

ITEM #: 36
DATE: 09-10-24
DEPT: P&H

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: ZONING TEXT AMENDMENTS TO PUD OVERLAY FOR INFILL SITES, POCKET NEIGHBORHOODS, AND FRONT DOOR DESIGN STANDARDS

BACKGROUND:

The City established the Planned Unit Development (PUD) Overlay in 2021 as a zoning tool to assist in the development of diversified housing types. A PUD Overlay is combined with a base residential zoning district to establish density and design standards. A PUD site must be at least two acres in size. The PUD Overlay allows for flexibility regarding some base and general zoning standards, such as building types, setbacks, lot size, and lot coverage.

Development within a PUD Overlay requires a more precise development plan than standard development to take advantage of the allowed flexibility. Examples of PUD approvals include the townhomes at Hayden's Ridge, Ansley subdivision in south Ames, and the Baker Subdivision Creekside Townhomes.

In response to City Council priorities to support diverse housing opportunities, including more infill development options, the City Council has initiated consideration of three amendments to the PUD Overlay:

1. Support infill development options on sites less than two acres in size and allow for maximum density of the base zoning district plus one (1) dwelling unit.
2. Create a specific development option for a Pocket Neighborhood within the PUD Overlay.
3. Modify compatibility design standards in relation to the garage door and front door.

1. INFILL DEVELOPMENT -MINIMUM SIZE AND DENSITY:

The current Minimum Area requirement is two acres, except for extenuating circumstances established by City Council related to natural areas, scenic areas, environmental assets, or a Council initiated rezoning process. Density currently is required to match the base zoning allowance with an option for a 15% bonus for affordable housing. **The proposed amendment would allow for; 1) infill sites less than two acres to be eligible for a PUD Overlay, and 2) a Density Bonus for one additional unit more than the base zoning allowance, regardless of affordability.**

Although no minimum site size threshold would exist with the proposed change, a development cannot be for one lot with a single permitted building to obtain development relief by way of a PUD. In practice, a minimum of three or more units would need to be included in a development proposal to propose a PUD Overlay with a minimum lot area of 18,000 square feet (.41 acres) in RL zoning.

Staff believes the proposed density bonus is beneficial to small projects where density calculations have large rounding variations on smaller sites and having one additional unit can help the financial feasibility.

POCKET NEIGHBORHOODS:

City Council reviewed the concepts of Pocket Neighborhoods at its June 11 meeting and reviewed general concepts for a pocket neighborhood. **Pocket neighborhoods are commonly a cluster of 4-12 homes around open space. Pocket neighborhoods are defined by key characteristics of individual homes, typically smaller homes, fronting along a common open space shared between the homes. Each home site has limited or no private yard areas. Parking is either rear loaded or located in common area away from the homes.** This type of development is a niche opportunity, but it could be a successful option within Ames.

The proposed text amendment describes this unique development type and includes key elements to support this design concept with no lot size or setback requirements; an allowance for reduced parking of one parking space for 50% of the homes; location of parking anywhere within the development site; and design requirements for the fronts of homes to common space and walkways.

DESIGN COMPATIBILITY-GARAGE AND FRONT DOOR:

At the time of approving the PUD Overlay ordinance, the design compatibility features were created to address the quality and interest of front façades in consideration of the higher density, reduced spacing, and desired pedestrian scale features. One specific design feature within the PUD Overlay is a goal to limit the prominence of the garage in defining the character of the home. The intent was to promote the front entry as the defining element of the home rather than the garage door as can be typical of standard lot subdivisions.

The primacy of the front entry over the garage face has been an issue for development of some townhome development types that are through lots with the front door by a garage and the opposite façade as the rear of the home along the street. City Council directed staff to exempt front doors for townhomes on through streets to remove this potential conflict. This direction was determined at the time of approval of homes in Hayden's Ridge townhomes along 190th Street. **The proposed amendment grants Council authority to determine it is impracticable to meet this design requirement for through lots.**

Developers believe the relationship of the front door to the garage face limits their options of building certain home types that may be built in other communities without design requirements and would like the limit on protruding garages eliminated from the PUD standards. This specific issue was brought up for discussion this past winter as part of the AEDC short term housing taskforce letter requesting greater design flexibility in support of housing production.

In practice, this standard had been met through either the use of porch elements that extend out to the garage face or having the garage face equal to or recessed from the front façade. However, staff has had feedback that this approach discourages housing because existing house designs may have to be modified to meet this expectation.

Rather than delete the expectation in its entirety or to define it as a guideline, staff is proposing in the attached ordinance to modify the requirement with a maximum setback allowance related to the front door location. Staff believes the setback option is a predictable expectation compared to a guideline. **Staff proposes to utilize the recently adopted 12-foot setback standard of the two-family home design requirements as the basis of the allowance. The maximum 12 feet would be from the face of the garage to the front door, it would not include the face of a porch. A builder would**

have the choice of meeting the requirement through the current methods related to bringing a facade or porch in front of a garage or with an allowance of the 12-foot setback or less to the front door.

PLANNING AND HOUSING COMMISSION:

The Commission reviewed the proposed changes at its August 7 meeting. Prior to the meeting, staff sent email notices to its interested parties developer contact list. Two comments were received from developers in support of the changes. One of the two developers spoke at the meeting describing their problem with the current garage front door requirement and how it impacted their housing construction choices for a project, but the proposed changes address his concern.

The Commission asked for clarification regarding what types of homes or tiny homes could be built on City lots currently. Staff responded that only homes on foundations with utilities are permitted within the City as meeting the definition of a dwelling. Other housing types would be allowed within an RLP-zoned mobile home park. The Commission also inquired about the design compatibility standards for garages and other communities. Staff responded that it believes in this area only Des Moines, which utilizes a form-based code city-wide, includes standards about garage design for all residential areas.

The Commission voted 7-0 in support of the changes as proposed by staff.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve on first reading the proposed amendments to the PUD Overlay.
2. Modify the proposed amendments and approve on first reading.
3. Direct staff to provide more information or to make modifications to the proposed ordinance and return at a future meeting.
4. Decline to approve the proposed amendments.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The PUD Overlay is a tool designed to allow for individual design review of custom designed developments. Development within a PUD requires a public hearing as a zone change and a site development plan, which requires property owner notification within 200 feet of a site. **If the proposed ordinance is adopted, an applicant will still be required to obtain a city development in order to take advantage of the flexibility allowed within the PUD.**

Changing the minimum area requirements will support City goals for infill without changing general density standards of a neighborhood, but allows for design flexibility to make infill more feasible. Pocket neighborhoods are a unique, non-mandatory development type that could address many housing interests of the City related to greater diversity of building types and context sensitive design features.

Changes to the garage standard are designed to address feedback about impediments to housing production as viewed by builders. Although removing the standards would grant the most flexibility, staff proposes to keep the expectation, but define the maximum setback of the front entry as 12 feet. The proposed ordinance allows the exemption certain through-lot designs from the requirement, if it is not practicable. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative 1, as described above.

ATTACHMENT(S):

[Ordinance ZTA PUD Overlay.PDF](#)