Planning Division

Proposed Zoning Amendment Fact Sheet

Terminology Streamlining Amendments

Proposed Zoning Amendment Summary

This amendment proposes 2 changes to terminology in the SZO:

The first change replaces all uses of the term “Affordable Dwelling Unit” in the SZO with “Price Restricted Dwelling Unit”. This change aims to prevent confusion between Affordable Dwelling Unit and “Accessory Dwelling Unit”. It also aligns the SZO with how the State and other communities use the acronym “ADU”.

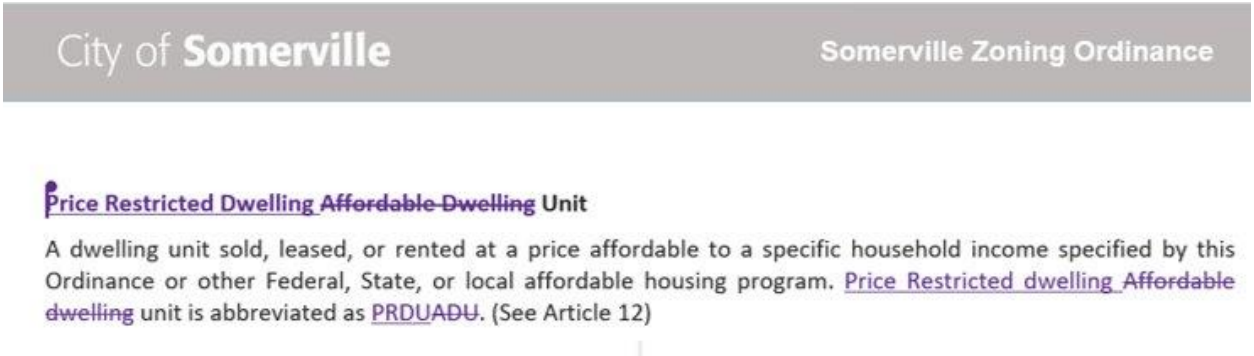
The second change replaces all uses of the term “Commercial Space” in the SZO with “Commercial Unit(s)”

Make standards related to commercial space more clear by aligning with how other communities use the term Commercial Unit(s)

ADU TO PRDU

Somerville’s **‘Affordable Dwelling Unit’ (ADU)** is rebranded through this amendment and replaced by the term **‘Price Restricted Dwelling Unit’ (PRDU)**. This amendment does not, in any way, change affordability standards or requirements. It is only a terminology update.

Every time ‘Affordable Dwelling Unit’ or ‘ADU’ is referenced in the SZO, it has been changed to ‘Price Restricted Dwelling Unit’ or ‘PRDU.’


City of Somerville Somerville Zoning Ordinance

Price Restricted Dwelling ~~Affordable Dwelling~~ Unit

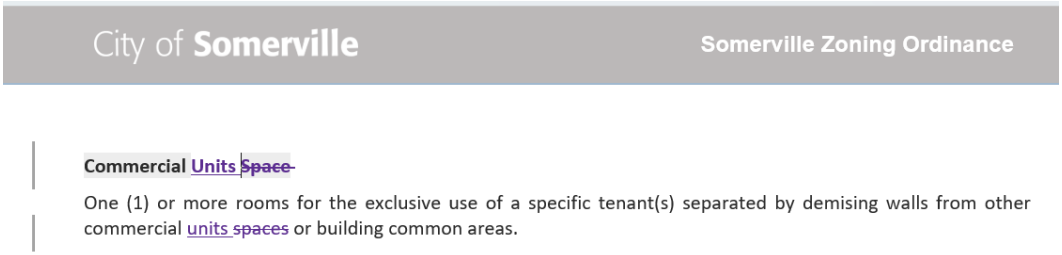
A dwelling unit sold, leased, or rented at a price affordable to a specific household income specified by this Ordinance or other Federal, State, or local affordable housing program. Price Restricted dwelling ~~Affordable dwelling~~ unit is abbreviated as PRDU~~ADU~~. (See Article 12)

The term Price-Restricted Dwelling Unit (PRDU) describes a residential unit whose cost is kept within specific limits and that is made available only to eligible or certified individuals. Housing and Planning Division staff propose the term PRDU because it describes the unit itself, rather than the people or households who occupy it. Since the Zoning Ordinance regulates the physical unit and its characteristics, the terminology avoids unnecessary confusion or connotations about households or individuals. The term also uses "restricted" accurately and in plain language, reflecting that the unit is kept within specific limits and/or made available only to an authorized group. Because housing terminology can be dense and complex, particularly when translated, the SZO aims to use clear, plain-language terms that minimize opportunities for confusion or mistranslation.

Commercial Space to Commercial Unit

The term 'Commercial unit' is used more commonly by peers in zoning language and more easily understood by stakeholders than 'Commercial Space', the term currently used in the SZO. This amendment does not, in any way, change commercial space standards or requirements. It is only a terminology update.

Every time 'Commercial Space' is referenced, it has been changed to 'Commercial Unit' or 'Commercial Units" as appropriate.



Affected Sections of the SZO

Affordable Dwelling Unit to Price Restricted Dwelling Unit

- 2.1.1
- 3.2.8
- 3.2.9
- 3.2.10
- 3.2.11
- 4.1.7

Commercial Space to Commercial Unit

- 2.1.1
- 2.2.1
- 2.4.5
- 3.1.16
- 3.2.15
- 4.1.3

- 4.1.8
- 7.4.11
- 8.1.1
- 8.1.2
- 8.1.4
- 8.1.5
- 8.1.6
- 8.4.16
- 12.1.1
- 12.1.2
- 12.1.4
- 12.1.5
- 12.1.6
- 12.1.7
- 12.3.6
- 12.3.7

- 4.1.8
- 4.1.9
- 4.1.10
- 4.1.13
- 4.2.10
- 6.1.8
- 6.2.3
- 6.2.7
- 6.2.9
- 6.2.12
- 6.3.3
- 6.3.8
- 6.4.11
- 6.4.3
- 6.5.3
- 6.5.7
- 6.5.8
- 6.5.11
- 7.2.7
- 7.2.10
- 7.4.3
- 7.4.6
- 7.4.7
- 7.4.8
- 8.2.2
- 8.2.4
- 8.2.5
- 8.4.16
- 8.4.17
- 8.4.19
- 9.1.7
- 12.3.5