

Single- and Two-Family Code Amendments – March 2023

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the key changes proposed in the ordinance?

The ordinance proposes updates to definitions and standards for single and two-family lots and dwellings:

- Reduce minimum lot size and lot width requirements for single- and two-family lots
- Remove minimum floor area requirement in the Zoning Code
- Amend stormwater requirements for single-family homes on smaller lots
- Reduce front setback requirement for two-family dwellings
- Reduce on-site parking requirements
- Amend the two-family dwelling grouping approval process from a rezoning to a conditional use permit action
- Remove the prevailing front setback standards in the R-1 zoning district
- Revise the application review and approval process for plats or subdivisions that create two units or less

The following table summarizes the key proposed changes:

Standard	Existing	Proposed
Minimum Site Size (Single-Family)	11,000 sq. ft. (internal) 15,000 sq. ft. (corner)	7,800 sq. ft. (internal) 11,050 sq. ft. (corner)
Minimum Site Size (Two-Family)	15,000 sq. ft. (internal) 18,000 sq. ft. (corner)	13,000 sq. ft. (internal) 16,250 sq. ft. (corner)
Minimum Site Width (Single-Family)	80 feet (internal) 120 feet (corner) or 80% of area median, whichever is greater in the R-1, RS-1 and R1-A Districts	60 feet (internal) 100 feet (corner) or 80% of area median, whichever is greater in the RS- 1 and R1-A Districts.
Minimum Site Width (Two-Family)	100 feet (internal) 120 feet (corner) or 80% of area median, whichever is greater in the R-1, RS-1 and R1-A Districts	80 feet (internal) 100 feet (corner) or 80% of area median, whichever is greater in the RS- 1 and R1-A Districts.
Minimum Unit Size (Single-Family)	1,040 sq. ft. in R-1 and RS-1 District 1,700 sq. ft. in R-1A District	No minimum outside building code requirements per room
Minimum Unit Size (Two-Family)	960 sq. ft.	No minimum outside building code requirements per room
Minimum Off-Street Parking (Single and Two-Family)	4 spaces per unit, 2 of which per unit must be in a garage	2 spaces per unit, 1 of which per unit must be in a garage

Standard	Existing	Proposed
Minimum Front or Side Setback Adjacent to Street (Single-Family)	30 feet or prevailing setback not to exceed 65 feet when adjacent to homes built on or before 10/7/1974	30 feet in R-1 District 30 feet or prevailing setback not to exceed 65 feet when adjacent to homes built on or before 10/7/1974 in RS-1 and R1-A Districts
Minimum Front or Side Setback Adjacent to Street (Two-Family)	50 feet or prevailing setback not to exceed 65 feet when adjacent to homes built on or before 10/7/1974	30 feet in R-1 District 30 feet or prevailing setback not to exceed 65 feet when adjacent to homes built on or before 10/7/1974 in RS-1 and R1-A Districts
Impervious Surface Limit (Single-Family)	35% of site area	35% of site area by right. For lots under 11,000 sq. ft. up to 45% with approved stormwater enhancements and tree planting
Approval Process for Groupings of Two-Family Dwellings	Rezoning as Planned Development approved by the City Council	Conditional Use Permit approved by the Planning Commission subject to appeal
Process for single or two-family residential lot splits resulting in two or fewer lots	Planning Commission and City Council Review	City Council Review

What are the project goals?

- Increase affordable home ownership opportunities
- Provide more housing options and housing types
- Provide opportunities for infill housing
- Seek to address the home ownership opportunity gap

How were the project goals determined?

The project goals were identified at multiple meetings with the City Council, Planning Commission, and Housing and Redevelopment Authority.

How does the proposed ordinance provide more affordable home ownership opportunities?

The amendments influence affordability by:

- Reducing land costs per unit (lot size and lot width)
- Reducing garage costs for those who do not want a two-stall garage
- Reducing housing sizes for those who do not want a larger house
- Reducing setback requirements in some cases, which lowers costs for utility lines and driveways
- Streamlining approval processes, which lowers fees and reduces approval times

- Increasing opportunities to construct two-family dwellings

How does the proposed ordinance provide more housing options and housing types?

Current restrictive zoning standards prohibit housing types that could be an excellent fit in Bloomington. One example is a small home or two-family dwelling. Current zoning standards do not allow single family homes smaller than 1,040 sq. ft. in the R-1 and RS-1 Districts or smaller than 1,700 sq. ft. in the R1-A District. Two-family dwellings must be at least 960 sq. ft. per unit. All homes must have at least two garage stalls per unit. Many residents do not need homes of that size. Singles and seniors especially may find a smaller home better serves their needs and is much more affordable. The proposed amendments would rely on the Building Code alone to determine minimum sizes for single- and two-family houses. The amendments also reduce the number of garage stalls needed to one per unit. Of course, homeowners could develop much larger homes and garages, but the amendments would provide options for those who do not want large homes. Many smaller homes were built in Bloomington in the past, prior to the establishment of minimum home sizes. These homes function well, are relatively affordable, and assist in meeting residents' life cycle housing needs.

How does the proposed ordinance provide more infill housing opportunities and why is infill housing important to the community?

Continued, measured growth benefits residents in many ways. Growth supports robust, healthy schools, strengthens the tax base, provides park dedication funds for improved parks, and supports added commercial services, just a few benefits. Growth that occurs on the fringe of the region rather than close to jobs and services results in more vehicle miles traveled, energy consumption, greenhouse gases, pollution, and congestion.

Bloomington has seen rapid growth recently in rental housing opportunities. Unfortunately, recent new ownership housing opportunities have been minimal. Staff anticipates the changes would create new opportunities for home ownership in Bloomington if larger lots could be subdivided. Maps and tables in the packet demonstrate this potential citywide and in three selected neighborhoods.

How does the proposed ordinance address the home ownership opportunity gap?

There is a large home ownership gap in Bloomington by race and ethnicity. In 2020, Bloomington home ownership rates were:

- 75% - White
- 56% - Asian
- 51% - Two or More Races
- 44% - American Indian and Alaska Native
- 43% - Some Other Race
- 42% - Hispanic or Latino Origin
- 20% - Black or African American

Given income disparities between groups, the affordability of Bloomington housing impacts the ownership gap. By reducing zoning standards that add costs to housing (minimum unit size requirements, minimum lot area requirements, minimum lot width requirements, minimum garage size requirements, additional setback requirements, etc.), new housing can be more affordable, which can help to address the home ownership gap.

How will we know whether the project has been successful?

Increasing the supply of new single and two-family housing, especially owner-occupied housing, will signal success. The City will closely monitor the production of new single- and two-family housing and compare it annually to levels prior to the amendments. Market factors such as interest rates, construction costs, and regional housing supplies will likely play a prominent role in determining the pace of construction. Should future City Councils determine the pace of construction is either too fast or too slow, those Councils may influence the pace through ordinance modifications, similar to the recent Opportunity Housing Ordinance adopted in 2019 but amended twice since then to influence results.

Will existing lots be required to be reduced to the minimum size and width (7,800 sq. ft. and 60 feet wide for interior lot in R-1)?

No, the proposed changes would modify the minimum zoning requirement. Larger lots remain legal and allowed as determined by property owner/market preference.

Will the proposed zoning changes degrade property maintenance standards of residential lots?

No. The City's Environmental Health Division manages a thorough residential property maintenance program that successfully addresses a wide variety of maintenance related violations. The maintenance and enforcement program will continue regardless of the outcome of the zoning changes.

Where did discussion about the single- and two-family zoning changes initially start?

Discussions about modifications to the City's single and two-family zoning standards began in 2021 to increase opportunities for affordable homeownership and housing variety. As a fully built-out community located in the middle of a growing region, opportunity to add any forms of housing other than multifamily is currently constrained.

How were the proposed ordinance amendments advertised and communicated?

Three public hearing opportunities, all of which advertised in the Sun Current, are being offered as part of the review of the proposed ordinance as follows:

- Planning Commission on December 8, 2022 (published in 11/24/2022 Sun Current)
- City Council on January 9, 2023 (published in 12/29/2022 Sun Current)
- City Council on March 20, 2023 (published in 03/09/2022 Sun Current)

In addition to the public hearings, the following engagement opportunities have been provided:

- Let's Talk Bloomington online project page with comment and Q&A tools (<https://letstalk.bloomingtonmn.gov/single-and-two-family-development-standards-update>)
- Engagement with neighborhood representatives by request
- Posting project information on City social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Nextdoor, and E-Subscribe)
- Informational meetings by request
- Miscellaneous engagement with residents and interested parties (phone calls, emails, etc.)

How many new units may result from the amendments over time?

It is difficult to estimate or project the potential development that could occur as a result of the changes within the proposed ordinance. However, based upon recent infill development trends in Bloomington, analysis of the site areas and site widths of existing R-1 lots, and evaluation of property values of said lots, staff estimates that there could be between 100-200 units of housing created over the next 10 years within the full community. Based on the difficulty of completing infill development (land acquisition, design, lower return on investment), staff believes that the estimation of increased housing noted above to be on the high end of the range of outcomes.

Does the City have any site design or other standards that address environmental protection?

As part of the platting (subdivision) and site plan review process, the City reviews projects against the following requirements:

- Tree Preservation – https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/bloomington/latest/bloomington_mn/0-0-0-114049
- Steet Slopes – https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/bloomington/latest/bloomington_mn/0-0-0-105599
- Stormwater Management - [Chapter 16](#) of the City Code
- Bluff Protection Overlay District – https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/bloomington/latest/bloomington_mn/0-0-0-120714
- Shore Area Regulations – https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/bloomington/latest/bloomington_mn/0-0-0-106247

Does the ordinance allow multi-unit development on a single-family residential lot?

Two-family dwellings are already permitted within single-family zoned areas and have been allowed since the 1960s. The current standards for two-family dwellings are found in Sec. 21.302.04 of the City Code

(https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/bloomington/latest/bloomington_mn/0-0-0-110626). Related to standards for two-family dwellings, the ordinance proposes to reduce the

required minimum lot size and width, remove minimum floor area requirements from the Zoning Code, reduce the front setback requirement, reduce the parking requirement, and modify the approval process for a grouping of two-family dwellings from a Planned Development/Rezoning approval process to a Conditional Use Permit approval process. The underlying use allowance for two-family dwellings does not change as a result of the ordinance, but the amount of sites that could be eligible for development is anticipated to increase.

Multiple-family dwellings (apartments) and townhomes are not currently permitted within the R-1 zoning district, and this is not proposed to change as part of the subject ordinance.