

Zoning for Co-Living in Alexandria: A Case Study Examination of Denver and Salt Lake City

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Prepared by

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Introduction

As housing prices climb and wage growth lags, the U.S. has seen a renewed interest in co-living housing—housing types where common spaces such as bathrooms and kitchens are shared. These housing types have piqued cities’ interest due to their potential to provide more housing that is affordable to their communities. Co-living takes a variety of shapes, sizes, and forms (including multi-unit and traditionally single-family homes); despite this variation, some form of this housing has been common for centuries, both in the U.S. and around the world (Urban Land Institute, 2018).

Perhaps the most well-known co-living housing type is single-room occupancy units (SROs), which have historically served as cities’ lowest-cost, permanent form of rental housing in the U.S. (Harvard Kennedy School, n.d.). This form of housing has had a turbulent history; poor perceptions coupled with large-scale urban renewal and redevelopment in the 1970s saw significant demolition or conversions of SROs, which was a factor that “led to a dramatic increase in homelessness in the 1980s” (McCormick, 2018). SROs were again reintroduced by the federal government at the end of the 1980s as a form of housing for individuals transitioning from homelessness (Sturtevant, 2017; Harvard Kennedy School, n.d.). More recently, master-leasing of SROs has been a strategy employed by some cities to create additional, permanent supportive housing units (City of Salt Lake, 2019).

Against the backdrop of evolving uses and policy debates around SROs, cities have continued to host a number of other similar housing types, such as rooming and boarding houses and congregate housing facilities. While definitions and uses of these forms of housing vary across cities, these housing types also provide shared common areas and more affordable rents. Emerging in this space has been the national surge and interest in microunits, or small studio apartments typically appealing to young singles in urban areas, which “represent a market response to high housing costs in several major American Cities” (Gabbe, 2005, p. 223; Sturtevant, 2017). Some forms of microunits offer shared common areas. Also, due to their small scale, microunits can be a source of affordable housing, though their affordability depends on types of amenities provided and their location (Sturtevant, 2017).

Perhaps sparked by response to microunits, U.S. cities have been revisiting their zoning codes and policies in efforts to reintroduce, expand, or permit co-living housing to increase the supply of housing affordable to a range of income groups. A diverse mix of housing options that are affordable to a range of household incomes is “critical to supporting sustainable, long-term local and regional economic growth...[producing] positive outcomes for families and children... [and serving as] a basis for building diverse and welcoming communities.” (Sturtevant, 2017, p.4). Zoning changes for co-living housing are not a panacea for addressing rising housing costs, but rather are part of a host of land use and zoning strategies and tools cities can use to more fully promote a “full range of housing options” (p. 4).

This report responds to a request from the Alexandria Department of Planning and Zoning to research how zoning ordinances can be modified to accommodate co-living as one way to provide more affordable housing. We describe the policy and development context for co-living housing, assess the baseline conditions for co-living in Alexandria, and present case studies of leading U.S. cities’ co-living efforts. In doing so, we endeavor to answer the following:

1. What cities are leaders in co-living housing development?
2. How are leading cities defining co-living housing and related terms?
3. How do leading cities use regulatory (e.g., zoning and permitting) and non-regulatory (e.g., outreach and branding) strategies to facilitate or encourage development of co-living housing?
5. How do leading cities manage community concerns around co-living?
6. Who are stakeholders in this policy area, and how do they help/hinder cities’ co-living efforts?

Methodology and Approach

Background and Literature Review: We conducted a literature review on co-living to establish a baseline of common terminology, identify barriers to the construction of co-living housing typologies, assess the economic feasibility of co-living, and profile co-living in the D.C. area.

To establish a baseline of existing conditions in Alexandria we:

- Reviewed the Housing Master Plan to frame the policy context and drivers for the City's interest in co-living.
- Identified definitions, permitting requirements, and allowed locations in Alexandria's zoning ordinance for rooming houses, congregate houses, and apartment hotels.
- Reviewed special use permits (SUPs) for existing co-living.
- Evaluated the City's past research on co-living.

Case Studies: Preliminary research indicated that large cities such as San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York have undertaken co-living initiatives. Some mid-size cities, such as Seattle, Miami, and Denver, and smaller cities, such as Salt Lake City, have as well. Because these are recent efforts, literature on their measured outcomes is somewhat limited. Also, while some cities have expressed interest in revising their zoning ordinances to reinstate or expand co-living housing, very few have actually done so, and/or have published information on their zoning text amendment processes related to co-living. Of the modest selection of potential case studies, we focused on cities that have displayed progressive leadership in the co-living housing space and are actively undergoing zoning text amendment processes at the time of this report's development: Denver and Salt Lake City. In addition to the benefits this approach provided from a research standpoint (namely, availability of information and project manager points of contact), these two cities have employed a diversity of innovative solutions responding to the need for co-living.

We researched both cities' zoning ordinances and housing master plans and reviewed the cities' communications around co-living (e.g., toolkits, infographics, and other public engagement materials).

Our team also conducted semi-structured interviews with city planning staff in Denver and Salt Lake City to deepen our understanding of each city's process and approach for developing their co-living zoning amendments. We identified staff through review of zoning amendment project websites. Appendix 6 presents the interview questions.

WHAT IS CO-LIVING?

- Co-living looks a little different everywhere; there are different models it can take (microunits, rooming houses, SROs, shared single family homes). Most localities have at least 1-2 types.
- Common spaces are shared, and square footage of individual rooms is generally smaller.
- They are usually rental units, offering flexible short or long-term stays.
- Co-living housing spans the spectrum of housing affordability and is an important contributor to the housing continuum (ranging from extremely low-income <30% area median income (AMI) to moderate income 80-100% AMI).
- U.S. localities are revisiting their zoning to accommodate these unique but important housing types to further contribute diverse housing types to the housing continuum.

Literature Review

Our team conducted a literature review on housing that provides shared common areas. The review focused on several key areas: 1) definitions and terminology, 2) barriers to construction, 3) economic feasibility, and 4) co-living in the D.C. metro area. A complete list of references is available in Appendix 1, and Appendix 4 briefly describes the most salient references we reviewed.

Definitions and Terminology

SROs and microunits are the predominant terms used to refer to housing that provides shared common areas. We undertook a literature review focused on these terms and related uses.

Multiple literature sources agree and acknowledge that there is no standard definition for microunits, and that it is an ambiguous and evolving term that can refer to a variety of housing types. Literature agrees that microunits are typically 400 square feet or less (Sturtevant, 2017; Urban Land Institute, 2014; Iglesias, 2014). Working definitions suggest that individual microunits are distinct from SROs because SROs have communal bathroom and kitchen facilities, while each microunit contains a full kitchen and bathroom. However, this distinction is utilized by researchers and practitioners when comparing individual units only, such as a single self-contained microunit (also loosely referred to by some as an efficiency, studio, or micro-studio) that is part of a high-rise development, for example, to an individual SRO unit.

However, there are also private developments that consist either partially or entirely of microunits where common areas such as bathrooms and kitchens are shared, creating some ambiguity between these types of units and SROs. These private developments have been referred to by some as micro-housing, micro-apartments, micro-apartment buildings, small housing units, and 21st century SROs, (Iglesias, 2014; McCormick, 2018; Stern & Yager, 2018; Urban Land Institute, 2014). Some practitioners also treat these types of developments as synonymous with the term microunits (Urban Land Institute, 2014). In addition, there are private companies that facilitate communal environments by way of leasing individual bedrooms within a suite that has common areas. Private companies use the term co-living to refer to this floorplan/rental option in their developments, which is sometimes provided among a host of other rental options, such as traditional one- and two-bedrooms. There are some companies, such as PadSplit, who similarly employ this concept and rent out individual rooms within single family homes. In general, these private development options are sometimes referred to as “co-living suites” or simply “co-living” (Anderson, 2019; Urban Land Institute, 2018).

Overall, SROs, apartment hotels, microunits, micro-housing, and rooming houses are understood to be related uses (Iglesias, 2014). Some municipalities in the U.S. also use the term congregate housing to refer to SROs (HUD User, 2018); in these instances, these facilities can also be considered a related use. Shared-living and co-living are terms used by some practitioners to broadly acknowledge the umbrella of these related uses, and co-living is a term used by some private development companies who provide units with shared common areas (Urban Land Institute, 2018; Lind, 2018). It is important to note that the term co-living is distinct from the term co-housing, which refers to intentional communities in the form of special developments of single-family homes (The Co-housing Association of the United States, 2020; Mid Atlantic Co-housing, 2020).

For decades, zoning codes across the U.S. have regulated residential living arrangements differently based on the (un)related status of occupants, frequently defining *family* in formal rather than functional terms (i.e., defining family through “blood, marriage, or adoption”) (Redburn, 2019). These strict definitions of family inhibit the sanctioned formation of non-traditional households, limiting creation of co-living environments like roommate arrangements in single-family homes. Through co-

living efforts, municipalities are re-examining the definitions of *household* and *family* to create more flexible and equitable regulations, which can provide more affordable housing options and permit the construction of more diverse housing types, such as private microunit developments.

Barriers to Constructing Co-Living Housing: SROs and Microunits

Broadly, the most commonly cited challenges to the construction of SROs and microunits are parking requirements (Stern & Yager, 2018; Gabbe, 2015; HUD User, 2018) and density restrictions (i.e., the maximum number of units permitted per lot) (Urban Land Institute, 2018; Stern & Yager, 2018). A study in New York City found that financing these units through public subsidies can also be a challenge, as some public subsidies in the city favor larger units, and some lenders are wary of investment because they feel it is new territory and the model is untested (Stern & Yager, 2018). Other barriers include lengthy administrative review processes and minimum unit and/or lot size requirements (Gabbe, 2015; Stern & Yager, 2018).

Some cities, like New York and Austin, have focused on locating these forms of housing in highly transit-accessible areas, which can help overcome parking challenges (McCormick, 2018). In Austin, microunit developments are incentivized by allowing increased density and reduced parking when constructed in transit corridors, if 10% of the building is priced at affordable rates for those earning less than 80 percent AMI (City of Miami Dade, 2018).

The Furman Center for Housing Research working paper (2018) and Gabbe's (2015) case study of micro-apartments in San Francisco are instructive examples of identifying city-specific barriers to these types of units; each study examines the zoning code in depth and provides zoning text amendment recommendations to overcome identified barriers and allow for more ease in the production of these types of units. Notably, the Furman Center working paper (2018) recommends the provision of a pilot project in New York City to test the viability of these units as a way to ease lender concerns.

Economic Feasibility of Co-Living Housing: SROs and Microunits

Co-living housing may be supplied by private developers, public agencies, non-profits, and/or individual homeowners. Some research has examined the market potential of SROs and microunits (HUD User, 2018). The above referenced Furman Center for Housing Research working paper quantified the return on investment (ROI) of rents from SROs to gauge whether these returns were competitive for developers when compared to microunits and classic studio apartments, which could incentivize construction. The study compared the unit size, total number of units per building, and rents per unit of small studios, micro-studios (units containing bathroom and kitchen facilities), SROs with communal kitchen facilities, and SROs with communal kitchen and bath facilities in New York City. The research found that developers were able to maintain a competitive ROI at lower per-unit rental rates when units decreased in size, increased in number (in a building), and had larger areas of communally shared spaces. (Stern & Yager, 2018). The department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) suggests this report can be used as a framework for municipalities to employ in efforts to gauge potential benefits and barriers to SRO/microunit construction (2018).

In 2018, the city of Alexandria Office of Housing conducted a special study to gauge the role microunits could play in expanding affordable housing options in the city. The report used a similar framework as the NYU Furman Center report, as it compared the rents and square footage between microunits and 1-bedroom apartments. The report did not examine the ROI on construction, but instead focused on the whether these units could be affordable to those earning less than 80 percent AMI. Staff's research was guided by two primary questions:

- “Can microunits help expand housing affordability in neighborhoods with close proximity to transit, jobs, and amenities consistent with the Housing Master Plan’s recommendation to enhance housing options in areas of opportunity?”
- If yes, will the market produce microunits in adequate quantities? If not, should the City incentivize their construction?” (p. 1)

The study (2018) found that microunits can increase amenitized urban housing choices available to renters, and that monthly rents at face value are lower than market rate rents of standard-sized units. In addition, it was identified that microunits are effectively helping to provide housing options for households earning between 80 percent and 100 percent AMI. However, the study (2018) concluded that microunits “fail to create opportunities to meaningfully expand housing affordability to households earning below 80% AMI” (p. 4). The report recommended that the city should not actively incentivize these types of units, but also “should not preclude or disincentivize their construction in the presence of market demand” (p. 4). The report also stated that staff would continue to review these recommendations as market conditions evolve.

Co-Living Housing in the Washington, D.C. Region

In 2017, Lisa Sturtevant, PhD, prepared a publication titled “A Guidebook for Increasing Housing Affordability in the Greater Washington Region,” which compiled planning and policy tools that local governments, developers, non-profits and advocacy groups in the Washington D.C. region are using, or could use in the future, to produce and/or preserve housing that is affordable to a range of household incomes. The report inventories and benchmarks different land use and zoning tools employed by the region’s local jurisdictions (Washington D.C., Alexandria, Arlington County, Fairfax County, Loudoun County, Prince William County, Montgomery County, City of Rockville and Prince George’s County). Microunits and SROs were two of the land use and zoning tools that were inventoried, which yielded the following insights on microunits and SROs in the region.¹

Microunits. D.C. is the sole jurisdiction in the region with a microunit² policy. The report (Sturtevant, 2017) noted that in practice, new microunits constructed have been larger than the city’s minimum size for an apartment (220 square feet), and that the first microunits in the city were rental, but as of 2017 there “was at least one building that has for-sale microunits with 400 square foot, one-bedroom units” (Sturtevant, 2017, p. 22).

SROs are not common in most communities in the region. In 2003, a Fairfax County task force of housing advocates, developers, and government agencies studied SRO housing to gauge its potential to provide housing for low-income single adults in the county (Sturtevant, 2017). As a result of the study, the county made zoning modifications to make construction of SROs easier (Sturtevant, 2017). As of 2017, the Fairfax County Department of Housing and Community Development manages a development of 20,200 square feet SROs, which can be rented for two weeks at a time (Sturtevant, 2017). The units are located on the ground floor of an office building.

Co-living units. In addition to microunits and SROs, there are some apartment buildings in the D.C. area that provide co-living units/suites. The Highline Apartment development is one such example; in addition to one- and two-bedroom rental options, a suite of furnished bedrooms with shared communal

¹ Because the report was published in 2017, it is possible that these findings do not completely reflect current conditions.

² The report defines microunits as self-contained units (bathroom and kitchen included in the unit) and distinguishes them from SROs, in which individual units share these facilities. The report also underscores that microunits are most appealing to young, single people in dense urban areas, and considers SROs to be a housing option for individuals at-risk of homelessness or who have other urgent housing or social service needs.

spaces is also available for tenants (Kashino, 2019). The suite arrangement allows each individual bedroom to be rented out. WeLive, a private co-living provider (and subsidiary of the WeWork office company), has a building in Arlington County (Crystal City) that offers a similar arrangement, where individual furnished bedrooms are available for rent within a four-bedroom suite (Gaynor, 2017). Furnished microunit studios are also available for rent, and the building offers multiple communal spaces aimed to foster interaction and create a work/live environment (Perkins Eastman, n.d.).

Synopsis and Context for this Report

In general, few cities have implemented updated zoning changes to accommodate the expansion, promotion, or reintroduction of this form of housing where common space is shared. Many cities are actively revisiting their policies and ordinances to do so, or, at the very minimum, are putting forth policies to preserve what currently exists in their inventory. As cities undergo these processes, it appears they are grappling with the multiplicity of the terms discussed above and are putting forth their own terms and associated definitions as well. And, because this field is emerging, there are few case studies that have examined cities that have completely implemented zoning changes for this type of housing.

Moreover, our research found that the term co-living has been used to refer more broadly to housing types where common spaces are shared. While there isn't a hard and fast definition of this term, it was the only term identified from an authoritative source that broadly encompasses the spectrum and variety of forms this type of housing can take; namely, rooming houses, SROs, apartment hotels, microunits, microunit developments, and private co-living. This term was also the common denominator among these housing types. In addition, we found that the term co-living is most appropriate for addressing what's on the ground in Alexandria now, and what could be built in the future.

As such, for the purposes of this report, the term co-living will refer to the umbrella of housing options that offer opportunities to share common space, including but not limited to rooming houses, congregate housing facilities, apartment hotels, SROs, and microunits. Where relevant, authors of existing reports who've provided definitions of individual terms will be noted.

Housing Policy Context and Existing Co-Living Housing in Alexandria

This section establishes a baseline of existing conditions in Alexandria with respect to co-living housing, including a discussion of relevant local planning/housing policies, relevant terms used by the city, and past work the city has conducted on the subject.

Alexandria Housing Policy Context

The city of Alexandria is home to approximately 140,000 people (City of Alexandria, 2013). Over the past 10+ years, the city has seen an increase in housing and housing costs that has outpaced household income growth (City of Alexandria, 2013). When coupled with the context of a competitive real estate market and regional development pressure, these conditions have contributed to a significant loss in housing that is affordable for low- and moderate-income³ families and individuals (City of Alexandria, 2013). The City of Alexandria's Housing Master plan, adopted in 2013, puts forth the framework needed to obtain the city's affordable housing needs into the 2030s (City of Alexandria, 2013).

In the housing analysis portion of the plan, which was focused on households with incomes at or below 60 percent AMI, the city identified a number of critical housing needs:

- Households with incomes at or below 60 percent AMI currently have very limited options in the city's housing market and are the most adversely impacted by increasing rents of market affordable properties. Over 40 percent of the city's rental housing demand comprises households at or below 60 percent AMI.
- There are very few committed permanent affordable units or subsidized market affordable units for extremely low-income households (those at or below 30 percent AMI) in the city.
- Even under the assumption that all assisted (committed) units will remain affordable in the future, there is still an estimated need for 14,000 new affordable units for those households at or below 60 percent AMI by 2030.
- There is a current unmet need of 800 units for cost-burdened households with an intellectually, physically, or developmentally disabled family member.
- There has been a significant loss in homes affordable to households with incomes at 60% of the Washington area median; in survey data posted on the city's website, the number of rental units affordable to households with incomes at 60 percent AMI was 6,416 in 2011 compared to 18,218 units in 2000.

The plan established a target to provide, preserve, or assist 2,000 housing units from FY 2014-2025 and put forth a number of principles, goals, strategies, tools and funding resources to address these needs and reach this target (City of Alexandria, 2013). Co-living aligns with the following principles of the Housing Master Plan:

- Principle 1. Alexandria's housing stock should include a variety of housing options for households of all incomes
- Principle 2. Alexandria's housing stock should be expanded to offer greater housing choice to people of all ages and abilities

³ As defined by the city's housing master plan (2013), extremely low-income are those households or individuals earning at or below 30% AMI, and low-income are those earning 30.1% - 50% AMI. Moderate incomes range from 60.1% - 80% AMI (rental) to 80% - 120% AMI (ownership).

In addition, the following goals are of particular relevance to co-living housing:

- Goal 1. Preserve long term affordability and the physical condition of assisted and market affordable housing.
- Goal 2. Provide or secure affordable and workforce housing through strategic development or redevelopment.
- Goal 6. Enhance public awareness of benefits of affordable housing.

Alexandria ensured that the housing master plan aligned with existing city policy, including the 2010 Alexandria City Council Strategic Plan. One of the goals in the strategic plan, goal 7, states: “Alexandria is a caring and inclusive community that values its rich diversity, history and culture, and promotes affordability” (City of Alexandria, 2013, p. 54). The first objective of this goal is to “Promote a continuum of affordable housing opportunities for all residents, especially those most in need” (City of Alexandria, 2013, p. 54). Several initiatives of this objective are also relevant to co-living:

- Offer diversity in housing choices for households and individuals with income ranging from 0 to 50 percent of the regional median income, with special attention to households with extremely low-incomes (30 percent of median and below), and households with special needs.
- Provide increased housing choices for low- and moderate-income households of three or more persons
- Identify zoning, land-use tools, and strategies to incorporate affordable housing in development and redevelopment efforts in the City; locate such opportunities strategically with regard to employment centers and transportation, and subsequently begin implementation of those strategies through the Housing Master Plan.

Definition and Use of Rooming Houses, Congregate Houses, and Apartment Hotels

In Alexandria, there are three housing types where common areas such as kitchens, bathrooms, living rooms, and dining areas could be shared: rooming houses, congregate housing facilities, and apartment hotels. At present, there are three rooming houses, three congregate housing facilities, and one apartment hotel in the city; a total of seven co-living housing types.⁴ While common spaces may be shared in these three types of housing, each are defined, regulated, and used in slightly different ways. All are required to undergo the special use permit (SUP) process.

Rooming houses permit up to nine individuals to rent rooms within a dwelling⁵ (or a portion of a dwelling) (City of Alexandria, 2020a). All rooming houses are required to undergo an annual city building inspection, and typically require the operator (also required to be the owner) to live on site, though this can be waived in certain zoning districts on a case-by-case basis (City of Alexandria, 2020b). The three rooming houses in the city have all been operating for at least 40 years, including one in operation for over 100 years, all prior to the city’s requirement to operate these buildings via a SUP. These buildings were first formally issued SUPs between 1991-2002.

Congregate housing facilities are “structures other than single-family dwellings, where unrelated individuals live and typically receive special care or training, either on a temporary or permanent basis” (City of Alexandria, 2020c). Supervision or 24-hour on-site management is required (City of Alexandria, 2020c). The three congregate housing facilities in the city provide housing and supportive services for some of the city’s most vulnerable populations. Two of these facilities are managed by the same community-based non-profit organization, Friends of Guest House, which provides short-term residential housing for non-violent female parolees and offers services such as counseling and

⁴ This information is based on SUP data provided to Virginia Tech by the City of Alexandria and is summarized in Appendix 2.

⁵ A building or portion thereof, which is designed or used exclusively for residential purposes (City of Alexandria, 2020e).

vocational training. Friends of Guest House has been operating its first facility since 1979, and in 2018 received city approval to operate its second facility. The third congregate housing facility provides permanent housing and support services to homeless individuals with disabling conditions and has been in operation since 2007.

Apartment hotels are “buildings (or portions thereof) designed to contain guest rooms, or suites of rooms and dwelling units,⁶ where common areas can be shared and occupancy can be permitted on a long or short-term basis” (City of Alexandria, 2020d). At present, there is one apartment hotel in the city, which was recently approved for permitting. There is no front desk, but guests in need of assistance can call or text the operator 24/7. There are also security cameras which operate 24/7.

These housing types share a number of traits. To start, the majority of these buildings were constructed before 1950, some of which are designated historic. In addition, all three of these housing types permit short and long-term use, by definition of the zoning code. And, as described above, all three housing types permit the sharing of common areas.

Despite the similarities, these housing types are distinguished in certain ways. For instance, rooming houses are in part characterized by their shared use of common areas, whereas apartment hotels are flexible in this regard. And, while the definition of congregate housing facilities does not reference shared common areas, this is a typical component of these facilities. Both rooming houses and congregate houses require some form of on-site management; rooming houses in most cases require the owner/operator to live on site, and congregate housing facilities require 24-hour on-site management. Apartment hotels do not have similar requirements, although the existing apartment hotel in the city does utilize security cameras that operate 24/7. Other important distinctions between these housing types include the fact that congregate housing facilities provide specialized residential care, making this housing type unique compared to rooming houses and apartment hotels. In addition, regarding occupancy, rooming houses are the only housing type which has a cap on the number of people who can live there (nine adults). Also, of note is the fact that rooming houses and congregate houses restrict housing to unrelated individuals, whereas apartment hotels can accommodate families, because dwelling units, in addition to guest rooms, are permitted. Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of each co-living housing type in the city.

Characteristics (as used or by definition)	Rooming Houses	Congregate Housing Facilities	Apartment Hotels
Shared common areas	●	●	●
24/7 Security cameras		●	●
On-site management	●	●	
Cap on the number of adults who can live there	●		
Specialized Residential Care		●	
Can accommodate individuals and families			●

Table 1. Characteristics of Rooming Houses, Congregate Houses, and Apartment Hotels

⁶ A group of one or more rooms designed for or intended for occupancy by a single-family. In determining whether a dwelling is a single-family dwelling, a two-family dwelling, a townhouse dwelling or a multifamily dwelling, consideration will be given to the separate use of or the provision made for cooking, heating and sanitary facilities whether installed or not; both the actual use to which the dwelling is being put and the potential use to which the dwelling might be put; and whether kitchen and bathroom facilities and bedrooms are so located as to provide privacy if occupied by an additional family. It is the intent of this provision to prohibit the installation of facilities in a dwelling unit which would extend the use of the premises for occupancy by more than one family (City of Alexandria, 2020f).

Under the current zoning code, all three of these housing types are considered special uses and are not permitted by-right. Special uses require city staff review and the planning commission's approval of a SUP in order to operate (City of Alexandria, 2020g). In addition to preparing a SUP, applicants must also provide written notice to nearby property owners, placard the proposed property, and provide public notice in the newspaper (M. Christesen, personal communication, March 5, 2020). This notification provides the public with an opportunity to comment on the proposed use.

Rooming houses, congregate housing facilities and apartment hotels are zoned similarly in some instances, but not all. These housing types are all permitted⁷ in the same commercial districts, zones 4-400 - 4-1100 (commercial general and commercial downtown zones, and medium, regular and high commercial office zones). Rooming houses and congregate housing facilities are also permitted in commercial zones 4-100 - 4-300 (commercial low, community, and service zones). Congregate housing facilities are uniquely permitted in zone 1404, the neighborhood retail (Arlandria) zone. All three housing types are also permitted in the King Street urban retail zone, a special overlay zone.

Rooming houses are permitted in seven residential zones, which are zones 3-600 - 3-800 (medium density multi-family, townhouse, and apartment zones), 3-900 - 3-1000 (high density apartment zones), and 3-1100 - 3-1300 (low and medium density townhouse zones). Apartment hotels overlap and are permitted in zones 3-800, 3-900, and 3-1000. Congregate housing facilities are not permitted in any residential zones.

Apartment hotels and congregate housing facilities are permitted in the same mixed-use zones, zones 5-100 - 5-400 (low, medium, and high density commercial residential mixed use, and commercial residential mixed use in Old Town North). Rooming houses are not permitted in any mixed-use zones.

Figure 1 (a depiction of the zones where these housing types are permitted in the city) and Figure 2 (the city-wide zoning map) together illustrate that all three housing types typically occur in the city's growth crescent, and are not permitted in low-density residential areas, which occupy the vast majority of land area in the geographic center of the city and are predominantly comprised of single-family homes. Appendix 3 supplements Figure 1, which summarizes existing zoning for co-living housing.

Microunits

The Alexandria Office of Housing report on microunits (2018) found that there are several existing apartment complexes in the city, both of older and new construction, that offer units that meet the city's definition of a microunit:

- Older construction: The Bridgeyard Old Town (formerly Hunting Towers), Southern Towers, Linden at Del Ray (formerly Bellefonte Gardens) and Del Ray Tower (formerly The Calvert)
- Newer construction: Notch 8, Modera Tempo, and The Dalton

⁷ Rooming houses, congregate housing facilities and apartment hotels are permitted in the city as a special use only. For the purposes of this section, the term "permitted" is a reference to this fact.

Zoning Districts for Co-Living Housing Types* Permitted in the City of Alexandria

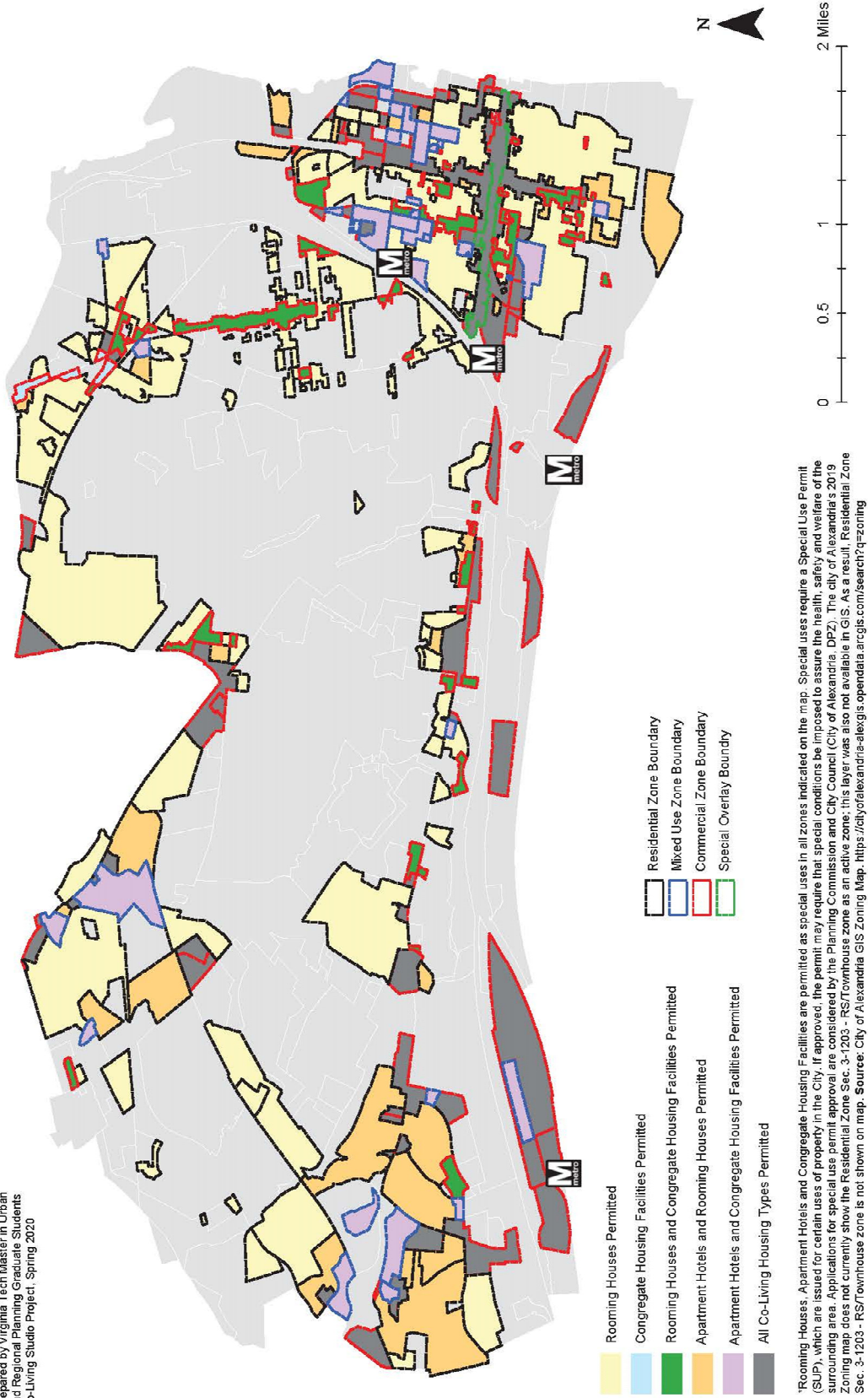


Figure 1. Zoning Districts for Co-Living Housing Types Permitted in the City of Alexandria

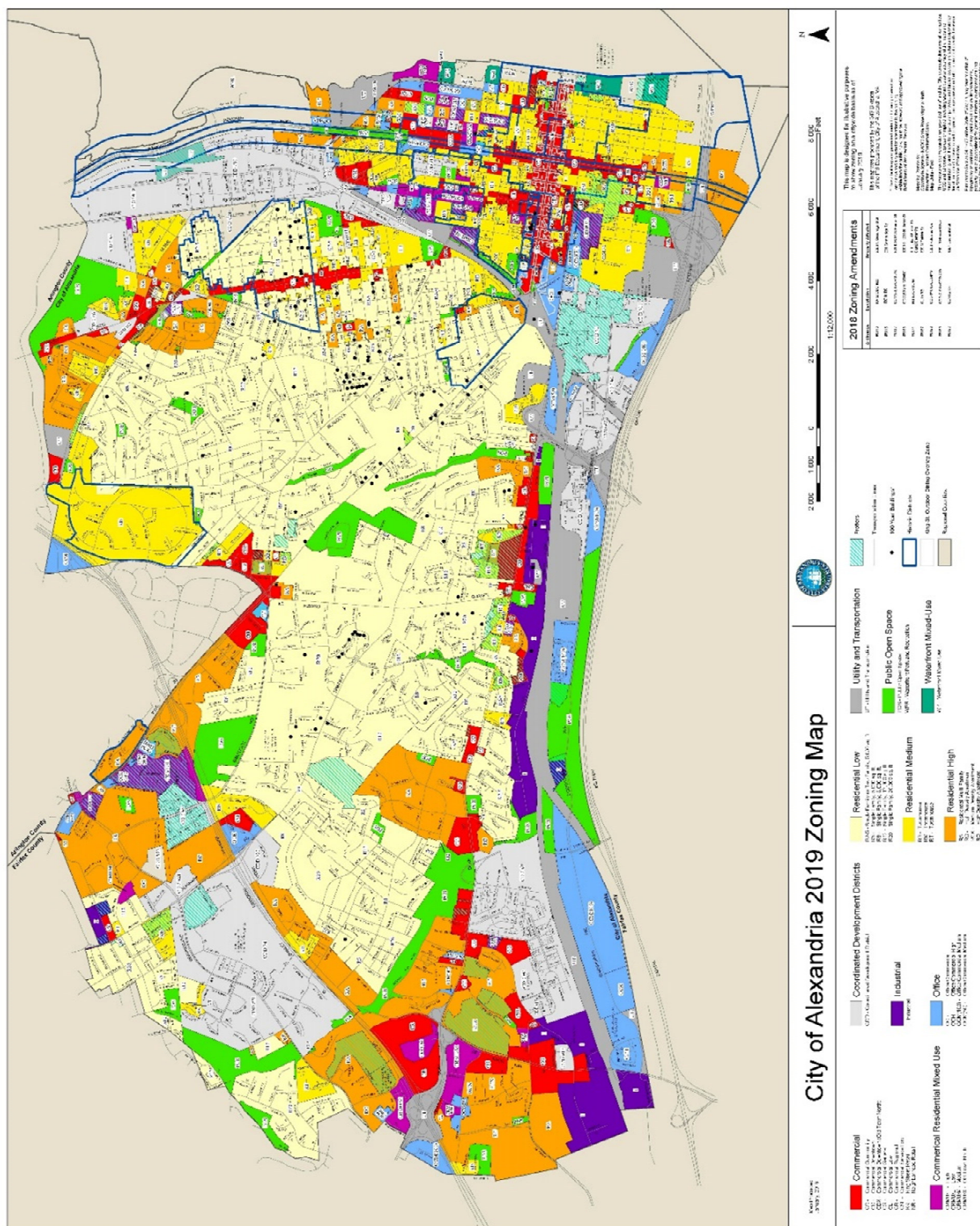


Figure 2. City of Alexandria 2019 Zoning Map

Denver Case Study

Background: Population, Housing, and Policy Context

Denver's population grew by approximately 100,000 people between 2010 and 2017 (City and County of Denver, 2018a) and is expected to continue to grow in coming decades. By 2040, Denver anticipates an additional 189,000 residents in 90,000 more households, bringing the total population to 894,000 (City and County of Denver, 2019).

Denver's population boom and economic growth have contributed to housing affordability challenges, as highlighted in *Housing an Inclusive Denver* (2018a) through several statistics characterizing the housing and demographic conditions. A rising share of residents—now 36 percent—are cost-burdened, including 68,000 renter households and 35,000 owner households. Rents are high and rising, increasing 46 percent from 2011 to 2016. Rentals are unaffordable to many “low- and moderate-income households, with a shortage of approximately 26,000 housing units for the lowest earners” (City and County of Denver, 2019, p. 12). While the number of housing units is rising in Denver due to new construction, there is significant competition for older, lower-cost rental stock. Homeownership is increasingly less attainable and maintainable – as current owners grapple with rising tax bills and prospective owners face higher sales prices from a limited and decreasing inventory of homes available for sale. The population experiencing homeless fluctuates around 3,000-4,000 people.

Housing an Inclusive Denver, the city's 2018-2023 strategy for housing policy and investment, defines four “core goals” for addressing these housing challenges (2018a, p. 7):

- Create affordable housing in vulnerable areas AND in areas of opportunity
- Preserve affordability and housing quality
- Promote equitable and accessible housing
- Stabilize residents at risk of involuntary displacement

The plan identifies, among other legislative and regulatory priorities, an effort to “expand and strengthen land-use regulations for affordable and mixed-income housing,” (2018a, p. 9) a recommendation driving the city's current efforts around co-living.

Blueprint Denver (2019), a supplement to the city's *Comprehensive Plan 2040*, focuses on equity considerations, including several related to housing such as “increas[ing] the range of affordable housing options” (p. 33), mitigating involuntary residential displacement, and increasing housing diversity in terms of “prices, sizes, types and mix of rental and for-sale” (p. 41) in all neighborhoods.

CO-LIVING INITIATIVE SNAPSHOT

Primary housing challenges:

- Changing residential uses
- Demand outpacing supply

Key proposed changes:

- Increase the number of unrelated adults allowed to live together
- Change SROs from a temporary lodging use to a permanent residential use

Housing types impacted by the co-living initiative:

- Single-family
- Two-family
- Multifamily
- SROs

Project webpage:

https://www.denvergov.org/content/denvergov/en/community-planning-and-development/zoning/text-amendments/Group_Living.html

Proposed Group Living Text Amendment

The focus of this case study is a proposed text amendment to the Denver Zoning Code regarding potential changes to residential uses that aim to bring the code into alignment with the vision established in *Blueprint Denver* and *Housing for an Inclusive Denver*. The proposed changes are a response to the “increasing demand for non-traditional housing in Denver [and] the evolving needs of residents” (City and County of Denver, n.d.a). Specifically, the City has identified several problems associated with the zoning ordinance (City and County of Denver, 2018b):

- Demand for group living housing solutions outpaces supply, but supply is somewhat limited by the zoning ordinance;
- Residents want housing forms and arrangements that keep pace with changing “challenges, circumstances, and lifestyles” (p. 1) but the zoning ordinance does not currently define appropriate uses or housing typologies; and
- Rules are “unclear or inflexible” (p. 3) especially with respect to emerging housing forms and family makeups.

Broadly, the proposed changes will (1) revise the definition of “household” to accommodate more unrelated adults living together, (2) restructure group living uses into congregate living and residential care, and (3) reorganize residential care uses to regulate by facility size (City and County of Denver, 2020d). The changes to uses related to residential care, while an important part of Denver’s strategy to update residential primary uses, are outside the scope of the co-living focus of this case study and are therefore excluded from further discussion/analysis.

These group living changes are proposed in the context of a number of overlapping residential needs, as illustrated in Figure 3 (City and County of Denver, 2018b).

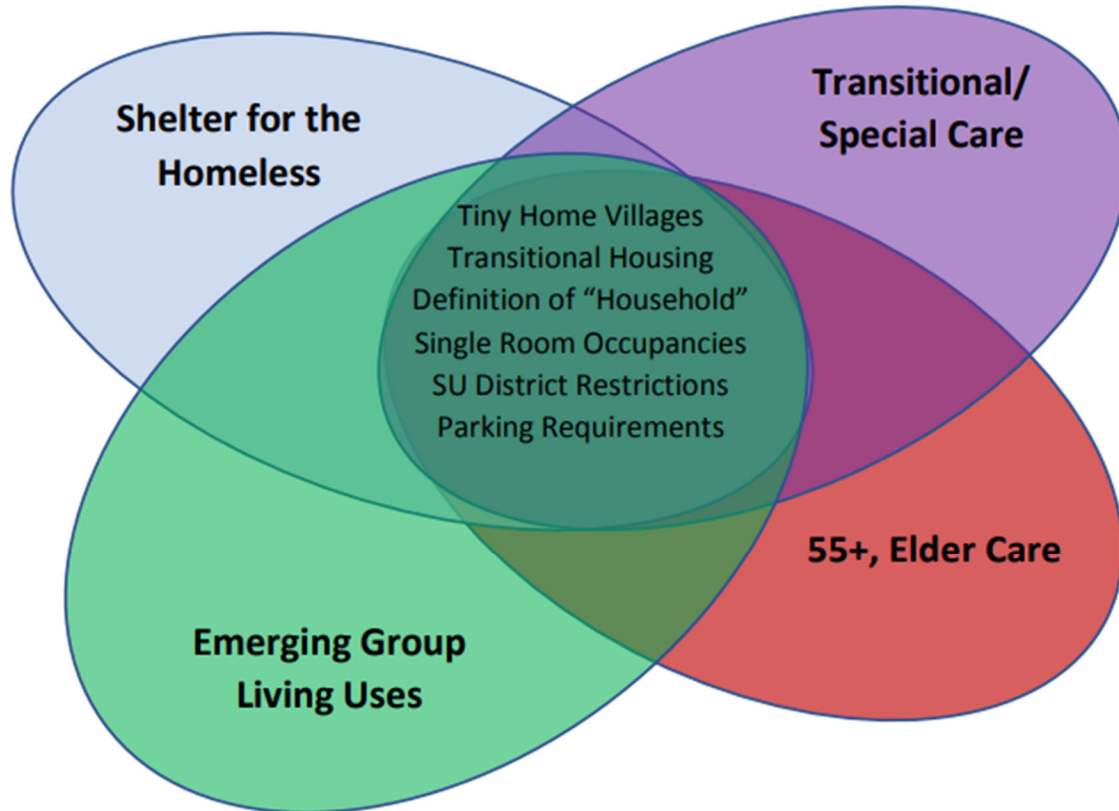


Figure 3. Intersection of Group Living Focus Areas and Zoning Revision Efforts (p. 9)

Revised Household Definition

Under the current Denver Zoning Code, a household is limited to no more than two unrelated adults in single-unit dwellings and no more than four unrelated adults in two- or multi-unit dwellings and is defined as follows:

A dwelling unit occupied by persons in any one of the following four categories living as a single non-profit housekeeping unit, including any permitted domestic employees:

- a. A single person plus any number of [relatives⁸]; or
- b. Two persons living together as spouses, domestic partners, or civil union partners, plus any number of [relatives]; or
- c. In a single unit dwelling use only: One or two unrelated adults over the age of 18 years plus any [relatives]; or
- d. In a two-unit dwelling use or multi-unit dwelling use only: Up to four unrelated adults over the age of 18 years plus any [relatives].” (City and County of Denver, 2010, p 11.12-1).

Under the proposed change, “eight unrelated people [would be allowed] to live together as a household in a house of up to 1,600 square feet in size, with one additional adult permitted per 200 square feet of finished floor area⁹ in larger dwelling units” (City and County of Denver, 2020b, p 2). The code would further define a household “as a group of people living together as a single housekeeping unit and who share the entire home and make decisions about the household together” (p 3).

In Denver today, the zoning ordinance allows for only two unrelated roommates to live together in a single-family home and four unrelated roommates in a multi-family unit. Denverites may establish a rooming and/or boarding home occupation accessory use, subject to zoning permit review, to exceed the number of unrelated roommates that are ordinarily allowed. Zoning permit review involves a pre-application meeting, submittal of a written application and payment of required fees, and review and final decision by the city zoning administrator. This process may be used to allow one to two additional roommates as roomers/boarders, depending on the dwelling type and zone district, as summarized in Table 2. Table 2 also summarizes the number of unrelated adults to be allowed under the proposed change (City and County of Denver, 2010; City and County of Denver, 2020b).

Dwelling type and zone district	Number of Unrelated Adults Allowed		
	Current Regulations		Proposed Change
	By Right	With Zoning Permit Review for Rooming and/or Boarding Home Occupation Accessory Use	By Right
Single unit dwelling use – all SU zone districts	2	3	8
Single unit dwelling use – all other zone districts	2	4	8
Two-unit and multi-unit dwelling uses – all zone districts	4	6	8

Table 2. Impacts of Household Definition Changes to the Number of Unrelated Adults Allowed

⁸ “persons bearing to each other the relationship of: parent, grandparent, child, sibling, step-child, step-sibling, step-parent, grandchild, parent-in-law, sibling-in-law, child-in-law, parent-sibling (uncle or aunt), or sibling (nephew or niece)”

⁹ The square footage figures include both common and private spaces in the home.

Restructuring of Group Living Uses

Denver aims to clarify how emerging group living uses are regulated through changes to the zoning code regarding congregate living, a category which includes rooming/boarding houses and SROs (City and County of Denver, 2020d). Congregate living is characterized by housing for more people than would be permitted in household living, people not living as single housekeeping units, and the presence of shared cooking, bathroom, and common areas (City and County of Denver, 2020d). The city intends to permit congregate living uses in areas where multi-unit residential housing and mixed uses are allowed (City and County of Denver, n.d.b). This change would expand the zones where congregate housing is permitted in the city (A. Webb, personal communication, March 24, 2020).

Rooming and boarding house. Under the current zoning ordinance, a rooming and boarding house is a “residential building containing one or more guest rooms that are used, rented, or hired out, with or without meals, for permanent occupancy. A Rooming and Boarding House makes no provision for cooking in any of the guest rooms occupied by paying guests” (City and County of Denver, 2010, p 11.12-4). They are considered a group living use. The proposed changes do not materially change how rooming and boarding houses are regulated but will further classify them as a type of congregate living within the overarching group living use category (City and County of Denver, 2020d).

SRO hotel. Under the current zoning ordinance, an SRO hotel is “One or more buildings providing lodging accommodations in 6 or more ‘SRO rooms.’ A SRO Hotel use shall not be considered a Residential Care use or a Student Housing use. A ‘SRO room’ means:

- a. A guest room intended or designed to be used, rented, or hired out, and which is occupied as a primary residence for any duration; and
- b. SRO Rooms may contain kitchens and/or the building(s) may contain congregate cooking and dining facilities” (City and County of Denver, 2010, p 11.12-13).

SRO hotels are considered a “lodging accommodations use,” meaning they are “visitor-serving facilities that provide temporary lodging in guest rooms or guest units, for compensation, and with an average length of stay of less than 30 days except as specifically permitted for a Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Hotel” (City and County of Denver, 2010, p 11.12-13). The proposed changes will re-classify SRO as a congregate living residential primary use, changing it from temporary lodging to permanent residency (City and County of Denver, 2020d). According to a problem statement developed as part of the community outreach and engagement process, the current treatment of SROs as lodging is misleading and confusing, because it associates SROs with transient uses. Additionally, city staff have not wanted to apply SRO uses to development proposals because of their lower parking reductions compared to multi-unit residential uses (City and County of Denver, 2018b). For these reasons, the city seeks to disinhibit development of “nontraditional residential typologies” by treating SROs more like other multi-unit residential uses to help address the city’s housing challenges (City and County of Denver, n.d.b).

The City’s Process and Approach

The Group Living Advisory Committee (GLAC). The City established the GLAC to represent the views and interests of “housing providers, residents, guests, neighborhood representatives, advocates, and community leaders,” review peer-city information, and weigh in on options for updating the zoning code (City and County of Denver, 2020d). The committee formed subgroups around several focus areas:

- “Adult and Elder Housing
- Community Corrections
- Artist/DIY/Cooperative housing

- Emerging Residential Uses (tiny house villages, Single-Room Occupancy, co-living, etc.)
- Shelter for the Homeless
- Transitional and Special Care Homes” (City and County of Denver, 2018b, p 1).

Through several meetings and site visits, the subgroups generated a number of “problem statements” identifying and characterizing issues with the current zoning ordinance and began proposing changes to the code that may address the problems (City and County of Denver, 2018b).

The City engaged with a number of key stakeholders as part of the outreach process including housing providers, residents, Registered Neighborhood Organizations (RNOs), and anti-gentrification and homelessness advocacy groups (City and County of Denver, 2020d). Stakeholders providing support for the changes included the Cross-Disability Coalition, Mothers Advocating for Affordable Housing, and Enterprise Community Partners, Catholic Worker, and certain RNOs (Chaffee Park and Capitol Hill) (City and County of Denver, 2020a; A. Webb, personal communication, March 24, 2020).

The City conducted research on best practices from peer cities, including a review of homeless shelter regulations, community corrections facilities zoning regulations, and the number of unrelated adults allowed in single residential units. The City’s review of limits on the number of unrelated adults allowed in residential units found that Denver was on the low end, with peer cities ranging from three adults to an unlimited number of people. (City and County of Denver, 2020d)

Barriers

Denver compiled results from feedback forms from open houses held on the group living update, finding that, of 222 attendees filling out forms, 148 said “they did not support proposed changes to household regulations” and 65 saying “they supported or could live with proposed changes to household regulations” (City and County of Denver, 2020a, p. 2). Key themes identified through feedback included the following (City and County of Denver, 2020a, p. 4):

- “allowing more unrelated adults could cause an increase in crime, lack of maintenance and less availability of on-street parking”
- “changing neighborhood character”
- “unscrupulous landlords, commercialization of residential neighborhoods”
- “Strain on trash, sewer and other resources”
- Lack of “representation on the Group Living Advisory Committee”
- “allowing more people in larger houses could lead to “worst-case scenario” homes of 20 or more people”
- “allowing up to 8 individuals to live in houses up to 1,600 square feet sounds like “too many.” Approximately half of the input indicates support for some lower number, such as 4, 5 or 6 unrelated adults, with 4 being the most common suggestion”
- Higher density is not desirable during pandemics (A. Webb, personal communication, March 24, 2020)

The city employed a number of messaging strategies to frame the argument for updating the household definition and address community pushback around the proposed change. The household definition changes will:

- *Align Denver’s zoning with federal, state, and local policy.* For example, the Colorado Group Home statute requires the city to treat groups of 8 or fewer people in a protected class as a household with respect to zoning. The City argues that, if those in a protected class are to be treated as a household, so should those who are not in a protected class, because the potential impacts on the neighboring community are similar regardless of whether people living

together are in a protected class or not. (City and County of Denver, 2020b). The proposal is also consistent with HUD guidance recommending 200 sf/person and the city's accessory dwelling unit requirement for 200 sf/person. Finally, the Denver Building and Fire Code does not limit the number of people who can live together.

- *Enhance equity.* The current zoning is exclusionary in that it defines a particular type of (traditional) family that should be in particular neighborhoods (A. Webb, personal communication, March 24, 2020). The current rules limit the ability of people to reduce housing costs or live in multigenerational or intentional living settings (City and County of Denver, 2020b).
- *Bring Denver into parity with peer jurisdictions.* The city's research found that most peer cities allowed more unrelated adults to live together in a dwelling (City and County of Denver, 2020d).
- *Be more realistic.* Denverites are already living in roommate arrangements contrary to current zoning law (City and County of Denver, 2020b). Further, the current regulations are unenforceable because the city cannot determine the related/unrelated status of individuals living together (A. Webb, personal communication, March 24, 2020).
- *Simplify, increase flexibility, and not be overly prescriptive.* (A. Webb, personal communication, March 24, 2020)
- *Plan for people living in the city, not for the storage of private cars.* The city intends for changes to the "household" definition will be made independent of the zoning ordinance's parking rules, which allow "one car per driver plus one additional car for each household" (City and County of Denver, 2020b, p 4). City staff explained that on-street parking impacts would be assessed after implementation of the proposed change, with mitigations developed as needed (A. Webb, personal communication, March 24, 2020).

Outlook

Although city messaging has impressed that the household definition change will serve to legitimize current roommate arrangements, city staff indicated that they believe the change will meaningfully increase the number of people who are renters. Renters' organizations and landlords are interested in and excited about the forthcoming changes. Landlords have indicated that they would change rental practices (i.e., they are currently renting to fewer people than they would like because of restrictions imposed by the limited definition of household). (A. Webb, personal communication, March 24, 2020).

The next steps for the City include developing and then publishing for public review a redline text amendment. The proposed text will be published on the project website and required notification will be given to RNOs and stakeholders to begin a month-long comment period. After that, the public legislative review process begins, with the proposed amendment being brought before the planning board, City Council Land Use, Transportation, and Infrastructure Committee, and a final City Council public hearing. (City and County of Denver, 2020d)

Challenges Not Yet Addressed

The updates to the congregate living use category leave room for confusion around the difference between a rooming/boarding house and an SRO, because the city intends to maintain both terms in the updated zoning ordinance, despite the essential similarity between the terms.

Given the negative feedback expressed through the initial rounds of public engagement, the City aims to reach a 'compromise' position of increasing the number of unrelated adults from its current limit of two persons in single-family homes not to the eight initially contemplated, but to four to six residents. To further assuage public concerns, the City is also considering requiring a permitting process for

additional residents added for each 200 square feet in excess of 1600 square feet and capping the total number of residents at 10.¹⁰ Staff indicated that the initial proposed changes represent an aspirational/progressive position, and that they expect to arrive at a more realistic, 'adoptable' zoning amendment through ongoing public engagement and meetings with councilmembers (A. Webb, personal communication, March 24, 2020).

Private co-living housing providers (e.g., PadSplit) are not yet operating in Denver. City staff expressed hesitation around courting or otherwise incentivizing such companies, sensitive to community concerns around potential for increased housing costs, the more transient nature of rentals through such companies, and other negative outcomes that arise from commercialization of neighborhoods (A. Webb, personal communication, March 24, 2020).

¹⁰ The original proposal would not have required a permit for these additional household members and would have allowed for an unlimited number of residents with sufficient square footage.

Salt Lake City Case Study

Background: Population, Housing, and Policy Context

Salt Lake City (SLC), located in northern Utah, has a population of 190,873 people, and is comprised of 75,923 households in total (City of Salt Lake, 2018). It is estimated that by 2030, there will be an additional 30,000 residents living in the city. Like other cities and counties across the country, SLC is facing a housing shortage. The demand for housing continues to increase and costs for housing continue to rise, outpacing wage growth for renters and homeowners, and primarily impacting low- and middle-income earners (City of Salt Lake, 2018). In 2018, the city identified a housing deficit of 7,467 units for residents living in poverty (City of Salt Lake, 2018).

Also reflective of these challenges are the existing strains on residents who are cost-burdened by housing, meaning they spend over 30 percent of their income on housing. In 2018, the city identified that 49 percent of all renters in SLC and 22 percent of homeowners are cost-burdened. Of these cost-burdened renters, 24 percent are severely cost-burdened (i.e., they spend 50 percent or more of their income on housing) (City of Salt Lake, 2018). The discrepancy between occupational wages and increasing housing costs is expected to “create greater instability in the lives of low-income households,” placing high stress on families who are increasingly forced to choose between mortgage or rental payments and other necessities, such as food (City of Salt Lake, 2018).

SLC has taken policy and regulatory action in response to these challenges, which includes the development of *Growing SLC, A Five-Year Housing Plan 2018-2022*, which puts forth policy solutions for the city. There are seven key policy solutions the housing plan focuses on (p. 9):

1. Updates to the zoning code
2. Preservation of long-term affordable housing
3. Establishment of a significant funding source for additional affordable housing
4. Stabilizing low-income tenants
5. Innovation in design
6. Partnerships and collaboration in housing
7. Equitability and fair housing

CO-LIVING INITIATIVE SNAPSHOT

Primary housing challenges:

- Demand outpacing supply
- Almost half of all renters are cost burdened
- High rates of homelessness

Key proposed changes:

- Rename and redefine the SRO use (change to the term Shared Housing)
- Expand zones where Shared Housing will be permitted in the city

Housing types impacted by the co-living initiative:

- SROs
- Apartment hotels

Project webpage:

<https://stories.opengov.com/saltlakecity/published/ZIPjxH20c>

Proposed Shared Housing Zoning Text Amendment

In alignment with several of these policy solutions and in response to housing needs, SLC began undertaking a shared housing zoning text amendment in 2018, as part of a larger, multi-pronged approach to zoning modifications to expand affordable housing in the city. These changes would “add to the city’s inventory for permitted housing types” (City of Salt Lake, 2019a, p. 2) and help meet several goals and objectives of the city’s five-year housing plan, the comprehensive plan, and the transit master plan.

The shared housing amendment was originally proposed as a single-room occupancy (SRO) establishment zoning text amendment, with objectives to more accurately define SRO establishments, modify the length of stay, and expand the number of zoning districts where they are permitted. However, after more than two years of pursuing this text amendment, feedback from the public and housing advocates led the city to rethink the term “SRO.” City staff held additional stakeholder meetings in the fall of 2019 to better address concerns raised around equity and inclusion surrounding the original proposal (City of Salt Lake, 2020b), resulting in two key outcomes:

- There was an immediate need for additional affordable housing types, and the SRO zoning text amendment should proceed; however, the term “SRO” should be replaced with the term “Shared Housing”¹¹ to allow this housing type to accommodate families in addition to individuals, thus, the project should proceed as the shared housing text amendment
- The city committed to conducting further analysis to examine how zoning may have created barriers to constructing affordable housing

To date, the proposal is moving forward as the shared housing zoning text amendment and draws both from the original objectives of the SRO text amendment and the additional input the city received. Thus, the revised objectives of the shared housing text amendment are to (1) rename and redefine the use and (2) expand the number of zoning districts where this use is allowed.

Rename and Redefine the Use

The proposed zoning text amendment renames and globally replaces the terms “SRO” and “apartment hotel”¹² throughout the zoning code with the term “shared housing,” which would be excluded from the term “dwelling.”

The revision also modifies the length of stay; currently, SROs require a minimum stay of 30 days. The proposed changes would allow this housing type to be rented on a weekly basis, as opposed to monthly (City of Salt Lake, 2019a). SLC emphasized the importance and need to provide a weekly rental housing option for this use, which would provide shelter to those who are more housing insecure and not able to afford a full month’s rent. Further, removing this use as a type of dwelling eases the restrictions currently imposed on this housing type by the definition of family, a major limiting factor in their new construction (A. Ogden, personal communication, March 19, 2020).

In addition, the proposed definition of shared housing requires the provision of shared common areas. Currently, SROs are required to have all amenities (bathroom, kitchen) located inside each individual unit, which is not to exceed 500 square feet (City of Salt Lake, 2020a). SLC has highlighted that this current definition is inexact and that the proposed definition, which entails the sharing of common

¹¹ Because of the active crossover in terminology, for the purposes of this report, shared housing and SROs are used interchangeably

¹² Apartment hotel was not defined in the zoning ordinance, but was occasionally mentioned in some portions of the text

areas (e.g., bathrooms or kitchens) is more accurate and in alignment with commonly accepted definitions of this use (City of Salt Lake, 2020a).

Finally, the revised definition allows for individual units to contain multiple separate sleeping rooms, as opposed to the previous SRO proposal which restricted each unit to one sleeping room (City of Salt Lake, 2020b). Allowing for multiple sleeping rooms in a single unit provides flexibility in design and allows this housing type to accommodate families in addition to single individuals or couples, making the use more inclusive, a key concern expressed by housing advocates (City of Salt Lake, 2020b; A. Ogden, personal communication, March 19, 2020). This change to accommodate families was also the genesis for the change in terminology from SRO to shared housing. The proposed definition (2020b) of shared housing is as follows:

A building, or portion thereof that is designated for residential purposes and contains individual housing units that may be occupied on a weekly or monthly basis. Each individual housing unit consists of one or more sleeping rooms and may contain either kitchen or bathroom amenities, but not both. Whichever amenities are not contained within the individual unit (the kitchen, bathroom, or both) shall be provided as a common facility within the same building, to be shared with other tenants of the shared housing development. (p. 2)

To further shape shared housing use, staff has proposed a number of qualifying provisions (i.e., minimum operating requirements) for shared housing, which are listed below:

- “Shared housing will be subject to the same lot and bulk requirements as multi-family dwelling use, but not the density requirements of the underlying zone.
- A maximum of 2 people per sleeping room may reside within an individual shared housing unit.
- A minimum floor area of 100 square feet per sleeping room is required for a single tenant, and 120 square feet per sleeping room for two tenants.
- Communal areas, including, but not limited to libraries, lounges, recreation rooms, and dining rooms, etc. must be provided and must be accessible to all tenants.
- The minimum floor area of communal areas, exclusive of kitchens, bathrooms, hallways, and maintenance/storage areas, is 20 square feet per sleeping room.
- A property manager is required to be on site 24/7, and communal areas (except bathrooms) must be continuously monitored by security cameras.
- A shared housing development can include an office and private living unit for the property manager. This private living unit can include a private bathroom and kitchen” (City of Salt Lake, 2020b).

City staff emphasized that the provision of an on-site property manager was critical to the success of SROs because of the need to ensure that common spaces are well maintained (A. Ogden, personal communication, March 19, 2020). City staff stated that the city’s sole SRO operator similarly stressed that this requirement is essential to ensuring continuous responsibility for the common areas in the building (A. Ogden, personal communication, March 19, 2020).

There are other minor accompanying changes throughout the city’s ordinance proposed to ensure references to shared housing are clear, concise, and standalone. The first of these changes includes removing references to SROs from the “multiple-family dwelling” classification in the residential off-street parking requirements matrix and listing the use separately as shared housing. Because of the addition of sleeping rooms included in the shared housing proposal, the parking requirement will also

be modified to require ½ parking space per sleeping room, replacing the previous requirement to provide ½ space per individual unit.

Additionally, the city is revising how a list of residential uses is referred to in the downtown warehouse/residential district. Instead of listing out each specific residential type, the text will be changed to broadly refer to “permitted residential uses.” Previous iterations of the proposal added in SROs to the list of uses, but the current proposal both streamlines the language and acknowledges that shared housing is a residential use. The last accompanying change proposed is to add the term “sleeping room” to list of zoning definitions, which would be defined as, “a room within a shared housing land use that is identified and used for sleeping purposes” (City of Salt Lake, 2020b).

Expanding Zoning Districts Where Shared Housing is Allowed

At present, SROs are solely permitted in transit station areas (TSAs) and form-based urban neighborhoods (FB-UN2). Additionally, there is only one SRO building in the city, the Rio Grande Hotel, although about 40 years ago the city had an estimated 800 SROs (City of Salt Lake, 2019).

The zoning text amendment recommends permitting shared housing in five additional (general) zoning district types: residential mixed use, general commercial and commercial corridors, downtown warehouse and central business districts, mixed-use areas, and additional form-based neighborhoods. All uses would be by-right and therefore the construction of or conversion to a shared housing development would not be required to undergo a special approval process. Table 3 depicts the four key location criteria (2019a) SLC used to identify and expand the zones where shared housing would be permitted.

Location Criteria	Proposed Zoning Districts to Permit Shared Housing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoning districts with existing design standards in place • Zoning districts that already permit uses with similar characteristics/levels of intensity • Districts that typically have close proximity to frequent public transit • Districts that permit/are typically located near a mix of uses to enable accessibility to employment or other amenities by foot or bicycle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R-MU: Residential/Mixed Use • R-MU-35: Residential/Mixed Use • R-MU-45: Residential/Mixed Use • CC: Corridor Commercial • CHSBD 1& 2: Sugarhouse Central Business District • CG: General Commercial • TSA: Transit Station Areas* • FB-SC: Form Based Special Purpose Corridor Core Subdistrict • FB-SE: Form Based Special Purpose Corridor Edge Subdistrict • FB-UN2: Form Based Urban Neighborhood* • D-1: Central Business District • D-2: Downtown Support District • D-3: Downtown Warehouse / Residential District • D-4: Downtown Secondary Central Business District • G-MU: Gateway Mixed Use • MU: Mixed Use <p>*SROs are already a permitted use in the TSA and FB-UN2 districts</p>

Table 3. Location Criteria Used to Identify Zoning Districts for Expanding Shared Housing (City of Salt Lake, 2019a)

The city has form-based codes in several districts where shared housing is being proposed. Form-based codes, which regulate physical form (as opposed to uses) can facilitate walkable, mixed-use, and higher density environments. The use of form-based codes is a “regulation adopted into local law” that can help to “facilitate the production or preservation of affordable housing by writing affordability

requirements into the code” (Sturtevant, 2017, p. 18). Also, form-based codes can facilitate higher density environments, making below-market rate housing in some instances cheaper to construct (Sturtevant, 2017). SLC staff acknowledged in the interview that these districts were an important consideration during the zoning analysis phase for expanding zones where SROs are permitted (A. Ogden, personal communication, March 19, 2020).

The City’s Process and Approach

In order to implement the proposed zoning text changes, SLC stated that remaining within the confines of the building code required flexibility and creativity. SLC acknowledged that more work with the city’s building code is likely still needed (City of Salt Lake, 2019). The city emphasized that its overall objective was to ensure that zoning was not a barrier to these housing types, citing this text amendment as an initial step in an anticipated series of zoning updates.

In initiating the project, SLC researched SROs across the country and closely examined Seattle and San Francisco (City of Salt Lake, 2019a). After conducting research, SLC applied and scaled relevant findings to meet SLC’s specific needs and conditions, such as high rates of homelessness, large groups of single-family homes in some parts of the city, and evidence of market-demand for microunits. Similar to the findings from our research, during our interview, staff acknowledged that there are few published case studies of SROs or information on how they are regulated across municipalities.

Key to SLC’s approach was coordinating with local stakeholders, identifying advocates, and working closely with other city departments such as the building department. Staff stated that stakeholder involvement began at the very start of the project, with an objective to garner as much input as possible. Stakeholders involved included the state housing corporation, SLC Housing Authority, and local housing organizations (A. Ogden, personal communication, March 19, 2020). In addition, SLC worked closely with the non-profit operator of the only SRO in the city. Housing and homelessness activists have also played a large role in advocating for the amendment (A. Ogden, personal communication, March 19, 2020).

City staff followed their standard community engagement process and sent emails and postcards to stakeholders and other interested parties to notify them of the proposal. There have been several public hearings, some of which have lasted over two hours (A. Ogden, personal communication, March 19, 2020). In addition to the hearings, the city held several open houses to provide information to the public and answer questions. Staff shared that there was significant participation at the public hearings (A. Ogden, personal communication, March 19, 2020). In addition to meetings, SLC set up a user-friendly webpage explaining the substance and process of the zoning text amendment. The webpage features excellent graphics, provides a clear description of the proposed changes, and includes maps to indicate where in the city the changes would take place. There is also an open comment wall which asks the public, “What do you think about the proposal to redefine the Shared Housing use and expand the areas where units would be allowed?” The city plans to post the final outcome of the proposed amendment to the webpage. Videos from some of the public hearings are also posted on the project website, along with staff reports and analyses. There will be additional public hearings and open houses as staff continue to move forward with the shared housing proposal.

The zoning amendment process is not yet complete. To date, the planning commission has reviewed the proposal several times and hosted a number of public hearings. This process has been very iterative. Staff have continued to address city council and public concerns while also advancing their recommendations based on research and extensive discussions with stakeholders. The city’s overall approach to changes to the zoning code as it relates to housing has been incremental by design. Staff stated they did not want to take an aggressive approach, as seen in Minneapolis, opting to instead roll

out changes gradually (A. Ogden, personal communication, March 19, 2020). Staff indicated that the effort focused on SROs and not rooming houses,¹³ because this use is rare in SLC. While the city considered completely overhauling this related use and associated terminology (such as removing the rooming house term altogether), staff decided not to make these changes in efforts to keep the process as simple as possible. Staff felt as though there would be too much confusion for the public if the city made amendments to rooming house uses/terms in tandem with their shared housing proposal (A. Ogden, personal communication, March 19, 2020).

The shared housing zoning text amendment is taking place amidst a backdrop of other initiatives simultaneously underway in the city to address affordable housing, including the creation of an affordable housing overlay and a zoning update to the multi-family residential zone (RMF-30). These initiatives are recognized housing strategy tools included in the “Guidebook for Increasing Housing Affordability in the Greater Washington Region” (2017).

The **affordable housing overlay** would provide a variety of incentives to developers through zoning changes, such as reducing parking, or waiving administrative processes, in order to reduce development costs and increase the production of affordable homes in the city (City of Salt Lake, n.d.). As part of outreach for this project, the city conducted a survey on perceptions of affordable housing in the community and affordable housing strategies. One question asked respondents about different affordable housing types, allowing respondents to select which housing types would best fit their neighborhood. Of interest is that 35 percent of respondents felt that co-living/SRO establishments would work in their neighborhood, as shown in Figure 4 (City of Salt Lake, n.d). SLC is currently preparing a draft of the zoning ordinance for public review and aims to adopt the overlay by fall 2020.

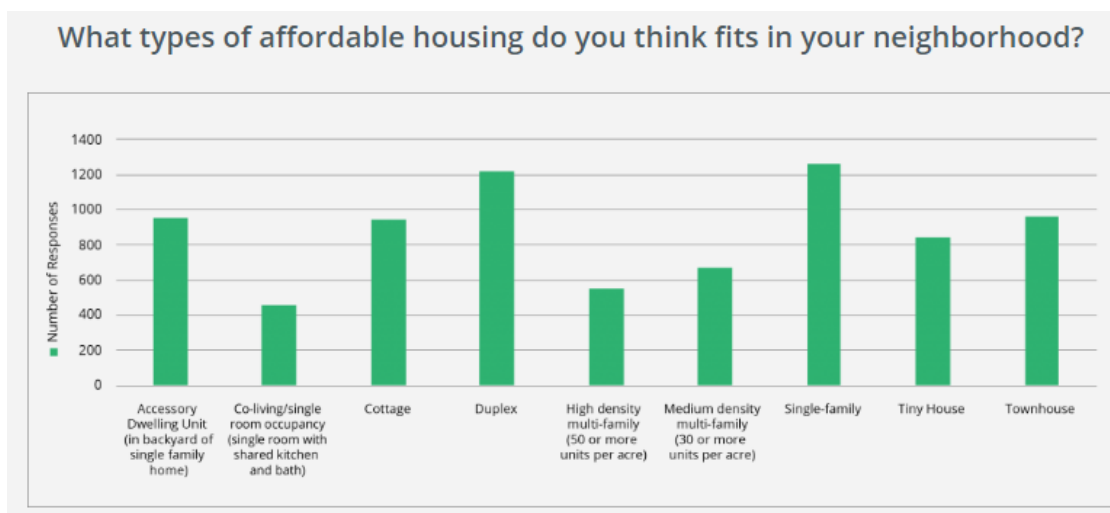


Figure 4. Excerpt from the Affordable Housing Overlay Survey (City of Salt Lake, n.d.)

¹³ Salt Lake City utilizes the term: Rooming (Boarding) house.

The **RMF-30** project aims to remove zoning barriers to the development of new housing in multi-family residential zones. As part of the project, the city is reducing certain building dimension requirements (such as minimum lot widths and setbacks) and modifying density limitations to allow for increased density that is compatible with surrounding neighborhoods (City of Salt Lake, 2019b). The project is also introducing design standards for new development as well as proposing to permit new, compact building forms in these zones, such as side oriented row houses, as depicted in Figure 5 (City of Salt Lake, 2019b).

New Building Forms in the RMF-30 District –

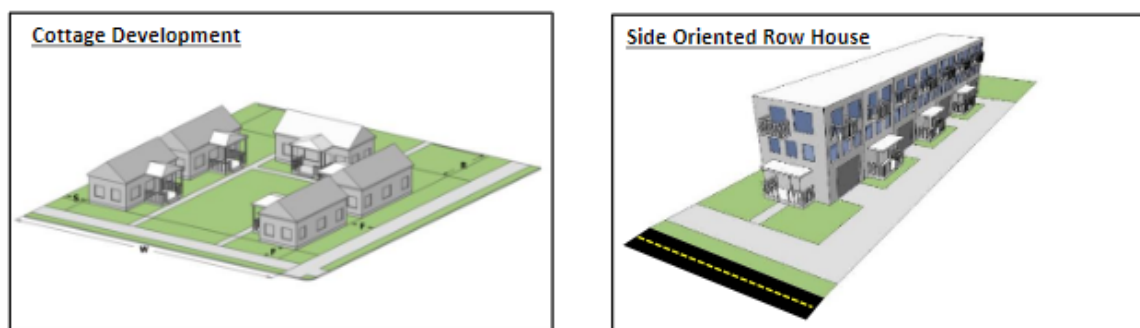


Figure 5. New Building Forms Proposed in Multi-Family Residential Zones (City of Salt Lake, 2019b)

Barriers

Many housing advocates and residents expressed concerns that the city's original SRO text amendment did not adequately address equity. In response, the city held additional meetings to learn more about stakeholders' concerns. During these meetings, stakeholders stated that the original SRO proposal by providing housing options only for individuals was exclusionary to families. This input guided the city's revision from the original SRO text amendment to the current shared housing text amendment, which provides housing options for families and individuals, allows for more flexibility in design, and incorporates Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.

While many housing advocates strongly support the amendment, many residents have expressed concern over the potential for poorly run and/or high concentrations of shared housing developments in the future. Residents have also expressed concern over the proximity of shared housing developments to existing single-family residential areas (City of Salt Lake, 2019). Some residents also expressed a desire to see shared housing permitted solely as conditional uses, as opposed to by-right (A. Ogden, personal communication, March 19, 2020). SLC has addressed these concerns by educating the public around its core reasoning that shared housing is simply another form of multifamily housing (A. Ogden, personal communication, March 19, 2020). SLC also emphasized in its messaging that the concept of shared housing, and shared housing uses is not new, that these were historical uses both in their city and across the country. SLC was transparent about the rationale for the zoning amendment and continued to educate the public around the four key criteria utilized in the recommendation for zoning districts SROs could expand to (detailed on pg. 23). City staff shared that the districts proposed already allow multifamily housing and have relaxed density criteria (A. Ogden, personal communication, March 19, 2020). Staff also emphasized that none of the districts proposed are located in or are proximate to single-family-home neighborhoods (of which SLC has many). To further convey these points, city staff relied on data and statistics on their project webpage, such as the fact that only 21 percent of the city's land area permits residential uses, with a little less than half of that area (only 9 percent) permitting higher density, where shared housing would be permitted. In

other words, the proposed locations where shared housing would be permitted overall is limited (A. Ogden, personal communication, March 19, 2020; City of Salt Lake, 2020b).

Whether shared housing should be zoned as conditional uses was a point of contention between the city and the public. Staff's recommendation since the proposal's inception was to permit shared housing by-right, to reduce time delays and expenses for applicants (A. Ogden, personal communication, March 19, 2020). Staff explained that they had to advocate for this angle very strongly, as they met resistance on this issue from city council as well (A. Ogden, personal communication, March 19, 2020). To address this concern, staff included an additional section on qualifying provisions (detailed on pg. 22) in their proposal which provides operating restrictions (such as occupancy limits) to ensure compatibility with surrounding uses (A. Ogden, personal communication, March 19, 2020). By incorporating these provisions, staff were able to address public concerns while maintaining their goal of permitting the use by-right. Applicants would be able to address these restrictions up-front, and early on in the process, avoiding the conditional use process. This compromise allowed the city to successfully advance this aspect of their proposal.

Outlook

Staff conveyed that there is increased interest in shared housing. The operator of the existing SRO has expressed interest in constructing new shared housing buildings, and in general there is significant support from local housing groups (A. Ogden, personal communication, March 19, 2020). Staff also mentioned that, if shared housing developments were permitted by-right at present, staff would expect to see developers incorporating these developments into their proposed site plans. In addition, a local housing advocate who has played a large role in this zoning text amendment is working with the state to establish a state-owned or state-built shared housing development.

There is also increasing market demand for microunit developments in the city, such as PadSplit, as evidenced by the city's receipt of emails and phone calls from developers expressing interest in constructing them (A. Ogden, personal communication, March 19, 2020). These units play an important role in the city's overall goal to moderately increase density in the city. Once the shared housing text amendment is approved by city council, staff expects to see an increase in these establishments (A. Ogden, personal communication, March 19, 2020).

Challenges Not Yet Addressed

The first challenge observed relates to cost of ownership of the city's sole SRO, the Rio Grande Hotel. The building is owned by the city, and some affordable units are provided through HUD's Low-income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program (A. Ogden, personal communication, March 19, 2020; Affordable Housing Online, 2020). Although the Rio Grande Hotel provides housing for a range of household income groups, including those who are very low-income, the ownership and funding sources raise the commonly debated questions around whether non-subsidized SROs can effectively serve as an affordable housing option. SLC staff were pressed on this point during a public hearing, where residents expressed concern that SROs would simply be constructed as market rate units and would not serve low-income households. SLC staff acknowledged this point and stated that they anticipated working with non-profits and housing corporations in the future as SROs were constructed. SLC also emphasized that the goal of this project was to ensure that regulations do not create unnecessary barriers to this type of housing in the future. Overall, this consideration for financing serves as a takeaway on the need to factor in potential subsidies and partnerships with non-profits to ensure co-living housing units are affordable for low-income households.

The other challenge observed was SLC's use of terminology. As discussed throughout this section, the term "SRO" will be changed to "shared housing." This change could be a challenge for the city, as it complicates the discussion around the evolution of the project and may be confusing for the public. It was also observed that SLC's affordable housing overlay project referred to SROs as "SROs/co-living units" in its public survey. It appears the city is juggling several different terms in a few different places. Following the adoption of the shared housing text amendment, SLC should ensure consistent use of terminology across its zoning projects. Moreover, in our interview with staff, it seemed unclear as to how the city draws the distinction between a rooming house and an SRO in practice. It was shared that rooming houses are typically used for dorm-style housing. This was confusing, because in the same discussion staff referred to microunits (typically considered "dorm-style" units) as falling under SROs. However, staff mentioned that rooming houses in the city were practically obsolete, and that there were initial discussions on removing the term from the zoning text. This was turned down, however, so as to keep modifications to the zoning text minimal (A. Ogden, personal communication, March 19, 2020). To resolve this ambiguity of terms, the city could consider future zoning text updates that consolidate the term "rooming house" under the umbrella of shared housing developments.

Lastly, SLC has acknowledged that there is an emphasis on expediting the shared housing text amendment due to the city's immediate needs for additional affordable housing, but that additional research will be needed to more comprehensively examine the way the city is currently zoned to address unintended barriers to constructing housing. The benefits of this targeted approach are clear; the city will be permitted to construct/convert more shared housing developments in order to provide additional housing for individuals and families. However, there are drawbacks to this approach as well, such as potential inconsistencies in language across the zoning ordinance, like the continued use of the term rooming house as discussed above. Additionally, some of the wording in the current legislative draft includes some minor provisions that contradict the proposal's objective to exclude shared housing as a type of dwelling. SLC will need to address these outstanding research avenues and revisions in a later phase of this project (or others).

Case Study Analysis and Discussion

Table 4 summarizes our assessment of strengths, weaknesses, and takeaways of each case study profiled in this report.

	Denver Group Living Initiative	Salt Lake City Shared Housing Initiative
Profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal to increase the number of unrelated adults allowed to live together from 2 (for single-family homes) and 4 (for multi-family housing) to 8, with 1 more unrelated person allowed for each additional 200 sf over 1600 sf. • Proposal to change SROs from a temporary lodging use to a permanent residential use. • Denver's effort focuses on changing the definition of "household" as well as reorganizing and expanding where different group living uses are allowed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SLC's effort is two-fold; redefine the term SRO and update the zoning ordinance using the term shared housing, and expand the number of zones where shared housing will be permitted • Shared housing would be permitted by right • The term shared housing will encompass SROs and other flexible configurations to accommodate individuals and families. Individual units can have a kitchen or bathroom but not both, and whichever amenity is not included in an individual unit is provided as a common/shared area • Shared housing units not to exceed 500 square feet per unit; minimum of 100 square feet per sleeping room for a single tenant and 120 square feet for two tenants • ½ parking space per sleeping room
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed changes are in alignment with and can be made independently from the city's building and fire code • Proposed changes will legitimize current practices of roommate living arrangements in the city and will align Denver with zoning practices in peer jurisdictions • Enables more efficient use of existing housing stock (both single-family homes and SROs) • Enhances equity and flexibility in zoning ordinance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamlines SROs/microunit uses and allows for new construction of SROs/microunit developments • Cleans up the zoning text (removing terms like "apartment hotel" which are not uses in the city) • Can house both individuals and families, and allows for flexible models of construction • By defining shared housing outside of the term "dwelling," SLC did not have to address restrictions imposed on it by the term "family" (maximum of 4 unrelated adults)
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant public resistance to city's initial proposal • Doesn't adequately address concerns around commercialization of residential neighborhoods • Terminology in the zoning ordinance could use additional refinement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terminology in the zoning ordinance could use additional refinement • Change in the proposed term through the zoning text amendment process could be confusing for the public • SLC felt additional research on zoning barriers to constructing housing was outstanding
Takeaways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to the family or household definition can be a "no cost" option to increase a city's housing pool by allowing more people to live in existing residences. Given the extent of single-family home neighborhoods in Denver, this definitional change also presents an opportunity to broadly improve housing choices through a seemingly narrow zoning change. • Public opinion matters, and may coalesce around unexpected details of a proposal. While Denver planning staff have preferred a more generous allowance for unrelated adults living together, residents of single-family home neighborhoods have exerted significant influence pushing back through Registered Neighborhood Organizations and other public engagement venues. Out of the larger scope of the group living initiative, debate and resistance have centered on the intended changes to the household definition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A monitor for common areas is critical to the success of SROs/shared housing • When expanding locations for SROs/shared housing, mixed-use areas that are easily transit accessible, walkable, and within districts that already permit similar uses and levels of intensity were selected • Zoning tools such as affordable housing overlays (which can incentivize affordable housing by waiving administrative processes) or zoning modernization efforts that address density by regulating by form, or, modifying lot size, can advance affordable housing by reducing regulatory barriers and diversifying the housing stock. These additional strategies may help to make co-living housing options more affordable • Partnerships with non-profits may be needed to ensure there are shared housing units that are deeply affordable • Housing advocates were a major stakeholder in SLC. In addition, SLC engaged frequently with the public and utilized a robust, interactive project webpage

Table 4. Comparison of Denver's Group Living Effort and SLC's Shared Housing Initiative

Our case study research yielded the following major takeaways:

There is no one ‘right’ way to increase the supply of co-living housing options. Cities may focus on repurposing traditional single-family homes into co-living spaces by redefining household or family. Alternately (or in addition), cities may expand and enable more SROs, apartment hotels, and microunits by recognizing these co-living housing types as residential uses, treating these uses like other multifamily residential uses, expanding zoning districts where these housing types are allowed, and streamlining these uses under umbrella terminology such as “shared housing.”

Co-living initiatives can be integral to municipal efforts to enhance housing equity as part of a larger suite of planning and housing initiatives. For example, cities may bundle co-living policy efforts with affordable housing zoning incentives, residential care regulatory restructuring, and reducing barriers for higher density housing development. Cities may need to couple co-living zoning ordinance updates with other aligning changes to the building code and/or parking regulations.

Cities encounter a varied response from the public regarding co-living. Typical concerns raised by the public include worries about crime, parking impacts, changes in neighborhood character, strains on city services, and insufficient community input. Co-living supporters (e.g., housing advocates) raise equity considerations, such as the provision of co-living housing for families, in addition to individuals. A robust project webpage that employs a variety of mediums (comment/response wall, project handouts, maps, recorded meetings) is an important tool to use for engaging the public and gathering feedback.

Cities use many lines of reasoning to communicate to the public about the needs for co-living initiatives. These rationales range from improving zoning ordinances to align with peer cities and federal/state housing policies, to enhancing regulatory flexibility and simplicity, updating zoning to modern living practices, and improving equity. Use of data and statistics, such as quantifying percentage of land area dedicated to different housing types, is an effective means for communicating these rezoning rationales.

Cities struggle with simplifying similar and interrelated terms. Currently, there isn’t a broad consensus around an umbrella term like “co-living” to describe these housing types where common spaces are shared. Defining and regulating multiple essentially similar uses (e.g., SRO, apartment hotel, microunit, rooming/boarding house) as different uses misses an opportunity for regulatory streamlining, may cause confusion, and could result in inequitable treatment. For example, if a unit were categorized as an SRO (instead of a rooming/boarding house) under Denver’s old regulations, occupants would be limited by the temporary lodging status to 30-day or shorter stays.

Private providers are supplying innovative co-living solutions working in the context of current zoning regulations in limited markets in the U.S. These companies can be valuable partners in providing unsubsidized housing that is more affordable across the income spectrum. However, it requires cities to examine costs per-unit against market-rate units to understand how co-living housing may contribute to local housing affordability goals. Cities are also cautious in engaging with private providers to avoid commercialization of residential neighborhoods and unintended consequences.

Engaging with housing advocates and champions early-on is an important part of the text amendment process. Both Salt Lake City and Denver worked closely with supportive stakeholders in the early stages of their zoning text amendments, who played an important role in advising and informing the proposals in both cities. In the case of Salt Lake City, the changes to SRO layouts to include families and use of the term shared housing were direct outputs from their close stakeholder engagement.

Recommendations for Alexandria

Based on insights drawn from Denver and Salt Lake City, this section presents a menu of potential strategies for enhancing co-living in Alexandria for the city's consideration. The approaches are summarized below and expanded on in the following pages.

- Make co-living a by-right use
- Simplify and clarify co-living terms
- Expand the number of zoning districts where co-living is allowed
- Change the definition of "family" to accommodate more unrelated adults
- Preserve existing co-living housing
- Implement proactive communications and messaging strategies

Make co-living a by-right use

Consider lifting the special use requirement for these housing types and permitting them as by-right. This is emphasized as a serious barrier for congregate housing in the city's Housing Master Plan. At a minimum, consider allowing these housing types in certain specified zones as by-right uses, as done in SLC and Denver.

Simplify and clarify co-living terms

Apartment hotels and rooming houses are defined similarly in Alexandria. The following changes proposed would combine elements of both terms, and collapse these two terms into one umbrella term, to simplify the zoning ordinance. The proposal below would also permit the construction of microunit developments. We recommend the following changes:

1. Select an umbrella term that broadly captures the multitude of housing types that permit the sharing of common areas (e.g., apartment hotels, rooming houses, and microunit developments). This term could be "co-living" or "shared housing," or something similar. The term selected should ultimately reflect the common attribute among these housing forms, which is that common spaces are shared. This umbrella term will simplify zoning terminology and allow for more flexibility in the types of arrangements that could be constructed.
2. Base the new umbrella term's definition on the existing definition of "apartment hotel." At present, the definition of apartment hotels allows for the housing of individuals and families, because dwelling units are permitted. As highlighted in the case study of SLC, this type of definition is more inclusive, and for this reason, we recommend retaining the apartment hotel language. Building from this definition, modify the language to state that an individual unit may include a bathroom or a kitchen facility, but not both, and, that the amenity not contained in the individual unit is provided as a common area (i.e., kitchen, bathroom, or both). Defining the use this way is in keeping with known definitions of SROs and microunits. SLC used this type of language in its definition of shared housing.
3. Incorporate typical rooming house recommended conditions into the new umbrella term's definition to reflect desired conditions and requirements for the new "co-living" or "shared housing" term/use. Incorporate conditions frequently put forth by staff in rooming house SUPs, such as the requirement that an owner/operator live on site. Ensure there are provisions that stipulate the maintenance of common areas, a best practice emphasized by SLC. Subsequently, delete the term "rooming house," collapsing and incorporating this use under the new umbrella term.

Rooming houses and apartment hotels as currently defined are very similar, though apartment hotels permit dwelling units (which allows families), whereas rooming houses restrict use to single unrelated adults. Additionally, rooming houses restrict the number of unrelated adults in one house to nine people. To allow for more flexibility in terms of who can have shared living spaces (i.e., families and individuals) and to allow for more people to access these types of units, we recommend that the term rooming house be deleted and absorbed under the new “co-living” umbrella term.

4. Keep the term “congregate housing facility” as is; while this housing type provides opportunities for sharing common spaces, we feel this is a distinct use in that it provides specialized residential care, and aligns more closely with assisted living facilities. No changes to this term are recommended.

Expand the number of zoning districts where co-living is allowed

As highlighted in the case studies examined, both Denver and Salt Lake City undertook an expansion of zones where co-living housing (namely, SROs) would be permitted. We present two options for expansion of co-living zones in Alexandria; one set of recommendations is based on a scenario in which there are no changes to existing terminology and definitions, and the other set of recommendations is based on a scenario in which Alexandria adopts an umbrella co-living term.

Overall, these changes represent modest modifications that are within the bounds of existing zoning for the three housing types that provide opportunities to share common areas in Alexandria; zones outside of those listed below could also be considered by the city as part of the city’s anticipated zoning text update, or a future update.

Scenario 1 – No changes to terminology: The following recommendations for zoning revisions would allow for a modest expansion and allow for more consistency in zoning among these fairly similar housing types. To the extent the following changes align with existing small area plans, we recommend:

- Permitting rooming houses in the same mixed-use zones as congregate houses and apartment hotels (a total of four zones).
- Permitting apartment hotels in the same commercial zones as congregate housing and rooming houses (a total of three zones).
- Permitting rooming houses and apartment hotels in the Neighborhood retail (Arlandria) zone to be consistent with congregate housing (a total of one zone).

Scenario 2 – Changes to terminology adopted: The following is recommended if Alexandria were to adopt an umbrella “co-living” term, under which apartment hotels and rooming houses are combined:

- Retain existing rooming house zoning for residential zones (this would permit apartment hotels in five additional residential zones; though would be referred to by the new umbrella term).
- Retain existing rooming house zoning for commercial zones (this would allow apartment hotels in three additional commercial zones; though would be referred to by the new umbrella term).
- Expand co-living uses (i.e., rooming houses and apartment hotels) to the Neighborhood retail (Arlandria) zone (a total of one zone).
- Retain existing apartment hotel zoning for mixed-use zones (this would “allow” rooming houses in four mixed use zones, but rooming house term would be referred to by the new umbrella co-living term).
- Retain existing special overlay zoning (apartment hotels/rooming houses already permitted in the King Street urban retail zone).

- Consider expanding co-living uses (i.e., rooming houses and apartment hotels) to zone - residential multi-family zone (RMF) 1400; this is the only multi-family zone that does not permit any form of co-living housing. By expanding to this zone, co-living housing would be permitted in all multi-family zones; an approach that was employed in both Denver and SLC.
- Apply parking standards used for multi-family buildings to co-living housing (i.e., apartment hotels and rooming houses).

Change the definition of “family” to accommodate more unrelated adults

Alexandria’s current definition of family is more expansive than the existing definition of household in Denver—Alexandria allows up to four unrelated persons while Denver allows two to four unrelated adults, depending on the housing typology. However, Denver’s strategy is to arrive at a household definition allowing five to six unrelated adults to live together in single-, two-, or multi-family housing. A similar change for Alexandria would bring the city into alignment with the peer jurisdictions of D.C. (which allows six unrelated persons), Montgomery County (which allows five unrelated persons), and Falls Church (which allows eight unrelated persons).

Preserve existing co-living housing

Alexandria has committed to “preserve the long-term affordability and physical condition of the existing stock of ... market rental housing” (City of Alexandria, 2013, p. 82). Specifically, the city established as a strategy “obtain[ing] commitments from current owners for long-term preservation of currently existing market-rate affordable units” (p 84). Several relevant implementation and funding tools are associated with this strategy: establish a developer contribution policy, transfer of development rights scheme, energy efficiency loans, tax abatement, historic tax credits, and development fee relief, among others (p. 83). However, the city lacks policies expressly addressing rooming house preservation.

Several cities across North America have implemented a number of tools to preserve SROs. These approaches include imposing (and enforcing through financial penalties) regulatory restrictions on conversions and demolitions of existing SRO stock (e.g., requiring minimum waiting periods for demolitions/conversions), requiring replacement of converted or demolished SROs, incentivizing maintenance and preservation of existing SRO stock through grants or low-interest loans, and implementing transfer of development rights schemes (Pearson, 2008; HUD, 1990). Alexandria should develop and implement a strategy to preserve existing rooming houses in the city.

Implement proactive communications and messaging strategies

Alexandria should consider incorporating rationales around policy alignment, enhancing equity, peer jurisdiction parity, and zoning modernization to reflect how people currently live. In addition, providing clear communication on the benefits of the zoning text amendment, such as simplifying terminology, and increasing flexibility in co-living housing types, should be conveyed in the city’s co-living public engagement effort. Data and statistics (such as quantifying residential land areas) should be used to support these points wherever possible.

In addition, Alexandria should employ a robust project website that clearly depicts the proposed changes and use graphics and visuals wherever possible. Alexandria should consider incorporating a forum on the webpage where the public can leave comments as well. The website can serve as an interactive and all-encompassing page, where the public can easily access all materials related to the zoning text amendment and have an opportunity to provide their feedback on the proposal. Appendix 5 presents a one-page co-living fact sheet for the city’s consideration.

Appendices

1. References
2. Existing co-living establishments in Alexandria
3. Zoning districts where rooming houses, congregate houses, and apartment hotels are permitted in Alexandria
4. Co-Living resources for the City of Alexandria
5. Flyer
6. Interview questions

Appendix 1 – References

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Appendix 2 – Existing co-living establishments in Alexandria

Establishment Name	Establishment Type	Special Use Permit (SUP) Number	Address	Year Built	Year SUP First Issued	Number of People Served	Number of Units	Parking	Zone	Small Area Plan	Stories	Bldg. Sq. Ft.	Staff	Description
Safe Haven Facility	Congregate	2007-0002	115 N. Patrick Street	1896-1902	2007 (est.)	12	3	9 spaces across street plus on street	CD	King Street Retail Strategy	2	4,000	8	Supervised permanent housing with support services for formerly homeless individuals
Friends of Guest House, Inc.	Congregate	2018-0029	116 – 120 South Payne Street	-	2018	21	10	8 provided in on-site parking lot, only 3 required	CL/ Commercial Low	Old Town	2	5,208	1	Housing for all female non-violent parolees with residential/counseling services
Friends of Guest House, Inc.	Congregate*	1267-B	1 East Luray Avenue	-	1979	9	8	-	R-2-5	Potomac West	2	-	Yes, total not known	Housing for all female non-violent parolees; short term, residential program usually terms of 4 months per person, in an 8-bedroom house, provides vocational training.
313 N. Patrick	Rooming House**	2013-00087	313 N. Patrick Street	1950*	1991	9	8	2 spaces off street	RB/ Residential Townhouse	Braddock Rd Metro Station	2	-	1, off-site	Detached dwelling, conversion of a single-family dwelling to a unit of 4-9 unrelated individuals in 1950s
1001A Queen Street/ 300 N Patrick St	Rooming House	2018-0001	1001A Queen Street/ 300 N Patrick St	1940	2002	8	8	None	CL/ Commercial Low	Braddock Rd Metro Station	2	3,600 sf total; 1,400 sf for rooming house located above ground floor retail	1	Has operated as a rooming house for at least 40 years, leases run ~ 4 months. No cooking facilities, 2 shared bathrooms, 1 occupant/room allowed, no on-site laundry; retail on first floor.
1022 Pendleton and 521 North Henry Streets Rooming house	Rooming House	2019-00104	1022 Pendleton and 521 North Henry Streets	Before 1917	1991	8	8	2 spaces rear end of property	CSL/ Commercial Service Low Zone	Braddock Rd Metro Station	2	4,000	1	Has been a rooming house for 100+years; 2 bathrooms and a common area for activities; no one owns a car; building may be eligible for state/federal historic listing
605 Prince St-The Prince St. Inn	Apartment Hotel	2018-0110	605 Prince Street	1840	2018	9-18	9	None required	CD/ Commercial Downtown Zone	Old Town	3	2,000	Yes, off-site, total not known	5 studio rooms with kitchenettes and 4 larger guest suites with full kitchens; providing a "high-end experience"; No front desk; 24/7 call/text and security; located in a historic district.

*At the time this was established there was a definition for group home. Today there is no longer a term for group homes - it was replaced by the term congregated housing facility. This building is permitted to continue to operate under its existing SUP for a group home. If this facility were to expand, the applicant would need a new SUP for a congregated housing facility (M. Christesen, personal communication, March 5, 2020).

**Operated as a rooming house since at least 1950, no information on year built

Appendix 3 – Zoning districts where rooming houses, congregate houses, and apartment hotels are permitted in Alexandria

Per Alexandria's zoning ordinance, co-living housing types are defined below. Table 5 summarizes zones in which different co-living housing types are permitted in Alexandria. Figure 6, Figure 7, and Figure 8 depict where these zones are located geographically.

Apartment Hotel: A building or portion thereof designed for or containing guest rooms or suites of rooms and dwelling units with or without unit cooking facilities and with or without common kitchen, dining or living facilities for occupancy on a short- or long-term basis.

Rooming House: A dwelling or portion thereof which contains guest rooms designed or intended to be used, let out of or hired for occupancy by, or which are occupied by three or more, but not exceeding nine individuals for compensation and in which meals may be provided. Existence of one or more of the following characteristics constitutes prima facie evidence that a dwelling is being used as a rooming house: separate rental agreements for different roomers; separate entrances from the exterior for individual roomers; and typical common areas of a dwelling, such as the living room and dining room, being utilized as sleeping areas or not being available on an equal or common basis to all roomers.

Congregate Housing Facility: A structure other than a single-family dwelling where unrelated persons reside under supervision or 24-hour on-site management and may receive special care, treatment or training, on a temporary or permanent basis.

Zone	Co-Living Housing Type		
	Apartment Hotel	Rooming House	Congregate Housing Facility
Residential Zoning			
Sec. 3-603 - RA/Multifamily zone. Special use.		●	
Sec. 3-703 - RB/Townhouse zone. Special use.		●	
Sec. 3-803 - RCX/Medium density apartment zone. Special use.	●	●	
Sec. 3-903 - RC/High density apartment zone. Special use.	●	●	
Sec. 3-1002 - RD/High density apartment zone. Special use.	●	●	
Sec. 3-1103 - RM/Townhouse zone. Special use.		●	
Sec. 3-1203 - RS/Townhouse zone. Special use.		●	
Sec. 3-1303 - RT/Townhouse zone. Special use.		●	
Commercial Zoning			
Sec. 4-103 - CL/Commercial low zone. Special use.		●	●
Sec. 4-203 - CC/Commercial community zone. Special use.		●	●
Sec. 4-303 - CSL/Commercial service low zone. Special use.		●	●
Sec. 4-403 - CG/Commercial general zone. Special use.	●	●	●
*Sec. 4-503 - CD/Commercial downtown zone. Special use.	●	●	●
*Sec. 4-603 - CD-X/Commercial downtown zone (Old Town North). Special use.	●	●	●
*Sec. 4-803 - OC/Office commercial zone. Special use.	●	●	●
*Sec. 4-903 - OCM (50)/Office commercial medium (50) zone. Special use.	●	●	●
Sec. 4-1003 - OCM (100)/Office commercial medium (100) zone. Special use.	●	●	●
*Sec. 4-1103 - OCH/Office commercial high zone. Special use.	●	●	●
Sec. 4-1404 - NR/Neighborhood Retail Zone (Arlandria). Special use.			●
Mixed Use Zoning			
Sec. 5-103 - CRMU-L/Commercial residential mixed use (low). Special use.	●		●
Sec. 5-203 - CRMU-M/Commercial residential mixed use (medium). Special use.	●		●
Sec. 5-303 - CRMU-H/Commercial residential mixed use (high). Special use.	●		●
Sec. 5-403 - CRMU-X/Commercial residential mixed use (Old Town North) zone. Special use.	●		●
Special Overlay Zoning			
Sec. 6-702 - KR/King Street urban retail zone. Upper floor special use.	●	●	●
*Requirement to have someone living on site in a rooming house may be waived on a case by case basis			

Table 5. Summary of Zoning Districts Where Co-Living Housing is Permitted in Alexandria

Zoning Districts for Rooming Houses* Permitted in the City of Alexandria

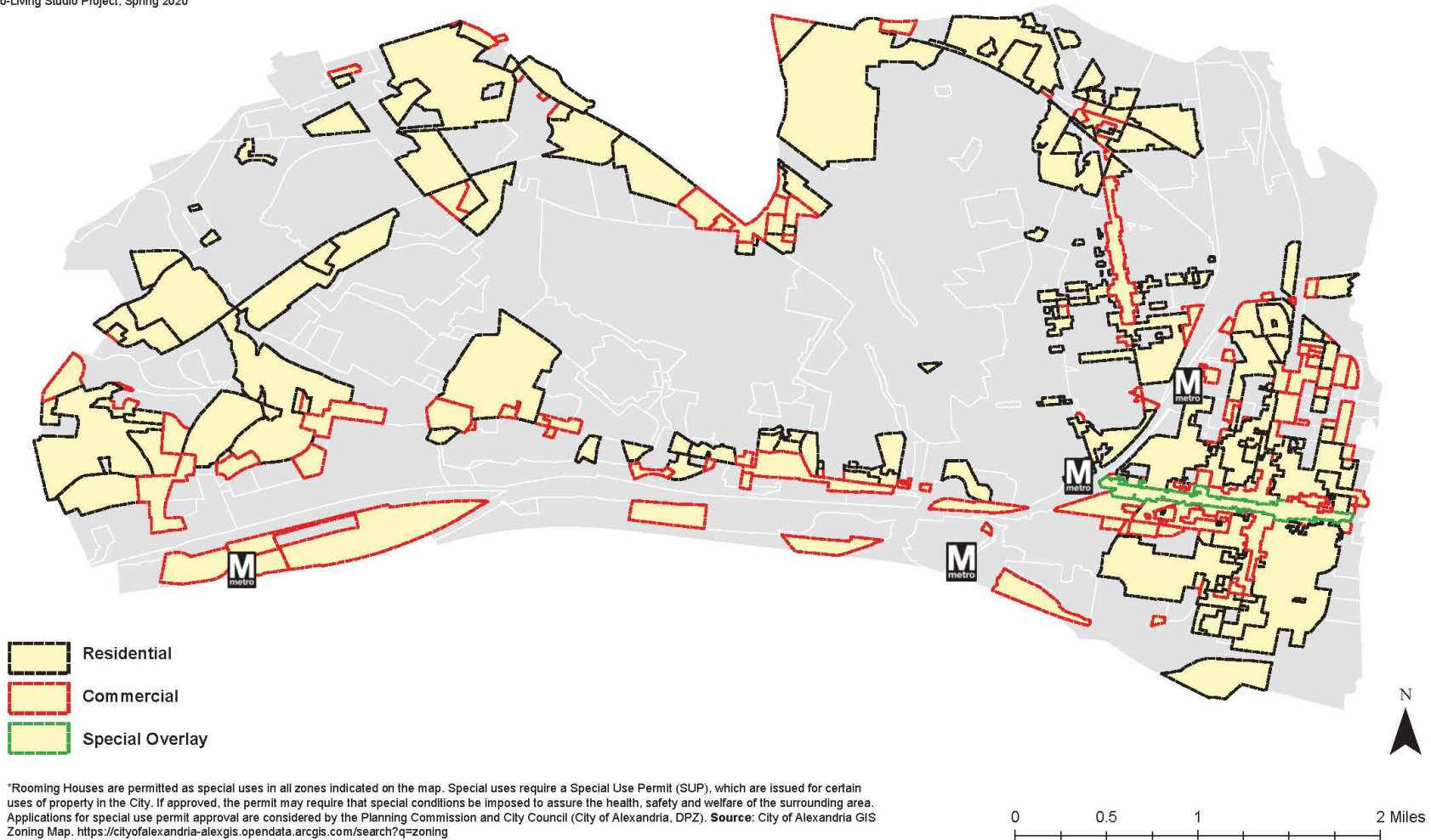


Figure 6. Zoning Districts for Rooming Houses Permitted in the City of Alexandria

Zoning Districts for Apartment Hotels* Permitted in the City of Alexandria

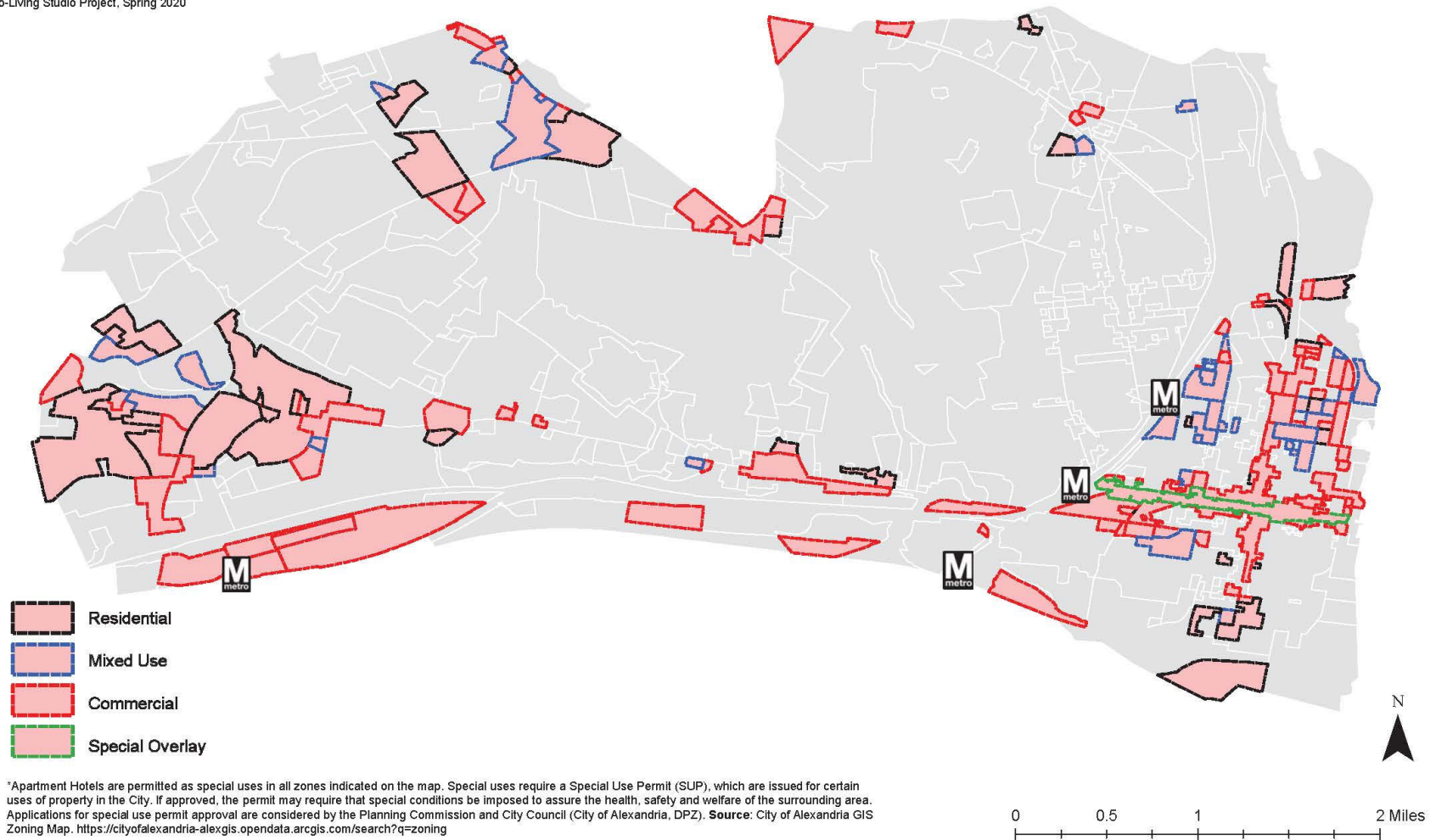


Figure 7. Zoning Districts for Apartment Hotels Permitted in the City of Alexandria

Zoning Districts for Congregate Housing Facilities* Permitted in the City of Alexandria

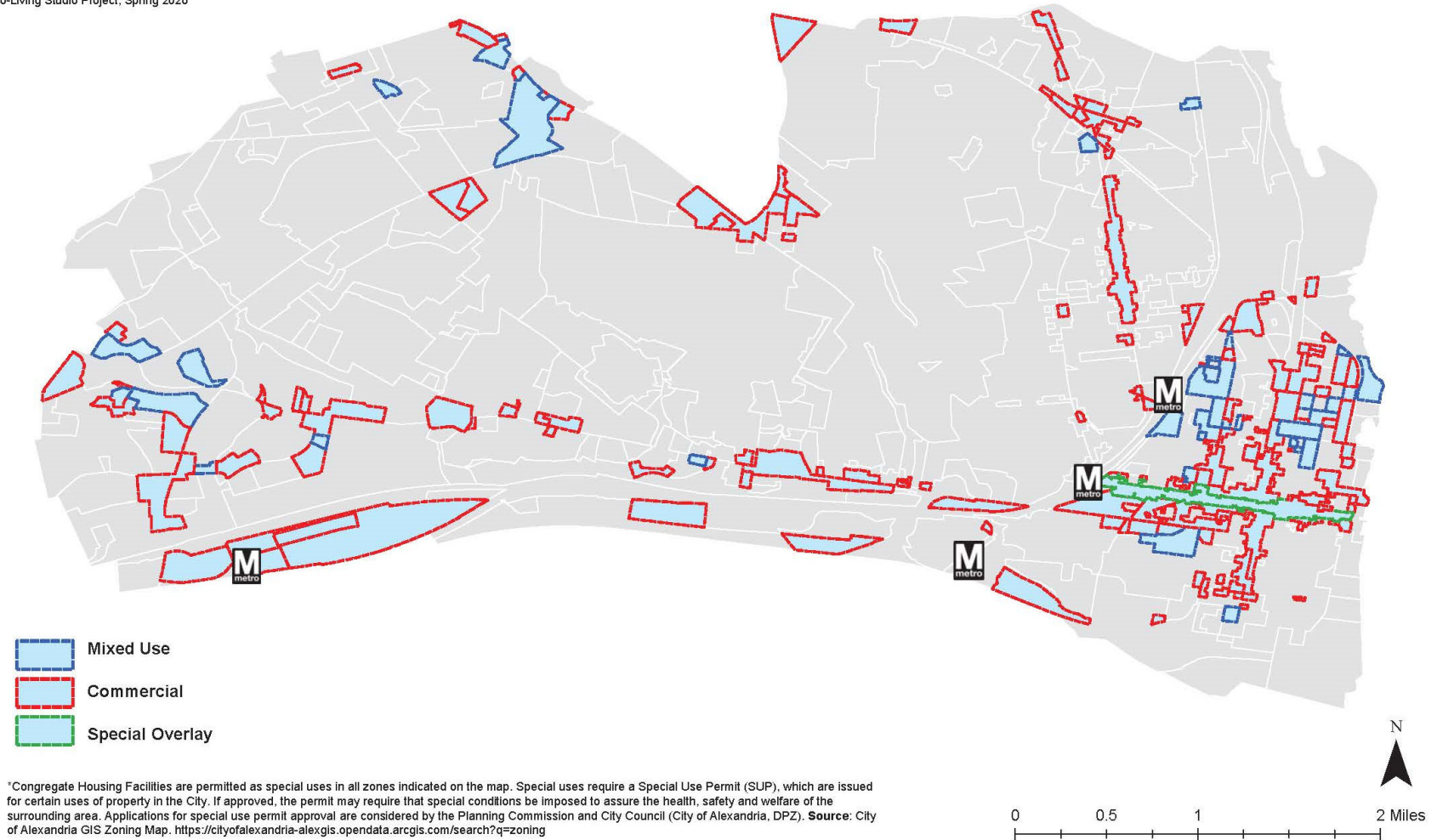


Figure 8. Zoning Districts for Congregate Housing Facilities Permitted in the City of Alexandria

Appendix 4 – Co-living resources for the City of Alexandria

While we've referenced these sources in our report (among others), Table 6 compiles a list of the most salient reports we encountered in our research that would be most useful for the city to have on hand as a tool as the city considers options for moving forward with re-zoning for co-living.

Resource	Description	Link
Lisa Sturtevant. Housing Leaders Group of Greater Washington. 2017. <i>A guidebook or Increasing Housing Affordability in the Greater Washington Region. Local Resources and Strategies for Housing Production and Preservation</i>	A Guidebook that compiles planning and policy tools for local governments, nonprofit and for-profit developers and advocacy groups in the Greater Washington D.C. region are using—or could be using—to promote the production and preservation of housing that is affordable for all in the region. Includes benchmarking of peer DC region cities on SROs, microunits, etc.	https://www.washingtongrantmakers.org/news/new-release-guidebook-increasing-housing-affordability-greater-washington-region http://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/06af46_0268b7d74a0a40ec88b5a7cfaa11333f.pdf
Mark L. Gillem and Stacey Croll with Katherine Brown, Paula Gilmour, Todd Kimball, Claire Maulhardt, Susan Mershon, Katelyn Ruben, Daniel Schaible, and Renuka Vasepalli (University of Oregon). 2007. <i>Housing with Dignity: A Post-Occupancy Evaluation of Single Resident Occupancy Units</i>	Quality of life study on SROs which details preferable configurations.	https://www.brikbase.org/content/housing-dignity-post-occupancy-evaluation-single-resident-occupancy-units
Urban Land Institute. 2013. <i>The Macro-view on Micro Units</i>	Report summarizing literature on micro-units; includes details on sizing, configuration, and peer city research.	https://uli.org/wp-content/uploads/ULI-Documents/MicroUnit_full_rev_2015.pdf
Tim Iglesias. 2014. <i>The Promises and Pitfalls of Micro-Housing</i> , Zoning and Planning Law Report 37:10, 1–12	A report that examines micro-housing and its various types, and forms. Provides an excellent summary of regulatory and policy considerations for zoning for micro-housing.	https://works.bepress.com/tim_iglesias/29/
Urban Land Institute. 2018. <i>Design for Affordability: Four housing product solutions that are quickly implemented, unsubsidized, utilize existing land and materials, and affordable for 10% - 120% AMI</i>	This report Examines 4 private co-living models, aimed at addressing affordability in the city of Atlanta: Single Family Co-Living, Increasing Density on Single Family Lots, Micro-Units in Multi-family Developments and Multi-family Co-Living.	https://ulidigitalmarketing.blob.core.windows.net/ulidcnc/2018/12/ULI-Atlanta-Design-for-Affordability-FINAL.pdf
C.J. Gabbe. 2015. <i>Looking Through the Lens of Size: Land Use Regulations and Micro-Apartments in San Francisco</i> . Cityscape 17:2, 223–38	A report that examines the two prototype micro-apartment buildings to illustrate regulatory barriers to smaller units in San Francisco, where an innovative pilot micro apartment policy was adopted. The report recommend that cities review their codes through the lens of unit size and eliminate unnecessary impediments to small units and underscores the most common impediments.	https://www.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/cityscpe/vol17num2/Cityscape_July_2015.pdf

Resource	Description	Link
John Infranca. 2014. <i>Housing Changing Households: Regulatory Challenges for Micro-Units and Accessory Dwelling Units</i> . Stanford Law and Policy Review 25:53, 53–90	This article provides a detailed analysis of regulatory and other challenges to developing micro-units and ADUs, across 5 cities: NYC, D.C., Austin, Denver, and Seattle. Analysis addresses broader demographic shifts and the relationship between public and private realm and argues that jurisdictions should avoid considering micro-units in isolation from other forms of housing such as ADUs.	https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2339136
E. Stern and J. Yager. 2018. <i>21st Century SROs: Can Small Housing Units Help Meet the Need for Affordable Housing in New York City?</i> NYU Furman Center for Housing Research	This report analyzes the ROI of SROs compared to small studios in New York City. Examines zoning codes and provides zoning change recommendations and provides a framework for other municipalities to gauge benefits and barriers of this housing type.	https://furmancenter.org/research/publication/21st-century-sros-can-small-housing-units-help-meet-the-need-for-affordable
City of Denver. <i>Peer Cities Review: Unrelated Adults Allowed in Single Unit</i>	Peer city benchmarking on number of unrelated adults who can live together – emphasis on west-coast cities. Created by city of Denver as part of their Group Living zoning text amendment.	https://www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/646/documents/Zoning/text_amendments/Group_Living/Group_living_peer_cities_review.pdf

Table 6. Co-Living Resources

Appendix 5 – Flyer

Figure 9 is a one-page flyer intended to communicate to the public about co-living and is based on insights from our literature review. The flyer employs some language from the Alexandria Housing Master Plan to ensure consistent messaging from the city.

CO-LIVING HOUSING

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Localities across the country are modernizing their zoning to allow for more diversity in their housing stock as a way to provide more affordable housing. As part of this process, Alexandria is examining how zoning changes that enable co-living housing can contribute to a robust supply of housing options that are affordable to households at a range of income levels, ages, and abilities. The provision of co-living housing is a common affordable housing strategy utilized by many localities across the U.S.

WHAT IS CO-LIVING HOUSING?

Co-living housing is an umbrella term for housing options that have shared common spaces, such as bathrooms and kitchens. Typically, co-living housing is available as short- or long-term rentals. Some co-living housing types are designed to have units that provide smaller square footage per person than typical apartment complex units, making them more affordable to construct and rent in some instances.

WHAT IS AFFORDABLE HOUSING?

A home is generally considered affordable if a household pays 30% or less of its income (before taxes) on rent or mortgage payments.

WHAT DOES CO-LIVING LOOK LIKE?

Co-living housing can take several different forms, and looks a little different throughout communities across the U.S. Most municipalities, like Alexandria, have at least one to two types of co-living housing types. Co-living housing is not new; in fact, variations of this type of housing have been around for over one hundred years.

DETACHED SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES | DUPLEX | TRIPLEX & FOURPLEX | COURTYARD APARTMENT | BUNGALOW COURT | TOWNHOUSE | MULTIPLEX LIVE/WORK | HIGH-RISE

MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING

Illustration © 2013 Optima Design, Inc.

WHY IS CO-LIVING HOUSING IMPORTANT?

Co-living housing provides a variety of housing options along the continuum of housing affordability, thereby making contributions to "missing middle housing" and providing housing for residents at a range of income levels.

CO-LIVING HOUSING HELPS ADVANCE ALEXANDRIA'S HOUSING MASTER PLAN GOAL OF PROVIDING "HOUSING FOR ALL"

Figure 9. Co-Living Housing Informational Flyer

Appendix 6 – Interview questions

- Who were key stakeholders (individuals, organizations) that helped the city institute SRO/rooming house friendly zoning/planning (e.g., developers, non-profits, citizen groups)?
- Who are common stakeholders involved and how do they work within regulatory frameworks to produce/provide co-living (e.g., expedited processes, work-arounds)?
- What were the biggest barriers (including public concerns around parking, concentration, impacts to single-family neighborhoods) for the city to institute SRO/rooming house friendly zoning/planning?
- How did the city overcome these barriers/concerns?
- How has the city addressed public concerns (e.g., fears about concentrations of these housing types, single family home concerns)?
- Was the definition of family/household an issue/factor at all?
- What are non-regulatory approaches the city uses to promote co-living/SROs (e.g., outreach, education, branding/marketing)?
- Has the city considered PodShare or PadSplit (private microunits)?
- Does the city use or refer more broadly to the term co-living?