

*Thoughtful
Revision/ Proposed
by
Gainesville
Neighborhood
Voices.*

Minimum Lot Size Reform

*Submitted
by Dean
to City
Clerk
7/18/24
for ordinance
ready for
land use
&
zoning
did receive
to reduce
min.
lot size*

Overview

On July 18th, the City Commission is scheduled to vote on a zoning ordinance that would affect ALL residential RSF 1-4 neighborhoods in Gainesville. Density would increase to 12 units/acre plus 2 ADUs (currently RSF-1 allows 3.5 units and RSF-4 allows 8). All residential zones RSF-1 to 4 would be eliminated and replaced by one new zone labeled SF which would have uses and restrictions similar to the current RC zone. Minimum lot size and building setbacks would be reduced. The proposed ordinance will also allow houses to be clustered around a central open space at a density of 12 units/acre, a concept known as a cottage neighborhood.

Stated Reasons for the Lot Size Reform Ordinance

Commissioner Eastman has championed this effort, and in his blog and presentations he has listed these targeted outcomes:

- Create more starter homes
- Modernize current outdated regulations
- Create opportunities for more diverse housing options
- Preserve single-family zoning

GNV Voices Believes:

- A. Smaller lots CAN enable more, and more affordable, starter homes.
- B. But smaller lots ALSO allow multistory rent-by-the-room rental housing.

Potential Unintended Outcomes of Item B:

- Multistory rent-by-the-room rental housing can be constructed on smaller lots in single-family neighborhoods, disrupting the fabric of those neighborhoods.
- In existing single-family neighborhoods with very low current property values, multiple units of multistory rent-by-the-room rental housing can be constructed, destroying existing more affordable rental housing stock as well as destroying the fabric of neighborhoods. This is already happening in our historically Black neighborhoods.



Further, the new State law eliminating residential occupancy caps could exacerbate this problem further.



Proposed Solutions

To eliminate the risk that these smaller lots would be used for multistory rent-by-the-room housing rather than for the stated goal of more affordable starter homes:



1. For lots smaller than 1/8 acre (5,445 sf) which are created by the new zoning and which are in the newly created SF zoning district:

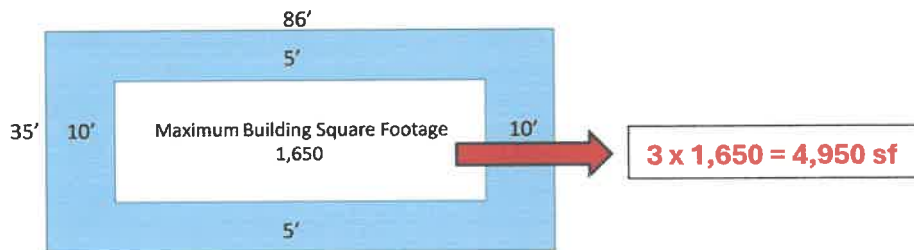
- o Set a **maximum building square footage** consistent with Alachua County's Cottage Neighborhood ordinance (1,400 sf)
- o Require 1 **onsite parking** space (parking for families with children)
- o Restrict **ADUs** allowed to either none or one

- 2. For Cottage Neighborhood proposal:
 - Learn from Alachua County experience and modify the current proposal to track the county's Cottage Neighborhood language
- 3. Allow lot splits and new construction in all residential areas while expressly maintaining the existing single-family zoning categories.

Analysis: How smaller lots can allow multistory rent-by-the-room rental housing.

Buildable Area Can Include 3 Stories in Height BY LEGAL RIGHT:

The ground-level footprint of the smallest lot that would be allowed can be visualized as this 1,650 sf buildable footprint. **HOWEVER, by legal right, up to 3 stories of height can be built on that 1,650 sf buildable footprint.**



With no requirement for onsite parking, **up to 4,950 sf can be built on each small lot, ample for rent-by-the-room housing with multiple bedrooms with en suite bathrooms.**

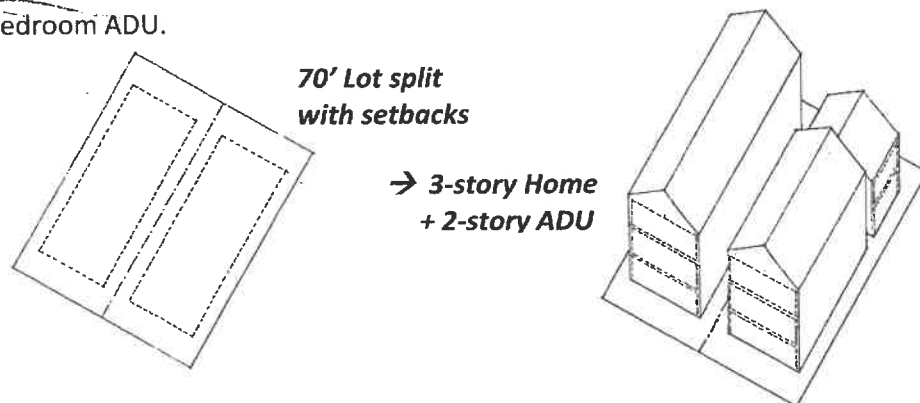
The following three scenarios demonstrate what could – by right - be built if the currently proposed ordinance was enacted, without the restrictions proposed by GNV Voices:

Scenario 1: 2 ADUs + 1 Primary Residence. Maximum ADU square footage = 850/2 stories = two 425 SF footprints, leaving maximum primary residence ground floor square footage of $1650 - 850 = 800 \text{ SF} \times 3 \text{ stories} = \mathbf{2,400 \text{ SF maximum}}$.

Scenario 2: 1 ADU + 1 Primary Residence. Maximum ADU square footage = 850/2 stories = 425 SF footprint, leaving max primary residence ground floor square footage of $1650 - 425 = 1225 \text{ SF} \times 3 \text{ stories} = \mathbf{3,675 \text{ SF maximum}}$.

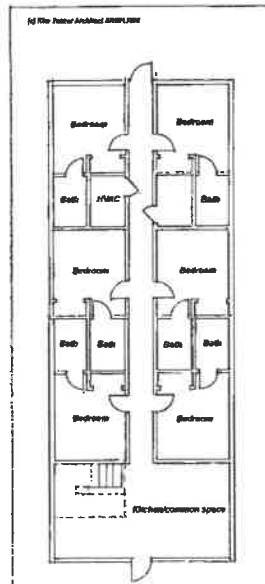
Scenario 3: No ADUs & 1 Primary Residence. Maximum primary residence ground floor square footage of $1650 \times 3 \text{ stories} = \mathbf{4,950 \text{ SF maximum}}$.

Example - Within the setbacks of the proposed lot splits, one 35' lot could accommodate either a 3-story 18-bedroom home with en suite bathrooms for rental, or a 3-story 12 bedroom home with a 3 bedroom ADU.

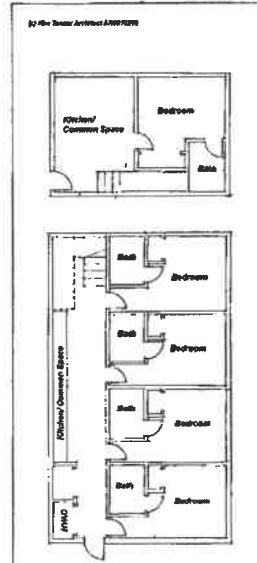


(Contract's Residents' Handwritten Signature)

Analysis, cont:



3-stories / 18 bedrooms



3 story w/12 BRs + 2-story 3 BR ADU

*** Financial Returns Incentivize Rent-by-Room**

The financial incentives are overly appealing for developers to build these rent-by-the-room bedrooms with en suite baths.

- Monthly Rental Income: \$15,000 to \$16,500
- Monthly Carrying Cost: \$10,500 (P&I + Tax + Insurance)
- Free Cashflow: \$5,000+/month

Durham NC is Proof the Modifications will Work

Durham NC has proven that setting a maximum building size works. In 2019 it capped individual dwelling units on new small lots at 1200 square feet, and since 2019, 215 small-house/lot permits have been issued. This proves that ensuring that smaller, more affordable lots are utilized to create small, more affordable homes is effective.

Cottage Neighborhoods Need Similar Guardrails

The ordinance on which the Commission will vote on July 18th includes allowing Cottage Neighborhoods, with the same 12 units per acre density. Alachua County first implemented its cottage neighborhood proposal several years ago, and discovered that, rather than providing housing choices for permanent residents, developers intended to build dense rent-by-the-room housing within existing neighborhoods. Neighbors in Idylwild/Serenola quickly realized the problem and brought it to the County Commission's attention. The BOCC reconsidered and modified its Cottage Neighborhood ordinance. The new ordinance does not permit Cottage Neighborhoods within neighborhoods platted prior to 2023 and now requires single family homes only, with a maximum house size of 1400 square feet, among other things.⁽⁵⁾ We propose that Gainesville modify its Cottage Neighborhood ordinance to track the County's Cottage Neighborhood provisions.

SUMMARY

The GNV Voices Modifications will enable more affordable starter homes.

The combination of Commissioner Eastman's proposal with the proposed modifications will give the best opportunity for the newly created smaller lots to be used for more affordable starter homes.

Being Careful is Warranted: NO OTHER town has done everything Gainesville is considering.

See the matrices on the following pages. No other town or city we have found has made all the changes that Gainesville is considering. Caution is warranted.



Being Careful is Warranted: NO OTHER town has as many student renters as Gainesville.

Gainesville has the highest ratio of university students to general population of any city we have found for comparison.



Being Careful preserves options: The modest guardrails GNV Voices is proposing can be removed later if warranted.

The proposed guardrail provisions can be removed at a later date, either in whole or in part, and either citywide or by area, if data demonstrates that they are unnecessary.



The Proposed Modifications have been proven effective.

The maximum building size in Durham NC has led to a significant increase in small-lot/small-house permits being issued, and the Alachua County experience with Cottage Neighborhoods suggests that having a maximum house size is needed to prevent multi-family rent-by-the-room housing.



Retaining RSF 1-4 will enable later removal of protections if warranted.

Maintaining the current RSF zones while allowing non-conforming small lot splits will make it easier to remove the protections in the future, zone by zone, if future data supports doing so.



The Proposed Modifications will achieve the goals while removing risk.

Gainesville is a quintessential university town, and as such it should be expected to exemplify ideals of equality of opportunity for all citizens. Adopting the protections proposed by GNV Voices will help ensure that the result will be the desired increase in affordable starter homes by removing the risk that the new small lots will be used to build multistory rent-by-the-room buildings.

Matrices of Comparative Towns are on the following pages.

For all Sources, Footnotes & Addendum, visit <https://tinyurl.com/4r9d2xse>

Matrix A – Other Southeast College Towns

Note that **NO OTHER S.E. College TOWN has done everything Gainesville is considering.** Hence the need for guardrails that can be removed at a later date if data and results warrant it.

	Gainesville FL	Alachua County	Tallahassee FL	Athens GA	Columbia SC	Columbia MO	Knoxville TN
Recent zoning change(s)	Gainesville, Proposed elimination of SF zoning categories, lot splits within subdivisions,, cottage neighborhoods, plus implemented 2 ADUs per lot	Alachua County Cottage Neighborhoods ordinance	ADUs under consideration March 2024	ADU ordinance failed 2022	ADUs, cottage neighborhoods	ADUs, small houses on small lots	ADU (with owner occupancy)

	Gainesville FL	Alachua County	Tallahassee FL	Athens Clarke County GA	Columbia SC	Columbia MO	Knoxville TN
Citywide single-family zoning change	Yes, if passed	No	No	No	No	No	No
Population (1)	145,812	285,994	202,221	96,124	142,146	129,330	198,162
University Student Population (2) (3)	67,818	67,818	80,160	40,118	35,364	38,399	36,304
Students/permanent residents city-wide	46.5%	23.7%	39.6%	41.7%	24.9%	29.7%	18.3%
Avg % in on-campus housing	17.9%	17.9%	14.5%	35%	36%	28%	31%
Households	55,193	108,597	81,846	41,353	50,223	50,948	84,195
People/household	2.27	2.41	2.21	2.9	2.18	2.3	2.17
Owner occupied housing 2018-2022	38.5%	54.5%	39.8%	37%	47%	48.8%	46.2%
Median value owner-occupied 2018-2022	\$216,600	\$245,600	\$256,400	\$249,000*	\$226,200	\$248,600	\$184,200
ADUs - One Unit allowed	Yes	Yes	Pending	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
ADUs - Two Units allowed	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Citywide allowance of lot splits	Yes, if passed	N/A	No	No	No	No	No
Owner occupancy required for ADUs	No	Yes	Pending	No ADUs	Yes	?	Yes
On site parking required	No	Yes	?	No ADUs	Yes	?	?

Matrix B – Other Cities & Towns

Note that **NO OTHER CITY** in this matrix has done everything Gainesville is considering. Hence the need for guardrails that can be removed at a later date if data and results warrant it.

	Gainesville FL	Alachua County	Minneapolis MN	Durham NC	Los Angeles CA	Portland OR
Recent zoning change(s)	Gainesville, Proposed elimination of SF zoning categories, lot splits within subdivisions,, cottage neighborhoods, plus Implemented 2 ADUs per lot	Alachua County Cottage Neighborhoods ordinance	Minneapolis 2040	Durham Expanding Housing Choices	Los Angeles 2 dwelling units per lot	Portland--various recent changes

	Gainesville FL	Alachua County	Minneapolis MN	Durham NC	Los Angeles CA	Portland OR
Citywide single-family zoning change	Yes, if passed	No	No	No	No	No
Population (1)	145,812	285,994	425,115	296,186	3,820,914	630,498
University Student Population (2) (3)	67,818	67,818	60,920	29,860	321,180	58,132
Students/permanent residents city-wide	46.5%	23.7%	14.3%	10.1%	8.4%	9.2%
Avg % in on-campus housing	17.9%	17.9%	14.3%	49.5%	5.5%	9.2%
Households	55,193	108,597	185,674	120,386	1,399,442	283,896
People/household	2.27	2.41	2.20	2.27	2.70	2.21
Owner occupied housing 2018-2022	38.5%	54.5%	48.1%	52.0%	36.6%	53.3%
Median value owner-occupied 2018-2022	\$216,600	\$245,600	\$328,700	\$316,600	\$822,600	\$523,100
ADUs - One Unit allowed	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	In certain zones
ADUs - Two Units allowed	Yes	No	No	No	No	In certain zones
Citywide allowance of lot splits	Yes, if passed	N/A	No	No. Urban Tier only w/ 1200sf max	Yes (CA) - owner occupied	N/A
Owner occupancy required for ADUs	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	?	?
On site parking required	No	Yes	No (?)	No (?)	Varies on public transit	Varies on public transit