

TO: Mayor Marchione and City Council

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DATE: January 21, 2014

**SUBJECT: STAFF REPORT: HOUSING-RELATED AMENDMENTS TO THE
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND ZONING CODE**

REQUESTED DIRECTION

This staff report summarizes recommended housing-related amendments to the Redmond Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code. Staff requests direction regarding whether there are any topics the Council would like to discuss at a study session, as well as any questions the Council may have.

The Planning Commission completed a recommendation regarding these amendments in December 2013. The Planning Commission Report dated December 10, 2013, was delivered to Council members by email on Friday, January 10, 2014.

BACKGROUND AND DESCRIPTION

The housing-related amendments to the Redmond Zoning Code are proposed to improve clarity and consistency, remove duplicative language, and amend specific regulations that will result in greater compatibility of residential structures. In addition, Comprehensive Plan Policy HO-33, which speaks to the Innovative Housing Demonstration Program, is proposed for deletion, as the program ended in August 2013. Staff will complete a formal evaluation of the Innovative Housing Demonstration Program in 2014 for consideration by the Planning Commission and City Council. As a result of the study, staff may recommend elements of the demonstration program be incorporated into the Zoning Code to encourage additional flexibility in standards related to housing development.

As part of the process to identify and prepare this package of proposed amendments, staff reviewed housing-related topics set aside in a “parking lot” following the Zoning Code rewrite, as well as housing strategies identified by City Council as high priority as part of the adopted Housing Strategy Plan. In addition, staff reviewed the City’s housing-related regulations as a whole to identify other potential areas for improvement.

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OVERVIEW OF PLANNING COMMISSION DISCUSSION

The Planning Commission recommended approval of the proposed amendments to the Zoning Code and Comprehensive Plan including the proposal to lower height limits for detached Accessory Dwelling Units and homes built within a small-lot short plat (e.g., “backyard homes”) from 35 feet to 25 feet. Commissioners questioned if the proposal would hinder development of these structures and further, if this was contrary to the City’s goals of encouraging the development of affordable housing. Staff responded that the proposed lower height limits should neither encourage nor discourage development and are consistent with other smaller residential structures such as cottages and size-limited homes. The proposed heights will allow sufficient height for two-story but not three-story structures which is more compatible within neighborhoods. The Commission concurred with the staff recommendation on this issue and supported the lower height limits. The Commission’s full discussion is provided in the Planning Commission Report and in the Commission’s final issues matrix, which is Attachment B to the Planning Commission Report.

The Council’s Planning and Public Works Committee received a briefing on these amendments on January 14, 2014.

NEXT STEPS

If desired by the Council, staff will schedule a study session to review this amendment package. If a study session is not desired, staff will bring forward an ordinance for Council consideration at a future meeting.