



OKC Development Codes Update

HP/Urban Conservation District Focus Group

Heritage Hills Historic Preservation and Heritage Hills East UCD

January 28, 2023

Staff in attendance: Lisa Chronister, Assistant Planning Director; Marilyn Lamensdorf Allen, Program Planner and staff liaison to the Code Update; Katie Friddle, Principal Planner, Current Planning division manager and Oklahoma City Historic Preservation Officer

Residents in attendance: Heritage Hills HOA Annual Meeting, about 60 residents

Staff gave a presentation as invited guests of the Heritage Hills HOA. Staff explained the proposal for new residential zones in the area known as the “Urban Medium LUTA” (Land Use Typology Area) as assigned in the City’s Comprehensive Plan, plan **okc**. The comprehensive plan called for integrating residential unit types and sizes; increasing walkability while ensuring that adjacent construction was compatible to mitigate any negative impacts of more compact development. The existing zoning code (Chapter 59 of the City’s Ordinances) does not allow easy integration of different housing types, does not focus on preserving trees and open space (environmental protection); and needs better standards to ensure adjacent commercial development is compatible with residential development. The presentation explained the concept for one proposed zone to be called Urban Medium-Single Dwelling (UM-SD). The one zone would have three development choices, depending on the property’s location. The intention of the zone is “One Zone, Many Options.”

The presentation pointed out in a map that in Heritage Hills all of the properties have a “base zone” of HP instead of R-1, R-2, R-3 etc. The base zone allows only Single-Family Residential uses. However, a few duplexes and quadplexes built decades ago exist in the neighborhood under HP zoning. These dwellings are considered “non-conforming.” They can remain but can’t be expanded. In Heritage Hills East, the northern half of the neighborhood is also zoned HP. However, the southern half of the neighborhood is zoned R-3, R-4 and commercial and so could not be zoned HP. Instead, the neighborhood has two overlays, one as Heritage Hills East Urban Conservation District (UCD) and one as “Historic Landmark.” Both HP base zones and HL designated areas

require historic preservation review for changes to the properties. Staff explained that Heritage Hills was not platted with alleys. Heritage Hills East was platted with some north-south alleys. However, most of the structures were not built according to that configuration. Instead, they were built east-west in line with surrounding neighborhoods.

Staff explained that Urban Medium areas of the city are being prioritized for new zones for at least three reasons. 1) **planokc** laid out a vision for the Urban Medium area of “medium” development intensity; unlike areas outside the core of the City, UM has city services; new services don’t have to be added as they do when new neighborhoods are built at the edges of the city. UM areas also have access to modes of transportation other than vehicles. The existing UM walkable patterns can improve health outcomes for the City and provide various housing types for different stages of people’s lives. The City’s current zones do not allow the type of intensity envisioned for the UM area in walkable formats. 2) The City has seen a proliferation of special zoning requests called Simplified Planned Unit Development (SPUD) to build the more-dense housing types envisioned in **planokc**. The problem with SPUDs, however, is that each one is individually negotiated, and the outcome is unpredictable to adjoining residents and to the zoning applicants. 3) As in Heritage Hills East, development types of smaller lot single family, duplexes, quadplexes and garage apartments were built in the Urban Medium areas of the city during the 1920s to the 1940s. These dwellings could not be re-built under the City’s current zones.

Staff and consultants have spent the past year listening to residents and builder/developers to determine what is needed to both increase housing in the core area of the City and to respect existing neighborhood character. Staff also has analyzed current conditions and examined SPUD zones that requested more density to determine what is needed to both build more units in the core and keep neighborhood character. The input process led the staff to some guiding principles for the new zone rules.

- Provide flexibility without negotiation
- Accommodate different housing types and promote housing affordability
- Protect neighborhood character and ensure compatibility with current neighborhood character form having distinct height, setbacks, lot coverage, street frontage and regular spacing of driveways.
- Support infill development
- Guide density to appropriate locations. **Planokc** envisions a level of density for the UM LUTA that ranges from 10 to 40 dwelling units per acre. The zones should guide the range (ie. Where do single dwellings fit and where do multi-dwellings fit?)
- Protect stormwater quality and reduce quantity
- Ensure predictability

Staff explained the concept for the new Urban Medium single-dwelling (UM-SD) zone which is based on the above principles. It is proposed to replace R-1 and R-2 current zones. The proposed UM-SD zone allows three patterns. The three types depend on whether the site is in the middle of a block, on a corner, or whether the lot could have access to an alley so that vehicles can park behind the buildings and not disrupt the sidewalks and walkability along the street. The three building types are allowed on streets identified in plan **okc** as “Neighborhood” Streets. The three forms are:

- 1) Standard Options (Pattern 1): Anywhere in an area that would be zoned “UM-SD” an owner may build two dwellings on a lot with either a primary home and a smaller “accessory” dwelling in the rear on a minimum lot size of 6,000 square feet and a minimum lot width of 50 feet. The owner may also build an attached duplex and may split the duplex into two ownerships of 25 feet lot width or more. The “accessory” dwelling may not be split into a second separate lot. It will also have lower height limits and building coverage restrictions so that structures remain “accessory” to the principal dwelling. A single home is also allowed. This is proposed to be called “Pattern 1.”
- 2) Alley Options: (Pattern 2) On a lot that can be accessed via a constructed alley, the owner may build up to two buildings and four dwellings. Lots that have constructed alley access may be split for smaller single dwellings to 25-foot lot widths. Parking would be accessed from the alley and/or from one single drive allowed for every 50 feet of lot frontage (which means small lot homes would need to share a drive from the front). About one-third of existing residences in the Urban Medium LUTA are located on a platted alley, although most are not built. This is proposed to be termed “Pattern 2.” Again, Heritage Hills has no alleys, deleting the use of this option in the neighborhood.
- 3) Corner Options: (Pattern 3) On a corner lot, an owner may build up to two buildings and four dwellings. More intensity is proposed at corners due to their ability to provide a driveway on each street front and essentially split up the parking areas. This may have the form of one quadplex with parking in the rear, two duplexes, a single dwelling and accessory dwellings or small-lot single dwellings split into lots with 25-feet of frontage. This is proposed to be called “Pattern 3” and allows the most density in the UM-SD zone.

The second part of the presentation focused on options for the Historic Preservation base zone and the overlays of Historic Landmark and Heritage Hills East Urban Conservation District (UCD). Staff explained that the HP base zone currently has no “bulk regulations” like height limits and lot coverage, sometimes making cases before the Historic Preservation Commission difficult to decide. An overlay, such as the Historic Landmark current designation, has a base zone underneath to draw the basic patterns and then has conditions on top to tailor it to the overlay district. Most historic zoning in the country works through an overlay zone. All of the current historic design regulations and review procedures would be the same whether the HP base zone remains or is changed to an overlay.

After the presentation and some questions and answers, the following points were made as feedback and discussion.

Comments related to current HP regulations:

- The HP base zone was partly established to maintain the single dwelling residential homes in the neighborhood. (“If its not broken, why fix it?” one resident explained. Another asked, “If we don’t want to add density, why force it into the neighborhood?”)
- Splitting lots for duplexes is a problem in that it would change the lot width and lot sizes that are being preserved with HP review processes.
- If the amount of people doubles in the area, we are not sure we have adequate parking, and water and sewer and gas capacity to support the growth. Water pressure and aging water lines have been a problem as new projects are undertaken in the neighborhood.
- Residents were in favor of accessory dwelling units if they were limited in size and kept the look of historic detached garages that are part of the character of the neighborhood. Residents were not in favor of demolishing detached garages to accommodate an accessory dwelling.
- Residents asked whether the HP rules as an overlay could override some of the UM-SD base zone patterns. Staff replied that, yes, overlay zones can restrict some of the forms. In addition, staff explained, HP guidelines prevent demolitions in most cases and have design guidelines, such as maintaining similar lot widths to the historic pattern, which would prevent the construction of some of the UM-SD patterns.
- Converting historic single dwelling homes into duplexes and quadplexes and splitting lots were some of the largest concerns expressed in relation to historic preservation about the UM-SD proposal by the residents.

Residents expressed the need to continue discussions on the code update. Staff said they are available to help at any further discussions and that there would be many hearings on the code prior to any adoption of it by the City Council.