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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

TRANSPORTATION, INFRASTRUCTURE,  
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**A New Approach to Missing Middle Housing**

**What does this draft zoning change do?**

I have worked with a group of stakeholders to develop a draft Missing Middle Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA). This draft zoning change would create a new “Missing Middle” optional method of development that would allow the owners of property in residential zones that is proximate to BRT Routes or designated in a Master Plan to submit a Missing Middle Plan to the Planning Board for their approval, and provide more flexibility in the density and site configuration rules in the Zoning Code to allow for a wider range of residential building types. This process would be similar to the Site Plan process required for optional method development in Commercial/Residential zones.

**Where would the draft zoning change apply?**

The draft ZTA would allow Missing Middle housing types in any single-unit residential zone if either:

1. The property is within one-quarter mile of an existing or planned Bus Rapid Transit Corridor and has frontage on an arterial or higher roadway classification, or
2. The property is recommended for Missing Middle housing in the applicable Master Plan.

The County has ten planned Bus Rapid Transit Routes - for example: 355, Viers Mill Road, and Georgia Ave - which were approved by the Council in the 2013 [Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Plan](#). These routes were chosen because they are high capacity roadways that traverse the busiest activity centers in the County and intersect with other forms of mass transit such as Metro, Purple Line, and MARC.

While eligible properties could get more density and more flexibility around setbacks and other rules, many protections would remain in place, such as the minimum site size for the zone.

**What is Missing Middle Housing?**

Examples are duplexes, triplexes, townhouses, small apartment buildings with a handful of units, and even smaller single unit homes on compact lots, possibly grouped in a courtyard. Missing Middle Housing generally refers to housing that is smaller in size than single family homes on large lots, but is also not a mid-rise or high rise apartment building.

Missing Middle can also refer to middle income housing. While not necessarily income-restricted or deeply affordable, Missing Middle housing types are smaller and require less land to build, so are more affordable than the large-lot single unit homes that are exclusively allowed in many residential zones.

**What's next for this idea?**

This draft ZTA has not been introduced and is being circulated for comment.

The Council is discussing Missing Middle housing in a variety of forms. Councilmember Jawando has introduced [ZTA 20-07](#) which would allow Missing Middle housing in R60 Zones around Metro stations. The Planning Board is currently finalizing the [Thrive Montgomery 2050](#) General Plan Update, which contemplates Missing Middle housing, among many other topics, and will soon take up the [Silver Spring Downtown Plan](#), which has been expanded to consider ways to allow Missing Middle in residential neighborhoods.

These changes are complex and very significant, and it is important that we vet them thoroughly. I am recommending that the Council ask the Planning Board to review Missing Middle, provide more opportunity for public input, and develop recommendations for the Council to take up later this year, to be informed by the overarching policy decisions the Council makes in the Thrive General Plan Update.