



The City of Springfield has entered the crucial public input stage of the first attempt to do a comprehensive update of the City's development code, originally put in place in the 1980's, according to Mark Rust, Principal Planner and Interim Current Development Supervisor for the City. For many years the city has made modest updates to meet particular circumstances but now, facing the need to implement new State law requirements to encourage increased residential density, the task

has taken on some urgency.

Begun some four years ago, the project was originally envisioned to take three years. "That was optimistic," Rust said. Now both the pandemic and the need to adapt to the changes imposed by the state under House Bill 2001 – designed to encourage the "missing middle" in housing, the City has completed a draft of the changes to the Phase I residential part of the code and created an online open house for public comment. The open house is open throughout July and August and may be reached [HERE](#). A community survey is available [HERE](#).



The City is also working on Phase II of the project, which deals with employment lands, those zoned for commercial and industrial uses, and still planning a third phase this winter which will deal with follow ups to the outcomes in Phases I and II.

While there are changes throughout the code designed to simplify and make the Code easier to understand and implement, the major interest for the public is undoubtedly the changes designed to increase residential density. Rust was quick to explain that these changes do not require the City to increase housing density; rather they are designed to prevent the City from restricting those property owners who wish to develop their properties at higher densities than are presently permitted in the code.

The most fundamental change is a requirement that the City not deny permission to build multiple units – duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes and townhomes-- on lots zoned for single family residences. Developers and property owners can still build single family homes, but now they must be permitted to build duplexes on any residential lot, not just those on corners as the present code permits. Similarly, with some restrictions based on lot size, and subject to meeting building codes for safety and utility codes to provide utility service, the City will be required to allow more multiple units as well as "townhomes" – which are multiple attached units separated only by a firewall. Triplexes could be built on any lot of more than 5,000 square feet, and fourplexes must be allowed on any lot of more than 7,000 square feet.

The new code will also permit the conversion of existing homes to multiplexes, although this could be a complicated and expensive process since the conversion would be required to meet all building code standards and would also have to enable separate utility service to each unit – a potentially very expensive process for converting an existing single-family residence. In many cases these conversions

would also involve converting the building into a condominium, so that each unit could be owned by a resident.

Several other changes are designed to meet the requirements of HB 2001. These include reducing the minimum legal lot size from 4500 square feet to 3,000 square feet, increasing the height limit from 30 feet to 35 feet and allowing structures to cover 60 percent of a lot, rather than the 4r5 percent limit which now exists.

Rust said that the public involvement phase of the project will continue through the summer, with public hearings before the planning commission and the City Council in the fall. There is some sense of urgency to wrap up Phase I, since under state law if the City does not change its codes to allow development of the “missing middle” housing, it will be forced to operate under a state adopted model code beginning in July 2022. While Springfield has participated extensively in developing that code, Rust said, it would still be highly preferable for the City to take its own steps rather than work with a one size fits all solution.

IN the last session, the Legislature added a new wrinkle to =the housing requirements by passing legislation that would require that cities permit properties with multiplex units to divide the legal lots so each property sits on a legal lot and can be sold separately. Rust noted that, like converting existing units, this could be a very expensive process since the property owner would be required to meeting all building code and utility standards, as is the case in converting existing homes.

While Rust said that originally the Council had decided that the code update would be enacted in a form to be consistent with the City’s existing comprehensive Plan, the changes required by meeting HB 2001 now appear to dictate the need for some revision of Comprehensive Plan policies. The City still hope to keep the changes in the employment land code provisions policy neutral as respects the Comprehensive Plan so that no Plan amendments would be required to accommodate those changes.

A questioner noted that the City had recently moved to permit the construction of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in an effort to promote more density and asked how this change would affect those. Rust said that the major change would be that the City would not require additional parking to be provided for an ADU. The new state law, and the proposed City code, “blur the distinction between ADUs and duplexes.”

Rust was also asked about the impact of covenants, conditions, and restrictions (CCR) which are in place in some subdivisions to, among other things, restrict density increases. While HB 2001 provides that no such future CCRs may be required, that law does not invalidate those that already exists. Vacating those conditions, he said, is a private matter win which the City would not become involved.