



# City of Culver City

Mike Balkman Council  
Chambers  
9770 Culver Blvd.  
Culver City, CA 90232

## Staff Report

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**File #:** 20-610, **Version:** 1

**Item #:** PH-2.

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**CC - PUBLIC HEARING:** Introduction of an Ordinance Approving Zoning Code Amendment P2019-0266-ZCA, Amending Culver City Municipal Code, Title 17 - Zoning, Sections 17.210.020, 17.320.020, and 17.400.065 Establishing Standards and Requirements for Residential Studio Micro-Units.

**Meeting Date:** January 13, 2020

**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:** ☒

**Public Notification:** (Email) Meeting and Agendas - City Council (1/8/20); (Email) Master Notification List (12/26/19); (Posted) City website (12/26/19); (Published) Culver City News (12/26/19)

**Department Approval:** Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director (01/06/20)

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends the City Council introduce an Ordinance approving Zoning Code Amendment P2019-0266-ZCA, amending Culver City Municipal Code (CCMC) Title 17 - Zoning (Zoning Code), Sections 17.210.020 - Residential Zoning Districts Development Standards, 17.320.020 - Number of Parking Spaces Required, and 17.400.065 - Mixed Use Development Standards, establishing standards and requirements for residential Studio Micro-Units.

### **PROCEDURES**

1. The Mayor seeks motion to receive and file the affidavit of mailing and posting of public notice.
2. The Mayor calls on staff for a brief staff report and City Council poses questions to staff as desired.

3. The Mayor seeks a motion to declare the public hearing open and the City Council receives public comment.
4. The Mayor seeks a motion to close the public hearing after all testimony has been presented.
5. The City Council discusses the matter and arrives at its decision.

## **BACKGROUND**

On November 13, 2019, the Planning Commission considered Zoning Code Amendment P2019-0266 -ZCA related to Studio Micro-Units. The Planning Commission recommended City Council approval of the proposed Ordinance (Attachment No. 1). The Planning Commission expressed support for the new unit type and the proposed development standards and discussed the need to address the housing affordability crisis.

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.

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.

The below table summarizes key differences between SROs, Studio Micro-Units and standard Studio Units.

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Unit Type	Unit Size	Location	Distinguishing features
Single Room Occupancy (SRO)	200-350 sf	Mixed-Use Developments	Mandated by state law to identify zones permitting SRO units. Kitchen and bathroom facilities required. Subject to standards for mixed-use developments.
Studio Micro-Unit	350-499 sf	RLD, RMD, RHD, Mixed-Use Developments	Units of this size are not currently allowed by the code. Subject to distinct development standards as it relates to parking, open space, amenities. Otherwise subject to standards for multi-family residential developments or mixed-use developments, whichever is applicable.
Studio	500 sf min	RLD, RMD, RHD, Mixed-Use Developments	Subject to standards for multi-family residential developments or mixed-use developments, whichever is applicable.

### **Planning Commission Questions and Comments**

The Planning Commission discussed the difference between Single Room Occupancy Units (SROs) and a Studio Micro-Units and clarified the value of adding a new unit category. Studio Micro-Units will permit units between 350 and 499 square feet, a unit size which is not currently explicitly allowed in the Zoning Code. In addition, the proposed Micro-Unit development standards seek to reduce cost of producing new housing units. For example, Studio Micro-Units will be parked at a lower rate than a standard Studio unit, which reduces the high cost of providing required parking.

The Planning Commission expressed support of having a unit mix provision to prevent oversaturation of Studio Micro-Units. The proposed Zoning Code Amendment establishes a unit mix provision for Mixed-Use developments which requires that no more than 25% of the total residential units may be studios or Micro-Units. This standard would not apply in Multi-Family Zones because density limitations in Multi-Family Zones limit the scale of development considerably in comparison to mixed-use developments. In addition, RLD and RHD zoned lots are concentrated in small pockets of the City. RLD zones make up only one block of the entire City, while the majority of RHD zones are Planned Developments clustered in Fox Hills. RMD zoned parcels allow a maximum of 1 unit/1,500 square feet of net lot area, up to maximum of 9 units. Most RMD zoned lots allow less than 6 units given their lot size. It is therefore unlikely that Studio Micro-Units in Multi-Family Zones will pose a threat to the diversity of the housing supply.

The Planning Commissioners also conveyed support of the reduced parking requirements for Studio Micro-Units. They requested that the SRO parking requirement become consistent with Studio Micro-Units given that SROs are smaller in size. This change will occur under a separate zone text amendment.

### **Proposed Zoning Code Text Amendment**

In order to reduce costs of producing housing units while maintaining diversity in unit sizes, staff recommends the following development standards for Micro-Units. The attached Exhibits show where in the code the language change will occur.

### **Summary of Studio Micro-Unit Development Standards**

<b>Development Standard</b>	
<b>Minimum Size</b>	350 square feet of gross floor area.
<b>Zones</b>	RLD, RMD, RHD, Commercial zones permitting mixed-use developments.
<b>Unit Mix</b>	No more than 25% of the total number of residential units shall be studios or micro-units.
<b>Parking</b>	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.
<b>Open Space</b>	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.
<b>Facility Requirements</b>	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.
<b>Amenity Menu</b>	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

## **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 Multi-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 are subject to appropriate CEQA

analysis.

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no fiscal impact associated with the introduction of the proposed Ordinance.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

1. 2020-01-13\_ATT - Proposed Ordinance with Exhibits A, B, C
2. 2020-01-13\_ATT - Planning Commission Staff Report (without attachments) - November 13, 2019
3. 2020-01-13\_ATT - Micro-Unit Floor Plan Mock-Ups (300, 350, 400 square feet)
4. 2020-01-13\_ATT - Letter of Support from Abundant Housing LA

## **MOTION**

That the City Council:

Introduce an ordinance approving Zoning Code Amendment P2019-0266-ZCA, amending Culver City Municipal Code (CCMC) Title 17 - Zoning (Zoning Code), Sections 17.210.020 - Residential Zoning Districts Development Standards, 17.320.020 - Number of Parking Spaces Required, and 17.400.065 - Mixed Use Development Standards, establishing standards and requirements for residential Studio Micro-Units.