

NEW HAVEN CITY PLAN COMMISSION ADVISORY REPORT

RE: **ORDER OF THE BOARD OF ALDERS** Approving Proposed Zoning Text Amendment allowing Accessory Dwelling Units as-of-right within the City's Single-Family, Low-Middle Density and High-Middle Density Zoning Districts. (Submitted by: Aicha Woods, City Plan Department)

REPORT: 1584-04

ADVICE: Approve

BACKGROUND

The proposed Accessory Dwelling Unit and Minimum Lot Size Reduction Zoning Text Amendment is one element in the Mayor's Housing for All platform to reduce barriers to affordable housing in New Haven. It supports the Board of Alders' Legislative Agenda policy goal of safe, affordable housing and builds on the recommendations of the Affordable Housing Task force. The Accessory Dwelling Unit proposal here is aligned with HB 6107 which was passed by the Connecticut General Assembly and signed by Governor Lamont in June 2021¹ and with the platforms advocated by Desegregate CT and CT Fair Housing Center.²³

In recent years, the City of New Haven has seen robust growth of large-scale market-rate housing development. At the same time there is also a strong demand for affordable housing options in all New Haven neighborhoods. As in most other US cities, outdated zoning built on redlining has created restrictions and barriers to small scale incremental and affordable development across the city through lot size, parking and density restrictions. This has historically limited housing choice for residents of limited economic means and reinforced racial segregation and wealth gaps.⁴

The purpose of the proposed ADU and Minimum Lot Size Zoning Text Amendment is

- Increase affordable housing choices especially for residents of all income levels including very low-income residents in all neighborhoods.
- Provide diverse housing types that respond to changing family needs, smaller households, and increasing housing costs; and
- Provide income streams for homeowners to build equity in neighborhoods and prevent displacement
- Provide accessible housing for seniors and persons with disabilities.
- Create new housing units while respecting the scale of historic fabric and neighborhood patterns of development
- Offer environmentally friendly housing choices with less average space per person and smaller associated carbon footprint; with efficient use of existing housing stock, infrastructure and open space.
- Create small contractor work force opportunities

¹ <https://legiscan.com/CT/text/HB06107/id/2410689/Connecticut-2021-HB06107-Chaptered.pdf>

² <https://www.desegregatect.org/>

³ https://www.ctfairhousing.org/wp-content/uploads/CFHC_Zoning_Guide.pdf

⁴ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/cea/blog/2021/06/17/exclusionary-zoning-its-effect-on-racial-discrimination-in-the-housing-market/>

- Bring “illegal” rental units into compliance
- Make more “sliver lots” buildable for affordable infill housing.

This proposal is a modest first step in reducing barriers to small scale, affordable, resident driven development. It allows for owner-occupants to add one unit to their property, as of right, within an existing building envelope, without additional on-site parking. At this stage, any further changes to building footprint or bulk area would require zoning relief. The unit would be subject to all applicable health and safety requirements in Building and Housing Code as well as Local Historic District ordinances.

Moreover, the text change proposes a reducing minimum lot size to a uniform 4000sf across all residential zones. Historically, minimum lot sizes have been a structure of inequity in land use. Allowing smaller buildable lots would reduce barriers to building new infill housing.

The restriction to owner occupants is in response to resident’s voiced concerns regarding absentee/investment landlords. The restriction incentivizes the benefit to the 30% of New Haven households that are owner occupants, while creating more affordable rental options for the 70% of New Haven residents who are renters.

The Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) and Minimum Lot Size Reduction Zoning Text is currently limited to RS-1, RS-2, RM-1 and RM-2 Zones as the majority of single family to 2-4 family housing is found in those residential districts. However low-density housing (2-4 family) exists in all zones and the Commission recommends that this be considered in future policy amendments.

The City Plan Commission recommends that the policy is reevaluated at a two-year interval with public input to assess any disparate benefits or impacts by neighborhood and housing market. Many jurisdictions have amended ADU policies over time, further reducing barriers and incentivizing production with financing and technical support.⁵ The anticipated production of ADUs under this current “Phase I” text amendment will be modest, based on examples from other jurisdictions.

The City Plan Commission recommends that staff continues to engage with neighborhood residents, to analyze data regarding density, infrastructure, and transportation impacts, to develop context specific design guidelines for alterations to envelopes and lot coverage, to work with New Haven Preservation Trust on historic preservation guidelines and to work with other City agencies and affordable housing service providers on pilot projects to incentivize deeply affordable rental units (under 30% AMI).

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The following Comprehensive Plan goals and recommendations are met with the proposed Accessory Dwelling Unit zoning amendment:

- Building housing for all incomes and ages;
- Preserving neighborhoods
- Support the provision of affordable, workforce (middle income) housing within the city
- Increasing opportunities for homeownership

⁵ <https://www.enterprisecommunity.org/resources/overcoming-barriers-bringing-adu-development-scale-11049>

- Supporting services by pursuing necessary zoning amendments, as required, to implement the proposed future land use map of the city;
- Allowing existing housing stock to accommodate aging in place for older households through zoning amendments such as encouraging row housing within existing residential districts;

ADVICE

The Commission finds the proposed text amendment aligns with the City's Comprehensive Plan.

ADOPTED: July 28, 2021
Leslie Radcliffe
Chair

ATTEST: _____
Aicha Woods
Executive Director