



City of Gainesville
Department of Sustainable Development
Planning Division

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CITY PLAN BOARD STAFF REPORT

PUBLIC HEARING DATE: April 25, 2024

PROJECT NAME AND NUMBER: LD24-000045 Side Setbacks In Transects U4-U7

APPLICATION TYPE: Text Change (Legislative)

RECOMMENDATION: Approve

CITY PROJECT CONTACT: Ari Rabinovich

APPLICATION INFORMATION

Applicant: City of Gainesville

PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION

This petition is initiated by the City of Gainesville to amend Land Development Code **Sec. 30-4.13, Table V-2: Building Form Standards within Transects**. This amendment would reduce side setbacks in transects U4-U7 from 5' to 0'.

STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION

ANALYSIS

Various planning institutions and organizations point to density as a key factor in achieving sustainable development goals, including the American Planning



City of Gainesville

Department of Sustainable
Development

Association¹, the US Environmental Protection Agency², and the Brookings Institution.³ Research points to several outcomes impacted by increasing density in cities, including:

- Reduced reliance on personal vehicles, and a concurrently reduced demand on automobile infrastructure, due to walkability and access to a greater number of public transit routes
- Lower per capita greenhouse gas emissions, further enabling cities to meet net zero greenhouse gas emissions goals
- [Reduced pressure for sprawling development](#), which protects intact natural places and ecosystems ⁴

Both cities and their residents benefit from increased density. Removing side setback requirements in specified transects provides flexibility for landowners by increasing the buildable area of lots, thus reducing land expenditure, and creates an opportunity for ‘missing middle’ housing development that can only occur with 0’ side setbacks. Transect zones are an ideal location for increased density, and for a diversity of housing types, as they function to provide communities with a diversity of uses and housing types while respecting the established character of public spaces.

Transect Zones in Gainesville

Transect zoning is a concept originally envisioned by Andrés Duany, a new urbanist architect, planner, and founder of the Congress for New Urbanism. Whereas Euclidean zoning defines strict areas for single-purpose districts, transect zoning intermingles uses, thereby centralizing resources and reducing the necessity for long-distance travel to meet every day needs.⁵

¹ Berg, J. (2023). Practice gentle density. *American Planning Association*.

² Kackar, A.; Preuss, I. (2003). Creating great neighborhoods: density in your community. *Local Government Commission, National Association of Realtors, Environmental Protection Agency*.

³ Baca, A.; McAnaney, P.; Schuetz, J. (2019). “Gentle” density can save our neighborhoods. *The Brookings Institution*.

⁴ Hanley, A. (2023) Rethinking zoning to increase affordable housing. *The National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials Journal of Housing and Community Development*, 80(2).

⁵ Duany, A.; Talen, E. (2002). Transect planning. *Journal of the American Planning Association*. 68 (3): 245–266.



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The City of Gainesville has established Urban Zones 1 - 9 and Downtown to allow a diversity of uses to coexist within a denser urban fabric, while ensuring that density progresses gradually, and more natural or lower development areas are not adversely impacted by incompatible uses. A concept and form of development that fits well within the goals of transect zoning is that of 'missing middle' housing.



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A Missing Middle Housing Sampler



1. COTTAGE COURT

2. SIDE-BY-SIDE DUPLEX

3. STACKED DUPLEX

4. FOURPLEX

5. SIXPLEX



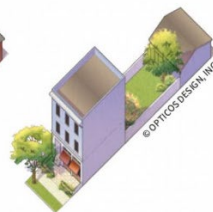
6. EIGHTPLEX



7. COURTYARD



8. TOWNHOUSE



9. LIVE/WORK

From the report by AARP and Opticos Design.



Missing Middle Housing and Gainesville

One benefit of establishing zoning districts where missing middle housing is permissible is the implementation of 'gentle density' through 'missing middle' housing. These development types are denser than detached single family homes but scaled for compatibility with existing neighborhoods. The AARP identifies several benefits of missing middle housing, including:

- Reduced transportation costs (due to the typical location of missing middle housing within walkable areas)



City of Gainesville

Department of Sustainable
Development

- Shared land costs, reducing housing costs per unit
- Smart land use – permitting higher density housing at a smaller scale allows incremental infill development on lots that would not be suitable for larger, traditional condos or apartments due to topography or natural land features.⁶



Town homes within the Sorrento development in Gainesville, where single family units share a wall in common with neighbors. Part of a Planned Development



Townhomes within the Mill Run Owners Association, each platted as individual parcels with 0' side setbacks. These townhomes are within the U9 zoning district.

⁶ Stanton, M. (2023). Discovering and developing missing middle housing. *AARP Livable Communities*.



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Townhouses in the Duckpond Neighborhood

Proximity to Economic Opportunity

Denser housing tends to be more affordable, as evidenced by lower median prices for condos compared to detached single-family housing.⁷ Greater affordability enables a broader range of residents to live near the hubs of development where economic opportunity is found. Data shows that proximity to economic opportunity is a factor that impacts job seekers' ability to secure employment and reduce time spent jobless during periods of transition. This is particularly true for low skill, low-income residents, as proximity to jobs is a crucial element toward rising out of poverty and reliance on welfare. This is due in part to the cost barriers presented by transportation and housing (lower income workers have less flexibility in housing options and may not be able to afford personal vehicles; proximity reduces time spent on public transit, walking or biking, and provides access to jobs that would otherwise be out of reach.)⁸

A study of cities in 2012 by the Brookings Institution found that cities averaged 6,600 jobs per square mile, compared to 1,400 jobs in suburbs, translating into nearly three times as many jobs within proximity for city dwellers. In short, creating opportunities for housing development within the urban core brings people to where there are more jobs, whereas sprawling suburban development tends to disperse workers and jobs.

⁷ Bergen, A. (2023). Single family home vs. condo: which should you buy? *Money Under 30*.

⁸ Kneebone, E.; Holmes, N. (2015) The growing distance between people and jobs in metropolitan North America. *Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings. Brookings Institution*.



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Department of Sustainable
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Table 2. Trends in Jobs and Job Proximity in Cities and Suburbs, 96 Large Metro Areas

	City			Suburb		
	2000	2012	Change	2000	2012	Change
Total jobs	29,123,784	28,596,920	-1.8%	44,694,327	46,557,304	4.2%
Average tract job density	6,583	6,632	0.7%	1,403	1,381	-1.6%
Proximity	627,212	605,367	-3.5%	223,365	207,158	-7.3%

Source: Brookings Institution analysis of 2000 and 2012 ZIP Business Patterns, Census 2000, and 2009-13 American Community Survey data

The City of Gainesville Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC) 2022 Incentives and Recommendations Report states:

“Zero lot line developments have no required setbacks on one or more sides. Consequently, they allow the use of a greater percentage of the lot. As a result, the allowance of zero lot line developments in appropriate locations can **lower overall housing costs by reducing land costs.**”

The findings of this staff report and resultant proposal mirror the AHAC sentiment. Transects U4-U7 represent an urban fabric that scales toward higher density and urban activity, so are an appropriate location to enact this change. Permitting a 0' side setback in these zoning districts can ease cost pressure on development and can increase access to opportunity for residents.



City of Gainesville

Department of Sustainable
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More homes, less yard



One single-family detached
3,000 square feet
2.5 stories



Three townhouses
2,000 sq. ft./house
2.5 stories



Six condominiums
1,200 sq. ft./condo
3 stories

Note: These are hypothetical examples created for this analysis. Structure types and building dimensions are typical of homes in Washington, D.C., verified against Computer Assisted Mass Appraisal residential data from opendata.dc.gov.

B Metropolitan Policy Program
at BROOKINGS

Impacts to Historic Districts

Within transects U4-U7 are several historic districts that retain the character and design standards of historic Gainesville. These districts provide value to the city by:

- Contributing positively toward placemaking and community cohesion
- Encouraging tourism
- Preserving landmarks
- Positive environmental impact via adaptive reuse of historic buildings

Specifically, the University Heights North and South Districts are largely zoned U4-U7 (250 parcels), with some portions of the Pleasant Street and Northeast (Duckpond) Historic Districts zoned U4-U7 as well. Overall, there are **1,936 parcels in the City of Gainesville zoned U4-U7**, of which **342 parcels fall within Historic Districts, representing approximately 17.67% of these transects.**

During the process of acquiring a **Certificate of Appropriateness (COA)**, properties within historic districts are subject to review by the Historic Preservation Officer or the Historic Preservation Board, in consideration of design and site standard elements to preserve historic character.

Historic preservation districts, while typically denser than modern single-family neighborhoods, contain lots and houses whose character and charm rely upon their spatial relationship to each other and to the broader environment. Section 30-4.28(F) of

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Proposed Amendment

Table V-2: Building Form Standards within Transects.

[illegible]



City of Gainesville

Department of Sustainable
Development

Secondary frontage (min)	30%	40%							50%	60%
E. BUILDING PLACEMENT										
min-max. from curb										
min. landscape/min. sidewalk/min. building frontage										
Storefront Street	20'-25' 5'/10'/5'	20'-25' 5'/10'/5'							20'-25' 5'/10'/5'	20'-25' 4'/10'/5'
Principal Street	17'-37' 6'/6'/5'	17'-27' 6'/6'/5'							17'-27' 6'/6'/5'	17'-27' 6'/6'/5'
Thoroughfare Street	19'-100' 6'/6'/5'	19'-100' 8'/6'/5'							19'-100' 8'/6'/5'	19'-100' 8'/6'/5'
Local Street	15'-35' 5'/5'/5'	15'-20' 5'/5'/5'							16'-21' 5'/6'/5'	15'-20' 4'/6'/5'
F. BUILDING SETBACKS										
Side interior setback (min)	5'	5'	5'	5'-0'	5'-0'	5'-0'	5'-0'	0'	0'	0'
Rear setback (min)	15'	3' (alley) 10' (no alley)							3' (alley) 5' (no alley)	3' (alley) 0' (no alley)

LEGEND:

1 = See section 30-4.8 for development compatibility standards.

The provisions of this amendment are consistent with Comprehensive Plan Goals, Policies and Objectives, including:

- **Future Land Use Element Policy 1.1.3:** Neighborhoods should contain a diversity of housing types to enable citizens from a wide range of economic levels and age groups to live within its boundaries
 - This proposal enables greater density in transects U4-U7, permitting a higher number of units on a smaller parcel. New, diverse housing types



City of Gainesville

Department of Sustainable Development

are possible within U4-U7 with 0' side setbacks, creating flexibility for both would-be homeowners and developers.

- **Future Land Use Element Objective 1.5:** Discourage the proliferation of urban sprawl.
 - Increasing opportunities for the development of denser housing types promotes urban infill, reducing pressure on the housing market within central city areas, and reducing the need for low-density sprawl.
- **Housing Element Objective 1.2:** Provide a variety of housing types and densities for moderate-income, low-income, very low-income, and extremely low-income people.
 - This proposal would allow for the development of 'missing middle' types of housing in zoning districts U4-U7 that are only made possible with 0' side setbacks. Consequently, developers are enabled to leverage density to provide more affordable housing.
- **Housing Element Policy 4.1.1:** The City shall encourage infill housing and cluster subdivisions in order to protect environmentally sensitive lands and to promote energy conservation.
 - This proposal holds the potential to conserve environmentally sensitive lands by functionally reducing demand for sprawl toward the periphery of the city boundaries.
- **Transportation Element Goal 7:** Strive to reduce single-occupant vehicle trips within the Gainesville Metropolitan Area.
 - Amending the land development code to reduce side setbacks may lead to the development of higher density housing types within transect zones, granting a greater percentage of the population access to a diversity of amenities and uses closer to home, thus reducing the need for single-occupant vehicle trips.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of LD24-000045 with the condition that feedback is solicited from the Historic Preservation Board prior to City Commission consideration.



City of Gainesville

Department of Sustainable
Development

DRAFT MOTION FOR CONSIDERATION

I move to approve LD24-000045 with conditions.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Application Documents

Appendix B – Comprehensive Plan Goals, Objectives, and Policies



City of Gainesville

Department of Sustainable
Development

Appendix A.

Application Documents



City of Gainesville

Department of Sustainable Development

Text Amendment Application

Applicant/Agent	
Name: Ari Rabinovich	Company: City of Gainesville
Mailing Address: 306 NE 6th Ave	
City, State, Zip: Gainesville, FL 32601	
Phone: 352-393-8334	E-mail: RabinovicAD@GainesvilleFL.gov
<p>Note: It is recommended that anyone intending to file a petition for a text amendment to Chapter 30 of the City of Gainesville Code of Ordinances (Land Development Code) or to the Comprehensive Plan, meet with staff prior to filing the petition, in order to discuss the proposed amendment and petition process. The request will be evaluated as applicable to the particular zoning district or land use category on a citywide basis.</p>	

Text Amendment		
Check applicable request below:		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Land Development Code	<input type="checkbox"/> Comprehensive Plan Text	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
Section/Appendix No: 30-4.13	Element & Goal, Objective or Policy No:	Specify:

Proposed text language and/or explanation of reason for request (use additional sheets, if necessary)
<p>This is an amendment proposal to alter Table V2: Building Form Standards within Transects - side interior setbacks for transect zones U4-U7. This proposal aims to reduce side setbacks in these transect zones to 0ft. The intent of this request is to allow a larger buildable area on each parcel in these transect zones; this enables efficient use of land, encourages compact development, preserves green space via a reduced incentive to build sprawling development, and improves the value proposition for public transit by adding population density to the urban core.</p>

No person submitting an application may rely upon any comment concerning a proposed amendment, or any expression of any nature about the proposal made by any participant at the pre-application conference as a representation or implication that the proposal will be ultimately approved or rejected in any form.

Certification:

The undersigned has read the above application and is familiar with the information submitted herewith.

Applicant Signature: _____

Date: 04/09/24



City of Gainesville

Department of Sustainable
Development

Appendix B.

Comprehensive Plan Goals, Objectives and Policies

Goals, Objectives & Policies



Future Land Use Element

- GOAL 1** **IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE AND ACHIEVE A SUPERIOR, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PATTERN IN THE CITY BY CREATING AND MAINTAINING CHOICES IN HOUSING, OFFICES, RETAIL, AND WORKPLACES, AND ENSURING THAT A PERCENTAGE OF LAND USES ARE MIXED, AND WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE OF IMPORTANT DESTINATIONS.**
- Objective 1.1** **Adopt urban design principles that adhere to timeless (proven successful), traditional principles.**
- Policy 1.1.1 To the extent possible, all planning shall be in the form of complete and integrated communities containing housing, shops, workplaces, schools, parks and civic facilities essential to the daily life of the residents.
- Policy 1.1.2 To the extent possible, neighborhoods should be sized so that housing, jobs, daily needs and other activities are within easy walking distance of each other.
- Policy 1.1.3 Neighborhoods should contain a diversity of housing types to enable citizens from a wide range of economic levels and age groups to live within its boundaries.
- Policy 1.1.4 The City and its neighborhoods, to the extent possible, shall have a center focus that combines commercial, civic, cultural, and recreational uses.
- Policy 1.1.5 The City, to the extent possible, should contain an ample supply of squares, greens, and parks with frequent use encouraged through placement, definition and design.



Policy 1.4.4 In mixed-use zoning districts, the City should prohibit or restrict land uses that discourage pedestrian activity and residential use, including car washes, motels (hotels are acceptable), storage facilities, auto dealerships, drive-throughs, warehouses, plasma centers, and street-level parking lots.

Policy 1.4.5 When considering the acquisition and establishment of public facilities such as parks, libraries, and neighborhood centers, the City should, to the extent appropriate, select a location and/or design the facility in such a way that collocation of the facility with a public school is either achieved with an existing school, or can be retrofitted for such a collocation.

Objective 1.5 Discourage the proliferation of urban sprawl.

Policy 1.5.1 The City shall continue robust code enforcement and law enforcement to discourage flight from the city due to excessive noise, excessive lighting, blight, illegal parking of cars, ill-kept properties, and illegal signage.

Policy 1.5.2 The City should collaborate with the School Board of Alachua County to enhance schools within city limits, particularly to make the schools more accessible to students without a car.

Policy 1.5.3 The City should create more well-defined squares and parks within walking distance of residences, offices and shops.

Policy 1.5.4 The City should prioritize core areas to receive the first enhancements when the City has planned citywide public improvements such as sidewalks, street re-paving, undergrounding utilities, street lights, and public parks.

Policy 1.5.5 The City recognizes Alachua County's use of the Urban Cluster, as adopted on their Future Land Use Map, as an urban growth boundary.

Policy 1.5.6 The City certifies that the entire area within current city limits meets the definition in Chapter 163, F.S., of an urban service area, as supported by the Data and Analysis Report.

Policy 1.5.7 The Future Land Use Map should designate appropriate areas for multi-family residential development in close proximity to neighborhood centers and important transit routes. When appropriate and in a way not detrimental to single-family neighborhoods, the City should encourage the establishment of residential, retail, office, and civic uses within 1/4 mile of the center of neighborhood centers as an effective way to reduce car trips and promote transit, walking, and bicycling.

GOAL 2 REDEVELOP AREAS WITHIN THE CITY, AS NEEDED, IN A MANNER THAT PROMOTES QUALITY OF LIFE,



- Policy 1.1.4 The City shall review and evaluate zoning and other regulations that pertain to housing to insure that requirements continue to be reasonable and do not unduly limit opportunities for lower income groups to secure housing in desirable locations.
- Policy 1.1.5 The University of Florida (UF) and the private sector shall be responsible for providing housing for college students.
- Policy 1.1.6 Housing programs and projects, where feasible, shall be coordinated with Alachua County, the Housing Authorities and any other groups involved in providing affordable housing.
- Policy 1.1.7 Lobby the State Legislature for broad based sources of recurring revenue to provide funds to pay for the construction of new housing units for low-income, very low-income, and extremely low-income households.
- Policy 1.1.8 The City shall provide Fast Track permitting to streamline the review process for new residential, residential additions and residential interior remodeling applications.
- Objective 1.2 Provide a variety of housing types and densities for moderate-income, low-income, very low-income, and extremely low-income people.**
- Policy 1.2.1 The Housing and Community Development Division and Planning and Development Services Department, through the First Step Program, shall assist private and non-profit housing developers in identifying sites for moderate-income, low-income, very low-income and extremely low-income housing.
- Policy 1.2.2 The City shall allow mobile home parks in areas designated Residential-Low on the Future Land Use Map.
- Policy 1.2.3 The City shall allow manufactured housing built to the Standard Building Code in residential areas as designated on the Future Land Use Map.
- Policy 1.2.4 The City shall provide the opportunity for zero lot line and cluster subdivisions as incentives for low-income, very low-income, and extremely low-income housing.
- Policy 1.2.5 The City shall support the dispersal of low-income, very low-income and extremely low-income housing units throughout the City by providing housing densities throughout the City that will allow low-income, very low-income and extremely low-income housing to be provided by the private sector. The City shall use Community Development Block Grant Funds and Section 8 Programs, the Home Investment Partnerships Grant (HOME) and



GOAL 4

ENSURE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT DOES NOT NEGATIVELY AFFECT THE GAINESVILLE ENVIRONMENT.

Objective 4.1 **The City's Land Development Code shall ensure that new housing developments preserve on-site environmental features and conserve environmental resources.**

Policy 4.1.1 The City shall encourage infill housing and cluster subdivisions in order to protect environmentally sensitive lands and to promote energy conservation.

Policy 4.1.2 The City's Land Development Code shall guide the siting, building orientation and landscaping of new housing developments to promote energy and water conservation, ensure compatibility with the surrounding area, minimize impacts on the environment, and enhance visual appeal.



- Policy 6.1.5 The City shall collaborate with the State and the County to design roadways that promote safety, provide pedestrian refuge, promote traffic calming, and provide space for landscaping.
- Policy 6.1.6 The street layout of new developments shall be coordinated with the streets and parking of surrounding areas. This shall be done by establishing street connections to adjacent or potentially adjacent streets and parking lots, when feasible, unless natural features prevent such a connection. When not feasible, the end of the street shall establish a right-of-way connection to adjacent, off-site property so that a future motorized or non-motorized connection to an adjacent street or property is not foreclosed.
- Policy 6.1.7 The City shall set aside at least one day each year as a designated and publicized sustainable transportation day to encourage citizens to switch from single-occupant car use to another commuting form of travel.

GOAL 7

STRIVE TO REDUCE SINGLE-OCCUPANT VEHICLE TRIPS WITHIN THE GAINESVILLE METROPOLITAN AREA.

- Objective 7.1 Provide multi-modal opportunities and mixed-use development areas to reduce single-occupant automobile trips and reduce vehicle miles traveled.**
- Policy 7.1.1 The maximum number of travel lanes for a new or widened street within city limits shall not exceed 4 travel lanes, except for I-75.
- Policy 7.1.2 The City shall review turn lanes on a case-by-case basis to ensure that intersections are safe for all modes of travel.
- Policy 7.1.3 The City shall periodically review the Land Development Code to ensure that parking standards are adequate to meet the needs of the community.
- Policy 7.1.4 The City shall encourage new public and private schools to provide bicycle and pedestrian connections to nearby residentially designated lands.
- Policy 7.1.5 The City shall use the Transportation Mobility Program Area as mapped in the Transportation Mobility Element Data and Analysis Report to encourage redevelopment within the City, and to promote transportation choices.
- Policy 7.1.6 Whenever redevelopment or reuse of a site would result in the combination of one or more parcels of land that had previously operated as separate uses with separate driveways and parking, but are now proposed to operate jointly or to share parking facilities, the total number and location and width of driveways shall be reviewed. In order to reduce access points on the street system,