

Lee, Chris

From: R P <palmra@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 14, 2025 6:30 PM
To: Lee, Chris
Subject: Re: Zoning, Neighborhoods, and Development Committee Meeting 4/15

Comment to be published on
240997

7. Ordinance A substitute ordinance relating to creation of the RT5 zoning district.

My name is Robin Palm, I'm an AICP certified urban planner and resident of Washington Heights in Aldermanic District 10. I'm also the southeast wisconsin representative to the state's professional planning chapter, although I won't be speaking in that capacity or at their behest.

The creation of the RT5 district is a good step in the right direction for Milwaukee's zoning code. There isn't really a "happy medium" zone between larger apartment buildings and towers and 1-4 family districts. I applaud this change as moving toward allowing more "missing middle" housing types to the city.

While Milwaukee is certainly a national leader when it comes to its stock of duplexes, the zoning code has been fairly strict on attached homes, known as "row houses" or "townhomes", and this has resulted in relatively few of the housing types being built in Milwaukee. They are also the most common type of home to be used as new construction in urban infill lots, for obvious reasons.

Comments in the record have really gone full scale fear mongering that a simple ordinance change will mean every lot will have an 8 plex on it. Some of the suggested/demanded revisions, such as the ones found in the Five Points Neighborhood Association letter, are blatantly illegal under current Wisconsin State Statutes. (See endnote)

The average lot size in many of these districts are 40x120. Roughly 5000 square feet. Even if upzoned to RT5, those lots would only be allowed to have 4 units on them max, same as they currently allow.

Because the zone calls for 1200 square feet of lot area per unit, a lot would need to be 9600 square feet in order to host an 8 plex, and that's before parking requirements.

And that's assuming every lot were zoned RT5 already. No parcels would be zoned RT5 upon adoption of the ordinance, and each rezone would get a full legislative process with public hearings and comment, much like the process being worked through now.

If anything, my personal opinion is that this code classification addition doesn't go far enough to separate itself from the existing zones (due to the parking requirements and square footage minimums).

My suggestion would be to cut the number of existing zones down, and add rights and loosen restrictions for those existing zones, so that the benefits can be realized without having 6 months of committee meetings and hearings for every single parcel that wants a rezone. Also I'd suggest eliminating the time based legal non conforming clauses, allowing housing to be legal only if it were built prior to 2002 or something. If a 2002 home is ok for a community, a 2025 home of the same size and shape should also be ok.

However, I'm not king, and I respect incremental positive change at all levels. After all, these processes are works in progress.

So in the name of progress, I support this code revision, as it allows expansion of housing supply and opens up a greater variety of housing types in our most in demand residential areas of the city.

Thank you

Robin Palm, AICP

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Endnote on my claim that certain suggestions run contrary to Wisconsin Statutes:

- 1) Wis. Stats. [66.1015](#) prohibits inclusionary zoning at all. I won't even get into how one would then redefine what "affordable" means as to only include Black residents.
- 2) Seizure of private property without a condemnation process or foreclosure process is an illegal taking, and those processes generally aren't available for failure to meet landscaping requirements.