



Memorandum

TO: COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

FROM: Joseph Horwedel
Leslye Krutko

SUBJECT: SECONDARY UNIT PILOT PROGRAM/PERMANENT ORDINANCE

DATE: February 12, 2008

Approved

Date

2-13-08

COUNCIL DISTRICT: City-Wide
SNI AREA: All

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Community and Economic Development Committee recommend to the City Council approval of an ordinance amending Title 20 of the San Jose Municipal Code to establish secondary unit requirements in the City's Zoning Code and adoption of a resolution amending the Schedule of Parkland In Lieu Fees charged pursuant to Chapters 14.25 and 19.38 of the San Jose Municipal Code to establish a parkland fee of 50% of the fees applicable to SRO units, resulting in a parkland fee in the range of \$2,275 to \$5,500 per secondary unit.

OUTCOME

Approval of the proposed secondary unit ordinance and amendment to the Schedule of Parkland In Lieu Fees (Schedule of Fees) to add a parkland fee for secondary units will allow: (1) the continued production of secondary units with development parameters previously established and then modified based on lessons learned through the Secondary Unit Pilot Program, and (2) ensure that new secondary units contribute towards the provision of park facilities in an amount that is commensurate with their size and character.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Secondary Unit Pilot Program was approved by the City Council in November of 2005 to test the allowance of secondary "granny" units on single-family lots subject to specific

development parameters. This program has run for approximately two years and, as of January 25, 2007, had resulted in 83 secondary unit applications, 61 approved permits and 19 constructed units. In October, 2007 the City Council approved minor modifications to the Pilot Program development parameters based on lessons learned during implementation of the program. Staff has now completed a thorough evaluation of the Pilot Program and community outreach regarding a permanent secondary unit program and the associated PDO/PIO fee.

The results of the Pilot Program to this point and surveys of secondary unit property owners and adjacent residents, indicate that secondary units provide an important alternative for single-family homeowners seeking to provide housing for elderly parents or other family members or the additional income of a rental unit and that the units approved through the Pilot Program do not appear to have generated significant concern from adjacent property owners or resulted in noticeable impacts on surrounding neighborhoods. Results of an analysis of Pilot Program data suggests that the actual impact of secondary units on park facilities is less than that of either single-family residences or single room occupancy (SRO) units and that establishment of a parkland in lieu fee that reflects the unique characteristics of secondary units is needed.

BACKGROUND

In November 2005, the City Council approved an ordinance establishing the Secondary Unit Pilot Program to allow secondary “granny” units on single-family lots subject to specific development parameters. This action responded to State legislation that required the City to consider allowing secondary living units in single-family zoning districts without a discretionary permit unless it made findings of adverse impact to health and safety. The pilot program as originally approved by the Council was to run for one year or until 100 secondary unit applications had been approved. In February 2006, the Council approved an ordinance exempting secondary units approved through the pilot program from park impact fees.

Due to the small number of secondary unit applications received in the first 11 months, the City Council approved a six-month extension of the Pilot Program to June, 2006. In May and October of 2007, the Council approved two additional ordinances further extending the Pilot Program. Together, these ordinances extended the pilot until April 30, 2008 or until such time as 100 units are permitted, whichever comes first. The October ordinance also made minor changes to the Pilot Program parameters, including small increases in allowed unit size for large lots, a two-foot increase in the maximum height of secondary units, a minor reduction in the rear-yard setback requirement and clarification regarding windows overlooking adjacent properties. Table 1 provides a summary of the Pilot Program parameters, including the recently approved changes.

Table 1. Secondary Unit Pilot Program Parameters

	Original Pilot Program Parameters	Changes Approved by the Council in October, 2007
Applicable Zoning	All R-1 Districts and PD Districts with R-1 standards	No change.
Minimum Lot Size	Attached unit - 6,000 sq. ft. Detached unit - 8,000 sq. ft.	No change.
Maximum Unit Size	600 sq. ft.	≤ 9,000 sq.ft. lot 600 sq.ft. 9,001 to 10,000 lot 650 sq.ft. ≥10,000 lot 700 sq.ft.
Bedrooms No. and Size	One bedroom required and maximum allowed. 400 sq. ft. maximum	No change.
Storage	60 sq. ft. maximum	No change.
Required Parking	One space (outside front and side setbacks)	No change.
Setbacks Attached Unit	Same as primary dwelling.	No change except reduction of rear setback from 20 to 15 feet for single-story unit
Setbacks Detached Unit	Same as primary dwelling except that façade of secondary unit must be set behind that of primary residence. Units must be separated from any other structure by 6 feet.	No change except reduction of rear setback from 20 to 15 feet for single-story unit
Height	16 feet maximum 12 feet average	18 feet maximum 14 feet average
Design Criteria	Exterior materials and roof pitch to match existing house. Front door cannot be on same façade as that of primary residence. Windows cannot have views of adjacent properties.	No change except windows cannot have views of adjacent properties with existing or planned residential uses.
Ownership	Property owner must certify that he/she occupies existing house at the time of application.	No change.
Detached Garage	Secondary unit cannot be attached to detached garage.	Secondary unit can be attached to detached garage if both conform to setbacks required of secondary unit.

The Pilot Program provides for approval of secondary units through a *Secondary Unit Permit*, a non-discretionary building permit that includes review by Planning staff for conformance with the requirements of the program. Excluding any parkland fees, City permit fees and development taxes for secondary units have totaled approximately \$5,000 to \$6,000 per unit. Secondary units are also subject to school impact fees of up to \$1,500 collected by the applicable school district/s. The processing time for secondary unit permits has ranged from one day to several months, depending on the quality of the plans and complexity of the project.

ANALYSIS

Staff has completed a thorough evaluation of the Pilot Program that includes (1) an analysis of program data, (2) a phone survey of property owners with approved or constructed secondary

living units, (3) a survey of neighbors living adjacent to completed secondary units, and (4) a series of community meetings to discuss the possibility of a permanent secondary unit program.

Analysis of Secondary Unit Program Data

As of January 25, 2008, staff had accepted a total of 83 applications for new secondary units and had approved building permits for 61 secondary units, well short of the maximum of 100 approvals authorized under the Pilot Program. Applications have been submitted at a relatively steady rate over the past two years, averaging three to four per month. Table 2 provides a summary of the status of the applications currently on file for secondary units.

Table 2. Second Unit Application Status as of 1-25-08

	Final Inspection Complete	Under Inspection	Permit Ready for Issue	Tech. Review	Expired	Total
Detached Units	11	21	1	7	3	43
Attached Units	8	21	1	9	1	40
Total Units	19	42	2	16	4	83

The distribution of secondary unit applications citywide does not appear to be closely related to the number of lots that meet the minimum lot area requirements for an attached secondary unit (6,000 square feet or greater). As indicated in Table 3, secondary unit applications have been filed in all Council Districts; however, a disproportionate number have been filed for properties located in District 6 (28 or approximately one third of the total) and in District 8 (14 or approximately 16 percent of the total). District 9, which includes the largest proportion of eligible lots, (approximately 17 percent of the total) generated only six applications, and District 10, which has the second largest number of eligible lots, has produced two applications.

Table 3. Eligible Lots and Secondary Unit Applications by Council District

Council District	Total No./Percent Lots 6000 sq.ft. +	No. Detached Unit Applications	No. Attached Unit Applications	Total Applications/ Percent
CD 1	12,081 (11.3%)	4	3	7 (8.4%)
CD 2	11,524 (10.7%)	2	4	6 (7.2%)
CD 3	11,524 (10.7%)	2	1	3 (4.8%)
CD 4	9,652 (9.0%)	2	3	5 (6.0%)
CD 5	7,822 (7.3%)	2	8	10 (12.0%)
CD 6	12,458 (11.6%)	17	11	28 (33.7%)
CD 7	5,077 (4.7%)	1	1	2 (2.4%)
CD 8	12,676 (11.8%)	9	5	14 (15.7%)
CD 9	18,464 (17.2%)	3	3	6 (7.2%)
CD10	16,219 (15.1%)	1	1	2 (2.4%)
Total	107,327 (100%)	43	40	83 (99.8%)

It is notable that lot sizes for applications submitted under the pilot program are significantly larger than the required minimum lot sizes. As indicated in Table 4, this is true for both attached and detached units, although the trend is more pronounced for lots with detached units. Ninety-five percent of the lots proposed for detached units exceed the minimum lot size by 1,000 square feet or more. Lot sizes for attached units are significantly smaller than for detached units, but with an average area of 8,806 square feet, and a median of 7,841 square feet, they remain well above the required minimum lot area of 6,000 square feet. These findings suggest that minimum lot size has not been a primary constraint for the production of secondary units under the Pilot Program.

Table 4. Second Unit Pilot Program Lot Size

	Required Minimum Lot Area (sq.ft.)	Total Applications	Average Lot Area (sq.ft.)	Median Lot Area (sq.ft.)	Applications for Lots over 9,000 sq. ft. (Percent)	Applications for Lots over 12,000 sq.ft. (Percent)
Detached Units	8,000	43	15,665	11,566	95%	44%
Attached Units	6,000	40	8,806	7,841	38%	10%
All Units	n/a	83	12,403	9,313	67%	28%

Despite the large lot sizes associated with secondary unit applications filed under the Pilot Program, the existing houses on these lots tend to be relatively small. Over half are less than 1,800 square feet in floor area and over one third are less than 1,500 square feet. If the owners of these small houses had elected to expand their house instead of adding a secondary unit, many with large lots could have doubled and tripled the size of the existing houses without the discretionary review of a Single-Family House Permit. Even those with the smallest 6,000 square-foot lots could have constructed house additions as large as a secondary unit without triggering a Single-Family House Permit or any discretionary review.

Staff's experience in assisting customers in the preliminary review and application processes and the results of the property owner survey, suggest that the parking space and setback requirements are greater constraints in achieving conformance with Pilot Program requirements than lot size. Providing the required parking space is not feasible for a large number of existing lots where placement of the existing house blocks vehicular access to the rear yard and allows insufficient room for a parking space in front of the house, outside of the front setback.

Secondary Unit Property Owner Survey

Between May and July of 2007, staff attempted to survey by phone 35 property owners whose secondary units were approved and under construction. Staff was successful in completing a phone survey with 21 property owners; 10 of these had completed construction of their secondary unit. Results of the survey are summarized below.

Use of the Secondary Unit. A large majority of the property owners surveyed (82 percent) responded that their secondary unit was being used, or would be used when complete, as a residence for a family member, a pool house/recreation room, or a guest house. Only 19 percent indicated that their units would be used as a residence for a non-family member.

Cost of Secondary Unit Construction Project. The reported total cost of the units varied greatly, with 41 percent reporting costs between 0-\$75,000 and 12 percent of respondents saying the cost exceeded \$200,000. Several property owners whose units cost less than \$75,000, volunteered that the costs were reduced because they completed some or all of the work themselves or were converting existing building area.

Parking. In regard to the eight completed units that were occupied as a residence, seven respondents reported that the resident of the unit owned a car and six indicated that the required parking space was in regular use.

Challenges Encountered in the Design of Respondent's Secondary Unit. The most common reported challenge was the difficulty of meeting the required setbacks. The second most frequent response was that the process for obtaining a permit was difficult. Other responses indicated that the required parking space was difficult to provide, that the restriction on the location of the front door was challenging and the height limit was difficult to meet.

Proposed Changes to the Pilot Program. The most frequent response to the question about what, if any, aspect of the pilot program they would like to see changed, was "allowing larger secondary units." Another frequent response proposed elimination of the parking requirement or proposed that the required parking be allowed in the front setback.

Adjacent Resident Survey

In response to suggestions from the community, staff mailed surveys to 79 residents of property located adjacent to or across the street from 13 completed secondary units. Twenty-two of the contacted residents submitted a survey response. Survey respondents were evenly split in their support of, or opposition to, a permanent secondary unit program (50% in support, 50% in opposition). The appearance of the secondary units was not a concern for most respondents; ninety-one percent indicated that the secondary unit on their neighbor's property enhanced the overall appearance of the site, had no effect on the appearance of the site, or was not sufficiently visible to allow an assessment. Parking was a concern for slightly less than half of the respondents, with 29% noting some reduction in the availability of on-street parking as result of the new secondary unit and 18% indicating a significant reduction in parking availability as result of the new unit. Approximately 71% of respondents indicated that the adjacent secondary unit had no overall effect on their property or immediate neighborhood, while 30% reported an overall effect that was either somewhat or very negative. The fact that only 29% reported either a "somewhat negative" or "very negative effect" from their neighbor's secondary unit, while 50% said they were "somewhat opposed" or "very opposed" to a permanent program, appeared to be due to a concern that a future proliferation of such units might result in a negative effect.

Most respondents took advantage of the opportunity to provide additional comments. Favorable comments focused on the positive appearance of adjacent units and the lack of any negative impact. Comments expressing concern focused on parking impacts, density increases and associated noise and traffic, reduction in property values, and an increase in renters.

Community Meeting Input

Approximately 95 people attended five community meetings held to seek input regarding the Secondary Unit Pilot Program and the possibility of a permanent secondary unit ordinance. The majority of those in attendance expressed support for a permanent secondary unit program, citing such benefits as the flexibility secondary units would offer families seeking to provide for aging or disabled family members, the additional housing units the program would produce, and the income such units would provide for households seeking to make mortgage payments. Some requested that the program be designed to prevent impacts on single-family residential neighborhoods; a minority strongly opposed any permanent secondary unit program, indicating that such a program would lead to overcrowding, parking impacts, loss of open space and an influx of renters into single-family neighborhoods.

Community members also provided input in regard to the appropriate parameters for a permanent secondary unit ordinance. Homeowners who had obtained approval of a secondary unit or were exploring the possibility of such a unit requested that more flexibility be provided in regard to setbacks, unit size, parking, design compatibility, and limitations on windows facing adjacent properties. A few advocated a reduction in the minimum lot size; however, others felt that such a reduction would give homeowners false expectations and that smaller lots would not be able to meet setback and parking requirements. Others supported retention of the existing parking and setback requirements to ensure that the new units did not result in adverse impacts on adjacent properties and expressed concern that secondary units not be used as a means of avoiding the subdivision process or of increasing the capacity of residential care or service facilities allowed by right in a single-family residence.

Regarding the issue of park impact fees for secondary units, most indicated that the park impact fee exemption applicable under the Pilot Program should be extended to the permanent secondary unit program, however, others favored a reduced fee that would not place an undue burden on a small secondary unit.

Recommendation for a Permanent Secondary Unit Ordinance

Overall, the results of the Pilot Program indicate that secondary units provide an important alternative for single-family homeowners seeking to provide housing for elderly parents or other family members or to obtain additional income from a rental unit. The units approved through the Pilot Program do not appear to have generated significant concern from adjacent property owners or resulted in noticeable impacts on surrounding neighborhoods. Parameters tested

through the Pilot Program have generally worked well and with the refinements approved by the Council in October 2007, provide clear and effective guidance for the construction of secondary units within San Jose's existing single-family neighborhoods.

Parkland Dedication Ordinance/Park Impact Ordinance Fees

Pursuant to the City of San Jose Municipal Code Parkland Dedication and Park Impact Ordinances (PDO and PIO), parkland dedication or in lieu fees are required when new housing is constructed. The PDO sets forth the parkland requirements for subdivided projects and the PIO contains the parkland requirements for non-subdivided projects. For PIO projects, parkland fees are collected at the time the building permit is issued for the units. The parkland fee amount is based on a formula that is set forth in the PDO and PIO and is derived from State law (the Quimby Act). It is based on the number of units in the development, persons per household, and land values in the area of the development. Persons per household (pph) is based upon the average number of persons occupying the housing types listed in the most recent Federal Census. Recently approved fee adjustments based on 2006 land values have set the fees for single-family attached and detached units ranging from \$14,000 to \$38,550.

Low income units (units meeting certain affordability restrictions) are exempt from PDO and PIO requirements as a means of encouraging production of low income units. There is also a temporary reduction of parkland fees currently in effect for high rise (12 stories or more) in the "Downtown Core Area" in order to encourage the construction of Downtown highrise housing. This temporary fee reduction will expire upon the issuance of the building permit for the 2,500th high rise unit built in the Downtown Core Area.

In March of 2006, the City Council took action to exempt secondary units approved through the Pilot Program from PIO requirements and parkland fees. At that time, the administration was concerned that parkland fees, in addition to other fees and taxes, would discourage participation in the pilot program. After two years of experience with the Pilot Program and careful analysis of program data, staff is recommending that the parkland in lieu fee for units approved under the proposed permanent secondary ordinance be set at 50% of the fee applicable to SRO units. This recommendation reflects both the similarity of these two unit types and unique characteristics of secondary units that affect their occupancy characteristics.

Single room occupancy units are small rental units designed to accommodate a one or two person household. SROs are limited by the Zoning Code to a maximum of two residents. No similar restriction applies to secondary units; however, based on their small size and single-bedroom limit, they are designed for no more than two persons. The Federal Census does not provide an average number of persons per household for SROs, and the PIO originally calculated SRO units as multi-family units. In 2002, the City Council provided a separate parkland fee calculation for SRO units based on evidence that the pph for SRO units was significantly lower than the 2.29 number applicable to multi-family projects with 5 or more units. Staff's analysis at the time included a survey of the occupancy of existing SRO projects, which indicated that most units were occupied by a single individual and that only a small proportion were occupied by two residents. Based on this analysis, the City Council revised the PDO and Schedule of Parkland In

Lieu Fees to establish a pph of 1.00 for calculating SRO parkland fees, resulting in current fees that range from \$4,550 to \$11,000.

Secondary units are similar to SRO units in that they consist of small individual living units designed to accommodate single- or two-person households; however, they differ significantly from SRO units in that they are constructed by the owner of a single-family house on the same site as the house and are ancillary to the primary unit. These units are either attached to the single-family house or are located in its rear or side yard; share private open space with the primary residence; often take access through a private yard; and may include tandem parking that necessitates daily coordination with the main unit. This ancillary relationship makes them particularly suitable for use by families as an extension of the primary residence, either providing additional family recreation space or guest accommodations, or providing a semi-independent living situation for a member of the family that occupies the primary house.

Results of the Pilot Program indicate that secondary units constructed for family use do not always result in new residents. The secondary unit property owner survey indicated that 82% of the units were constructed for use by family members (either as a pool house, recreation room or guest house not intended as a permanent residence - approximately 14%, or to accommodate a family member - approximately 67%). Several of the survey respondents volunteered in the course of the interview that the family member intended to occupy the unit would actually move from the primary residence to the secondary unit upon its completion. Clearly, since the secondary unit is required to be constructed within the building envelope of the primary house, family members could alternatively be accommodated through an expansion of the house with no additional parkland in lieu fee. Based on this analysis, staff concludes that over 80% of secondary units would not result in the addition of new residents to the site in that the units are either not occupied as permanent residences or they accommodate family members who were already living on the site or who could otherwise be accommodated in the primary family residence.

The remaining 19% of secondary units that were are not constructed for family members, but are intended as more traditional rental units, would clearly result in new residents. Based on their design, these units could be expected to accommodate one or two residents. If, all of these units intended to be used by new residents were occupied by two people, the average number of residents per unit for all secondary units would be slightly under 0.4. Based on the limited survey data available, staff recommends that the number of persons per household for secondary units be set at .50 (pph). This number of persons takes into account both the number of new residents who are estimated to reside in the secondary units as well as the probability that some of the secondary units which the primary residence owner currently intends to be used by the residents of the primary residence will in fact be occupied by one or two new residents.

A parkland fee calculation based on 0.50 pph yields a parkland in lieu fee that is 50% of the fee applicable to SRO units; for 2008, this fee would range from \$2275 to \$5500. Staff is recommending that the Schedule of Fees be revised to set the calculation for secondary units at 50% of the SRO fee based upon this analysis.

POLICY ALTERNATIVES

The alternative policy actions available to the Council include the following:

Alternative #1: Approve a permanent secondary unit ordinance with development parameters that include either greater or smaller minimum lot sizes and/or setbacks than those included in the current Pilot Program.

Pros: Requiring larger lots or larger setbacks would increase the buffering between secondary units and adjacent lots, reducing the visibility of secondary units and potentially reducing noise and other impacts on surrounding properties. Reducing the requirements for lot size and setbacks would increase the number of lots eligible for secondary units and potentially increase the number of secondary units constructed under a permanent secondary unit ordinance. Reducing the setbacks would make it easier for homeowners to locate secondary units on their properties in a manner that maximizes usable rear yard space.

Cons: More stringent requirements would reduce the number of lots eligible for secondary units and could potentially reduce the number of units constructed under a permanent secondary unit ordinance. The survey of surrounding property owners and other public outreach indicated that new secondary units have not resulted in significant impacts on surrounding properties. Reducing the requirements for lot size and setbacks would reduce buffering between secondary units and adjacent lots, increasing their visibility and potentially increasing noise and other impacts on surrounding properties.

Reason for not recommending: The parameters tested through the Pilot Program, as amended by the City Council in October 2007, appear to be working well in balancing the objectives of facilitating secondary units while protecting surrounding properties from undue impact.

Alternative #2: Decline staff's recommendation and vote to deny a permanent secondary unit program in San Jose and direct staff to draft findings of adverse impact for City Council consideration.

Pros: By denying a permanent program, the City administration would not have to establish a program to administer another program. This would save staff time and City resources for other Planning projects.

Cons: Under State law, in order for a jurisdiction to be exempted from offering a program, it must make findings of adverse health and safety impacts that would result from its adoption. Staff would need to perform further analysis to ascertain whether such findings could be supportable at the present time; research performed to date would not support such adverse impact findings.

Reason for not recommending: Under the two-year pilot program the City has tested whether there would be adverse health and safety impacts experienced under a potential permanent

program. To date, there has not been data collected to suggest that there is enough justification for findings of adverse health or safety impacts.

Alternative #3: Approve a permanent secondary unit ordinance and apply the PDO/PIO in-lieu fees currently in place for SRO's or exempt secondary units from the payment of the PDO/PIO in-lieu fees.

Pros: Exemption of secondary units from the PDO/PIO in-lieu fees would reduce the costs associated with the development of secondary units. Requiring secondary units to pay the PDO/PIO in-lieu fees currently in place for SRO's would result in greater revenues to address park impacts.

Cons: Applying the PDO/PIO in-lieu fee schedule for SRO's to secondary units may exceed the actual impact associated with these small ancillary units, taking into account the unique role they often play as an extension of the family home, while exempting them may result in the City being unable to address the additional park impact created by secondary units.

Reason for not recommending: After analysis of the limited survey data from the two year pilot program, staff believes that exemption of PDO/PIO in-lieu fees for secondary units would eliminate a source of revenues to address the park impact that is created by secondary units, while applying the full SRO PDO/PIO in-lieu fee to secondary units may require owners of secondary units to pay an amount that exceeds the park impact created by secondary units.

FISCAL/POLICY ALIGNMENT

The proposed permanent secondary unit ordinance would help implement the San Jose 2020 General Plan and its housing strategy to provide a wide range of housing options.

COST SUMMARY/IMPLICATIONS

(N/A)

PUBLIC OUTREACH/INTEREST

- Criteria 1:** Requires Council action on the use of public funds equal to \$1 million or greater.
- ✓ **Criteria 2:** Adoption of a new or revised policy that may have implications for public health, safety, quality of life, or financial/economic vitality of the City.

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- Criteria 3:** Consideration of proposed changes to service delivery, programs, staffing that may have impacts to community services and have been identified by staff, Council or a Community group that requires special outreach.


Community meetings regarding the results of the pilot program and the issue of a permanent secondary unit ordinance were held at the Willow Glen Baptist Church on May 31, 2007, at the Alum Rock Library on July 25, 2007, at the Southside Community Center on July 26, 2007 and at the West Valley Branch Library on August 16, 2007. On June 20, 2007, staff attended a meeting of the Winchester NAC to discuss the results of the Secondary Unit Pilot Program and receive input and on July 17, 2007 staff discussed the pilot program with the Neighborhood Roundtable. Notices of the community meetings were emailed to a secondary unit interest list, a citywide list of neighborhood associations, Strong Neighborhood Initiative groups and the Neighborhood Roundtable contact list, and were posted on the City's website. Public input received at these meetings is summarized in the analysis section of this memorandum and written correspondence is attached.

COORDINATION

This memo has been coordinated with the Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services and the City Attorney's Office.

CEQA

The proposed secondary unit ordinance is exempt pursuant to Section 15282(h) of the California Public Resources Code, File No. PP07-184.


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