Work Session 5 / December 11, 2025

Bringing It All Together

Missing Middle Housing Work Group

Santa Clara County Planning Collaborative
21 Elements

21 Elements

Santa Clara County Planning Collaborative

Who’s in the room?

Please type your name, jurisdiction and title in the chat

Today's Agenda

Recap of Session 4

Creating a Middle Housing Strategy

- Tips for Getting Started
- Berkeley's Middle Housing Zoning
- San José's Moderate Income Housing Strategy

Breakout Discussions

Talking About Middle Housing Middle Housing

Middle Housing Resources

Session 4 Recap

Defining Goals for Middle Income Housing Strategies

What are the goals for your strategy?

- **Stability?**
  - Predictable, stable costs
  - Retaining existing residents and workforce
  - Preventing displacement
- **Self-determination?**
  - Greater decision-making and autonomy for residents over their housing
- **Wealth building?**
  - Repairing past harms
  - Pathways to intergenerational wealth

Who are you aiming to serve?
How will you measure success?

Choosing an Effective Strategy

- Strategies for middle income rentals and homeownership are **different**
- Effective strategies are **multi-faceted**
- Use **regulatory levers** like:
  - Ministerial approvals and streamlined processes
  - Increased density limits and reduced parking requirements
  - Objective design standards
  - Zoning vacant and underutilized land for multifamily housing
  - Aligning infrastructure investments with land for multifamily housing
  - Incentives for smaller units for homeownership
  - Incentives for family-friendly units for rentals

Closing the Gap

- Regulatory levers/zoning are key, but only get you so far
- **Close the gap** with:
  - Subsidies for buildings and people
  - Capital investments in development
  - PLHA funds for homeownership
  - Loan and downpayment assistance programs
  - Alternative ownership structures like land trusts, limited equity cooperatives, etc.

Creating a Local Strategy

Policy + Program Process

1. Implement Regulatory Levers (Zoning)
2. Create Subsidies (Buildings, People)
3. Invest in Innovative/ Alternative Models

Policy Goals

- ❑ Stability
- ❑ Choice & Diversity
- ❑ Self-Determination
- ❑ Wealth Building

Breakout Group Poll

Where is your jurisdiction in the strategy process?

Fill out the poll:

1. Exploring
2. In Process
3. Implementing

Discussion goals

- ❑ Identify overlap and potential collaboration opportunities with neighbors
- ❑ What tools and resources are most helpful going forward?
- ❑ Is there a cohort that wants to continue meeting and working together?

Creating a Middle Housing Strategy: Tips for Getting Started

So you want to do "middle housing"…

CREATING A MIDDLE HOUSING STRATEGY

1. Define Goals and Desired Outcomes
2. Identify Existing Constraints & Levers
3. Identify Policies, Programs and Resources that Align for Outcomes
4. Develop a Near-Term Action Plan

STEP 1: Define Goals and Desired Outcomes

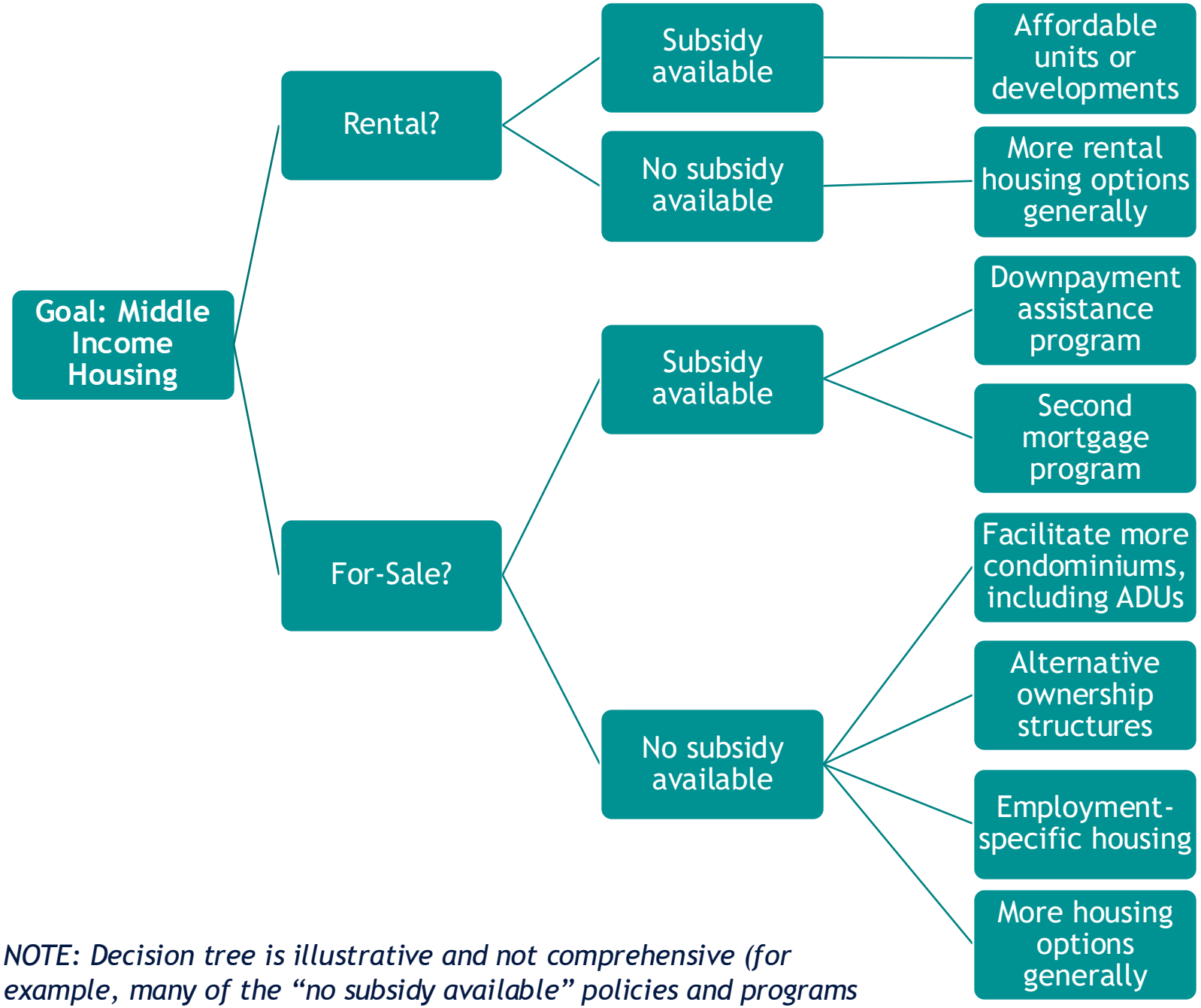
- **Get clear on your primary goal:** Are you focused on middle-**income** housing or missing middle housing **typology**? *There is overlap but one does not necessarily lead to the other.*
  - If it's Middle **Income**…what is "middle income" in your community?
  - If your goal is to create more of Missing Middle Housing **Types**…what are the specific outcomes you're seeking?
- **Who or what is driving the effort?** And what do those stakeholders mean by "middle income?" Is it about ownership opportunities or rentals, too?
- Clearly communicate the project's **goals and desired outcomes**

STEP 2: Identify Existing Constraints & Levers

1. **Funding**: Do you have funding to subsidize middle income housing? What is the priority relative to other funding needs?
2. **Financial/tax incentives** (property tax exemptions, JPAs)
3. **Code** (inclusionary zoning, incentives, zoning changes)
4. **State law (**opportunities to utilize and build upon state law)
5. **Land/site control:** What public properties/assets might be used to support these goals?
6. **Market**: Affordability/Desirability Mismatch

STEP 3: Identify Policies, Programs and Resources that Align for Outcomes:

Middle Income Housing



NOTE: Decision tree is illustrative and not comprehensive (for example, many of the "no subsidy available" policies and programs are also relevant in situations where subsidies are available)

STEP 3: Identify Policies, Programs and Resources that Align for Outcomes:

Missing Middle Housing Typologies

1. **Align your zoning code** with desired outcomes
2. **Leverage state law:** What tools are available that you can harness or build upon?
    - SB 6
    - SB 9
    - SB 10
    - SB 684
    - ADU Laws
    - Density Bonus Law

STEP 4: Develop a Near-Term Action Plan

Based on goals and priorities:

1. Integrate regulatory updates into city work plan
2. Create coordinating group with key partners (funders, CBOs, developers)
3. Define resource commitments (funds, program staff, land…)
4. Develop program guidelines (eligibility, performance metrics, equity sharing, etc.)
5. Monitor and report on progress

Berkeley's Middle Housing Zoning

Justin Horner

MIDDLE HOUSING

Justin Horner, Principal Planner
jhorner@berkeleyca.gov

CITY OF BERKELEY

AGENDA

- Background
- Middle Housing Zoning Changes Summary
- Some Key Aspects of Berkeley's Experience

What is Middle Housing?

Multiple Units on One Property – Not Single Family and Not Podium or High-Rise

Existing Middle Housing

New Middle Housing

Existing and New Middle Housing

Why did we consider Middle Housing?

City Council Referrals + Reports

- Housing Accountability Act (2017)
- Missing Middle Housing (2019)
- Eliminating Exclusionary Zoning (2021)

Housing Element Update (January 2023)

- Program 29 – Middle Housing
  1. Amend Affordable Housing Fee schedule to create a sliding scale based on residential unit floor area
  2. Amend BMC to allow multi-unit development on one lot in lower density residential districts
  3. Consider amending the Demolition Ordinance to provide a by-right pathway for single-family homes that would result in a net increase in density

SETTING THE TABLE for Middle Housing

- Off-street parking reform (2021)
- Affordable Housing Impact Fee changes (2024)
- Demolition Ordinance revisions (2024)

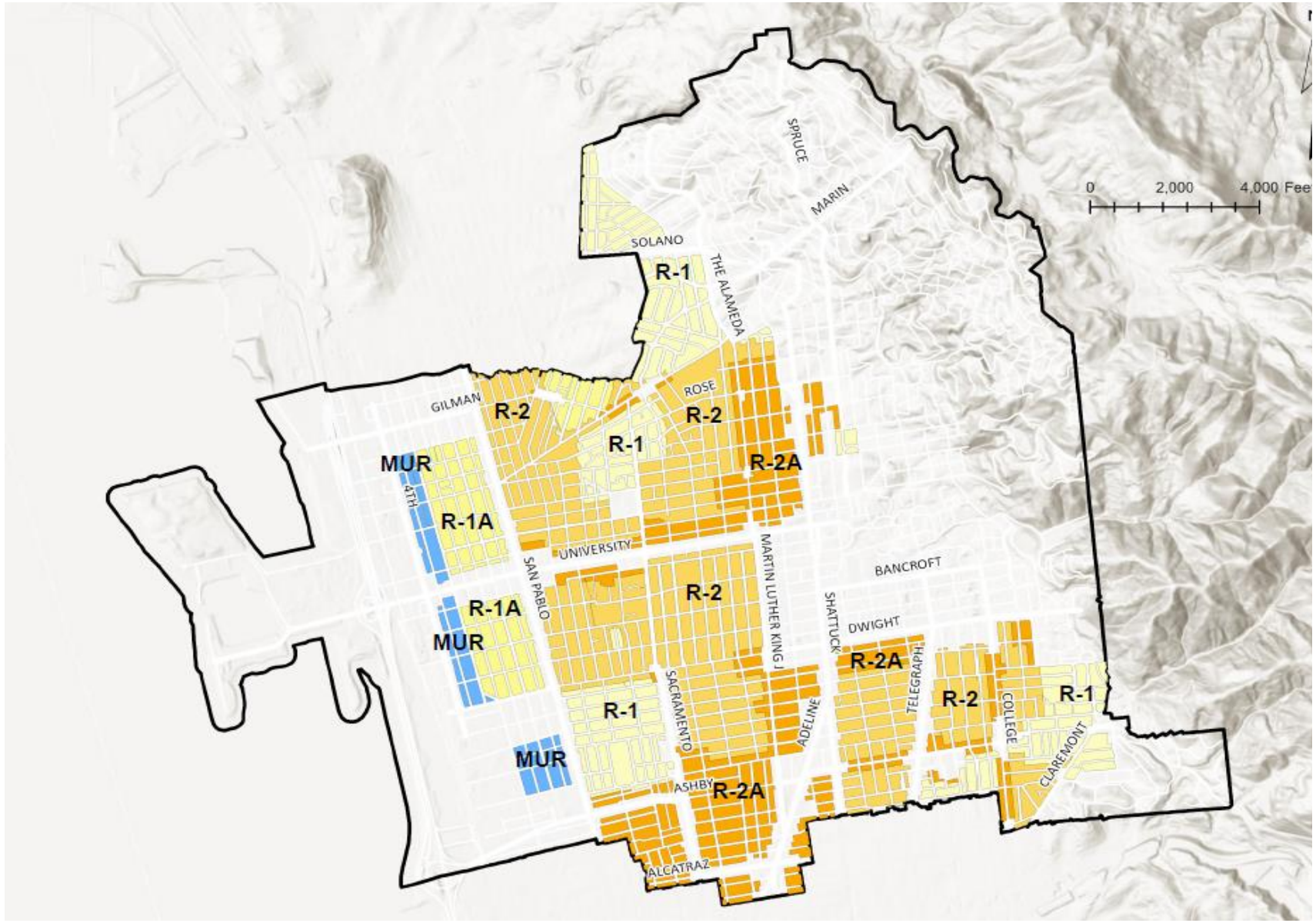
MIDDLE HOUSING STANDARDS

Final Council Action
July 2025

Effective Date
November 1, 2025

1. Allowed Uses & Permits
2. Minimum & Maximum Density
3. Maximum Height
4. Maximum Lot Coverage
5. Open Space
6. Setbacks & Building Separation

LOWER DENSITY DISTRICTS



LAND USE AND PERMITS

- All residential-only uses are *ministerial*
- All additions compliant with development standards are *ministerial*
- Added permits for additional bedrooms were *removed*
- No design standards
- Neighbor noticing required, like for ADUs
- Zoning Code amended to allow conditions of approval for ministerial projects

Minimum & Maximum Density

Existing Regulations

	R-1	R-1A	R-2	R-2A	MU-R
Min. Lot Size	5,000 sf	5,000 sf	5,000 sf	5,000 sf	None
Min. Lot Area Per Unit	5,000 sf	2,250 sf	2,500 sf	1,650 sf	1,250 sf

***Example*: Permitted units on a typical 5,000 sf lot…**

Min. # Units	1	1	1	1	1
Max. # Units	1	2	2	3	4
+ ADUs	One conversion + one new + one Junior ADU on lot with one single family home (or) Two ADUs on a lot with new multi-family building				

Minimum & Maximum Density (Units per Acre)

Adopted Regulations

	R-1	R-2	R-2A	MU-R
Min. Density (du/acre)	10	10	20	20
Max. Density (du/acre)	70	70	70	70

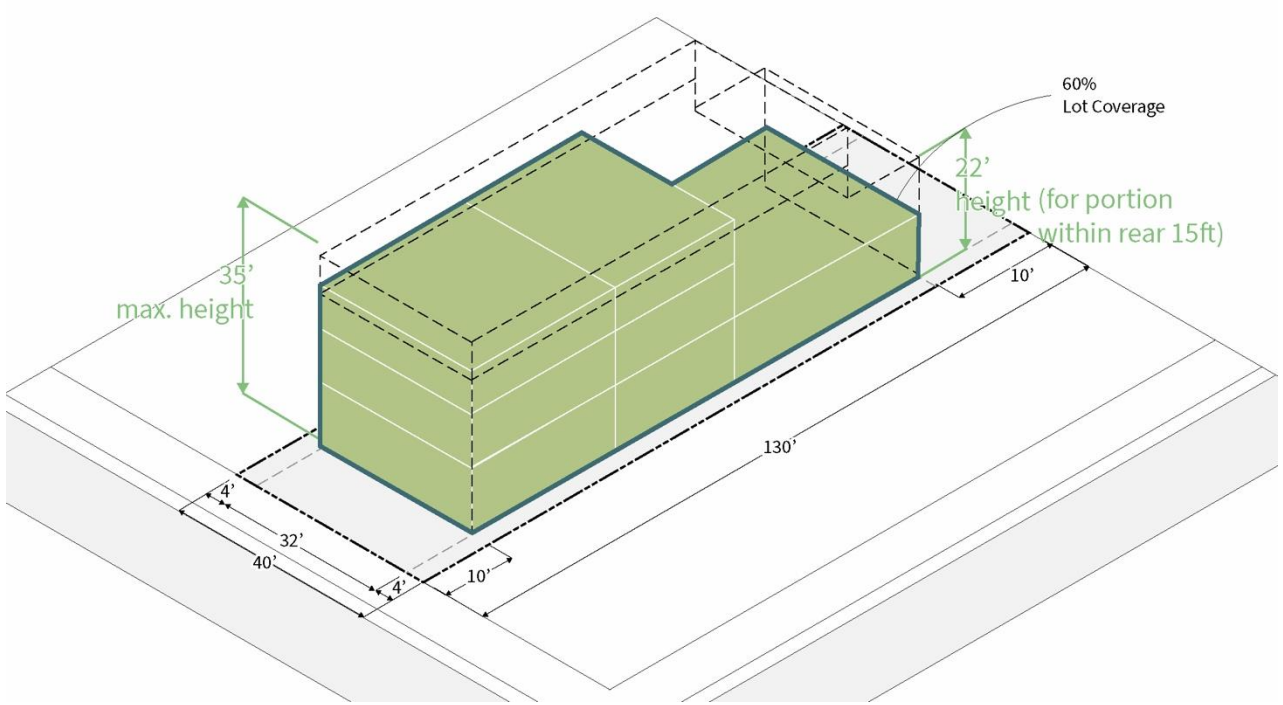
Example: **Permitted units on a typical 5,000 sf lot…**

Min. # Units	1	1	2	2
Max. # Units	5	6	7	7
+ ADUs	One conversion + one new + one Junior ADU on lot with one single family home (or) Two ADUs on a lot with new multi-family building			

Building Height Standard

35-foot maximum height and 3 stories

22 feet max height within rear 15 feet of lot



Lot Coverage

CURRENT STANDARDS

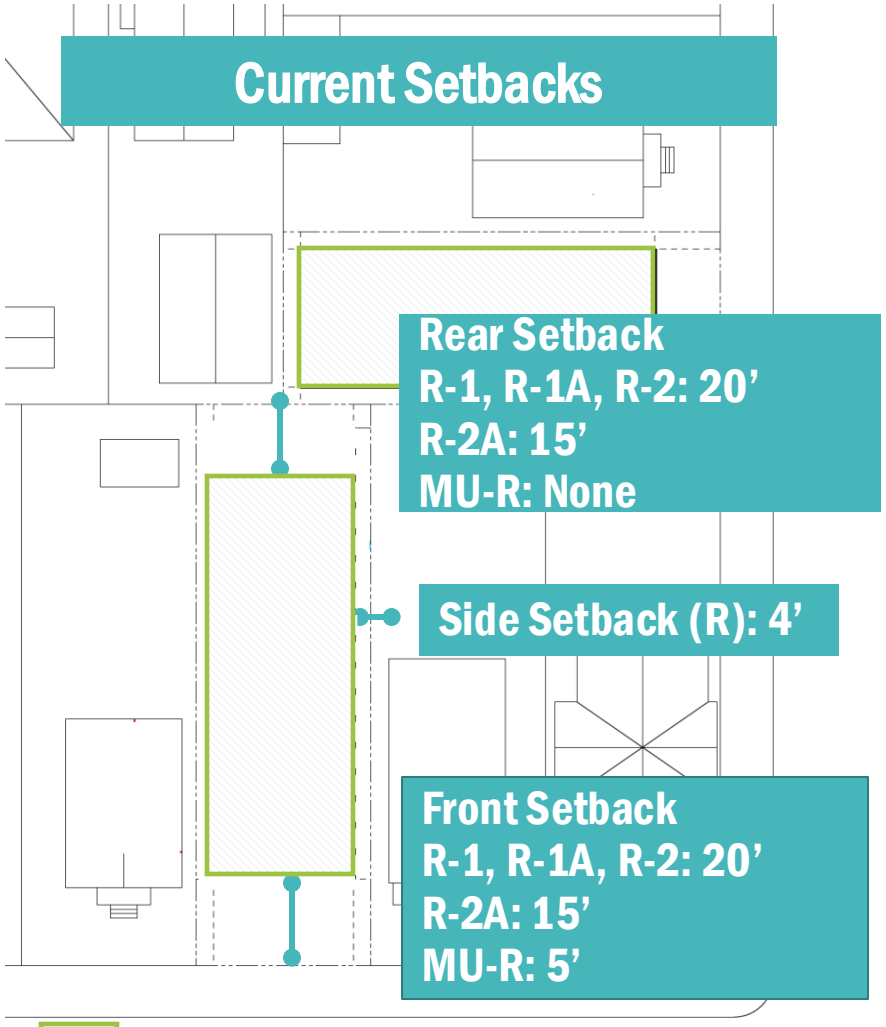
	R-1	R-1A	R-2	R-2A	MU-R
1 story	40%	40%	45%	45%	100%
2 story			40%	40%	
3 story			35%	35%	

PROPOSED STANDARDS

	R-1, R-2 and R-2A	MU-R
All residential projects	60%	100%

Minimum Setbacks

Current Setbacks



Rear Setback
R-1, R-1A, R-2: 20’
R-2A: 15’
MU-R: None

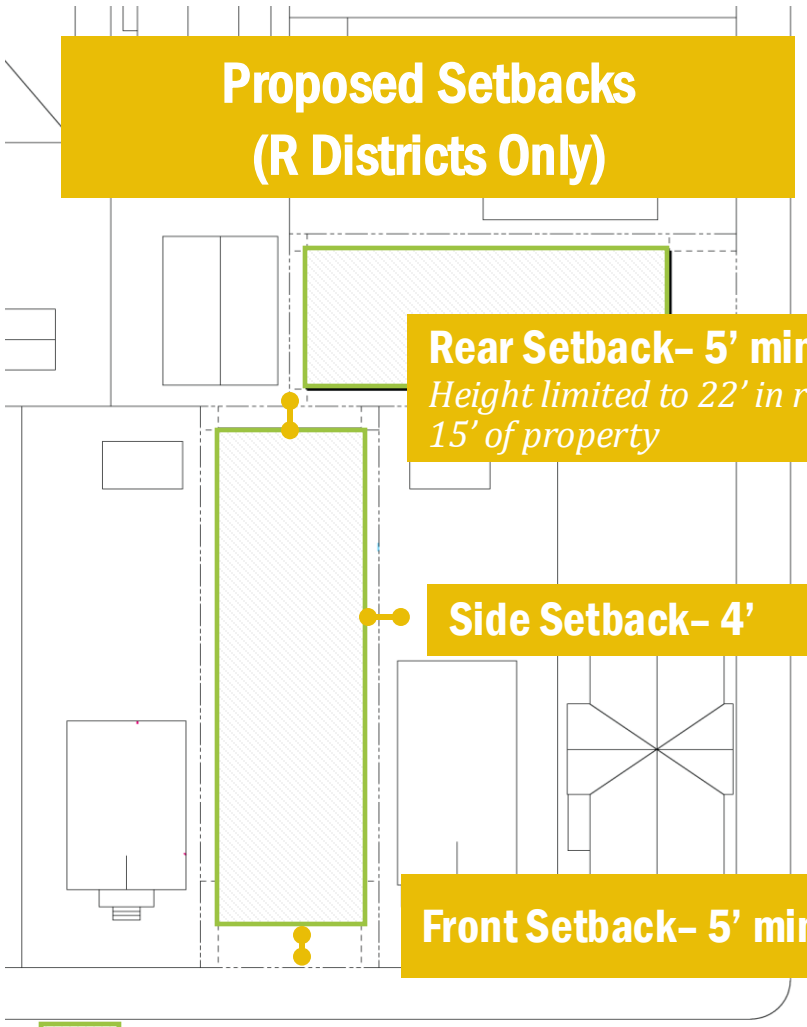
Side Setback (R): 4’

Front Setback
R-1, R-1A, R-2: 20’
R-2A: 15’
MU-R: 5’

Developable Area

Rear + Front Setback must be at least 20’

Proposed Setbacks (R Districts Only)



Rear Setback– 5’ min.
Height limited to 22’ in rear 15’ of property

Side Setback– 4’

Front Setback– 5’ min

Developable Area

Building Separation (for buildings *on the same lot*)

CURRENT STANDARDS

	R-1	R-1A	R-2	R-2A	MU-R
1 story	N/A	8 ft	8 ft	8 ft	None
2 story		12 ft	12 ft	12 ft	
3 story		16 ft	16 ft	16 ft	

PROPOSED STANDARDS

All residential projects	5 ft

NEXT STEPS

- AB 1033 (ADU Condos)
- SB 684
  (Small Lot Subdivisions)*

* Watch those maximum densities!

TAKEAWAYS/LESSONS

- Berkeley's historic role in creating single family zoning
- Affordability crisis
- Climate and land use
- Generational differences
- Demolition and displacement
- Hillside Overlay/Fire Zone
- Time/patience
- *Political will*

San José's Moderate Income Housing Strategy

Kristen Clements
Jerad Ferguson

San José's Moderate-Income Housing Strategy

- **Origin story**
  - City Council direction – Housing Crisis Work Plan 2018
  - → Council committee work plan
  - → Put into Housing Element
- **Influences**
  - JPA-issued bonds for acquisition/rehab
  - Homebuyer support
  - ADUs support
  - 6th cycle RHNA Mod goal = 10,711
  - Regional bond $ vs. no $
- **Creation process**

Demo-graphics

- 20% cost-burdened
- 55% homeowners, 45% renters
- Average persons / HH = 3.03
- Race/ethnicity – similar to City

Substance

Process Improvements

- Inclusionary – Surplus Credits market
- Inclusionary – AMI scale 60% to 120%

Production Incentives

- ADU ownership incentives & purchase assistance
- ADU Density Bonus Program

Regulatory Reforms

- CA: Condo defect liability reforms
- SJ: Advance missing middle typologies

Breakout Groups

Self select into one of the following groups:

1. Exploring
2. In Process
3. Implementing

Talking About Middle Housing

Talking About Middle Housing

People care about where they live! Housing conversations can be emotional and tense

Lead with values

Focus on people and community

Talk about homes, not units

Remind everyone that change is constant

Talking About Middle Housing

Frame a constructive conversation

- Define “the missing middle”
  - Hear from community members about their concerns and what is missing
  - Connect to people (who is not able to be here?)
  - Ground in data and connect to local context (how do rents and home prices compare to incomes for local workforce?)
  - Highlight existing examples of middle housing types
  - Highlight what is available in the market for middle income
- Set realistic expectations
  - What can the city actually do, and what’s up to the market?
  - What would success look like?
  - What tools are available? Who could be partners?
  - Be clear about what’s feasible and trade-offs.

Middle Housing Resources

ABAG Let's Talk About Housing

Communications Guide for Local Governments

ABAG Middle Housing MythBusters

Guidance for talking about common community concerns.

Middle Housing MythBbusters

Common concerns raised about rezoning for Middle Housing, and how you can respond.

Technical Assistance for Local Planning HOUSING

MYTH 1 Height / Scale / Compatibility

Middle Housing will destroy privacy, with new neighbors looking down into my backyard.

Whether using a form-based approach or other development standards, most Middle Housing that is designed to physically fit in with its neighbors. In addition, Middle Housing's footprint should be similar to the footprint of single-unit houses: if the length of a Middle Housing building is similar or the same as a single-unit house, views into neighbors' backyards is no more possible than it is for single-unit homes.

Upper Middle Housing may be three stories tall (or 3.5 with a habitable attic space). These Middle Housing types may be located at the edges of neighborhoods, along busier streets and areas of transition between single-unit houses and larger buildings. Having separate standards for Upper Middle Housing lets you distinguish between the two-story and three-story typologies to make sure the scale and height works based on location.

MYTH 2

Middle Housing will create large apartment buildings and change the scale and character of our neighborhood.

A key difference between Middle Housing and typical apartment buildings is that Middle Housing is house-scale. House-scale is the size of small to large houses, so that it fits in with existing houses. Some Middle Housing types are small and some are larger but they all are the size of small to large houses.

There are eight Middle Housing types with variations of each of these types. Each type has the massing of either a small, medium or large house. The large Middle Housing types (Multiplex Large and Courtyard Building) include massing standards to make sure that each building looks like a large single-unit house.

Upper Middle Housing types which are three stories tall include massing standards to visually break down their size and relate them to neighboring two-story houses. However, it's best to locate the Upper Middle Housing types in ways to avoid being near single-unit houses.

MYTH 3

We don't have enough open space in our neighborhood for more units.

Most Middle Housing types have rear yards or courtyards for on-site open space. Because Middle Housing types fit on lots that are the same size as lots for single-unit houses, the need for on-site open space is lower than for typical apartment buildings. In addition, larger Middle Housing types can be located near parks and other open space to provide additional opportunities.

MYTH 4 Parking & Traffic

Adding Middle Housing is going to create a parking nightmare.

There are many things that impact demand for on-street parking. In many places, car ownership rates are higher now than in the past, and upper income households (who are well represented in single family neighborhoods) have more cars per household than lower income households. There's also the reality that many single family households use their garages for storing everything but their car. On-street parking may be burdened, but it's important to acknowledge the source of the problem and make that part of the conversation and solution.

Where Middle Housing is located matters. A core strategy is to consider it in areas where new residents have the real option of not using a car for every trip. These areas are the lots within short walking distance of existing or future amenities (say up to 10 minutes). By locating Middle Housing in these amenity-rich areas, it's reasonable to expect that the need for a car will be less. For moderate and lower income households, being able to forego the cost of full-time car ownership (by not owning a vehicle or participating in a carshare) can be a substantial benefit in creating an affordable living option.

A parking ratio of 1 space per unit will usually suffice, or can be even lower. Providing off-street parking spaces helps to address neighborhood concerns, but one space per unit is typically adequate to meet Middle Housing parking needs. That ratio can be even lower (0.5 per unit) in areas where frequent transit service is available.

While possibly tempting, requiring off-street parking creates other problems. By requiring more parking per unit, the size of the lot and the project must grow, causing compatibility issues with neighbors and the area. Middle Housing seeks to be at the size and scale of single-unit houses and the lots that those houses fit on, while using a mix of off-street and on-street parking just like the single-unit houses do. Also, requiring more off-street parking can kill project feasibility, countering the purpose of the rezoning all together.

Residential parking permit program can help manage on-street parking. We all use on-street parking: to park extra vehicles, for visitors or because garages are full of other things. Rezoning for Middle Housing can be accompanied by policies or programs to better manage on-street parking to all residents—new and old—recognizing that the street is a shared public resource. (While think of the street parking in front of their property as "theirs," it isn't. The street is public shared use, and should be managed accordingly.)

reen Middle Housing parking spaces to make them fit in.

ould use the same parking location approach as neighboring single-unit houses. For isting pattern is of parking down a side drive from the street to the middle or rear Middle Housing should be designed with the same pattern. As a result, common in areas where a large project or non-residential project is near n Middle Housing projects.

MYTH 10 Property Values

Adding duplexes, triplexes, and other Middle Housing will decrease neighboring property values.

House-scale Middle Housing can be designed to look much like a single-family home. People may not even realize that there are multiple units. Oftentimes, if the development looks like a house, buyers will act like it's a house. Even if the Middle Housing doesn't look exactly like a single-family home, if well designed, new construction can add value to the adjacent areas by demonstrating demand for housing in the area and increasing investment in the area.

Renters are less invested in their neighborhoods and landlords don't take good care of the property.

Both Middle Housing and single family can be owner-occupied or rentals. Some renter households do need to move frequently and may not have deep connections to a particular neighborhood, but others stay in one place for many years and are as much a part of their community as other long-term residents. There are some property owners who do not or cannot take good care of their properties (whether they live in them or not), in which case code enforcement is the appropriate response, but new development generally does not need a lot of maintenance while the building is new.

Displacement Impacts

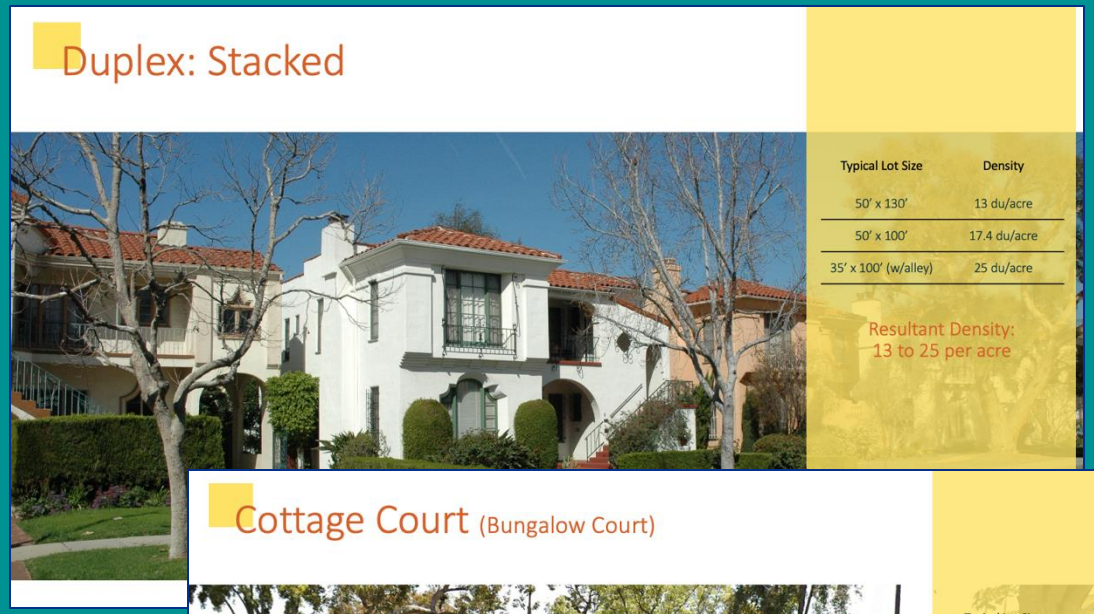
Redeveloping older single family homes with Middle Housing will cause displacement.

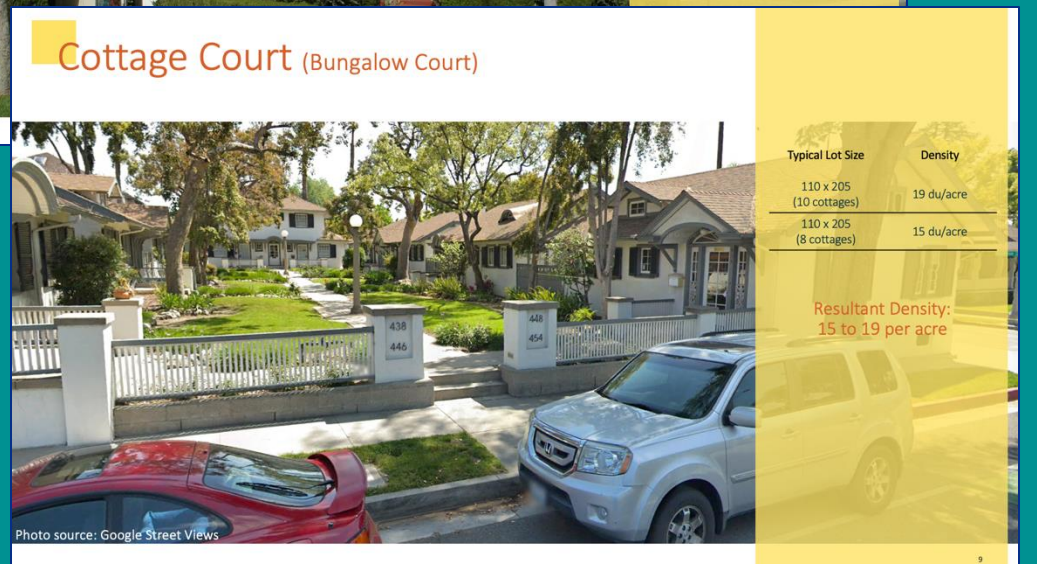
Displacement risk can be real, but it can also be used by wealthy homeowners as a cover for other underlying concerns. Think about who is really at risk, and whether that's who is expressing the concern.

- **Homeowners are protected from market-driven displacement.** If Middle Housing increases property values, Proposition 13 means that property taxes will still only increase by two percent per year as long as the homeowner owns that home,[2] which protects homeowners from displacement. While predatory home buying offers can be a concern, homeowners get to choose whether to redevelop and/or sell their properties.
- **Renters in apartments are less likely to be affected.** There is little precedent for larger apartment buildings being redeveloped, as Middle Housing is unlikely to generate sufficient financial returns to justify redeveloping an apartment complex. While there is a perception that new construction can cause rents to increase for existing nearby rental housing, adding more housing (particularly rental housing) in a desirable area can actually reduce upward pressure on rents for existing units.

ABAG Missing Middle Housing Deck

Template deck for community presentations.
Introduces middle housing types.





Resource Doc

Missing Middle Housing Resources for Jurisdiction Staff

Missing Middle Work Group, 2025
Santa Clara County Planning Collaborative & 21 Elements

All work group slides and resources available here:
https://citiesassociation.org/missing-middle/

Defining the Middle: Housing Types

Middle housing generally refers to building types between a single-family home and a 20+ unit apartment building (for sale or for rent). These middle housing types are often "missing" because over time they have been prohibited under local regulations, and because they haven't been able to compete in a changing housing market.

Strategies for encouraging missing middle housing types generally fall into zoning strategies and market strategies.

- Zoning Strategies: Updating local regulations to allow and incentivize middle housing types.
- Market Strategies: Working with local developers to improve market conditions for middle housing streamline pathways for permitting and entitlement.

Work Group Resources

- Work Group Slide Deck 1
- Work Group Slide Deck 2

Defining the Middle: Affordability

Middle income generally refers to households making between 120% - 150% of area median income (AMI). However, for the purposes of this work group middle income refers to 80% - 120% AMI.

Households at the lower end of this range have been squeezed out of traditional homeownership because single-family homes are in short supply and out of their price range, and other ownership options are limited. Middle income renters typically have better access to rental options in the Bay Area, with a greater selection of rental units in their price range.

Strategies for encouraging affordable homeownership and affordable rental options are different and often depend on market conditions.

Strategies & Programs

Jurisdiction Examples

Boulder Missing Middle Strategy

- Work Group Slide Deck 2
- City of Boulder Middle Income Housing Strategy (2016)
- Video on Boulder's modular home factory - a partnership with the Boulder Valley School District to provide job training while producing affordable homeownership opportunities for community members

San José Missing Middle Strategy

- Work Group Slide Deck 5

Berkeley Middle Housing

- Work Group Slide Deck 5

MTC-ABAG Tools & Resources

- "Making Middle Housing Work" Regional work group slides and recordings.
- Middle Housing Feasibility Tool: Password: MiddleInteractive
- Bay Area Middle Housing Market Report
- "Zoning for Middle Housing" Guidebook
- "Making Middle Housing Affordable" Guidebook
- Middle Housing Zoning Changes and RHNA
- Middle Housing Mythbusters
- "What Is Middle Housing?" customizable slide deck

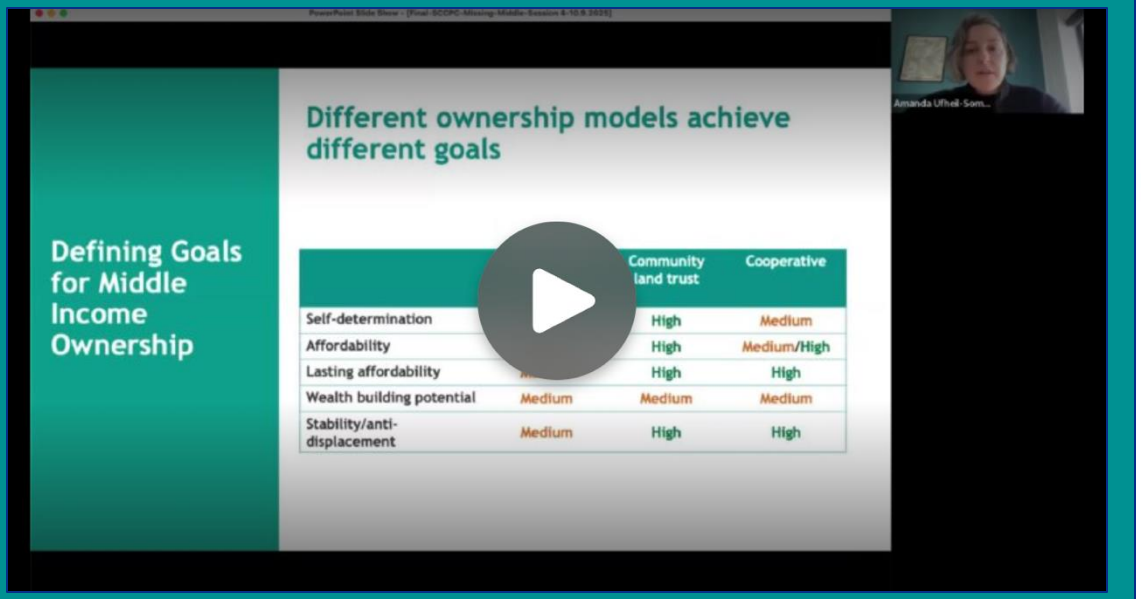
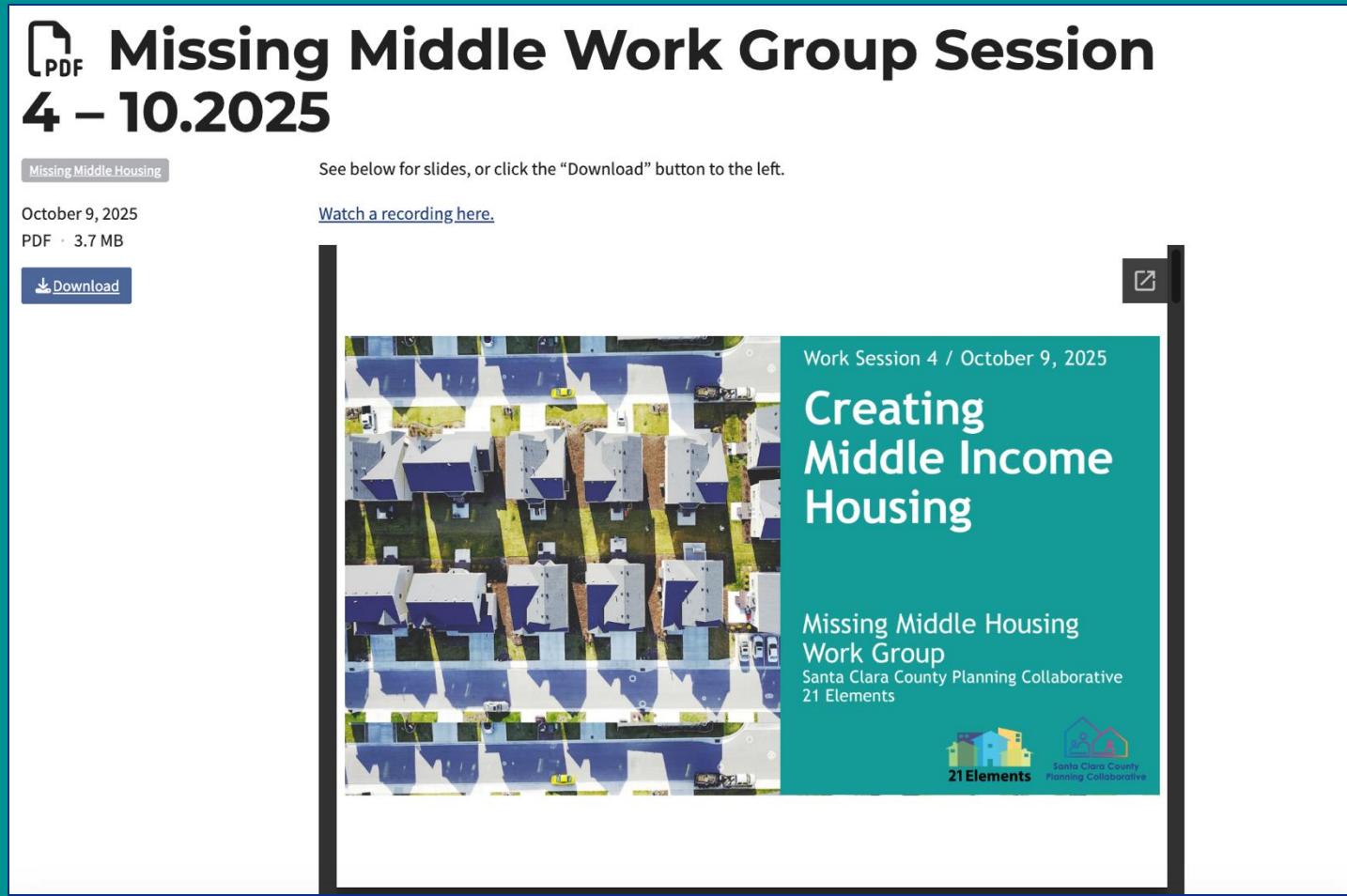
Other Tools & Resources

- Casita Coalition: Build the Middle Playbook
- Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies: Legalizing Missing Middle Housing
- EcoNorthwest for San Luis Obispo County: Working with the Market: Affordable By Design

CA State Laws

SB 6: Middle Class Housing Act, 2022

Facilitates residential development on properties zoned for office, retail, or parking uses without the need for rezoning.

Recordings, Slides, Meeting Summaries

Collaborative Missing Middle webpage: https://citiesassociation.org/missing-middle/