



Community Planning & Economic Development

News Release

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For Immediate Release

Minneapolis City Council Adopts Residential Zoning Text Amendments

Friday, August 29, 2014 (Minneapolis, MN) - Minneapolis City Council Member Linea Palmisano, honoring her commitment to improve zoning regulations for new homes, promoted adoption of new zoning text amendments by a unanimous City Council vote today. The new regulations will take effect on October 1.

Palmisano introduced a moratorium on infill construction in Linden Hills, Fulton, Armatage, Kenny and Lynnhurst neighborhoods in March, which temporarily paused demolition and new construction of single and two-family dwellings. The Council lifted the moratorium in April after it adopted a Construction Management Agreement, which addresses public safety and livability issues related to the construction process. The Construction Management Agreement was quickly followed by the Toolkit for Neighbors of New Construction, a document created by Palmisano's office and designed to guide neighboring residents on how best to handle concerns related to construction on their blocks.

The zoning amendments will apply to one-to-four unit residential buildings and will work in combination with the Construction Management Agreement and the Toolkit for Neighbors of New Construction for better regulation of residential construction, leading to an improved process and better outcomes for homes in every ward.

Extensive input from stakeholders—including 13th Ward neighborhood focus groups, builders, real estate professionals, residential architects active in Minneapolis, city staff and her council colleagues—began in April, and produced “a long list of modest changes that, in aggregate, will result in creating residential buildings better suited to the urban environment,” she said.

The new zoning changes strike a fair balance between the preferences and needs of both existing residents and home builders. The zoning text amendments will result in:

Revised maximum height including a newly-established limit on the tallest point of a structure. This will result in less shading of neighboring homes and new homes that are sized more appropriately for the neighborhood.

Appropriate side yard setbacks. Required side yard setbacks will be proportional to the width of the lot, in many cases increasing the minimum distance between new homes and interior side property lines.

Quality construction and design. Revisions in the Site Plan Design Standards will create stronger incentives for high-quality construction materials.

Improved outcomes for housing in every ward. This is not a “one size fits all.” Contextual consideration will continue to exist for building or remodeling new homes in neighborhoods where half of the homes within 100 feet already exceed the size and height regulations. Incentives have been added to encourage the number of stories in a new home to stay consistent with existing neighbors.

A commitment to sustainable demolition and construction. The ordinance will reduce the amount of property that may be covered by buildings and impervious (paved) surfaces. This will assist storm water infiltration and reduce the risk of water runoff onto adjacent neighbors. The ordinance also has stronger incentives for tree planting and preservation, as well as storm water management.

Reduced impacts of street-facing garages and driveways. When a home has alley access, curb cuts will be prohibited at the front of a property. Basement level garages will be limited to no more than 60% of the front façade of a home, and attached garages will now count towards a home’s floor area ratio (FAR).

Added flexibility to definition of “half story.” Half story homes are often more appealing to neighbors than full second stories, and the added flexibility will further encourage builders to employ half story designs.

The draft of the zoning text amendments had three public meetings to solicit feedback from the community and industry representatives. “Builders have expressed their support and have indicated that they will still have the ability to build the kinds of homes their clients demand. Existing residents feel that their voices were heard,” emphasized Palmisano. The ordinance was passed unanimously by the Planning Commission, Zoning & Planning Committee, and the City Council.

The goal was to develop reasonable standards that resulted in improved outcomes for all Minneapolis neighborhoods and residents. “Throughout this process, I was committed to crafting zoning amendments that benefitted not only 13th Ward residents but the entire city,” Palmisano said.

Doug Kress, Director of Development Services for the City of Minneapolis added, “We believe a reasonable and balanced outcome has been achieved that will continue to facilitate investment in the city while ensuring it is done in a way that will respect the character of our neighborhoods.”

In addition to leading passage of the zoning text amendments, Council Member Palmisano directed City of Minneapolis staff to conduct a study of methods and tools to establish incentives related to two aspects of sustainable construction and demolition affecting 1-4 unit residential development: “green” building and building deconstruction. The study will coincide with and complement continued research into construction & demolition waste recycling under Mayor Hodges’ Zero Waste initiative. Staff is

directed to return to the Zoning & Planning Committee meeting no later than March 31, 2015, to report on this study.

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