



Town of Bar Harbor
Planning Department

A STEP TOWARDS COMMUNITY

Potential Removal of the Area Per Family Requirement in Some Zoning Districts

Progress towards a vision of vibrant year-round neighborhoods that are economically diverse, walkable, near parks, transit stops, jobs, schools, healthcare, and accessible food.

Created By:

Cali Martinez,
Housing and Community Planner

Presented on:

January 20, 2026



CONTENTS

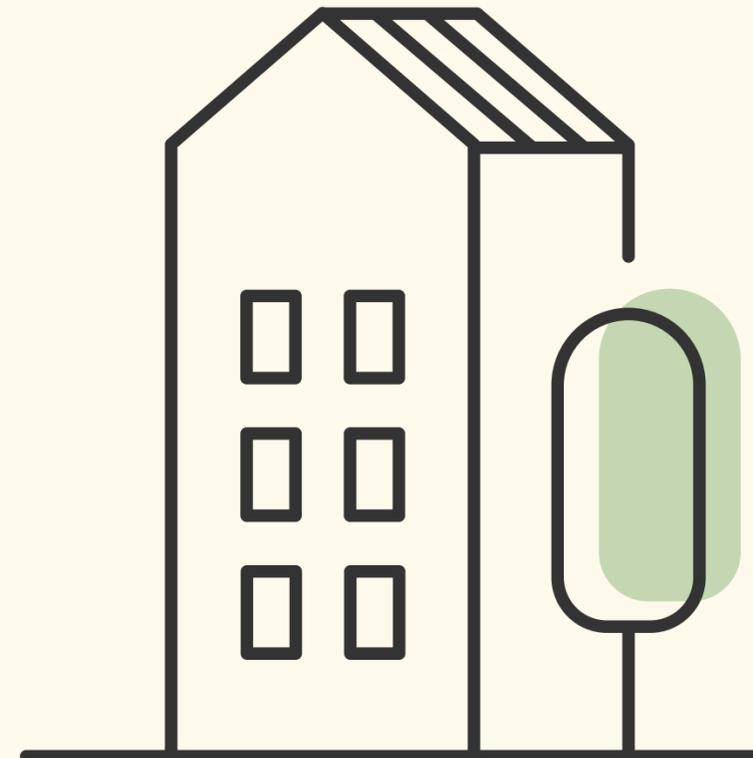
Why?

How?

What?

Questions?

Purpose. This report is intended to give a detailed overview of a potential land use amendment for the June 2026 ballot to address the community's housing shortage.



THE *WHY*

Why Change to Lot Area per Family?

TO GET CLOSER TO THE COMMUNITY'S SHARED VISION

Bar Harbor's vibrancy stems from the **mix of people** and the dramatic natural and cultural beauty of our place. Together, we build upon our diverse economic strengths and, through partnerships, we create **solutions that meet year-round and seasonal needs.** **Our resilient and sustainable community includes sufficient equitable housing, robust infrastructure, and efficient transportation.** We work through our differences to strengthen our collective sense of community. We take care of each other, and we take care of our place.

Why?

How?

What?

Questions

Why?

“Mix of people”

“Our resilient community includes sufficient equitable housing”

How?



What?

“Solutions that meet year-round and seasonal needs”



Questions

& HELP MEET THE STATE'S HOUSING GOALS

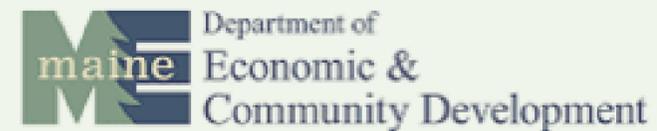
State of Maine Housing Production Needs Study

Homes to support Mainers and Maine businesses, now and in the future.

October 2023



GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF
Policy Innovation
and the Future



Why?

How?

What?

Questions



COMMUNITY



Why?

How?

What?

Questions

HOW...

How do we retain and grow a thriving diverse community?

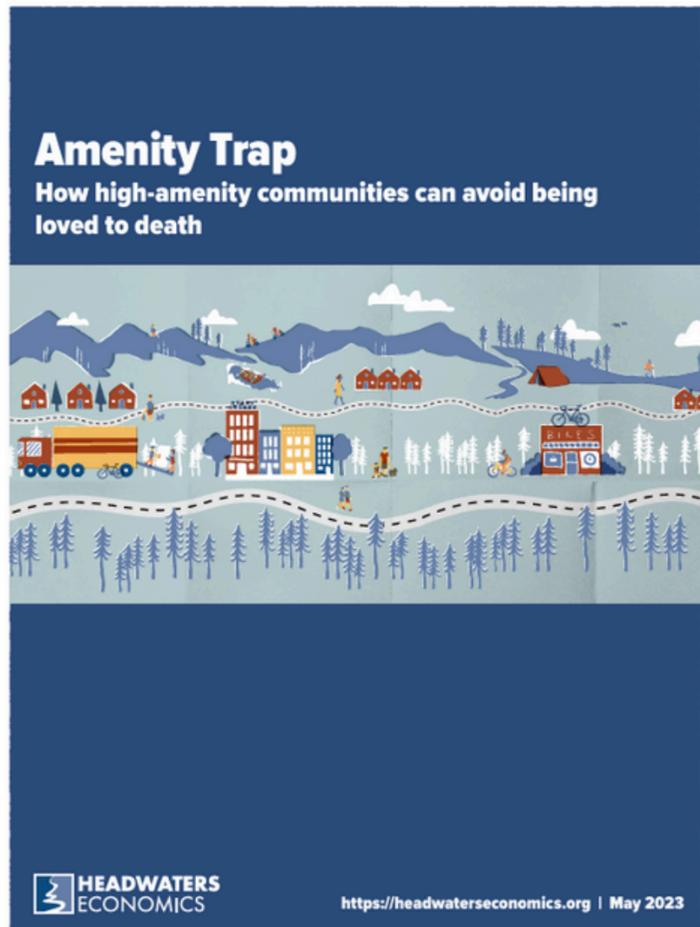
How does the potential change to area per family help reach the community's vision?

BARRIERS & SOLUTIONS TO NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT



Why?

How?



BAR HARBOR HOUSING ANALYSIS
December 28, 2022

RKG
ASSOCIATES INC



What?

Questions

EXCLUSIONARY ZONING



Images from a video created by Sightline Institute called "Invisible Walls Shutting You Out? Housing affordability solutions to take them down."
You can watch the full video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9yZhk2GCYww&t=2s>

Why?

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EXCLUSIONARY ZONING



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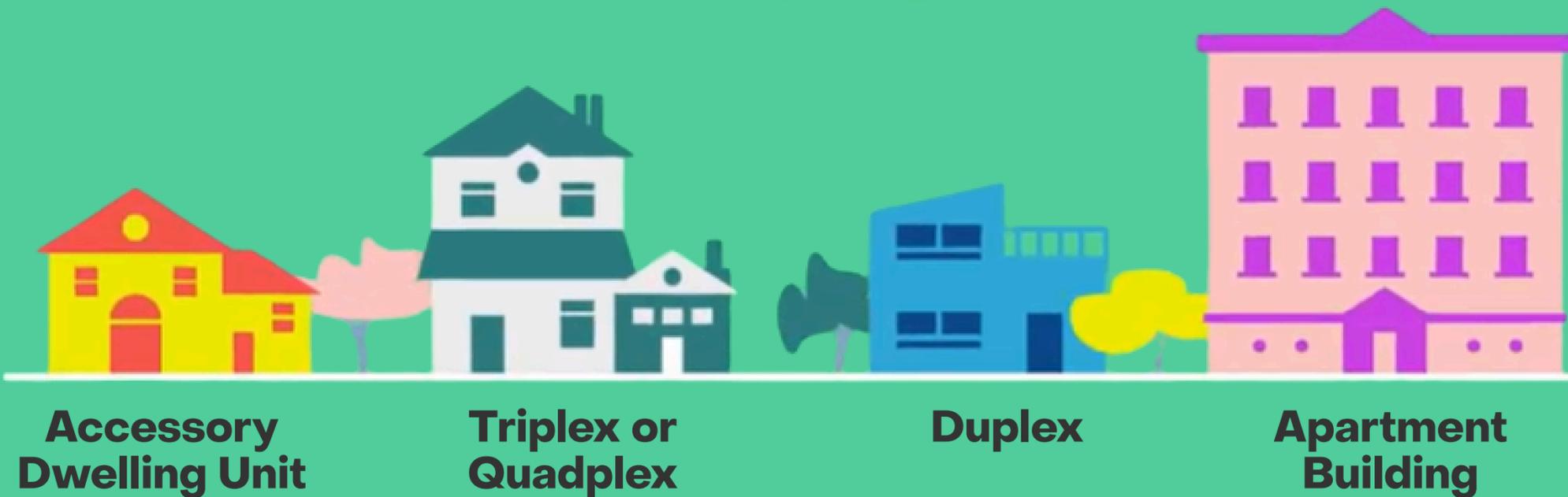
Why?

How?

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Questions

INCLUSIVE ZONING = Diverse Housing Types



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Why?

How?

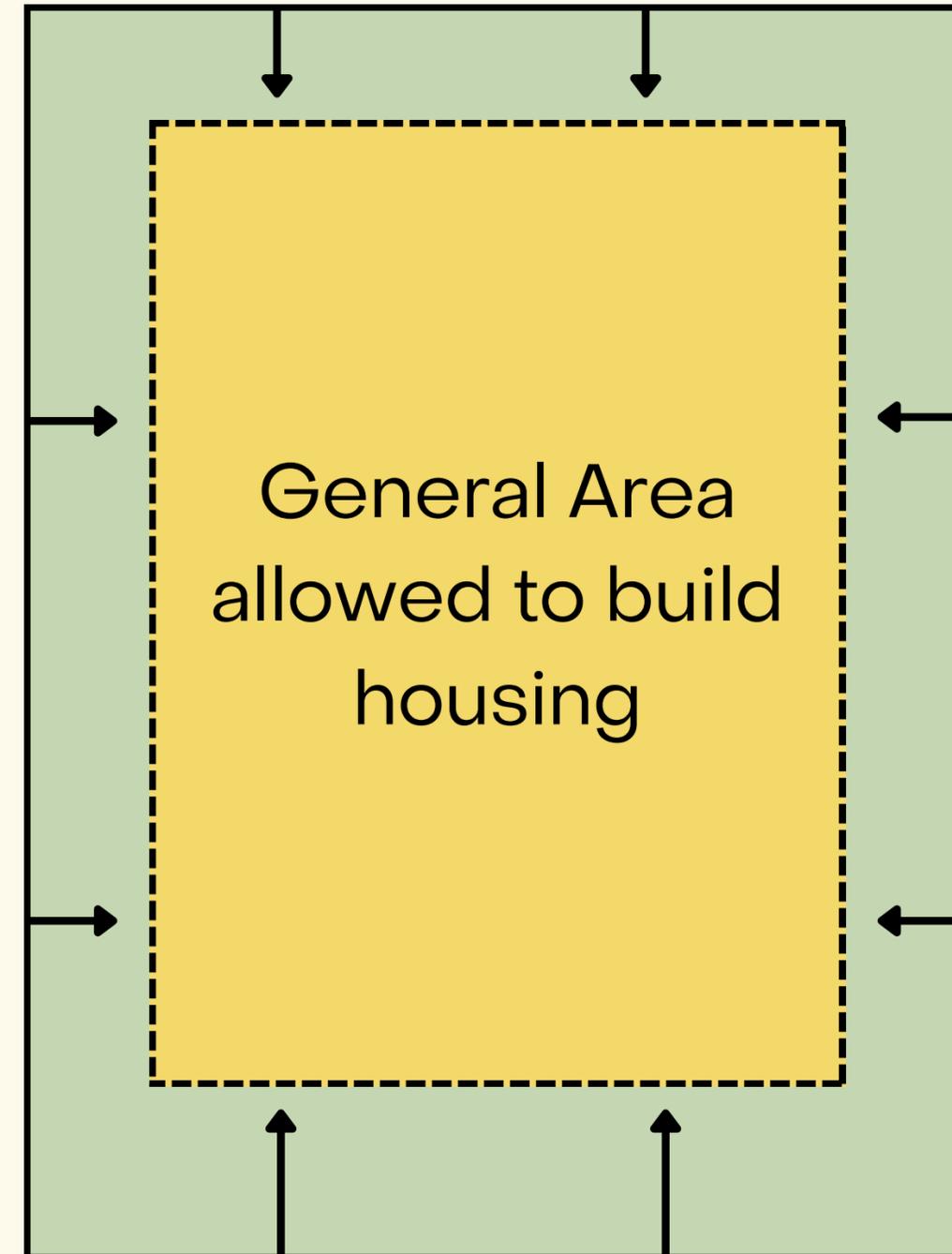
What?

Questions

**What regulations
cause a zone to be**

EXCLUSIVE?

Setbacks



Why?

How?

What?

Questions

What regulations cause a zone to be

EXCLUSIVE?

Setbacks

Lot Coverage

Maximum Lot coverage= 30%



Why?

How?

What?

Questions

What regulations cause a zone to be

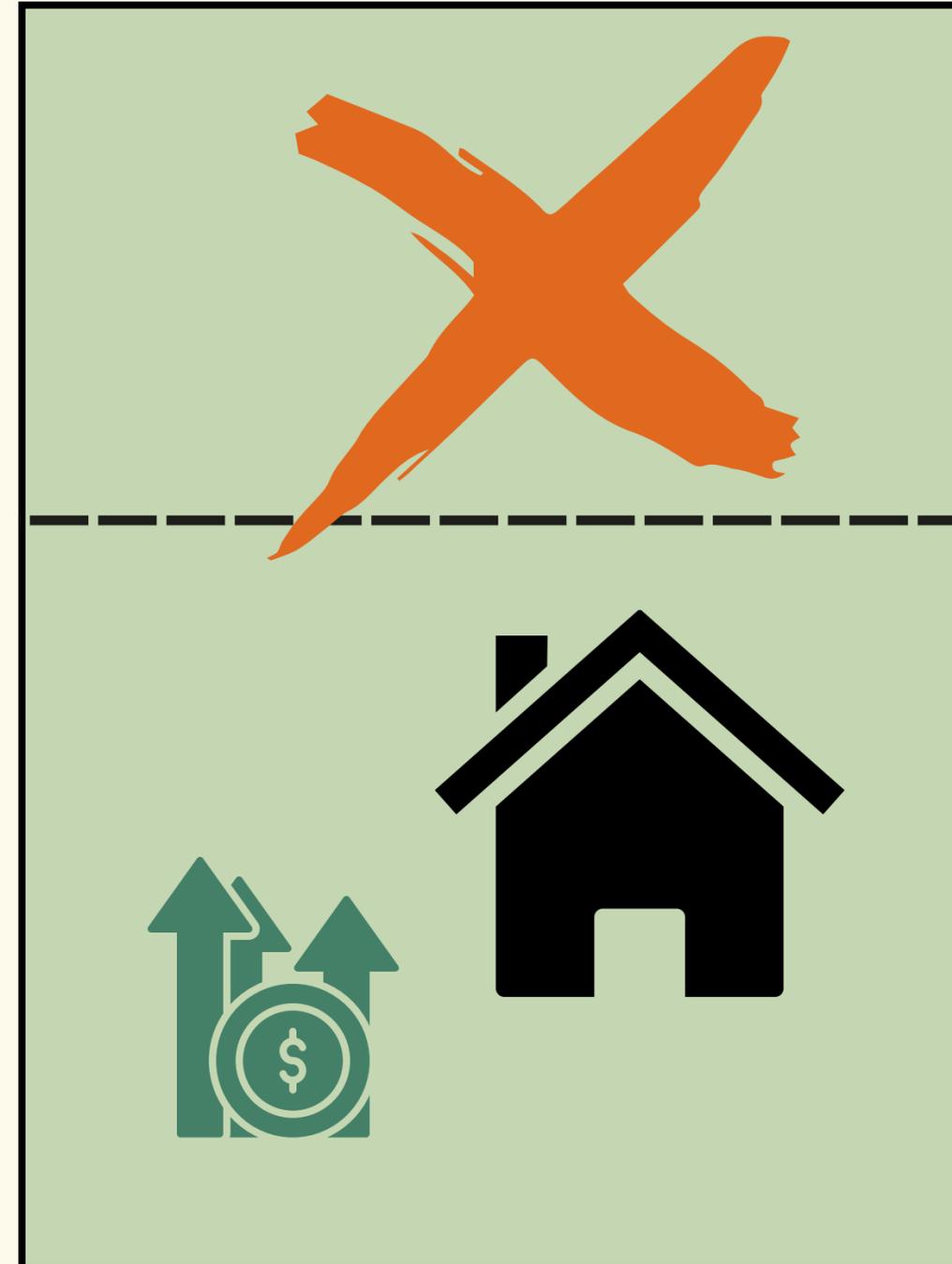
EXCLUSIVE?

Setbacks

Lot Coverage

Lot Size

Minimum lot size = 10,000 sqft



Why?

How?

What?

Questions

What regulations cause a zone to be

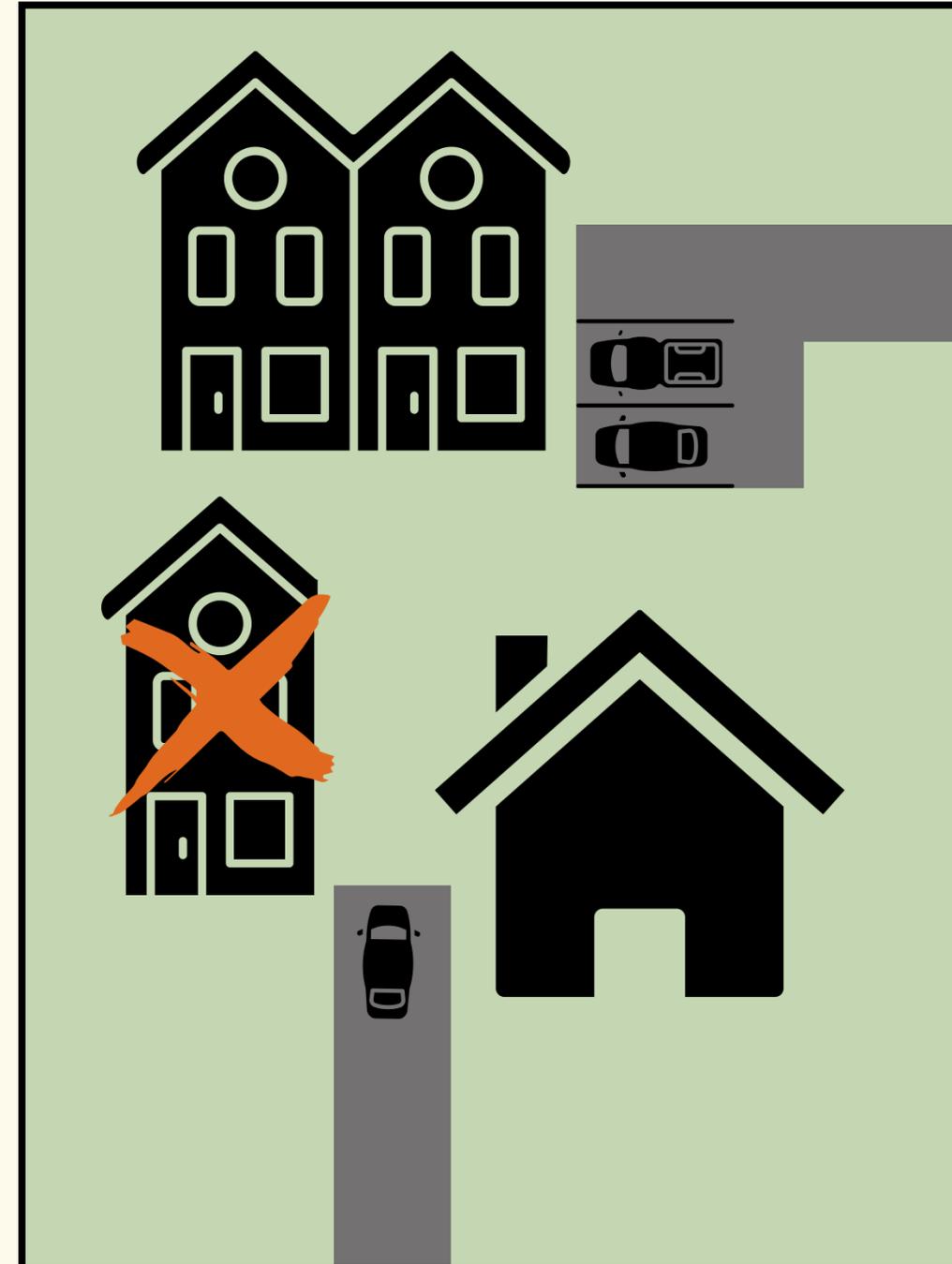
EXCLUSIVE?

Setbacks

Lot Coverage

Lot Size

Parking



Why?

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What regulations cause a zone to be

EXCLUSIVE?

Setbacks

Lot Coverage

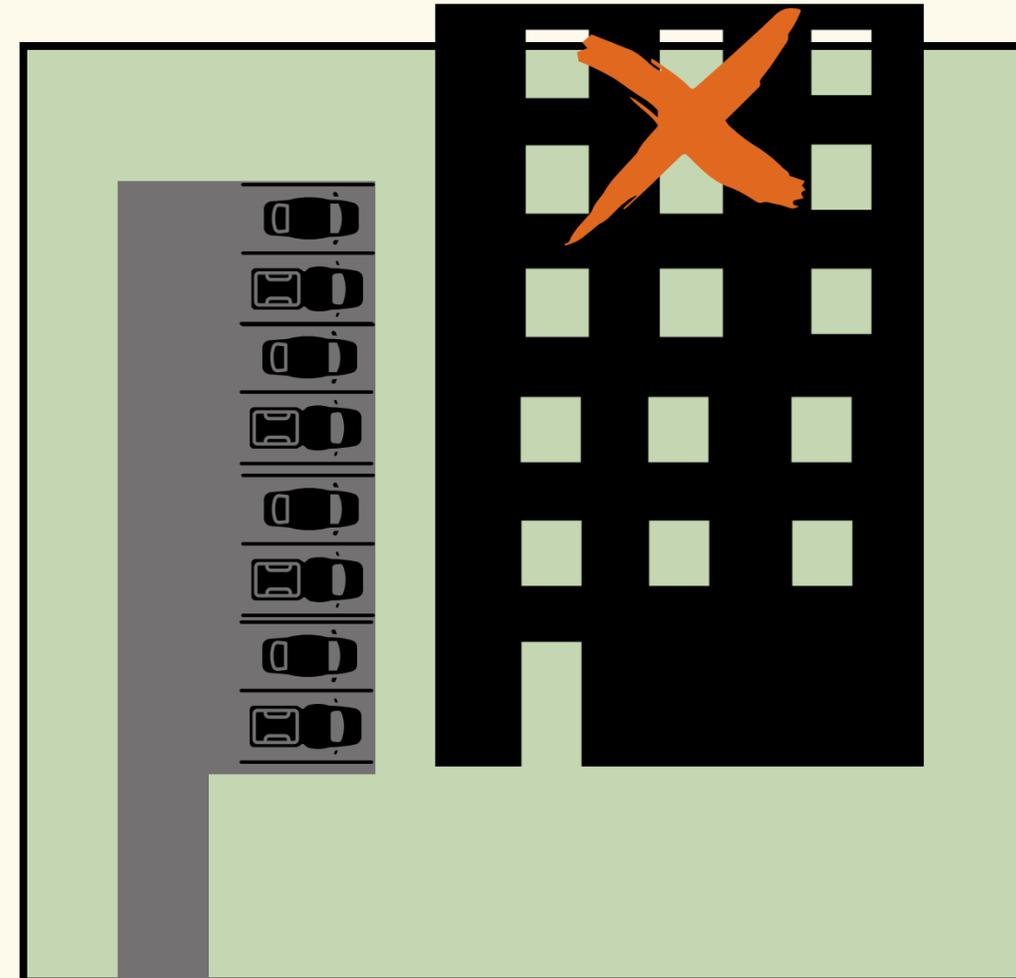
Lot Size

Parking

Height



Maximum height = 40 ft



Why?

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What regulations cause a zone to be

EXCLUSIVE?

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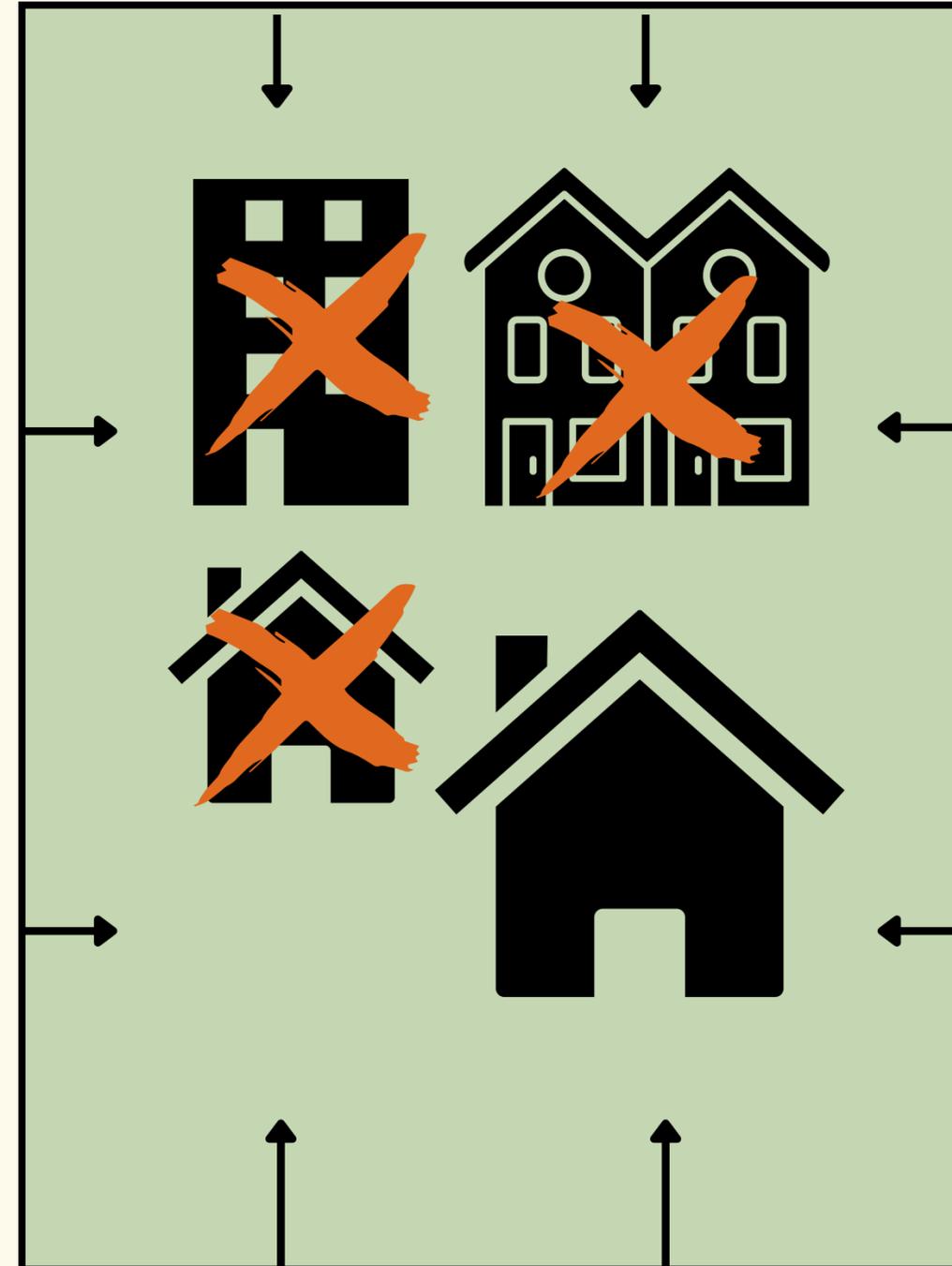
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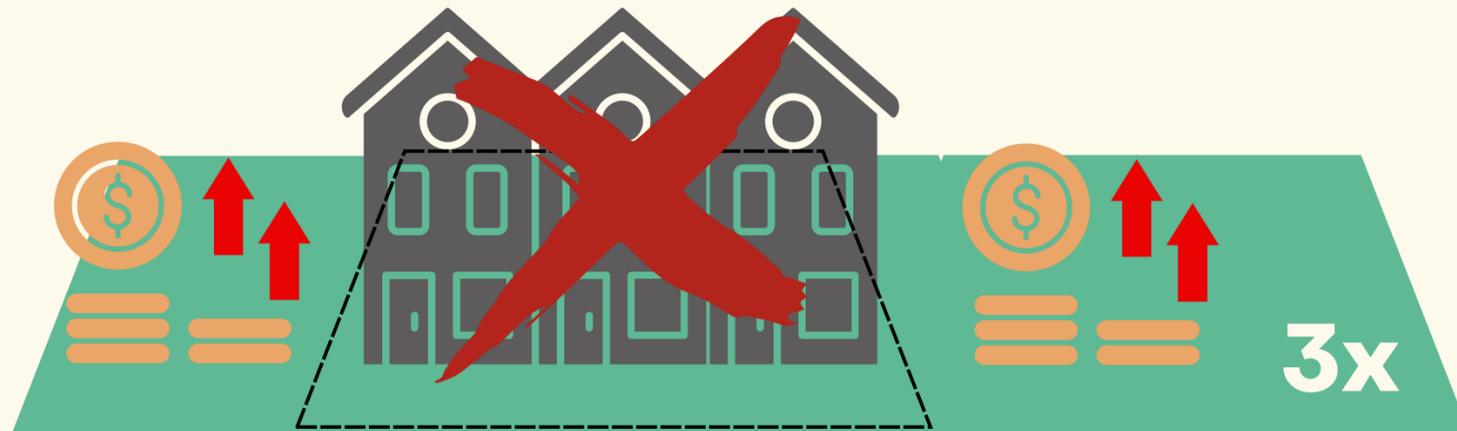
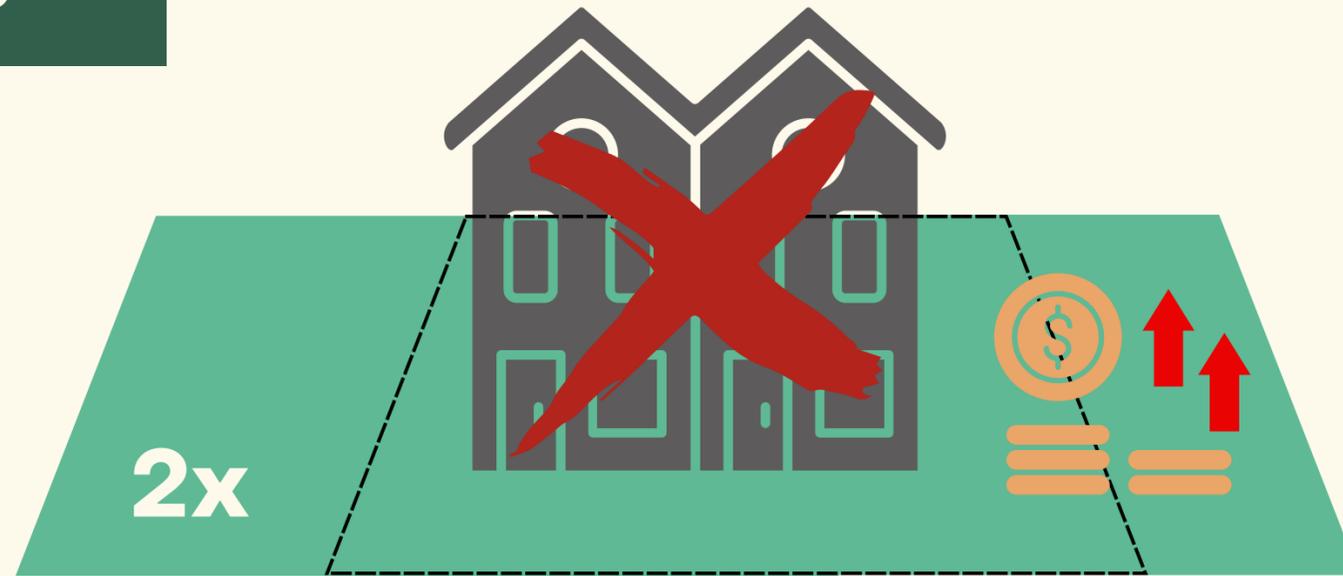
Why?

How?

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Questions

What Is Area Per Family?



Why?

How?

What?

Questions

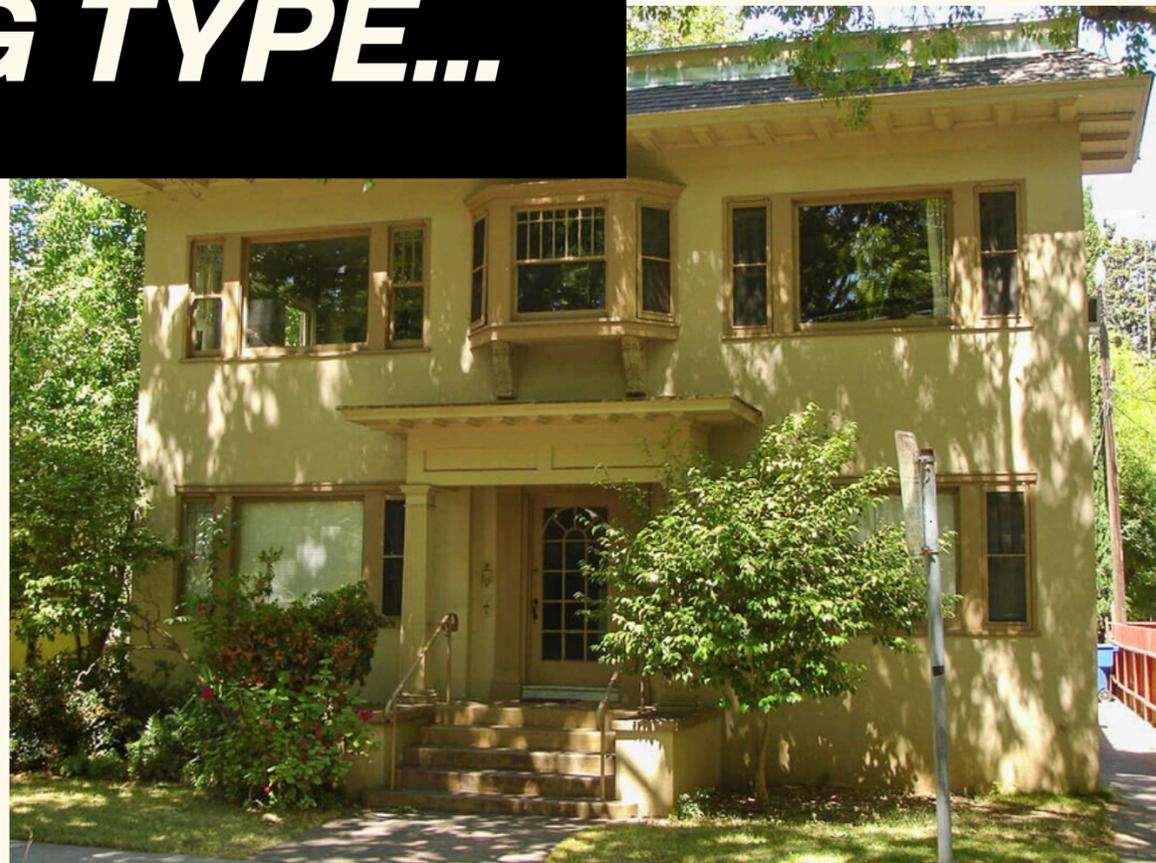
WHAT...

What could the propose change to area per family look like?

What about this change is different than the requirement in new state law?



GUESS THE HOUSING TYPE...



Why?

How?

What?

Questions

Without Area Per Family, more diverse housing is possible



Why?

How?

What?

Questions



***THEY ARE ALL A
FOURPLEX***



Why?

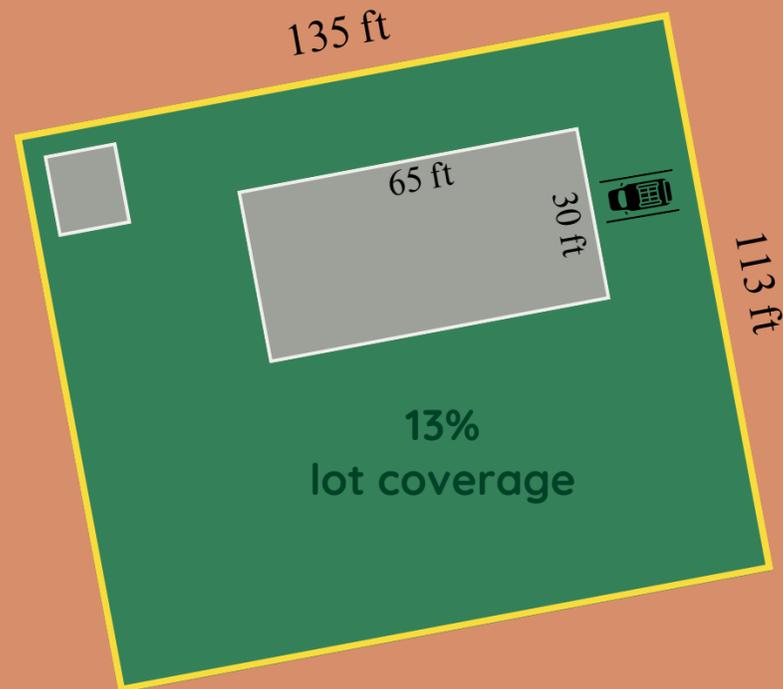
How?

What?

Questions

EXISTING RESIDENTIAL LOT

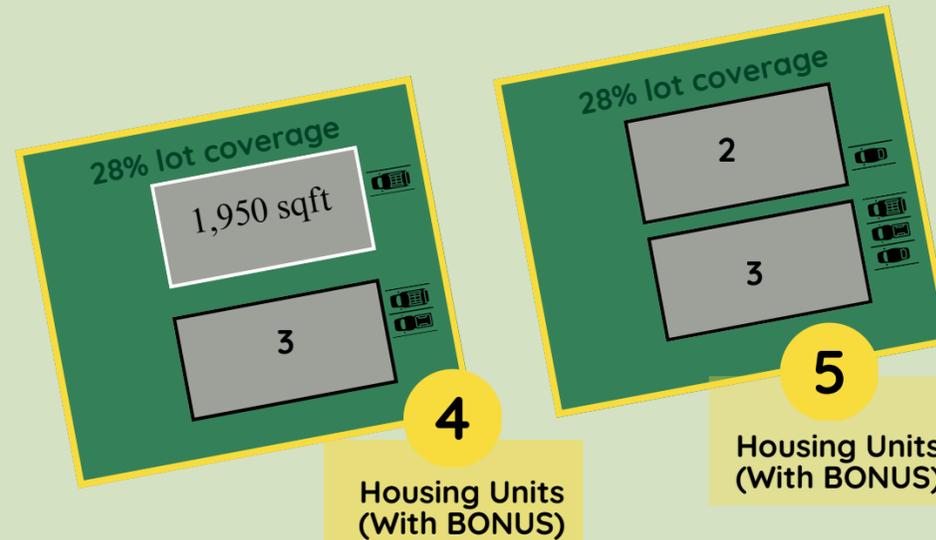
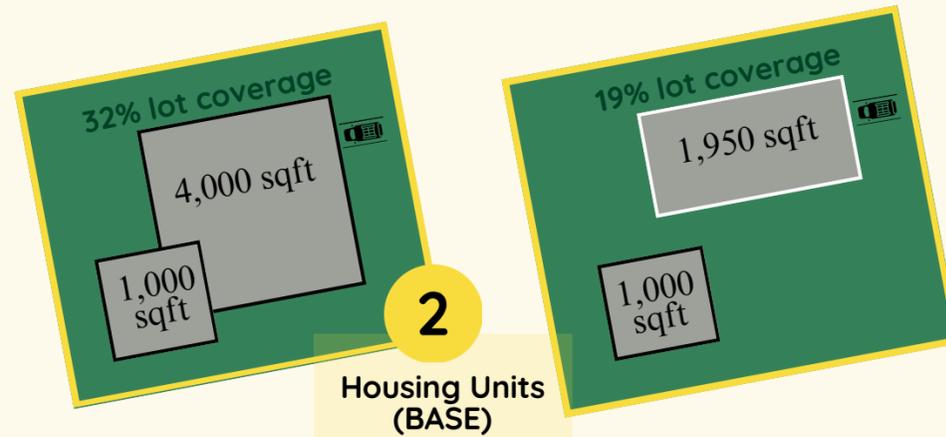
- The existing house is about 1,950 sqft
- The lot is about 15,250 sqft
- Existing lot coverage = ~13% (~2,000 sqft)
- Allowed lot coverage = 50% (~7,625 sqft)



CURRENT

Housing Buildout Potential

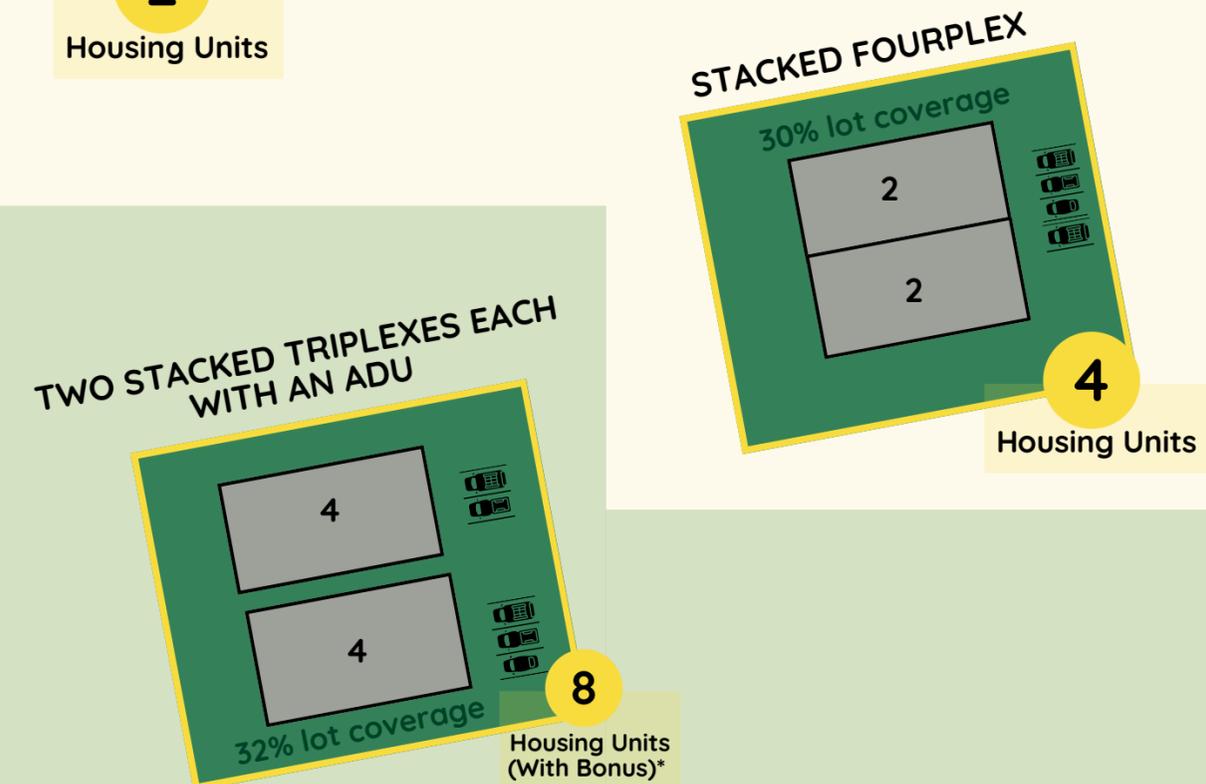
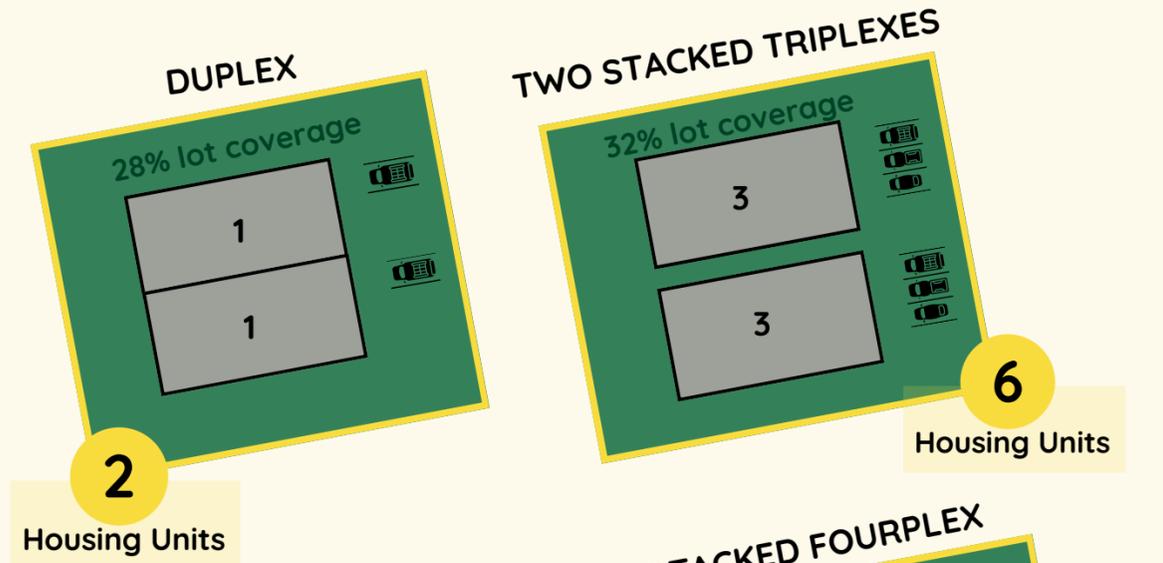
Allowed Under Existing Regulations



POTENTIAL FUTURE

Housing Buildout

Allowed if there are no Area per Family Requirements for Areas on Public Water and Sewer



*Represents a buildout when the height bonus in state law is locally implemented (LD 1829).

SCENARIO A

Severe Housing Shortage for All



*If nothing is done to adapt
to current trends*

SCENARIO B

Better but Housing Still a Challenge



Redefine
Affordability

Remove
Zoning
Barriers

Remove Other
Regulatory
Barriers

*If nothing is done to adapt
to current trends*

Top image source: APA 2025 Trend Report p. 58; Bottom Image was created by Canva AI Image generator

SCENARIO C

Start to Feel and See Positive Change

Develop Financial Incentives

Redefine Affordability

Remove Zoning Barriers

Remove Zoning Barriers

If nothing is done to adapt to current trends



Top image source: APA 2025 Trend Report p. 58; Bottom Image was created by Canva AI Image generator

SCENARIO D

Affordable Choices Available For All Ages & Households



Top image source: APA 2025 Trend Report p. 58; Bottom Image was created by Canva AI Image generator

Public-Private Partnerships for Under Utilized Parcels

Develop Financial Incentives

Redefine Affordability

Remove Zoning Barriers

Remove Zoning Barriers

If nothing is done to adapt to current trends

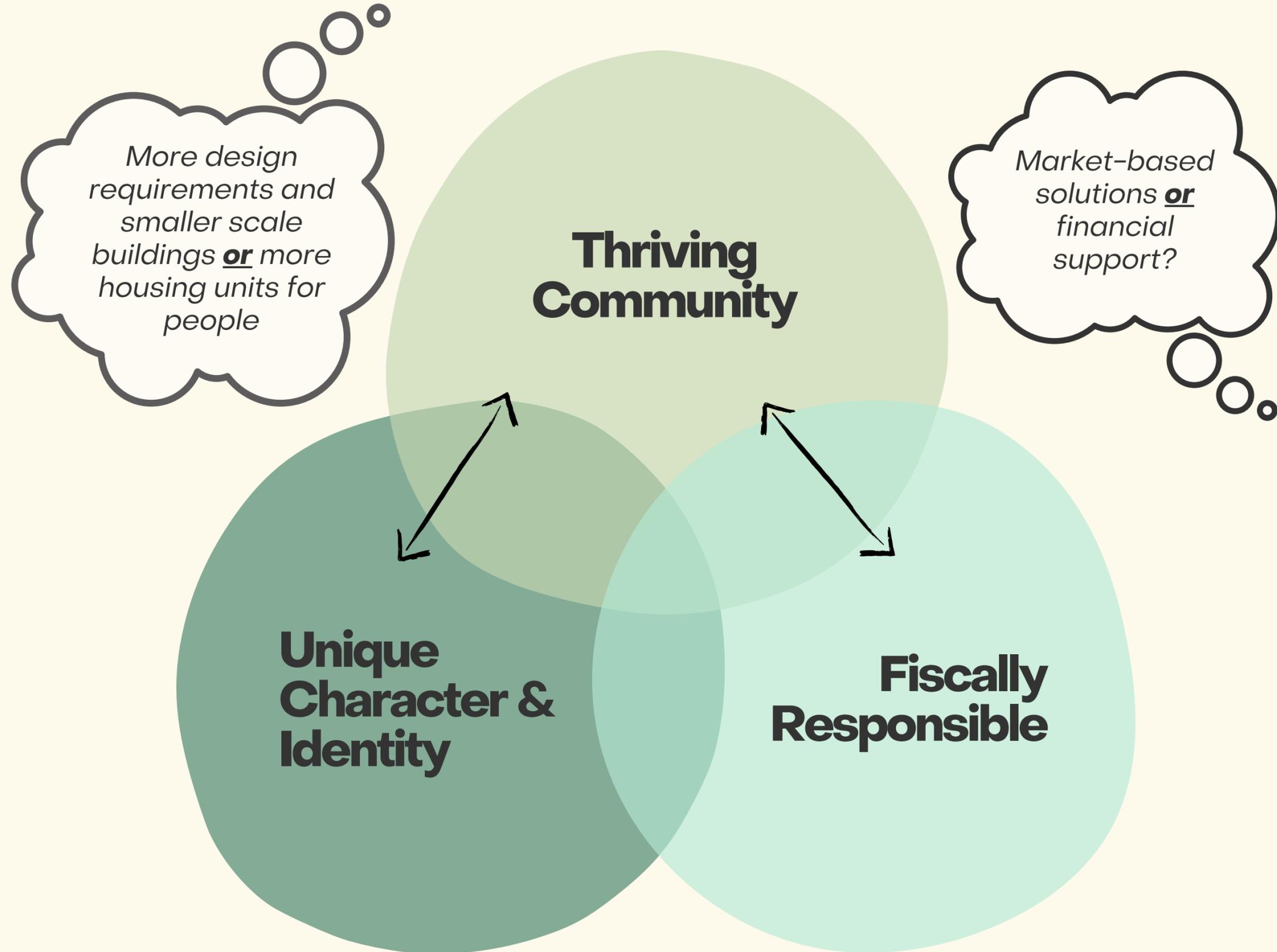


Approach

BALANCING ACT

These values will be foundational to each housing decision, however, **the community must prioritize efforts that create a thriving community**; to accept new individuals, couples, and families that come from unique backgrounds and cultures, that bring their own unique needs and preferences.

The community will need to tolerate **change** and **invest** in the future.





REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Below are the foundational documents that were used to create this presentation and will continue to be used to ensure all housing efforts are aligned with the community's values and unique needs.



Housing Policy Framework V2 (2023)

This document outlines the Town's housing vision and associated policies and actions. Proposed solutions will align with the content of this framework.



Bar Harbor Housing Analysis (2022)

This document clarifies many housing market challenges and dynamics specific to Bar Harbor and the region. This document will be utilized to ensure solutions address our unique challenges.



Bar Harbor 2035 Comprehensive Plan (2025)

This plan was adopted by the voters in June 2025, efforts will aim to further the vision and future land use strategy described within this document.



Amenity Trap Report (2023)

This report was published in 2023 by Headwaters Economics which summarizes research and examples of how amenity towns can best address their unique challenges



QUESTIONS?

