



York County Needs 49,000 Homes. What Are We Doing About It?

.Bridging the Gap: Exploring the Future of Housing in York County

New Missing Middle Housing Study Reveals Key Insights & Opportunities for a More Balanced Market

As housing affordability, inventory, and livability continue to dominate headlines and policy conversations across the region, the Piedmont Regional Association of REALTORS® (PRAR) is proud to take a proactive role in seeking solutions.

PRAR recently funded a **Missing Middle Housing Scan of York County**, developed by Opticos Design, Inc. with grant support from the South Carolina Community Alliance and the National Association of REALTORS®, in partnership with the York County Planning Department. This groundbreaking study examines the housing types that fall between detached single-family homes and large apartment complexes—such as duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, cottage courts, and small multifamily units—and their potential to address current and future housing needs.

Why This Matters

York County is expected to grow significantly over the next 25 years, with the population projected to reach **over 407,000 by 2050**. To accommodate this growth, the county will need an estimated **49,000 new housing units**—yet current housing production trends show a clear gap:

- From **2010 to 2023**, York County added over **28,000 new housing units**, but nearly all were either single-family detached homes or large apartment buildings.
- Small multi-unit buildings (2–4 units)—the very heart of Missing Middle Housing (MMH)—**actually declined** in number over that period.
- Nearly **49% of renters** in York County are cost-burdened, and **median-income buyers are priced below the median sale price**, which recently climbed to **\$435,000**.

This is where Missing Middle Housing can play a transformative role.

What is Missing Middle Housing?

Missing Middle Housing refers to a range of housing types that are compatible in scale with single-family homes but provide multiple units—such as duplexes, triplexes, courtyard buildings, fourplexes, bungalow courts, and townhomes. These housing types are often found in walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods and offer a more diverse, affordable set of options for renters, first-time buyers, and downsizers.

Key Findings from the Scan

- **York County's housing market is polarized**, offering mostly high-cost single-family homes or large apartment complexes, with very little in between.
- **Inventory of Missing Middle units has actually decreased** since 2010.
- **Most new housing is located in car-dependent areas**, missing the opportunity to build near walkable centers that would naturally support MMH.
- **Zoning barriers**—such as maximum density caps, wide minimum lot widths, and off-street parking requirements—make it difficult for MMH projects to be approved or financially feasible.
- **Opportunities exist** to revise existing policy to encourage MMH in targeted areas, especially near existing neighborhood centers and with infrastructure already in place.

Recommendations & Next Steps

The report outlines both **"Small Moves"** (short-term zoning adjustments) and **"Big Moves"** (strategic policy shifts and community pilots) to help create more MMH-ready communities. These include:

- **Aligning zoning codes** with the county's comprehensive plan (York Forward 2035) by exempting MMH types from rigid density caps.
- **Reducing parking minimums** in walkable areas and allowing on-street parking to count toward requirements.
- **Modernizing ADU regulations**, including removing owner-occupancy rules and easing parking and size limitations.
- **Launching a pilot MMH project** on county-owned land and streamlining the permitting process for infill and small-scale development.
- **Creating a pattern book** to guide developers on building context-appropriate, walkable housing types.

For REALTORS®: What You Need to Know

1. **The Market Gap Is Real.** There's strong demand for more diverse, attainable housing types—especially among first-time buyers and renters. MMH can unlock new opportunities for your clients.
2. **Location Is Key.** Focus your attention on walkable centers and areas with existing infrastructure, where MMH performs best.

3. **Policy Shapes Inventory.** Stay informed on local zoning discussions and be an advocate for smart reforms that allow your clients more housing choices.

As **Colleen Coesens**, PRAR 2025 President, said:

“This study is one of the most impactful initiatives our Association has ever supported. As REALTORS®, we are on the front lines of housing every day, and we see firsthand how limited the options are for working families, first-time buyers, and those looking to downsize.

By funding the Missing Middle Housing Scan, the Piedmont Regional Association of REALTORS® is helping bring data-driven solutions to the table—solutions that support smart growth, housing diversity, and long-term community health.

We are proud to be part of this important conversation and even prouder to take the lead in building bridges between the real estate industry, local government, and our residents. This is what advocacy in action looks like.”

Leading with Purpose

PRAR remains committed to being more than a professional association—we’re a community partner dedicated to smart, sustainable growth across York County and the greater Piedmont region. This scan is just one example of how REALTORS® are stepping into leadership roles to **shape the future of housing** in South Carolina.

Want to dive deeper?

[Click here or use QR code to read the full Missing Middle Housing Scan Report](#)

