

To: Tulsa City Councilors

From: Susan Miller, AICP, Director, Tulsa Planning Office

Date: March 22, 2023

Re: Possible Council initiation of zoning code amendments concerning housing feasibility

As recently announced in the citywide housing study, Tulsa is experiencing a housing crisis that will require the construction of at least 13,000 housing units over the next ten years, representing a 55% increase in current housing production. Zoning Code 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 home builders, housing advocates, policymakers, citizens, and our own team of planners, we have identified issues that prevent the development of neighborhood-scale infill housing.

In the past few years, we have begun implementing recommendations found in adopted small area plans and the 2019 downtown housing study. In 2021, we introduced the Neighborhood Infill Overlay (NIO) for many neighborhoods surrounding downtown.

Additional neighborhoods, also seeking more housing choice, have requested that the City expand the boundaries of the overlay or create a modified version for their own areas. One such version is being developed for the Dawson area.

While those regulations apply to specific areas, new housing is needed across all areas of the city. Recent changes to the zoning code that apply citywide include reduced lot area requirements for duplexes and cottage house developments, reduced minimum lot widths for duplexes and townhouses, and reduced minimum street setbacks in Residential-Multifamily (RM) zoning districts.

Some of the key proposed concepts build on those, and some have been identified as we continue to talk with the community, home builders, and experts.

Key Concepts

- 1) Allow Duplexes, Multi-Unit Houses, Apartments, and Cottage House Developments by right in more Office and Commercial Districts where it makes sense.
- 2) To accommodate commercial properties and hotels to be converted to housing, eliminate minimum lot area per unit and open space per unit, and instead rely on established Floor Area Ratios.

- 3) Allow manufactured housing approved by special exception to remain on a lot for more than one year, to which they are currently limited.
- 4) 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) Reduce regulatory barriers to the construction of accessory dwelling units (ADUs)/backyard cottages/granny flats while accounting for neighborhood concerns. This is accomplished by:
 - a. Creating uniform building size limits for accessory dwelling units
 - 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
 - d. Increasing the setback requirements from lot lines to ensure a bit more distance from neighboring lots
- 6) Merge two minimum parking ratio categories, applying the existing requirements for CH and MX districts to all zoning districts except CBD (which has no minimum ratios). This will make many projects more feasible and facilitate reuse of existing vacant structures. Minimum parking requirements are a major factor in restricting housing development, and they add considerable construction costs that then get passed on to consumers, home buyers, and renters. It will make the requirements easier to understand.

If the City Council chooses to initiate the change, Tulsa Planning Office will draft these amendments to the Zoning Code.