

CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS

Intentional Community Ordinance

Community Meeting

What is an intentional community?

A self-identified group of two or more people living together, who share in the management and governance of their household, and who share in the work to maintain their residence.



Examples of Intentional Communities

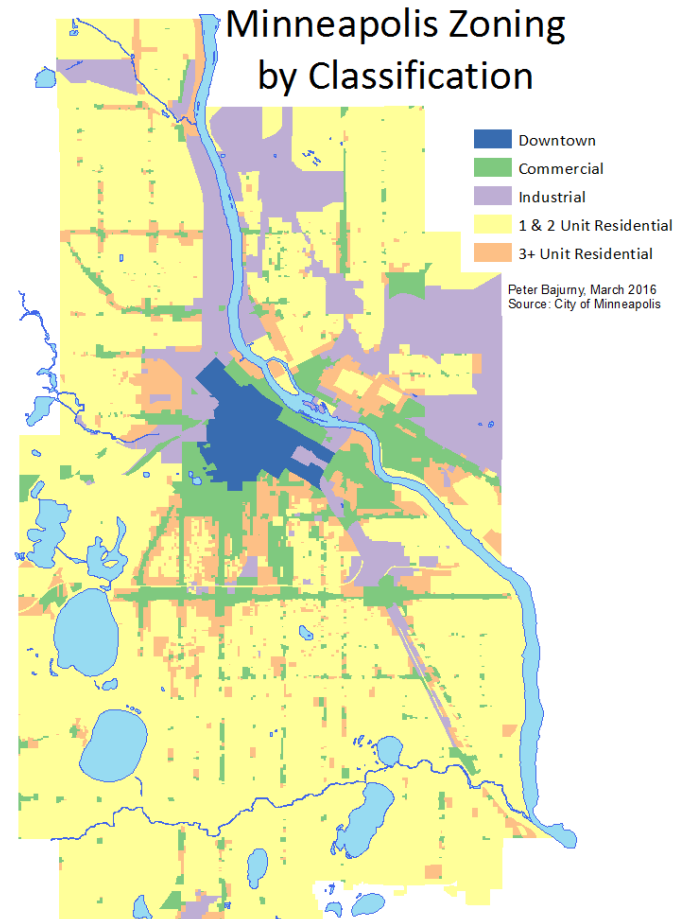
- Housing Cooperatives – examples include U of M Student Housing Coop
- Groups of seniors sharing housing
- Co-housing for veterans
- ‘Mission houses’ affiliated with a religious organization
- Individual ‘named’ co-housing entities:
 - Sprout House, Dreamland, Lake House, Omega House, etc.

Benefits of Intentional Communities

- Sharing housing increases affordability
- Cooperatives build wealth and stability, and encourage long-term investment in housing stock
- Democratic governance and decision-making
- Social benefits of community – social support network for residents
- Community focus makes for good neighbors
- Infill without demolition or destructive remodeling ('chopping up') – retention of historic building stock

Existing ordinance

- Zoning code:
 - No more than 3 unrelated adults in low density (R1-R3) zones
 - No more than 5 unrelated adults in higher density (R4-R6) zones
- Housing/Building/Fire code
 - Maximum safe occupancy based on size of dwelling unit & number of legal bedrooms



Problems with existing ordinance

- The maximum occupancy number is **arbitrary**, and is not affected by the size of the dwelling or characteristics of the community of residents
- Prevents communities and families of people not related by blood or marriage from **sharing housing**
- Prevents the expansion of **cooperative housing**
- Prevents the full use of **existing, historical** housing stock
- Creates a barrier to renters working with the City to **improve** their housing
- Blocks conscientious residents from making their housing more **affordable**
- Lacks any **reasonable** and **accessible options** for people to function outside the parameters of the code

Problems with existing ordinance, cont'd

- Differential treatment
 - Related vs. unrelated residents
 - Religious intentional communities already exempt
 - Supportive housing for certain protected classes (alcoholics in recovery, e.g.) already exempt
- Limited definition of “Family”:
 - “*Family*. An individual or two (2) or more persons related by blood, marriage, domestic partnership as defined in Chapter 142 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances, or adoption, including foster children and domestic staff employed on a full-time basis, living together as a permanent household.”

History

- 1924 Zoning Code:

16. Family. A Family is any number of individuals occupying a single housekeeping unit not herein defined as a Boarding House, Lodging House, or Hotel.

- Current definition of “Family” dates to **1960s** code amendments

Proposal:

- Intentional communities that fit a set definition may **register** with the City
- Intentional communities that register will be allowed to exceed the City's zoning code maximum occupancy
- The number of residents for registered intentional communities will be limited by the limits in the Housing Maintenance Code, which are established to find the number of people who can **safely** live in a house.

Proposed definition of Intentional Community

Residents of an intentional community:

- **Share** the entire dwelling unit and function as a single housekeeping unit
- Have an adopted set of **rules** covering democratic governance, maintenance responsibilities, and other household issues, possibly including **cooperative** status
- Use the dwelling unit as their **legal address** for purposes including but not limited to voter registration, driver's licenses, taxes, etc.
- Expect to remain in place for **more than a year**
- **Share expenses** for things like food, rent or ownership costs, utilities and other household expenses
- Do not act as separate **roomers**

Proposed Registration Process

- The **name** and **address** of the Intentional Community
- The name and current contact information of a **representative** of the Intentional Community
- The **property owner's approval** of the Intentional Community
- A **notarized statement** that the Intentional Community **meets the City's standards**
- A **floor plan**, so that the City can determine the **maximum safe occupancy**
- **Legal documentation** establishing the existence of the Intentional Community as a cooperative or other legal entity, if any such documentation exists
- A copy of any applicable **lease**, if one exists

Safeguards

For dealing with problematic **landlords**:

- One landlord may have an ownership interest in only **one** dwelling occupied as an Intentional Community (though cooperatives whose members live in the dwellings they own will not be subject to this limitation).
- No landlords with **any** Tier II or Tier III properties may have an Intentional Community register in one of their properties.

For dealing with problematic **tenants**:

- If a household registered as an Intentional Community does not actually meet the City's standards at any point, that household may **lose** its Intentional Community status and revert to the zoning code's maximum occupancy.
- If registered Intentional Communities violate **other laws** – hosting noisy and unruly assemblies, “social hosting,” etc. – that household may **lose** its Intentional Community status.

Other cities' solutions

Similar ordinances:

- **Bellevue, WA** – in definition of “family”: “...a group of more than four unrelated adult persons living together in a dwelling unit may also be included within the definition of ‘family’ if they demonstrate to the Director that they operate in a manner that is functionally equivalent to a family.”
- **Poughkeepsie, NY** – “family” defined as up to 3 people or “Four or more persons occupying a dwelling unit and living together as a traditional family or the functional equivalent of a traditional family.”
- **Ames, IA** – Requires a Special Use Permit for a “Functional Family” that meets 8 criteria including:
 - sharing a bond or commitment to a single purpose,
 - members are not legal dependents of others not part of the functional family,
 - share a household budget,
 - prepare food and eat together regularly,
 - share in the work to maintain premises and
 - legally share in the ownership or possession of the premises.

Other cities' solutions

Higher maximum occupancy

- San Francisco (10)
- Seattle (8)
- Portland, OR (6)
- St. Paul (4)

Some cities have no maximum occupancy in their Zoning Code.

Why not try a different solution?

- Issues with changing maximum occupancy to a different arbitrary number:
 - Doesn't solve many of the problems with the existing ordinance
 - Would allow more people than reasonable in some dwellings
- Issues with doing away with maximum occupancy altogether:
 - Does not address concerns of many residents

Next Steps

- Review at Planning Commission Committee of the Whole - October
- Public Hearing on Zoning Code related ordinances at Planning Commission – Late Oct. or early Nov.
- Public Hearing on Housing Code related ordinances at CD&RS - Late October or Early November
- Referral of Zoning Code related ordinances to Z&P - November
- Passage of ordinances by City Council - November

Questions?

