



City of Othello
Planning Commission
July 19, 2021
Anne Henning

CALL TO ORDER

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this was a hybrid meeting with a remote component via GoToMeeting. Chair Chris Dorow called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Chair Chris Dorow, Brian Gentry, Alma Carmona, Daniela Voorhies

Absent: Kevin Gilbert

Staff: Community Development Director Anne Henning, Building Inspector Tim Unruh

Attendees: Bob Carlson, Councilmembers John Lallas, Corey Everett, and Angel Garza

MINUTES APPROVAL

June 21, 2021 minutes were approved as written. M/S Gentry/Carmona

RESIDENTIAL LOT COVERAGE & LOT SIZE – PUBLIC HEARING:

Chair Chris Dorow explained conflict of interest and asked if any Commissioners had a conflict of interest on this matter. All verified that they did not have a conflict of interest.

Community Development Director Anne Henning gave an overview of the issues. Lot coverage standards date back to the first zoning ordinance in 1950. The R-1 Zone had the same 35% lot coverage limit as now and a minimum lot size of 4800 SF, which is much smaller than the current standard. The only other Residential Zone was R-2, which had no standards for either lot coverage or lot size. These standards remained until 1995 when the R-3 and R-4 Zones were added, minimum lot size increase, and the 35% lot coverage was applied to all Residential Zones. There were no significant changes until the 2020 Zoning Update.

Ms. Henning showed site plans of various projects that had to be denied due to the lot coverage limitation, including 3 patio covers and 4 triplexes. The projects met other standards such as setbacks and parking, but lot coverage varied from 36% to 44%. She also showed an existing multi-plex building from 1961 that covers approximately 50% of the lot.

The lot size issue has 2 components: Correcting an error in the R-4 Zone and considering lot size in general. In the 2020 Update, extra lot size requirements were added to the R-4 Zone, which had the inadvertent effect of requiring a much larger lot in R-4 than R-3 for a triplex or 4-plex. This obviously doesn't make sense when R-4 should be denser than R-3. This error can be corrected by just having one lot size in R-4 without calling out lot size increases for parking or landscaping, since a project would need to meet all those requirements anyway.

Allowing smaller lots can increase housing supply and reduce cost, both needs shown in the Housing Action Plan. Changing lot sizes would affect new lots but would be very unlikely to affect existing developed areas. At the June meeting, the Commission had discussed reducing the R-3 lot size.

Chair Dorow opened the public testimony portion of the hearing at 6:10. The following spoke in favor of the issues:

Councilmember Angel Garza, 625 N. 12th Ave, was in favor of higher density. He felt 6000 or 6600 SF would be appropriate in R-2. This would allow him to create 6 more lots between 9th and 11th Ave. He was in favor of increased lot coverage to 40% or 45%. He has requests for a 3500 SF house with 800 SF garage, but he can't build large houses like this even on a 10,000 SF lot because it exceeds the current lot coverage. He stated Othello is unique since it is a farming community. The price point most people can afford is \$230,000 to \$270,000. We need to consider what to do to grow the city. This is a low income area, and if houses cost \$280,000-\$300,000, sales will drop. A manufacturing employee may be able to afford it, but a seasonal agriculture employee working 10 months of the year won't. Being able to create 6 more lots would help his development, provide 6 more homes at lower cost, and generate more taxes for the city. He would like the Council, Planning Commission, and developers to work together to keep the city growing.

Councilmember Corey Everett, 539 S. 4th Ave, stated that he didn't understand why lots needed to be so big. He said he has a 1400 SF home, 300 SF garage, and 200 SF portable building on a 6500 SF lot, leaving him a great size of yard. He questioned the need to have a minimum lot size at all. Some people would like having a smaller yard. He said it should be no one's business what someone does in their back yard as long as it doesn't bother the neighbors. He said lot sizes need to be smaller.

Councilmember John Lallas, 456 E. Fircrest, proposed:

Zone	Min lot size (SF)	Max lot coverage
R-1	7000	50%
R-2	6000 or less	50%
R-3 & R-4	5000	No restriction, as long as they provide parking

He stated he likes the Sea Hawk Apartments but there could be more parking or larger units. He also likes rowhouses in pairs with courtyards between.

The following testified neutral to the issues:

Bob Carlson, 2213 S. Broadway, said he liked the lot size and lot coverage suggestions from Chair Dorow last meeting. He also prefers to keep distinctions between the zones.

No one testified in opposition to the issues.

Chair Dorow mentioned that some cities don't have lot coverage limits, but they have other more complicated regulations to address it. He felt the Commission made a mistake on the 2020 zoning update by not recommending 6000 SF lots in R-3. He felt R-4 could be 4000 or 5000. Angel Garza pointed out that there is a great need for 6000 SF lots, and a 1200 to 1400 SF house easily fits on a 6000 SF lot. He stated that if prices stay high, he will go to a 1000 SF house to bring prices down, but that is too big for a 7000 SF lot.

The Commission discussed the merits of rezoning vacant land to a higher-density zone compared to decreasing lot size. Corey Everett pointed out that rezoning is a lot more complicated than changing zoning text. Angel Garza pointed out that all cities are running out of land. The city of Quincy encouraged him to plat smaller lots, but he wanted to build custom homes so he did larger lots.

Commissioner Carmona felt 7000 SF was a good size for a lot. She felt 8000 SF might be too big as a minimum.

John Lallas pointed out that water is scarce and he hates to see potable water being used for landscaping. He mentioned that in Phoenix, houses are close the street and the back yard is covered patio or a pool so there isn't a lot of need for landscape water. He felt Othello should not be requiring greenery and instead should require desert scape.

Commissioners discussed various possibilities and ended up with the following:

Zone	Min lot size (SF)	Max lot coverage
R-1	7000	50%
R-2	6000	50%
R-3	5000	65%
R-4	4500	No restriction

Chair Dorow closed the public testimony at 7:17 PM. He asked Building Inspector Tim Unruh if the proposal would be good for Othello. Mr. Unruh replied that Othello is in desperate need of houses and prices are going way up, so it is good to make housing less expensive and easier to provide.

Motion to recommend to the City Council the discussed changes to lot size and lot coverage. M/S Carmona/Voorhies. 4-0 in favor.

ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

The Planning Commission has been working for several years to create an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) ordinance that the City Council finds acceptable. Now with the adoption of the Housing Action Plan and establishment of a rental housing licensing and safety inspection program, the Mayor would like the Council to discuss an ADU ordinance again. Given the amount of time that has passed and various changes in circumstances, the Commission is reviewing their recommendation before it is forwarded to Council.

The Commission reviewed the July 15 draft and made the following changes:

17.63.030(b) Accepted the strikeout for lot coverage of 35%, since in the previous action, the Commission is recommending higher lot coverage minimums in all residential zones.

17.63.030(f) The Commission discussed the practicality of requiring separate utility connections for an ADU within an existing house, and determined it would be difficult. Therefore, they struck out the first part of this section so separate connections would only be required for detached ADUs.

17.63.030(h) Building Inspector Tim Unruh asked the Commission to add the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC) to the list of relevant codes. The room size requirements of the IPMC are listed in 17.63.030(k), but there are other parts of the IPMC that may apply.

17.63.030(l) The Commission discussed whether to keep the proposed section limiting the ADU to 2 bedrooms and 900 square feet. They didn't want to unnecessarily limit housing but also wanted to keep ADUs in scale with the neighborhood. They discussed limiting ADUs to a percentage of the main house, but some existing houses are pretty small. The Commission decided to keep the language as proposed.

