



Policy Memo: Zoning Updates

The City of Syracuse should update the zoning code with the changes listed below.

Overview:

2.2-2.9: Zoning Districts R1-MX-3

- Set the minimum lot width to 20 ft for single-unit attached dwellings in zone R1, and 16 ft in other zones. Set the % structural lot coverage maximum increased to at least 50%, with no more than a 1,500 SF lot minimum for single-unit attached dwellings. These numbers are more reasonable for the townhome building type in an urban setting, especially if no parking or driveway surface is provided. Additionally, The minimum lot widths and minimum area would align well with the city's standard lot size in many neighborhoods of 33x99. These revised numbers would allow for 2 single-unit attached homes per standard lot width in zones R2 and denser, and 3 single-unit attached homes per every two lot widths in zone R1.
- Set all lot minimums other than for single-unit attached to no greater than 25-30 ft wide. For all building types other than single family, % structural lot coverage maximum should be set at no less than 50%. This allows for a more effective and reasonable use of urban space.

2.2-2.5: Zoning Districts R1-R4

- Reduce the front setback to no more than 10 ft to make requirements more consistent with existing development patterns in many areas and the context of building in a city.

2.11: Zoning District MX-5

- Edit "3 stories minimum. 100% of building footprint must meet minimum-story requirement." to read "3 stories minimum. 100% of building footprint must meet minimum-story requirement, except where a tower of greater than four stories containing primarily residential and/or hospitality uses sits upon a one-to-two story podium of other use types." This should be adjusted to accommodate the downtown building type of a building where the ground floor is retail with 100% lot coverage, but the residential or retail floors above utilize a smaller footprint to allow all units to access natural light.



2.17C(4): Setbacks - Partially Developed Street Frontages

- Front setbacks should also allow setting the minimum setback by measuring the average setback of the two adjacent lots if it is a smaller number than “by taking the average front setback of the existing buildings within 200 feet of the property” as is currently stated. This will allow structures to be designed in context with immediate neighboring structures.

2.19: Summary of Dimensional Standards

- Eliminate lot size minimums per unit for multi-unit dwellings. This is unnecessarily limiting and is redundant in the context of other restrictions on building size.

3.1E: Use Regulations - Table of Allowed Uses. Update the items below for greater flexibility for land owners / users, greater entrepreneurial opportunities, and better walkability.

- Permit live/work dwellings in R2 and R3.
- Permit multi-unit dwellings in MX-1 and with a special use permit in R2 & R3.
- Allow small restaurants, small general retail, and food/beverage retail (especially stores selling fresh produce) in MX-1 and MX-2.
- Permit congregate living for cooperative housing without a special permit in all zones.
- Allow some types of small commercial/retail/restaurant uses on all corner lots with a special permit, especially where fresh groceries are sold in food deserts.

3.3: Use-Specific Regulations

- For A(1)a., Allow three additional employees in a live/work dwelling rather than just one, in order to provide live/work businesses with some greater flexibility.
- For A(2)b.2, Allow the type of mixed-income developments reserved for the R2 zone in the R3 zone, as well, since R3 is missing any type of mixed-income development designation in the regulations. Additionally, both of these zones should allow for a lot size minimum of 700 SF per unit for mixed-income development to allow for this type of development on a typical city lot size.
- Remove A(3)b., which states “Minimum side yard setback requirements shall apply to end units only.”, to allow separately developed single-unit attached homes and rows of single-unit attached homes to connect, creating a more continuous street wall typical of urban development. The current regulations would lead to a gap between adjacent townhome developments built at different times, rather than allowing them to connect in a way more typical of traditional urban cities.



3.4D.(1) Additional Regulations for Specific Accessory Uses and Structures

- a.2. General Requirements - Accessory dwelling units should be allowed for both single-unit detached and single-unit attached dwellings, as long as the accessory dwelling units have primary street access, as there's no inherent difference in usage or ownership between single-unit attached and detached.
- e.2. Ownership Requirements - Edit "The owner of the property on which an Accessory Dwelling Unit use is located shall be required to reside in either the Primary Dwelling Unit or the Accessory Dwelling Unit as the owner's primary place of residence except for Use Types in the Congregate Living Use Category." to read "The owner of the property on which an Accessory Dwelling Unit use is located shall be required to reside in either the Primary Dwelling Unit or the Accessory Dwelling Unit as the owner's primary place of residence except either for Use Types in the Congregate Living Use Category. Alternatively, the Accessory Dwelling Unit can be designated as an affordable dwelling unit certified by the Department of Neighborhood and Business Development, or all owners of the property must reside within Syracuse City Limits." The current limitations on accessory dwelling units deter their construction.

3.6A.(1)a.1. Use Definitions

- Modify "Dwelling, Single-Unit Attached: A building that contains single dwelling units that are attached by means of party walls to another single dwelling unit, each of which is a single and independent dwelling unit, including row homes and townhomes," to instead read: "Dwelling, Single-Unit Attached: A building that contains single dwelling units that either is attached by means of party walls to one or more buildings or dwelling unit(s), or utilizes common wall construction." This will allow for development and character more typical of traditional city neighborhoods, including the gradual and seamless transitions from townhomes to small apartment buildings and mixed-use/commercial buildings.

4.4C: Off-Street Parking and Loading - Minimum Required Off-Street Parking Spaces

- Change the term "Minimum Required Off-Street Parking Spaces" to "Minimum Recommended Off-Street Parking Spaces" to allow the market to determine how many parking spaces are built and to prevent requiring the costly overbuilding of off-street parking in a space-constrained urban setting.



4.6D.(2) Site and Building Design - Multi-unit Residential Building Design - Ground Floor Residential Units

- In MX-1, MX-2, MX-3, and MX-4, Allow ground-floor residential to be at street level rather than raised or set back if at least 20% of the ground floor of the building, with an entrance directly from a street frontage, is dedicated to commercial or office uses. This will make mixed-use residential development more economically feasible in these zones.

7.2: Other Definitions

- Define “Common Wall Construction” as “Structures that contain a side setback of zero on one or more sides of a parcel, permitted in any zone that allows for common wall construction. Common wall construction is permitted between any two structures of any type, or any one structure and a lot line not containing a common wall structure in the adjoining lot.” This will allow for development and character more typical of traditional city neighborhoods.