

City of Prairie Village Housing Policy Primer (Last Updated 7/2/2024)

Introduction

The recently updated (2021) comprehensive plan, like the original 2006 plan, includes policies on housing. The two plans share many of the same goals related to neighborhoods and housing. This continues the City's ongoing efforts to ensure that housing is a priority of the city, and that we continue to meet current and future needs for strong neighborhoods. As a result, the City Council has directed staff to structure a process to engage residents and stakeholders to further consider specific steps on how to best implement some of the plans goals and policies. This housing primer provides some basic information and overview of the topics that may be helpful to those who plan on participating in these discussions.

Planning & Zoning Basics

The City of Prairie Village influences development and long-term investments in the city through a system of plans, policies, and regulations.

- **Plans.** The Comprehensive Plan includes long-term, city-wide goals for Prairie Village. Other specific area or topical plans can also support the general direction in the comprehensive plan. These plans are guides to other decisions, and do not affect any specific changes until acted upon through other decisions and processes. A comprehensive plan is implemented by guiding decisions in three aspects of city development:
 1. Guiding the Planning Commission recommendations and City Council decisions on zoning.
 2. Guiding capital investments and design decisions by the City on public facilities such as streets, parks, trails, or civic buildings.
 3. Guiding private investment by property owners or institutions acting on their own initiatives.
- **Policies.** The City can also influence growth and development through other policies and programs. The City Council can promote or coordinate collective action through policies on financing, public investments, administrative actions, coordinating other government or institution decisions, or promoting public private partnerships to impact city building and design.
- **Regulations.** The City's regulations impact development in a reactive way, setting requirements for property owners making investments. Although other regulations affect development, the zoning ordinance is a key tool to implement the comprehensive plan. It consists of two elements:
 - (1) a zoning map designating property within the City to specific zone districts; and
 - (2) development standards and regulations that apply either city-wide or within specific zone districts.

Changes to the zoning regulations require public hearings, a recommendation by the Planning Commission, and final decisions by the City Council. **Changes to the zoning map (rezoning) require the same, but also require further engagement of and notice to surrounding property owners, and in most cases are initiated by private property owners based on a specific development proposal.** [See Steps to Rezone Property in Prairie Village on Website] Changes to the zoning standards or map are guided by recommendations in the comprehensive plan.

Housing Issues

Housing is increasingly a critical planning issue in many communities. This is true for several reasons, and most are applicable to Prairie Village:

- Demographic changes affect housing needs.
- Location preferences based on regional issues such as transportation, jobs, and access to metropolitan amenities, impact market preferences.

- Age, condition, and format of housing stock impacts maintenance, rehabilitation, and reinvestment in housing.
 - Costs –in terms of property values, taxes, and construction costs, affect housing attainability.
- These issues put a premium on planning for strong, resilient neighborhoods, and establishing strategies to address the dynamic housing market that are appropriate to the local, metropolitan, and regional context.

What Does our Plan Say?

Village Vision 2.0, an update to the original Village Vision Comprehensive Plan, was adopted by the City in January 2021. It included the following specific principles and policy recommendations related to housing, many of which are continued themes from the original Village Vision:

- Diversify the size, type, and price points of the housing portfolio in Prairie Village.
- Maintain the integrity of Prairie Village neighborhoods.
- Reinforce existing neighborhood patterns and implement transitions with graduated intensity of housing: [See Land Use Policy Map and Village Vision 2.0 on website]
 - Suburban Neighborhoods – generally south of 83rd Street [primarily large-lot single family]
 - Traditional Neighborhoods – generally north of 83rd Street. [primarily narrow-lot single family]
 - Village Neighborhoods – near commercial centers or at nodes on major intersections or corridors. [a range of small- and moderate-scaled multi-unit buildings]
 - Village Centers – primary commercial centers [incorporate accessory residential uses - complimentary residential projects or mixed-use buildings]
- Strengthen neighborhood design elements through the following:
 - Prioritize well-designed streetscapes and public spaces.
 - Focus on a compatible range of small- and moderate-scaled building types.
 - Emphasize the relationship of housing types to public spaces and surrounding property.

What Does our Zoning Ordinance Say?

With respect to housing and neighborhoods, the City’s zoning ordinance has four main components.

- **R-1 Districts.** These districts are for single-family houses, and have two sub-sets – the R-1A district with a minimum lot size of 10,000 square feet; and the R-1B district with a minimum lot size of 6,000 square feet. These districts are also subject to the Neighborhood Design Standards that were adopted through public forums and hearings in 2016 and 2018. The majority of the City is zoned R-1, with the R-1B area being in the central portion near the Prairie Village Shops. (approximately 89% of residential in the City) [See map on website]
- **R-2 District.** This district allows the same things as the R-1B district but includes an additional option for duplexes on a minimum lot of 9,600 square feet. Therefore, it results in development with a similar scale and intensity as the R-1 districts. Only a few areas near Somerset and 83rd Street are zoned R-2. (less than 0.12% of residential in the City) [See map on website]
- **R-3 District.** This district allows multi-unit buildings, and requires 2,500 square feet of lot area per unit. The standards do not include any particular design or building format standards, but the district is primarily set up to yield a conventional suburban apartment complex pattern of development. The majority of multi-unit projects in the city are in the R-3 district, primarily at transitions to commercial centers or at major intersections. (approximately 8.9% of residential in the City) [See map on website]
- **R-4 District.** This district is intended for “condominium” or “common wall” residential units. While the standards do not specify any particular design, building format, or scale, it appears that this district is geared for townhouse or row house type housing projects. A few small areas near 79th

& Mission and along Somerset are zoned R-4. (approximately 1.9 % of residential in the City)
[See map on website]

- **MXD District.** A fifth district that can impact housing is the Planned Mixed-Use District. It is intended for a mix of residential, retail, and office in a walkable pattern. However, there are few specific standards ensuring this type and format of development, and the district relies on a “planned” or discretionary public review process to set the standards for any one project. (This district is rarely used, and was used in a limited capacity for the Meadowbrook redevelopment.)

What Has the City Done So Far?

- Village Vision, the City’s Comprehensive Plan, was adopted in 2006. It contained numerous policies and strategies on housing, with recommendations for zoning strategies and other non-regulatory implementation actions. Village Vision 2.0 was updated in 2019-20 (adopted January 2021), including the specific policies on housing referenced above.
- A Johnson County Housing Study was published providing regional data and assessments on the state of housing for the County. (2020/21).
- United Community Services of Johnson County published a Housing For All Toolkit, for consideration by Johnson County, Kansas Municipalities (June 2021).
- The Mayor appointed an ad hoc housing committee in the Fall of 2021 to analyze the Prairie Village Comprehensive Plan recommendations, and to assess the local relevance of other regional resources and studies on housing. The goal of this committee was to recommend specific steps and housing strategies to implement the City’s plan.
- The ad hoc housing committee met several times between September 2021 and April 2022, and presented its recommendations for the City Council to consider in June 2022. The ad hoc housing committee’s recommendations include more detailed and refined recommendations based on the Comprehensive Plan.
- The City Council has asked staff to outline a process and approach to more thoroughly consider recommendations from the comprehensive plan and the ad hoc housing committee’s recommendations. (July – September 2022).
- ~~The City Council and Planning Commission continue to discuss the recommendations.~~
- During the October 2, 2023 City Council meeting, the Prairie Village City Council passed [a detailed motion regarding housing](#), specifying what is—and what is not—on the table.
- On July 1, 2024, the City Council approved updates to the zoning code in non-single family zoning districts. These updates impacted the R-2, R-3, R-4, C-O, C-1, C-2, and MXD districts. A summary of these updates can be found on a [webpage dedicated to this round of updates.](#)

What Remains to Be Done?

- ~~The Planning Commission were introduced to the ad hoc housing committee recommendations at their September 13, 2022 meeting and discussed options for next steps. They will make recommendations to the City Council on a more formal and detailed process for potential updates to the zoning ordinance.~~
 - ~~At the September 13 Planning Commission meeting, the Commission updated the proposed timeline for the process, see below for updates.~~
- ~~The Planning Commission has held several Work Sessions to further discuss the recommendations. Currently their discussions are focused on the R-3, R-4, Commercial and Mixed Use Zoning areas. Public input sessions occurred in June and July 2023, and will be followed by discussions at Planning Commission work sessions. The Planning Commission meeting schedule can be found on the [website](#). A summary of the Planning Commission’s recommendations as of April 2024 can be found on a dedicated [webpage](#).~~
- ~~The City Council will consider the Planning Commission’s recommendations, and give direction to staff on specific steps and processes. (Tentative)~~

- ~~• Based on City Council direction, staff will conduct more detailed outreach through public information and input sessions, as well as analyze issues and opportunities to address in an update to the current zoning regulations.~~
- ~~• Based on this analysis and outcomes of the public information sessions, staff will review and prepare formal recommendations on any specific updates to the zoning regulations.~~
- ~~• The Planning Commission will hold a public hearing(s) on any specific changes and make a recommendation to the City Council.~~
- ~~• The City Council will make any final decisions on specific changes to the zoning ordinance.~~
 - At the April 24, 2023 work session, the City Council provided direction to staff to prioritize updating the design guidelines and researching short-term rentals as next steps in the R-1 discussion.
 - During the October 2, 2023 City Council meeting, the Prairie Village City Council passed [a detailed motion regarding housing](#), specifying what is—and what is not—on the table. The next steps in the process will be to continue to discuss revising neighborhood design guidelines and short-term rental regulations.

What is being Considered?

While the Planning Commission and City Council may consider a range of changes based on the plans, policies, and housing issues facing the City, the comprehensive plan and more specific ad hoc committee recommendations impact four specific areas of the zoning regulations that may need to be updated. There may be other policy or program (non-regulatory) elements that the City will need to consider in addition to zoning strategies. [See **What Does our Zoning Ordinance Say?** above for existing provisions.]

~~To be discussed first, per the Planning Commission:~~

- ~~1. R-3 / R-4 Districts: Enable more small- and moderate-scale, multi-unit building types in the multi-family areas. This will involve looking at options in addition to conventional suburban-style apartment complexes currently allowed in these areas. Building types including 3- to 6-plex buildings, small walk-up apartments, row houses, courtyard housing, and similar options should be considered. [See map on website]~~
- ~~2. Mixed-use Areas: Consider allowing residential projects in the commercial districts — either as complimentary uses to the C-districts retail and office uses, or by improving the existing MXD district for use in and near the village and community center areas of the plan.~~
- ~~3. R-2 Districts: Monitor if changes are needed to be a better transition between R-1 and R-3 districts, but no specific changes have been identified. [See map on website]~~

To be discussed potentially at a later time by the City Council:

R-1 Districts: [See map on website]

At an April 24, 2023 work session, the City Council provided direction to staff to prioritize updating the design guidelines and researching short-term rentals as next steps in the R-1 discussion.

During the October 2, 2023 City Council meeting, the Prairie Village City Council passed [a detailed motion regarding housing](#), specifying what is—and what is not—on the table.

This council action effectively ended the discussion on the following topics:

- Accessory dwelling units in single-family residential areas
- Multi-unit homes in single-family residential areas

- Increased density in areas that already have duplexes
- Revisions to resident notification requirement

It's important to note these topics had previously been de-prioritized by the Council and were never actively developed by staff.

Going forward, the Council will encourage collaboration on the following actions designed to ensure our neighborhoods and community continue to thrive:

- Update the neighborhood design guidelines for smaller residential lots (R-1B districts) to ensure teardown and rebuilds—or other new construction—better fit the existing neighborhoods. This topic was discussed in detail during the Council Committee of the Whole portion of the meeting. The council recommended refined standards to the Planning Commission for consideration.
- Consider additional short-term rental regulations.
- Continue discussion of potential updates to existing multifamily and commercial areas. ~~This topic is currently under consideration by the Planning Commission.~~

The full motion can be read in its entirety [online here](#).

These potential strategies, and any changes that result as outcomes from these strategies would need to be formally adopted through a separate public process. Additionally, none of these strategies anticipate any changes to the zoning map (rezoning), and this action would likely need to occur through a formal development application and public review process. [See Steps to Rezone Property on website]

Note: Links to maps, etc. is available on the web version at <http://www.pvkansas.com/departments/community-development/planning-zoning/housing-policy> .