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News Article

Better Housing by Design Concept Report addresses open space, building design and scale, street connections and more; comment to staff by August 7.

Published: July 5, 2017 4:29 pm

Not all apartment buildings are created equal. Some include attractive features and design qualities; others leave a lot to be desired.

As Portland grows and more housing is required, our community will see more multifamily construction, such as apartment complexes, fourplexes, courtyard apartments and other types of multi-dwelling buildings being built.

So how can we ensure that these new housing units are more “user-friendly” — more like home? With outdoor spaces for play and gardening; more trees, sidewalks and pathways; and improved design standards for front and side setbacks, garages and height transitions?

The Better Housing by Design (BHD) project has been working with residents, builders, designers and other stakeholders to figure out how to make new development in multi-dwelling zones healthier, safer, more comfortable and inviting.

Concept report sets the table

Over the course of several months, the BHD project team has developed a set of concepts that address these issues. These 18 concepts are the subject of the Better Housing by Design Concept Report. They address improvements to open space, building design and scale, development bonuses, Eastern Portland development standards, and street connections in multi-dwelling zones.

More open spaces: For instance, one concept would require that multifamily development on large sites include shared outdoor areas, like courtyards, to provide space for children’s play areas or gardening. Currently, these kinds of spaces are not required in the Zoning Code.

New types of streets: Another concept proposes a new type of narrow street that will make it easier to provide street connections on small sites.

Setting the bar higher

New multifamily development plays an important role in providing more housing for our growing population. But Portland's Zoning Code can set the bar higher so more people can enjoy these homes in neighborhoods that foster a sense of community and support healthy living.

Read and comment on the Concept Report

Read the report and find out how the Zoning Code can help create better housing by design.

Then tell us what you think. Comments to staff **are due by August 7**. Your feedback will help staff develop the changes to the Zoning Code rules.

What's next?

Project staff will develop draft code language that will be included in a "Discussion Draft" to be released in the fall. Comments on that draft will be reviewed by staff, who will then prepare a "Proposed Draft" to submit to the Planning and Sustainability Commission (PSC) sometime in the winter of 2018. The PSC will hold a hearing so the public can testify about the Proposed Draft. The PSC will then make decisions about how to change the draft before submitting it to City Council in the form of a "Recommended Draft."