



City of Culver City

Mike Balkman
Council Chambers
9770 Culver Blvd.
Culver City, CA 90232
(310) 253-5851

Staff Report

File #: 20-455, **Version:** 1

Item #: PH-2.

PC - Consideration of a City Initiated Zoning Code Amendment P2019-0266-ZCA, Amending Culver City Municipal Code Title 17: Zoning Code; Section 17.210.020, Table 2-4, Residential Zoning Districts Development Standards, 17.320.020, Table 3-3A, Number of Parking Spaces Required, and 17.400.065.G, Mixed-Use Residential Development Standards to Allow Residential Studio Micro-Units.

Meeting Date: November 13, 2019

Contact Person/Dept: Michael Allen/Current Planning Manager
Andrea Fleck/Planning Intern

Phone Number: (310) 253-5737
(310) 253-5727

Fiscal Impact: Yes ☐ No ☒

General Fund: Yes ☐ No ☒

Public Hearing: ☒ **Action Item:** ☐ **Attachments:** ☒

City Council Action Required: Yes ☒ No ☐ **Date:** To Be Determined

Public Notification: (E-Mail) Meetings and Agendas - Planning Commission (11/07/19); (Posted) City Website (10/24/19); (Published) in Culver City News (10/24/19).

Department Approval: Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director (11/05/19)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Planning Commission adopt Resolution No. 2019-P011, recommending to the City Council approval of Zoning Code Amendment P2019-0266-ZCA, to allow Residential Studio Micro-Units in Multi-Family Zones and in Mixed-Use Developments where currently permitted.

PROCEDURES

- 1) Chair calls on staff for a brief staff report and the Planning Commission poses questions to staff as desired.

- 2) Chair opens the public hearing and receives comments from the general public.
- 3) Chair seeks a motion to close the public hearing after all testimony has been presented.
- 4) Commission discusses the matter and arrives at its decision

BACKGROUND

Rising rental and home prices throughout the state have limited housing options and imposed a financial strain on many Culver City residents. According to data from the U.S. Census 5-year estimates (2013-2017), approximately 39% of all Culver City households (and 44% of renters) are rent burdened, meaning they pay more than 30% of their monthly income on housing. As technology and media industries continue to locate and expand in the city, they attract new employees that increase the pressure on housing costs and affect the demand for new types of housing.

Furthermore, there has been a shift away traditional unit sizes to accommodate changing household needs and demographic trends. Historically, more people are living alone or with unrelated roommates with single-person households making up the largest share of total households in Culver City (approximately 34.8% in 2017). The share of single-person households as a percentage of renter occupied households is even higher at 41% (U.S. Census 2017). Land use regulations must continue to keep up with changing household patterns and configurations.

In response to these trends, and as recommended in the Housing Divisions FY 19/20 work plan, Staff has suggested the alternative affordable housing option of Micro-units which may be defined as residential studio units that range from 220 to 400 square feet in size.¹

Studio micro-units may help fulfill the need for relatively affordable housing for single people, including older adults, in Culver City. According to an Urban Land Institute study, compact units typically have a 20-30% lower monthly rent than standard sized units in a given market. Micro-units also have potential to relieve pressure on family sized units that would otherwise be occupied by unrelated roommates who might prefer to live alone. Amending the Zoning Code to allow studio micro-units to be smaller than the current minimum unit size requirement, is therefore a critical step toward increasing housing options for current and prospective Culver City residents.

DISCUSSION

The proposed Zoning Code Amendment introduces a new type of residential studio unit that is smaller than the current minimum unit size of 500 square feet of gross floor area. Permitting studio micro-units as small as 350 square feet is likely to reduce the cost of housing and increase housing affordability. For reference, the minimum interior size of a two-car garage in Culver City is 369 square feet (20.5'x18'). Staff recommends a minimum unit size of 350 square feet in order to maintain a clear distinction between studio micro-units and SRO units, which are only allowed as part of a mixed

-use development with a minimum area of 200 square feet and maximum area of 350 square feet. Studio micro-units are proposed to be permitted in multi-family zones including RLD, RMD, RHD, and within mixed-use developments where currently permitted. Density allowed in these zones is consistent with more compact unit sizes, which is not the case in R1, R2 and R3. Other Zoning Code provisions including, but not limited to, unit mix, parking, common open space and other requirements as summarized below:

Summary of Studio Micro-Unit Development Standards

Development Standard	
Minimum Size	350 square feet of gross floor area.
Zones	RLD, RMD, RHD, Commercial zones permitting mixed-use developments.
Unit Mix	No more than 25% of the total number of residential units shall be studios or micro-units.
Parking	0.5 space per dwelling unit, except in the TOD District. Studio micro-units within the TOD District depicted in Map 4-1 of section 17.400.065.E are not required to provide parking. Bike parking shall be required pursuant to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, or as amended.
Open Space	No private open space is required. However, 100 square feet of common open space per unit is required, of which 100% may be located on the rooftop.
Facility Requirements	Laundry and storage area requirements shall comply with the requirements of Section 17.400.105.B Facility and Design Requirements for Multiple Family Residential Standards. All developments with 4 or more units shall provide common laundry facilities with keyed access for tenants only. A minimum of 100 cubic of lockable storage area shall be provided for each dwelling outside of the unit, with a minimum dimension of 30 inches.
Amenity Menu	Pet services, bike repair services, fitness center or studio, on-site car-share or bike-share, Wi-Fi, communal lounge area, built-in shelving, barbeque grill, package receiving services, ride hailing areas

Unit Mix

The unit mix requirement is established as a measure to preserve diversity in housing stock.²

Culver City's current Mixed-Use Development Standards require that no more than 25% of the total number of residential unit at less than 700 square feet of gross floor area, except within the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) District. Considering the issues described above, staff proposes a modification to the unit mix provision so that no more than 25% of the total number of residential units would be studios or micro-units. This provision would continue to apply only to mixed-use developments.

Parking

The current parking requirement for studio units under 900 square feet is 1 space per unit. Given the accessibility of active transportation options in Culver City and considering that parking requirements represent a major barrier and cost to development, staff proposes that studio-micro units be parked at a lower rate than is currently required. To address housing cost concerns, staff suggests that studio micro-units be parked at 0.5 space per unit and within the TOD District, studio micro-units be exempt from providing parking. Reducing the minimum required parking for studio micro-units is a major step toward reducing the cost of housing and promoting local mobility. Bicycle parking is also required pursuant to the City's current Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, which is being updated in conjunction with the General Plan Update. The updated Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan will likely require more bicycle parking than currently required.

Common Open Space

Currently, mixed-use projects require 75 square feet of private or common open space, of which only 40% of common space may be located on the rooftop. Multiple family residential projects require 100 square feet of private open space per unit, typically taking the form of a balcony. It is proposed that studio micro-units not be required to provide private open space, however, a minimum of 100 square feet of common open space per unit would be required, of which 100% could be provided on the rooftop. Studio micro-units located in multiple family residential developments and mixed-use developments would be required to comply with the additional open space standards required by their respective land use development standards. The new common open space requirement is intended to compensate for the small area of the dwelling unit, while also providing a less costly means of providing open space on the project roof rather than incorporating balconies into the project design.

Facility Requirements and Other Amenities

Per the Facility and Design Requirements of the Multiple Family Residential Standards, common laundry facilities with keyed access for tenants would be required, and a minimum of 100 cubic feet of lockable storage space would be provided for each dwelling outside of the unit with a minimum dimension of 30 inches. A reference to Section 17.400.105.B - Multiple Family Residential Standards would be added to the Mixed-Use Development Standards as it relates to laundry facilities and storage area.

Provided that micro-units are limited in area and amenities located within the unit, staff recommends that developers building studio micro-units select from a menu of amenities to incorporate on-site. The menu of amenities would include, but are not be limited to, pet services, bike repair services, fitness center or studio, on-site car-share or bike-share, Wi-Fi, communal lounge area, built-in shelving, barbeque grill, package receiving services, ride hailing areas, or other amenities as determined by the Director.

Other

For development standards not listed herein, studio micro-units shall comply with the standards of the zone and/or specific land use in which they are located.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

The Zoning Code Amendment will not generate any costs nor create additional revenues for the City.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), the subject Zoning Code Amendment is covered by the general rule that CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. As it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity to amend the Zoning Code by in of itself will have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA. The Zoning Code Amendment does not result in any physical changes in the environment because it will only amend the Zoning Code to allow micro-units in multiple family zones and mixed-use developments where currently permitted and will not result in an intensification of development beyond what the Zoning Code currently allows. Any future projects seeking approval subsequent to this Zoning Code Amendment is subject to appropriate CEQA analysis.

CONCLUSION

The State is confronted by a growing housing crises that impacts housing affordability, mobility and livability. Micro-units offer one affordable housing strategy to reduce housing costs in Culver City. The proposed development standards for micro-units are intended to reduce the costs of producing new housing and provide another option for addressing changes in demographic trends and new housing needs.

ATTACHMENTS

- 1) Draft Planning Commission Resolution No. 2019-P011 and Exhibits A, B and C
- 2) Micro-Unit Floor Plan Mock-Ups (300, 350, and 400 square feet)

MOTION

That the Planning Commission:

Recommend to the City Council approval of Zoning Code Amendment P2019-0266-ZCA Establishing Use and Development Standards for Residential Micro-Units.

NOTES:

1. Locally, studio units in the City of Los Angeles abide by the California Building Code standards of 220 square feet minimum living area, plus a bathroom, closet and kitchen. In Santa Monica, studio micro-units, classified in their Zoning Code as Single Room Occupancy units (SROs), were previously permitted as small as 150 square feet in the Downtown District, however, a flood of SRO developments began to threaten the diversity of the housing stock. In response, Santa Monica banned Single Room Occupancy units. Santa Monica still allows studio units with a minimum of 375 square feet in area, however, studio units in the Downtown District are now limited to 15% of a development's total units.
2. Issues related to Single Room Occupancy units in Santa Monica demonstrate why this type of provision is necessary. Upon the permitting of SROs as small as 150 square feet in 2015, Santa Monica encountered an influx of developments consisting exclusively of Single Room Occupancy units. Concerned that this trend was overwhelming the market and jeopardizing the availability of family-sized households, Santa Monica adopted an ordinance restricting SROs unless they are 100% affordable and limiting the share of studio units in Downtown District developments to a maximum of 15%. The minimum unit size for studio units in Santa Monica is currently 375 square feet.