



THE CITY OF
NOVATO
CALIFORNIA

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STAFF REPORT

MEETING

DATE: November 18, 2014

TO: City Council

FROM: Robert Brown, Community Development Director

SUBJECT: **NORTHWEST QUADRANT FOCUS AREA STUDY CONSULTANT SERVICES AGREEMENT**

REQUEST

Consider adopting a resolution authorizing the City Manager to enter into a consultant services agreement with Opticos Design, Inc. to assist with community workshops and presentations for a study of the Northwest Quadrant Neighborhood.

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt resolution.

DISCUSSION

The Northwest Quadrant Neighborhood, located north of the downtown and constituting the residentially zoned area generally between First and Seventh Streets and between Grant Avenue and Carmel Drive, has been identified by the City Council as one of four Focus Areas for examination as part of the General Plan Update (see attached Study Area map).

A neighborhood plan was prepared for the Northwest Quadrant Neighborhood in 1977 and includes a land use policy stating, "Those single-family homes which are in sound condition should not be removed for apartment construction." While the area is currently zoned Medium Density Multiple Family Residential, this policy provision has resulted in very little change in the neighborhood over the past several decades.

The 1996 General Plan called for the preparation of a new neighborhood plan for the neighborhood (Land Use Policy 6), although this was never initiated due to staffing limitations and conflicting priorities.

In identifying potential focus areas for the General Plan Update, staff provided the Council and Planning Commission with an article (see attached) which described opportunities for what was termed "middle housing" – lower density and scale residential development types that could include duplexes, triplexes, "bungalow courts", townhouses or small courtyard apartments. These are housing types that might be appropriate for a mixed density neighborhood like the Northwest Quadrant, which could in turn revitalize the neighborhood, support the downtown economically and locate new residents closer to both services and transit.

Staff proposes to utilize the services of the architect Dan Parolek, the author of the “Middle Housing” concept who specializes in the creation of form-based codes that articulate in detail the scale and form of development that is desired, rather than simply relying upon setback and height regulations. The consultants would work closely with staff to prepare for and conduct neighborhood workshops in early 2015 to explore the appropriateness of such concepts for this neighborhood and to present workshop recommendations to the Planning Commission and City Council.

Unlike previous community workshops that have been largely staff-driven with assistance from volunteer architects and other professionals, the use of a design consultant for this focus area is proposed to both evaluate and prepare massing studies of potential development under the existing R10 zoning and of alternative housing types and scale that might better fit the characteristics of this particular neighborhood.

Mr. Parolek and his firm, Opticos Design, Inc., have done community design workshops and form-based code creation in many communities and at different scales. They are currently utilizing a similar process for all of the individual residential neighborhoods in Austin, Texas.

The proposed budget for the consultant work is \$59,873 which includes background data and design preparation, conduct of the workshop (with City staff) and presentations before both the Planning Commission/Design Review Commission and City Council.

Staff has attended presentations by Mr. Parolek and believe that he will work well with local residents and decision-makers in developing concepts that reflect the desires of residents and the character of this unique neighborhood.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funding to cover the cost of the consultant services would come from the General Plan Update account. To date staff has not extensively utilized budgeted amounts for outside consultant assistance in the General Plan processes, so the proposed costs fall within the authorized project budget.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Do not authorize the City Manager to enter into a consultant services agreement with Opticos and provide direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Resolution
2. Scope of Services
3. Study Area Map
4. Article: “Missing Middle Housing”

CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NOVATO

RESOLUTION NO. _____

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF
 NOVATO AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO ENTER
 INTO A CONSULTANT SERVICES AGREEMENT WITH
 OPTICOS DESIGN, INC. TO ASSIST WITH COMMUNITY
 WORKSHOPS AND PRESENTATIONS FOR A STUDY OF THE
 NORTHWEST QUADRANT NEIGHBORHOOD AS PART OF
 THE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE PROCESS

WHEREAS, the 1997 Novato General Plan (Land Use Policy 6) called for the preparation of an updated neighborhood plan for the Northwest Quadrant Neighborhood, which was not implemented; and

WHEREAS, the City Council has designated the Northwest Quadrant neighborhood as one of four Focus Areas for the General Plan Update process; and

WHEREAS, the City desires to retain the services of a design consultant to assist in the analysis and preparation of design alternatives for consideration of alternative housing types and scales that will upgrade and be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, support the downtown economically and result in walkable and transit-oriented redevelopment; and

WHEREAS, Opticos Design, Inc. submitted a proposal to provide such consulting assistance and has demonstrated the necessary expertise and character to work with the residents and decision-makers to craft a plan consistent with the character and desires of the neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, Opticos Design, Inc.'s proposed budget to provide such design assistance is \$59,873.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the City Council of the City of Novato does hereby authorize the City Manager to enter into a consultant services agreement with Opticos Design, Inc. to provide design consulting assistance for an update of the Northwest Quadrant Neighborhood Plan in the amount of \$59,873.

* * * * *

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing resolution was duly and regularly adopted by the City Council of the City of Novato, Marin County, California, at a meeting thereof, held on the 18th day of November, 2014, by the following vote, to wit:

AYES: Council members

NOES: Council members

ABSTAIN: Council members
ABSENT: Council members

City Clerk of the City of Novato

Approved as to form:

City Attorney of the City of Novato

DRAFT

Novato Northwest Neighborhood Study Work Program: October 29, 2014. Proposal good for 45 days.		Opticos Design, Inc.									
		Principal	Senior Associate	Associate	Senior Designer	Designer	Natasha	Admin	Subtotal Fees	Subtotal Expenses	Opticos Design, Inc Total
		\$250	\$200	\$175	\$160	\$145	\$160	\$95			
Task 1	Project Initiation & Background Review	\$3,000	\$0	\$0	\$5,600	\$12,325	\$0	\$0	\$20,925	\$0	\$20,925
1.1	Kick-off Meeting & Site Tour	3 hr			5 hr	5 hr			\$2,275		\$2,275
1.2	Graphic Assesment of Existing Zoning	2 hr			12 hr	24 hr			\$5,900		\$5,900
1.3	Give Direction on Base Mapping-to be Completed by the City	2 hr			4 hr	2 hr			\$1,430		\$1,430
1.4	Gather and Organize Photos	2 hr			4 hr	16 hr			\$3,460		\$3,460
1.5	Prepare 3-4 Photo Posters	1 hr			4 hr	32 hr			\$5,530		\$5,530
1.6	Community Outreach Strategy Consultation	1 hr			4 hr				\$890		\$890
1.7	Assist City in Fnalizing Base Maps	1 hr			2 hr	6 hr			\$1,440		\$1,440
	Deliverables: Assessment of zoning memo; 3-4 photo posters. All delivered in pdf format.										

Task 2	Public Workshop	\$5,750	\$0	\$0	\$9,440	\$13,775	\$0	\$0	\$28,965	\$0	\$28,965
2.1	Prepare Presentation	5 hr			6 hr	6 hr			\$3,080		\$3,080
2.2	Assist with Pre-Workshop Logistics	1 hr			4 hr	4 hr			\$1,470		\$1,470
2.3	Design Studies (summarized in posters)	8 hr			24 hr	40 hr			\$11,640		\$11,640
2.4	Workshop 1 (2-3 hour workshop)	5 hr			5 hr	5 hr			\$2,775		\$2,775
2.5	Finalize DesignStudies and Graphics	2 hr			12 hr	24 hr			\$5,900		\$5,900
2.6	Workshop Drawings Package	2 hr			8 hr	16 hr			\$4,100		\$4,100
	Deliverables: Presentation for workshop 1; Design study posters; Workshop drawing package. All delivered in pdf format.										

Task 3	Planning Commission and City Council Presentations	\$1,750	\$0	\$0	\$1,920	\$870	\$0	\$0	\$4,540	\$0	\$4,540
3.1	Prepare Presentation	3 hr			4 hr	2 hr			\$1,680		\$1,680
3.2	Planning Commission Presentation	2 hr			4 hr	2 hr			\$1,430		\$1,430
3.3	City Council Presentation	2 hr			4 hr	2 hr			\$1,430		\$1,430
	Deliverables: Presentation for Planning Commission; Presentation for City Council. All delivered in pdf format.										

Task 4	Project Management (10%)								\$5,443	\$0	\$5,443
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TOTAL FEES		\$10,500	\$0	\$0	\$16,960	\$26,970	\$0	\$0	\$59,873	\$0	\$59,873
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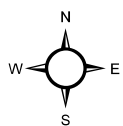
Total Hours
Assumptions

42 hr 0 hr 0 hr 106 hr 186 hr 0 hr 0 hr 334 hr

1. City will provide space, food, and equipment for the charrette and other meetings. (Consultant to bring computers and drafting supplies.)
Consultant will not be responsible for any such planning or expenses.
2. City will be responsible for all public outreach and marketing, including the project web site.
3. Client to plot posters for workshop.
4. Any additional tasks performed outside of those specified above, such as attending additional meetings or completing additional revisions beyond the hours or number of revisions specified above, will be compensated at the hourly rates set forth below (valid through June 2010):

Principal: \$250/hr
Senior Associate: \$200/hr
Associate: \$175/hr
Senior Designer: \$160/hr
Designer: \$145/hr
Administration: \$95/hr

Study Area



0 120 240 480 720 960 Feet

Missing Middle Housing: Responding to the Demand for Walkable Urban Living

Daniel Parolek

The mismatch between current U.S. housing stock and shifting demographics, combined with the growing demand for walkable urban living, has been poignantly defined by authors such as Christopher Nelson¹ and Chris Leinberger,² and most recently the Urban Land Institute's publication, *What's Next: Real Estate in the New Economy*.³ Now it is time to stop talking about the problem and start generating immediate solutions! Are you ready to be part of the solution?

Missing middle housing, such as duplexes, fourplexes, bungalow courts, mansion apartments, and live-work units, are a critical part of the solution and should be a part of every architect's, planner's, real estate agent's, and developer's arsenal.

Unfortunately, the solution is not as simple as adding more multi-family housing stock using the dated types of housing that we have been building. Rather, we need a complete paradigm shift in the way that we design, locate, regulate, and develop homes. As *What's Next* states, "it's a time to rethink and evolve, reinvent and renew."⁴ "Missing middle housing," such as duplexes, fourplexes, bungalow courts, mansion apartments, and live-



This diagram of missing middle housing types illustrates the range of types and their location between single-family homes and mid-rise buildings. Image courtesy of Opticos Design.

¹ Nelson, Arthur. "Catching the Next Wave: Older Adults and the 'New Urbanism'." *Generations: Journal of the American Society on Aging* 33(4): 37-42. January 2010.

² Leinberger, Christopher. *The Option of Urbanism: Investing in a New American Dream*. Island Press. 2009.

³ Urban Land Institute. *What's Next? Real Estate in the New Economy*. Washington, D.C.: Urban Land Institute, 2011.

⁴ Urban Land Institute. *What's Next? Real Estate in the New Economy*. Washington, D.C.: Urban Land Institute, 2011: 17.

work units, are a critical part of the solution and should be a part of every architect's, planner's, real estate agent's, and developer's arsenal. They are classified as missing because very few of these housing types have been built since the early 1940s due to regulatory constraints, the shift to auto-dependent patterns of development, and the incentivization of single-family home ownership.

Missing middle housing can achieve medium-density yields and provide high-quality, marketable options between the scales of single-family homes and mid-rise flats. They are designed to meet the specific needs of shifting demographics and are therefore a key component to a diverse neighborhood. And they can meet the market demand for walkable urban living.

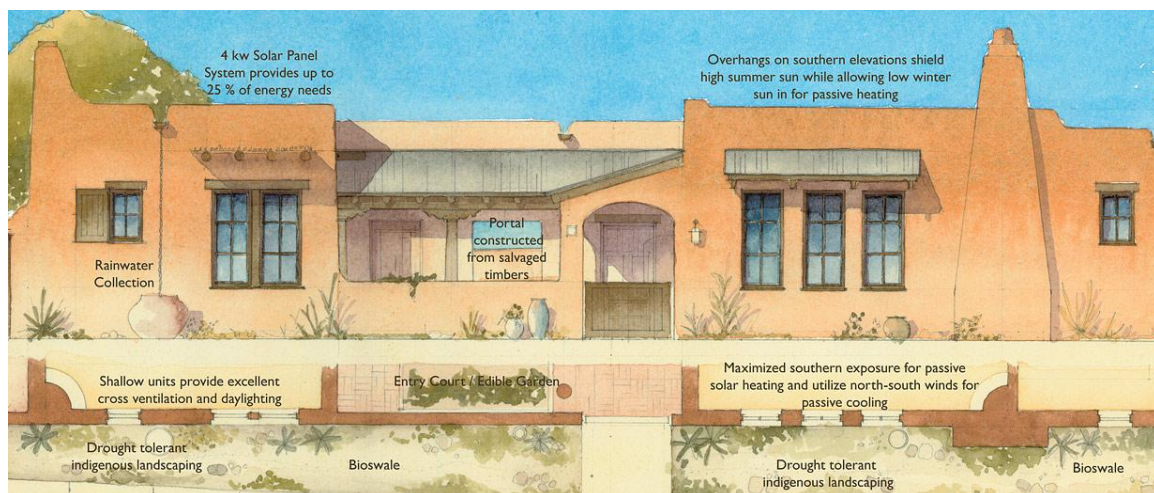
Following are eight defining characteristics of missing middle housing:

1. Walkable Communities

Probably the most important characteristic of missing middle housing types is that they need to be built in urban areas that are walkable. Buyers or renters of these housing types are choosing to trade larger suburban housing for smaller homes without yards to maintain and that are close to services and amenities such as restaurants, markets, and work. Linda Pruitt of the Cottage Company, who is building creative bungalow courts in the Seattle area, says the first thing her potential customers ask is, "What can I walk to?" This criteria becomes very important in her selection of lots and project areas, as is it for all missing middle housing.

2. Medium Density but Lower Perceived Densities

Missing middle housing typically ranges in density from 16 dwelling units/acre (du/acre) to 35 du/acre, depending on the building type and lot size. But it's important not to get too caught up in the density numbers when thinking about missing middle housing. Due



This courtyard housing project in Santa Fe, NM incorporates six units on a ¼-acre lot (24 du/acre) in a form that is compatible with adjacent single-family homes. Image courtesy of Opticos Design.

to the small footprint of the building types and the fact that they are usually mixed with a variety of other building types, they do not look like dense buildings.

With a combination of these housing types, a neighborhood can reach a minimum average of 16 du/acre. This figure is generally used as the threshold at which a neighborhood can support public transit and main streets where walkable retail and services become viable.

3. Small Footprint and Blended Densities

As mentioned above, a common characteristic of these housing types are small- to medium-sized building footprints. The largest of these types of homes, the mansion apartment or side-by-side duplex, may be about 40-50 feet wide, which is comparable to a large estate home. This makes them ideal for urban infill, even in older neighborhoods that were originally developed for single-family homes but have been planned and often zoned to evolve with slightly higher intensities. A courtyard housing project in the Westside Guadalupe Historic District of Santa Fe, New Mexico incorporates six units and a shared community-room building onto a one-quarter-acre lot (Figure 1). The buildings are designed to be one room deep to maximize cross ventilation/passive cooling and to relate well to the existing single-family homes.

4. Smaller, Well-Designed Units

One of the most common mistakes architects and builders new to the urban housing market make is trying to force suburban unit types and sizes into urban communities. The starting point needs to be smaller unit sizes, but the challenge is creating small spaces that are well-designed, comfortable, and usable. However, smaller unit sizes can help developers keep their costs down, improving the pro-forma performance of a project, while making the housing available to a larger group of buyers or renters at a lower price point.

5. Off-Street Parking Does Not Drive the Site Plan

The other non-starter for missing middle housing is providing too much parking on site. A lot of parking isn't needed since these units are being built in a walkable urban context. The buildings become very inefficient from a development potential or yield standpoint and shift neighborhoods below the 16 du/acre density threshold if large parking areas are provided or required. There should be no more than one off-street parking space per unit. A good example is newly constructed mansion apartments in the new East Beach neighborhood in Norfolk, Virginia. For less stringent off-street parking requirements to work, on-street parking must be available adjacent to the units. Similar to a way that traversing a large, unattractive parking lot impacts marketability of a multi-family housing unit, too much parking forced onto a smaller sight can also impact marketability by compromising the curb appeal and/or the quality of the residents' frequent experience of the procession from the car into the home.

6. Simple Construction

The days of easily financing and building complicated, expensive Type-I or II buildings with podium parking are behind us. Simpler, more cost-effective construction is needed in many locations. *What's Next* states, “affordability—always a key element in housing markets—is taking on a whole new meaning as developers reach for ways to make attractive homes within the means of financially constrained buyers.” Because of their simple forms, smaller size, and Type V construction, missing middle housing can help developers maximize affordability and returns without compromising quality by providing housing that is simple and affordable to build.

7. Creating Community

Missing middle housing creates community through the integration of shared community spaces, as with courtyard housing and bungalow courts, or simply from the proximity they provide to a larger social community within the neighborhood or building. This is an important aspect of this type of housing, particularly within the growing market of single-person households (which are nearly 30% of all households) that want to be part of a community. This has been especially true for single women, who are a strong market for missing middle housing, especially courtyard housing and bungalow courts.



A new mansion apartment in the East Beach project successfully integrated into a neighborhood with mostly single-family homes. Image courtesy of Opticos Design.

8. Marketability

The final and maybe the most important characteristic of these housing types, in terms of market viability, is that they are very close in scale and provide a similar experience to single-family homes. For example, occupants enter from a front porch facing the street versus walking down a long, dark corridor to get to a unit. This makes the mental shift of living in a single-family home versus a missing middle housing type much less drastic than making a shift to living in a large mid-rise or high-rise building. This combined with the fact that many baby boomers likely grew up in similar housing types in urban areas, or had relatives that did, enables them to easily relate to these housing types.

This paper is a call for architects, planners, and developers to think outside the box and to begin to create immediate, viable solutions to address the mismatch between the housing stock and what the market is demanding—homes within vibrant, diverse, sustainable, walkable urban neighborhoods. Missing middle housing is an important part of this solution and should be integrated into comprehensive and regional planning, zoning code updates, transit-oriented development strategies, and the business models for developers and builders who want to be at the forefront of this paradigm shift.



Fourplexes like this one in the Midtown neighborhood of Sacramento are highly sought after. Image courtesy of Opticos Design.

The market is waiting. Will you respond?

Dan Parolek is principal of Opticos Design, an architecture and urban design firm with a passion for vibrant, sustainable, walkable urban places. This paper is adapted from an article in Logos Opticos: Composing Vibrant Urban Places.

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