

Craig, Sondra

From: melissa crook <crook6@att.net>
Sent: Friday, January 19, 2024 11:40 AM
To: Kuhlman, Lewis; Trost, Jennifer; Trane, Andrea; Dinkel, Jenna
Cc: ZZ Council Members; Acklin, Tim
Subject: ADU Informational Meeting

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Thank you for taking the time yesterday to provide information on the proposed ADU Resolution. While I still have a few concerns, the presentation was thorough and productive. My opposition has never been towards ADUs (particularly if constructed for the intended purposes you've set forth) but more about the governing policy by which they will be allowed. A few minor amendments to this resolution could provide the desired result of responsible growth and neighborhood preservation.

Last evening there was some discussion about why a resolution is desired instead of the current permitting process. It was relayed that this change to the zoning code will open up ADU construction to a broader section of the city and that it removes judgement from neighbors over choices homeowners make with their property. While understandable, there is value lost in taking away initial oversight. The City requires committee approval of much lesser items such as building a fence or planting flowers in the boulevard so why remove approval for a decision this large? At a minimum the city should put in place a mechanism to override this ordinance should it be deemed (by the planning department, fire department, building inspector or other city agency) that an ADU isn't a good fit for a property or if conditions exist that would make it a detriment to the greater neighborhood. In addition, a required site visit prior to construction could provide a home owner with helpful suggestions on ADU placement or even save them from making costly mistakes such as construction in a neighborhood with restrictive covenants or ordinances related to historical designations of which they might not be aware.

Within the city of LaCrosse there is a growing imbalance between owner occupied and rental households. Homes near area universities and hospitals are in high demand for both family homes and rental properties with extremely limited housing stock. When properties do become available, multiple offers and bidding wars drive up the price of these homes substantially. Reliable zoning code enforcement, sufficient penalties for code violations and guarantees that the owner occupancy clause will not be removed are necessary to insure this resolution won't incentivize an even greater shift towards neighborhoods of primarily rental dwellings. After all, a property with an ADU would allow a landlord to significantly increase rental income from a single parcel without much additional investment. The threat of a \$1000 fine for a code violation is minimal in comparison to the potential added income from an ADU. To be clear, this isn't about the misconception that homeowners don't want renters living beside them but about concern for the long term stability and preservation of LaCrosse neighborhoods. When multiple city blocks of homes are comprised primarily of rentals, this changes not only neighborhood appearance but community dynamics. Fewer families lead to lower school enrollment which, as we're seeing now, leads to school closures. To achieve the goal set forth in the Comprehensive Plan that "the city work to attract and retain more family households" the Council must be cognizant of its duty to enact legislation that won't undermine this objective. Adding an owner occupancy requirement to the deed restriction, could help with long term code enforcement, give legal teeth to prosecute noncompliant property owners and deter ADU additions by landlords.

Thank you for your consideration of my concerns and your willingness to work with the community.

Sincerely,

Melissa Crook

