



# Tiny Homes, Townhouse, Duplex, Triplex & Fourplex Units: Zoning Provisions

August 2017

**Question:** Should these uses be permitted in all neighborhoods? Should the City consider factors such as proximity to transit routes or commercial services?

**Current Olympia Approach:**

Olympia allows for a variety of housing types in most zoning districts. However, closer examination of the code shows that different development standards for duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes may make it more difficult to develop these types of structures.

Residential Zoning District	Tiny House on Foundation	Townhouse (separate lot)	Duplex	Triplex	Fourplex
R-4	X	X	Existing Only		
R-4CB	X	Not Allowed	X	X	X
RLI	X	X	X	X	X
R 4-8	X	X	Existing Only		
R 6-12	X	X	X	X*	X*

\* High Density Corridor Transition Areas only.

**Current City requirements are generally:**

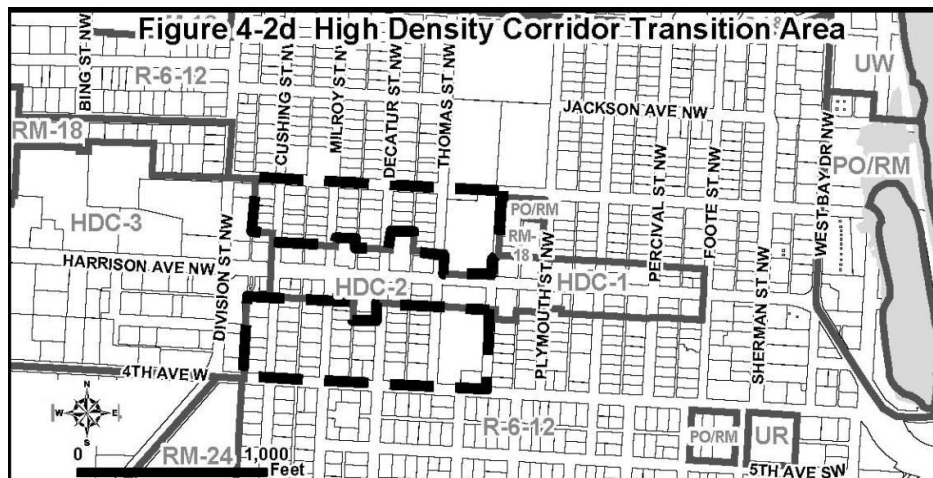
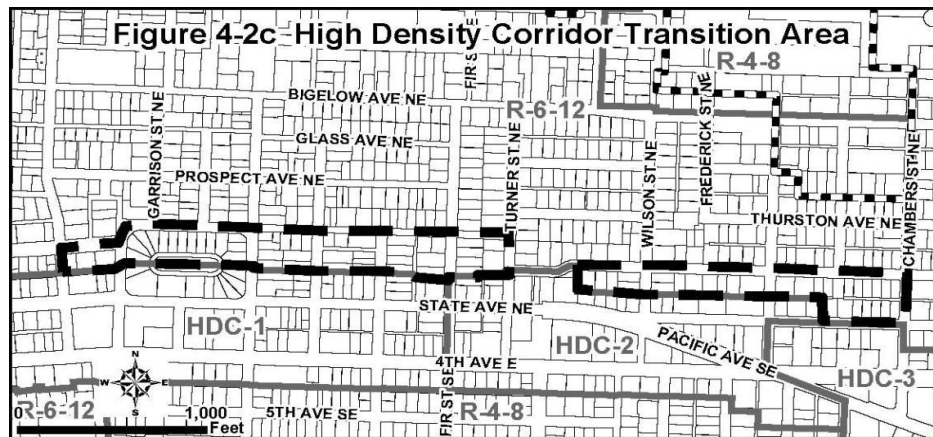
**Tiny House on Foundations** are not specifically addressed in the code. They are treated as Single Family detached residences.

**Townhouses** are subject to the provisions in Chapter 18.64 – Townhouses, which includes additional requirements:

- In the R4, R4-8, and the R 6-12 districts the maximum site area for solely townhouse development is four (4) acres. There is no maximum site area in other districts where townhouses are permitted.
- In the R4, R4-8, and portions of the R 6-12 districts the number of units per townhouse structure is limited to four.
- There can only be one builder per townhouse structure.
- Buildings with three or four units have a side yard setback of ten feet (there is a five foot side yard setback for one and two unit structures).
- In the R-4, R 4-8, and R 6-12 districts, a land division is required for all townhouse development, so that individual dwelling units are on separate lots. In other zones where townhouses are allowed, platting is optional.

**Duplexes** While it may appear that duplexes are allowed in most zoning districts, in actuality there are development standards in place (minimum lot size and lot width) that make it challenging to build them on lots that were not platted to accommodate them. For more detail see additional information at the end of this paper.

**Triplexes and Fourplexes** in the R 6-12 district are subject to the High Density Corridor Transition Area provisions listed in 18.04.060(FF), which limit their location to these areas:



Additional requirements include a triplex minimum lot size of 7,200 square feet and 9,600 square feet for the fourplex. A minimum lot width of 80 feet is required, three stories up to 35 feet is the maximum height allowed, and minimum side yard setbacks are increased to 10 feet. Infill and Other Residential design review standards must be met.

Building Height: The zoning code includes the maximum building height allowed in each zoning district (generally 35-40') for structures. The code notes how many stories the structure can have. In some cases only two stories are allowed, even though a building height of 35' could accommodate three stories.

**What is current approach intended to accomplish?**

The code intends to ensure adequate space is available for residential units and that the types of residences allowed in neighborhoods are compatible with each other. However, the code has not been reviewed to reassess compatibility and appropriate development standards for various housing types in quite some time. Additionally, certain development requirements have changed, such as adoption of the

new Low Impact Development standards, which could also affect the type of development desired or constructed.

**Alternative Approaches:**

Below is a table of some other cities’ approaches:

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Basic Approach in Low Density Zones</b> (what is “low density” varies by city)
<b>Lacey</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low Density 0-4 units/acre: Allows SF and ADUs;</li> <li>• Low Density 3-6 units/acre: Allows SF, ADU, Townhouse, and up to 5% of lots for Duplexes and Triplexes;</li> <li>• Moderate Density: Allows any residential use with a density of 8-16 units per acre and any additional bonus density and requires that all parcels over ten acres in size shall provide a mix of housing types with no less than fifty percent of the units designated for multifamily use. The required mix should be integrated throughout the entire site as much as possible.</li> </ul>
<b>Tumwater</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single Family Low Density: Single Family Detached, ADUs, Existing Duplexes</li> <li>• Single Family Medium Density (6-9 units/acre): Single Family Detached, ADUs, Townhouses/Rowhouses in Planned Unit Development, Duplex w/ at least 6,000 sq. ft. of land</li> <li>• Multifamily Medium Density (9-15 units/acre): Single family and Multifamily, Duplex w/ at least 6,000 sq. ft. of land</li> </ul>
<b>Thurston County</b>	Follow City in each city’s urban growth area
<b>Bremerton</b>	Treats tiny homes on foundations as SFR, allows Tiny Houses on Foundations and townhouses in low density zones, duplexes in some low density zones, does not allow triplexes or fourplexes in low density zones
<b>Vancouver, WA</b>	Allows townhomes in low density zones by Planned Unit Development, allows duplexes if the lot size is at least 6,000 square feet. Does not allow triplexes or fourplexes in low density zones.

Alternatives include:

1. Allow new duplexes in the R 4-8 zoning district.
2. Create one lot width and lot size standard for the R 4-8 zoning district. Property owners could build a single family house or a duplex on the lot if development standards such as lot coverage, building height, parking, and setbacks are met.
3. Allow triplexes and fourplexes in the R 4-8 zoning district if within a certain distance (e.g. ¼ mile, ½ mile) of a transit route or commercial zone.
4. Reduce the ten foot side yard setback to the standard five foot side yard setback for townhouses with three or four units.
5. Allow townhouse structures to have more than four units.

6. Eliminate the different lot size and lot width standards for triplexes and fourplexes in the R 6-12 Zoning District.
7. Allow triplexes and fourplexes throughout the R 6-12 zoning district.
8. Eliminate the maximum number of stories allowed; instead, rely on the maximum building height.

**Analysis:**

The factors for consideration discussed by the Missing Middle Work Group are:

- **Affordability**  
Tiny Homes on foundations, duplexes, and townhouses are often less expensive to rent or buy than traditional, single family detached houses of the same age or condition. Counter inquiries about duplexes often result in a “no” because the property in question does not meet the current minimum lot width and/or lot size standards of the underlying zone. Opportunities to allow for a wider variety of housing sizes and types would provide more housing options across all income levels.
- **Variety of housing types**  
There are significant opportunities to increase the variety of housing types allowed in Olympia’s residential neighborhoods. For example, currently only single family residence and townhouses are allowed in the R 4-8 zoning district. By allowing duplexes, or even triplexes or fourplexes, in this district, more housing could be provided within existing neighborhoods.
- **Ability to accommodate growth**  
Approximately 68% of Olympia’s land is designated for Low Density Residential Development according to the Future Land Use Map in the Comprehensive Plan. There is room to increase density in these areas while still maintaining residential character. Conversion of existing homes to duplexes or triplexes, opportunities to build duplexes on infill lots, or the ability to develop townhouses can occur over time. Triplexes and fourplexes in the R 6-12 zoning district could also help meet infill goals and accommodate the projected growth within the existing urban growth area.

Related Detailed Information:

MLW = Minimum Lot Width; MLS = Minimum Lot Size in square feet

Residential Zoning District	Tiny House on Foundation	Townhouse (separate lot)	Duplex	Triplex	Fourplex
R-4	MLW: 50' MLS: 5,000	MLW: 18' MLS: 2,000 min; 3,000 avg.	<u>No New Duplexes Allowed</u>	<u>Not Allowed</u>	<u>Not Allowed</u>
R-4CB	MLW: 100' MLS: 12,000 sf to one acre	<u>Not Allowed</u>	MLW: 100' MLS: 12,000 sf to one acre	MLW: 100' MLS: 12,000 sf to one acre	MLW: 100' MLS: 12,000 sf to one acre
RLI	MLW: 30' MLS: 4,000	MLW: 16' MLS: 2,000 min; 3,000 avg.	MLW: 60' MLS: 6,000	MLW: 80' MLS: 7,200	MLW: 80' MLS: 7,200
R 4-8	MLW: 45' MLS: 4,000	MLW: 18' MLS: 2,000 min; 3,000 avg.	<u>No New Duplexes Allowed</u>	<u>Not Allowed</u>	<u>Not Allowed</u>
R 6-12	MLW: 40' MLS: 3,500	MLW: 16' MLS: 1,600 min, 2,400 avg.	MLW: 80' MLS: 7,200	MLW: 80' MLS: 7,200	MLW: 80' MLS: 9,600

Building Height Information:

Residential Zoning District	Maximum Building Height (Primary Use)	Maximum Number of Stories
R-4	35'	2
R-4CB	40'	3
RLI	40'	3
R 4-8	35'	2
R 6-12	35'	2 (3 for triplex or fourplex)