

To: Neenah City Council and Plan Commission

September 2, 2026

From: Tom Beck, 1062 Kalfahs Street, Neenah, WI

I am a 50 - year resident of Neenah and a former city/traffic engineer from 1975-1990. I was directly involved in sub-division design and I know quite a bit about Neenah and its residential development.

I am here now because I am deeply concerned with the Accessory Dwelling Unit, ADU, portion of the Rezoning Rewrite.

I have seen a few ADU'S in Madison and thought they were quite intrusive on the adjacent properties, (Exhibit A). They seemed to consume all the green space that was in the rear or side yards of the single - family homes which are now basically R-2 properties. **I thought, glad these are not allowed in Neenah.**

I then decided to check if these indeed were allowed. I stumbled into the 2025 Housing Report. ADU'S were mentioned as a partial solution to the "missing-middle "of affordable housing, (Exhibit B). That is a large city concept that does not always transition well to small cities. Neenah has other options for affordable housing and they are listed in the 2025 Housing report.

I decided to get involved and attended the Zoning workshop on June 15. There was no mention of ADU's at the brief presentation. I did speak with the consultant and believe she is in favor of them. I gave a letter with my initial thoughts on ADU'S for the Steering committee. **I have attached a copy of the letter for your review along with some questions to consider in your decision making, (Exhibits C & D). It is easier to read my concerns than to listen to me speak for 25 minutes.**

I believe that the concept of ADU'S in R-1 neighborhoods would be such a major change for single family home owners that all means should be made to inform them if any changes would be contemplated. I fear that Neenah's single-family home owners would not be aware of this potential change since most do not follow Zoning review or Plan Commission meetings and the residents I have spoken with are not in favor of ADU'S.

This is the most significant zoning change ever proposed that affects your largest voting bloc, the single-family home owner.

I have read the ADU zoning ordinances for Oshkosh, Appleton, Wauwatosa, Sun Prairie, Lacrosse, Madison, San Diego, Minneapolis and others. They are all very similar in reduced set-backs from 25' to 5' on rear lot lines and lack requirements for additional off-street parking.

In checking on actual implementation, Wauwatosa has had 2 constructed in 8 years, Minneapolis 176 in 14 years. These are minimal numbers that will not improve affordable housing. Implementation in Neenah would only upset adjacent neighbors, increase storm water run-off and increase on street parking, these are all negatives.

R-1 zoning represents a longstanding understanding between the city and the single-family home owner. Residents selected their neighborhoods and homes based on the protections offered by R-1 zoning.

R-1 zoning was established to provide adequate setbacks from adjacent properties. It favored green space and preserved the single-family home lot that many residents desire. Modifying current R-1 zoning to allow ADU'S would significantly alter development standards that have served Neenah neighborhoods successfully for generations.

I encourage you to take ADUS out of consideration before the process is even started.

Thank you,

Tom Beck

PRESERVE R-1 ZONING IN NEENAH

Comments Regarding Proposed Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Policies

Submitted by

Thomas Beck
1062 Kalfahs Street
Neenah, Wisconsin

50-Year Resident of Neenah
Former Civil Engineer, City of Neenah

Submitted to the City of Neenah Zoning Project Steering Committee

R-1 Zoning Defined

R-1 zoning represents a longstanding understanding between the City and its single-family homeowners. Residents selected their neighborhoods and homes based on the protections offered by R-1 zoning.

R-1 zoning was established to provide adequate setbacks from adjacent properties. It favored green space and preserved the single-family home lot that many residents desire.

Modifying current zoning to allow ADUs would significantly alter development standards that have served Neenah neighborhoods successfully for generations.

Neenah 2025 Housing Study

The 2025 Housing Study received minimal feedback from the more than 7,000 single-family homeowners in Neenah.

The study indicates that approximately 350 responses were received through the online survey.

ADUs would likely provide only a modest increase in available housing units.

Problems With ADUs in Established R-1 Neighborhoods

Impact on Drainage

Additional roofs, paving and walkways would increase the runoff coefficient for individual lots.

This could result in increased runoff to neighboring properties and additional demands on the City's stormwater system.

Neenah is relatively flat, and many R-1 subdivisions were designed with runoff coefficients of approximately 0.30. Storm sewers in older neighborhoods were designed with minimum slope and capacity.

The City is already constructing retention basins and making stormwater improvements in some areas because of inadequate capacity in older systems.

As a former Civil Engineer for the City of Neenah, I am concerned that a large number of ADUs would only add to these infrastructure demands.

Impact on Natural Light, Tree Canopies and Green Space

Allowing ADUs, including some two-story structures, could block natural light into neighboring yards.

Homeowners enjoy seeing the sunrise and sunsets, not an ADU.

Large shade trees and green space associated with traditional R-1 homes would be reduced.

Established shade trees near lot lines could have their root systems damaged during construction.

Privacy and Neighborhood Character

Reduced setbacks, some as little as five feet from rear lot lines, would allow second-story units to look directly into neighboring yards and windows.

R-1 setbacks were established for a reason.

Residents purchased their homes with the expectation that these standards would remain substantially intact.

Without owner-occupancy requirements, absentee ownership could introduce multifamily characteristics into established R-1 neighborhoods.

Parking and Traffic Issues

Providing additional off-street parking would further increase water runoff.

If parking is allowed on the street, garbage collection and snow removal become more difficult.

Children playing or riding bicycles on residential streets would have more parked cars and additional traffic to contend with.

Aesthetics

The appearance of established neighborhoods could be changed permanently.

There is no assurance that future ADUs would always be compatible with the scale and character of existing single-family neighborhoods.

Possible Alternatives

If additional housing opportunities are needed, the City could prioritize higher-density development in areas already planned to accommodate growth.

These areas may include:

- Downtown Neenah and redevelopment sites;
- Commercial corridors;
- Existing multifamily districts;
- Underutilized commercial properties; and
- Areas where infrastructure and traffic patterns are already designed to support higher density.

This approach would help address housing needs while preserving the character and expectations of established single-family neighborhoods.

Neenah has successfully accommodated different housing types throughout the community. Future growth can continue without fundamentally changing long-established R-1 neighborhoods.

Conclusion

Neenah's single-family neighborhoods are among the City's greatest assets.

Before recommending permanent changes to R-1 zoning, I respectfully encourage the City of Neenah Zoning Project Steering Committee to carefully evaluate infrastructure impacts, privacy concerns, neighborhood character, and the expectations of existing homeowners.

Respectfully Submitted,

Thomas Beck

50-Year Resident of Neenah

Former Civil Engineer, City of Neenah

1062 Kalfahs Street

Neenah, Wisconsin

EXHIBIT A

Accessory dwelling unit currently under construction in Madison, Wisconsin.

This structure is located approximately five feet from the rear lot line and illustrates concerns regarding privacy, mature trees, green space, and neighborhood character in established single-family neighborhoods.



PRODUCTION STRATEGIES | ADU'S

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

Accessory Dwelling Units meet diverse family needs. It can also add some affordable rental supply.

Purpose

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) can meet community needs by increasing the supply and variety of housing. They create an important additional income stream for some, and for others they may meet family needs related to caring for family members.

They are smaller housing units that are on the same lot as an existing home and owned by that homeowner. They may be built as an attachment to the primary home or as a separate structure.

They are an efficient use of public infrastructure because they introduce a new housing unit where there are existing utilities. The property manager, being the resident of the primary home, is close at hand, which usually ensures good management and responsive attention to issues that arise.

Strategy

Current zoning districts do not allow for more than one dwelling on a lot, precluding detached ADUs. Likewise, large front and back setback requirements prevent home additions and construction of detached ADUs. Minimum dwelling width in R1 and R2 neighborhoods also are too large for most ADU types.

Zoning should allow for ADUs in R-1 as a permitted use, and other zoning changes made on setbacks to make ADUs a viable option in residential neighborhoods.

Other options include allowing ADUs as an attachment to or within an existing primary home, or requiring an application to apply for and obtain approval for a conditional use permit.

Examples

ADUs are allowed as an accessory use in all residential zoning districts, and in Oshkosh, they

are allowed as an accessory use in all single- and two-family zoning districts.



PRODUCTION STRATEGIES | CITY OWNED LAND & VACANT PARCELS

City-Owned Land Inventory and Development

Questions for the Plan commission and Common Council regarding ADU'S

I think the answers to these questions would be most helpful in making a decision on the most controversial item in the Zoning rewrite.

Is there an absolute need for ADU'S in R-1?

Are R-1 home owners demanding them? How many?

Will you send out mailers directly informing every single-family homeowner of this potential change and ask for their opinion? It is more important than a water or tax bill.

ADU' are expensive to build would they really rent at affordable prices vs market rate?

Wauwatosa has built 2 units in 8 years. How many do you expect in Neenah?

Is it worth it to change R-1 zoning after 100 years of it working quite well?

Who would you upset if you did not allow ADU'S vs who would you upset if you do?