
Survey results summary

Livable Places Action Committee



**PLANNING &
DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT**

In July 2021, the Planning and Development Department's Livable Places Action Committee shared the Single-Family Residential Survey, which garnered more than 1,200 responses. All responses, concerns and ideas for how to improve development in Houston have been noted. The Planning Department will consider this input as we review possible changes to the current ordinance.

Many respondents expressed concern that the City would allow more single-family and multi-family units where deed restrictions would prohibit it. Please note that the City cannot override deed restrictions.

Please see below for a summary of responses to each of the questions.

Question 1: *Currently, a single-family lot may not have more than 2 units (an attached duplex or a primary unit with an additional detached secondary unit not to exceed 900 square feet).*

What do you see as benefits and/or challenges to increasing the number of units per lot?

Many respondents liked the idea of allowing multiple units on a lot to provide housing options for small households and extended or multi-generational families. Some other benefits noted are added income, living close to work, more mobility options, safety for residents with mobility challenges, better use of land, and affordable homes.

Respondents expressed concern that adding more units to existing neighborhoods will bring negative effects and will change neighborhood character. Concerns include loss of green space, more impermeable area, increased flooding, on-street parking issues, inadequate infrastructure, traffic congestion, more garbage cans, inadequate mobility options, reduced traffic flow, parking scarcity, increase in temporary residents, increased noise, reduced property values, crowded schools, loss of neighborhood character and privacy. Some also expressed that neighborhoods should be allowed to decide which rules should apply in their areas.

Question 2: *Currently, attached secondary units have no size restrictions and detached secondary units may not exceed 900 square feet.*

What do you see as benefits and/or challenges of increasing or eliminating the maximum size of accessory dwelling units (ADUs)?

Many survey participants said that the 900 square foot size is sufficient for a small household. The smaller size seems well suited for families to provide an additional living space to someone close to the family. Some participants responded that having a size restriction ensures some control over development and the crowding of lots.

Others responded that removing the limit would encourage more diversity and innovation in residential development, create needed housing for more type of households including families with children, and flexibility in building secondary housing for renters.

Many survey participants responded that removing the size limit would allow two large units to be built covering the entire property, allowing too many people to live there. This would be out of scale with the existing neighborhoods and will lead to loss of green space, more flooding, increased parking issues, increased crime, reduced fire safety, and decrease in property values. Some participants also mentioned inadequate infrastructure to support such development. Instead, some participants suggested increasing the maximum size to correspond with property size

Question 3: *The current off-street parking requirement for a secondary detached unit on single-family lots is one additional space. Should this requirement be changed? If so, how?*

Many said that one parking space per ADU is sufficient, especially if the size of the unit is limited. Some favor one or no spaces if the property is located near transit. Several respondents favored eliminating parking minimum requirements altogether to preserve green space, reduce the amount of concrete in the city and reduce the costs of housing.

Many survey participants were concerned that the current requirement of one space per ADU isn't sufficient. They said most households have two cars, and if there isn't room on site to park, they will park in the street. They worried that on-street parking attracts crime, makes streets unsafe for pedestrians and children playing in adjacent yards. More parking on the city's many narrow streets makes it harder for emergency vehicles to pass and causes traffic congestion.

Suggestions included:

- Provide incentives for 'no car' units or permeable gravel parking.
- Allow credit for preserving on-street parking spaces.
- Allow for mixed parking uses in neighborhoods.
- Prohibit one-size-fits all parking requirements.
- Increase focus on biking infrastructure to reduce car demand.
- Charge on-street parking fees and use revenue for mass transit.

Question 4: *Should parking vary based on proximity to various modes of transit?*

Many respondents were in favor of removing or reducing minimum parking requirements especially near rail and high-capacity bus routes. Others said to let market determine parking, charge for its use, invest in transit and evaluate the consequences of parking restrictions on various communities.

Many respondents expressed that they believe Houstonians are too dependent on their cars, and people living close to transit will still need a parking space. Some said that other modes of transit can only serve some trips.

Some respondents also said that a tenant might use transit, but their guests would park on the street, potentially blocking driveways. Others suggested limiting parking based on number of units, number of bedrooms or unit size or lot size, and not based on proximity to alternate modes of transit.

Question 5: *What might be some other aspects that should be considered?*

- Consider capacity of streets, drainage and utilities when determining where higher density of homes should be allowed. Also, consider proximity to groceries, schools and employment.
- Provide tax incentives for developing small units in some neighborhoods.
- Increase community amenities like parks, protected bike lanes, and tree canopy.
- Plan for more modular cities, with a lower emphasis on private vehicles, more space and money given to public transit, and consider flooding, heat, and other changes that are coming due to the climate crisis.
- Improve transit options and build sidewalks.
- Encourage permeable pavers for driveways and parking, Repair and maintain utilities.
- Promote pier-and-beam construction.
- Bring back the construction of 4-8-plexes, allow common dumpster for homes.
- Ensure access for emergency vehicles and fire protection.
- Create multi-function spaces, mixed use developments, live-work units.
- Rethink street-facing garages.
- Consider mobility service providers and autonomous vehicles