

# Beheard Public Engagement Comments (1/21/26 to 3/1/26)

## Re: "Family" definition change

**Andrew**

**Allowing more efficient use of our housing stock is a great idea**

Basing occupancy limits on what is actually built makes sense.

**Adrienne S.**

**This is a good, small step the City should take.**

This is a small step the City can take to allow folks to live together in more creative and affordable ways. As an architect, I see many folks who are priced out of building, buying, and renting a home. Allowing a greater number of people to live together makes better use of housing stock and helps decrease living costs for individuals. It also helps address the growing epidemic of loneliness. The average size of biological families has been decreasing for decades – we need City policy that enables non-related people to live together and help fill in the social and financial gaps that the nuclear family has traditionally helped provide.

Likes (1)

**amanda61502**

**I struggle with the use of the word "Family" at all. Number of Occupants should be the focus.**

The reason the current zoning restrictions were put into place was due to undergraduate college students living in mass together in homes that were not designed for large capacity. I would argue that the word "family" has no place in this ordinance and that it is simply an "Occupancy" ordinance moving forward. As a landlord, we have always applied the rule of no more than 2 heartbeats per bedroom. Thus, if the property has 2 bedrooms, then no more than 4 individuals may occupy the property, regardless of age. If the property has 4 bedrooms, then no more than 8 individuals may occupy the property, regardless of age. It could certainly be considered that "no more than X individuals 18 years of age or older" can occupy a specific density. Example: In a 3-bedroom property (which according to our in house rules could have up to 6 heartbeats) there could be a rule that no more than 4 individuals 18 years of age or older can occupy the property. Or that in a 4-bedroom property, no more than 5 individuals 18 years of age or older can occupy. Regardless, let's get rid of the "family" stipulation and just focus on overall density. It sure would make the math a lot easier on those of us that landlord!

Likes (1)

**bmink**

**Support a change to either an occupancy limit by square footage/a much more inclusive definition of family.**

So many different types of families are currently locked out of R1 and R2 housing based upon this archaic definition that I believe was done to limit the amount of "nontraditional" families. That can include:- households with more than 3 kids- multigenerational households- polyamorous households- households where there is a step-parent and people may not all share the same name- queer households - adult friends living together to make rent cheaper. We need to make securing affordable housing easier for people, not harder. The current definition of "family" limited to just 4/5 people should be scrapped, and should either be replaced by a square footage habitation limit or a new definition of "family" that is inclusive of non-tradition and non-nuclear families/households. I would be willing to live in arrangements like this either in the past or future and would like to have more options for affordable housing in central Columbia, especially as a nondriver.

Likes (1)

**Cory**

**Let's go back to the 1935 definition.**

Plus define what overcrowding is. Seems like infrastructure should define how many folks can live in a house. There are some big houses in Columbia with long driveways that could accommodate a stable household of 8 or so people. Naturally, the neighbors would make bricks out of their posteriors. But let them build a wall to shield their delicate eyes. :)

Likes (0)

**ddokken**

**This is a good step to accommodate varied living situations and optimize use of housing stock.**

Likes (1)

**jhotaling**

### **Columbia's Arbitrary Zoning Restrictions Force Us to Pay More in Rent**

The house I live in has six unrelated people living together. I have lived here for my entire time in Columbia, for more than five years. People have moved in and out, but we have retained a community that functions really well. We have never received a noise complaint, and some of us don't own cars, so parking is not an issue (especially when there are up to 8 parking spaces on average for every car in the US).

The best part: because our house happens to be zoned "R-MF Multiple Family Dwelling," our rent is allowed to be split between 6 people, and not a restricted max of 3 for "R-1 One-Family Dwelling."

Translation: Our rents are split between twice the people, so we pay a lower rent total per person. This means our housing is more affordable than most other places to rent in the city.

Our house is smaller than many houses along West Broadway, as an example, however because of the arbitrary zoning designation, we benefit from affordable housing, while most of the rest of the city does not.

With restrictions on the amount of people living in a house, and minimum parking requirements to match (even though 1/3rd of Missourians do not even have drivers licenses), you force our community to sprawl out further. This hinders any opportunity for a walkable community as rural land is forever altered to build more single-family homes. Boone County has already lost so much open space in the last decade, and we are on track to lose an increasing proportion of natural landscapes permanently. We do not take this issue seriously enough as a community.

The 1935 definition seems apt to return to: "Any number of individuals living together as a single housekeeping unit, as distinguished from a group occupying a boarding house, lodging house, or hotel as defined herein." There was no set number attached to the amount of people restricted to a single living unit, and no parking minimum requirement for those units.

Opening up more opportunities for housing and walkability will only benefit the city and its residents. 4 people per single-family unit is a start, but cannot be considered sufficient. We are still limiting housing affordability (by limiting options, regardless of the building's size), and encouraging sprawl (by mandating a minimum number of parking spaces, regardless of how many cars are owned by residents). Go further. Eliminate the minimum number of residents that can live in a household, and eliminate parking minimum requirements citywide.

Likes (5)

**jparshall**

**This seems like a small but reasonable step. Knock this out and then look for additional ways to enable density and infill.**

Likes (1)

**Mike**

**This is a bad idea! Remove some of the overwhelming restrictions on new developments and this won't be a problem.**

Columbia created this problem with zoning laws and regulations. Let's fix it the same way and allow developers to build houses without too much government involvement.

Likes (0)

**NeonDeone**

**I think it is time to revisit this. It came about mainly due to students (over)occupying residential homes.**

Since numerous student-centric apartments were built downtown and near the city, it has become much less of a concern. The attention has now turned to STRs. One mechanism to prevent over-occupancy was to require a disclosure signed by every buyer and seller of a property that defined the definition of a family and the occupancy of that zoning class. This is overkill. Parking concerns in certain areas should be a greater concern than a person's familial relationship.

Likes (0)

**ryan.westwood**

**Right Direction, Not Enough**

This is a move in the right direction, to prioritize functional living arrangements over family structures. But, to really address the housing crisis, the City should eliminate arbitrary occupancy caps entirely and use health and safety codes based on square footage instead. Managing the concrete externalities should replace the ambiguous hard cap, but the proposal to require additional parking just outright self-defeats this proposed policy. There's no use removing a barrier to housing just to erect an even more complex barrier in its place. If there is demand for properties without parking, the City should welcome that with open arms, especially if it hopes to revive its dying public transit system.

Likes (3)

**New comment on Right Direction, Not Enough**

Hard agree. The word "parking" is mentioned 34 times in the council work session document. We might as well demolish housing and build more parking lots at this point, because parking is clearly a more important priority with this proposal than affordable housing.

## **Facebook Public Comment – Re: “Family” definition change**

**Sharon Geuea Jones**

January 21, 2026

Please comment on whether you think we should limit the number of people living in a home based on their relationship to each other, or if the limit should be based on space and not take into account whether the people are related. (edited 1/23/26 to clarify the other option is a limit without relationship)

**City of Columbia, Mo. Government**

January 21, 2026

Columbia is exploring updates to the definition of “family” in residential zoning to help maximize housing options and better meet the needs of our community. These changes could support multi-generational households, shared living arrangements and other non-traditional family structures. We invite residents to submit public comments on the proposed revision at <https://beheard.como.gov/updating-definition-of-family-in-residential-zoning> by Feb. 20. Your feedback will be shared with the Planning Commission and City Council as part of a future public hearing process.

**All reactions: 8**

**Zack Dunn**

No.

**Tyler Travers**

I think we should limit the number of illegal slot machines in Columbia!

**Bonnie Sanders**

No

**Faydre NeanderDoll McGennis**

Why do I care who lives in a house together? As long as it's not some slumlord charging for space to sleep on a floor that is.

**Danielle Masterson**

Faydre NeanderDoll McGennis my thoughts exactly

**Jay Sparks**

Didn't CoMo have the "cathouse" rule on the books for a loooooong time that was something to do with more than [some number] of un-related women living in the same house and the sorority Greek system was somehow instrumental in getting it changed, but CoMo wanted to keep it so they could punish sorority houses for parties if they needed to? Or am i making all that up?

**Heather Hearnorthere**

Jay Sparks I think they're called brothel laws

**Sharon Geuea Jones**

Jay Sparks Still does. That's what we are trying to change.

**Karen Sicheneder**

When I was in college, I shared a 3 bedroom house with 7 other women. Was it chaotic and filled with drama? Yes. But it was all we could afford. I can only see how limiting people negatively impacts poor people. Especially as housing gets more expensive. I'm in favor of capping rent prices, though.

**Chelsea Robinson Peters**

In theory I'm fine with it. But I worry what the town slumlords will do to rent prices when suddenly they can squeeze rent money from 6 adults vs 3.

**Michael MacMann**

Chelsea Robinson Peters Sharon Geuea Jones this

**Heather Hearnorthere**

Chelsea Robinson Peters people are already squeezing in and not telling the landlord so they can save money on rent. Fencu doesn't care about the health of its renters.

**Crystal Bilyeu Whitecotton**

No, as of now.

**Mike Leonard**

I think it's disgusting that this country has come to the point where people are struggling to find affordable housing.

Doubly so that in the face of this travesty someone is considering trying to make it illegal for people to cohabitate outside of a specific set of limits.

Fascists being fascists.

**Amy Rothwell**

Can we answer how the current restrictions fail us? Because as a former property manager that was often a saving grace

## **Amy Rothwell**

The current regulations allow for multi-generational living. It even has pretty fluid language to support poly relationships within a reasonable limit. How is the current language failing? Who is the current language failing? Bc in a college town it's protecting quite a bit.

### **Sharon Geuea Jones**

Amy Rothwell There are two main reasons for changing it. The first is the different standards for different zoning districts mean that a lot of property is being under utilized without a real reason. The language is actually not flexible in how it would deal with poly relationships, but enforcement has always been. The question I am really asking is: If we went to a straight International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC) standard based on the square footage of the property and the amount of bedroom space, would that be a clearer and easier to enforce standard? Do we care what the relationship is among the people as long as there is a reasonable limit on the total number of people living in a given space?

### **Sara Jean Ferrill**

Sharon Geuea Jones That is ALWAYS how I enforced it. Square footage IS in the code. The issue is thst the Cono inspectors pick and choose how to enforce it and which landlords they will enforce it with. I am SUPER happy to talk with anyone and have always kept my documentation on the blatant corruption, racism and classism of that office.

## **Ronald J. Leone**

Sharon Geuea Jones Poly relationships?

Square footage and the number of bedrooms seems the most logical, fair, and equitable way to address this issue with the least amount of governmental discretion.

But there will always be outliers or bad apples who create problems for everyone else...

## **Lori Marie Mundy**

No it should not be limited. It would create more homeless.

## **Otto Fajen**

I would have thought that a multi-generational household was considered traditional.

### **Sharon Geuea Jones**

Perhaps, but our current code requires direct relation by blood or marriage. So with Aunts, cousins, in-laws, and blended families, it can get confusing to determine who is allowed and who isn't.

## **Bryan Mink**

So many different types of families are currently locked out of R1 and R2 housing based upon this archaic definition that I believe was done to limit the amount of "nontraditional" families. That can include:

- households with more than 3 kids
- multigenerational households
- polyamorous households
- households where there is a step-parent and people may not all share the same name
- queer households
- adult friends living together to make rent cheaper

We need to make securing affordable housing easier for people, not harder. The current definition of "family" limited to just 4/5 people should be scrapped, and should either be replaced by a square footage habitation limit or a new definition of "family" that is inclusive of non-traditional and non-nuclear families/households