



CITY OF NORMAN, OK STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 03/12/2024

REQUESTER: City of Norman

PRESENTER: Jane Hudson, Director of Planning & Community Development

ITEM TITLE: CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL, ACCEPTANCE, REJECTION, AMENDMENT, AND/OR POSTPONEMENT OF ORDINANCE O-2324-39 UPON FIRST READING BY TITLE: AN ORDINANCE OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORMAN, OKLAHOMA, AMENDING SECTION 36-514 (R-1, SINGLE FAMILY DWELLING DISTRICT), 36-515 (R-1-A, SINGLE-FAMILY ATTACHED DWELLING DISTRICT), 36-516 (R-2, TWO-FAMILY DWELLING DISTRICT), 36-519 (RM-6, MEDIUM DENSITY APARTMENT DISTRICT), 36-520 (R-3, MULTIFAMILY DWELLING DISTRICT), AND SECTION 36-521 (RO, RESIDENCE-OFFICE DISTRICT) OF ARTICLE 36-V OF CHAPTER 36 ("ZONING"), TO REMOVE THE BUILDING COVERAGE MAXIMUM; AND PROVIDING FOR THE SEVERABILITY THEREOF.

BACKGROUND:

The core portions of Norman's zoning ordinance date to 1954, when there were only three residential districts. Numerous amendments to the code have expanded that number and created various requirements since the 1954 adoption.

In recent years, many residents, and developers in the community have approached city staff regarding building coverage requirements on residential lots. The current coverage requirements for residential lots is as follows: building coverage (all buildings) is limited to 40% and the overall lot coverage is capped at 65%. In many cases the design and development of a lot is in stages, working with the prospective buyer and architect/draftsman to fit the new building on the lot. In other cases, a property owner would like to add an additional room onto the existing house for the growing family/aging parents – and if zoning allows, an accessory dwelling unit/garage apartment. In both cases, there are several meetings back and forth to trim a little here, add a little there, all to keep the building coverage at or under the 40% requirement. When the 40% requirement cannot be met, the applicant has the option of requesting a variance from the Board of Adjustment. Since 2012 to current, Board of Adjustment has heard 22 applications regarding coverage variances: 15 passed, four failed, and three withdrew. The time and cost for an application to the Board of Adjustment is 30-days (or more) and approximately \$500 in cost to the applicant.

In 1996, the building coverage in R-1 and R-1A was previously capped at 35%. With the adoption of Ordinance No. O-9697-07 the coverage was increased to 40%. This was done in part to the changes in development trends (older tenants requesting single-story, less yard to maintain) and to stay in line with similar communities. In 1996 there was not an adopted ordinance controlling the maximum coverage for the overall lot.

In April of 2008, the 65% overall coverage requirement was adopted with Ordinance No. O-0708-36; overall coverage had not been included in the previous Zoning Code. In April of 2022, staff presented to the Oversight Committee the discussion item to amend the current requirement of 40% lot coverage, while still maintaining the required overall coverage maximum of 65%. Staff received positive feedback for the item as long as the overall coverage will still be met.

In response to the recent Strong Towns discussions in 2023, staff was directed to draft an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) ordinance. While researching the new ADU ordinance, staff considered lot sizes in the core area of Norman. Many of these lots are smaller than the current lot size requirement, typically 6,000 SF. This can create difficulty in designing an ADU to fit on a lot with an existing single-family home. As reiterated multiple times in the recent Strong Towns initiative, make the next smallest change and then the next smallest to benefit the community. This proposal to remove the 40% building coverage is that next smallest step. The somewhat companion item, next on the agenda, for ADUs is the next smallest step.

As noted, the Zoning Ordinance has been in place since 1954 and development trends change over time. With the exception of writing an entirely new code, the options are to continue to update sections as trends adjust while addressing possible life safety/negative impacts to the community.

DISCUSSION:

The attached proposed amendments remove the structure coverage maximum of 40% of the lot area from the following zoning districts:

- R-1, Single-Family Dwelling District,
- R-1-A, Single-Family Attached Dwelling District,
- R-2, Two-Family Dwelling District,
- RM-6, Medium-Density Apartment District,
- R-3, Multifamily Dwelling District, and
- RO, Residence-Office District.

The impervious coverage maximum of 65% of the lot will remain in each district. This change does not increase impervious areas – a roof, sidewalk, patio area are all impervious, expanding a roof line and reducing a patio will all still be required to meet that 65%.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff forwards this proposed amendment to the current building coverage maximum requirements located in Chapter 36, Zoning Ordinance, as Ordinance No. O-2324-39 for consideration by City Council.

At their February 8, 2024 meeting, Planning Commission unanimously recommended adoption of Ordinance No. O-2324-39 by a vote of 8-0.