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# Unlocking Housing Choices

Spring Update  
BRUN - June 2026

# Update on One Slide

Continuing development of text amendment to achieve the following:

1. More **Compatible** Residential Design
2. Allow More Homes When a Home is **Retained**
3. Allow More Homes When **Affordability** is Provided

Staff is wrapping in feedback from engagement, stakeholder input, advisory committee meetings, financial feasibility studies, and peer city lessons to further develop the strategy details and draft the text amendment.

There will be another round of engagement in **August and September** to get community feedback on the strategy details.

Engagement Summary and Expected Outcomes report can be found on our webpage

# Briefing Slides

1. **What is Unlocking Housing Choices?**
2. Project Schedule
3. Phase One Strategy Details
4. Expected Outcomes
5. Appendix



# Unlocking Housing Choices

- A proposed **Zoning Code Text Amendment** that will require a City Council vote and Mayoral approval
- Advance recommendations from **Blueprint Denver** and the **NPI Plans**.
- Respond to **community vision** for more housing options.



# Key Blueprint Denver Plan Guidance

**Land Use & Built Form: Housing Policy 02:** Diversify housing options by exploring opportunities to **integrate missing middle housing into low and low medium residential areas.**

**... focus on discouraging demolition and encouraging affordability.**



# Area Plan Guidance

- Most plans **support missing middle housing**.
- Each plan addresses missing middle housing **differently**.
- Some plans are **more prescriptive** than others and include missing middle housing strategies that focus on:
  - **Affordable housing**
  - **Retention of existing structures**
  - Proximity to amenities
  - Improved design outcomes



In Progress:  **F A R NORTH WEST**  **NEAR NORTHEAST**

# Unlocking Housing Choices

## Project Goals

- Allow more “missing middle” housing in Denver.
- **Update building form design requirements to promote compatibility** of new housing in scale with existing neighborhoods.
- **Incentivize retention** of existing homes.
- Explore **incentives or requirements for onsite affordability** in added housing.



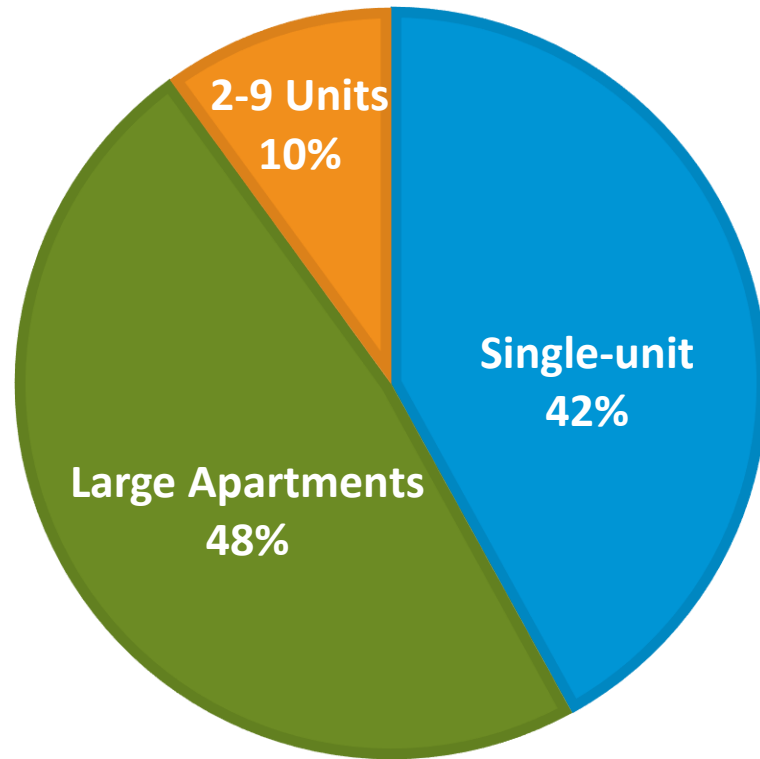
# Agenda

1. What is Unlocking Housing Choices?
- 2. Background**
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# Background: What housing options are we missing?

DENVER'S HOUSING



Most of Denver's housing is:

- Single-Unit Homes (~42%), or
- Large Apartment Buildings (~48%).<sup>1</sup>

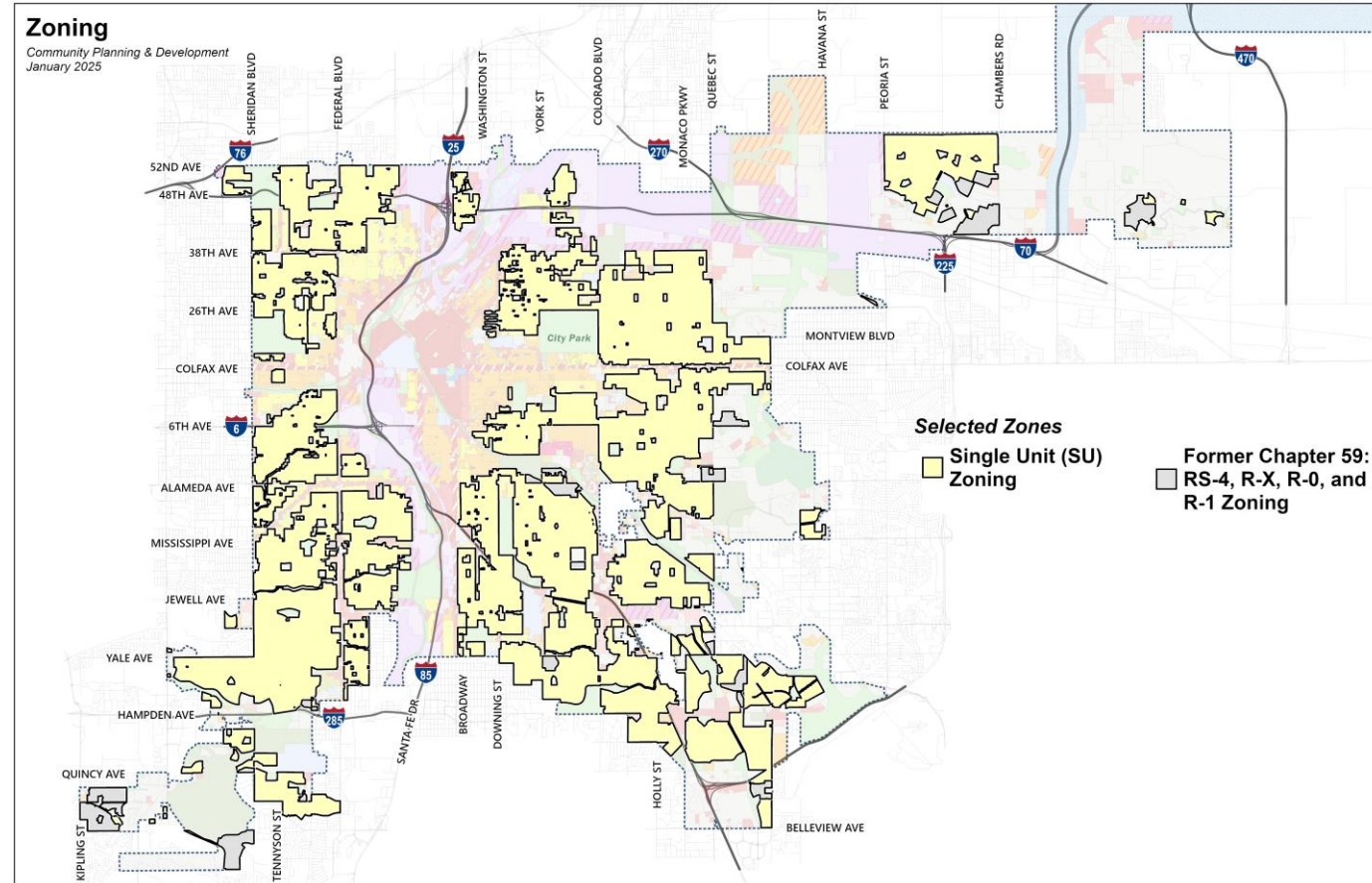
1. US Census Bureau 2022 American Community Survey 1-year Estimates

2. Denver Geographic Information Systems data, exclusive of Denver International Airport property

3. <https://coloradocenterforaging.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Discovering-and-Developing-Missing-Middle-Housing-singles-093022.pdf>

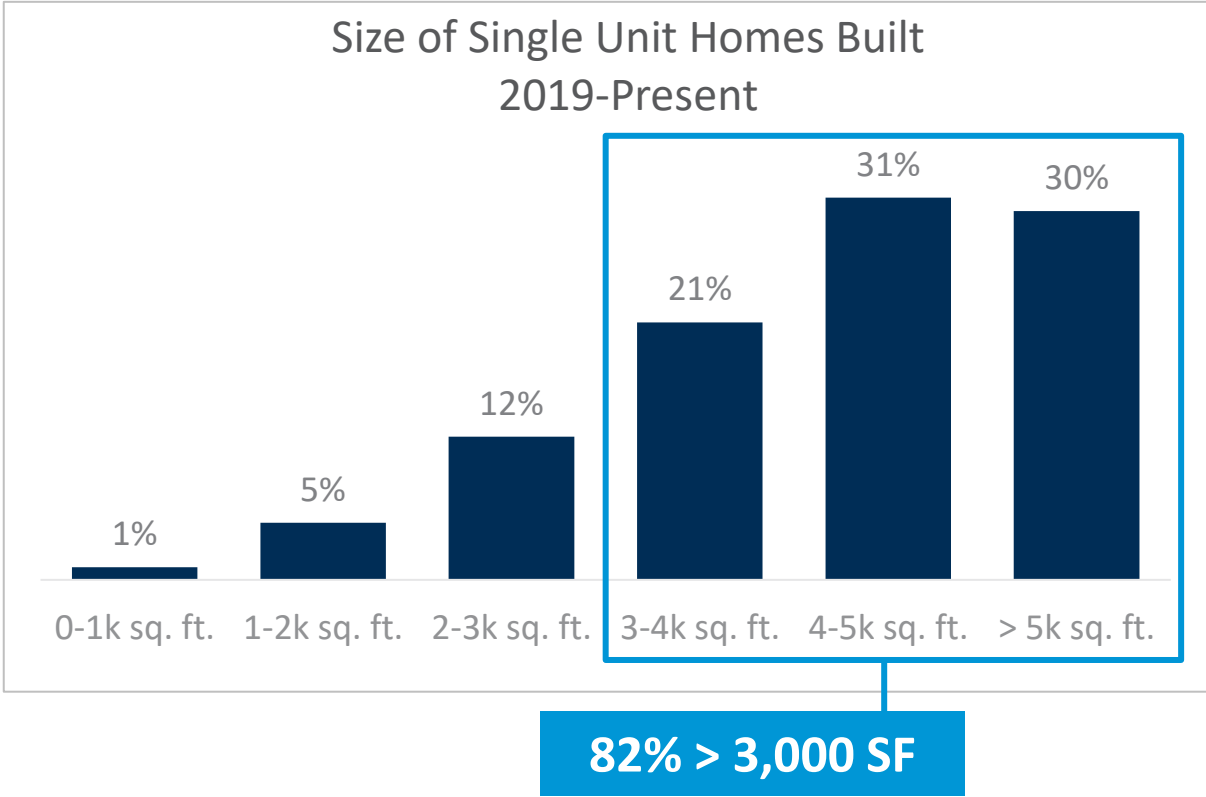
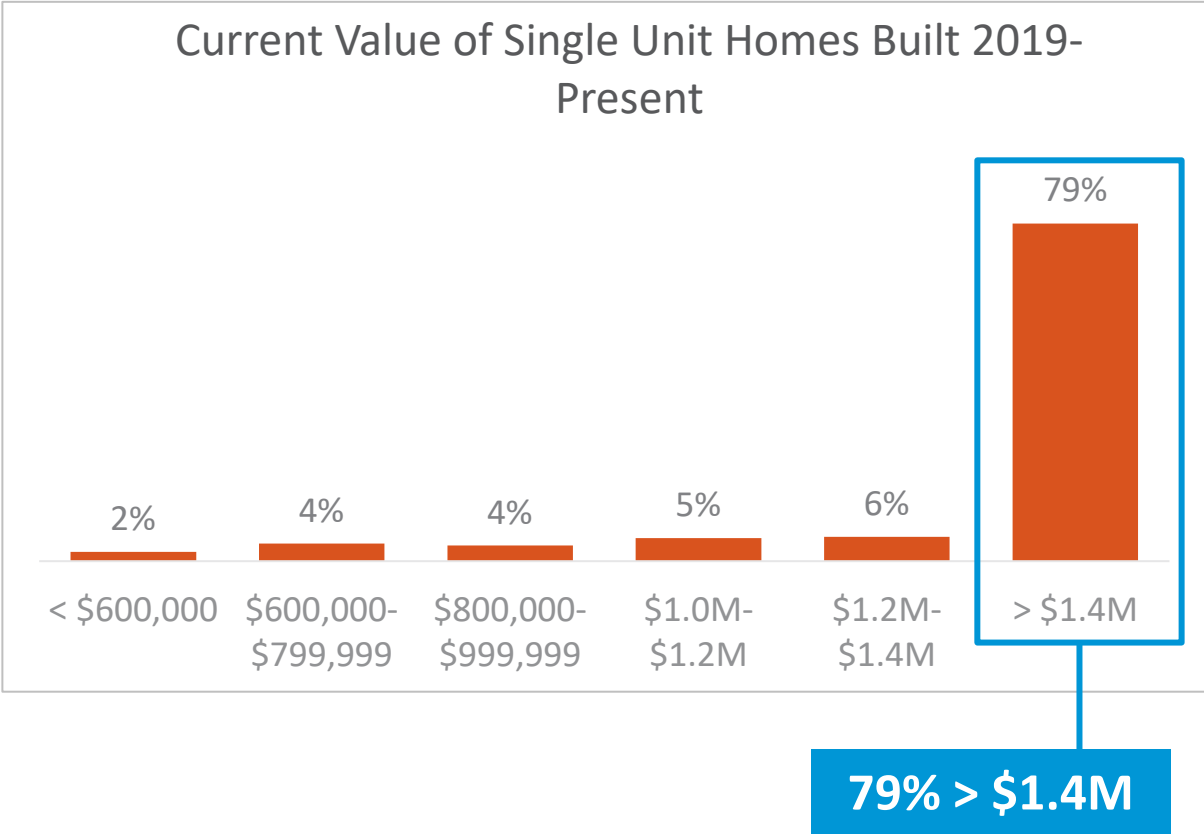
# Background: Zoning slows housing growth

- Zoning constricts housing supply
- ~40% of land in Denver has “single unit” zoning (ADUs are allowed)
- This is ~67% land where Residential uses are allowed



1. Denver Geographic Information Systems data, exclusive of Denver International Airport property

# Current Trends

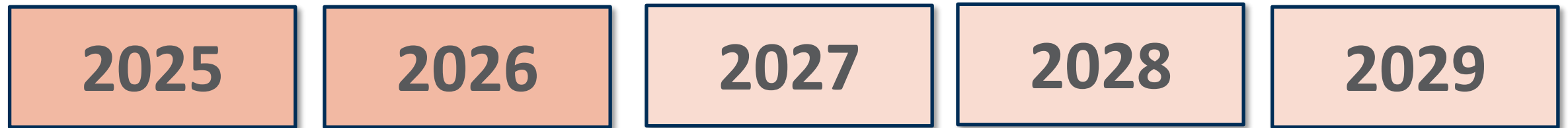


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# Project Phases and Timeline



## Phase One:

Focus on affordability, retaining existing homes, and design

## Phase Two:

Focus on more market-rate middle housing

City Council will consider adopting **Phase One** strategies at the **end of 2026**.



# Engagement to Date

6 Advisory Committee Meetings



3 Joint City Council/ Planning Board Meetings



5 Public Meetings



20+ Neighborhood Organization Meetings



843 Online Survey Responses



UHC team shares strategy with advisory committee

Advisory committee provides input, gives feedback, and asks questions

UHC team works to address comments and update the strategies

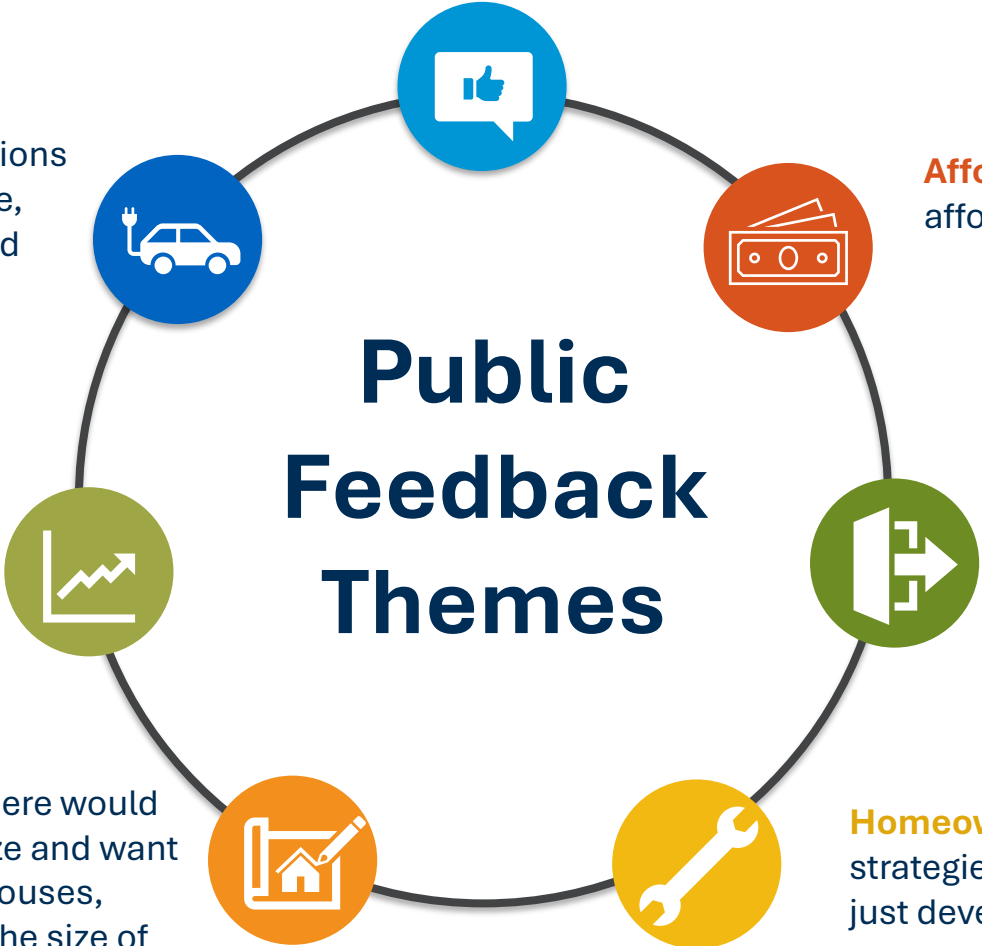
UHC team engages stakeholders, partner agencies, and our community

**Options** - Most support expanding housing choices and allowing more homes in single unit neighborhoods, though many do not

**Infrastructure impacts** – questions around impacts to infrastructure, particularly utilities, parking, and open space on lots

**Monitoring** – desire for clear measures of success, as well as monitoring and reporting

**Design changes** – Some feel there would be too many limits on house size and want to keep allowing 3rd story doghouses, while others support reducing the size of houses and changing 3rd story/roof design, or want further reductions in size and scale



**Affordability** – questions around how affordability will be defined and enforced

**Displacement** – concerns around displacement, unintended consequences, and corporate ownership

**Homeowner Benefits** – desire for phase 1 strategies to be accessible to homeowners, not just developers

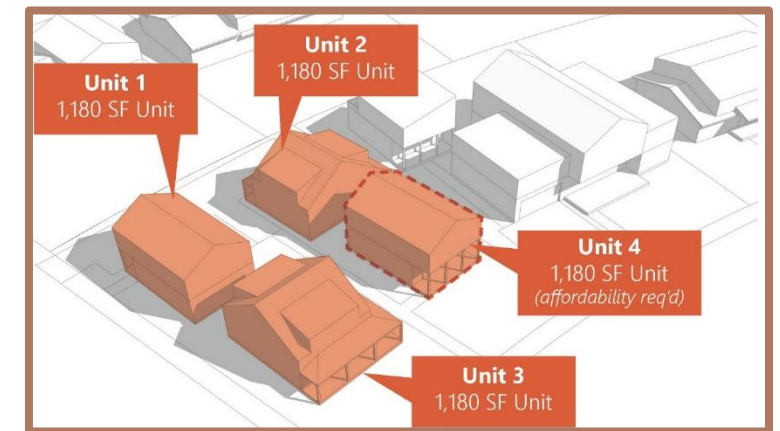
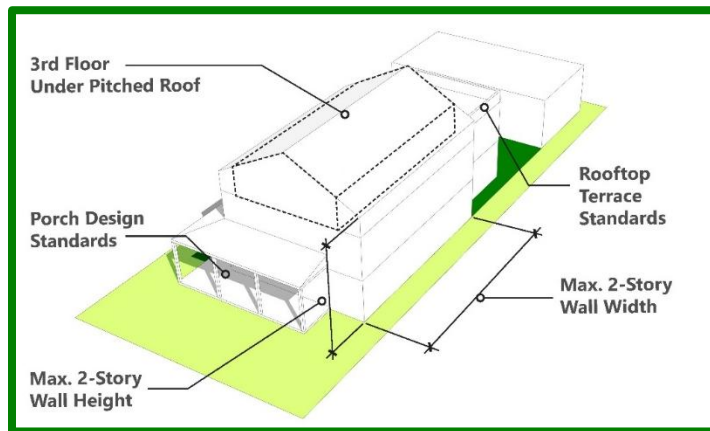
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# Three Key Strategies Proposed in Phase 1

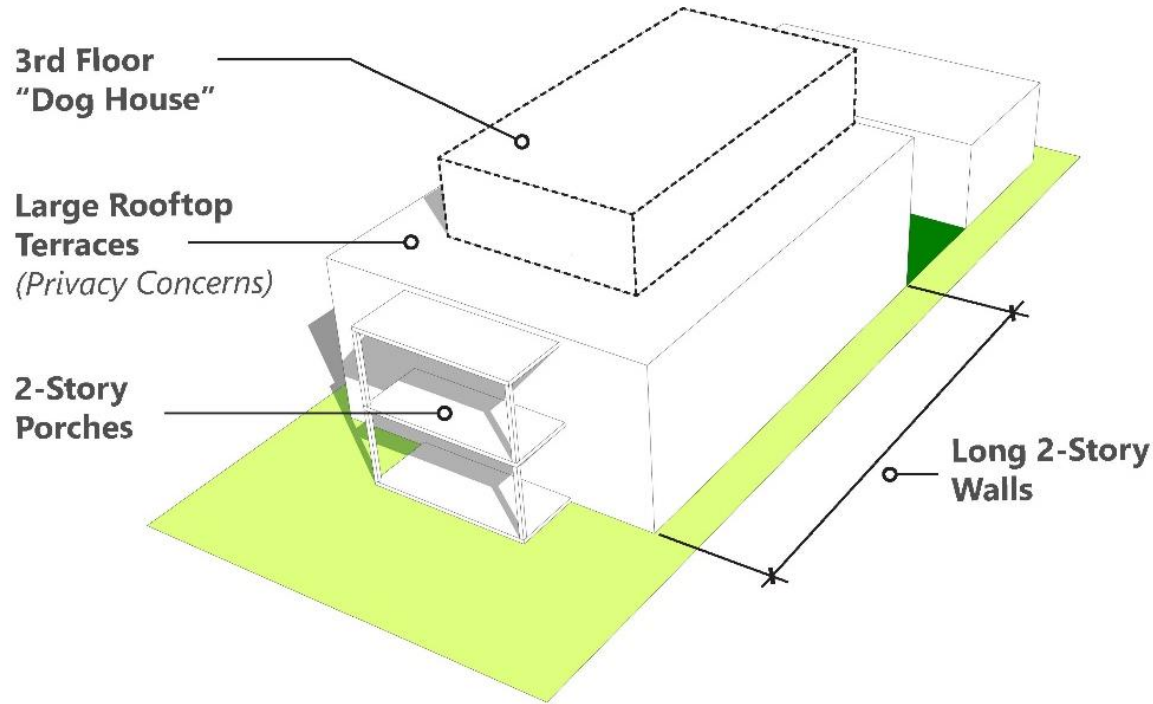
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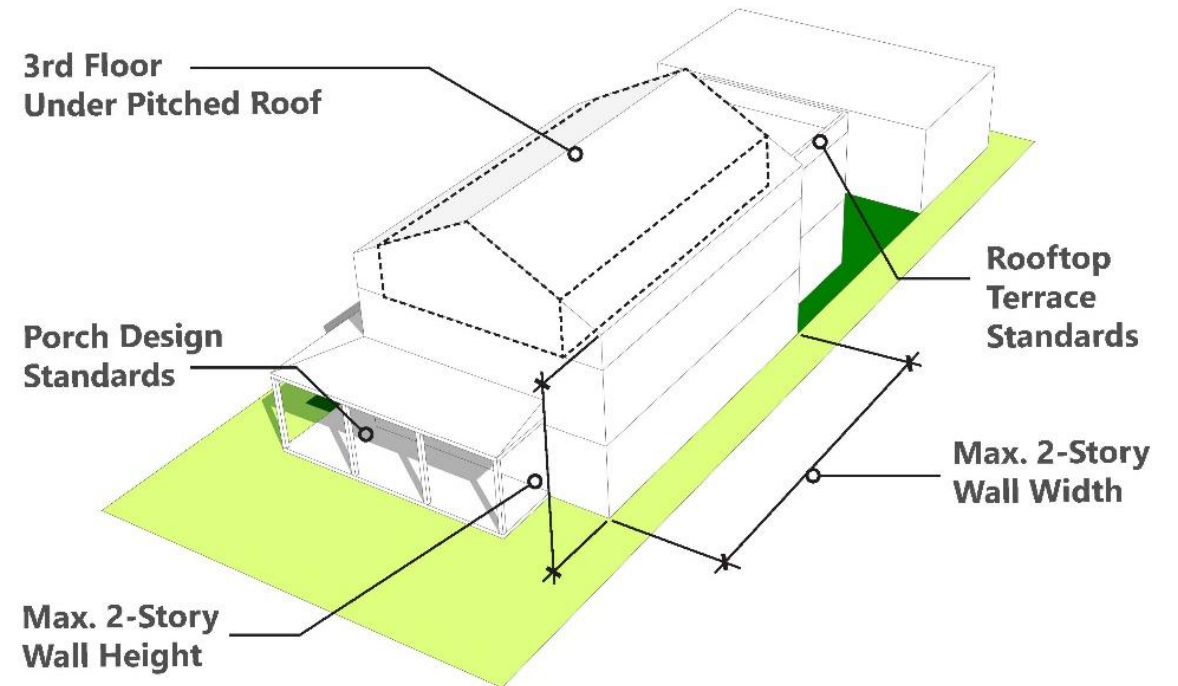
# More Compatible Residential Design in Neighborhoods

*Change zoning standards for small-scale residential buildings so they will be more compatible with existing neighborhoods.*

Concerning outcomes under current standards



Considerations in the proposed standards



# More Compatible Residential Design in Neighborhoods

*Incentivize building more units by limiting the livable floor area of new single-unit homes, and allowing more floor area when more units are built*

## HOW IT WOULD WORK:

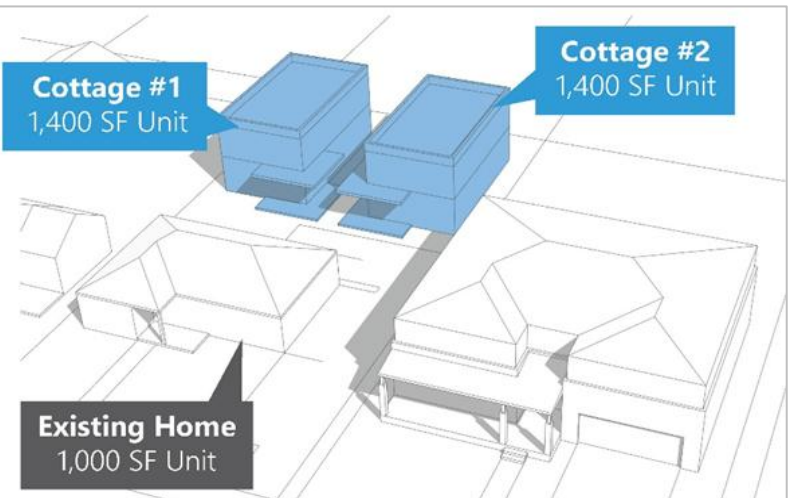
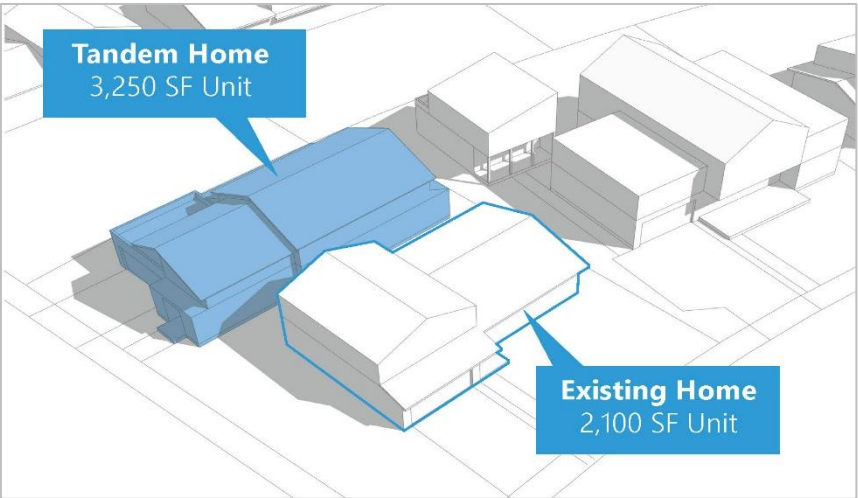
- Maximum above-grade livable area is limited
- More floor area allowed with more units
- More floor area on larger lots
- Existing homes could be rebuilt or remodeled
- Allowed floor area exceeds the citywide average
- **Incentivizes** more units per lot, rather than very large single unit homes
- **Slows** speculative redevelopment

## Example: 5,001 to 7,000 sf lot

Number of Units	Max Above-Grade Livable Area
1	3,500 SF
2	4,500 SF
3	5,000 SF
4+	5,500 SF

# Infill Bonus: Allow More Homes When a Home is Retained.

- New units would be allowed when an existing home is retained.
- Additional primary dwellings can be built alongside the existing home.
- New dwellings can be rented, or sold on separate parcels.

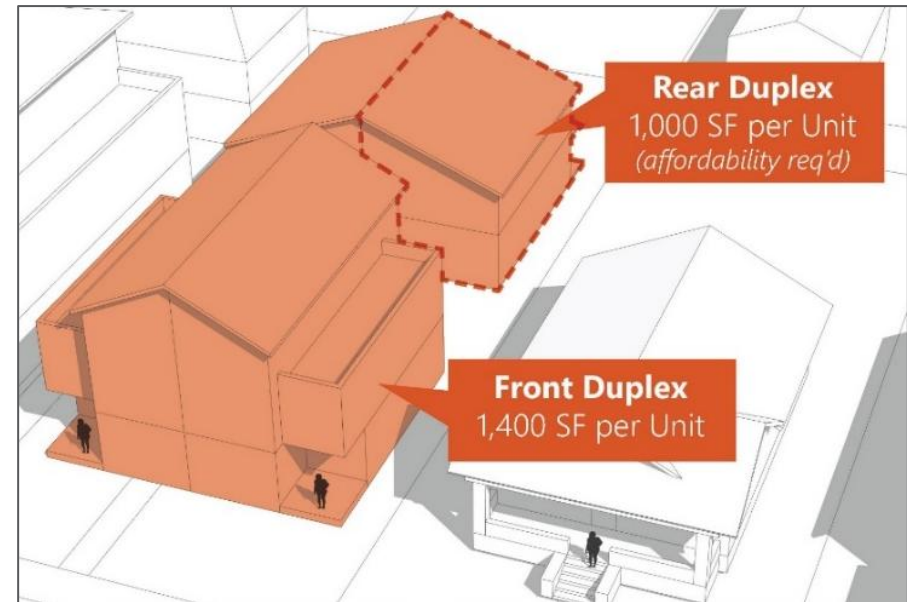
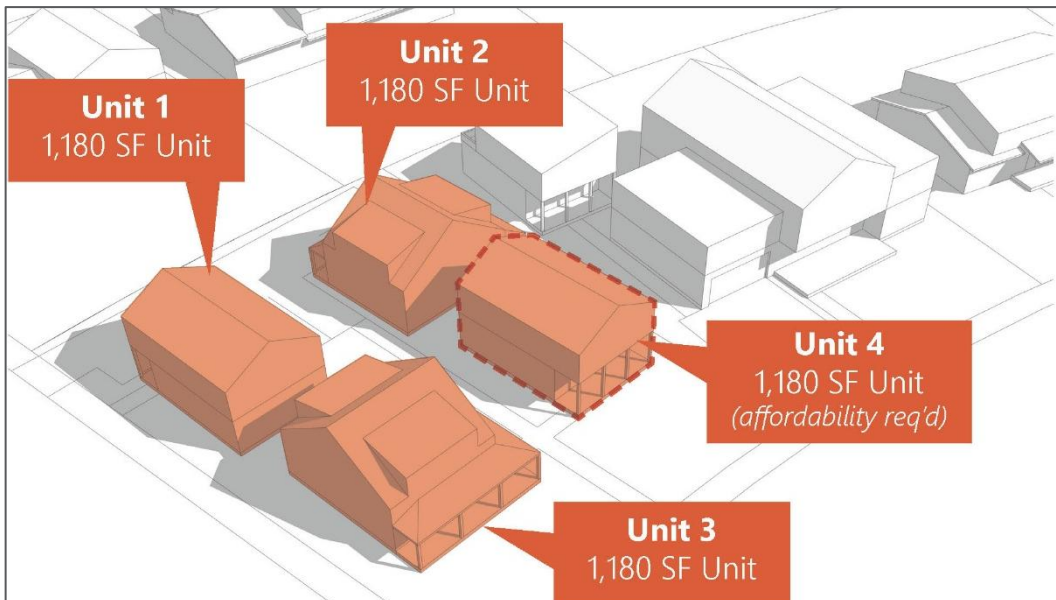


- **Expands** options for property owners and builders
- **Incentivizes** the retention of existing homes.
- **Discourages** demolition

# Affordability Bonus: Allow more homes on a lot when at least one home is affordable

## In Single Unit and Two Unit Districts

- When at least one affordable unit is provided, more housing can be developed on an SU or TU zoned property
- New dwellings allowed in new or existing structures.
- A house cannot be replaced without providing an unit affordable to a family making:  
70% AMI rental/100%AMI Sale



## Is This An Unfunded Mandate?

- No. A mandate requires affordability. This bonus would reward affordability.
- Property owners would unlock additional housing opportunities only if they provide affordable housing

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# Expected Outcomes



*Our consultant team developed a model based on current trends and peer city data that found that if UHC is adopted as currently proposed:*

## Current Trend, January 2010 to April 2025

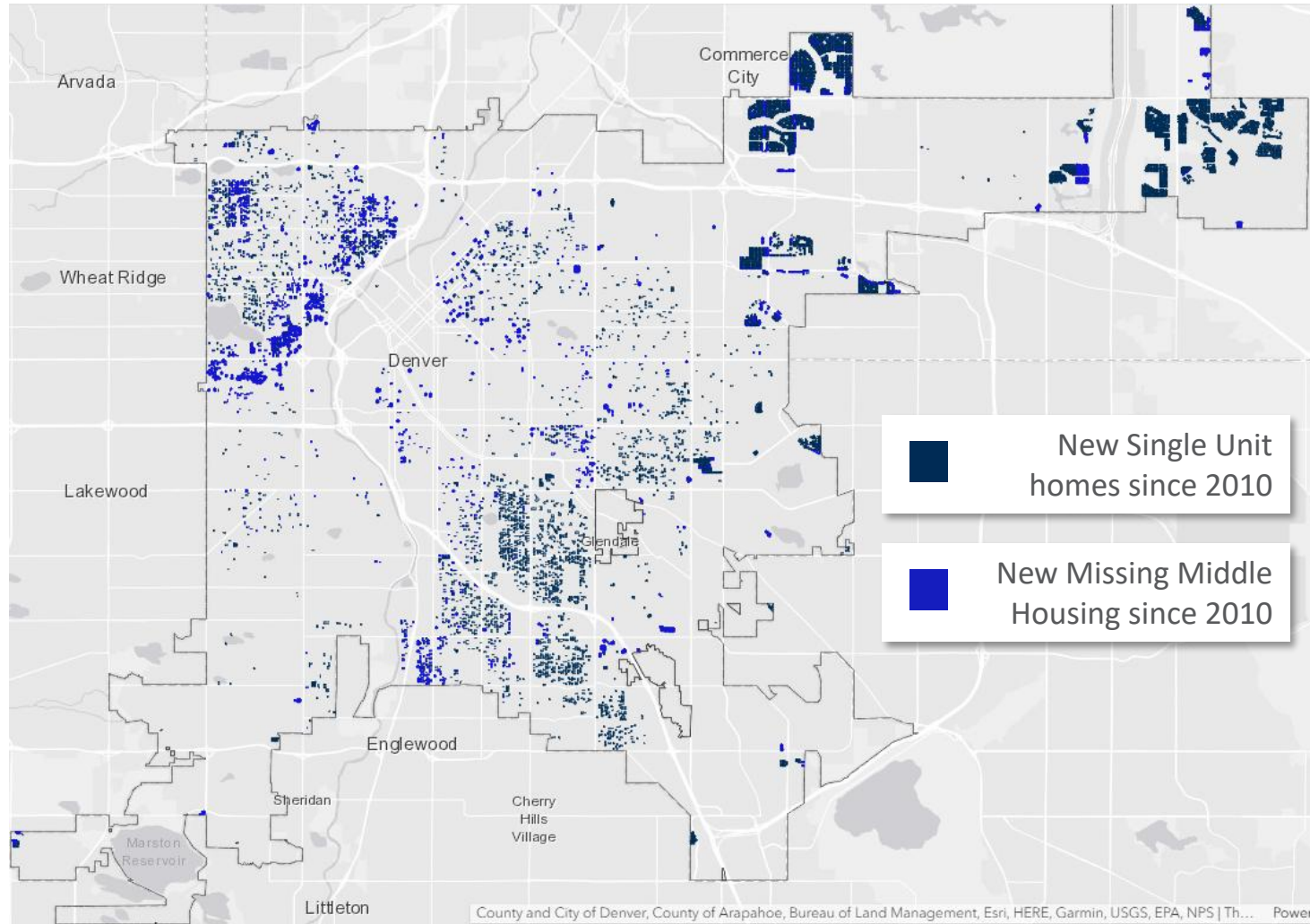
- ~237 single-unit homes are demolished annually, on average.
- Most are replaced by larger and more expensive single-unit homes

## After UHC Adoption

- Infill redevelopment could result in multiple homes instead of one larger home.
- Estimated outcome: **83 – 675 single-unit properties** redeveloped into **249 – 2,025 new missing middle homes annually**, depending on market conditions.
- Depending on the neighborhood, more new homes could come from the infill bonus and additions, not demolition.



# Housing Distribution



UHC is not expected to dramatically shift where new housing is built.

Allowing flexibility will likely change the types of homes being built in areas already experiencing development pressure.