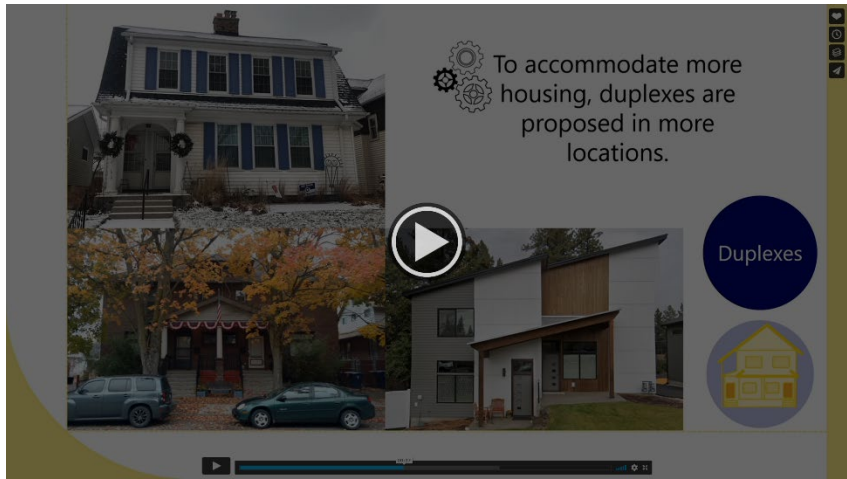




# Residential Development Code Initiatives Duplexes in Residential Zones

Possible changes related to **duplexes** in **Residential Single-Family (RSF)** zones were suggested in the Spokane [Housing Action Plan \(HAP\)](#) Strategy A1 (pp. 22-24); [HAP Implementation Plan](#) Strategy III.3; and [Housing Emergency Proclamation](#) Action Item 2.i.

Topic	Duplexes in Residential Single-Family zones
Code	SMC <a href="#">Section 17C.110.115</a> and <a href="#">Section 17C.110.310</a>
Proposed Changes	Permit duplexes in RSF and RSF-C zones, and update design standards.
Watch the Video to Learn More	

## What is a duplex?

A duplex is a building that contains two separate dwelling units, contained on one lot. The units share a common wall or common floor/ceiling, and they are also referred to as stacked flats or side-by-side houses. Duplexes, and other -plexes, differ from attached housing like townhomes or rowhouses which are separate units on individual lots that share common walls and lot lines.



*Side-by-side duplexes with parking behind*  
© 2021 Google



*Front-loaded duplexes © 2021 Google*

## How will this change the character of my neighborhood?

Changes to neighborhoods would be dependent on developers constructing duplexes on undeveloped lots, renovating existing housing stock to create two units, or redeveloping lots with duplexes. Effects to Spokane neighborhoods may be minor, partially due to lag between code changes and the construction of units, but more importantly because a duplex will be converted from an existing single-family home or built new with design features to promote scale and function similar to a single-family home.

## What are the benefits of duplexes for Spokane's housing supply?

Across the US there is growing interest in smaller homes, walkable neighborhoods, multi-generational living, aging in place, and shorter commutes. Yet, this growing demand for walkable housing isn't limit to living in a downtown. Walkability is a spectrum ranging from the more dense downtown, to less intense density around commercial centers, and "neighborhood living" in areas like Perry, Monroe, and Garland. Neighborhood living is the ability to enjoy amenities—parks and trail connections, transit stops, schools, and neighborhood-scale retail and commercial— within walking distance of the home in your unique Spokane neighborhood.

Gently increasing the density of residential zones in Spokane increases housing choice, both in the types and location of housing, and also in affordability. And there are economic ripple effects. More housing creates activity in other areas: hardware and nursery purchases, work for skilled trades like electricians or plumbers, and more rooftops means more customers to support Spokane businesses. In addition, increasing the density of housing utilizes tax dollars more efficiently, plus added customers increase sales tax revenue.

Where we live is about more than just shelter. Our location connects us with family, friends, community, transportation, employment and more. When there are no housing options we can afford in the neighborhood we want to live in, we lose out on those opportunities. Increasing housing options in residential zones increases opportunities for all residents.



*Duplex example with garage, driveway and main entrances on opposite streets.*

### How are they currently regulated in Spokane?

With rare exceptions on lots adjacent to other zones, duplexes are currently not permitted in the RSF, or RSF-C zoning districts. Where they are permitted, and in other districts, here's a brief overview of the development standards:

- A duplex must meet the lot development standards for the base zone (see [Table 17C.110-3](#)).
- The maximum height is limited in the same way as a single-family unit.
- Design standards ensure the unit is compatible with the character of the existing neighborhood (see [Section 17C.110.310\(E\)](#) SMC).

**Zoom into**  
[Map Spokane](#)  
for your zoning  
district.

### What are the proposed changes to regulations?

The City is proposing several code changes which effect construction of duplexes:

- First, the City is proposing to allow duplexes in the RSF and RSF-C zones.
- Second, to incentivize the construction of smaller more affordable units, when each unit is 1,200 square feet or smaller, a duplex gets a density calculation bonus which counts the residential building as a single dwelling unit.
- Additional changes include requiring a minimum of 250 square feet of outdoor area for each unit of a duplex; and
- The City is proposing updates for simple, flexible design standards that will apply to all housing types, including attached houses, to ensure that new homes will be well-designed and would add to the quality of the established neighborhood.

## How can I comment on the proposed changes?

You can email public comment to [developmentcode@spokanecity.org](mailto:developmentcode@spokanecity.org), or contact the project staff listed on the [project webpage](#). Members of the public are encouraged to testify at public hearings both before Plan Commission and City Council.

## Proposed Draft

Updated design standards that apply to all housing types were detailed for Plan Commission on January 26, 2022 and you can review the [slides](#) for an overview. You can review the proposed draft text which was taken before Plan Commission on March 9, 2022 by viewing the [agenda packet](#). At the March 9 workshop, Plan Commission discussion focused on the design standards which apply to all housing types, requesting another workshop for discussion, but were otherwise supportive of the code amendments to incentivize smaller duplexes and allow them in the RSF and RSF-C zones. You can view the Plan Commission [workshop recording](#) for discussion on the proposed code amendment.



*Side driveway by duplex with detached garage.*