

## 2025 One Year Plan Proposed Updates

1/17/2025

The sole proposed revision to the 2025 One Year Plan pertains to the location criteria for duplexes in Chapter 2: *Development Policy*. Staff were instructed by the Planning Commission to review this section of the One Year Plan at the January 9, 2025 meeting in response to a staff recommendation of denial for a duplex. When duplexes are reviewed as a [Special Use](#) by the Planning Commission, they are required to be consistent with adopted plans and policies (Article 16.2.F.1). This includes the [One Year Plan](#), which requires one of the following conditions to be met:

- The proposed site is located on a collector street.
- Development of the duplex would provide a desirable buffer between residential and non-residential areas.
- The site is in an area having a gross density exceeding 5 dwelling units per acre.
- The site is in an area which has experienced a significant loss of housing but is still desirable for residential use.
- The site is a part of a planned residential development.
- Conversion of a detached house into a duplex should be permitted where the structure meets the location criteria listed above and does not require significant variances from the provisions of the zoning ordinance.
- Duplexes should be encouraged in areas designated as appropriate for medium density housing.
- Duplexes may be used in some instances as buffers between detached housing areas and more intense non-residential uses.

These criteria can affect staff's ability to recommend Special Use approval of duplexes that otherwise meet review criteria and the development policies in the General Plan and sector plans. Duplexes are an integral way to diversify housing options in the City of Knoxville. They currently comprise only 2.6% of the City's housing stock, compared to the 53.6% that are detached single-family homes according to the [Missing Middle Housing Scan](#) conducted in 2022.



## **RELATIONSHIP OF ONE YEAR PLAN TO OTHER ADOPTED PLANS**

The One Year Plan is a tool to align zoning with the City’s sector plans, which are elements of the General Plan. These plans are intended to provide policy guidance on long- and mid-range development issues, and they serve as a guide in the development of the One Year Plan.

The policies and general location criteria in the sector plans are provided in the future land use classes. For example, the LDR (Low Density Residential) land use classification is described as primarily residential in character with a density of less than 6 dwelling units per acre. The description specifically includes detached single-family dwellings and duplexes and states the primary residential pattern should be neighborhoods. A duplex is consistent with the LDR description and is identified as one of the primary uses.

The LDR land use class location criteria includes these areas being protected from through traffic by avoiding direct access to major collectors or arterial streets. This is in direct conflict with one of the duplex criteria within the One Year Plan – that they be located on a collector street. The other location criteria are for LDR areas to be buffered from incompatible land uses. The allowance of a duplex is not in conflict with this criteria.

The General Plan’s Development Policies provide guidance for land use decisions within the City of Knoxville. The allowance of a duplex is not in conflict with any of the General Plan policies. For example, Policy 9, Build Sustainable Neighborhoods, is the most applicable policy with regard to a duplex. Policy 9.3 calls for ensuring that the context of new development, including scale and compatibility, does not impact existing neighborhoods and communities. Duplexes are of a similar scale as a single-family home and are therefore consistent with this policy.

The City’s current Zoning Ordinance was adopted in January 2020 and includes principal use standards specifically for duplexes ([Article 9.3.J](#)), which did not exist in the previous zoning ordinance. Design criteria require the incorporation of porches or stoops, specific guidelines for front loaded garages, and a minimum amount of fenestration. These design criteria help to ensure duplexes fit into surrounding neighborhoods.



## **CHANGES IN POLICY SINCE THE ADOPTION OF THE ONE YEAR PLAN**

The City's [Housing Strategy Update](#), published in 2024, identifies land use policy change as an important avenue to meet housing needs and drive down the cost of development. The strategic plan specifically promotes Middle Housing, which are house scale buildings that have more than one unit in them, as an approach to diversify and increase the City's housing stock.

## **CONCLUSION**

The One Year Plan is updated on an annual basis to provide a guide to community growth, preservation and enhancement that is reflective of current conditions. Removing the duplex location criteria will foster more even-handed reviews of this housing form moving forward. The location criteria for duplexes in the One Year Plan are not reflective of any objectives, principles or policies in the General Plan or the sector plans. This is counter to the purpose of the One Year Plan to align zoning with these comprehensive plans.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Approve an amendment to the One Year Plan to remove duplexes from the Location Criteria section in Chapter 2: *Development Policy*.