



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community Development

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Golden Valley City Council Meeting

July 7, 2026

Agenda Item

5A. Receive and File the Missing Middle Housing Study

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Summary

Golden Valley, like many first-ring suburbs in the Twin Cities region, is facing growing pressure to expand housing options in response to shifting demographics, rising housing costs, and changing household needs. While the city has long been characterized by its predominantly single-family neighborhoods, there is growing recognition that this limited housing mix no longer meets the diverse needs of current and future residents. Younger households, aging residents looking to downsize, and workers seeking to live closer to employment centers all require more varied, flexible, and affordable housing options than what is currently available.

"Missing middle housing" refers to a range of multi-unit or clustered housing types such as duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, and courtyard apartments that are compatible in scale with single-family neighborhoods but offer greater affordability and choice. These housing types have historically existed in Golden Valley and surrounding communities but have become increasingly rare due to zoning restrictions and development trends.

The City Council highlighted this Missing Middle Housing Study as a strategic priority for 2025. The City of Golden Valley is committed to increasing the variety of housing options and creating a welcoming City. This project explores strategies to reintroduce missing middle housing into Golden Valley's fabric in a way that supports the City's goals of strategic redevelopment, local control, and inclusivity. The objectives of this study include:

- Research missing middle housing as it relates to Golden Valley and the City's goals for increasing variety and affordability.
- Create right-sized missing middle housing solutions that can be implemented in Golden Valley in an effective manner.
- Engage with the community to educate and inform on the concept and benefits of Missing Middle Housing and to gauge local housing needs and preferences.
- Provide actionable metrics around local and regional housing demand.
- Add diversity in resident types and income levels to standard single-family neighborhoods.
- Create policies that will allow infill density in low density areas of the City.
- Increase the types of housing units available to meet demographic and cultural needs.

- Prepare for potential legislative actions affecting municipalities

Implementing the study recommendations to support the 2030 Strategic Directive for Strategic (Re)Development, specifically the goal to foster a healthy mix of housing stock that accommodates various price points and life stages. It is also related to the City's 2040 Comprehensive Plan goal of

Planning Commission reviewed the final version of the study document on June 22, 2026. This agenda packet is available on the City website. The commission took public testimony, discussed the study, and unanimously recommended City Council receive and file the study. The Planning Commission asked staff to provide additional information on the study for tonight's Council meeting. Please see the attached memo. The draft meeting minutes from June 22, 2026, as well as all public comments received on the study, are also included in tonight's packet.

Next Steps

Based on their evaluation of the study, City Council may direct staff and Planning Commission to implement any number of the recommendations. Over the next several months, City staff and our consulting partners will conduct additional community engagement and further study with the Planning Commission for every recommendation City Council wishes to pursue. Staff drafted an example of a one-year work plan for implementing some of the study recommendations.

The action this evening does not affect any City ordinances and is limited to receiving and filing the study.

Financial or Budget Considerations

The 2025 budget includes \$65,000 to engage a consultant to complete a Missing Middle Housing Study. The consultant's contract for this study includes a not-to-exceed cost of \$55,000. The Metropolitan Council awarded a \$50,000 grant to the City recently and the grant agreement will be on an upcoming City Council meeting agenda. The grant will be utilized for study implementation efforts as directed by City Council and the City Manager in 2026.

Legal Considerations

There are no specific legal considerations with this update. Any formal policy recommendations or code amendments would be reviewed by the Legal Department prior to placement on a City Council agenda.

Equity Considerations

The Missing Middle Housing Study aligns with the Community Development Department's Equity Plan. Through reducing housing barriers and increasing opportunities for people to live and thrive in our City, we put into practice our Equity goal to apply transparent data, community engagement, and compliance with our codes to ensure programs, projects, services, and policies address and alleviate social, environmental, infrastructure, economic, and housing disparities. The creation of missing middle housing supports the City's goals to preserve and promote economically diverse housing options in our community by creating high quality housing in Golden Valley for households with a variety of income levels, ages, and sizes. City staff have completed an initial Equity Analysis for this study, and will evaluate each potential code amendment and policy update with Equity Scans with the City's Equity Division.

Golden Valley Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission (DEIC)

The DEIC held a joint work session with the Planning Commission on August 11, 2025, to discuss the Missing Middle Housing Study. The DEIC evaluated the study to consider issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion within the study and offer recommendations that address these issues. In the attached memo, the DEIC notes that the 2040 Comprehensive Plan and the 2030 Strategic Directives call for ensuring policies, procedures, and decisions are inclusive by supporting racial, cultural, and economic diversity. DEIC focused their evaluation of the Missing Middle Housing on recognizing the need to identify the populations who could benefit most from the recommended changes.

DEIC recommends taking study recommendations further to permit MMH with more units via administrative approval on larger lots and along major corridors; supports allowing increased building size and coverage for missing middle housing types only, to limit risk of permitting more single-family “McMansions”; and echoes the studies support policies and recommendations that enhance conservation of Golden Valley’s environment. The DEIC also recognizes the need for pedestrian-focused design and safety plans for all users along corridors identified as candidates for missing middle housing development.

The DEIC memo culminates with a call for ecological preservation, environmental safety, and equitable usability for current and future residents of Golden Valley. Additionally, the DEIC notes that by placing a focus on zoning policies and operationalizing through a lens of safety, equity, and health, there will be not inadvertent regulatory structures that can exclude people based on income, which quite often has unintended negative consequences that disproportionately impact communities of color, the disability community, and many more marginalized communities.

Zoning For Equity

The 2021 Zoning for Equity report examines how Golden Valley’s land use policies have contributed to patterns of racial and economic exclusion. The authors conclude that Golden Valley's zoning code has long reflected exclusionary practices. These policies have limited housing diversity and affordability.

The authors recommend a series of reforms designed to "zone for equity" by reducing housing costs, expanding housing choice, and promoting inclusion. Several of the recommendations in the report underwent further analysis in the Missing Middle Housing Study, including increasing as-of-right development, allowing accessory dwelling units, and legalizing multifamily housing in more neighborhoods. While acknowledging that zoning reform alone cannot achieve equity, the report argues that these changes are necessary steps toward creating a more inclusive and equitable Golden Valley.

Recommended Action

Motion to receive and file the Missing Middle Housing Study.

Supporting Documents

- [Missing Middle Housing Study Final Report](#)
- [Planning Commission Memo](#)
- [Example One-Year Work Plan](#)
- [City of Golden Valley DEI Commission Memo](#)
- [Draft June 22, 2026, Planning Commission Meeting Minutes](#)

- [Public Comments](#)
- [2040 Comprehensive Plan - Housing Chapter - Implementation Section](#)