



CENTER FOR ETHICS IN BUSINESS AND GOVERNANCE

Saint Anselm College

Possible Manchester Zoning Changes for Greater Infill and Affordability

Manchester could make its regulatory environment more welcoming to multifamily housing, while also promoting environmental, aesthetic, and fiscal goals: increasing density, reducing overcrowding, reducing car-dependent infrastructure, and raising land values. Here are some possible tweaks to the city's zoning code with these objectives in mind.

1. Allow townhouse, duplex, and multifamily dwellings by right in B-2 (General Business District). To accommodate attractive rowhouses, set a minimum lot size of 1,200 square feet, a minimum lot frontage of 12 feet, a zero front minimum setback, and a maximum floor area ratio of 1.5 for residential. Lexington, Kentucky has done something similar: <https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2018/2/14/a-small-zoning-change-could-have-big-implications-for-lexington>.
2. Allow duplex and multifamily dwellings by right in CBD (Central Business District). Restricting residential development in a CBD is extremely unusual. Eliminate the maximum floor area ratio in the CBD.
3. Slightly reduce the R-2 (two-family) minimum lot size to 5000 square feet to match the R-3 (urban multifamily) minimum lot size. Reduce the R-2 minimum lot frontage to 50 feet. As a rule, minimum lot frontage should be the minimum lot size divided by 100.
4. Slightly reduce the R-1A (single-family medium density) minimum lot size to 10,000 square feet to match the minimum lot frontage of 100 feet.
5. Slightly reduce the R-SM (suburban multifamily) minimum lot size to 7,500 square feet to match the minimum lot frontage of 75 feet.
6. Reduce the RS (suburban) minimum lot size to 15,000 square feet to match the minimum lot frontage of 150 feet.
7. Reduce front setbacks in all districts to 10 feet. Here is some information on why front setback requirements are especially undesirable: <https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2019/2/22/question-of-the-week-why-are-building-setbacks-sometimes-undesirable>.
8. Reduce minimum parking requirements for all residential units to one space per unit (Table 10.04).
9. Expand the ADU ordinance. Eliminate the owner-occupancy requirement, the conditional use permit requirement, the one-parking-space-per-bedroom requirement, and the connecting-door provision, and set the maximum lot coverage and maximum floor area ratio at 75% and 0.75, respectively, in any residential district for properties with ADUs.