

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Housing and Community Development Committee  
**From:** Judy Daniel, Planning and Development Director  
**Prepared By :** Shannon Tuch, Assistant Planning Director  
**Date:** May 26, 2010  
**Subject:** Affordable Housing

### **Background:**

*The 2008 Affordable Housing Plan for the City of Asheville* reflects a six-month planning effort by a diverse group of volunteers and advocates dedicated to exploring values and practices that help citizens access and maintain affordable housing. In June of 2008, the Asheville City Council reviewed and accepted this report with a recommendation for more work to continue in identifying high priority areas and possible measures that could be implemented to help accomplish recommendations included in the report and reduce barriers to affordable housing.

### **Summary:**

A smaller "working group" composed of members of the original task force was formed and began work with city staff on the Plan recommendations and other related matters. This group began this extensive task by considering key recommendations, and chose to first pursue developing a UDO text amendment that would directly address:

Recommendation #6 – for all proposed developments under 50 units, density bonuses for affordable housing should be a use-by-right, subject-to-special-requirements, not a conditional use. The special requirements should be developed with community input and should not be prohibitive or onerous.

This same wording amendment also indirectly addresses:

Recommendation #9 – In all residential single family districts, allow duplexes, triplexes and quadraplexes as conversions or new construction as a use-by-right, subject-to-special-requirements. Re-evaluate the special requirements currently in place for duplexes to increase flexibility. In general, all residential areas should allow multi-family buildings that fit the design, scale and character of the neighborhood.

This amendment only indirectly addresses #9 by providing a use-by-right option for small multi-family structures in single family residential districts but only in exchange for affordable housing or green building. By requiring affordability or green building components, this amendment does not directly address the intent of the recommendation.

While staff and the working group began work on this proposal, a parallel discussion within the Sustainability Advisory Committee on Energy and the Environment (SACEE) was also occurring where an interest in developing an incentive option for green building was being investigated. Recognizing

the relationship between the two initiatives, the HCD Committee requested that Planning staff consider the feasibility of incorporating both elements into one single amendment. Despite initial concerns on the part of both groups, a draft joint amendment has been worked out. The attached draft titled "Sustainable Development Projects" offers density and other building incentives to projects that address key City adopted goals as an option by right provided a number of basic requirements can be met. Additionally, a menu of desirable features has been developed with each feature being assigned a relative value (points). Higher scoring projects are eligible for larger density bonuses and other flexible development options that allow reductions or waivers of other development requirements such as minimum lot size, setbacks, open space and height limitations. A separate, more simplified, option is offered for green building projects based on LEED (or NC Healthy Built) certification. When combined, special projects that meet both strategic goals are offered even larger bonuses.

The draft and menu were tested on a number of project sites within Asheville to determine whether the extent of the bonuses offered were appropriate.

A few other key points include:

- The Use-by-right option will be an administrative review only replacing the existing Conditional Use Permit process.
- The proposal eliminates the separation requirement between small multi-family structures in single family neighborhoods.
- A pre-requisite for Sustainable Development Projects requires that they be within ¼ mile of a transit line, with additional points offered for very close proximity to 30 minute transit lines.
- Reductions in off-street parking are offered when available on-street parking exists in the area or the majority of the units are 1 bedroom efficiency apartments.
- Limitations on Sustainable Development Projects in single family districts, including Architectural and Design requirements.
- Review thresholds are established by the base density, not the bonus density (For example, a project that would be allowed 40 units under the basic zoning but receives a significant bonus that would double the density to 80 units would be reviewed as a Level II and not a Level III).
- A "Good Neighbor Agreement" is required and must be posted on site within view of residents.

**Fiscal Impact:**

No negative fiscal impact is anticipated.

**Recommendation:**

Staff recommends that the HCD Committee support the creation of a new "Sustainable Development Project" application as a new Use-by-right, Subject-to-special-requirements and direct staff to continue working with interested stakeholders on refining the draft before scheduling the item for consideration by the Planning & Zoning Commission at their July 7, 2010 meeting.

Attachment: Sustainable Development Project draft  
Appendix 7-x draft