

My name is Gordon Coker. I would like to comment on some aspects of the Missing Middle Housing (MMH):

- 1) I agree with the concept of long term planning for the needed housing in Knoxville.
- 2) I agree with the original Opticos proposal of the controlled building duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes on the perimeters of neighborhoods. I would argue that these structures, with incentives, should primarily be built along the corridors such as Broadway Avenue, Central Street, and Magnolia Avenue where vacant building and empty lots already exist. Again, the original Opticos study emphasized that MMH be built on the perimeters of neighborhoods.
- 3) The city modified also the MMH study to only apply to RN-2, RN-3, RN-4, and RN-5 because of “readily accessible amenities”. I would argue that there are many RN-1 zoning areas that also have these amenities, or could be achieved through long term planning. I disagree that the MMH should only apply to the already most densely populated neighborhoods in the city.
- 4) I do not have a problem with multifamily structures being build in vacant lots in existing neighborhoods. But I strongly disagree in the concept of the conversion of existing houses to multifamily, specifically changing the zoning to allow this. That is a huge step in the wrong direction, in my opinion. In my neighborhood of Fourth and Gill, we have fought hard for decades to try to bring back the housing stock to its original state. There are single family homes as well as duplexes, brownstones, and fourplexes. But these houses were originally built for that intent. With the zoning change my house, which has been a single family house since 1904, can be converted to a fourplex because of my lot size. In one scenario, if I sold my house under the new “conversion proposal”, someone could come in and convert it to four units. In addition, under the new guidelines, that person would have to supply four off street parking areas. In addition, this opens the door to outside investors to buy houses and convert them to multifamily, thus becoming absentee landlords. It is more economically to convert my house to four units than to buy property and build a new one. We have seen this before in our neighborhood in the last mid century era, the early 1980’s, and the mid 1990’s in our and surrounding neighborhoods. It has taken years and years to undo the damage to the housing stock. And I disagree with some who argue that the housing prices would be a deterrent for such a change. There is always “bigger” money out there.
- 5) I conclusion, I can support the MMH proposal only if the “conversion” aspect is removed.