

Three Zoning Changes Engagement Report – 9/26/22



The first stage of community engagement for the proposed zoning changes for short-term rentals, parking minimums, and accessory dwelling units focused on gathering community input through public meetings, town halls, focus groups, and an online survey. During these events, staff from the Department of Planning and Development Review (PDR) shared the requested zoning changes, discussed potential elements that may change in the zoning ordinance, and addressed community questions and feedback regarding these potential changes

Timeframe

The first stage of community engagement ran from August to September 2022.

Promotion

PDR promoted the three proposed zoning changes along with the associated outreach events and survey online and through the local media.

- In early August 2022, The Office of Strategic Communications and Civic Engagement sent a media release to local media outlets including the *Richmond Times Dispatch*, *Richmond Bizsense*, *WTVR*, and *NBC12*.
- Print advertisements were featured in the *Richmond Free Press*.
- PDR staff reached out to all City of Richmond civic associations and utilized the Richmond 300 mailing list which was previously created for public updates to the Richmond 300 Master Plan. **4,000+** individuals subscribe to this mailing list.
- A flyer containing a QR code that linked to the PDR website was distributed to civic associations and handed out at public meetings.
- The online survey and public meetings were promoted on the City of Richmond social media channels.
- Local City Councilmembers coordinated with PDR staff throughout the engagement process by sharing the online survey, information about public events, and encouraging the public to participate.

Emails and Calls

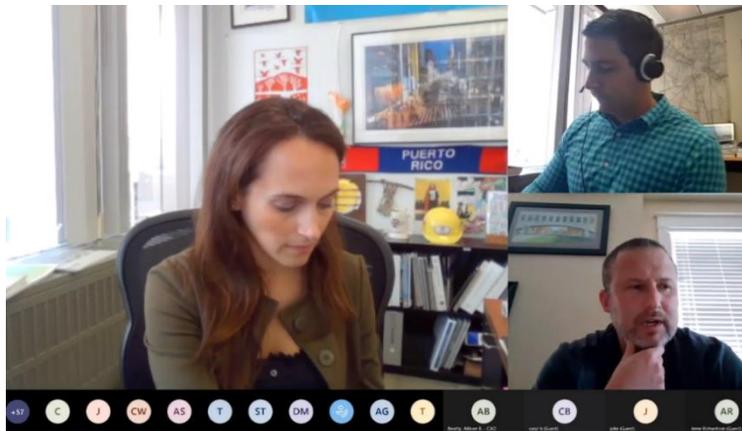
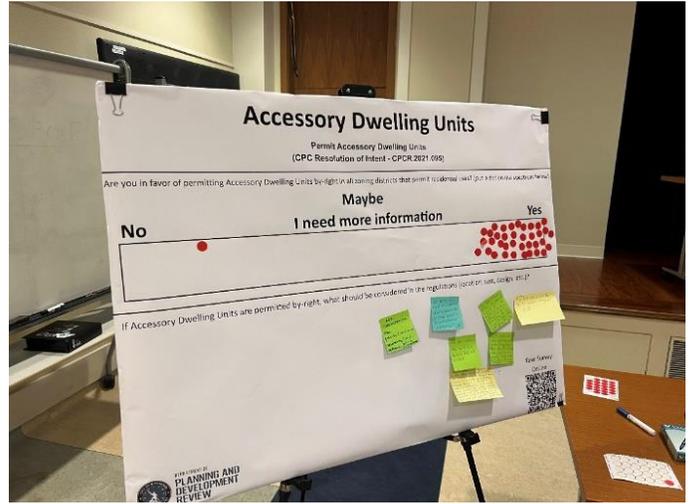
PDR staff answered phone calls and responded to emails on a continuous basis throughout the engagement period. This open line of communication served as a sort of informal 'open house' for community members to directly voice their concerns and provide ideas and insights. Staff received approximately **25 emails** and answered approximately **20 calls**.

Public Meeting Summary

Staff chose to hold two public meetings with varied times and formats to reach a more diverse group of community members. These times included both an in-person weekday evening option and a virtual weekday lunch-hour meeting. While staff used the in-person meeting to give contextual presentations and answer questions, participants were also encouraged to provide feedback by answering survey questions on meeting posters. These questions were the same as those used in the online survey. A recording of the virtual meeting was posted onto the PDR website for additional public review. In total, **237 people** attended the public meetings.

Public Meeting Attendance

Date	City Staff	Public	Council Members	Location	Total
Tuesday 8/9/22 6-7:30pm	8	120	2	Main Library	130
Wednesday 8/10/22 12-1:30pm	14	93	0	Virtual (MS Teams)	107



Telephone Town Hall Summary

PDR staff hosted telephone town halls on two dates in August 2022. The Office of Strategic Communications and Civic Engagement outsourced the telephone town hall operations to Telephone Town Hall (TTHM) US, a company specializing in telephone town halls, peer-to-peer SMS/MMS texting and voice broadcasts. The call-in format allowed participants to arrive at any time and to stay as long as they chose. Community members engaged directly with PDR staff and asked questions during the Q+A segment. Additionally, five poll questions were presented to participants to gauge the general tenor of community opinions. Approximately **260 responses** to these poll questions were received. Recordings of the telephone town halls were posted onto the PDR website for additional public review. The events also included a live, English-to-Spanish translation listening option for Spanish-speaking participants. Attendance numbers, including how many callers utilized the Spanish line, are detailed below.

Telephone Town Hall Attendance

Date	City Staff	Attendees on for more than 30 minutes	Attendees on for more than 5 minutes*	Total
Tuesday 8/16/22 6-7pm	4	240	460	704
Wednesday 8/17/22 12-1pm	7	170	400	577

*Includes 3 attendees who participated on the Spanish line

Date	Total Minutes	Max. # of people in town hall at one time
8/16/22	28,529	493
8/17/22	23,106	356

Telephone Town Hall Stats 8/16/22:

Answered Calls

Name	Number
Selects For Event	27,249
Accepts	1,932
TF Calls	56
Toll Inbound Calls	0
Answering Machines	8,071
Declines	2,274
Total Answered Calls	12,277
Talked	14
Speaker Queue	39
Screener Queue	15
WEB Participants	0

Note: "Selects for Event" refers to the total number of people who dialed into the town hall.

Telephone Town Hall Stats 8/17/22:

Answered Calls

Name	Number
Selects For Event	27,224
Accepts	1,629
TF Calls	45
Toll Inbound Calls	0
Answering Machines	9,268
Declines	1,787
Total Answered Calls	12,684
Talked	15
Speaker Queue	22
Screeener Queue	6
WEB Participants	0

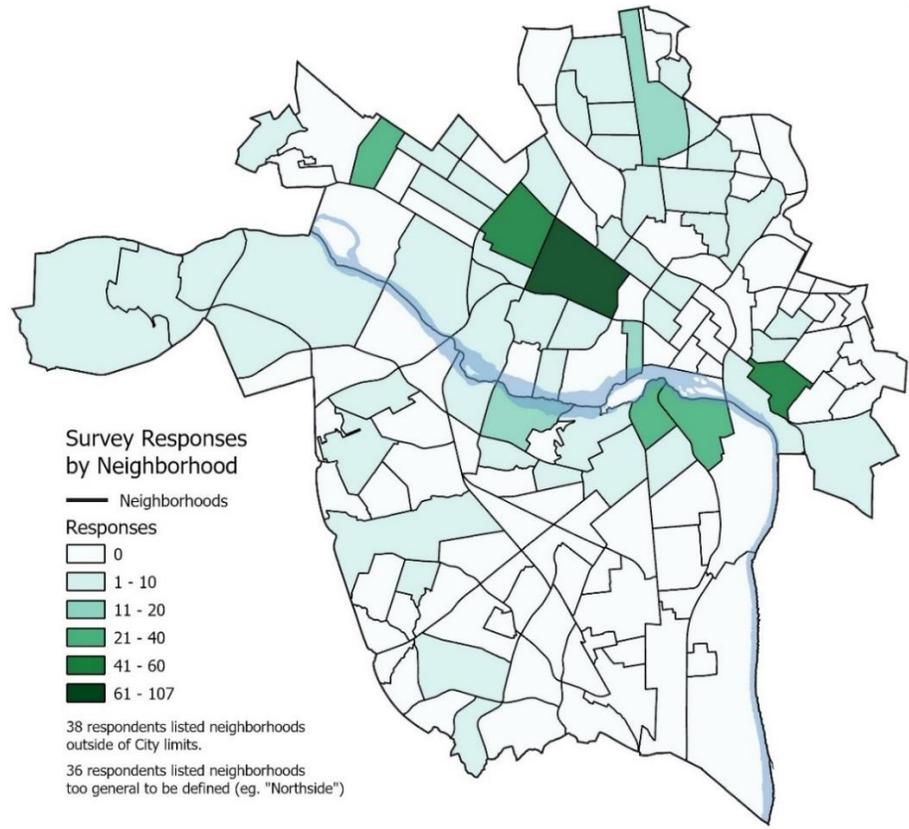
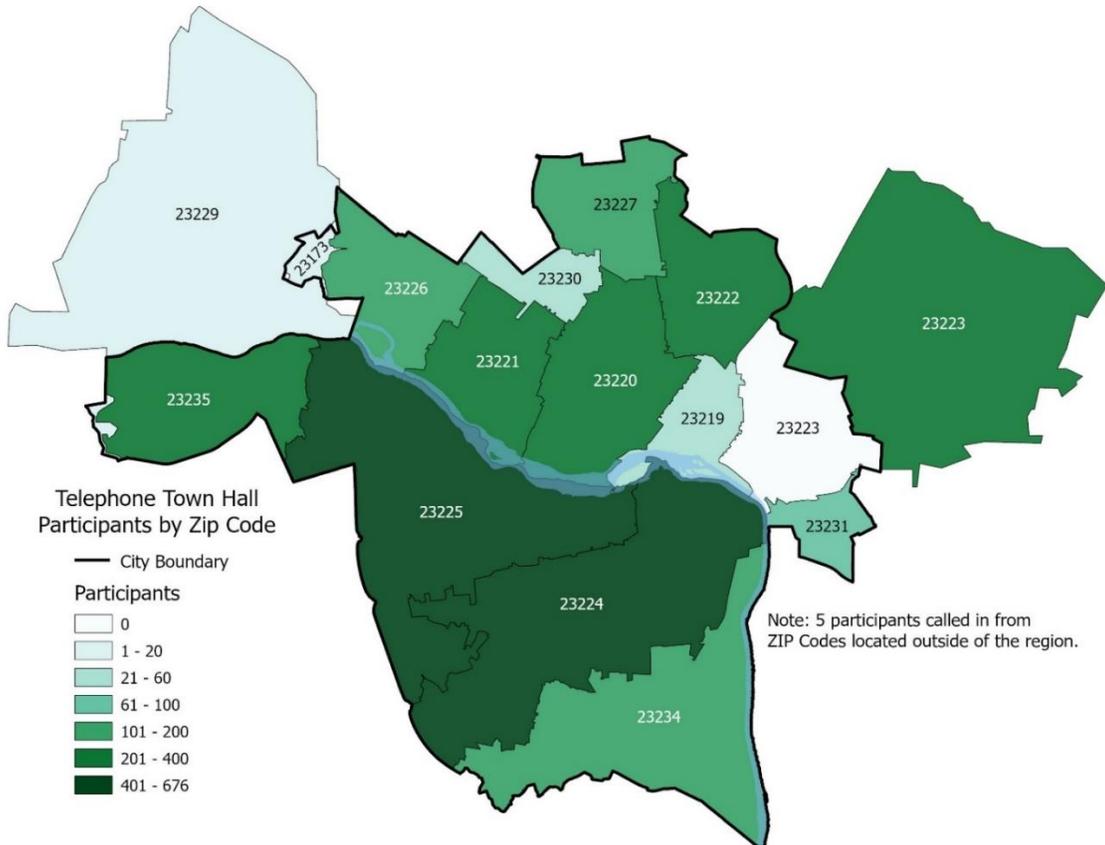
Note: "Selects for Event" refers to the total number of people who dialed into the town hall.

Online Survey Summary

In addition to the telephone town hall events, the community had an opportunity to provide their input by completing an online survey which was open from August 9, 2022 until September 9, 2022. The survey was used to collect feedback on the proposed zoning changes through pointed questions and gather contact information for those interested in participating in future focus groups. **539 people** completed the survey.

Geographic Distribution

Online survey respondents provided their residential neighborhoods within one of the answer boxes whereas telephone town hall participants had their ZIP codes collected by TTHM. Both the respondent and participant geographic data are mapped on the following page to better visualize the geographic distribution of those community members who provided feedback.



What we heard | Emails

Examples:

"I wanted to voice my support for very liberal, by right, zoning and other efforts to increase the number of ADUs. Additionally, all the new tax revenue derived from the improved value of new ADUs might be a nice source for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund."

"Richmond is being unfair to the hotel industry, because STRs do not pay lodging tax. Therefore, STR Corps should be engaged to collect taxes for the City."

"The city needs to increase its enforcement of the STR regulations. It is unacceptable for most of the short-term rental units to be unregistered with the City, especially in view of the fact that the short-term rental websites disclose the units that are being offered to the public on a day-to-day basis."

"It's time for us to stop facilitating everyone getting into a single-occupant vehicle as the default mode of transportation in our city. The market will dictate how much parking each new development needs."

"Relaxing regulations on STRs will price people out while also inviting more home purchases by investors rather than permanent residents."

"Allowing ADUs throughout the City will help streamline planning processes and create a more equitable community."

"If the new zoning regulations will eliminate parking requirements, then they will need to allow for the easy construction of stand-alone parking decks."

"Any lessening of regulations [of STRs] would only reward bad actors. You need to enforce the regulations on the books and shut down these illegal operators."

"For many seniors the personal car with available parking are necessities. I hope therefore that there will not be too great a rush to eliminate required parking minimums."

"Allow for different [STR] restrictions by district - it is clear that The Fan District is anti-STR for reasons of parking, parties, VCU, etc. The current ordinance is written to apply to all districts in the same way."

"[Eliminating parking minimums] will lower costs for new development and create more leasable and livable space in buildings that would have otherwise been dedicated to automobiles."

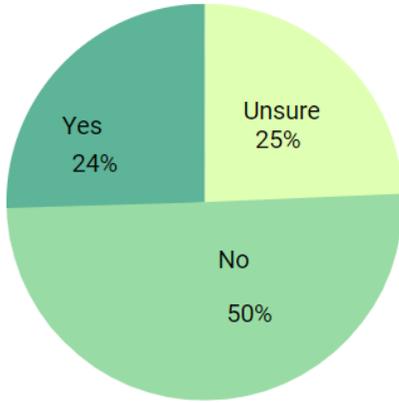
"ADU's should be smaller and subservient to the main dwelling unit on the property."

What we heard | Telephone Town Hall

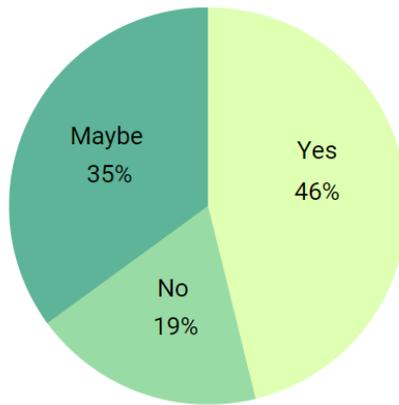
The following questions were included within the poll section of the telephone town halls. Participants pressed numbers on their telephone keypads (e.g., #1 for 'yes') to submit their answers. The poll results, combined from both town halls, are also included below.

- 1) Which of the three zoning changes is of most interest to you?
- 2) Do you think there should be a primary residency requirement for Short-Term Rental hosts?
- 3) Do you think minimum parking space requirements should be eliminated from the Zoning Ordinance?
- 4) Are you in favor of permitting Accessory Dwelling Units by-right in all zoning districts that permit residential uses?
- 5) Are you interested in being part of a focus group in September?

Do you think minimum parking space requirements should be eliminated from the Zoning Ordinance?



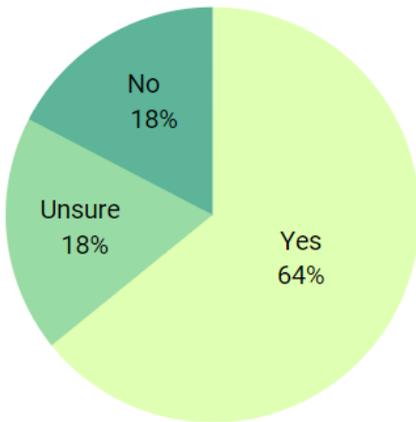
Are you in favor of permitting Accessory Dwelling Units by-right in all zoning districts that permit residential uses?



Telephone Town Hall Concerns & Feedback:

On 8/16/22, **14 participants** spoke directly to PDR staff while 39 were placed within a speaker queue. Similarly, on 8/17/22, **15 participants** spoke and 22 were placed in the speaker queue. All comments and questions were logged, regardless of whether participants received the chance to speak with staff live on-call. Some examples of the concerns and feedback received are below:

Do you think there should be a primary residency requirement for Short-Term Rental hosts?



“Am I understanding correctly that any property owner will have the right to build an accessory building on their property and then rent it out as an STR? And they can do that without any zoning requirement or city ordinance approval?”

“Has the commission looked into parking maximums?”

“Have you considered the number of STRs to one per person instead of requiring someone live in the unit?”

Could ADUs also be used as part of the housing choice voucher program?”

“Why is this city wide when all the neighborhoods are all different?”

“We already have a great deal of development, and there is already a lack of parking.”

“What other steps will be taken to minimize car-centric infrastructure?”

What we heard | Online Survey

The following questions were included within the online survey. Respondents answered questions with open-ended responses. Some of the most observed ideas, concerns, and comments are listed on the following page.

- 1) What revisions are needed to the existing short-term rental regulations (if any)?
- 2) What are some ideas or recommendations to ensure compliance and enforcement of STRs in the city?
- 3) Do you have any other comments on this topic?
- 4) What are some challenges with eliminating parking space minimums?
- 5) What are some opportunities with eliminating parking space minimums?
- 6) Do you have any other comments on this topic?
- 7) If accessory dwelling units are permitted by-right, what should be considered in the regulations (location, size, design, etc.)?
- 8) Do you have any other comments on this topic?

Short-Term Rentals

- The 180-day residency requirement should remain in place
- STRs should be permitted only in business or mixed-use districts
- STRs should be taxed like hotels or businesses
- Too many STRs leads to housing unaffordability
- More staff are needed to increase compliance and enforcement
- Restrictions against STRs should be eased
- The permit fee for STRs should be increased
- STRs can create noise and disturbance concerns
- STRs are attractive options for tourists and visitors

Respondents' ideas for improving enforcement were:

- A city-wide hotline could be used for community members to report noncompliance or disturbance issues
- Staff should screen popular rental sites like Airbnb and Vrbo
- City could coordinate with STR websites to require proof of permit before posting
- The permit and complaint processes should be streamlined
- Repeat regulation violations should result in revoked permit and additional fines
- STRs should be inspected by City staff on a regular basis

Eliminating Parking Space Minimums

Respondents noted the benefits are:

- More green space, less asphalt, and reduced stormwater runoff
- Less administrative burden on City staff
- Can lead to better design and walkable neighborhoods
- Can increase housing supply
- Will remove obstacles for new small businesses
- Will encourage mass transit usage and alternative means of transportation
- Will help to reduce the City's carbon footprint

Respondents noted the concerns are:

- Unreliable and inadequate existing transit options
- Overcrowding of street parking
- Negative impacts on residents who rely on off-street parking
- Local businesses with large visitor bases being negatively impacted
- Developers may not add parking
- There is already a lack of parking in many parts of the city
- Can create tightly packed streets that are unsafe for pedestrians and cyclists

Respondent recommendations included:

- Incentives for public transit, rideshare, and bike users
- Improved education and language around parking issues
- Limiting the elimination of parking minimums to certain districts
- Increasing bike racks and bike storage
- Improving existing crosswalks and sidewalks

Accessory Dwelling Units

Respondents noted the benefits are:

- Could increase affordable housing stock
- Potential for supplementary income
- Better utilization of land and open space
- A larger tax base
- Can reduce the number of unhoused citizens
- Multiple familial generations can live in proximity to one another
- More diverse housing options

Respondents noted the concerns are:

- Obstructed daylight and views for neighboring lots
- Storm drainage and environmental issues

- Increased parking needs
- Environmental concerns with too much density
- Increased burden on public services and utilities
- Potential for substandard housing

Respondents' ideas for regulations included:

- Size and height restrictions
- Design regulations, particularly in historic neighborhoods
- A limit on number of ADUs per lot
- Occupancy restrictions
- Setback and lot location restrictions