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TO: City Plan Commission
FROM: *NG* Nathan Gwinn, Assistant Planner
RE: Unit Lot Subdivision / Infill Housing Strategies for Core-area neighborhoods

Summary

The Planning and Development Department and City Plan Commission will identify and pursue next steps following the City's adoption in August 2014 of unit lot subdivision procedures for cottage housing and townhouses, resulting in a proposed work program by January 2015. The project will examine specific areas and discuss development strategies.

Background

During deliberations following the City Council public hearing for the unit lot subdivision code amendment on August 18, 2014, it was suggested that the City should encourage the additional opportunities for homeownership in designated multifamily neighborhoods throughout the community. In addition, staff will examine areas with properties zoned for higher uses that are developed below the density range prescribed in the Comprehensive Plan.

Infill development with mid-level housing forms can achieve 10 to 20 units per acre. These forms include cottage housing and townhouses.

Key Definitions:

Cottage Housing	Spokane Municipal Code 17A.020.030: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A grouping of individual structures where each structure contains one dwelling unit.2. The land underneath the structures is not divided into separate lots.3. A cottage housing development may contain no less than six and no more than twelve individual structures in addition to detached accessory buildings for storing vehicles. It may also include a community building, garden shed, or other facility for use of the residents.
Attached Housing	Spokane Municipal Code 17A.020.010: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Two or more dwelling units that are single-family residences on individual lots attached by a common wall at a shared property line. These include:2. Townhouses,3. Row houses, and4. Other similar structures
Townhouse	2009 International Residential Code: A single-family dwelling unit constructed in a group of three or more attached units in which each unit extends from foundation to roof and with a yard or public way on at least two sides.
Infill Development	The City Comprehensive Plan defines Infill Development as "development of vacant lots and parcels within an already built up area."

Unit Lot Subdivision	While there is no formally adopted definition, Unit Lot Subdivision is a procedure to separate units within a cottage housing or townhouse project into two or more “unit lots” that can then be sold or leased. An individual unit lot may not resemble a typical lot in terms of setbacks and lot dimensions, however the project as a whole meets development standards, including density and land use, based on the zoning designation. A subdivision or short subdivision procedure is used, depending on the number of units. The procedures were adopted for existing projects by the City earlier this year and became part of the Spokane Municipal Code in section 17G.080.065.
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Such developments might satisfy market demand, fill in the middle ground between higher and lower-density areas, and support transit and economic development of identified growth centers. Using remaining land more efficiently would increase Spokane’s housing density overall and help the City provide services and utilities to its customers with lower costs. Encouraging development of new townhouses and other moderately compact forms of housing would increase the supply of affordable home ownership opportunities for prospective residents.

Development capacity in core neighborhoods will be reviewed. Since the 2010 Census, outside of the Kendall Yards and River Run Planned Unit Developments, there have been few townhouses built, and fewer cottage housing projects. Areas of Residential High Density (RHD-35), with a 35-foot height limit, and Residential Multifamily (RMF) in the core neighborhoods will be examined for factors such as numbers of housing units, vacant parcels, and acreage. These areas are designated for residential development by the Comprehensive Plan for 15 or more housing units per acre. As aggregated parcels, none of the study areas in these neighborhoods has this density.

The Residential Single-family (RSF) zone is designated for residential development at the lowest residential density of four to ten housing units per acre. In these areas, the existing cottage housing regulations allow a density bonus of 20 percent. For attached single-family dwellings on separate lots, the existing regulations specify a maximum of two attached units. Some flexibility for increased density is allowed based on proximity to services or the approval of a Planned Unit Development. For example, land uses allowed in the Office zoning district are allowed to a depth of 250 feet in the RSF zone behind a principal arterial adjacent to a commercial zone under Spokane Municipal Code subsections [17C.110.110\(B\)](#) and [17C.320.080\(J\)](#). Another form of higher density may be permitted through a rezone from RSF to Residential Single-family Compact (RSF-C) within a quarter of a mile of land designated CC Core, described under SMC [17C.110.030\(C\)](#).

Comprehensive Plan Goals

Policies found in the Comprehensive Plan will be assessed for compatibility. These generally encourage a variety of housing form and density, promoting efficient use of land at planned densities, providing affordable housing and preserving open space within and between developments.

Strategies for Development

The community can ensure development regulations reflect standard practices for mid-level housing and remove identified barriers where necessary. This project proposes text amendments to expand the recent unit lot subdivision regulations in appropriate areas and other associated sections of code, including development regulations for cottage housing developments and townhouses. Other implementing measures include the public and private investment following adoption of the regulations and programs that require participation and in some cases voluntary efforts across the community.

Process

A timeline will be established for the project to study the identified areas and discuss proposed text amendments with advisory groups, with two to three periodic updates to the Plan Commission at workshops through the fall. The project will be presented to the City Council during the first quarter of 2015.

The Spokane Municipal Code is available online at www.spokanecity.org/services/documents/smc/.

This information is provided in anticipation of discussion at your upcoming Commission Workshop on Wednesday, October 22nd. Please contact me if you have any questions at 625-6893 or ngwinn@spokanecity.org.