

Are we leaving housing on the table?

MCCAIN LOOP: THE DIFFICULTY OF CREATING A TRIPLEX INSTEAD OF A DUPLEX

In 2022, Cook Inlet Housing Authority, an affordable housing development agency, redeveloped a property on McCain Loop in Spenard to create two duplexes and one triplex on two lots - a type of housing that is common in our older neighborhoods, but rare today. In fact, CIHA found that from 1970-85, 326 triplexes were built (~22 a year), but since 1999, only 31 triplexes (~1 a year) have been built. CIHA persevered, but others, especially small businesses and families have instead opted to build duplexes on land that is zoned for higher density because there is less red tape. Inspired by this project, the Assembly is currently looking at making three and fourplexes easier to build. Read below to learn why it's a challenge to build this type of much needed multi-family housing.



WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

- While building 3 or 2 units sounds like the same scale of project, they are treated differently in code. 3- and 4-plexes are commercial, with the same building requirements as a big box store.
- Minimum lot sizes: in the R2M zone, the minimum lot size increases from 6,000 SF for a duplex to 8,500 SF for a triplex.

Examples of additional development requirements for 3- and 4-plexes:

- Additional MOA department reviews, lighting study, traffic impacts, and fire safety
- Traffic engineering approval
- Stricter design standards
- Private open space requirements
- Additional drainage requirements, including potentially connecting to a storm sewer or building sidewalks

Having multiple units on the site also triggered a requirement for a private street, instead of allowing the units to connect by a shared driveway. This requirement, on top of the others, would have made the project too expensive to build. Ultimately, the MOA made a policy change so the same driveway can serve up to 3 buildings or 12 units.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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INSTRUCTIONS

Gather in small groups to review and discuss the case study presented on the reverse side, using the questions below as a guide. If you are part of a larger group, you can share your small groups' key takeaways with the larger group and continue the discussion.

- **How does this case study relate to Anchorage's bigger housing challenges?**
- **Looking at the list of strategies and actions in the Assembly's draft Housing Action Strategic Plan, which actions might fix these problems and have the most impact? Are there different short and long-term solutions?**
- **What questions do you have about the solutions proposed in these actions?**
- **What do you think the community's questions or concerns about these actions might be?**

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Take this sheet to your next book club, family gathering or association meeting to bring the conversation further into our community. Anchorage's housing crisis is an everyone problem and we need the community to come together to solve it. Choose from six case studies:

Act on Housing: Breaking Barriers

1. Why are good properties undeveloped?
2. Are we leaving housing units on the table?
3. Who pays for public infrastructure?

Act on Housing: Invest in Ourselves

1. How can we make housing more secure/keep people housed?
2. What are barriers to affordable rent?
3. Get to know the Anchorage rental market

Find the Assembly's draft Housing Action Strategic Plan, all six case studies, and more information on housing at anchoragehousingaction.org

