

December 31, 2021

Subject: Proposed UDO-CC15 -Revision of Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Regulations, Request to delay action

Dear Member of the Winston-Salem City Council:

I am a concerned citizen who has lived in Winston-Salem since mid 1973. I am a Life and Charter member of the American Institute of Certified Planners. From June 1973 until March 1982, I was privileged to serve as a planner and then Senior Planner on the staff of the City-County Planning Board (CCPB). I followed this employment with five years as a private planning consultant and 18 years as the Executive Director of the Home Builders Association of Winston-Salem. Through out my time working in public, private and non-profit sectors I have been a strong advocate for public service and rigorous citizen participation.

While I retired from the HBA of W-S in late 2006, I have tried to stay informed on the work of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County governments and the City-County Planning Board. My principal source of information on local government activities has always been the local newspapers. On December 30, as I was scanning the Readers Forum in the Winston-Salem Journal, I read a letter from Ms. Carolyn Highsmith, I learned for the first time of the UDO-CC15 text amendment concerning proposed changes in the regulation of ADUs and that this matter was on the agenda for the Monday, January 3 meeting of the W-S City Council. Since that moment, I have spent the rest of my waking hours researching this proposal. The most important information coming from the City-County planning Board's Staff report, a copy of which you, other members of the City Council and our Mayor received in your agenda packet.

The first paragraph of the CCPB Staff Report does an excellent job of explaining the ADU concept and I personally heartily support utilizing appropriately regulated ADUs to assist in addressing the growing housing needs of our community. For me the details of how the concept of ADUs should be presented to our citizens and what regulations are needed. These are the matters which should now concern all of us. The bottom line for me is very simple: if UDO-CC15 as written is adopted on January 3, a great disservice will be done to the citizens of our city and to the need for allowing ADUs in all residential zoning districts. Why do I make this statement?

1. The vast majority of the citizens of Winston-Salem are unaware that this text amendment is scheduled for action by our City Council on January 3. They are unaware because they have spent the last 2 years fighting for their lives and the lives of their family in the COVID 19 Pandemic that has consumed all of us for 2 years. In addition, from Thanksgiving until January 2 every year, most families in Winston-Salem are focused on relaxing and celebrating the holiday season with family and friends. Most importantly, the Citizen Participation effort conducted to date has not engaged them.
2. Worst case: Winston-Salem could be set back for far too long in our use of the vehicle of ADUs to help address our long-term housing needs. Why? Single family homes are for the middle class of our community, the single most valuable asset that their owners have. I believe that UDO-CC15 is the biggest proposed change to zoning regulations in Winston Salem since the adoption of the Unified Development Ordinance in 1994. Uninformed citizens do not normally respond positively to changes in development regulations which they do not understand and which they could interpret as a threat to the value of their principal asset.

In conclusion, I urge you and the other members of the Winston-Salem City Council to delay consideration of UDO-CC15 until a date that will allow the City-County Planning Board and its staff to conduct a rigorous citizen participation process designed to both inform and involve the citizens of Winston-Salem.

Sincerely,

Harry Weiler, 2745 Maplewood Avenue, Winston-Salem, NC 27103

(336)-480-7674

harryw@triad.rr.com

CC: Chris Murphy, Director of Planning & Development Services