

Middle Housing Design Guidelines

Addendum to [Design Guidelines for New Construction](#)

Introduction

Middle housing types include duplex, tri-plex, quadplex, townhomes, and cottage clusters. Many of these housing types were historically permitted and built throughout the state prior to World War II, and can still be found in many older neighborhoods in Oregon City. These housing types were added as permitted uses to the City's low and medium-density districts in 2019 and 2022. Middle housing types are now permitted uses in R-10, R-8, R-6, and R-3.5 zones, which overlap with the City's two historic districts and with various historic Landmarks.

How to Use this Document

The following design guidelines provide further direction on middle housing within historic districts and landmarks to ensure that the design is compatible and does not adversely affect the significance of the district or Landmark. Consult the general guidance in the Design Guidelines for the applicable district or Landmark before incorporating the middle housing guidelines into your design. This document is an addendum to the adopted guidelines; please ensure that the general design guidelines for materials, siting, scale, roof form, architectural style, and design elements that apply to residential construction are also addressed. Refer to pages 4 and 5 of the Design Guidelines for step-by-step guidance.

All Middle Housing Types

MASSING

How to determine appropriate massing:

Step 1:

Measure the average height and square footage of the nearest six designated and contributing historic resources

Step 2:

New middle housing structures should have a total building mass no larger than 1 ½ times the size of the average resource. Massing should be appropriate to the style chosen.

For landmarks, new middle housing structures should ensure that the total individual building mass is no larger than 1 ½ times the size of the Landmark.

Massing may, in some circumstances, exceed the prescribed 1.5 times the average for sites in which:

- The site is considerably large, allowing for ample spacing and setbacks
- The site is sloped such that the building mass is less visible or shielded from public view
- The structures would be shielded from public view by existing structures that are unlikely to be demolished.

The applicant must provide a detailed analysis to demonstrate why massing would not be considered excessive.

PARKING

Principles:

Paved driveways and parking areas are to be located to the side or rear of the structure.

Front yard areas should be comprised of landscaping and not provide parking.

Driveway widths should be consistent with the predominant driveway width of the district or Landmark, which is typically less than 20 feet in width.

Parking lots should be broken up into smaller clusters rather than one larger parking lot.

Unique approaches are encouraged in areas where topography or other factors limit parking access onsite.

CONFIGURATION OF DUPLEX/TRIPLEX/FOURPLEX UNITS

Principles:

New attached plexes can be designed to look like one single-family home or can be designed as separate units attached with a “hyphen” set back from the front façade. Detached units are encouraged if allowed by the zoning code. The massing of each unit can be considered separate if there is adequate separation of the units by the location and size of the “hyphen”. The applicant must provide a detailed analysis to demonstrate why massing would not be considered excessive.

Units can be stacked vertically or attached on the sides.

Plexes on a lot with an existing single-family home should generally be detached from the existing structure. Middle housing units should generally be located behind or next to an existing structure.

Setbacks should be consistent with surrounding historic single-family structures.

ENTRYWAYS FOR DUPLEX/TRIPLEX/FOURPLEX UNITS

Principle: Entryways should be located on the street-facing facade of the structure and should be designed to read as a single entryway. Multiple front doors in a single defined entryway are acceptable; for example, two or three doors on a central front porch. This may also be achieved through the location of doorways around a central recessed entry or using a single exterior doorway leading to an interior entry hall. Alternatively, units may be accessed from secondary entrances located on the side or rear of the structure.

Faux entry elements are not recommended. Multiple entries should be integrated into the design of the building.

Townhomes

Townhomes are not a historically represented type in either the Canemah National Register District or the McLoughlin Conservation District.

- Townhomes should follow vernacular styles for each district; vernacular Queen Anne styles in McLoughlin are also acceptable. For other styles, applicants must demonstrate how the style is compatible with the district.
- In the Canemah and McLoughlin Districts, no more than three units are to be attached together as one building mass. *Note: citywide code allows up to six attached townhomes.*
- Front-facing attached garages are not allowed.
- Each townhome building should be separated by at least 10 feet.

Cluster Housing

Oregon City generally reviews Clusters Housing through a Type I review process through OCMC 17.16 Middle Housing Design Standards. However, through the Type III Hearing process, the Historic Review Board can require a reduction in the size, location, or massing of proposed units if it can be found to be adversely affecting the significance of the historic district or Landmark.

Cluster Housing are groups of smaller detached housing units, typically 300-900 square foot footprint, clustered around a common open space.

- Cottage cluster unit designs and forms should vary within the cluster to avoid identical or near-identical designs.
- Flexibility in materials and design elements for units that are visually removed from public streets is appropriate.
- Share open space should be centrally located and publicly visible.
- Parking lots should be broken up into smaller clusters rather than one larger parking lot.



412 John Adams Street

This building utilizes multiple recessed entrances to access units.



1202 Jackson Street

This residential building utilizes a more streetcar commercial design and was once a historic commercial node in the neighborhood



1102 7th Street

Basement and rear entrances provide secondary access to this quad-plex that maintains the massing of a single-family residence.



601 Jackson Street

While currently a 6-plex, this approach breaks the building into two abutting historic massings, which reduces impact on the district.



1206 9th Street

Some strategic articulation can break up the massing in a multi-unit building. This 1930 minimal traditional still reads a single-family residence.



1108 6th Street

This simple duplex utilizes a mirror design with paired entrance doors and maintains the massing of a single-family residence.



426 Division Street

This Landmark also utilizes a mirror design and maintains the massing of a single-family residence.