Proposed Interim Housing Amendments

Introduction

Housing costs in Asheville have increased, affecting the ability of long-time residents and newcomers to find affordable places to live. While the City is limited by funding and federal and state regulations, the City of Asheville is focusing on three key areas to address housing challenges:

- Increasing the housing **supply** to meet current demand.
- Continuing and expanding **subsidies** for affordable housing and related programs.
- Increasing **support** and protections for vulnerable renters and homeowners.

The City's strategy uses a multifaceted approach to protect communities, preserve existing homes, increase housing options and support community efforts.

The City of Asheville's Anti-Displacement & Affordable Housing (ADAH) project team is preparing an initial set of policy and program recommendations. These are intended to **support** residents, provide housing **subsidies**, and create new housing **supply** options. They include the following:

1. **Displacement Risk Assessment Tool:** Working with key stakeholders from neighborhood and community groups to develop a public, web-based tool to assess displacement risk and recommend measures to reduce that risk for major public and private development projects in vulnerable neighborhoods.
2. **Subsidies through a Home Repair Program:** Developing an owner-occupied home repair program policy to support long-term Asheville households at risk of involuntary displacement.
3. **Increased Housing Supply:** Allowing greater flexibility in City development regulations to build neighborhood-scale homes in Asheville.

This document focuses on summarizing the proposed changes related to **increasing housing supply.**

Duplexes and Townhomes

The City of Asheville is considering **allowing duplexes and townhomes in all residential neighborhoods**. Duplexes are one building that is split into two separate living spaces. They look a lot like a standard single-family house, but because they share walls and a yard, they are usually cheaper to rent or buy. Townhomes, like duplexes, are attached to each other, but each unit sits on its own separate piece of property with its own yard, so they are considered a single family home. Many neighborhoods in Asheville already have duplexes and townhomes. Historically, Asheville allowed duplexes and townhomes throughout the city. Today they are allowed in about one-third of Asheville's residential neighborhoods.

Accessory Dwelling Units

An Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) is a smaller, secondary home on the same property as a main house. You might know them as "in-law suites" or "carriage houses." They can be a backyard cottage, an apartment over a garage, or an attached suite. People build ADUs for many reasons: to house older family members, to downsize, or to earn extra money by renting them out.

Whatever the reason, ADUs allow owners and potential renters more options to fit their housing needs while still maintaining a neighborhood scale as ADU's *must be smaller* than the main residence. The city is considering **increasing the size of an ADU** from 70% of the main residence **with a maximum** size of 800 square feet to 90% of the main residence with a maximum size of 1200 square feet. So under the proposed regulation: an 1000 sqft main house would be allowed a 900 sqft ADU; a 1,330 sqft main house would be allowed a 1,200 square foot ADU; and a 2,000 sqft mains house would also only be allowed a 1,200 sqft because an ADU could not be larger than 1,200 sqft. Raising the current restriction on ADU size will make them more functional living spaces for more individuals and families.

Currently an ADU is only allowed on single family (including townhome) lots. The city is proposing allowing one ADU on duplex lots as well. So one duplex, which contains two units, would be allowed one ADU, totally three units, or homes, on one lot.

Reduced Parking Requirements

The final proposal in this round of changes would **eliminate minimum parking requirements for new buildings** in Asheville, with the exception of hotels in and around downtown. Currently, parking requirements change depending on where you are in the city. For example, a small 4 unit apartment on Haywood Road in West Asheville is not required to provide a parking lot. However, if the same apartment was placed one block down on Fairfax Avenue they would need to provide at least a 4 car parking lot.

Parking takes up a lot of space. By not forcing builders to designate land for off street parking, that extra space can be used to build more housing. For example, maybe that 4- unit apartment building is on a block with lots of available street parking, and a 2 car parking lot would meet the needs of the renters. With two less parking spaces to build, that land could instead be used to build a 3-bedroom apartment instead of a 2-bedroom, or an additional small studio. Builders can still build parking if they know their renters will need it, but the City would no longer require them to do it. Allowing more flexibility around parking also allows for more flexibility for housing and businesses.