

ITEM #: 27  
DATE: 02-25-25  
DEPT: P&H

### COUNCIL ACTION FORM

**SUBJECT: ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT TO CHAPTER 29 OF THE AMES MUNICIPAL CODE TO CREATE TOWNHOME BUILDING TYPE STANDARDS**

**BACKGROUND:**

In support of infill housing opportunities, City Council has undertaken a number of initiatives to support construction of additional housing in the City, such as duplex housing standards, ADUs, and the PUD Overlay. **In addition, the City Council discussed the option of creating a townhome building type as distinction from apartments for the purpose of expanding housing opportunities with a lower parking requirement compared to standard apartment buildings. On June 11, Council directed staff to proceed with creating and additional dwelling type for the purpose of encouraging small infill housing option with reduced parking.**

**The term "townhome" is not in the Zoning Ordinance as a building type and is used loosely to represent either single-family attached dwellings or apartments designed to have the appearance of a row of individual homes with no units above or below the dwelling.** A single-family attached unit is a version of a townhome on its own lot, whereas the proposed Townhome Dwelling is a group of buildings on one lot as either condominium or as an apartment. Creating a new Townhome Dwelling type will support infill options with defined design requirements and an allowance for reduced parking rates compared to apartments.

The dwelling type will be allowed in FS-RL, FS-RM, RM, RH, and South Lincoln Mixed Use (S-SMD), unless an overlay applies. For example, RM properties in the O-SFC are not eligible for use of the building type with its parking reduction. The building type is expressly permitted with a PUD Overlay or within the University Impacted Area Overlays which have an underlying RH base zone.

**The proposed standards focus on small infill sites with up to a maximum of five units in any one building and a total of eight units on a site with staff approval. Larger sites would require a PUD Overlay with Council approval.**

**The standards allow for a one parking space reduction for 3-bedroom units that include covered parking to encourage this building type rather than an apartment building. Larger units would be treated as apartments and require typical parking on a per-bedroom basis.**

The Townhome Building type includes specific design features and orientation of units to meet goals of compatibility articulated by Plan 2040 for infill housing options. **The intent is to encourage the building type with its higher level of building design by reducing parking and allowing for certain setback reductions for front facades facing a street.** Requirements include the following:

1. Entryways face a street and connect with walkways
2. Emphasis on individual unit identity and vertical proportions associated typically with rowhouse design. This includes the use of porches, stoops, roof forms, building materials, and projections
3. Use of window patterns to eliminate blank walls and reflect residential home patterns along street

facing facades

4. Exception to the multiple buildings on a lot standard for apartments
5. Allowance for 10-foot front yard setback reduction for front facing units to a street. Side units are not eligible for the reduction. Diagrams included in the ordinance to define the orientation
6. Additional guest parking may be required if there are more than four units

**PUBLIC OUTREACH:**

Staff provided notice to the Developer Interest List prior to the Commission's review of the draft standards at its December 18 meeting. No comments from the public were received.

**PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION:**

Staff provided background information regarding the intent of this infill option to the Commission and described the standards, including an interest by staff to allow it within the University Impacted Overlays where higher parking requirements typically exist. The Commission voted 5-0 in support of proposed standards.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

1. Approve on first reading the ordinance to create a Townhome Building type within Chapter 29 Zoning Ordinance of the Ames Municipal Code.
2. Modify the proposed ordinance and approve on first reading.
3. Direct staff to make additional change and return for future approval.
4. Deny the proposed ordinance.

**CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

**The proposed Townhome Building type is oriented to small infill sites with limits of five units in a building and a total of eight units on a site without approval of a PUD Overlay by the City Council. The proposed Townhome Building type with reduced parking and specific design standards addresses the last infill housing directive of the City Council that is part of the Planning Division Workplan.**

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council approve Alternative #1.

**ATTACHMENT(S):**

[Ordinance Townhome Design.pdf](#)