
MOUNT VERNON ZONING UPDATE

Planning & Zoning Commission

August 28, 2024



P & Z QUESTIONS

- How to “police” that one of the two units is owner-occupied?
 - If owner mailing address is different than the property address, that would be a red flag.
 - Possibly not receiving utility payments from owner.
 - Possibly rental permit if that is implemented someday.
 - Put future owners on notice w/ pertinent rules of the ADU w/ county recorder so can be picked up by abstractor when abstract of title is extended.
 - If a detached ADU, can it be surveyed off and sold to a third party?
 - This would probably only be likely if the lot was large enough to subdivide to another lot with a primary structure.
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P & Z QUESTIONS

- Where are these allowed? Everywhere would be simplest
 - Recommend every district that allows single-family housing. ADUs are meant to add housing options to single-family neighborhoods without impacting the single-family character. Would maintain consistency.
 - By right as a separate building permit – reviewed and approved by “someone”.
 - By right would still require a permit to ensure ADU conforms with the zoning code.
 - Do we need to include any reference to tiny homes specifically, or can that be addressed with the size requirements listed here?
 - You do not need to. It would be necessary if you wanted to regulate tiny homes differently than other housing.
 - Districts w/ single-family housing:
 - Agricultural
 - Suburban Residential
 - New Residential
 - Traditional Residential
 - High-Density Residential
 - Town Center
 - Mixed-Use Urban Corridor
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P & Z QUESTIONS

- Home occupation question, stating it brings up more challenges but may make sense for a home office.
 - The City can't regulate no-impact businesses, so you cannot completely exclude home occupations.
 - Home-based business regulations, 610 (1.), should already mitigate a lot of potential impacts, and home-based business is limited to 25% of dwelling space, which would not amount to much in an ADU.
 - I assume the current density calculations were put in place for a good reason, so why would we make exemptions in this case?
 - The language would actually have to, or ideally, reflect that ADUs are not counted as a housing unit for the "site area per housing unit" requirement. ADUs are meant to increase density while blending in with the single-family character of the neighborhood. Requiring, for example, 3,400 sq. ft. of land for an ADU would probably preclude most properties from adding an ADU and not help affordability.
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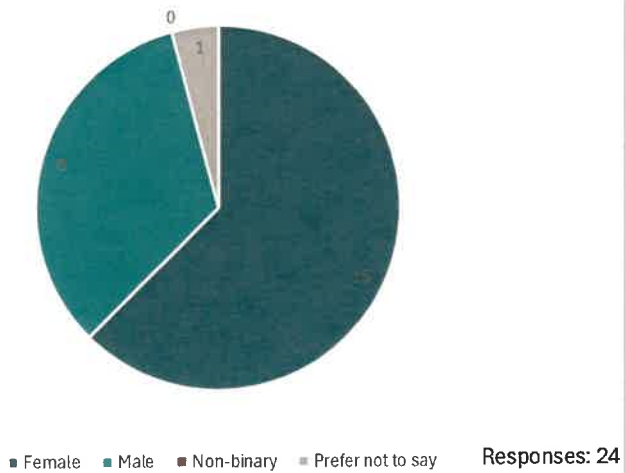
DISCUSSION TOPICS

- Survey results
 - Drafted code amendments
 - Discussion of other possible code amendments
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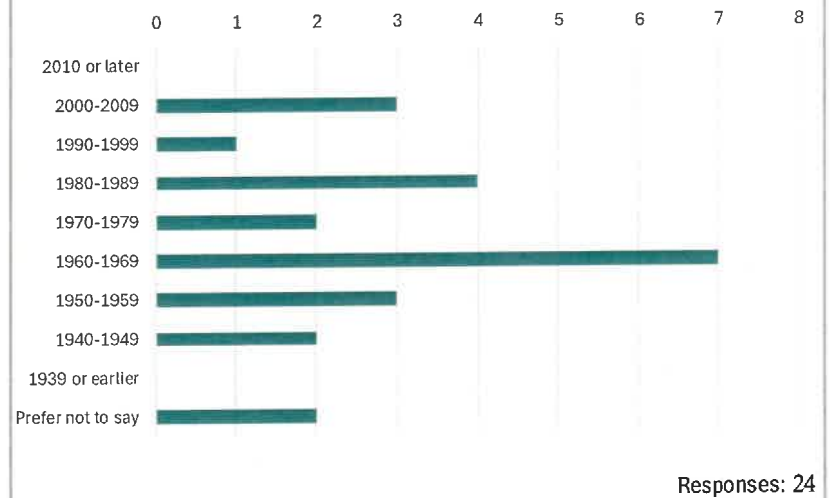
SURVEY RESULTS

DEMOGRAPHICS

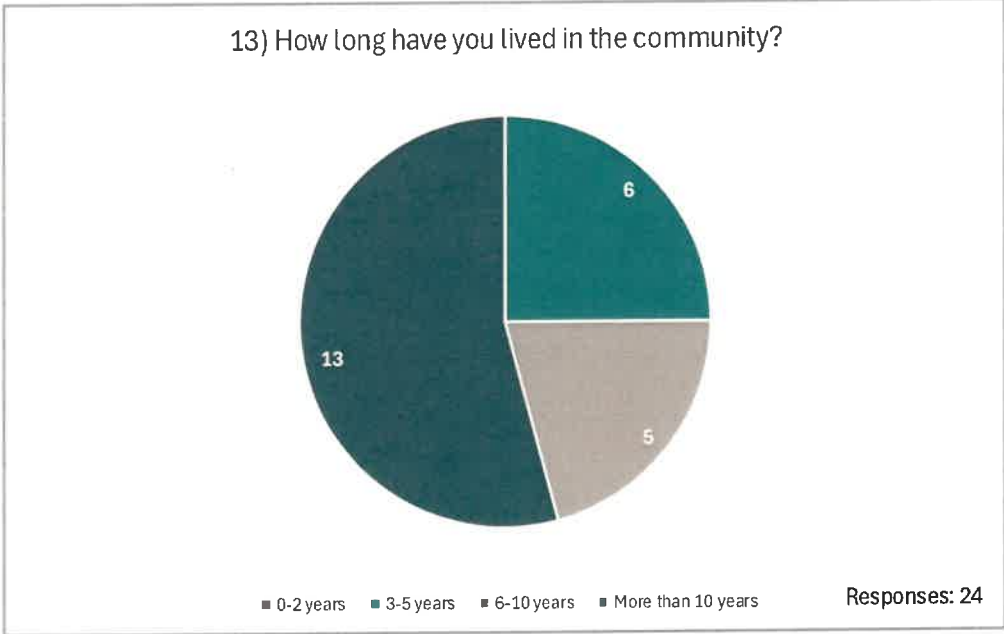
5) What is your gender identity?



6) What decade were you born in?

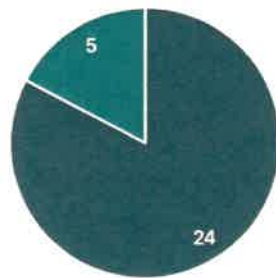


DEMOGRAPHICS



ADU QUESTIONS

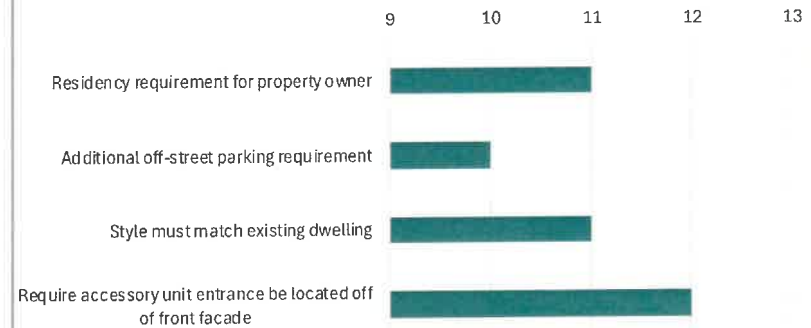
1) Do you support amending Mount Vernon's zoning code to allow ADUs? Select one.



■ Yes ■ No

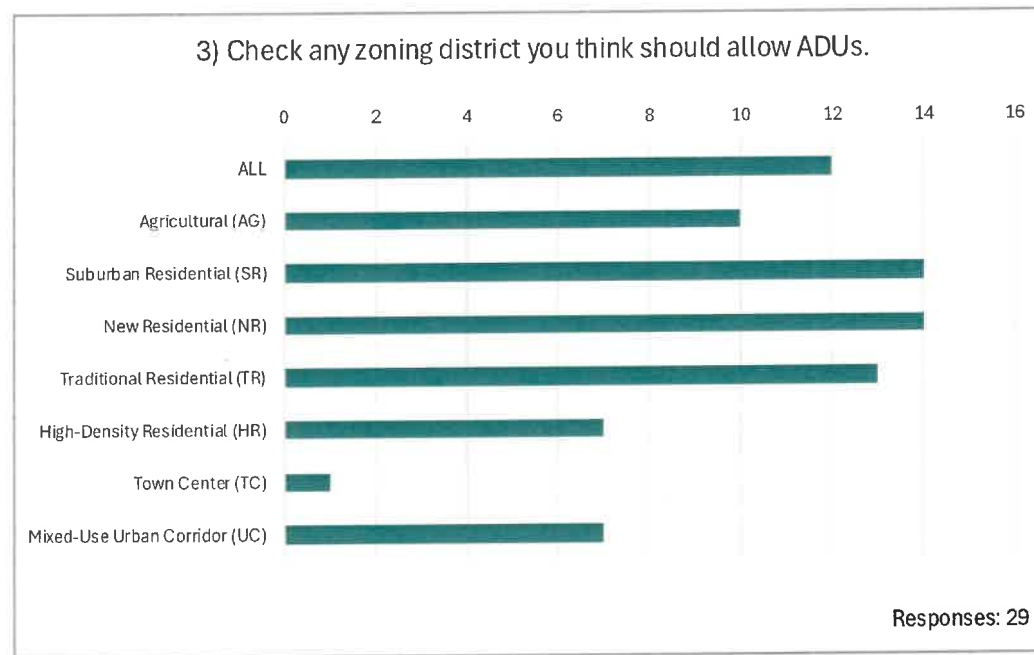
Responses: 29

2) The following regulations would likely be implemented if ADUs were added to the zoning code. Check any you think would not be necessary.



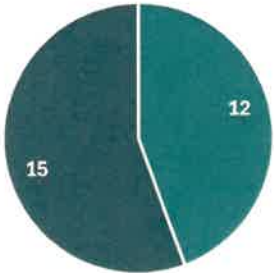
Responses: 29

ADU QUESTIONS



ADU QUESTIONS

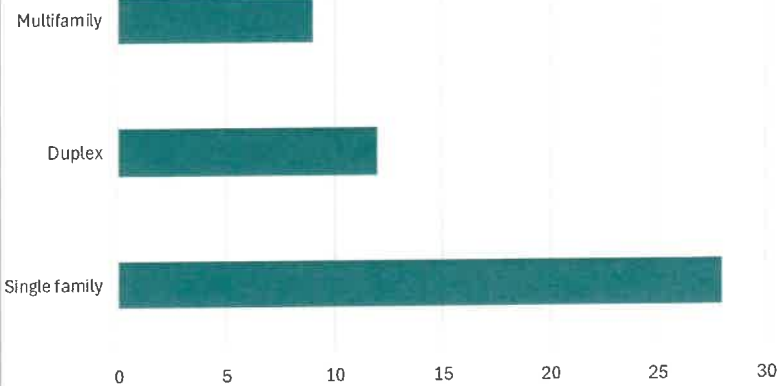
4) Do you think ADUs should be allowed by right or as a conditional use, subject to Board of Adjustment approval? (There should be some assumed undesirable or unknown impacts on a zoning district to require Board of Adjustment review)



■ By right ■ Conditional

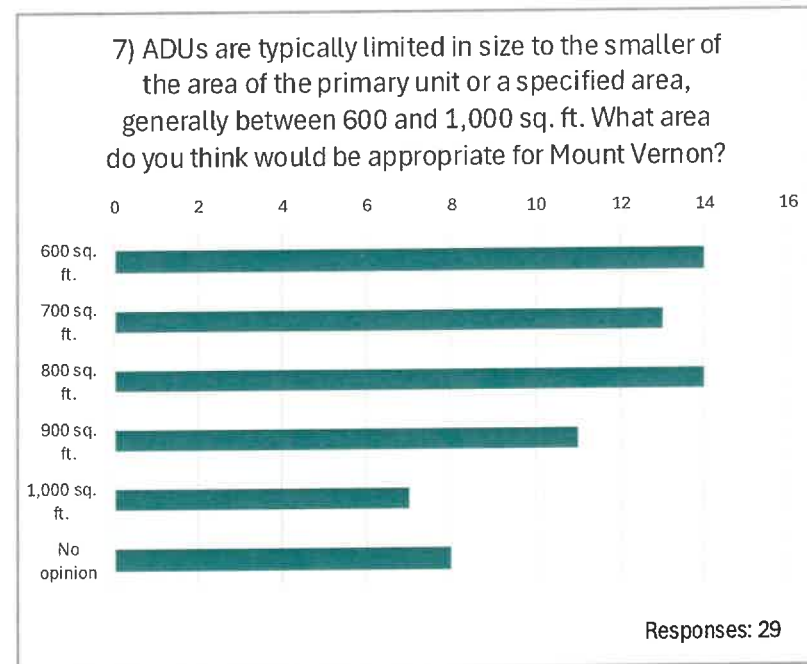
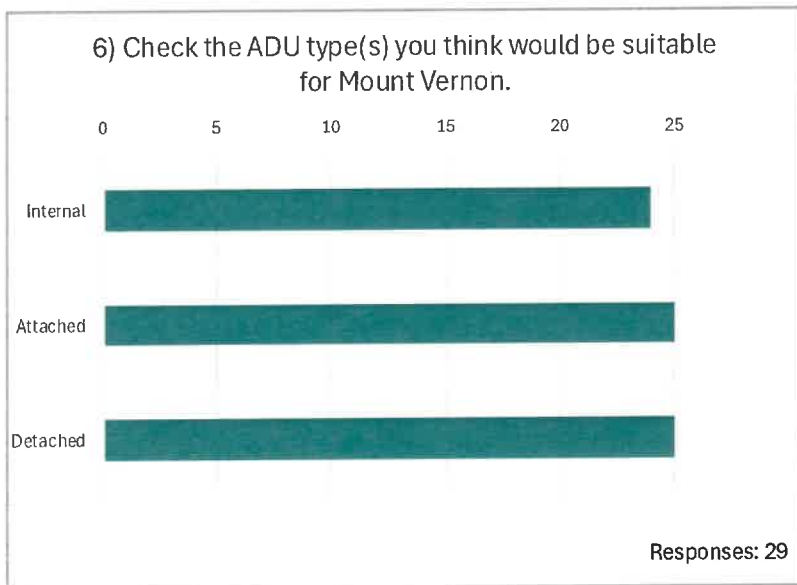
Responses: 27

5) Check the boxes for the housing types where you think ADUs should be allowed.

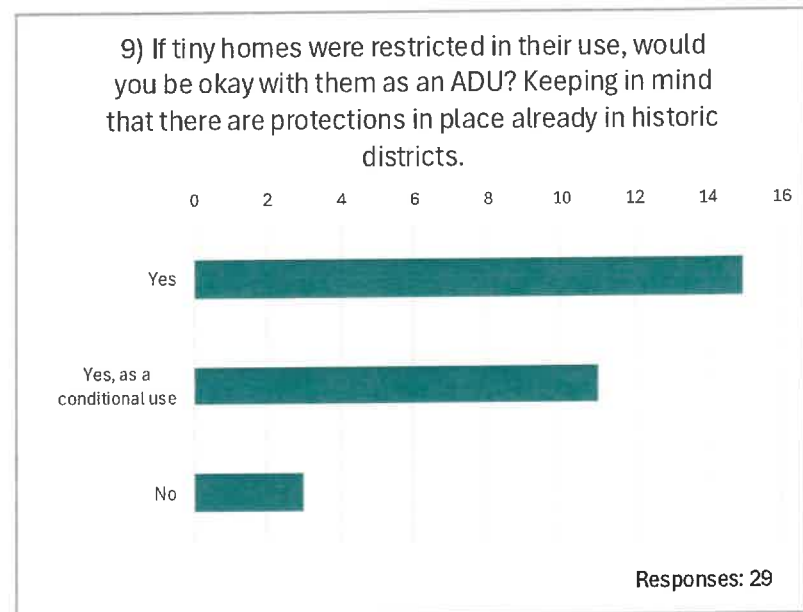
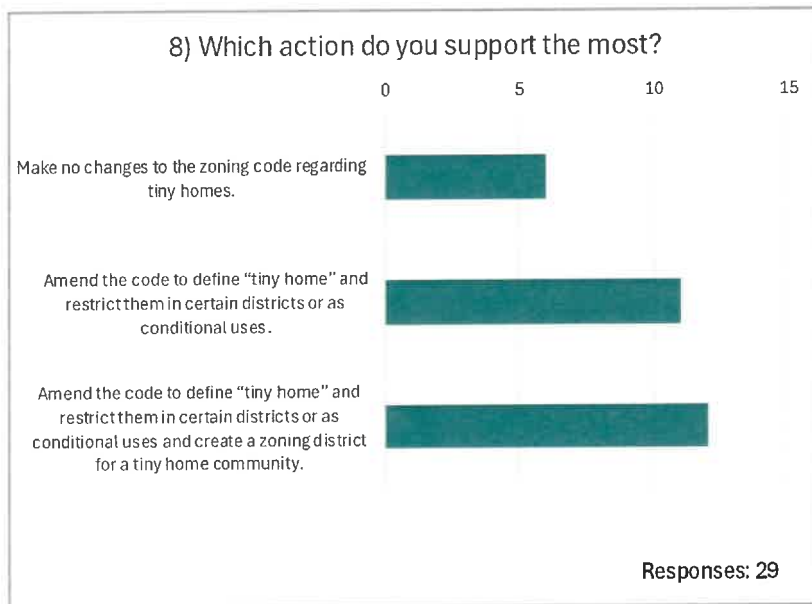


Responses: 27

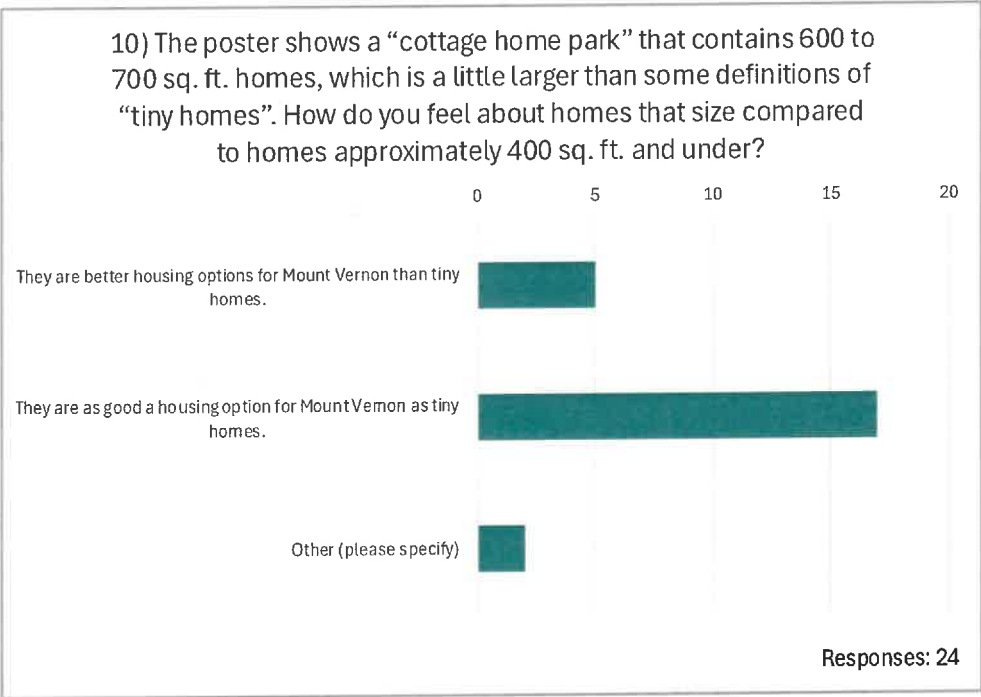
ADU QUESTIONS



TINY HOME QUESTIONS



TINY HOME QUESTIONS



OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Q11 (Are there any aspects of shipping container homes that are not materials related that you think should be regulated in the zoning code?)

- Creativity: creative use with exceptional craftsmanship
 - I don't think shipping containers should be allowed.
 - Not as an ADU.
 - Yes, sch should be aesthetically pleasing to the neighborhood they are constructed.
 - Neighborhood specific to the style and materials
 - Prefer not rentals
 - These should be regulated as they often don't seem to be astetically keyed to an existing building
-

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Q11 (Are there any aspects of shipping container homes that are not materials related that you think should be regulated in the zoning code?)

- No, but this kind of home shouldn't be in historic districts
 - Aesthetics meet neighborhood's style
 - Need more information
 - Restrict to NR created new district
 - I think that the zoning code should require some amount of uniformity with homes, such as having the wide part facing the road.
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OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Q12 (You may leave comments and ideas here regarding any of the covered topics.)

- Mount Vernon needs affordable housing and this is a helpful option, especially since it won't be restricted by age or income. The new developments are only for large homes for wealthy families. Mount Vernon needs more diversity in population and home prices. Need more information
- Tiny homes and container homes would be best in a designated area (similar to a trailer park). ADU should be allowed, especially for older homes where it is difficult to build on without compromising the look of the house. I love the idea of a space above a garage to look like a carriage house so that way older homes can be more functional for larger families. I'd like to use the space as a spare room.
- I think tiny homes are a fad that doesn't have longevity, especially in rural communities in Iowa. They will likely decrease property values and end up being hard to fill/be likely to turn into a trailer park. We don't have a large homeless population nor would they help increase enrollment (families are unlikely to live in one) or help fund our community with property taxes. I'm just not seeing the need for this.

I do think it makes sense to let people build dwellings on their own property.

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Q12 (You may leave comments and ideas here regarding any of the covered topics.)

- While I wholly support making MV more affordable and accessible for families and single people, I am concerned that this type of living could change the landscape of MV. When I walk around MV it is easy to spot the rental houses and absentee landlord apartment buildings. These properties destroy the charm of MV and it's hard to believe that they are allowed to continue to exist. A potential issue with tiny homes / ADUs is the demographics of the new residents. MV schools and services are so dependent on property tax revenue and a large influx of students into the school system could be costly for the tax payers. Are these units going to be owner-occupied or rentals with absentee owners? I fear that a designated tiny home/ ADU district will decrease property values and become another "mobile home park" where there is overcrowding and no sense of pride & ownership in maintaining the exterior property.
 - Please allow tiny houses!
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OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Q12 (You may leave comments and ideas here regarding any of the covered topics.)

- Depends on size of property
 - Generally - has there been a call for this? Or is this a pre-emptive survey? If neither - is this a not broke, don't fix it situation?
 - This is so important for MV: We need more housing options for people who want to move here, especially more affordable options.
 - I think we need more opportunities for younger people to come into the community. Purchasing homes that are less expensive are very few or have to be very expensive newer homes. We would have a hard time purchasing in MV today.
 - This may be one answer to more affordable housing in Mount Vernon.
-

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Q12 (You may leave comments and ideas here regarding any of the covered topics.)

- This may be one answer to more affordable housing in Mount Vernon.
 - I think these are great ideas to add more housing to the community. We need more housing options in this community, period.
 - Switching out community's zoning codes from exclusive to inclusive will help ranging incomes affordably live in MV. MV needs more housing options so tiny homes or public housing is the best way to serve dwellers of all income ranges.
 - I'd like to see MV consider a co-housing dev, such as that in Iowa City – Prairie Hill. Tiny homes could be one type of housing offered.
 - I think an important consideration for ADU is to promote historic preservation. Significant alteration of a district due to the implementation of, say, multi-family structures as ADU in a previously single-family neighborhood. Like anyh other structures, ADU's should also be approved via permit through the HPCin order to maintain uniformity.
 - Are we trying to come up w/ a solution in SEARCH of a problem - ie is there really a need for ADU-being added to zoning code
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DRAFTED CODE AMENDMENTS

105⁰⁰ APPLICATION OF DISTRICT REGULATIONS. ¶

6.⁰⁰ All dwelling units, including attached garages, shall be placed on and secured to a permanent frost-free perimeter foundation. ¶

302⁰⁰ DEFINITIONS. ¶

4. Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU): An accessory dwelling unit located within an owner occupied, single-family or duplex use or in an accessory building and meeting the requirements of this chapter.

199. Surplus Sales. Businesses engaged in the sale, including sale by auction, of used items or new items which are primarily composed of factory surplus or discontinued items. Surplus sales uses sometimes include regular outdoor display of merchandise. Typical uses include flea markets, auction houses, factory outlets, or merchandise liquidators.

200. Townhouse A dwelling unit having a common wall with or abutting one or more adjacent dwelling units in a townhouse structure, with its own front and rear access to the outside, and neither above nor below any other dwelling unit.

603 RESIDENTIAL USES.

5. Multi-Family Residential. Multi-family residential development must comply with the following requirements for dispersion throughout the City.

A. Any new multiple-family development containing from three to eight residential units (small-scale Multi-Family Residential) must be located at least 300 feet from any pre-existing multi-family development.

B. Any new multi-family development containing over 8 residential units (large-scale Multi-Family Residential) must be located an additional 35 feet for each additional unit over 8 from any pre-existing multi-family development.

C. Unit limitations do not apply to the Retirement Residence use type.

401 DISTRICTS ESTABLISHED.

The City is herewith divided into the following districts, including overlay districts:

- 1. Base Districts
 - AG Agricultural
 - SR Suburban Residential
 - NR New Residential
 - TR Traditional Residential
 - HR High-Density Residential
 - CB Central Business
 - TC Town Center
 - UC Mixed-Use Corridor
 - LC Limited Commercial
 - GC General Commercial
 - BP Business Park
 - LI Limited Industrial

City of Mt. Vernon Zoning Map



Layer

Land Use Class

- Agriculture
- Suburban Residential
- Traditional Residential
- High Density Residential
- Business Park
- General Commercial
- Limited Commercial
- Central Business District
- Town Center
- Urban Corridor
- Limited Industrial
- Highway 30
- Parcel

Created May 2018; Updated December 2022

This is where ADUs could be added to the code, in each applicable district.

403 SR – SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT.

2. Accessory Uses and Buildings. Uses of land or structure customarily incidental and subordinate to a permitted use in the SR District:

A. Accessory dwelling unit

This is where something like an ADU is in the code already.

402 AG - AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT.

2. Accessory Uses and Buildings. Uses of land or structure customarily incidental and subordinate to a permitted use in the AG District.

A. Living quarters of persons employed on the premises and not rented or otherwise used as a separate dwelling.

OTHER POSSIBLE CODE AMENDMENTS

TINY HOMES

- The most support was expressed for defining tiny homes and creating a zoning district.
 - Probably would not recommend this. It could be a lot of work for a district that is never applied.
 - PUD and “creative subdivision” provides some flexibility to create a tiny home community.
 - Here are several options for tiny homes:
 - Make no changes to the code regarding tiny homes and see if it becomes an issue. The City could issue a moratorium to update the code if it were to start receiving many permit requests for tiny homes.
 - Define tiny homes and:
 - make them permitted with supplemental regulations similar to 603 which requires a buffer and consider allowing as a conditional use for properties not meeting the buffer requirement, or
 - make them conditional uses in districts where they may be allowed conditionally.
 - Not all districts need to have the same permitted/conditional uses.
 - If detached ADUs are allowed as a permitted use, tiny homes could be permitted as an ADU. They could also be conditional
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SHIPPING CONTAINER HOMES

- There is not a lot the City can do to regulate these from a materials standpoint.
- One comment suggested requiring wide side of shipping container to face the street.
 - This could probably be specified in the code, or other dimensional standards that would apply to all structures regardless of materials would have the same effect.

New Iowa Code

Sec. 2. Section 414.1, subsection 1, Code 2024, is amended by adding the following new paragraph:

NEW PARAGRAPH. h. (1) A city shall not adopt, enforce, or otherwise administer an ordinance, motion, resolution, or building code that prohibits or limits, either directly or indirectly, the use of a specific style of exterior cladding or finish materials for residential buildings in a manner that is more restrictive than the state building code as adopted pursuant to section 103A.7. This subsection does not prohibit a city from regulating the use of a specific style of exterior cladding or finish materials for a residential building that meets any of the following conditions:

(a) The building is located in an area designated and declared as a state or local historic district under applicable law.

(b) The building is designated as a local, state, or national historic landmark.

(c) The building is in a common interest community as defined in chapter 499C.

(d) The building is located on a property that is governed by a policy of regulation of an overlay or special purpose zoning district that is adopted pursuant to applicable law.

CODE CLEANUP

14. Apartment. A housing unit within a building designed for and suitable for occupancy by only one family. Apartments are generally located within multi-family residential buildings.

Iowa Code

414.1 Building restrictions — powers granted — rental properties — consumer fireworks.

b. A city shall not, after January 1, 2018, adopt or enforce any regulation or restriction related to the occupancy of residential rental property that is based upon the existence of familial or nonfamilial relationships between the occupants of such rental property.

402 AG - AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT.

4. Bulk Regulations. The following requirements shall provide for light and air around permitted uses and buildings in the AG District.

Regulations	AG Agricultural uses	Single-family dwellings	Other uses
Regulations	AG uses	Single-family dwellings	Other uses
Minimum lot area (acres)	5 acres	1 acre	5 acres
Minimum lot width and depth (feet)	150 (width) 150 (depth)	150 (width) 150 (depth)	200 (width) 200 (depth)

4. Bulk Regulations. The following requirements shall provide for light and air around permitted residential uses and buildings in all NR Districts:

Regulations	Single-family dwellings	Duplex	Multi-family dwellings	Other Uses
Regulations	Single-family dwellings	Duplex	Multi-family dwellings	Other Uses
Minimum lot area (square feet)	7,500	8,000	8,000	10,000
Minimum lot width and depth (feet)	60 (width) 60 (depth)	75 (width) 75 (depth)	80 (width) 80 (depth)	80 (width) 80 (depth)
Site area per housing unit (square feet)	7,500	4,250	3,400 *	NA

Dimension are consistent in SR District

4. Bulk Regulations. The following requirements shall provide for light and air around permitted residential uses and buildings in all SR Districts:

Regulations	Single-family dwellings	Duplex	Multi-family dwellings	Other Uses
Regulations	Single-family dwellings	Duplex	Multi-family dwellings	Other Uses
Minimum lot area (sq. ft. unless otherwise noted)	7,500	8,500	10,200	1 acre
Minimum lot width and depth (feet)	60 (width) 60 (depth)	65 (width) 65 (depth)	80 (width) 80 (depth)	150 (width) 150 (depth)
Site area per housing unit (square feet)	7,500	4,250	3,400 *	NA

QUESTIONS / THANK YOU

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