City of Asheville Staff Report

City Council Meeting Date: August 25, 2026

Staff Resources: Chris Collins, AICP, Planning & Urban Design Interim Director

Action Requested: Adoption of a zoning text amendment to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), Chapter 7 of the Asheville Code of Ordinances, to amend UDO sections 7-2-5, 7-8-1(d), 7-16-1(28) regarding zoning permission for Duplexes and Townhomes.

Summary of Petition:

- The zoning text amendment proposes to change the current allowances for duplexes and townhomes as follows:
    - Allows duplexes as a by-right use in the following districts where the use is not currently allowed:
        - RS-2, RS-4, RS-8, NB, RAD-NT, RAD-LYH, RAD-RES
    - Revises the special requirements for Townhomes (Dwellings, townhouse) to allow a maximum of two attached townhomes in RS-2, RS-4 and RS-8;
    - The townhouse changes are intended to allow a duplex to take advantage of the lot width, setback, and area requirements so that a duplex may be subdivided along with the land each unit occupies for ownership purposes.
- From April of 2025 to April of 2026, the City received 18 applications to permit duplex construction.
- This proposed amendment is supported by and promotes City-initiated but non-adopted plans and studies as follows:
    - Affordable Housing Plan (2024):
        - Goal 3.2 - Reduce regulatory barriers [to housing] citywide
    - Missing Middle Housing Study (2023):
        - Zoning Recommendation 4 - Allow Wider Range of Housing Options through By-Right Review.
- This proposed amendment aims to increase the available land for duplex construction and allow for individual ownership of duplex units, thereby expanding the potential for housing unit development and ownership opportunities.
- City staff held a stakeholder engagement event on May 20, 2026. This event included representation from neighborhood organizations (including Legacy Neighborhoods), home builders, realtors, and other stakeholder organizations. A summary from this event is attached to this staff report as Exhibit B.
- A public hearing was held before the Planning & Zoning Commission on August 5, 2026. The Planning & Zoning Commission recommended approval of the amendment with minor changes by a vote of 6-1.
- The changes recommended by the Planning & Zoning Commission have been incorporated into this request and were as follows:
    - Removal of the existing restriction limiting a townhouse cluster size to 4 units within the RM6 zoning district;
    - Removal of the existing restriction requiring townhouses to provide parking to the rear of the building unless a garage is provided.

Staff Recommendation:

- Staff recommends approval of this zoning text amendment request based on the reasons provided within this report.

Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and Other Plans:

Living Asheville Comprehensive Plan (2018)

- The proposed text amendment supports several goals in the Living Asheville Comprehensive Plan, including:
    - **Increase and Diversify the Housing Supply** - by promoting zoning policies to encourage more housing (p. 179).
    - **Encourage Responsible Growth -** by promoting small-scale residential units on residential lots with limits aimed at encouraging compatibility and creating flexibility within the planning, permitting, and construction process (p. 130).

Missing Middle Housing Study (2023)

- The proposed text amendment is listed as a potential anti-displacement strategy in the Missing Middle Housing Study & Displacement Risk Assessment (Document link, page 134). Allowing duplexes or single-family lot splits provides more housing opportunities on the same lot, which can help to minimize the displacement of vulnerable populations.

Council Vision 2036 Focus Area(s):

This proposal supports the following:

- **Quality Affordable Housing** - By enabling a range of innovative housing options throughout the City.
- **Well-planned and Livable Community -** By enabling a range of housing choices at a small scale that does not harm neighborhood safety while promoting socioeconomic diversity.

Committee(s):

- Planning & Zoning Commission - June 3, 2026 - Heard Report
- Planning & Zoning Commission - August 5, 2025 - Recommended Approval, Vote: 6-1

Suggested Motion:

- I move to approve the proposed wording amendments to Chapter 7 of the Asheville Code of Ordinances and find that the proposed amendments are reasonable, are in the public interest, are consistent with the City's comprehensive plan and meet the development needs of the community in that the amendments will: 1) Promote zoning policies to encourage more housing; 2) Implement one of the suggested anti-displacement housing supply strategies identified in the Missing Middle Housing Study; and,3) Promote small-scale residential units on residential lots to encourage neighborhood compatibility and create flexibility within the planning, permitting, and construction process.

Attachment(s):

- This document contains the mark ups - Mark-Up Strike Through Document

- This document contains the draft ordinance - Ordinance
- This document contains the summary of the engagement event held on May 20, 2026 - Public Engagement Summary Report - Exhibit B