

## STAFF MEMO

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Kinsey O'Shea, AICP, Senior Planner

DATE: June 14, 2024

SUBJECT: Zoning Ordinance Amendment (ZOA) #61-An amendment to the Town of Blacksburg Zoning Ordinance to create a new Small Lot Development Option in the R-4 Low Density Residential Zoning District to allow smaller lot sizes.

---

Planning Commission discussed the Small Lot Development Option zoning ordinance amendment at the March 19, and April 16, 2024 work sessions.

### Background

The Town of Blacksburg is considering a Zoning Ordinance amendment to address the need for additional residential development. This amendment aims to provide a framework for small lot residential development to fill a market need for smaller homes and the “missing middle” housing market. In the 2017 Comprehensive Plan survey, respondents identified more affordable housing as a top priority. In the 2020 Blacksburg Housing survey, small lot single-family development was also among the most highly ranked strategies for increasing affordability for permanent residents. “Missing middle housing” refers to housing types that fall somewhere in between a single-family large lot home and mid-rise apartment buildings. Examples include townhomes, two-family dwellings (duplexes), triplexes, and courtyard clusters. Missing middle housing can help localities increase the availability of less expensive housing types and support vibrant, walkable neighborhoods while gently increasing density. These housing types are an important component of a diverse housing stock, contributing to more inclusive neighborhoods.

As currently drafted, the Small Lot development option ordinance is a new set of regulations that will:

- Only apply to properties in the Town of Blacksburg, with a minimum of two (2) contiguous developable acres under common ownership that are zoned R-4 Low-Density Residential.
- Allow primarily single-family detached homes as well as duplexes and townhomes when served by alley access.
- Limit the overall height of structures to 30' and 2-1/2 stories to retain the character of a single-family neighborhood.
- Require sidewalks on both sides of the street to accommodate more users with the higher density.
- Have a limited occupancy standard of a family plus no more than one (1) unrelated person; or no more than two (2) unrelated persons per residential dwelling.

### Other Standards

There are additional regulations regarding the types of streets and curbs, public utility easements, parking and driveways, and the appearance of homes, providing more flexibility from existing standards, which are not conducive to small lot development. Some of the regulations in the Small Lot Residential

development option supersede existing regulations. Please see the updated draft ordinance for more details.

A public meeting was held on March 27 at 5:30 pm at the Blacksburg Motor Company. Town staff presented an overview of the zoning ordinance amendment for small lot development. Following the presentation, questions and comments were received from the public. Notes from the meeting were previously provided to Planning Commission.

An updated draft ordinance is attached with several notable changes. The updated ordinance:

- Has one option with sliding scale regulations based on lot size.
- Provides a maximum percentage of attached duplexes and townhome units in a development.
- Made changes to open space requirements including requiring 15% open space when more than 10 attached duplex or townhome units are developed.
- Has a maximum percentage of front-facing garage door width relative to total house façade width.

#### **UPDATED LOT DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS**

1. ***A minimum of 10% of the development must be open space.*** This retains the current open space standard for R-4 subdivisions. For developments containing more than 10 attached duplex or townhome units, a minimum of 15% of the development must be preserved as open space. This is intended to ensure that open space is adequate and meaningful.
2. ***There is a maximum percentage of duplexes and townhomes allowed in a small lot development.*** This maximum percentage is intended to ensure that small lot developments feature a variety of unit types when attached units are included.
  1. On sites of less than 5 acres: attached units shall comprise no more than 50% of the total units.
  2. On sites 5 acres or more: attached units shall be limited to no more than 30% of the total units.
3. ***There is a maximum width of front-facing garage doors.*** This is expressed as a maximum percentage of no more than 40% of the width of the structure, or no more than 22', whichever is less. Additionally, attached and detached garages must be set back from the front building line a minimum of four (4) feet. This is intended to provide a pedestrian-oriented streetscape.

An updated map showing the properties within the R-4 zoning district that are currently eligible is attached. Areas of eligibility for this district can change over time as properties are bought and sold. The map is a snapshot of the potential applicability today.

Combined, the new standards are designed to create small, walkable neighborhoods with a denser development pattern than the current R-4 zoning allows, while requiring high-quality design.

#### **ATTACHMENTS**

Updated ordinance draft dated June 15, 2024

Updated Map