

Intentional Community Ordinance



Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: WHAT IS AN INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY?

A: Intentional communities are self-identified groups of two or more people living together, who **share in the management** and **governance** of their household, and who share in the **work to maintain** their residence. Some intentional communities are cooperatives, others have a less-formal set of agreements.

Q: HOW MANY PEOPLE CAN CURRENTLY SHARE HOUSING?

A: The current Minneapolis zoning code prohibits more than **three** unrelated adults from living together in low-density areas, and more than **five** unrelated adults from living together in higher-density areas.

Q: ARE THERE CURRENTLY ANY EXEMPTIONS FROM MAXIMUM OCCUPANCY?

A: Yes, but they are very limited. There are exceptions in the law for members of protected classes, which includes religious groups and people living in supportive housing, halfway houses and emergency shelters. The City must currently already allow these uses to exceed maximum occupancy, but has no way for secular people, not of a protected class, to share housing.

Q: WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WITH THE EXISTING LAW?

A: There are several. The current law:

- Prevents communities and families of people not related by blood or marriage from **sharing housing**
- Prevents the full use of **existing, historical** Minneapolis housing stock
- Creates a barrier to renters working with the City to **improve** their housing
- Prevents the expansion of **cooperative housing**
- Blocks conscientious residents from making their housing more **affordable**
- Lacks **reasonable** and **accessible options** for people to function outside the parameters of the code

Q: HOW WILL "INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY" BE DEFINED?

A: A group of people will be defined as an Intentional Community if they:

- **Share** the entire dwelling unit and live, cook and eat together as a single housekeeping unit
- Have an adopted set of **rules** covering democratic governance, maintenance responsibilities, and other household issues, including **cooperative** status
- Use the dwelling unit as their **legal address** for purposes including but not limited to voter registration, driver's licenses, taxes, etc.
- Expect to remain in place for **more than a year**
- **Share expenses** for food, rent or ownership costs, utilities and other household expenses

Q: HOW WILL INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES IDENTIFY THEMSELVES?

A: The City will establish a **registration** process for Intentional Communities, which will require the residents to provide:

- The **name** and **address** of the Intentional Community
- The name and current contact information of a **representative** of the Intentional Community
- The **property owner's approval** of the Intentional Community
- A **notarized statement** that the Intentional Community **meets the City's standards**
- A **floor plan**, so that the City can determine the **maximum safe occupancy**
- **Legal documentation** establishing the existence of the Intentional Community as a cooperative or other legal entity, if any such documentation exists
- A copy of any applicable **lease**, if one exists

Q: WILL THERE BE ANY LIMITATIONS ON HOW MANY PEOPLE CAN LIVE IN AN INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY?

A: Yes. The number of residents will be limited by the limits in the **Housing Maintenance Code**, which are established to find the number of people who can **safely** live in a house.

Q: DO ANY OTHER CITIES HAVE SIMILAR LAWS?

A: Yes. Several other cities have adopted laws that allow for groups to live together in numbers larger than typically allowed, if they meet a set of standards. These cities include **Bellevue, WA; Poughkeepsie, NY; and Ames, IA.**

Q: WILL THERE BE SAFEGUARDS TO PREVENT BAD LANDLORDS FROM MISUSING THIS LAW?

A: Yes. One landlord may have an ownership interest in only **one** dwelling occupied as an Intentional Community (though cooperatives whose members live in the dwellings they own will not be subject to this limitation). No landlords with **any** Tier II or Tier III properties may have an Intentional Community register in one of their properties.

Q: WILL THERE BE SAFEGUARDS TO PREVENT BAD TENANTS FROM MISUSING THIS LAW?

A: Yes. If a household registered as an Intentional Community does not meet the City's standards at any point, that household may **lose** its Intentional Community status and revert to the zoning code's maximum occupancy. Additionally, if registered Intentional Communities violate **other laws** – hosting noisy and unruly assemblies, breaking the “social hosting” ordinance by having underage drinking on the premises, etc. – that household may **lose** its Intentional Community status.

Q: WHO SUPPORTS THIS INITIATIVE?

A: A group of advocates have come together to form the Minneapolis Coalition for Intentional Communities. You can find out more at <https://sites.google.com/site/mplscic/>.