



## CITY OF NORMAN, OK STAFF REPORT

---

**MEETING DATE:** 11/13/2025

**REQUESTER:** City of Norman

**PRESENTER:** Lora Hoggatt, Planning Services Manager

**ITEM TITLE:** CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL, ACCEPTANCE, REJECTION, AMENDMENT, AND/OR POSTPONEMENT OF ORDINANCE O-2526-17: AN ORDINANCE OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORMAN, OKLAHOMA, AMENDING SECTION 36-101 ("DEFINITIONS") OF ARTICLE 36-I ("ZONING IN GENERAL") WITHIN CHAPTER 36 ("ZONING") OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF NORMAN TO REVISE THE DEFINITIONS FOR "FAMILY" AND "DWELLING UNIT"; AND PROVIDING FOR THE SEVERABILITY THEREOF.

---

### **Background**

The City's Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 36, has generally defined family as "three unrelated persons living together" since 1954. This definition was originally intended to preserve neighborhood character and address issues related to traffic, parking, and noise. Over the years, enforcement has focused on maintaining health and safety standards, as well as protecting the quality and character of residential neighborhoods.

### **Current Challenges**

Despite these intentions, the current definition has proven increasingly difficult to enforce and may no longer reflect modern living arrangements or housing needs of our community. City Council and staff have observed there are separate code provisions available for the enforcement of health and safety standards, as well as other neighbor concerns, such as parking.

Key challenges include:

- **Enforcement Complexity-**  
Enforcement requires significant staff time to verify familial relationships, gather evidence, and manage investigations. Neighbors are often asked to provide detailed logs and documentation, creating additional burdens.
- **Limited Impact-**  
Between 2023 and 2025, a total of 28 complaints were filed, resulting in only one citation. Most cases were closed due to insufficient evidence or proof of compliance.
- **Disproportionate impacts-**  
The existing restriction disproportionately affects certain groups, including:
  - Multi-generational or extended family households

- Low-income residents
- Students
- Elderly, disabled, and immigrant residents
- Unhoused individuals seeking cooperative living arrangements

### **Rationale for Change**

Many U.S. cities are reevaluating traditional occupancy definitions in response to housing shortages and rising living costs. Updating the City's definition of family will:

- Increase Housing Flexibility and Affordability:  
Allowing more flexible living arrangements supports residents who share housing to manage costs.
- Promote Equity:  
Prevents discrimination against non-traditional or cooperative households.
- Streamline Enforcement:  
Reduces administrative burden and focuses City resources on genuine health and safety issues.
- Modernize City Code:  
Aligns with forthcoming Development Code updates and contemporary approaches to zoning and housing policy.

### **Definition of Dwelling Unit Amendment**

For consistency purposes, and in conjunction with the amendment of the definition of family, staff included a minor amendment to the definition of "dwelling unit".

### **Proposed Amendments:**

#### **Existing Definition of Family**

Family means a single family comprised of one of the following:

- a) An individual, or two or more persons related by blood, marriage, or legal adoption living together as a single housekeeping unit in a dwelling unit, including foster children, domestic servants, and not more than two roomers;
- b) Three unrelated persons living together in a quasi-unit quarter; or
- c) A group home as defined by 60 O.S. § 862.

#### **Proposed Definition of Family, Annotated**

Family means a number of persons cohabitating in a single dwelling, ~~family comprised of one of the following:~~

- ~~a) An individual, or two or more persons related by blood, marriage, or legal adoption living together as a single housekeeping unit in a dwelling unit, including foster children, domestic servants, and not more than two roomers;~~
- ~~b) Three unrelated persons living together in a quasi-unit quarter; or~~
- a) And includes a group home as defined by 60 O.S. § 862.

#### **Existing Definition of Dwelling Unit**

Dwelling unit means any room or group of rooms located within a dwelling and forming a single habitable unit with facilities (including cooking facilities, as defined herein) which are used or intended to be used for living, sleeping, cooking, and eating. In quasi-unit quarters, accommodations for every three persons shall be counted as a dwelling unit.

**Proposed Definition of Dwelling Unit - Annotated**

Dwelling unit means any room or group of rooms located within a dwelling and forming a single habitable unit with facilities (including cooking facilities, as defined herein) which are used or intended to be used for living, sleeping, cooking, and eating. ~~In quasi-unit quarters, accommodations for every three persons shall be counted as a dwelling unit.~~

**Conclusion**

The proposed change modernizes the City's Zoning Ordinance by removing outdated occupancy restrictions that no longer serve their intended purpose. It supports a more inclusive and equitable approach to housing, while preserving the City's ability to address health, safety, and nuisance issues through existing codes related to parking, noise, and property maintenance.

**Recommendation:**

Staff forwards this Zoning Ordinance amendment to the definition of "family" and "dwelling unit" as Ordinance O-2526-17 to the Planning Commission for consideration and recommendation to City Council.