



CITY OF NORMAN, OK STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 04/09/2026

REQUESTER: City of Norman

PRESENTER: Lora Hoggatt, Planning Services Manager

ITEM TITLE: CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL, ACCEPTANCE, REJECTION, AMENDMENT, AND/OR POSTPONEMENT OF ORDINANCE O-2526-51: AN ORDINANCE OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORMAN, OKLAHOMA, AMENDING THE DEFINITION OF ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT IN CHAPTER 36 ("ZONING CODE") SECTION 36-101; AND PROVIDING FOR THE SEVERABILITY THEREOF.

BACKGROUND:

In reviewing recent applications and citizen inquiries, Staff has identified concerns with the existing standards for ADUs:

1. Clarity and Administration

The setback requirement of "rear 25 percent" measurement has proven difficult for applicants and staff to interpret consistently, leading to delays in permitting and frequent requests for clarification.

2. Functional Limitations on Eligible Lots

Strict adherence to the rear placement requirement creates undue hardship on certain lot configurations and may unintentionally prohibit ADUs in districts where they are otherwise permitted.

Allowing flexibility for existing detached structures that comply with all adopted Code requirements may support additional housing opportunities without increasing the building footprint or altering established neighborhood character.

Maintaining the subordinate nature of ADUs remains important, however, the placement requirement may be more restrictive than necessary to meet that goal.

Staff presented the proposed change to City Council Business and Community Affairs Committee on March 5, 2026, and received direction to proceed to Planning Commission.

Possible Amendments to Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Placement Standards:

The current adopted Ordinance No. O-2324-40 requires that Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) be located within the rear twenty-five percent (25%) of the principal structure. This requirement is located within the following districts: A-1, Rural Agricultural District, A-2, General Agricultural District, RE, Residential Estate Dwelling District, R-1, Single-Family Dwelling District, and R-1-A, Single-Family Attached Dwelling District. This standard was adopted to ensure that ADUs remain subordinate to the primary dwelling and to preserve established neighborhood character.

Since adoption, Planning Staff have received consistent questions and applications reflecting confusion regarding how the “rear 25 percent of the principal structure” is measured and applied. Applicants frequently inquire whether the measurement is based on the building footprint, total building depth, roofline, or lot configuration. Additional uncertainty arises on corner lots and irregularly shaped parcels.

Furthermore, in the applicable zoning districts, particularly those with smaller or limited rear yard depth, strict application of this requirement effectively prevents placement of an ADU, even when all other zoning standards such as setbacks, height limits, and coverage can be met.

Proposed Language:

Accessory dwelling unit or ADU means a dwelling unit that is:

- (a) attached to the principal dwelling by a common wall or roof; or
- (b) detached from a principal dwelling unit on the same parcel (notwithstanding other language within this chapter, where an ADU is detached, it must be located no further forward than the principal structure ~~that the rear 25% of the principal structure's depth~~).

AND

- (c) is clearly subordinate to the principal dwelling unit in size, including height; and
- (d) is not manufactured or mobile home; and
- (e) is located on a legal conforming or legal nonconforming parcel (the burden to establish legal non-conforming status is on the parcel owner or applicant);
- (f) complies the development standards of the applicable zoning district in which it is located (unless legal non-conforming status is otherwise established); and
- (g) may be utilized only within the A-1, A-2, RE, R-1, and R-1-A Zoning Districts.

CONCLUSION:

This amendment to the ADU language would improve clarity, reduce unintended hardship, and allow for increased housing opportunities while maintaining compatibility with established neighborhoods and preserving the subordinate nature of ADUs to principal dwellings.

Staff forwards Ordinance O-2526-51 to the Planning Commission for consideration and recommendation to City Council.

