

## Staff Report

**DUPLEXES PUBLIC OUTREACH SUMMARY**

October 10, 2023

**BACKGROUND**

On June 21, 2023, City Council directed that staff proceed with public outreach regarding proposed regulations (Attachment B) for allowing Accessory Dwelling Units and Duplexes within low density residential zoning districts city-wide. This direction was the culmination of a several month effort that began with a March workshop discussing infill, directives of Ames Plan 2040, and identifying neighborhood compatibility considerations.

**PUBLIC OUTREACH EFFORTS**

Public outreach efforts began in earnest in August and extended until the beginning of October. Outreach was combined for both accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and duplexes. These resources included a city newsletter article, webpage, alerting registered neighborhood association contacts, online survey for open comments, brochure, press releases, five open houses, and two KOHI radio appearances. Specific details of each of these efforts are included in the Addendum. The webpage was attractively designed with information about “what a duplex is,” the proposed regulations, a link to the ADU & duplex brochure, the open house schedule, frequently asked questions, and public inviting comment with a link to the online duplex survey.

**PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION (P&Z)**

A presentation about ADUs and duplexes being proposed within the city’s low density zoning districts was given at the October 4<sup>th</sup> P&Z Meeting. The presentation included background information about the proposed regulations, a summation of staff’s outreach efforts, and next steps. No specific recommendations were required or offered at the meeting. There were limited comments about duplexes other than acknowledgment of the design compatibility requirements compared to the ADUs and the limited applicability because of the new construction requirement.

**FEEDBACK RECEIVED REGARDING DUPLEXES**

There was much less feedback received regarding duplexes than ADUs where comments were received from 45 respondents (through October 5th). Of this total, 42 comments were from the online survey.

The survey for duplexes was different than the ADU survey with only the one open-ended question: “Please provide any comments on the new duplex regulations.” **There was not an overwhelming response from either those against or those in favor. Development interests were concerned about the design criteria requirements while others were concerned about the change in character of an area with**

**duplexes. Approximately 25% of the respondents were against all duplexes. Remaining comments were a mix of specific issues, conditional concerns, or supportive of allowing them. The complete listing of all comments received related to duplexes are included in the Addendum.**

### **NEAR CAMPUS OVERLAY**

As part of the review process staff has identified a need for direction on how to consider the bedroom/occupancy limitation of the Near Campus Neighborhood Overlay within the Rental Code. As proposed a new duplex can be constructed on any lot that is vacant. An existing house can be demolished and replaced with a new duplex. The unique issue within the Near Campus area is the bedroom/occupancy limitation based on the bedroom count of a principal dwelling from 2018.

The current language does not address a new structure that replaces a 2018 structure, but the intent was to not encourage intensification of rental units in this area. Staff believes the language would limit occupancy of a new duplex to that of the 2018 structure before it was demolished. This approach is logical within the Rental Code but difficult to manage in real life situations when the construction of a duplex could legitimately be for a nonrental purpose but be set up a future situation for rental that would not comply.

**City Council could specifically address standards for the residential low-density areas of the Near Campus Overlay by not allowing for duplexes to be built in order to avoid this issue, modify the Rental Code to address allowing for full occupancy of duplex units as a new structure, or take no action to amend either the duplex regulations or rental code.**

### **OPTIONS:**

*Option 1- Direct staff to proceed with public hearings for a zoning text amendment for the proposed duplex regulations, based upon the current draft.*

Given the divided public input received (with no one side having an overwhelming majority) and given the City Council's desire to support additional housing opportunities within the city, the City Council may determine that proceeding with public hearings for a zoning text amendment as currently drafted is the next step.

*Option 2 - Direct staff to proceed with public hearings for a zoning text amendment for the proposed duplex regulations, based upon amended regulations, including prohibiting within the Near Campus Neighborhoods zoned RL.*

Given the diverse public comments received, the City Council may find compelling reasons to consider amendments to the proposed regulations, in support of the Council's goal to provide diverse housing opportunities within the city. Council could identify specific changes to the proposed regulations that would then be followed by public hearings for the zoning text amendment.

Option 3 - Direct Staff to engage in further public input, before Council determines how to proceed.

Staff has pursued multiple avenues for reaching out to the public and inviting public comment. Staff believes that the comments received represent a wide gamut of interests and that additional public outreach is not needed. However, the City Council may determine participation is lacking from specific interests and that additional input should be captured and considered before proceeding with a decision on a zoning text amendment. If so, the City Council should direct staff as to the entities to be contacted for additional input before proceeding with text amendments.

Option 4 - Do not proceed with an Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance at this time.

Given the divided public input received (with no one side having an overwhelming majority), the City Council may determine that they do not wish to proceed with public hearings for a zoning text amendment at this time.

### **STAFF COMMENTS**

**Staff believes that the current draft standards continue to be an appropriate comprise option of allowing for duplexes to be built while trying to integrate with existing and new neighborhoods. Although the design requirements will add cost and require builders to consider site specific situations, maintaining design standards is consistent with policies of Plan 2040 for design context to apply to housing decisions for infill.** In addition, the new construction requirement also limits the applicable of this allowance for duplexes compared to allowing additions or conversions of existing houses. **Therefore, no substantive changes to the draft standards are proposed by staff.**

## **ADDENDUM**

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH SUMMARY**

Webpage. A webpage was set up in July that included details on the proposed regulations and open house opportunities ([www.CityofAmes.org/AddHousing](http://www.CityofAmes.org/AddHousing)). It also included an opportunity to provide feedback via a survey and also included a Frequently Asked Questions page. An email and phone number were provided for those with additional questions or comments.

Brochure. A brochure was created summarizing the proposed regulations and including graphic examples. A link to the brochure was included on the webpage site and hard copies were made available at the open houses and in the corridor outside of the Planning and Housing Department.

CitySide Newsletter article. A Utility Bill CitySide article and information on the webpage was included in August & September utility mailings.

Neighborhood Association. City staff emailed the City Neighborhood Association contacts alerting them to the public outreach efforts.

Press Releases. Two press releases ran in the Ames Tribune on August 14<sup>th</sup> and September 15<sup>th</sup> as well as numerous social media blasts during August and September.

Open House Opportunities. Over the last few months, staff has held five open house opportunities at various locations around the city. These included:

- Monday, Aug. 21                      5:30-7:30 pm  
Library – Brown Auditorium, 515 Douglas Avenue
- Thursday, Sept. 14                      5:30-7:30 pm  
Hira Park – Shelter, 3622 Woodland Street
- Monday, Sept. 18                      5:30-7:30 pm  
Ames Municipal Airport – Lobby and Multi-purpose Room, 2520 Airport Drive
- Monday, Sept. 25                      5:30-7:30 pm  
Inis Grove – Walnut Shelter, 2500 Duff Avenue
- Saturday, Sept. 30                      5:30-7:30 pm  
ECO Fair – City Hall Parking Lot

Copies of the brochure and frequently asked questions were made available at the open houses. A comment box was provided for giving comment and a computer was made available for filling out the Online Survey. Email information was gathered so that staff could continue to be in touch with the participants.

Those attending the open houses primarily left comments regarding Accessory Dwelling Units, rather than Duplexes.

Speaking Engagements. Kelly Diekmann spoke on KOHI radio about the opportunities for comment on the initiative on two occasions, one in August and one in September.

## **SURVEY RESULTS (42 Respondents, thru October 5th)**

Please provide any comments on the new duplex regulations:

- Too many parking spaces required, too much pavement required.
- I'm in favor of anything that encourages more infill development and more walkable neighborhoods.
- Anything we can do to make housing more affordable and accessible is a win. Shelter is a human right!
- The city should keep the current limited options in place for duplexes/ twin homes. Twin homes should only be allowed as transitional structures between apartments and single-family homes, or the like.
- Good idea. However, I would also like the city to also do more to utilize all of the apartments we have and work with companies and landlords to make rent more affordable for those of us who are permanent Ames' residents who cannot afford to buy a home due to costs in Ames but want to live here and want to live in a rental.
- It is most undesirable to begin to add duplexes in single family neighborhoods!! We are strongly against this plan! Are you trying to ruin the living conditions that Ames is known for? People purchased in these single-family neighborhoods to protect their families and home values. You are trying to break covenants that have been established for the protection of the area development that buyers chose and valued.
- Do not want them in our subdivision.
- Do not want any rentals in our subdivision.
- Entirely unfair that an owner-occupant cannot convert an existing part of their home into another yet. Whether that be an ADU or duplex. It unfairly benefits property developers not existing homeowners.
- I really support allowing duplexes in single-family neighborhoods, and I appreciate that Ames is taking steps to try to make housing more affordable for people. The only complaints I have are that I think the parking regulation should be modified such that, if the unit is only a single bedroom, then the unit should be allowed to have only a have only a single parking spot instead of all units requiring two spots.
- Already many rentals and duplexes in this neighborhood near campus
- Increasing population density doesn't improve vitality (unless it is measured by a number of drunk students per sq ft), it decreases value and quality of life for neighboring properties.
- Ridiculous regulation: Window patterns shall be logically designed to the proportions and spacing of single- family homes in area. For example, second floor windows shall generally be aligned with first floor.

- ALL FOR IT
- It sounds like you're sticking your fingers into becoming a city-wide HOA.
- Let's keep duplexes and single-family residences separate. A new duplex on my street would bring my property value down and negatively affect the long-time property owners.
- I think the following are much too stringent: lot coverage of 60%, setback, no conversions, and parking requirements.
- Thank you for working to provide lower cost housing in Ames. It is sorely needed and is a necessary requirement for responsible government. I have no complaints about the proposal.
- I am not in favor of allowing these additional dwellings on residential lots. I feel it will result in unkept and/or abandoned dwellings as time passes. Feel it will lead to friction in neighborhoods due to appearance and congested properties.
- Consider including modern HVAC systems as requirements. There are companies building subpar duplexes and still putting window-type A/C units in the walls!! Please, no! Please include regulations that provide for up-to-date isolation between units, or construction orientation to help. Consider duplexes that would allow more people to age in place without needing to move to a retirement community at an incredible expense. Basements? I think so in Iowa! If not full, at least partial. A newer, Average Joe duplex that is energy efficient in a decent part of town that doesn't rent for an arm and a leg, would be of interest to us as we near semi-retirement. We currently rent a duplex at a \$1.00/sq ft main floor in Kate Mitchell area. Thank you. Dawn Andersen.
- I'm concerned that new developments will prohibit duplexes in their covenants and this won't actually do anything to promote constructing new duplexes.
- There are already 3 duplexes on our block. There is definitely a density issue.
- We have been following this discussion with interest. Our company (Friedrich) owns a lot at 320 Jewel that previously had a duplex dwelling. It has been used as an illustration by Staff as part of the narrative on this topic. The former owner had it taken down with plans of rebuilding. Unfortunately, after demolishing the structure, he discovered the regulations for single-family dwellings in the area would not permit reconstruction of a duplex. In view of the fact, that there was a duplex here previously...there is a duplex next door and other multifamily nearby. In addition, Ames has a shortage of homes and rentals for residents...we see the intensification of existing residential areas as necessary to help meet the demand for housing. We are supportive of allowing new duplexes/townhomes in single family residential zones as proposed by staff.
- I don't understand why these restrictions on duplexes exist (for instance, that an existing house cannot be turned into a duplex). Multi-family housing offers economic, environmental, and social benefits to many communities, so I'm not sure why there are restrictions that may discourage people from pursuing such housing options.

- As our country moves toward recession and worse, it is important to allow duplexes and ADUs in Ames. More families struggle to provide housing for their extended family. Allowing ADUs and Duplexes to be built close to existing homes would help financial stability and would also help emotional stability and provide a stronger sense of community. It would help bring better mental health for those families.
- I am completely against the addition of a 2nd living area added to single family homes. The zoning was set up to protect, preserve and maintain property values and living spaces.
- We need more family places. Not just college housing. Families want to live here too.
- I want single-family living, not duplexes. I think both of these proposals are bad ideas. I find it frustrating that the city keeps trying to pack more people into less space. It makes me want to sell my house and move to a rural location.
- I support the regulations as written.
- Build neighborhoods with sufficient street width to accommodate parking on both sides. Then this concept will work well. At present you want to add more people, so more vehicles and limited parking. It is already an issue don't complicate it more.
- Garage regulations seem excessive.
- No problem with duplex structures
- They seem reasonable to me.
- I'd like to see more options for Ames' residents to buy and build wealth. If new duplexes are added in my neighborhood, I'd want them to be for purchased by the persons living there - NOT rentals. These duplexes need to add to available inventory for purchase, not take away usable land for companies to make more profit from.
- More housing options is a good thing.
- Neighborhoods should stay single dwelling houses
- I am in favor of this new regulation
- I am in favor of allowing duplexes in residential neighborhoods.
- I think this would be a great idea
- As a person who purchased in a home zoned for single family homes, I do not wish for duplexes to be allowable in all neighborhoods. It would enhance crowding in existing neighborhoods.
- No -brainer. Wild that this is still a zoning rule

**WRITTEN COMMENTS**  
**RECEIVED AT OPEN HOUSES & ECOFAIR**

Allow Conversions:

- “Given shrinking household sizes, why not support conversion to Duplex or ADUs within existing houses?”

**SUMMARY OF CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED**

Supports:

- Anastasia Tuckness of 1323 Clark states, “I think adding the capability of ADUs and increasing duplex options is a great idea. I think Ames would benefit from having creative ways to house more people in town. I live just north of old town Ames and have lived in Ames for 25 years, and personally hold a value of sustainability, which I think would be in line with this type of initiative.” [email, Sept. 2023]

Design Standards:

- Justin Dodge of Hunziker Companies does not support Design Standards for Duplexes as written. [His letter to City Council, Sept. 2023 is included on the following page.]





August 14, 2023

To: Ames Mayor and City Council

From: Justin Dodge, Hunziker Companies

Re: Comments on proposed duplex criteria

Dear Honorable Ames Mayor and City Council,

Thank you for discussing the possibility of building duplexes in our community. We think duplexes have been a successful building category in the past and believe there is a great opportunity for building them in the future.

Hunziker Construction has built numerous townhomes/duplexes in the surrounding communities in recent years. They have been a very popular option for residents, tenants and investors. Pictured below is an image of one of these homes.



This duplex is on two lots but would fit on an 89-foot-wide lot with 8-foot side yard setbacks. It is a very efficient design featuring three bedrooms, two and a half bathrooms and a double garage. We take pride in all our homes, and this design is no exception.

Under the proposed criteria for duplexes, we would not be allowed to build this as a duplex in Ames for two reasons:

1. The proposed criteria limits each unit to a single stall garage
2. The garage face in front of the house face, and potentially the window alignment.

We believe this design is compatible with most of our existing neighborhoods. Additionally, we can make minor changes to the exterior façade to incorporate attributes which would match the roofline to the rooflines of existing surrounding homes if needed.

We are asking for minor amendments to the proposed criteria to allow duplexes like the one pictured.

We would also ask for the option of a two-car garage for each unit. This would allow tenants to store vehicles inside instead of forcing vehicles to the driveway or the street. I believe most neighbors would be very supportive of this allowance.

Thank you for your time and continued commitment to making Ames a great place to call home.

Sincerely,

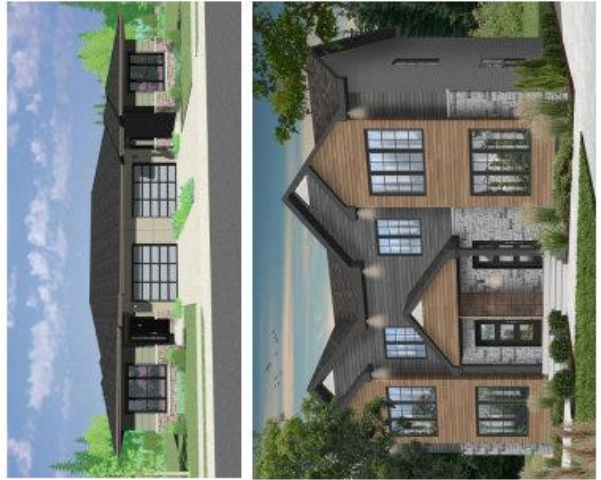


Justin Dodge, Hunziker Companies  
105 S 16th St, Ames, IA 50010  
justin.dodge@hunziker.com

**- DUPLEXES -  
NEW CONSTRUCTION ONLY  
WITH DESIGN STANDARDS**

- A Duplex is a building located on one lot that includes two independent residences attached to each other.
- Proposed in single-family neighborhoods as “new construction” only (no conversion or additions).
- Design standards focus on roof type, building orientation and garages. Garage and driveway pattern of the block is to be considered.
- The standards do not change the Historic District or the Single-Family Conservation Overlay District requirements.

**GARAGE & DRIVEWAY  
PATTERN EXAMPLES**



**-PROPOSED STANDARDS-  
ACCESSORY DWELLING  
UNITS (ADUs) &  
DUPLEXES IN SINGLE-  
FAMILY NEIGHBORHOODS**



In an effort to expand housing opportunities and diversify housing choices, the Ames City Council is exploring policies around allowing accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and duplexes within single-family neighborhoods.

This brochure illustrates these concepts and is part of the City's 2023 outreach effort. We seek your input.



Phone: 515.239.5400  
E-mail: [planning@cityofames.org](mailto:planning@cityofames.org)

**PLEASE TAKE OUR SURVEY**

**SEE OUR WEBPAGE AT:**  
[www.CityOfAmes.org/AddHousing](http://www.CityOfAmes.org/AddHousing)

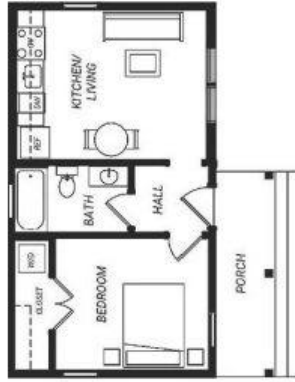


For additional helpful information on what is proposed, go to:  
[www.CityOfAmes.org/AddHousing](http://www.CityOfAmes.org/AddHousing)

**ATTACHMENT A  
Brochure**

## WHAT IS AN ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT?

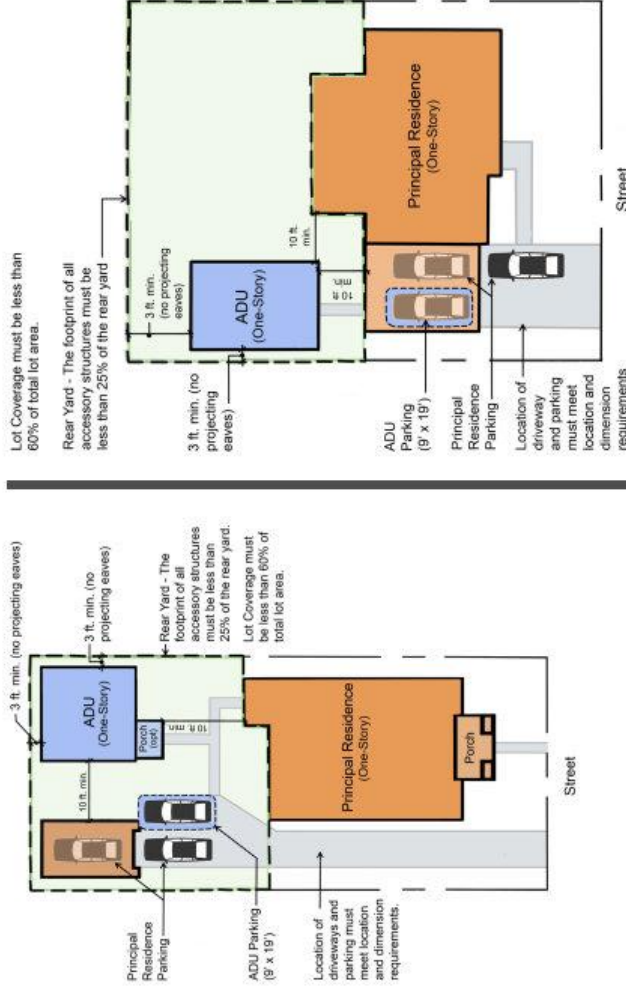
- Smaller, detached dwelling unit on the same property. Also known as a granny flat or guest house.
- Functions independently with its own bathroom and kitchen.
- Required to be on a foundation and have utility connections.



## CONSIDERATIONS

- Subdivision private covenants may prohibit ADUs and Duplexes.
- One additional parking space is required for a total of three parking spaces on a paved surface.
- The addition of an ADU plus existing accessory buildings cannot exceed 25% of the rear yard.
- The size of the ADU cannot exceed 900 sq. ft. and one bedroom.
- Total coverage of all impervious area must be less than 60% of the total lot area.
- The standards do not change Historic District or Single-Family Conservation Overlay District requirements.
- The owner of the property must reside on-site.

## WILL AN ADU FIT ON MY PROPERTY?



## WHAT ABOUT GARAGE CONVERSIONS AND TWO-STORY ADUs?



- **GARAGE CONVERSIONS:** Fire walls may be required.
- **PARKING:** Must still provide required number of parking spaces.
- **ABOVE GARAGE RESTRICTION:** Principal Residence must be two-story. Height cannot exceed 80% of house height.

**ATTACHMENT 'B'**  
**Proposed Duplex Unit Regulations (06-27-23)**

Allowed Use. Two-family dwellings are permitted on any residential lot, unless the use is prohibited by existing subdivision covenants. Two-family dwelling units only may be built as a newly constructed structure, conversions and additions are prohibited.

Independent Dwelling Units. Each dwelling unit must function independently from one another. Each must include its own bathroom and kitchen facilities and be connected to public utilities, including water and sanitary sewer. Separate metering is not required but allowed. Conversion of an existing single-family home to two units is not permitted.

Lot size. Minimum of 7,000 square feet.

Setbacks. Two-family dwellings are subject to the building setbacks for the zoning district where the property is located. Generally, these are: 25 ft. (front); 25/15 ft (corner front); 6 or 8 ft. (side); and 20 ft. (rear).

Nonconforming Setbacks. An existing principal building that does not meet the required setbacks may have an addition constructed to include a second unit, as long as the degree of non-compliance is not increased.

Lot Coverage. The total impervious area (buildings and paving) may not exceed 60% of the lot.

Bedrooms. Duplexes do not have a limitation on bedroom counts.

Architectural Style and Building Height. To determine this requirement, the block face must be evaluated to define any particular character defining features for entries, roofs, orientation, and garages. Does the block face have a uniform architectural style that is prevalent? If so, describe what features the duplex design has incorporated.

Roof Design. Incorporate roof forms from the block face evaluation that represent compatible styles, this can include hipped roofs, gables, and dormers.

Entrances. Each dwelling unit shall have its own entrance.

- One primary entrance of the duplex shall be clearly identifiable and not set substantially behind the front façade. The main entrance location(s) and design shall create either the appearance of definable unit(s) or shall be situated in a way that assists in the appearance of the structure as one unit with a side or rear entry for the second duplex unit.
- It is recommended that corner lots have one entrance facing each street.

Windows & Transparency.

- Street facing façades shall include at a minimum 15% solid to void ratio for the front facade. This prevents blank walls that create a blocked-off street frontage. This is the solid to void ratio requirement in the SF-COD overlay.
- Window patterns shall logically designed to the proportions and spacing of single family homes in area, for example second floor windows shall generally be aligned with first floor windows. Placement of closets, stairwells, bathrooms and other floor plan elements must be designed to accommodate this standard.

## Parking.

- Two paved parking spaces are required per unit (four spaces in total) with one of the two spaces provided in a garage.
- A paved driveway is required.
- Tandem style parking spaces (where access to a given space may be blocked by the designated parking space of another vehicle) may count toward meeting the parking requirements of this section as long as not more than two cars are in tandem.
- If creating a parking lot of more than four spaces, landscape buffering is required.

Garage and Driveway Placement Patterns. In established neighborhoods, the placement of garages and driveways must match the predominant pattern found on the street block. However, in all areas side loading and rear placed garages are allowed. The intent is for new construction to be compatible with the existing neighborhood by replicating these features. Within established neighborhoods, there are three garage/driveway patterns that emerge:

1. A flush or nearly flush front-loaded garage accompanied by a driveway not having a width greater than 20 feet (most predominant pattern).
  - Garages that protrude from the front façade are not allowed, unless it can be documented that this pattern is existing and prevalent on the street block.
  - The garage face shall not exceed in width more than 50 percent of the width of the front façade.
  - Driveways widths must conform to the garage standards, of minimum and maximum widths. Such as 1 car up to 14 feet, 2-car up to 20 feet, and 3-car+ up to 24 feet.
2. An attached or detached garage located at the rear of the house or in the rear yard accompanied by a narrow driveway usually along one side of the house.
  - Locate the garage at the rear of the duplex or as a detached garage in the rear yard.
  - Alternatively, the garage may be located a minimum of 18' from the front of the duplex.
  - Driveways widths must conform to the garage standards, of minimum and maximum widths. Such as 1 car up to 14 feet, 2-car up to 20 feet, and 3-car+ up to 24 feet. The driveway width may be expanded in the rear yard.
3. Attached or detached garage located at the rear of the house or in the rear yard accessed from an alley.
  - Garages shall be located either at the rear of the duplex or as a detached garage in the rear yard.
  - Any new driveway shall be constructed with access only from the alley. The driveway leading from an alley to the entrance of a garage shall be either 8 feet

from the property line abutting the alley or a minimum of 20 feet from the property line abutting the alley.

Additionally, detached garages shall comply with the accessory building regulations described in Sec. 29.408(7), for location within setbacks, and building height and size.

Sidewalk(s). Entrances must connect to public sidewalks.

Rentals. Any dwelling unit that is intended for use as a rental must be registered with the city and have a valid rental permit. All requirements of the Rental Code (Chapter 13) apply.

Lot Coverages. All development must meet lot coverage and building coverage limitations.

Overlay Zone. If the property is located in an overlay zone, it may be subject to additional design standards. In the event of conflict between overlay regulations and the regulations included herein, the overlay regulations shall control.