

RAYMORE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION AGENDA

Tuesday, March 6, 2018 - 7:00 p.m.

City Hall Council Chambers
100 Municipal Circle
Raymore, Missouri 64083

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Roll Call
4. Personal Appearances - None
5. Consent Agenda
 - a. Acceptance of Minutes from February 6, 2018 meeting
6. Old Business - None
7. New Business
 - a. Case #17036 - 27th Amendment to the Unified Development Code (*public hearing*)
8. City Council Report
9. Staff Report
10. Public Comment
11. Commission Member Comment
12. Adjournment

Any person requiring special accommodation (i.e. qualified interpreter, large print, hearing assistance) in order to attend this meeting, please notify the City Clerk at (816) 331-0488 no later than forty-eight (48) hours prior to the scheduled commencement of the meeting.

Meeting Procedures

The following rules of conduct apply:

1. Public can only speak during the meeting under the following circumstances:
 - a. The citizen has made a formal request to the Community Development Department to make a personal appearance before the Planning Commission;
or,
 - b. A public hearing has been called by the Chairman and the Chairman has asked if anyone from the public has comments on the application being considered;
or
 - c. A citizen may speak under Public Comment at the end of the meeting.
2. If you wish to speak to the Planning Commission, please proceed to the podium and state your name and address. Spelling of your last name would be appreciated.
3. Please turn off (or place on silent) any pagers or cellular phones.
4. Please no talking on phones or with another person in the audience during the meeting.
5. Please no public displays, such as clapping, cheering, or comments when another person is speaking.
6. While you may not agree with what an individual is saying to the Planning Commission, please treat everyone with courtesy and respect during the meeting.

Every application before the Planning Commission will be reviewed as follows:

1. Chairman will read the case number from the agenda that is to be considered.
2. Applicant will present their request to the Planning Commission.
3. Staff will provide a staff report.
4. If the application requires a public hearing, Chairman will open the hearing and invite anyone to speak on the request.
5. Chairman will close the public hearing.
6. Planning Commission members can discuss the request amongst themselves, ask questions of the applicant or staff, and may respond to a question asked from the public.
7. Planning Commission members will vote on the request.

THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF RAYMORE, MISSOURI, MET IN REGULAR SESSION TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2018, IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF CITY HALL, 100 MUNICIPAL CIRCLE, RAYMORE, MISSOURI WITH THE FOLLOWING COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: CHAIRMAN WILLIAM FAULKNER, KELLY FIZER, DON MEUSCHKE, MELODIE ARMSTRONG, CHARLES CRAIN AND MAYOR KRIS TURNBOW. ABSENT WERE MARIO URQUILLA AND ERIC BOWIE. ALSO PRESENT WERE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR JIM CADORET, ASSOCIATE PLANNER DAVID GRESS, CITY ATTORNEY JONATHAN ZERR, AND ASSISTANT PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR GREG ROKUS.

1. Call to Order – Chairman Faulkner called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Roll Call – Roll was taken and Chairman Faulkner declared a quorum present to conduct business.
4. Personal Appearances – None
5. Consent Agenda
 - a. Acceptance of minutes of December 19, 2017 meeting.
 - b. Case #18001 - Edgewater at Creekmoor Sixth Final Plat

Motion by Mayor Turnbow, Seconded by Commissioner Meuschke to approve the consent agenda.

Vote on Motion:

Chairman Faulkner	Aye
Commissioner Armstrong	Aye
Commissioner Bowie	Absent
Commissioner Crain	Aye
Commissioner Fizer	Aye
Commissioner Meuschke	Aye
Commissioner Urquilla	Absent
Mayor Turnbow	Aye

Motion passed 6-0-0.

6. Old Business - None
7. New Business -

A. Discussion Item - Sign Code

Community Development Director Jim Cadoret indicated that the Commission and City Council both discussed possible amendments to the sign code in 2016 in response to a Supreme Court case regarding municipal sign codes. Mr. Cadoret stated that in 2016 staff determined there was a need to review the sign code to ensure that the code is in compliance with the decision made by the Court. Upon further review by staff and the City Attorney it has been determined that the current code language is in compliance with the court decision and no further amendment is necessary.

City Attorney Jonathan Zerr concurred with the comments made by Mr. Cadoret. He indicated the current sign code language was drafted following a Missouri Supreme Court case out of Gladstone and that the Raymore code, in his opinion, is in compliance with state law and recent court decisions.

Chairman Faulkner asked Commissioners if they had any questions or comments related to the presentation by staff.

Commissioner Fizer asked what occurs when a lighted sign is not operating properly and is there a time limit for repairs.

Mr. Cadoret stated the sign code does address lighting standards for signs and if any sign is not operating properly the City Code Enforcement Officer will talk with the business owner and require compliance within a 30-day time period.

Mayor Turnbow asked staff what the most common request is for signs.

Mr. Cadoret stated that businesses usually ask about temporary signs such as banners. The City does allow each business to have a temporary sign permit four times a year. Each permit is valid for 30 days. The second most common request is from businesses that do not have frontage on 58 Highway but want to have a sign along the highway. A business must have frontage on 58 highway in order to have a sign along the highway.

Mayor Turnbow asked if the Supreme Court decision had any effect on how the City regulates the placement of election signs.

Mr. Zerr stated no and that the the City regulations are in compliance with the court decisions.

Chairman Faulkner stated that he did not hear a desire from the Commission for any amendments to the sign code at this time.

8. City Council Report

Mr. Zerr gave the City Council report for the January 8th and 22nd meetings.

9. Staff Report

Mr. Cadoret provided an overview of the upcoming cases to be considered by the Commission and on the 2018 National APA Planning Conference scheduled for April 21-24.

Mr. Cadoret requested the Commission cancel its February 20th meeting. The Commission confirmed the meeting is cancelled.

Public Works Assistant Director Greg Rokos provided an overview of the status of current City infrastructure projects.

10. Public Comment

None.

11. Commission Member Comment

Commissioner Crain commented that former Commissioner Anderson will be missed.

Mayor Turnbow thanked Mr. Anderson for his service to the City and stated he was a good leader for the Commission. Mr. Matthew Wiggins is being presented to the Council on Feb. 12 for appointment to replace Mr. Anderson. Mr. Wiggins served on the Charter Review Commission for the City.

Chairman Faulkner thanked staff for its work and support to the Commission.

12. Adjournment

Motion by Commissioner Meuschke, Seconded by Mayor Turnbow to adjourn the February 6, 2018 Planning and Zoning Commission meeting.

Vote on Motion:

Chairman Faulkner	Aye
Commissioner Armstrong	Aye
Commissioner Bowie	Absent
Commissioner Crain	Aye
Commissioner Fizer	Aye
Commissioner Meuschke	Aye
Commissioner Urquilla	Absent
Mayor Turnbow	Aye

Motion passed 6-0-0.

The February 6, 2018 meeting adjourned at 7:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Cadoret



To: Planning and Zoning Commission
From: City Staff
Date: March 6, 2018
Re: **Case #17036: 27th Amendment to the UDC – Accessory Dwelling Units**

GENERAL INFORMATION

Applicant: City of Raymore
Requested Action: 27th Amendment to the Unified Development Code
Advertisement: February 15, 2018 **Journal** Newspaper
Public Hearing: March 6, 2018 Planning and Zoning Commission
Items of Record: Exhibit 1. Growth Management Plan
Exhibit 2. Unified Development Code
Exhibit 3. Notice of Publication
Exhibit 4. Staff Report

TEXT AMENDMENT REQUIREMENTS

Chapter 470: Development Review Procedures outlines the applicable requirements for amending the text of the Unified Development Code.

Section 470.020 (B) states:

“...text amendments may be initiated by the City Council or the Planning and Zoning Commission”.

Section 470.020 (F) requires that a public hearing be held by the Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council.

Section 470.020 (G) (2) states:

“In its deliberation of a request, the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council must make findings of fact taking into consideration the following:”

1. whether such change is consistent with the intent and purpose of the Unified Development Code and plans adopted by the City of Raymore.
2. whether the proposed text amendment corrects an error or inconsistency in the code;
3. the areas which are most likely to be directly affected by such change and in what way they will be affected;
4. whether the proposed amendment is made necessary because of changed or changing conditions in the areas and/or zoning districts affected by it; and
5. whether the proposed text amendment is in the best interests of the City as a whole.

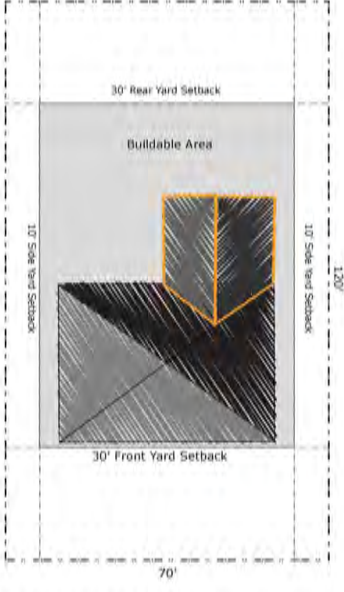
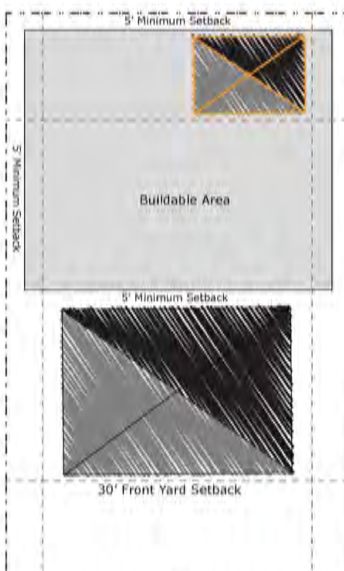
STAFF COMMENTS

1. As part of the annual review of the Unified Development Code (UDC) in June of 2017 staff prepared the 26th amendment which included revisions regarding:
 - keeping of animals on residential lots
 - solar energy systems
 - accessory dwelling units
2. At its October 3, 2017 meeting the Commission discussed the results of research completed by City staff on all three topics, including the addition of language related to the allowance of Accessory Dwelling Units on residentially-zoned properties within the City of Raymore, provided certain size and design requirements are met.
3. At its November 21, 2017 meeting, the Planning Commission approved the staff proposed findings of fact and forwarded the proposed 26th amendment to the UDC (including language related to accessory dwelling units) to City Council with a recommendation of approval.
4. At its January 8, 2017 meeting, City Council voted to approve the 26th amendment but deferred discussion on accessory dwelling units to a future work session.
5. At its February 5, 2018 work session, staff presented research findings related to Accessory Dwelling Units. At that meeting, City Council directed staff to compile their research findings for presentation to the Planning and Zoning Commission as the 27th Amendment to the UDC.
6. The 27th amendment to the UDC consists of three (3) separate revisions proposed to the UDC. The amendments are listed in the proposed ordinance as follows:

Staff recommends the following provisions of the UDC be amended for the reasons provided with each proposed change. Proposed new text is **highlighted**; deleted text is crossed out.

- **Revision 1:** Proposal adds definitions to clarify proposed code language regarding accessory dwelling units.

Section 485.010 of the Unified Development Code is hereby amended as follows:

Term	Definition
<p>Dwelling, Accessory, Attached</p>	<p>An accessory dwelling that is attached to, and/or located within the existing structure on the lot, but physically separated from, and not connected to the interior of the existing structure.</p> 
<p>Dwelling, Accessory, Detached</p>	<p>A type of accessory dwelling unit that is built separate from the existing structure, or above an existing accessory structure such as a detached garage.</p> 

- **Revision 2:** Proposal would allow an accessory dwelling unit in most residential zoning districts provided that certain design and size requirements are met.

Section 405.020H of the Unified Development Code is hereby repealed in its entirety and re-enacted as follows:

Use	A	RE	RR	R-1A	R-1	R-1.5	R-2	R-3	R-3A	R-3B	PR	Use Standard
RESIDENTIAL USES												
Household Living												
Accessory Dwelling	P	P	P	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Section 420.050E
Accessory Dwelling, Attached	S	S	S	S	S	S	-	-	-	-	-	Section 420.050E
Accessory Dwelling, Detached	S	S	S	S	S	S	-	-	-	-	-	Section 420.050E

- **Revision 3:** Proposal establishes size and design requirements for accessory dwelling units.

Section 420.050E of the Unified Development Code is hereby repealed in its entirety and re-enacted as follows:

E. Accessory Dwelling *(Amendment 18 – Ordinance 2014-006 2.10.14)*

All accessory dwellings must meet the following requirements:

1. There shall be only one accessory dwelling per lot
2. An accessory dwelling may be located within an existing residential structure or a detached structure.
3. ~~In RR zoning only, The accessory dwelling shall not exceed the square footage of the primary dwelling on the lot.~~
4. An accessory dwelling unit, attached or detached, shall be limited to 60% of the total square footage of the existing structure, but shall not exceed 1,000 square feet.
5. ~~In RR zoning only~~ An accessory dwelling structure shall not exceed the height or size of the primary existing structure on the lot.
6. An accessory dwelling shall comply with all requirements of the International One and Two-Family Dwelling Code adopted by the City of Raymore.
7. The accessory dwelling structure shall comply with all development standards for the applicable zoning district in which it is located.
8. Either the primary existing or accessory dwelling shall be occupied by the property owner at any time the accessory dwelling is occupied.
 - a. Before a Certificate of Occupancy can be issued for the accessory dwelling unit the property owner must sign an agreement stating that they will maintain occupancy of

either the existing structure or the accessory dwelling. Such agreement shall be recorded with the Cass County Recorder of Deeds.

9. If the accessory dwelling is located in an accessory structure, the dwelling shall be connected to the public water main separate from the connection of the primary structure.
10. If the accessory dwelling is located in an accessory structure, and said structure is located within three hundred (300) feet of a public sanitary sewer line, then the dwelling must be connected to the sewer line.
11. A paved connection of at least four feet (4') in width shall be made from an existing sidewalk or driveway located in the front yard of the existing structure to the entrance of the accessory dwelling unit.
12. Accessory dwelling units, when located in a fenced-in rear or side yard, shall maintain a gated access of at least four feet (4') in width for the paved connection.
13. The accessory dwelling unit shall be architecturally consistent with the design of the existing structure on the lot. Roof pitches, windows, doors, and other exterior finishes shall be designed to be compatible with the existing structure on the lot, to be determined by the Director of Community Development.
14. The entrance to attached accessory dwelling units shall be subordinate to that of the existing structure, and shall be less visible from the street than the main entrance of the existing dwelling unit. Entrances to an attached accessory dwelling unit shall be located only in the side or rear yard of a property.

STAFF PROPOSED FINDINGS OF FACT

Under Section 470.020 of the Unified Development Code, the Planning and Zoning Commission is directed concerning its actions in dealing with a request to amend the text of the Unified Development Code. Under 470.020 (G) (2) the Planning and Zoning Commission is directed to make findings of fact taking into consideration the following:

1. **whether such change is consistent with the intent and purpose of the Unified Development Code and plans adopted by the City of Raymore;**

Each of the proposed amendments are consistent with the identified purpose and intent of Section 400.040 of the Unified Development Code and with the Growth Management Plan.

2. **whether the proposed text amendment corrects an error or inconsistency in the code;**

The proposed sections of the ordinance do not correct an error or inconsistency.

3. **the areas which are most likely to be directly affected by such change and in what way they will be affected;**

The changes would affect properties throughout the City.

4. **whether the proposed amendment is made necessary because of changed or changing conditions in the areas and/or zoning districts affected by it; and**

The proposed amendments are generally not made necessary because of changed or changing conditions in the zoning districts. The amendments are proposed to clarify language in the code.

5. **whether the proposed text amendment is in the best interests of the City as a whole.**

The proposed amendments are intended to better clarify language in the code which would be in the best interests of the City as a whole.

REVIEW OF INFORMATION AND SCHEDULE

<u>Action</u>	<u>Planning Commission</u>	<u>City Council 1st</u>	<u>City Council 2nd</u>
Public Hearing	March 6, 2018	April 23, 2018	May 14, 2018

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Planning and Zoning Commission accept the staff proposed findings of fact and forward Case #17036, 27th amendment to the UDC, to the City Council with a recommendation of approval.

ATTACHED ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

Where can an attached accessory dwelling unit be built?

Attached accessory dwelling units are permitted anywhere on the property, so long as they do not encroach the required front, side or rear yards as defined by section 405.030 of the Unified Development Code, or exceed the maximum allowable lot coverage for the underlying zoning district.

Accessory dwelling units may not be constructed within any recorded easements on the property.

What is the maximum size of an attached accessory dwelling?

The maximum size of an attached accessory dwelling unit can be determined two ways;

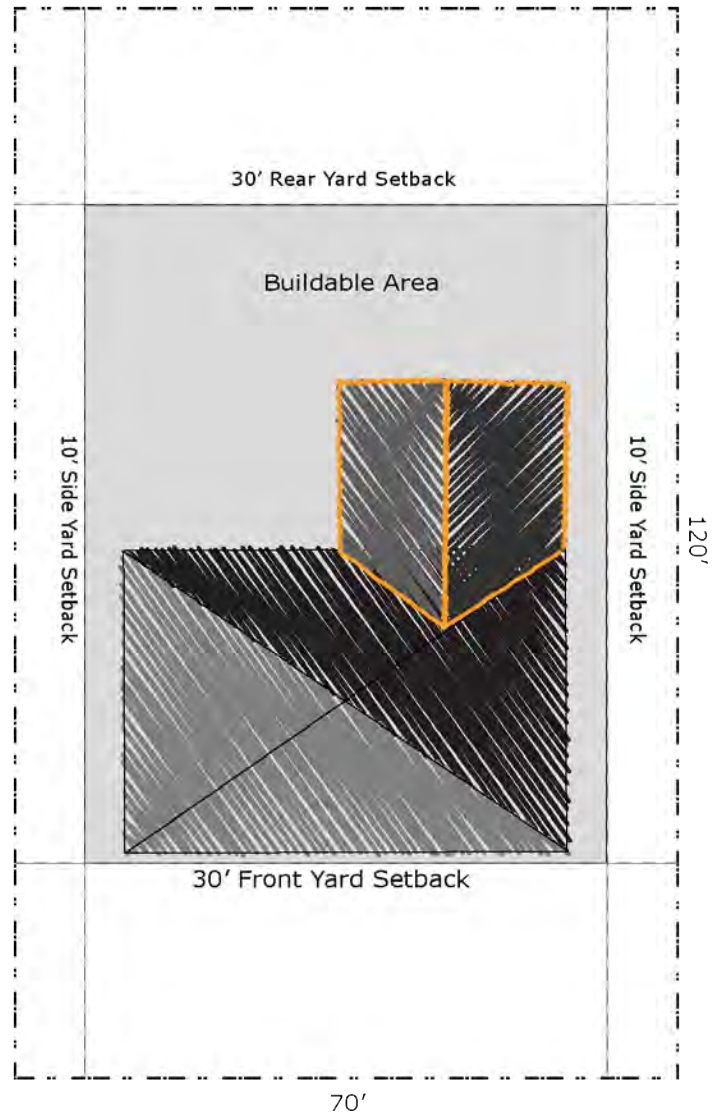
Maximum Allowable Lot Coverage:

Section 485.020(J) Building Coverage: Building coverage is measured as the percentage of lot area that is covered with principal and accessory buildings and above-grade structures. In the R-1 zoning district, maximum allowable lot coverage is generally 30%

Proposed Code Language

Section 420.050(E) Accessory Dwellings

The accessory dwelling unit shall be limited to 60% of the total square footage of the existing structure, or 1,000 square feet, whichever is less.



HOW IS THE CODE APPLIED?

Standard R-1 Lot: 8,400 Square feet
Average Home Size: 1,600 Square feet

Maximum Allowable Lot Coverage:

$$30\% (8,400 \text{ SF}) = \mathbf{2,520 \text{ SF}} = \text{maximum lot coverage}$$

$$2,520 \text{ SF} - 1,600 \text{ SF (existing home)} = \mathbf{920 \text{ SF}}$$

Proposed Code Language:

60% of the existing structure, or 1,000 SF, whichever is less

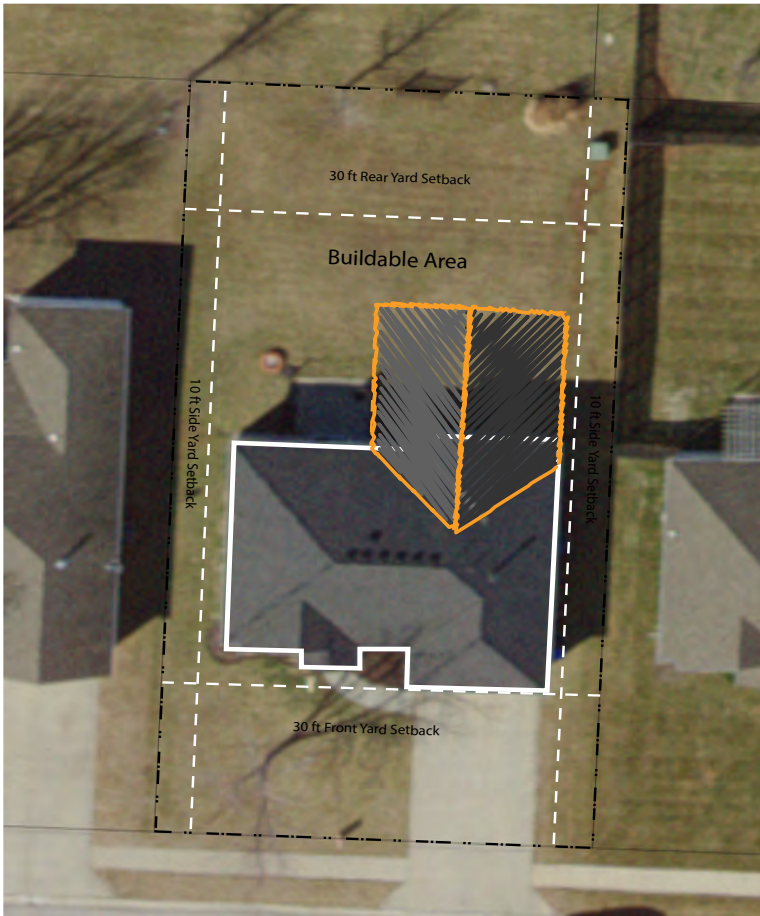
$$60\% (1,600 \text{ SF}) = \mathbf{960 \text{ SF}}$$

An attached accessory dwelling located on a standard 8,400 SF lot, with an existing 1,600 SF home is restricted to a size of no larger than 920 SF.

Although the proposed code language would allow a 960 SF. accessory dwelling, it would exceed the maximum allowable lot coverage for the R-1 zoning district

ATTACHED ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

HOW IS THE CODE APPLIED?



Typical R-1 Single Family Lot

Lot Size: 8,767 SF Existing Home Size: 1,840 SF

Maximum Allowable Lot Coverage:

30% (8,767 sqft.) = **2,630 sqft** = maximum lot coverage

2,630 sqft. - 1,840 sqft. (existing home) = **790 sqft.**

Proposed Code Language:

60% of the existing structure, or 1,000 sqft, whichever is less

60%(1,840 sqft.) = **1,104 sqft.**



Large R-1 Single Family Lot

Lot Size: 109,000 SF Existing Home Size: 2,940 SF

Maximum Allowable Lot Coverage:

30% (109,000 sqft.) = **32,700 sqft** = maximum lot coverage

32,700 sqft. - 2,940 sqft. (existing home) = **29,760 sqft.**

Proposed Code Language:

60% of the existing structure, or 1,000 sqft, whichever is less

60%(2,940 sqft.) = **1,764 sqft.**

An attached accessory dwelling unit located on this 8,767 sqft. lot would be limited to a size of **790 sqft.**

An attached accessory dwelling unit located on this 190,000 sqft. lot would be limited to a size of **1,000 sqft.**

DETACHED ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

Where can a detached accessory dwelling unit be built?

Detached accessory dwelling units are permitted in the rear yard of a property, provided that they maintain a minimum setback of 5 feet from all side and rear property lines, and all other existing structures on the property.

Accessory dwelling units may not be constructed within any recorded easements on the property.

What is the maximum size of a detached accessory dwelling?

The maximum size of a detached accessory dwelling unit can be determined three ways;

Maximum Allowable Lot Coverage:

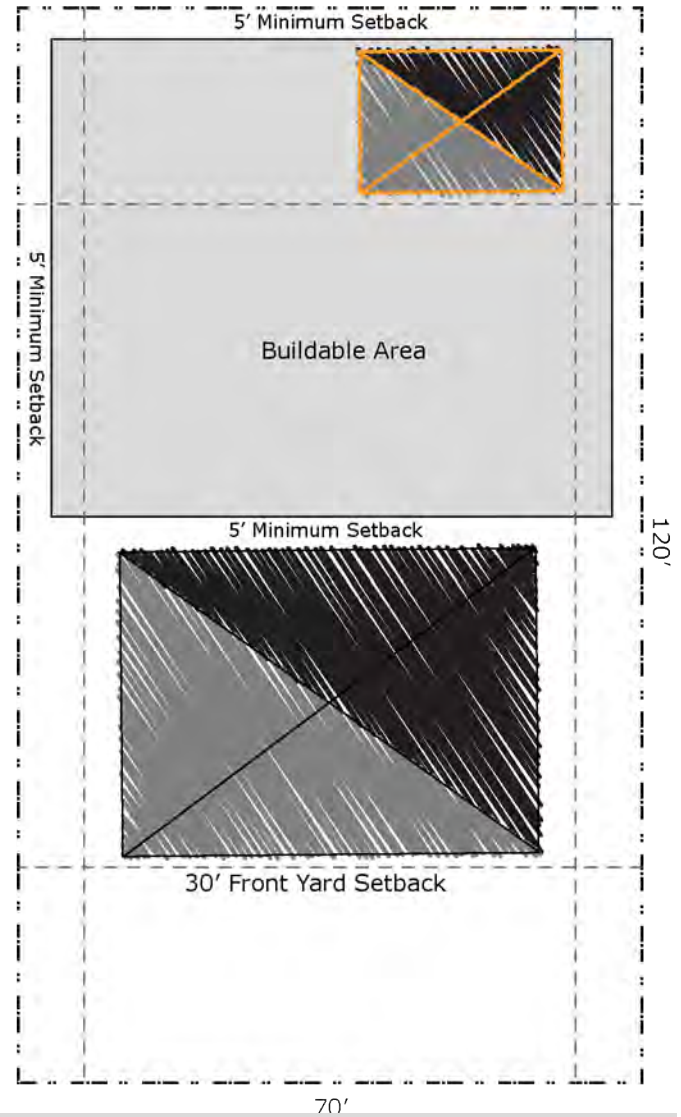
Section 485.020(J) Building Coverage: Building coverage is measured as the percentage of lot area that is covered with principal and accessory buildings and above-grade structures. In the R-1 zoning district, maximum allowable lot coverage is generally 30%

Maximum Allowable Lot Coverage for Accessory Structures:

Section 420.050(A) Accessory Uses and Structures
The total gross floor area of all accessory structures shall not exceed 8% of the lot coverage.

Proposed Code Language

Section 420.050(E) Accessory Dwellings
The accessory dwelling unit shall be limited to 60% of the total square footage of the existing structure, or 1,000 square feet, whichever is less.



HOW IS THE CODE APPLIED?

Standard R-1 Lot: 8,400 Square feet
Average Home Size: 1,600 Square feet

Maximum Allowable Lot Coverage:

$30\% (8,400 \text{ SF}) = 2,520 \text{ SF} = \text{maximum lot coverage}$
 $2,520 \text{ SF} - 1,600 \text{ SF (existing home)} = 920 \text{ SF}$

Maximum Allowable Lot Coverage for Accessory Structures:

$8\% (8,400 \text{ SF}) = 672 \text{ SF}$

Proposed Code Language:

60% of the existing structure, or 1,000 sqft, whichever is less

$60\% (1,600 \text{ SF}) = 960 \text{ SF}$

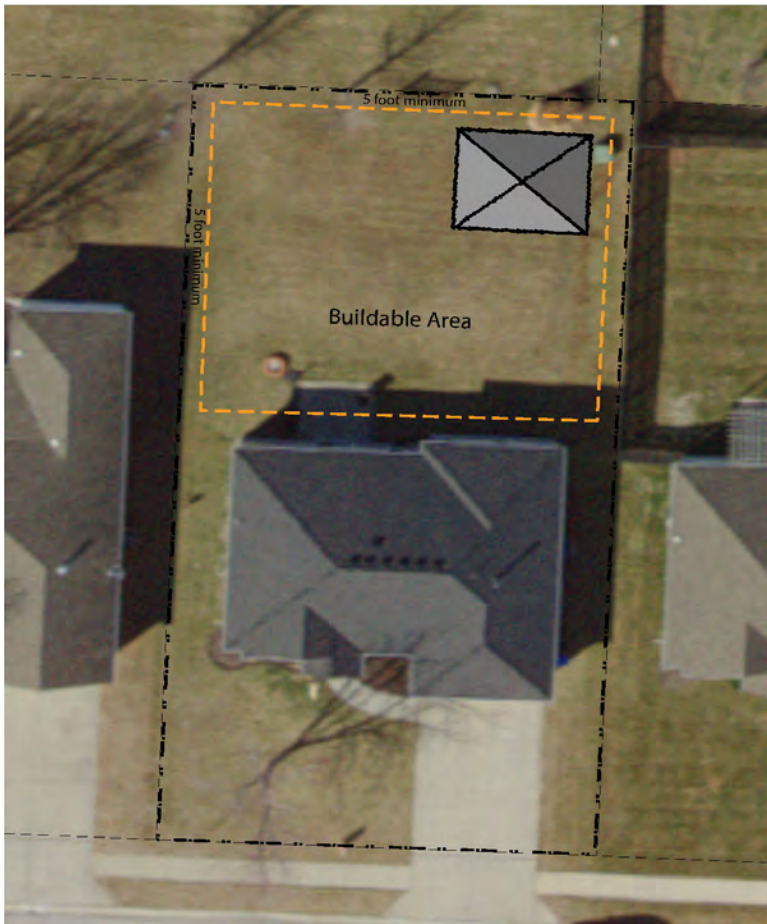
A detached accessory dwelling located on a standard 8,400 SF lot, with an existing 1,600 SF home is restricted to a size of no larger than 672 SF.

Although the maximum allowable lot coverage would allow for a 920 SF unit, it would exceed the maximum allowable lot coverage for an accessory structure. [section 420.050(A)]

The proposed code language would allow for a 960 SF unit, but that would exceed the maximum allowable lot coverage for the R-1 zoning district. [section 420.050(A)]

DETACHED ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

HOW IS THE CODE APPLIED?



Typical R-1 Single Family Lot

Lot Size: 8,767 SF Existing Home Size: 1,840 SF

Maximum Allowable Lot Coverage:

30% (8,767 SF) = **2,630 SF** = maximum lot coverage

2,630 SF - 1,840 SF (existing home) = **790 SF**

Maximum Allowable Lot Coverage for Accessory Buildings:

8% (8,767 SF) = **701 SF**

Proposed Code Language:

60% of the existing structure, or 1,000 SF, whichever is less

60%(1,840 SF) = **1,104 SF**

A detached accessory dwelling unit located on this 8,767 SF lot would be limited to a size of **701 SF**.



Large R-1 Single Family Lot

Lot Size: 109,000 SF Existing Home Size: 2,940 SF

Maximum Allowable Lot Coverage:

30% (109,000 SF) = **32,700 SF** = maximum lot coverage

32,700 SF - 2,940 SF (existing home) = **29,760 SF**

Maximum Allowable Lot Coverage for Accessory Buildings:

8%(109,000 SF) = **8,720 SF**

Proposed Code Language:

60% of the existing structure, or 1,000 sqft, whichever is less

60%(2,940 SF) = **1,764 SF**

A detached accessory dwelling unit located on this 109,000 SF lot would be limited to a size of **1,000 SF**.

QUICKNOTES

Measuring Community Character

Community character refers to the distinct identity of a place. It is the collective impression a neighborhood or town makes on residents and visitors.

People often choose the places they live and spend their leisure time based—in part—on their perceptions of community character. Nevertheless, many people find it difficult to explain which characteristics are essential to their sense of place. Identifying the key measurable qualities that contribute to community character can provide planners, local officials, and community members with a common language to understand the physical and social characteristics they value and most closely associate with their neighborhood or town.

BACKGROUND

When urban design experts explain the concept of community character, they typically stress the importance of the physical characteristics of a neighborhood or town, such as the pattern and style of buildings, streets, or open spaces. In contrast, landscape architects emphasize the role of natural features, and sociologists highlight interpersonal and institutional relationships. But the average citizen understands community character on an intuitive level. That is, she knows it when she sees it.

The danger of relying solely on intuition is that this can lead residents and business owners to oppose almost any proposed change to their community out of fear that it will negatively affect community character. Communities can approach change (which is inevitable) in a more constructive manner by working to identify the objective characteristics of the physical and social environment that are closely tied to perceptions of community character. This can refocus conversations on concrete measurable characteristics of the community, rather than emotional pleas based on intuition.

Generally, you can group objective characteristics that contribute to perceptions of community character into three broad categories: urban form, natural features, and demographics.

MEASURING URBAN FORM

Urban form refers to the relationships among streets, blocks, lots, buildings, and other man-made features. These relationships tell us, intuitively, whether we are in a place designed for many residents, workers, or visitors or just a few. They also send us signals about whether it would be more comfortable and convenient to walk or drive to get from one destination to another, and whether there are enough public spaces for people to gather on a nice day.

While there are many potential ways to measure the urban form of a neighborhood or town, a small number of these measurements seem to have a disproportionate effect on how people perceive community character. These key measures are the heights and widths of buildings, the distances between the fronts of buildings and the edges of streets, the distances between buildings on the same side of the street, the distances between facing buildings, the distances between parallel and intersecting streets, and the variation in those heights, widths, and distances across the community (or a defined subarea of the community).

MEASURING NATURAL FEATURES

In this context, *natural features* refer to terrain, vegetation, wildlife, and water bodies— including those altered by humans. The relationships between natural and man-made features tell us, intuitively, whether we are in a place designed primarily for people to live, work, or play. They also send us

Michigan Municipal League, Flickr (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)



This view of a retail corridor in downtown Traverse City, Michigan, shows several urban form characteristics that contribute to perceptions of community character, including relatively uniform and modest building heights, uniformly small distances between facing buildings, and a lack of separation between buildings along the same side of the street.



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signals about how much time we'd like to spend outside versus inside on a nice day. The impressions triggered by these relationships can either complement or conflict with those triggered by urban form alone.

As with measuring urban form, there are many potential ways to quantify the relationships between natural and man-made features, but a small number of measurements seem to have a disproportionate effect on how people perceive community character. These key measures are the slopes and heights of hills, the heights and widths of trees, the distances between trees, the percentage of land covered by vegetation or water, and the variation in those slopes, heights, distances, and percentages across the community (or a defined subarea of the community).

SELECTING DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographics are measurable characteristics of human populations, such as age, sex, household size, marital status, race, religion, and education level. While there are numerous sources that collect and share demographics for different geographical areas, most people have an intuitive sense of some demographics of their community. This sense may be rooted in information learned through public observation or social interaction, or from media depictions.

Demographic intuitions often affect our perceptions of community character. Perhaps most importantly, they tell us whether we are in a place inhabited by, or welcoming to, people "like us." The risk of relying solely on intuition is that our observations, interactions, and media consumption can create highly distorted impressions of the community as a whole.

While there is no limit on the number of potential measurable characteristics of human populations, planners and local officials typically select a small number of demographic statistics as important indicators of community makeup and health. These include the sizes of daytime and nighttime populations; population distribution by age, sex, race, and ethnicity; average household size; median household income; and rates of adult educational attainment, employment, and home ownership.

When selecting demographics to characterize a community, it is important to consider whether a statistic is likely to make members of the community feel stigmatized. In cases where key statistics do carry negative associations, it is important to keep discussions focused on facts and not feelings. The purpose of looking at demographics is to foster a more complete understanding of the community and not to legitimize discrimination based on national origin, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, sex, or familial status.

CONCLUSIONS

Certain measures of urban form and natural features, as well as select demographic statistics, exert a disproportionate influence over people's perceptions of community character. However, the concept of *community character* is not neatly limited to these factors. Personal experiences, along with community history and culture, can either amplify or attenuate impressions rooted in objective characteristics of the physical or social environment.

Community change is inevitable. Powerful external forces often drive physical and social changes in neighborhoods or towns. Identifying the most important contributing factors to perceptions of community character reframes conversations about potential changes around objective measures rather than vague notions that may result in blanket resistance to change. This can help planners, local officials, and community members establish goals and priorities for community growth and change without resorting to indefinite appeals to protect the established character.

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FURTHER READING

1. Published by the American Planning Association

Keast, Bret C. 2010. "Defining and Measuring Community Character." *Zoning Practice*, December. Available at planning.org/media/document/9006933.

Wright, Norman. 2012. "Beyond the Density Standard." *Zoning Practice*, November. Available at planning.org/media/document/9006909.

2. Other Resources

Kendig, Lane, and Bret Keast. 2010. *Community Character: Principles for Design and Planning*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press. Available at islandpress.org/book/community-character.

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