

## 2 HOUSING

### 2.4 Goals and Objectives

**Goal 1: The quality, quantity, location, and timing of housing development will be carefully planned, strongly managed, and coordinated with the provision of City services and infrastructure.**

#### Objectives

- a. Encourage the use of mixed-use and traditional neighborhood design concepts in new developments and redevelopments where appropriate and compatible with existing land uses.
- b. New developments should be located in areas that will be efficiently and economically served by existing or planned City streets, sanitary sewers, public water mains, and stormwater management facilities.
- c. Large ownership parcels should be developed as planned developments, rather than subdivided into lots without a coordinated development plan.
- d. A sufficient supply of developable land shall be provided within and immediately surrounding the City limits to meet projected housing unit needs.
- e. Provide adequate infrastructure and public services to meet existing and future demand for residential development.
- f. Encourage the use of conservation subdivisions (cluster developments) to preserve important open spaces such as bluff lands while allowing the overall density of a development to be maintained by permitting smaller, compact lots.
- g. Encourage mixed uses developments that include housing units and densities where appropriate to maximize the efficiency and utilization of available land.
- h. Promote the redevelopment of lands with existing infrastructure and public services to include a housing component, and maintain and rehabilitate existing residential structures.

**Goal 2: Strengthen and support existing Onalaska neighborhoods.**

#### Objectives

- a. New developments shall be compatible with or enhance the character of existing adjacent residential neighborhoods.

- b. Protect neighborhoods from incompatible land uses through effective land use and design controls.
- c. New buildings – principal or accessory – should be designed (architectural, size, scale, mass, etc.) to reflect the general character of the neighborhood in which they are developed.
- d. Improve transportation connections, particularly bicycle paths/routes and pedestrian facilities, between and within existing neighborhoods and other parts of the City and region.
- e. Mitigate the impacts of new and/or higher density housing, mixed-use developments, infill, and redevelopment of existing neighborhoods through design standards, open space and housing maintenance programs.
- f. Preserve historic homes and culturally important community features – both built and natural – in existing neighborhoods.
- g. Encourage and support the maintenance and rehabilitation of the older and deteriorating housing stock, particularly in the neighborhoods north and south of Main Street, west of Ninth Avenue.

**Goal 3: Onalaska’s new residential neighborhoods will be attractively designed through both site and architectural design.**

Objectives

- a. Encourage quality architectural design with attention to detail and building materials in new neighborhoods.
- b. Promote neighborhood designs that support a range of transportation choices, including pedestrian and bicycle paths that connect residential areas, parks and regional trails in and around the City.
- c. New housing developments will include beautiful streets which are comfortable to pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.
- d. New neighborhoods will be identifiable and distinct places.
- e. Maintain and respect (not dominate) natural and environmental features, including the bluffs, Black River, Lake Onalaska, and significant trees or vegetation (such as oaks, etc. if possible).
- f. Consider alternate residential development patterns such as cluster development and neo-traditional neighborhoods.

- g. Allow for a mix of dwellings, work places, shops, civic spaces or buildings and parks if the market demand exists for such developments.
- h. Create short residential blocks to better serve pedestrians and calm neighborhood traffic.

**Goal 4: A variety of housing types, styles and price ranges will exist in the City for people of all income levels and ages. Particular importance will be paid to ensuring that housing choices are available for (1) people who work in the City; (2) residents with special needs; and (3) senior citizens.**

Objectives

- a. Consider creating traditional neighborhood developments (TND) to provide a variety of housing types with a new development. Types of housing that may be considered in a TND or mixed-use neighborhood development include:
  - Standard lot single family detached dwellings;
  - Small lot single family detached dwellings;
  - Accessory dwelling units;
  - Two-family dwellings;
  - Single-family attached dwellings;
  - Mixed-use dwellings; and,
  - Small multi-family dwellings.

TNDs can function as socially integrated neighborhoods.

- b. Expand the supply of middle income family housing in the community, particularly moderately priced single-family housing.
- c. Provide affordable senior housing so that long-term residents and retirees may continue to live in the City.
- d. Integrate housing for people with special needs into new developments when possible.
- e. Ensure that senior, special needs, and multi-family residential developments are well integrated into the community through safe and convenient connections to public amenities (e.g. parks), a variety of transportation options (e.g. sidewalks, bicycle routes), and, accessible to places to shop, work, and go to school.
- f. Inform residents about housing ownership programs to allow for increased owner-occupancy for all Onalaska residents.

## 2.5 Policies and Recommendations

### Residential Character

- 1) Future residential development in the City shall continue to contribute to the development of neighborhoods. The allowable characteristics of future neighborhoods should be unique to each and shall be identified in the Land Use section. Features to consider include future parks, neighborhood organizations, neighborhood naming and signage, allowable uses, densities, and intensities.
- 2) Connect neighborhoods both visually and physically by roads, walkways and open spaces.
- 3) New residential development should enhance the character and aesthetics of the City by utilizing high quality site planning and architecturally interesting design.
- 4) Ensure that new residential developments provide adequate public amenities, open spaces, streetscape features and amenities (e.g. sidewalks, terraces, street lights, signage, etc).
- 5) Incorporate adequate noise buffers, such as landscaped earth berms, to mitigate highway traffic noise for residential developments near such transportation facilities.
- 6) When existing homes are rehabilitated, new architectural features should be compatible with the existing structure and surrounding neighborhood.
- 7) The City should require general design guidelines for all new residential developments over five (5) residential units addressing buildings (e.g. architectural features) and sites (e.g. setbacks).

### Housing and Transportation

- 8) Coordinate new residential developments with City and regional transportation plans.
- 9) Incorporate transit planning into the site design and street system planning for new high-density residential projects so that residents who do not drive have cost effective transit options.
- 10) Require public access easements for walking and biking trails in new developments to link new housing and park developments, and work with property owners to obtain such easements for existing neighborhoods where appropriate.
- 11) Require major residential developments to provide safe and efficient pedestrian and bicycle circulation.

- 12) As new neighborhoods develop, reserve corridors for collector streets.
- 13) Future residential developments and neighborhoods should be located within a well-defined collector-arterial system that keeps non-local traffic from passing through local streets in residential neighborhoods.

Housing and Infill Development

- 14) Infill development providing housing opportunities shall be encouraged in Onalaska. Infill sites, especially in the central portion of the City, should be considered for uses including senior housing, low/moderate income housing, and condominium housing when deemed compatible with the Plan.

Housing Rehabilitation

- 15) The City of Onalaska should pursue programs aimed at housing rehabilitation. Current programs include:

- WHEDA (Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Administration) Home Improvement Loans
- WHEDA Paint and Fix-Up Grant

- 16) Promote neighborhood beautification programs within the City.
- 17) Provide educational materials and forums promoting historic preservation and unique architectural styles to interested homeowners and residents.
- 18) Protect existing housing stock through effective enforcement of codes, policies and programs. The existing housing stock is also usually more affordable than new housing.

Variety of Housing Options

- 19) The City shall work with the local realtors, homebuilders, etc. to determine whether there is a balance between the residential market demand and City plans, policies and regulations. For example, City staff might meet with the La Crosse Area Homebuilders Association annually to discuss local sales data and to identify conflicts between the market demand and City plans, policies and regulations.
- 20) The City shall work with a variety of residents to ensure their housing needs are being addressed through City plans, policies and regulations.
- 21) Zoning and land division ordinances shall (pursuant to State Law for cities over 12,500 population) allow for TND and mixed use developments. These ordinances might allow people to live in the City of Onalaska during different stages of life.

- 22) Explore the potential for the development of a Community Land Trust program to encourage the development of permanently affordable housing.
- 23) Identify and promote the availability of land for the development or redevelopment of low-income and moderate-income housing.
- 24) Consider requiring new housing subdivisions to submit private covenants and restrictions that will govern whether units are owner-occupied or rental occupied. The homeowners association should oversee these restrictions, much as condominium associations do. The intent is to help increase owner-occupancy in the City. The City Attorney may need to review these covenants and restrictions to ensure they comply with City laws.
- 25) In appropriately designated locations, consider requiring a “maximum” living space of 1400 square feet, excluding garage, or 1900 square feet with garage. Consider requiring single story dwellings in this area not to exceed 1600 square feet. This restriction in housing size can help keep housing affordable.

Housing and Infrastructure

- 26) Coordinate public infrastructure improvements with new residential developments. Continue to ensure that the City’s planning and economic development, public works, fire, police, and other departments carefully review relevant City plans and development applications to determine whether and how new developments can be adequately served by City services and infrastructure.
- 27) Consider creating a formal residential phasing plan to facilitate efficient development and service extensions by approving developments adjacent to existing urban areas.
- 28) Adopt policies that prohibit “leapfrog” housing development. Require new development to be located adjacent to existing development to reduce infrastructure and service costs.
- 29) Continue to require property owners or developers to pay for infrastructure costs within new residential developments.

Senior Housing

- 30) Study the potential for senior housing at different locations. Potential future senior housing locations shall be identified in the Land Use element. The City should develop a list of criteria related to transportation, services, recreation, etc. that must be met for a site to be identified as well suited for senior housing.
- 31) Consider different options for senior housing including condominium, zero-lot line duplex, smaller lot single family and other available options discussed above.

- 32) Through Planned Unit Developments and the annexation/re-zoning process, require that a certain percentage of new units be age-restricted. Consider providing incentives to ensure that 5-10% of new housing is designated for seniors.
- 33) Consider adopting an inclusionary zoning ordinance that mandates senior housing.

*Housing and the Environment*

- 34) Allow for alternative methods to manage stormwater in new residential developments including rain gardens, narrower street widths where appropriate, permeable pavements where appropriate, etc.
- 35) Enforce City codes related to protection of existing vegetation when land is disturbed for new housing developments.
- 36) Encourage the use of native vegetation where appropriate in new residential areas. For instance, require native vegetation at entrances to subdivisions/neighborhoods, etc.
- 37) Facilitate the use of trails and connections from housing areas to the City's important natural resource areas, including the bluffs, Black River, the downtown waterfront and Lake Onalaska by improving such connections.
- 38) Encourage cluster/conservation development practices to preserve green space, bluffs, riparian areas, etc. and minimize adverse impacts on the environment. Revise relevant City ordinances to allow/require such practices where deemed necessary in the Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources and Land Use Elements.
- 39) Continue to prohibit housing development on slopes greater than 30 percent.
- 40) Prohibit ridgeline development or home siting at or on ridgelines which is visible for many miles and damages the scenic character of the Coulee Region.