Residential Working Group

*Initial report to Planning Commission on issues in residential zones.*

- October 22, 2019

City of Austin Planning Commission
1. Accessory apartments / internal ADUs
Probably the best way to get quick, unsubsidized affordable housing

- Don’t count an additional unit
- Must have internal door
- No FAR bump
- Size limit 750 sq ft?
- 1 per lot
- Exterior door encouraged?
2. Garages and parking
Some adjustments needed

• Restore 200 sq ft per unit FAR exemption – NOT unlimited.

• If you have an engaged front porch (private frontage), the garage can move forward but not encroach in front setback.

• Front yard impervious cover is currently 45%. Staff: look at need to bump front yard IC to 50%?
3. ADUs

Some adjustments to encourage them

- Direct departments that assess fees - including Parks and Recreation Department, Austin Water and Austin Energy - to reduce the cost of building ADUs through fee waivers, calculations, shorter approval times, and other means.

- External ADUs qualify for the 0.6 FAR that duplexes get.
4. Manufactured Homes

Keep current ones compliant; allow for new ones and tiny home parks/lots

- Existing zone is for parks. We need more zones.
- Redesignate current zone as MH1A (park)
- New zone MH1B (lot) for smaller manufactured home parks so existing ones aren’t non-compliant.
- New zone MH2A (park) and MH2B (lot) for tiny homes (unit size cap)
- MH allowed use for one unit on an RR lot?
5. Revision to R4

Impervious cover not calibrated correctly or bonused.

- R4 base is 4 units, 50% impervious cover, 25’/35’ McMansion-tent/tiered-cake
- R4 bonus is 8 units, 50% impervious cover, 35’/45’ McMansion-tent/tiered-cake
- Initial feedback on bonus is that 50% is not feasible for eight units.
- Possible action:
  - 1-2 units retains 45% impervious cover
  - Bonus has 60% impervious cover to make bonus feasible
  - Commission: Should there be a middle ground for 3-4 units? Or should all increase in IC come only with bonus?
6. New Zone: Missing-Middle-In-The-Tent

New zone that allows up to 4 units for affordable housing and compatibility with adjacent R zoning. Call it R2D?

- R3 has 3 units, within the 25’/35’ tiered cake/McMansion tent. 45% impervious cover.
- R4 has 4 units base, 8 units bonus, with 35’/45’ tier, 50% (or 60%) impervious cover.
- We are missing a just-right bonus in the middle.
- Proposal: New R2D zone with affordable ADU bonus
  - Working group is not proposing a mapping at this point
  - Base: R2A
  - Bonus: R2B’s “urban” setbacks of 10’ front and 5’ rear
  - Cottage court form allowed?
  - Same 25’/35’ tent/tiers
  - FAR of up to 1.0, based on ratio of market rate space to affordable space (3-to-1?)
  - Up to 4 units
7. Fixes to cottage court form?

From Commissioner Kenny

- Current form requires a 1,500 sq ft. courtyard minimum, surrounded on two sides by buildings, can’t be in setbacks, can’t be used for parking.
- Early feedback is this is infeasible on smaller and mid-sized lots.
- Potential change:
  - 6 foot separation
  - 100 sq ft / unit private open space
  - 100 sq ft / unit of common open space
  - 2,000 sq ft. size limit on units.
  - Allow common space to be in setbacks.
  - Get rid of courtyard and diagram.
8. Fences and Private Frontages
Practical fixes that don’t have a wall at the lot line

- Overall fence height of 4’ within front setback (5’ for slopes) – average of 4.5’
  - Restriction on portion that can be opaque?
- Private frontage
  - Allow safety rails where porch is elevated that are exempted from fence height limits
9. FAR
Putting some limits on work-arounds

- 6’8” or higher counts against FAR
- 15’ counts twice
10. Double-Lot Development
Reduce cost of development on double-sized lots

• Current draft requires most double-wide R-zoned lots to be subdivided prior to development
• Subdivision process is very expensive and time-consuming
• Make allowances for double-lot development of most forms in R zones provided widths and sizes are twice the standard for single lots.
11. Unified Development of Lots
What we do when one builder is doing multiple adjoined lots

• Allow builders to waive own interior side-setback to allow more flexible placement of buildings. (As we do with townhomes.)

• Staff: Should we look at ways to make Unified Development Agreements lighter-weight? Such as allowing DSD to sign-off, not City Law?
12. F25 Sunset
Let’s commit to finishing our code

• Request staff to set a timeline for incorporating F25 areas into code.
• Could be staggered with different deadlines for different F25s.
13. TDM for parking reductions beyond ¼ mi.  
Procedures for the area between ¼ and ½ mile from Transit Priority Network

• Staff, should we look at establishing TDM similar to PC direction on Draft 3 for area beyond ¼ mile?
14. Shade trees for transition zones
Making walking to transit more pleasant and healthy

- Current and proposed landscaping requirements do not apply to R zones.
- Apply front yard tree planting requirements to all urban/transition zones (R2B and up).
- Need to review requirements to make sure they are oriented towards shading sidewalk (accomplish within x feet of front lot line?)
- Need administrative variances to be sensible.
- Side note: Should we really be requiring front porches in R2B?
15. R1 vs R2C
Can we get more information?

• R1 and R2C seem to be easily merged into one zone for small lots?