

August 15, 2018

To: Saint Paul City Council
Fr: Edie Meissner, Saint Paul Advisory Committee on Aging
Re: Zoning Changes to Allow City-Wide Accessory Dwelling Units

The Saint Paul Advisory Committee on Aging (ACOA) reiterates its earlier support of the proposed amendments to the zoning code that would permit accessory dwelling units (ADU's) in the R1 – RM2 and T1 – T3 zoning districts. We have been traveling with Jamie Radel to the district councils to reinforce our support and encourage discussion of the stated policy priority of the Metro Council in Thrive 2040: ***Create housing options that give people in all life stages and of all economic means viable choices for safe, stable and affordable homes.***

We are all aging at all times and our life-needs are constantly changing. Affordable and life-cycle housing is about whole neighborhoods. As we age, the demographic shift will continue to drive housing demand. Housing that is built or modified for aging households sends a message to people of all ages: ***Saint Paul supports neighbors as integral members as we age in our communities.*** We consider this discussion to be part of a city wide discussion about “aging in community”* and what that means – socially, culturally and economically.

ADUs provide many benefits for residents of both the primary and accessory units:

- ADUs intended as rental housing are a source of additional income for primary unit owners, and would provide additional security "eyes" on a primary unit and adjacent properties. This also would serve as a means to assist an older adult(s) to reside in his/her home safely.
- ADUs could house paid caregivers providing support for/assistance to residents in the primary unit who have various health/mobility limitations.
- ADUs would readily promote intergenerational living opportunities that are growing more popular, as well as housing family members at no or little charge.
- Owners of a primary unit might choose to continue living there while family members (or others) move into the accessory unit. Or younger family members could move into the primary unit when the property owners relocate to the accessory unit. This option can be particularly important when the primary unit has accessibility problems for the owners, and the accessory unit can incorporate universal design features.
- Increasingly, groups of older adults, couples and/or singles, are discussing and seeking to contract for purchase, to modify or to design and build a custom home in residential areas. If the primary unit doesn't have adequate layout and/or accessibility for all involved, one or more in the group could live in the primary unit and the others in the accessory unit.

*ACOA uses the term *aging in community* intentionally and often to reframe our way of thinking about aging toward *relationships* that create the *social and community support* necessary for people of all ages to thrive in our communities. “The well-being and quality of life for elders at home becomes a measure of the success of the community “(Thomas, 2014). *Aging in Community* is a viable alternative to institutionalization; it is a way of life that at its heart recognizes that aging is the reality for all of us, and that whether it's the youngest among us, Millennials or Boomers, everyone is acknowledged and treated as a valuable resource in their community.