards the street.
 - b. Townhouses shall not be oriented so the fronts of units face the rear elevations of units.
 - c. Townhouses shall not be oriented perpendicular to the street. The narrow side of townhouse units must face the street.

4.6.F Middle Housing Conversion Standards

- 1. To retain existing housing stock and neighborhood character, while facilitating the creation of additional housing units, existing buildings may be converted to Middle Housing types via interior renovation or additions.
- 2. Conversions to Middle Housing types must comply with Table 4-3.
- 3. Middle Housing Conversion Design Standards
 - a. Additions must comply with the dimensional standards in Section 4.6.C and Table 4-4.
 - b. Additions to the front façade are not permitted. Additions may be made to the rear and side elevations where setbacks permit.
 - c. Additions may also be made to the roofline via an additional half story (the addition of dormers). Roofline additions shall be proportionally consistent with the existing house and shall not be so large as to dramatically alter scale of the original building mass.
 - d. Additions to rear and side elevations must not be taller in height than the existing building.

4.6.G. Administrative Variations, Variances, and Appeals

- 1. In some instances, it may be practical to provide relief from certain standards due to existing conditions on the site. A project may receive an administrative variation during Planning staff review based on the below criteria only.
 - a. Allowable administrative variations are as follows:
 - i. ~~Lot width: a decrease in the minimum required lot width, up to 20 percent, provided the existing lot can be developed following the intent of Middle Housing standards, meets all other applicable dimensional standards of Section 4.6, and is similar in scale and placement of buildings on the subject block face and the block face directly across the street;~~
 - ii. Corner side, side, and rear setbacks: a decrease in minimum setbacks, up to 20 percent, provided the reduction receives approval from the Department of Engineering;
 - iii. Design standards: a variation on the design standards in Section 4.6.E.4.c to allow for other qualifying design elements may be permitted, provided the project meets all applicable dimensional standards of Section 4.6, and variation from the design standards is necessary

to achieve a ~~creative~~ architectural design which is compatible in style and similar in scale with the buildings on the subject block face and the block face directly across the street.

~~iv. Front setbacks: a decrease in minimum front setbacks, up to 50 percent, provided the setback is consistent with the blockface.~~

- b. No other administrative variations to Article 4.6 are allowed.
- 2. The intent of Article 4.6 is to allow Middle Housing types which are in harmony with the character of the surrounding neighborhood and will not be injurious to it or to the public welfare. Therefore, variances which would allow developments which are larger scale, allow for greater density, or otherwise are out of character with the surrounding neighborhood are discouraged, unless there is a legal hardship and all standards and requirements for variances are met as set forth in Article 16.3.
- 3. Any person may appeal a ~~Planning~~ staff approval or denial under Article 4.6 to the ~~Knoxville-Knox County Planning Commission as provided in Article 16.12.A~~ Knoxville Design Review Board as provided in Article 14.6.C, using the process outlined in Article 16.12.A.4.b. Requests for variances follow the procedure under Article 16.3.

(Ord. No. O-10-2024, § 1, 2-6-24)

9.1 GENERAL USE REGULATIONS

- A. No structure or land may be used or occupied unless allowed as a permitted or special use within the zoning district or as a legal nonconforming use.
- B. All uses must comply with any applicable federal and state requirements, and any additional federal, state, or city ordinances. For select uses, specific federal, state, or city ordinances may be cross-referenced but this is not intended to indicate that only those ordinances apply to such uses or that other uses within this Code are not subject to additional ordinances not referenced.
- C. Any use that is not included in the use matrix or is not interpreted as part of a listed use, per a zoning interpretation (Section 16.9), is prohibited in all districts.
- D. A lot may contain more than one principal use, so long as each principal use is allowed in the district. Each principal use is approved separately. In certain cases, uses are defined to include accessory uses that provide necessary support or are functionally integrated into the principal use. Multiple principal uses are not permitted in the EN, RN-1, and RN-2 Districts. [Multiple principal uses on one lot are not permitted using the Middle Housing Standards \(Article 4.6\).](#)
- E. All uses must comply with the use standards of Section 9.3, as applicable, as well as all other regulations of this Code and the City.

10.1 GENERAL DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS

A. Number of Structures on a Lot

There must be no more than one principal building per lot in the EN, RN-1, and RN-2 Districts. This does not include permitted accessory structures or permitted accessory dwelling units. In all other districts, more than one principal building is permitted on a lot, provided that all structures comply with the dimensional standards of the district. Multiple principal buildings on one lot are not permitted using the Middle Housing Standards (Article 4.6).

B. All Activities within an Enclosed Structure

Within all districts, all activities must be conducted entirely within an enclosed structure, with the exception of the following uses and activities:

1. Parking lot, principal and ancillary.
2. Public park, conservation area, community garden, golf course/driving range, and similar open space uses.
3. Establishments that typically include an outdoor component, including, but not limited to: agriculture, outdoor amusement facility, outdoor storage yard, heavy retail, rental, and service, greenhouse/nursery—retail, outdoor dining, car wash, animal care facility, industrial, and similar uses where outdoor functions are typical, to be confirmed by the Zoning Administrator. Any use may be limited or the outdoor component prohibited as a condition of a special use, when special use approval is applicable.
4. Permitted accessory outdoor storage, and accessory outdoor sales and display areas.
5. Permitted outdoor temporary uses.

C. Applicability of Setbacks

No setback may be reduced so that it is less than required by this Code. The required setbacks for a lot cannot be considered a setback for any other lot. No principal building or accessory structure may be located in a required setback unless specifically permitted by this Code or a variance is approved.

D. Applicability of Dimensional Requirements

All structures must meet the dimensional requirements of the zoning district in which the structure is located. No existing structure may be enlarged, altered, reconstructed, or relocated in such a manner that conflicts with the requirements of the district in which the structure it is located unless a variance is approved.

E. Utility and Drainage Easements

Permanent structures and accessory structures are prohibited within utility and drainage easements. Stormwater facilities, retaining walls, and fences may be installed at the property owner's risk, subject to the approval of the City Department of Engineering.

F. Line of Sight Requirements

Developments near intersections must provide for adequate sight distance, as approved by the City of Knoxville Department of Engineering.

(Ord. No. O-87-2020, § 1, 5-19-20)

14.6 DESIGN REVIEW BOARD POWERS

The Design Review Board has the following powers pursuant to this Code:

- A. To make final decisions on downtown design review applications in the DK District.
- B. Using the Heart of Knoxville Infill Housing Design guidelines, to make final decisions on design review applications in the IH Overlay and issue certificates of appropriateness. In addition to setbacks and lot dimensions, the Board reviews the proposed development in terms of roof pitch, porch, door, window, and related features that were characteristic of the original pattern of development.
- C. To hear appeals of staff approval or denials under the Middle Housing Standards, Article 4.6, using the process outlined in Article 16.12.A.4.b.

(Ord. No. O-113-2020, § 1, 7-28-20)