



701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201

Council Memo

Department Source: Community Development

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: June 1, 2026

Re: UDC Text Change – Accessory Dwelling Units (Case # 113-2026)

Impacted Ward: Citywide

Executive Summary

Approval of the attached text amendment would revise the “use-specific standards” applicable to Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) construction in all permissible zoning districts with specific emphasis on the removal of the requirement that a conditional use permit (CUP) be sought for ADU construction in the R-1 zoning district, modification to the corner-side yard and rear yard setbacks standards applicable to ADU placement, modification to the minimum lot area necessary to construct an ADU on a lot, and allowance of greater ADU height when an ADU is construction as a second-story atop another lawfully permitted detached accessory structure. The proposed amendments are intended to reduce barriers to ADU production and align with broader future UDC revisions intended to remove regulatory barriers in the production of housing.

Discussion

Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) standards were first adopted by the City in 2015 in response to goals and objectives contained within Columbia Imagined, the city’s 2013 Comprehensive Plan. Addition of this housing topology was seen as a means of creating greater housing diversity and more “livable and sustainable neighborhoods”. With the recent completion of the 2024 Boone County/City of Columbia Housing Study and the limited production of ADUs year over year, notwithstanding amendments to the regulations in 2019 and 2024 and the creation of a “fee-waiver” program in 2018, there has been an expressed desire by ADU advocates that the regulations need additional calibration.

In October 2025, Monarch Architecture submitted a request (see attached) to the City Council seeking the Planning and Zoning Commission’s review of the regulations relating to several potential friction points. Following Council direction to review the requested amendments, the Commission held a series of work sessions between October 2025 – April 2026 (see attached minutes) to discuss the requested changes. Following this series of work session meetings, the attached regulatory changes were generated as the consensus recommendation of the Planning and Zoning Commission to potentially enhance ADU production.

Most significantly, the proposed revisions would reduce regulatory uncertainty by **eliminating the conditional use permit (CUP) requirements applicable to R-1 zoned properties**. In addition the revisions would also provide regulatory clarity with respect to when multiple

rental licenses may be issued on lot, would expand opportunities to construct ADUs into the M-OF and M-N zoning districts where single-family construction is permitted, establishes a single minimum lot area which must be met as a prerequisite to issuance of a building permit for an ADU, and revises corner side-yard, rear yard, and height restrictions applicable to “attached” and “detached” ADU construction.

The Commission’s review of the requested revisions coupled with their experience in dealing with CUP approvals in the R-1 zoning district influenced the creation of the revisions shown within the attached amendment. The Commission spent significant time within its work sessions discussing the issues of setbacks and the revision of the minimum lot area to a uniform 5,000 square feet. The outcome of these discussions and the consensus of the majority of the Commission is presented within the attached regulatory revisions. It is worth noting that many of the requested amendments by Monarch Architecture have been fully incorporated into the attached amendments.

The Commission’s discussion included concerns about placement of ADU’s in locations historically not considered “buildable” (i.e. required rear yards) and desired to ensure such areas were protected from possible invasion of privacy to an adjacent property owner when an ADU was proposed for construction. The Commission viewed the removal of the CUP requirement in the R-1 zoning district as a significant reason for an enhanced rear yard given there would no longer be a means for public input on such requests and that an ADU could be constructed as a second story dwelling on a permissible detached accessory structure.

Additionally with respect to the revision to the minimum lot area necessary to permit ADU construction, the Commission’s work session discussion shows divergence of opinion among the Commissioners. However, ultimately it was concluded that the **prohibition** of an ADU being permitted on a “cottage lot” (i.e. lots between 3,000 to 5,000 square feet) and the pending completion of the “small lot integration” project whereby lots as small as 3,000 square feet would be permitted in all zoning districts, needed to be taken into consideration with the proposed ADU revisions, such that over-concentration of dwellings on certain sized lots was not overlooked.

Finally, the Commission’s work session and public hearing discussion further illustrated divergence of opinion on what the corner side-yard and rear yard setbacks should be. However, the Commission ultimately acknowledge that lessening the required corner-side yard setback from that required pre-2017 may result in unintended consequences for which there was insufficient data to support the requested alternatives being offered in public comments. With respect to the rear yard setback contained within the attached amendment and identified in public comments, the Commission remained committed to ensuring that privacy protections for adjacent property owners was maintained; however, did show a willingness to consider possible modifications under certain circumstances.

Not unlike many “technical” amendments to the UDC’s standards, this particular topic was not posted to the City’s Public Engagement Portal “Beheard” because the requested review was very narrowly tailored to address specific concerns that were submitted to Council. Representatives from Monarch Architecture were present at almost all Planning Commission work sessions and were afforded an opportunity, along with others, to provide comments during the regulatory development process. As noted, the outcomes of the Planning Commission’s review and discussion generated the amendments that are attached. The amendments are viewed as being an important step forward toward relaxing regulations on ADU production, and do not foreclose on the opportunity to revisit this topic once the recommended revisions have had time to be implemented, and progress on enhanced ADU permitting and construction can be assessed.

The Planning and Zoning Commission held a public hearing on the attached amendments at its May 7, 2026 meeting. Written public comment received focused primarily on four potential changes to the draft that was under consideration. Following the staff report and public comment, there was discussion amongst Commissioners on a request that the four specific areas of public concern with the amendments be voted on “individually”. In light of this request, the Commission discussed each of the specific requested changes, and sought general Commissioner preference if there was or was not support for the alternative language offered in the public comments.

With respect to the first requested change, the minimum lot area required for ADU construction, the Commission Chairman requested a show of support for the proposed language offered within public comments to keep a 3,000 sq. ft. minimum lot area for ADU construction within R-2 and R-MF districts and expand it to the R-1 district. Of the 8 Commissioners present, 4 indicated that they would be in favor of such a change.

With respect to the second requested change, requiring a 15-foot rear yard setback for all ADU construction (attached or detached), the Commission Chairman requested a show of support for reducing the setback to 6-feet. Of the 8 Commissioners present, none indicated support of the change as proposed. There was Commission discussion that the amendment would need to disassociate attached and detached ADUs from one another and that if a proposed revision were to be made it would need to be more nuanced to provide greater protections for a possible second story ADU.

With respect to the third requested change, which requires a 12.5-foot corner side yard setback or a setback equal to that of the principal dwelling, whichever is greater, the Commission Chairman requested a show of support for the proposed language being offered that this revision be modified to either allow a future ADU to be constructed equal to the principal dwelling’s location from the side street, but no less than 6-feet. Of the 8 Commissioners present, 4 indicated support of the amendment as proposed.

With respect to the fourth requested change, requiring a 15-foot rear yard setback for all ADU construction (attached or detached) and maximum rear yard coverage of 30%, the Commission Chairman requested a show of support for the proposed language being offered which would separate attached and detached ADUs into two sentences, maintain a 15-foot rear yard setback for attached ADUs; however, proposed a detached ADU be allowed to maintain a 6-foot rear yard setback. Of the 8 Commissioners present, none indicated support of the amendment as proposed. There was Commission discussion that the amendment would need further revision to draw a distinction between zoning districts and possible construction of an ADU on as a second story use.

Following these general votes of potential support for the amendments offered within the public comments, there was limited additional Commission discussion. Following completion of the discussion, the Commission made a motion to approve the text amendment **as presented** during the public hearing which was recommended for approval unanimously by a vote of (8-0).

A copy of the Planning and Zoning Commission staff report, proposed text amendment (clean), proposed text amendment with margin notes, October 2025 request of Monarch Architecture for additional ADU provision review, Planning and Zoning Commission Work Session Minutes (Oct. 2025-April 2026), public correspondence, and meeting minutes excerpts are attached.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: None anticipated.

Long-Term Impact: Limited. Incurred costs may possibly be off-set by collection of building permit and user fees.

Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Organizational Excellence, Secondary Impact: Resilient Economy, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Livable & Sustainable Communities, Secondary Impact: Land Use & Growth Management, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Legislative History



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Date	Action
04-16-2024	Approved reduced lot area standards applicable to ADU construction, modified “doorway” placement requirement, amended Dimensional Standards Table. (Ord. 025630)
02-04-2019	Approved revisions to the Sec. 29-3.3(gg) [Use-specific standards – ADUs] of the Unified Development Code (Ord. 23771)

Suggested Council Action

Adopt the attached UDC text amendments **as presented**, per the recommendation of the Planning and Zoning Commission by a unanimous vote of (8-0).