

Item

Discuss proposed **Housing Feasibility Zoning Code amendments (ZCA-25)**.

Background

As announced in the 2023 housing study, Tulsa is experiencing a housing crisis that will require the construction of at least 12,900 housing units over the next ten years, representing a 55% increase in current housing production. Regulatory barriers such as zoning regulations are often cited by home builders, housing nonprofits, policy makers, and researchers as one of many factors leading to reduced housing production that does not keep up with demand.

As opportunities for greenfield housing development at the edge of the city continue to dwindle, attention has shifted toward infill development in the past decade. Through conversations with homebuilders, housing advocates, policymakers, citizens, development services staff, and our own team of planners, plus considering the recommendations of the 2023 AARP Tulsa Zoning Code Audit, we have identified many regulatory barriers that prevent the development of neighborhood-scale infill housing.

In the past few years, the Planning Office began implementing recommendations found in adopted small area plans and the 2019 downtown housing study. In 2021, the Neighborhood Infill Overlay (NIO) was adopted for many neighborhoods surrounding downtown. The overlay changed lot, building, and parking regulations, and allows additional housing types to be constructed by right, including townhouses, duplexes, multi-unit houses (triplexes and quadplexes), cottage court developments, small apartment buildings with up to six units, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs), which are also known as backyard cottages, granny flats, and garage apartments. This was the traditional mix of housing types in neighborhoods until zoning regulations in the 1940s prohibited it. In 2023, a modified version of the NIO was also adopted for the Dawson area.

Key Concepts in ZCA-25

1) **Housing Types in Office & Commercial Districts**

Allow Duplexes, Multi-Unit Houses, Apartments, and Cottage House Developments by right in more Office and Commercial Districts. Other higher-density residential building types are already allowed in these zoning districts.

2) **Hotel/Office-to-Residential Conversions**

To accommodate the conversion of vacant commercial buildings and hotels to housing, replace references to *minimum lot area per unit* and *open space per unit* with established Floor Area Ratios in O, C, and I zoning districts.

3) **Removing the Time Limit on Special Exception Approvals of Manufactured Housing**

Allow manufactured housing approved by special exception to remain on a lot for more

than one year, to which they are currently limited. The Board may still choose to impose a time limit if necessary, applicants will no longer be required to request extensions with each initial application. Currently, every Special Exception request for Manufactured Houses include such an extension request.

4) Cottage House Developments

Clarify that more than one grouping of cottage houses are allowed on a single lot and reduce the minimum number of houses required from 4 to 3 to make it more feasible to build small cottage house developments on existing infill lots.

5) Accessory Dwelling Units / Backyard Cottages

Reduce regulatory barriers to the construction of accessory dwelling units (ADUs)/backyard cottages/granny flats/garage apartments, by:

- a. Simplifying building size limits for accessory buildings
- b. Increasing the height limit to allow a two-story accessory building if it includes an accessory dwelling unit
- c. Increasing the allowable rear setback coverage

6) Reducing and Simplifying Mandatory Parking Requirements

Minimum parking requirements are a major factor in restricting housing and commercial development, and they add considerable construction costs that then get passed on to consumers, home buyers, and renters. To make many projects more feasible and facilitate reuse of existing vacant structures, the proposal includes reducing all districts to the existing CH/MX ratios, and simplifying the Household Living category, which will make the requirements far easier to understand.

- a. Merge the CH/MX and *All Other Districts* columns, applying the existing requirements for CH and MX districts to all zoning districts except CBD (which has no minimum ratios).
- b. Merge the Household Living subcategories and set the minimum to one space per dwelling unit

The proposed amendments were presented to TMAPC at a work session on March 22, 2023. Since that time, they were initiated by City Council and the Planning Office has had continued conversations with Councilors about the amendment details and other housing-related issues

Next Steps

The proposed amendments will be presented to TMAPC for consideration on September 4, 2024, and subsequently transmitted to the City Council for their consideration.