

Development Services Department

Information for the Planning and Neighborhoods Committee meeting on August 17, 2010 to discuss and take possible action on recommendations related to amendments to City Code regarding secondary dwellings.

The Planning and Neighborhoods Committee (PNC) will be discussing conceptual ideas including the development of pre-approved guidelines or designs for accessory dwelling units (ADU's) that would minimize the plan review for such units. The Development Services Department (DSD) has been asked to provide feedback as to the following;

- Thoughts on pre-approved guidelines/designs;
- Ability to take on developing the guidelines/designs; and
- Issues the PNC should consider regarding the concept;

Thoughts on pre-approved guidelines/designs

Pre-approved guidelines are beneficial. By way of example, the City of Santa Cruz, California completed such an effort in 2002. Santa Cruz hired a consultant to create an ADU Design Manual to help residents navigate ADU design, approvals and construction. Diagrams illustrate how to be a friendly neighbor when creating a new unit; ways to incorporate green building principals; and how to select a contractor, among other things. Please see the link below for the Santa Cruz ADU Manual:

<http://www.cityofsantacruz.com/home/showdocument?id=8875>

Along with the ADU Design Manual, Santa Cruz hired architects to develop seven prototypes. The prototypes are meant to get a project through the development process quicker because they have been pre-reviewed by City departments. The ADU Design Manual describes the benefits achieved by using prototypes. Please see the link below for the Santa Cruz prototypes:

<http://www.cityofsantacruz.com/departments/planning-and-community-development/programs/accessory-dwelling-unit-development-program/adu-prototype-architects>

Ability to take on developing the guidelines/designs

The City of Santa Cruz hired a consultant (Bruce Race) to draft their ADU Design Manual and hired architects to design the prototypes. A great deal of time was used for community meetings and outreach. In total, the consultant spent a year crafting the ADU Design Manual.

At this time, DSD is concentrating its efforts and resources on making improvements to the City's overall development review, permitting, and inspections process. New positions that are being requested through the DSD Action Plan are to resolve current deficiencies related to staff shortages. Taking on a large and significant task such as the development of an ADU manual and program cannot be accommodated with current or proposed resources.

Issues the PNC should consider regarding the concept

The Santa Cruz ordinance for ADU Zoning Regulations is a good indicator of the breadth of issues that should be considered. Locally, the concept should take into consideration Austin-specific codes such as impervious cover, heritage trees, and visitability.

The creation of a program for accessory dwelling units may require additional resources to administer the program. DSD is moving toward aligning its fees with the cost for providing service. Should an

accessory dwelling unit program be developed within DSD, fees would be based on any new costs incurred. Below is the link to the Santa Cruz ordinance:

<http://www.cityofsantacruz.com/home/showdocument?id=8862>

Additional resources

1. Issue 7 of the American Planning Association Zoning Practice journal discusses accessory housing and provides a good overview for issues to consider. Here is the link:
<https://www.planning.org/zoningpractice/2012/pdf/jul.pdf>
2. The City of San Francisco is going through the development of an ADU manual. Page 3 of this presentation from San Francisco Housing Action Coalition provides the list of phases, which includes research, design, and financial analysis. Areas such as research, design, and financial analysis will need to be covered when developing an ADU manual. Here is the link:
http://www.sfhac.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/SPUR-ADU-Presentation_web.pdf