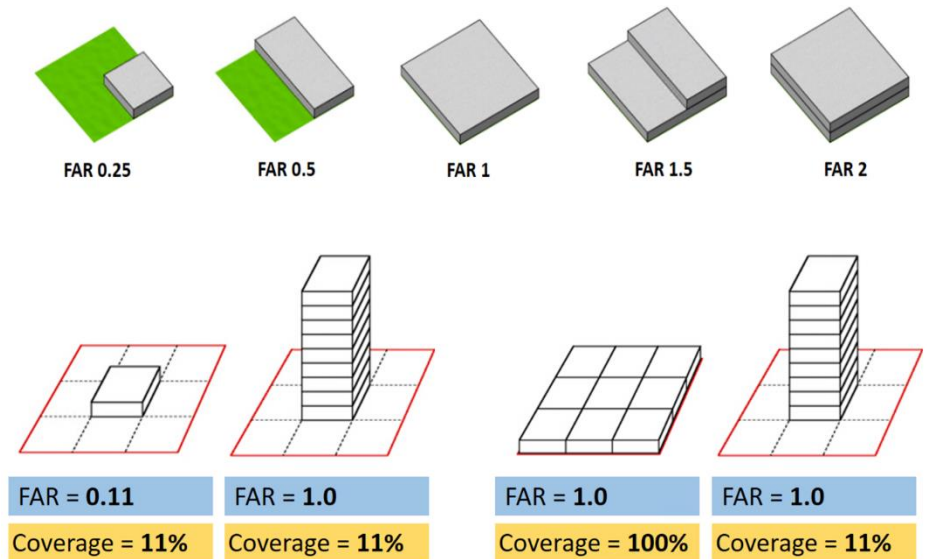


# Changes to Floor Area Ratio in Multi-Family Zones

## What is Floor Area Ratio?

- Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is the relationship between the square footage of the building and the square footage of the lot.** FAR regulations tell you “how much” building you can create on a lot. For example, in the diagram an FAR of 0.25 would allow a total building square footage up to 25% of the size of the lot.
- Lot Coverage is the relationship between the ground floor area of the building and the area of the lot.** Development scenarios with the same FAR but different lot coverage will produce varying types of development: for example, low-rise or high-rise, as seen in the diagram.



## What is changing?

Zone	Existing	Proposed
<b>R-3 (Planned Neighborhood Residential)</b>		
FAR	0.5	0.75
LOT COVERAGE	25%	25%
HEIGHT	35'	40'
<b>R-4 (High Density Apartment)</b>		
FAR	0.7	1.6
LOT COVERAGE	30%	40%
<b>R-5 (High Rise Apartment)</b>		
FAR	1.3	2.25
LOT COVERAGE	35%	45%

## Why change it?

The current ordinance was created just prior to city/county merger in the early 1970's and there have been no changes to the allowable Floor Area Ratio (FAR) since. Land availability and resulting costs have changed dramatically since that time. Over the last decade, R-3 and R-4 are increasingly unable to accommodate even low density development, and as the average available parcel size decreases, the difficulties with R-3 and R-4 become even more exaggerated. The ordinance was drafted to facilitate development of larger parcels, but today, very few developments are large enough to make R-3 and R-4 work, in many cases making even the most compatible 3 and 4 story developments impossible. Under current conditions R-3 is virtually unusable for parcels of 3-5 acres, where the small multi-family housing or “missing middle housing” is often desired.

The proposed changes will permit a 3-story building in R-3, a 4-story building in R-4, and a 5-story building in R-5 in most situations, and will create a greater differentiation between the zones, and allow more room to work within an existing zone. This will negate the need for zone changes for small amounts of needed FAR that do not alter the fundamental character of the development.

## Planning Commission Hearing Video:

[http://lfucg.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view\\_id=4&clip\\_id=5162](http://lfucg.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=4&clip_id=5162)

# FLOOR AREA RATIO ZONING ORDINANCE TEXT AMENDMENT

PLN-ZOTA-20-00002

QUESTIONS

**Why now?**

- The Floor Area Ratios in the current Zoning Ordinance were instituted in the early 1970’s with the City-County merger. Land prices and development patterns have evolved over the past 50 years to make these figures obsolete.
- The [2017 Housing Demand Study](#) projected a need for approximately 2,300 additional housing units annually.
- Our current ordinance makes it difficult or impossible to build “missing middle” housing that is broadly affordable.
- Housing prices continue to rise as land costs increase and supply of housing at low and moderate price points is constrained.
- The Comprehensive Plan’s goal of maintaining the Urban Service Boundary is predicated on implementing the policies and regulation changes within the plan, including increasing housing options and opportunities.

- The Planning Commission unanimously recommended approval of this Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment following a public hearing.

**What’s the potential impact?**

- An increase in housing units will result, and a greater diversity of housing stock will be more readily available at a diversity of price-points.
- Affordable housing will be more successful, with taxpayer funded subsidies being stretched further to net more units and house more families in need here in Lexington.
- Taxpayer dollars will be more efficiently spent on the provision of infrastructure, goods, and services for multi-family developments.
- The types of infill and redevelopment recommended by the Comprehensive Plan will be more feasible, thereby providing another relief valve for the Urban Service Area.

**Missing Middle Housing**  
a range of house-scale buildings with multiple units—compatible in scale and form with detached single-family homes—located in a walkable neighborhood.



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## What happens if we do not change?

- Contentious zone change hearings over relatively small amounts of floor area will continue, adding to development costs (both in time and money) that get passed along to the consumer.
- Affordable housing providers continue to struggle to put projects together with the FAR constraints of the outdated multi-family zones.
- Small-scale multi-family housing on smaller lots that lead to vibrant walkable neighborhoods, will continue to not pencil out for developers.
- The cost of community services will increase, and vacant land will be absorbed at a higher rate, but netting fewer housing opportunities.

## Why increase the height of the R-3 zone?

- The change will allow more architectural diversity of roof types and higher ceilings, but will not change the number of allowable stories.

## How did we arrive at these numbers?

- To create a linear relationship with the zones and building heights on a typical smaller infill lot  
**R-3: 3 Stories R-4: 4 Stories R-5: 5 Stories**

## Was the public notified & included?

- This Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment is a direct implementation of the Comprehensive Plan that was completed over a two year span and included the contributions of over 10,000 people.
- There were two Planning Commission work sessions on this proposed Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment.  
→ *Those agendas are publicly posted and the meetings are open to the public.*
- A Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment hearing triggers notification to every registered neighborhood association.
- The Planning Commission public hearing agendas are publicly posted and the meetings are open to the public.  
→ *Public comment is allowed and encouraged at the hearing.*

## Will neighbors get notice of land use changes?

- Neighborhood associations were notified of the Planning Commission public hearing for this amendment, and all related agendas/notifications were posted according to statute and procedures.
- This text amendment does not change the land use. Any property zoned R-3, R-4, or R-5 was zoned for multi-family residential before, and remains so.

## Are single-family neighborhoods at risk for wholesale redevelopment if they are already zoned R-3?

- This Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment may unlock previously undeveloped vacant lots for development, potentially relieving redevelopment pressure from other areas.
- The floor area ratios addressed within this text amendment do not impact single-family detached lots.  
→ *Single-family detached lots do not have limits on floor area ratio.*

## Does this ZOTA encourage gentrification?

- This text amendment allows for more “missing middle” housing across the Urban Service Area.  
→ *Residents will go where they can afford, with the amenities they want. Gentrification is a response by residents to a lack of broadly affordable options at key price-points.*  
→ *This Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment will help slow gentrification by providing a range of affordable options at key price-points throughout the Urban Service Area instead of leaving low-income neighborhoods to bear the brunt.*

## Is this a “stealth zone change”?

- No. This is like adjusting Social Security periodically for cost of living—except we haven’t done so for almost 50 years, and it is contributing to Lexington’s constrained housing supply.

01.23.20 — Planning Commission Work Session  
What is FAR?  
Why are we changing the regulations?  
Unveiled proposed numbers

02.20.20 — Planning Commission Work Session  
Redlined text presented.

06.04.20 — Planning Commission Zoning/  
Subdivision Committee Meetings

06.25.20 — Planning Commission  
Public Hearing