

## **MINUTES OF THE CITY OF AMES PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION**

**AMES, IOWA**

**OCTOBER 4, 2023**

The Regular Meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission was called to order by Chairperson Mike Sullivan at 7:00 p.m. on October 4, 2023 in the Council Chambers at 515 Clark Avenue. Commission Members present were Julie Winter, Mike Clayton, Mike Sullivan, Jon Emery, Matthew Voss, Mike LaPietra, and Jim Blickensdorf.

### **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Moved by Emery, seconded by Clayton, to approve the Agenda for the meeting of October 4, 2023. Vote on Motion: 6-0. Motion passed.

### **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 6, 2023 MEETING**

Moved by Winter, seconded by LaPietra, to approve the Minutes of the September 6, 2023 meeting. Vote on Motion: 6-0. Motion passed.

### **PUBLIC FORUM**

Chairperson Sullivan opened the public forum and closed it when no one came forward to speak.

### **ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT FOR VEHICLE CHARGING EQUIPMENT LANDSCAPE EXCEPTION**

Director Diekmann stated this is an update to standards for vehicle charging equipment. Ames Ford would like to add a dozen charging stations to their site. A portion of the Ames Ford display area would need to be removed to compensate for the incoming charging equipment. This seemed like a discouragement to existing developed sites, City Council initiated the text amendment at the request of Ames Ford. The text amendment would primarily apply and impact other existing developed sites besides Ames Ford. The degree of exception and changes for landscape percentage requirements would not be discernable. Staff proposes to add this exception to further allowance of electric charger placement.

Chairperson Sullivan opened public comments and closed it when no one came forward to speak.

Moved by Winter, seconded by Clayton, to recommend that the City Council approve the proposed zoning text amendment to except electric vehicle charging equipment from minimum landscape percentage requirements.

Vote on Motion: 6-0. Motion passed.

## **ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT FOR A REDUCED AFFORDABLE HOUSING PARKING RATE**

City Planner Amelia Schoeneman noted this item is part of the city's affordable housing strategy. Parking spaces can be costly to install and maintain and take up space which causes less flexibility for development. Outside of a Planned Unit Development project, the City requires one parking space per bedroom for two, three, four, and five bedroom units. One and a half spaces are required for a studio or one bedroom unit.

Staff performed counts during peak usage hours at three affordable housing developments in Ames. It was determined thirty-five to forty seven percent of provided parking was utilized. The proposed amendment would target developments that provide housing for households that have an annual income that is sixty percent or less of the area median income (AMI). This level is typical of what is seen for low-income housing tax credit developments. The ordinance would apply only to units targeting that income level. The proposed ordinance would allow staff to approve a reduction to one and a half spaces per unit for developments that had a minimum of forty percent of the units are restricted to households with incomes below the sixty percent AMI. The reduction would apply only to the affordable units. This agreement would require such properties be restricted to affordable housing for a minimum of 30 years.

Additional reductions to one space per unit may be granted to developments that are within a quarter mile of public transit access. City Council may approve additional for developments that are committed to providing housing for households with incomes below thirty percent of the area media. After 30 years, no additional parking would be required if the units were transformed to market rate. Staff recommends Alternative 1 as presented for approval.

Commission Member Julie Winter inquired if staff is proposing an agreement term length of 30 years. Ms. Schoeneman replied that was correct. Commission Member Michael Clayton asked what would happen if an owner wanted to demolish a building before the 30 years had passed. Ms. Schoeneman said the units would no longer exist and new parking rates would have to be followed.

Jim Blickensdorf inquired if there are density requirements or requirements regarding access to public transit. Ms. Schoeneman stated there were not. Commission Member Matthew Voss clarified near public transit meant close to a CyRide stop. Ms. Schoeneman confirmed that was correct. Ms. Winter voiced concern that the 30-year requirement may be an unnecessary burden. Ms. Schoeneman noted there are HOME funds the City administers that would require the same standard.

Ms. Winter commented on CDBG funds that may only have a 5-year requirement period and builders are eager to get started. Ms. Winter acknowledged this may not be part of the zoning concern. Director Diekmann said those things would not yield this product being created on their own and would require an additional funding stream and longer affordability restrictions.

Mr. Blickensdorf noted where he came from in Indiana that had concentrations of student housing, and half a space seemed to work well. Reducing parking requirements may enhance the goal of affordability and the market would encourage developments be built closer to public transit. Research shows people only have access to one car. An extra half space for an efficiency seems like a waste of land. Ms. Schoeneman replied that Mr. Blickensdorf's comment aligned with Alternative 2. Ms. Schoeneman explained why Alternative 1 was proposed by staff.

Mr. Blickensdorf asked if restrictions could be put in place while allowing developers to qualify for needed incentives and credits. Director Diekmann said it would be more permissive rather than restrictive if staff lowered requirements. One and half spaces is starting point for consistency. HOME funds do not have parking requirement associated with them. A major reduction would be at a high bedroom count level to benefit larger units rather than smaller ones.

Mr. Voss asked how much of Ames is within a quarter mile of public transportation. Ms. Schoeneman said all affordable housing in Ames is within that distance. Director Diekmann noted the data for all of Ames was not available for the meeting but could be gathered later. Most apartments in Ames are within that distance, but single-family areas may not be. Director Diekmann commented staff does not want the wording to be a hindrance. If a bus stop is not exactly a quarter mile from the development, it won't prevent staff from granting a reduction.

Ms. Winter voiced support of reducing the parking spaces required. Commission Member Jon Emery felt requirements lower than one and half spaces could put stress on surrounding neighborhoods. Mr. Emery felt the thirty-year requirement should be extended to at least fifty years to help protect affordable housing.

Ms. Winter noted affordable housing made her think of housing for students. She asked if the utilization rates are the same for senior housing or housing for other populations. Ms. Schoeneman replied parking rates for senior housing are already set at one space per unit.

Mr. Emery stated the Commission should consider what will happen in the future when a development passes the thirty-year mark and is stuck with the parking reductions. Further discussion occurred regarding the thirty-year requirement.

Ms. Winter commented when low-income tax credits are utilized, a developer may build thirty units but could designate some as market rate and others low income. Director Diekmann stated for the City projects they are designated as one hundred percent affordable with no market rates. Director Diekmann explained the two different LIHTC programs. The most advantageous scenario is to do income averaging and have a mix of higher income and lower income units. A property can have market-based units but would not receive the tax credit for those units.

Ms. Winter commented they may not always be looking at a 30-unit building, and each unit could have different regulations. Mr. Emery said the smaller units would be impacted too. Ms. Winter cited the study in the staff report that minimum parking requirements are not being utilized. Mr. Emery felt the Commission needs to look at how the proposed amendment would impact the future.

Director Diekmann said there is an open question about self-selection into smaller units with less parking. People with fewer cars will choose places with less parking since not everyone needs a lot of parking. There is no perfect answer however there is evidence people will self-select into transit-oriented units. Commission Member Mike LaPietra inquired if any of the affordable housing areas are at thirty percent utilization right now. Ms. Schoeneman said the highest rate was forty seven percent at Eastwood which is one hundred percent income restricted and average income is lower than sixty percent of the area median. Director Diekmann noted that site already had reduced parking for that utilization rate.

Mr. Sullivan asked if staff obtained information on the results of parking restriction implementation in other Cities. Ms. Schoeneman said she did not obtain that information when she reached out. Director Diekmann stated there are not many comparable programs.

Mr. Blickensdorf referenced when he was Parking Chair in Bloomington, Indiana. Most of the parking issues were in areas where single family homes had been converted to student housing, or in less desirable neighborhoods next to campus. It did not discourage development and has encouraged use of public transportation. He noted the developments are more attractive than what was there previously. Mr. Emery felt reduced parking promotes problems and mentioned lack of parking in the Campustown area. Mr. Emery disagreed with reducing parking requirements. Mr. Voss agreed with Mr. Blickensdorf that extending the requirement beyond thirty years would reduce incentive for builders to create affordable housing.

Moved by Blickensdorf, seconded by LaPietra, to recommend Alternative #2 that the City Council reduce the parking requirements for affordable housing developments as presented in Attachment A. 1- and 2- bedroom units would have 1 parking space per unit, 3- and 4-bedroom units would have 1.5 parking spaces per unit as the minimums.

Vote on Motion: 5-2. Motion passed. Voting Nay: Emery, Sullivan

## **DISCUSSION OF DRAFT ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT (ADU) AND DUPLEX STANDARDS**

Director Diekmann gave a quick overview of what would be shown in the PowerPoint. He stated the slideshow is a preview of what would be presented to City Council on October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

City Planner Eloise Sahlstrom gave an overview of the efforts City Council has made to diversify and expand housing in Ames. City Council is investigating policies regarding allowing Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and duplexes within single-family neighborhoods.

Ms. Sahlstrom stated tonight the proposed standards will be discussed. City Council values diverse housing options as reflected in the Ames 2040 Plan. There are many single-family homes and apartment complexes in Ames with few options in the middle. Council is looking at how to accommodate more diverse housing. Ms. Sahlstrom discussed previous meetings regarding ADUs and Duplexes that had taken place. She explained what an ADU is and the requirements for two different types of ADU. Ms. Sahlstrom discussed the obstacles to the proposal, parking requirements, size requirements, impervious area coverage requirements, and other qualifications.

Ms. Sahlstrom discussed the survey results to date and will provide the complete results in the future.

The requirements for two family dwelling units were discussed. Duplexes cannot be built today in the low-density zoning district. Staff is proposing new construction only and the conversion of an existing house into a duplex would not be allowed. The pattern of neighborhoods will be considered for compatibility purposes.

Ms. Sahlstrom explained the timeline for the proposed ADU standards and noted staff will be asking City Council for direction at the October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023 meeting.

Commission Member Michael Clayton commented there were 181 responses to the ADU and Duplex Standards survey so far, which was encouraging. Director Diekmann noted in person participation was lower than online participation.

Mr. Emery asked what the purpose of ADU's are according to the City. Director Diekmann said it provides additional space options for living space with the restriction the owner has to live on site. If an owner moves, the ADU can not be licensed.

Mr. Blickensdorf about the number of non-related people that could live in duplexes. Ms. Sahlstrom said each side of a duplex is separate for occupancy regulations.

Mr. Sullivan commented the proposal appeared to be a well-balanced approach.

Ms. Winter asked if shipping containers or those type of materials that are subject to weathering would be allowed. Ms. Sahlstrom replied the structure must have a foundation and could not be on wheels. Director Diekmann noted the materials would be covered under the building code and mobile homes would not qualify in any case.

Director Diekmann state there are no aesthetic requirements at this time. Ms. Sahlstrom discussed Home Occupation requirements regarding ADUs. Mr. Emery asked if there are restrictions to prohibit an ADU from housing a business. Director Diekmann explained home occupation permits for businesses and where they can be located. Mr. Emery asked if there

is a code in place requiring the ADU to match the main dwelling. Ms. Sahlstrom said the only requirement is the height limit, otherwise no. Ms. Sahlstrom said most ADUs would not be visible from the street.

Ms. Winter said the wording "of like materials" may exclude artistic types of ADU's. Ms. Sahlstrom noted in the Old Town District there are specific standards that must be followed. Mr. Emery asked if the ADU is within a quarter mile of public transportation if parking space would still be required for an ADU. Director Diekmann confirmed that was correct.

Director Diekmann noted no action must be taken as this was presented for informational purposes.

### **COMMISSION COMMENTS**

Mr. Emery asked Director Diekmann if there are any tentative items for the next meeting. Mr. Diekmann replied there may be an item for an integrated subdivision.

### **STAFF COMMENTS**

There were no staff comments.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Moved by Emery to adjourn at 8:37p.m.



Michael Sullivan, Chairperson



Laura Colebrooke, Recording Secretary