



Date: Wednesday, April 20, 2022

To: Board of Zoning and Planning

From: Chad D. Gibson, AICP, Community Development Director

RE: Supplemental Policy for the City's Residential Design Standards – Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) Article 7.17

Purpose and Background

The purpose of this memorandum is to summarize a new supplemental policy to accompany UDO Article 7.17 – the City's residential design standards including neighborhood compatibility. The City has had some form of residential compatibility language in the zoning code since 2002, when this section was then titled 'Residential Conservation'. Staff championed these regulations to proactively address the issue of potentially incompatible residential infill development (a.k.a. 'McMansions'). These design guidelines were changed to standards in 2007 via Ordinance 72-2007. Along with additional enhancements in 2017, this code section was re-titled 'Residential Design Standards' via Ordinance 54-2017.

In April 2019, City Council passed Ordinance 10-2019 after multiple public hearings, following review and recommendation by the Board of Zoning and Planning. The goal of this Ordinance was to further strengthen the existing neighborhood compatibility regulations, while still balancing contemporary redevelopment and existing neighborhood character. Third-party architectural review, required notification of adjacent property owners, the addition of newly created or modified parcels, and inclusion of street trees were all significant changes enacted by this legislation. Since new houses typically take a year or more to build, we are only just starting to see the results of these changes materialize.

Competing Interests and City Response

Staff believes that the Ordinance is working well and that these changes have been overwhelmingly positive. However, community sentiment continues to indicate that there may be more work needed on this issue. Two potentially competing Master Plan objectives – '*preserve residential neighborhoods*' and '*maintain and improve the existing housing stock*' seem to be at the root of this conflict. In response to this issue, in May 2021 the City hosted a series of focus group discussions with interested residents and those involved in the local real estate profession. The discussions were facilitated by an independent professional consultant. These focus group sessions were extremely positive and resulted in the following overall comment categories:



Positive perceptions of the City’s Neighborhood Compatibility Ordinance:

- Codification of the City’s interest in preserving existing neighborhood character
- Provides needed guidance while leaving room for personal choice
- Third-party architect review of residential development plans
- Informs residents about development and provides opportunities to voice concerns
- An opportunity to protect home and property values, privacy, add trees

Negative Perceptions of the City’s Neighborhood Compatibility Ordinance:

- Inconsistent or subjective application of the neighborhood compatibility ordinance
- Some residential development projects make neighborhoods appear less recognizable, threaten aesthetic
- Perceived cost and timing implications of residential redevelopment, long-term property taxes
- Desire for a more expansive, inclusive review process for all parties
- Perceptions that the neighborhood compatibility standards are too restrictive
- Perceptions that the neighborhood compatibility standards are not restrictive enough

While the community focus group sessions revealed some concerns for the Neighborhood Compatibility Ordinance, it also showed that a complete overhaul is not needed. Based on this feedback, Staff saw an opportunity to build upon the existing ordinance via the proposed policy. This option was attractive in part since City Council extensively reviewed and vetted this issue in 2019.

Policy Highlights

Some of the recommended changes to be implemented via policy are listed below:

- Expanded notification radius of neighbors (from 100’ to 200’) including “ready for change” signage at the property
- Adding notification of neighbors within 200’ for minor subdivisions (lot splits)
- Encouraging preliminary Staff review of new home designs
- Clarifying that newly created or modified parcels are subject to compatibility review; new homes sites must be comparable to others on the street segment
- Clarifying that new home placement must be sensitive to the established pattern on the block, even if the platted setback is different
- Limits the number of attached garage bays and the placement of carriage-style detached garages
- Limits the number of exterior wall materials on a single elevation; also discourages mixing siding types
- Notes that building height should not exceed 150% of the street segment median; homes sites on collector and arterial streets should not exceed 175% of the street segment median
- Creates a ‘step-back’ requirement for upper floors of 1.25 times the minimum side yard setback, when located adjacent to one-story homes
- Recommends roof massing reductions for larger homes (over 2,000 SF footprint)
- Includes diagrams and graphics to supplement UDO Article 7.17
- Includes neighborhood typology lists to aid with design

- Includes a list of resources, definitions and references

Historic Construction Activity

It is noteworthy that construction activity and reinvestment in Central Ohio continues at an historic pace; the Upper Arlington housing market has been directly impacted, with soaring home prices and robust sales. Of the City’s +/- 11,000 single-family housing units, recent trends show roughly 20-30 new houses constructed annually at an average cost nearing \$1M. While these new homes represent only a small fraction of the overall housing stock, they do have an immediate impact on the neighborhood and garner significant attention. In an effort to enhance transparency and represent a clear picture of this pattern, a GIS layer was added to the City’s website that shows recent home construction color-coded by year: upperarlingtonoh.gov/resources/gis-maps/

Recent New Home Permits		
2018	-	16
2019	-	24
2020	-	35
2021	-	19
2022	-	8
Total	-	102

Next Steps

With support from City leadership, including input from BZAP, City Staff will continue to administer UDO Article 7.17 but also incorporate this policy. Staff intends to deny those applications which do not conform to the policy; the variance and/or appeal processes through BZAP remain options for applicants. As the City monitors the effectiveness of this policy, Staff may consider codifying portions of the policy in the future.

- Attachments** Existing [UDO Article 7.17](#)
 Neighborhood Compatibility policy, April 2022
 Discussion forum summary memorandum from Illumination, August 2021
 Discussion forum session presentation, May 2021
 Ordinances [29-2002](#), [72-2007](#), [54-2017](#) and [10-2019](#)