

## COMMISSION ACTION FORM

**SUBJECT:** REVIEW OF PROPOSED ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS (ADUS)  
STANDARDS RELATED TO CHAPTER 31 DESIGN CRITERIA AND  
GUIDELINES

**BACKGROUND:**

***Action Requested.*** One of the powers and duties of the Historic Preservation Commission is to review proposed zoning amendments that affect historic resources and districts as defined with Ames Municipal Code Section 31.6 (6) & (7). Although no specific changes to Chapter 31 are proposed at this time, the request of the Commission is to review the proposed zoning standards and how the Chapter 31 standards would apply to the ADUs and make a recommendation to the City Council whether any changes to Chapter 31 are appropriate with the proposed zoning changes for ADUs.

***Project Description.*** In an effort to expand housing opportunities and diversify housing choices, the Ames City Council is exploring policies around allowing accessory dwelling units (ADUs) within single-family neighborhoods. ADUs are not currently allowed in Ames, so this would introduce a new allowance. The City is currently in a public outreach phase for the proposed ADU standards that would apply citywide.

An ADU is a smaller, detached dwelling unit on the same property as the principal residence. They are also called a granny flat or guest house. An ADU functions independently with its own bathroom and kitchen. It is required to be on a foundation and have utility connections.

A number of Open Houses have been scheduled in September (Sept. 14, 18, & 25) at various locations around the city, so that the city may receive feedback. A website [www.CityOfAmes.org/AddHousing](http://www.CityOfAmes.org/AddHousing) has been created to explain the proposed regulations and to receive public comment. An online Survey is also available.

The attached flyer summarizes the regulations that are proposed citywide. The proposed standards follow the City's existing accessory building requirements for maximum size of 900 square feet, setbacks, height coverage, location in the rear yard, etc. Notably the ADUs are required to be detached from the principal dwelling (no conversions of homes) and have one paved parking space in addition to those required of the principal dwelling. (See attached flyer)

***Historic Preservation Overlay "O-H" District.*** In addition to zoning standards, properties in the Old Town Historic District, subject to Chapter 31, would be subject to historic design review process and standards to construct an ADU.

Under the requirements of Section 31.10 of the Municipal Code, a Certificate of Appropriateness would be required for approval of an ADU as "New Construction," on any

property in the Old Town Historic District having a contributing structure. **ADUs would be treated as “Accessory Buildings” and treated the same as other building like Garages, meaning both Design Criteria and Design Guidelines would apply.**

Chapter 31 defines “New Construction” as, “The erection of a new principal or accessory structure on a lot or property, or an addition to an existing structure that increases the amount of the gross floor area.”

The focus of this discussion relates to the specific Design Criteria and New Construction Guidelines. The closest precedent to this new building type are decisions related to detached garages. Note that in addition to Chapter 31 requirements, the current SF-COD zoning design requirement apply to principal structures and in some cases accessory buildings.

### **DESIGN GUIDELINES AND DESIGN CRITERIA (Section 31.15):**

***Design Guidelines.*** Design Guidelines are the standards intended to preserve the historic and architectural character of the district. Design Guidelines for New Construction includes a section on “Garages and Accessory Buildings”. These specifically mention roof form and window design, but also indicate that the building is to be consistent with the architectural style which are covered in the Design Criteria.

#### **(10) Garages and Accessory Buildings.**

- (a) Garage and accessory building construction shall be consistent with the architectural style.
- (b) Garages and accessory buildings shall not exceed the height or bulk of the principal building.
- (c) Metal accessory buildings are not permitted.
- (d) Accessory buildings shall use window design and materials that follow that of the principal structure.
- (e) Aluminum or steel garage doors may be used as a substitute for wood.
- (f) Double garages shall have two single doors rather than one double wide door.
- (g) The roof form of a garage or accessory building shall be similar to the roof form of the principal structure.
- (h) An accessory building shall not attempt to mimic the house or look like a barn or other non-historic building.
- (i) Cementitious siding (smooth finish) of an appropriate profile may be used for the new construction of garages and other accessory buildings.
- (j) Accessory buildings that are 120 square feet or larger are required to meet Design Guidelines.

***Design Criteria Section 31.14.*** Design Criteria are specific to a property and the style of architecture of the principal structure on that property within the Old Town Historic District. The Design Criteria relates to character defining features of specific types of architecture. Included are criteria for:

- Height,
- Roof Type & Pitch,
- Entry (including Porch),
- Siding,
- Solid Void Ratios/ Windows
- Plan/Footprint

### ***Summary of Design Criteria and Guidelines as applied to ADUs.***

All structures within the Historic District must be consistent with the appropriate design criteria of the architectural style represented on the property and specific guidelines.

Height/Massing. The criteria state two or three stories are required, because this matches existing historic home heights. Massing Guidelines address relationships of buildings to the site and historic resources.

The proposed zoning standards allow for one or two-story ADUs. An ADU may only be two stories if the principal residence is taller than one-story. Zoning height restrictions for accessory buildings will apply.

*The minimum height requirement taller than one-story has not been applied to garages; staff would assume that the same interpretation would apply to ADUs. Requiring two-story ADUs could be problematic for feasibility unless above a garage.*

Roof Type, Pitch & Dormers. Roof type and pitch shall be compatible with the architectural style of the house. Asphalt shingles are permitted. Dormers are required or may be permitted if the style of architecture style require it, or it is compatible with the design. The slopes of roofs are typically a minimum of 6:12 or greater.

*In many cases these criteria could be accommodated reasonably in the ADU design since the basic intent is for the structure to be an architectural relationship to the primary dwelling.*

Entry. Centered or off-center entry depending on architectural style. An entry porch is required. (Minimum dimensions are not included in the Design Criteria or Design Guidelines, but the Single Family Conservation Overlay District [O-SFC] provides minimum dimensions for stoops [entry porches] if the compatibility standards are applied to ADUs).

*Garages have not had porch requirement applied to them as accessory buildings because they are not considered habitable space with living area. A porch would likely be required under the current language, absent any change to the language for accessory buildings, because an ADU is a type of dwelling.*

Siding. Metal buildings are not permitted. Wood or cementitious siding (smooth finish) may be used with the same reveal as the architectural style of the house. When corner boards are a feature of the architectural style, they shall be included.

*Garages have met this material standard. ADUs could reasonably meet this standard.*

Windows and Doors. Double hung windows required. Window design and trim shall be compatible with the architectural style of the house. Windows may be wood or aluminum clad wood windows with an anodized or baked enamel finish. Door design and trim shall follow that of the principal residence. Doors may be wood, metal, or fiberglass. Window and door trim dimensions shall match the principal residence.

*Although these standards could be accommodated, it is possible that due to the scale of ADUs some of the door and window standards may not seem appropriate.*

Footprint/Site Features. The intent of design criteria and guidelines is to address the relationship of buildings to the street and to the historic resource existing on the site. Design criteria define the primary shape and layout of specific architectural styles.

*Regulating the shape of the footprint has not been applied to garages. ADUs may be able to reasonably incorporate some of floor plan features of the criteria, but in many cases an accessory building is not sizable enough to regulate the shape of the footprint.*

Foundation. Requiring a first-floor elevation of 18" (as required by the Single Family Conservation Overlay District [O-SFC]) has not been applied to accessory buildings, such as garages.

*Applying this standard to ADUs could be burdensome on their feasibility since no basement is likely to be part of the building. Additionally, it is important that the ADUs be allowed the option of being located at-grade for accessibility. However, if the ADU were to include a raised elevation, the exposed foundation would be required to match the principal residence.*

### **Staff Comments.**

The overview of criteria and guidelines give a sense of what to expect for any future ADUs proposed within the Historic District. As New Construction, all new buildings would require HPC review and approval of a certificate of appropriateness. Applying the current criteria and guidelines as written likely reduces the likelihood of many property owners being interested in constructing an ADU due to additional costs and complications of design requirements. The question for the Commission at this time is if they see conflicts with these standards and how they would be applied to ADUs while maintaining the integrity of the historic district over time.

### **ALTERNATIVES:**

1. The Historic Preservation Commission may determine that the current Certificate of Appropriateness review process and application of the existing Design Criteria and Design Guidelines as indicated herein will ensure that the new construction of ADUs and no changes are required.

*This means all height, design style, and other historic features will be required.*

2. The Historic Preservation Commission may determine that ADUs should be exempted from the Certificate of Appropriateness review and application of the existing Design Criteria and Design Guidelines, as this is not needed to ensure that the new construction of ADUs would be compatible to the historic district. Exempting ADUs from obtaining a Certificate of Appropriateness would require a text amendment to Chapter 31.

*This option would treat ADUs the same within the Historic District as all other properties in the City.*

3. The Historic Preservation Commission may determine that additional design

guidelines regulations are needed or specific changes to existing language is needed, for an appropriate level of review of an ADU to be compatible with the Old Town Historic District. Including additional design guidelines would require a text amendment to Chapter 31.

*This option would edit or delete certain standards to specifically address unique characteristics of an ADU.*

#### **DEPARTMENT'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

Based on staff's analysis of ADUs as new construction, staff has determined that ADUs would be compatible with the Old Town Historic District, given the existing review and requirements for obtaining a Certificate of Appropriateness.

The Department of Planning and Housing recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission approve Alternative #3, with changes to exclude ADUs from specific design criteria and guidelines (i.e., of height, foundation, solid/void ratios and dimensions, footprint, porch) but require HPC approval of a certificate of appropriateness.

## Attachment A – Flyer