



Meeting Notes

June 15, 2021

Call to Order

Recording started by Teresa Geisheker.

Lisa Clark, Co-Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. There were 34 participants.

Welcome by Co-Chairs

Ms. Clark took the roll and presented the speaker rules.

Director's Report: Margaret Wallace Brown, Director, Planning & Development Department welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Suvidha Bandi: Today's discussion points are:

- Recap May meeting, year's timeline
- Continue single family and multi-family residential development discussion
- Present research on accessory dwelling units from other cities
- Homework activities and expectations for the next meeting
- Public comments at the end

We want to thoroughly vet the ideas through the committee; repeatedly gather feedback from all of the committee members, assess pros and cons of any recommendation changes, to help us make informed proposals and to work on details with the Technical Advisory Group (TAG.)

Goals:

- Have regulations to encourage development and preservation of various affordable housing types at various price points that meet the needs of middle-income households.
- Provide variety of housing options by allowing missing middle housing types
- Allow homeowners to add additional units on lots.

Data shows that the cost of housing has increased. The rate of homeownership increases as the household income increases. There is a growing demand for rental housing. With respect to the challenges, we learned that:

- Current regulations are not conducive to adding an additional unit when you already have a duplex on the lot.
- The multifamily regulations create limitations by requiring a private street on the property.
- Parking requirements may also create limitations, which we've discussed.

Review: Our residential best practices study recommendations:

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- Allow up to four units on a lot.
 - Focus not on density, but the floor area ratio and massing of the structure and reducing minimum parking requirements.
 - Encourage shape spaces, allowing more accessory, dwelling units, and providing different housing types, especially for corner lots.

Single-family is defined as:

- A lot built with not more than two separate units, which can include a detached secondary unit no larger than 900 square feet.
- A building with two attached units on a lot
- A building containing one dwelling unit on one lot that is connected with the party wall to another dwelling unit and another lot is also considered single family. Examples shown.

Considerations: Preliminary ideas:

- Allow 3-4 units on a lot? Benefits and challenges?
- Consider reduced parking requirements?
- Consider small-scale residential development?
- Change parking requirements for 1 additional unit? If so, how?
- Change multi-family criteria? A lot that already has duplex and adds a unit has to meet more stringent or unfeasible multi-family requirements.
- What should be the requirements for multifamily?

Photographic examples of homes: See recording

- Built prior to 1999 with more than three units on a lot
- More than two units on a lot.
- Combinations to achieve more than two units on a lot.

Single Family Questions? Comments?

Mike Dishberger: Good job showing different residential styles that happen in Houston. The number one item is not requiring the extra parking spot. Secondly, let the number of units go up to 4, for incremental affordability.

Ron Lindsay: Ideas tie to Walkable Places. Driveways crossing sidewalks in front of front-loading driveways is a negative.

Kirby Lu: Setbacks vary per the type of development. Reducing parking requirements won't make cars disappear. If housing footprint goes closer to street, could have park behind. Form on buildings mass affects parking, stacking cars in future. Don't prevent future technologies.

John Blount: Has City adopted Appendix Q of IRC, which facilitates even smaller homes? It would offer opportunities to resolve driveway issues.

Michael Howard, HPW: Proposed amendment to include Q into 2015 IRC; being considered in next few months. TTI meets the first week of August.

Margaret Wallace Brown: Bedrooms per unit establishes parking, important from our point of view.

John Blount: Bedrooms not required per Q. If a loft has no bedroom, no parking is required.

Sonny Garza: To add unit to an existing duplex, such as lower cost Mother-in-Law units, have to pave over the rear.

Peter Freeman: Four units is the way to go; reduce parking. Provide a true yard, not increase impervious cover. Provide incentives to use a common drive on one lot; currently triggers detention requirement. Multiple lots using the same driveway can make a great impact.

Lisa Clark: Discuss with Technical Advisory Group (TAG.)

Yuhayna Mahmud: Encourage green space. Increase density. Investment in sidewalks and bikeways network is going in the right direction.

Ron Lindsay: Four units makes sense. Doing away with parking doesn't. A 900 s.f. unit has a car. A 400 s.f. unit – maybe no car. Sidewalks need a network per Walkable Places concepts; backsliding on it.

Zion Escobar: Four units OK. Freedman's Town has duplexes, fourplexes with only street parking.

Megan Sigler: I lived in a 400 s.f. carriage house in Montrose; not sure small size precluded parking need. Setbacks important.

Meg Lousteau: Curb cuts affect on-street parking, which is a public commodity. Townhomes eat up all the curb space.

Sheri Smith: Minimize or increase street parking and look at use of street itself.

Shawn Massock: I'm listening; sounds good.

Sonny Garza: Shared driveways in Freedman's area triggered detention. Building new versus infill? How to make it easier to build multi-family on a lot? Incentives?

John Blount: Reduce parking. For detention, adopt County's green infrastructure rules.

Megan Sigler: Explain 4 units per lot. Change density in Ch. 42? Twenty years ago, 27 du/acre was based on 50 x 100' lots.

Suvidha Bandi: Density criteria is easier to meet when building larger units, as density is not based on square footage of the unit. It is based on the number of units per acre (du/ac.) Instead, using lot coverage and massing, or Floor Area Ratio (F.A.R.) can help achieve the goal allowing more units within the same square footage. TAG can study further.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's):

Suvidha Bandi: ADU's can be attached or detached. No size limit if attached in Houston. If detached, 900 s.f. is maximum. Details from other Cities to be presented by staff Planner Lindy Morris.

Lindy Morris: An ADU is an independent dwelling unit, up to 900 s.f., on same lot as a residence.

- San Antonio: maximum 800 s.f. in a residential zone with exceptions
- Austin: 1100 s.f.
- Minneapolis: 1300 s.f.
- Sacramento CA: up to 1,200 s.f., multiple permitted

Homeownership: Approximately 58% of ADU's may be rental.

Lynn Henson: Houston's www.hcad.org data suggests that what we may call ADU's are frame build detached units, garage conversions, or brick or stone buildings with living areas. See slide 35.

"Backdoor Revolution: The Definitive Guide to ADU Development," a book by Kol Peterson, suggests that even with varying construction costs., economics suggest to build up to the maximum allowable size, as there is only a marginal increase in the cost.

Questions to consider:

- Maximum size?
- Increase maximum size?
- What should be size (benefits or impacts?)

Lisa Clark: For detached garage apartment, what are the conditions for not having to do parking?

Hector Rodriguez: Can do game room. If no kitchen or no complete bathroom, not a complete Dwelling Unit (DU.) DU's requires sleep, bath, cooking – if missing one, not an ADU and therefore no parking.

Ron Lindsay: Take larger neighborhoods out of discussion, as they often have deed restrictions to prohibit rental. If workers or kids come home, it distorts size ratios.

Lynn Henson: We want to find a way to categorize. It may not help us to categorize units by using www.hcad.org codes.

Ron Lindsay: From larger, non-profit experience, a lack of City oversight on maintenance is an issue. City should make sure ADU's are safe to be in. Assistance placements are underfunded. Owners may not maintain; may deteriorate and be unsafe.

Peter Freedman: Kitchen and bath are major costs, if trying to do a 2 bedroom, 1 bath unit. Easy to add third bedroom. Increasing size can fit larger families' affordability. I like proposed size increases.

Peter Freedman: What is legal opinion on deed restrictions prohibiting multi-family, in relation to ADU's?

Suvidha Bandi: If deed restrictions prohibit multi-family, then multi-family cannot be built. Nothing within the subdivision regulations can override deed restrictions.

Megan Sigler: How do utilities work, with multiple units? Discuss answers next meeting.

Andy Teas: City inspections matter. Multi-family is registered as three units or above. If duplex or single-family rent house, it's not subject to that multi-family ordinance. Suggest leaving criteria as 3-4 units.

Andy Teas: Habitability definition differs between Solid Waste, Safety and Fire. Fire is 10 units or above.

Sonny Garza: Changing the ordinance language and definition may be appropriate.

Sonny Garza: If deed restrictions and single-family minimum lot size ordinance is in place, can a property be turned into a three-story apartment? Discuss with TAG.

Homework: Lynn Henson

- Do Survey on Let's Talk Houston\Livable Places
- Offer drive by suggestions
- See article on Let's Talk Houston; click on articles tab.
- Visit www.buildinganADU.com

No July meeting: August 10 is the next meeting.

Public Comment

Tramaine Chapman: Developers can build 2-3 single family townhomes on 6000 s.f. lots. If they built garages at the bottom, with living on second and third floors, it would free up parking. Investors buy two car garages and lease to students, with parking in streets and cars going over sidewalks.

Carson Riggins: In favor of reducing parking for ADU's. Creating minimums do not force people to exceed standards. If parking is forced, it adds cost. Curb cuts privatize parking for homeowners. Shared driveways are better.

Mary Ross: Opposed to reducing parking, as it creates safety issues with people parking on both sides of the streets, and emergency vehicles cannot pass. This idea penalizes people needing affordable homes. People with newer builds have to park on streets. Being near a METRO stop is not a solution, as accounting for it can penalize vehicle users. Also, do deed restrictions allow changes?

Benjamin Bahorich: Deed restrictions control development and property rights. If live in a deed restricted community, hard to imagine you could build a multi-family structure there. If creating lower costs developments, define single family as 1-4 families on 1 lot; might be able to meet deed restrictions, but may be a legal battle. How does City ordinance relate to potential lawsuits? Allow 2 unit ADU's, but less parking required. Deed Restriction control is a question.

Suvidha Bandi: Anything in Ch. 42 cannot override deed restrictions.

Robin Holzer: As a homeowner and transportation Planner in Montrose, raising my children: Rents are rising. Equip people to add affordable units. There is no such thing as free parking. Allow up to 4 units on single-family lots by right. Rethink parking policy: when City requires parking, it costs \$9-10,000/year. Think broadly of Transit-Oriented Design (TOD); ADU specific, such as if there are 3 bus lines close to an ADU; make it work when we can.

Wilson Callvert: There is no way in my area to reduce parking minimums. TOD does not apply to very neighborhood. If close to bus transit, should be allowed to not have parking. Don't eliminate all parking across City, but more people do live without cars. Like 4 units per lot by right. FAR (floor area ratio) is OK but reduce parking requirements. The City of Houston Climate Action plan says to eliminate all parking by 2030.

Meeting adjourned at 4:49 p.m.