



Although the “middle housing” changes to land development mandated by the State Legislature have captured most of the attention. Those changes are only a part of a comprehensive update of Springfield’s Land Development Code, according to Mark Rust, Senior planner with the City of Springfield and leader of the Development Code Update Project. Mr. Rust, a planner with over 20 years of government planning experience, told City Club that the project involves a complete update of the Development Code to simplify it and make it easier to follow and comply with. The recent passage by the Council of new development code provisions completes phases I and II of the project, which were originally designed to be separate but combined because of the pandemic. Those phases covered housing and employment lands, leaving a large number of miscellaneous activities

to be handled in a future phase.

In each phase the objectives including making the language simpler, providing a more straightforward development path, including in the case of residential development a minimum development standard (MDS) process based on clear and objective standards that requires only limited administrative review. Particularly for employment lands, the City has replaced a lengthy and highly detailed list of permitted uses with much more general categories, with the goal of both simplifying the code and developing broad categories which can accommodate uses not thought of at the time of code drafting.



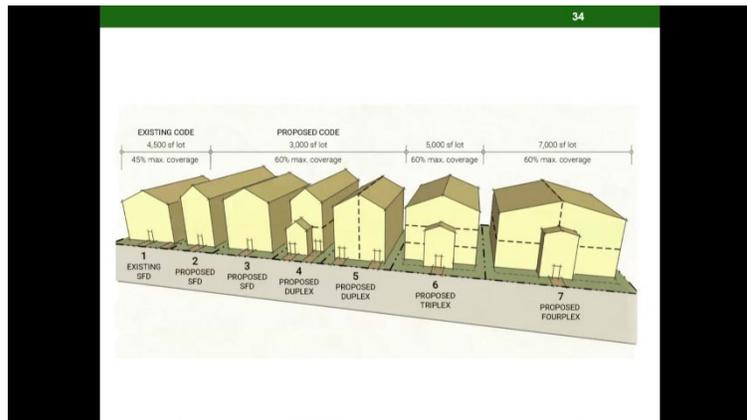
Mr. Rust devoted a large portion of his presentation to the area of the Code involved with what the Legislature described as Middle Housing when it adopted House Bill 2001 in 2019. Mr. Rust noted that Springfield had begun the code update project in 2018, well before the legislature acted, and had participated in the conversations which led to the adoption of HB2001, meaning it was in good position to move promptly to meet the requirements of that legislation in advance of the June 30, 2022 date when a state mandated process would go into effect for those cities which had not already adopted their own code updates.

Mr. Rust said that the Legislature had stated its intent in enacting HB 2001 was to support a greater variety of housing options across the state that are less expensive and smaller than most single unit dwellings. He cautioned that accomplish that intent will be difficult for several reasons. Not only does the legislation exempt those areas from increased development which are subject to hazardous situations like large slopes and other constraints, but it also requires that any development must still meet all current building standards and must demonstrate that the development can be served by the existing infrastructure, particularly wastewater and stormwater systems. All these factors mitigate against cost reduction in building middle housing.

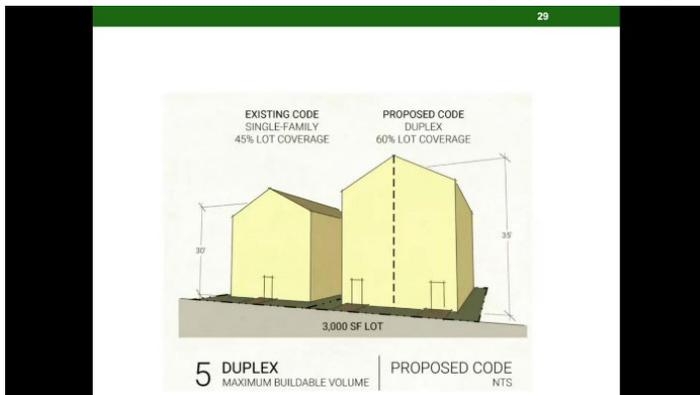
As an example, he pointed to a recent development in north Springfield where several residential units of about 800 square feet were built on lots of about 2400 square feet, well below the 3000 square foot minimum lot size adopted by Springfield to comply with the requirements of HB2001. Those units sold in the range of \$300,000. He did add, however, that there are some developers who are already working on projects designed to meet the new standards and anticipates that some of them may be submitted for review and approval shortly after the new code goes into effect on July 1. He expects that implementation of the new standards will occur in small chunks over time and does not expect any massive redevelopment quickly to occur in Springfield as a result.

Mr. Rust said that other changes implemented by Springfield which have no relationship to House Bill 2001 might have as much or more of an effect. He pointed to development of a minimum development standard process for residential housing which allows for much more rapid approval of development. While the legislature had, almost 10 years ago, mandated a streamlined process based on “clear and objective standards” which required a minimum of review prior to approval, most cities have struggled to develop such a process. Springfield has now accomplished that task in the current update, he said.

There remains some confusion in the implementation of the middle housing requirement, because of complexity of the definitions of housing types, which overlap in many cases. There are five distinct types of middle housing defined, but it can sometimes be difficult to tell which type is being developed. He pointed to a distinction between “town homes” and multiplexes which may, on the ground, look similar but are governed by different sets of rules. That confusion can be compounded by the fact that multiplexes can be either attached housing units or detached units, blurring the distinction, in some cases between those build types and the auxiliary dwelling units which were recently authorized in most cities.



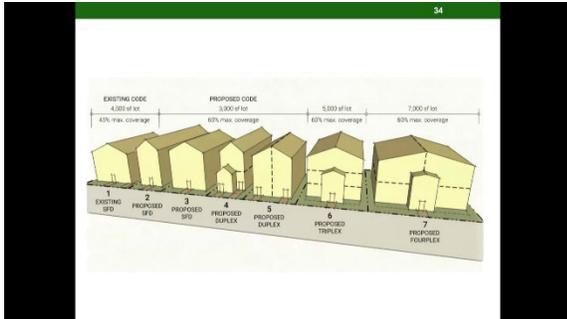
Lot size is a primary factor in developing middle housing, Mr. Rust said. Under the present code,



minimum lot size for a residential development is 4500 square feet. HB2001 mandated the minimum lot size be reduced to 3000 square feet, a provision which Springfield has adopted. He noted that Eugene had been considering adopting an even smaller minimum lot size. Springfield’s new code will allow for development of duplexes on those 3000 square foot lots and allow triplexes on lots of at least 5000 square feet and fourplexes on lots of at least

7000 square feet. Mr. Rust also noted that under the new code building height for residential structures

will increase from 30 to 35 feet. He presented several diagrams which provided visual examples of what lot coverage might look like under these requirements, as well as an example of the “cottage cluster” development type which provides for compact housing surrounding a common open space.



Mr. Rust said the City does not expect a massive and rapid shift in development types as a result of this code update, but more likely will see piecemeal expansion of more dense housing as the market demands and as developers can build at reasonable cost. He added that on the horizon, the development of Climate Friendly Equitable Communities regulations by the Land Development and Conservation Commission, might have an even greater impact in Springfield. These

regulations, which were adopted in preliminary form by LCDC in May, may have a much greater effect because of their focus on dealing more broadly with both housing and transportation issues.

This was the first City Club program since March of 2020 to be conducted in person, using a hybrid model that allow for both in person attendance and participation online through Zoom. The program was held at the offices of the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce, 101 South A Street, which will be the site of future programs. The program was not livestreamed to Facebook, although the Club is considering how that aspect of making programs available might be implemented again in the future.

