

City of Plano COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

HOUSING DENSITY POLICY STATEMENT 3.0

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Housing Density

Policy Statement 3.0

Description

This policy statement provides guidance regarding the density of housing in Plano. It addresses the following objective and strategy statements as found in the Housing Element of the Comprehensive Plan:

- 4 Objective B.3 - Disperse high-density housing across the city in small concentrations except for retirement housing and urban centers.
- 4 Strategy B.4 - Continue to apply the housing density policies in Policy Statement 3.0 - Housing Density when considering the appropriate concentrations of high-density housing.

Plano has developed housing policies that promote predominantly low-density residential neighborhoods while encouraging a mixture of housing

types. Current policies focus on limiting the concentration and proximity of apartment complexes to each other within neighborhoods and between contiguous neighborhoods, as found in the Multi-Family Task Force Study recommendations. These policies do not apply to denser pedestrian-oriented settings such as retirement housing, mixed use developments, and urban centers.

Background

Historical Perspective

The City of Plano has had policies regulating the distribution of high-density housing for many years. The goal is to distribute multifamily developments throughout the city to provide housing options in all residential neighborhoods. The first policy developed in 1981 allowed for ratios of different types of residential development within neighborhoods and along major development corridors. The ratio policy was ineffective because

developers inflated the density of single-family residential projects so that they could qualify for more apartments. The ratio policy regarding the distribution of high density housing was abandoned in 1986 for a new policy based on distance and numerical concentration and was included in the Comprehensive Plan.

Multi-Family Task Force Study

The Multi-Family Task Force was appointed by the City Council in February 1998. The mission of the task force was to study existing and projected multifamily housing in the city and the Metroplex region. The task force members were given the charge to evaluate the city's development policies as they affect the citywide balance of housing types, including the location and amount of multifamily housing in specific areas. This evaluation was to further the city's goals of developing sound neighborhoods and ensuring variety and affordability of housing types consistent with the needs of a diverse population.

Study Findings and Recommendations

The results of the task force study did reveal some interesting facts about multifamily developments. The number of school children generated per acre of multifamily development was about the same as that of single-family residential neighborhoods. Apartments tended to compare favorably with single-family development in terms of tax revenues and cost recovery fees during the first 10 to 15 years of the life of the complex. Apartment developments require fewer infrastructure improvements because the city is only responsible for maintaining water lines that connect to fire hydrants as opposed to the provision of miles of water and sewer lines along with street pavement to serve single-family neighborhoods. Since apartment complexes contain more units per acre, there is a likely increase in the demand of emergency services at one location. Apartment complexes also generate more vehicular trips per acre than single-family

developments. Therefore, major concentrations of multifamily units should be avoided by dispersing apartment complexes throughout the city.

The Multi-Family Task Force Study recommended that the distance and numerical concentration in the Comprehensive Plan be revised. The revised policy increased the distance requirements from 1,000 to 1,500 feet and reduced the number of apartment units from 750 to 500 that could be located within proximity of each other. A 1,200 foot setback was established for all residential development along the State Highway 121 corridor. The task force recommended that the city not increase the amount of land zoned for multifamily uses. The city should consider initiatives to increase the potential for less expensive owner-occupied housing such as patio homes and townhouses.

Analysis

The late 1990s was a time of tremendous growth of all types of residential development in Plano. The high demand for housing was a result of a strong economy adding many jobs to the Metroplex region. Since that time, there has been a significant drop in the construction of new homes and apartments within Plano. The decrease is due to changing economic conditions and the limited amount of land available for residential development. The Multi-Family Task Force Study has remained the primary driver of housing density policies.

The purpose of the high-density housing policy is to avoid large concentrations of garden apartments in one location. Garden apartments should be included within residential neighborhoods along with low-density single-family and medium-density housing such as townhouses and patio homes. This provides a variety of housing opportunities available in the residential neighborhoods throughout the city. The apartment residents would have access to needed goods and services found at the neighborhood centers located at the intersections of major thoroughfares.

Different options of housing choices will be important to accommodate the needs of the changing demographics of Plano's population.

Multifamily housing for the elderly and urban centers should be excluded from the high-density housing policy. Multifamily housing for the elderly is necessary to meet the needs of the aging population of Plano. This type of housing can range from independent living facilities to household care institutions. These facilities usually have less impact on surrounding residential development. They have reduced parking standards and generate less traffic as compared with traditional multifamily developments.

Urban centers are defined as a variety of land uses in a compact location that encourage pedestrian activity. Urban centers can be developed around transit stations and/or near major employment centers. Urban centers have high-density housing to allow for a large number of people to live within the development. This is important as a large population is required to support the businesses located within the development. Urban centers serve as gathering places and activity centers for the community. The household size and pedestrian orientation of urban centers tend to reduce the per-unit vehicular trips. This should in turn reduce the impact on local streets. Urban centers and multifamily housing for the elderly do not require much land. They are also good projects to consider for infill and redevelopment opportunities. However, it is important that service businesses for the residents be provided within these communities or within walking distance to the development.

Policy Statement

Below is a policy statement with a series of criteria to guide the development of high-density housing.

Develop new neighborhoods which are predominantly low- to medium-density housing, yet allow for a mixture of housing types and densities

based on the following policies:

- 1. Maintain low-density housing as the predominant land use in most neighborhoods;*
- 2. Locate medium- and high-density housing throughout the community based on access to major thoroughfares and mass transit opportunities;*
- 3. Distribute high-density housing on the periphery of a neighborhood so that no more than 500 units are located in any one complex or group of complexes with a recommended minimum 1,500 foot separation between developments. High-density housing policies are intended to ensure that minimum separations are maintained between multifamily developments. The dispersion policies should be considered, along with location policies and specific site conditions, in evaluating zoning and development requests;*
- 4. Consider concentrations in excess of 500 high-density units in the periphery of a single neighborhood, when a site's configuration and size limits its use. If a site's boundaries are established by floodplain, thoroughfare alignment, utility lines, or other barriers to development, it may be appropriate to identify a single use for the site. In such cases, it should be demonstrated that adherence to the maximum concentration size would create a residual tract that would be inappropriate for medium- or low-density residential development;*
- 5. Separate multifamily developments of three or more stories from single-family areas by a Type D thoroughfare (four lanes, divided) or greater or other significant physical feature;*
- 6. Policy Statements No. 3 and No. 5 do not apply to urban centers and multifamily housing developments for the elderly.*