



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Planning and Economic Development Division

m e m o r a n d u m

TO: Bruce K. Walden, Chief Administrative Officer

FROM: Elizabeth H. Tyler, AICP/ASLA, Planning Manager

DATE: July 19, 2001

SUBJECT: Parking/Density Requirements for Multiple Family Residential Uses

Introduction

The results of a survey of parking requirements and car ownership for multiple-family residential uses in Urbana were presented to Council in a memorandum dated June 21, 2001. A comparative analysis of Urbana's off-street parking requirements for multiple-family residential uses relative to other communities was previously presented in a memorandum dated October 4, 2000. These studies suggest that the City may be deficient in its requirements for off-street parking for apartments of certain unit mixes compared with actual car ownership patterns and with the regulations of other communities, including Champaign.

However, as noted in the June 21, 2001 memorandum, adjustments to the City's off-street parking requirements are not recommended without the accompanying adjustments to density requirements (including height, floor area ratio, and open space ratios) that may be necessary to retain a reasonable level of developability and land use expectations under current zoning designations. Such adjustments may vary depending upon the affected zone (e.g., R-4, R-5, MOR, etc.) and the area of the City under development. For example, due to Urbana's relatively restrictive regulations on height and FAR in the R-4 zone, any increase in off-street parking requirements could make multiple-family development economically infeasible. This would be particularly true in the more developed portions of the City, where parcels tend to be relatively small and land costs tend to be relatively high. By way of comparison, the density requirements in the City of Champaign were found to be substantially higher in their multiple-family residential zoning designations (see June 21, 2001 memorandum).

The City of Urbana is also unique in that it bases its off-street parking requirements on individual bedroom sizes. This appears to have resulted in bedroom sizes smaller than would otherwise be constructed or demanded by potential residents. The current regulations also tend to favor two- and three-bedroom unit mixes as opposed to one- bedroom and four-bedroom units. City staff have recommended that off-street parking requirements, along with accompanying adjustments to density requirements, be amended to more closely meet current demands. Staff recommends that

off-street parking requirements be additionally amended so that they are independent of bedroom size and do not favor certain unit mixes.

At its meeting on June 25, 2001, Council requested staff to develop a process for further evaluating the density adjustments that may be necessary to accompany any change in off-street parking requirements and to report back to Council, with a goal of proposing necessary text amendments to the Zoning Ordinance within a six-month timeframe.

Update

Since the meeting on June 25, 2001, staff has met individually with some apartment developers and designers active in the City of Urbana to obtain their input on the proposed revisions to the off-street parking requirements. These developers agree that it would be beneficial for the City to allow for bedroom sizes and unit mixes to be independent of parking requirements. However, most developers and apartment managers believe that they are already providing sufficient off-street parking for the needs of their tenants. It should be noted, however, that this perception is not consistent with the results of the tenant survey presented in the June 21, 2001 memorandum.

Local developers and designers also agree that some adjustment to density requirements will be necessary to off-set any increase in off-street parking requirements. The results of the apartment owner survey suggest that the cost of providing the parking spaces required under the current regulations is not fully recouped in rental revenues. It follows then that any additional new costs incurred in a substantial change in the structural design of the buildings, such as an underground lot or elevated building, will not be returned as rent to the developer either. The only alternative left is to change the style of the buildings erected (via changes to density regulations) and/or to change the way parking is provided. Parking design alternatives for apartments include: 1) surface lot; 2) surface lot beneath a building elevated on pillars; and 3) underground lot. It should be noted that there are also market considerations, such as the lifestyle and expectations of the tenants that are extraneous to zoning requirements and that also constrain the design options for apartment developers.

Recommendation

As described in the previous memorandum, a design study of various apartment building prototypes under a range of density and parking requirements will be necessary to identify appropriate adjustments to the density regulations for the affected multiple-family residential zones in different areas of the City. Rather than contract with an architectural designer to conduct this study, staff recommend that a focus group of local apartment builders and their designers be invited to participate in a charrette/workshop to evaluate possible changes to parking regulations and to identify compensating adjustments to density regulations that allow for appropriately scaled buildings that are compatible with surroundings and with the purpose of

the affected zones. Apartment builders contacted thus far have indicated their willingness to participate in such a charrette and to have their designers participate in this event as well.

Potential participants include the following:

Irwin Goldfarb, Campus Property Management
Carter Doyle, Doyle & Doyle Architects
Howard Wakeland, Wakeland Rentals
Gary Burgett, Smith/Burgett Architects
Kevin Hunsinger, Hunsinger Enterprises
Russ Dankert, Russell Dankert & Associates
Professional Property Management
Riley Glerum, Isaksen/Glerum, P.C.
Paul Smith, Smith Apartments
Gary Olsen, Olsen & Associates, Architects

Other interested guests can also be invited to observe the charrette/workshop. The charrette/workshop can be held on a date in early September when apartment owners have completed their busy Fall leasing/move-in period.

City staff will evaluate the results of the charrette and will conduct additional study as necessary to identify necessary text amendments to the Zoning Ordinance. Staff will report back to Council periodically on this important study and will also keep the Plan Commission informed of these efforts as we head towards a public hearing on amendments to the Zoning Ordinance.

C: Apartment Owners Association
Bruce Knight, City of Champaign
Urbana Plan Commission Chair