



Department of City Development
City Plan Commission
Redevelopment Authority of the City of Milwaukee
Neighborhood Improvement Development Corporation

Lafayette L. Crump
Commissioner

Vanessa L. Koster
Deputy Commissioner

MEMORANDUM

Common Council File #240402

Prepared by: Department of City Development, Planning Division

Subject: Summary of Public Engagement Efforts and Changes to the Draft Growing MKE Plan

Date: July 15, 2024

Following a one-year process that involved significant community input and engagement, a draft of the Growing MKE Plan was released for public review on April 30, 2024. The Growing MKE Plan was posted online at engage.milwaukee.gov/GrowingMKE and also linked from milwaukee.gov/GrowingMKE. The public was asked to provide comments on the draft plan on or before May 29, 2024. Based on the timing of outreach opportunities, the comment period was extended to June 2, 2024. Comments were solicited via email, social media, on the engagement website, and in-person at office hours, pop-ups and two open houses held in May 2024. A full list of engagement opportunities is provided in the attached Engagement Summary, in addition to a summary of themes from community feedback.

Based on public comments received on the draft, a number of edits were made to the final draft version of the Growing MKE Plan that has been submitted for review and approval to the City Plan Commission and Common Council. This memorandum includes a summary of comments received throughout the planning process and changes to the Growing MKE Plan since the Plan was released on April 30, 2024.

Community engagement has been extensive during this planning process. The totality of the public comments received during the planning process supports the recommendations found in the Final Draft Plan. Please see the attached Engagement Summary for more information.



Engagement Summary

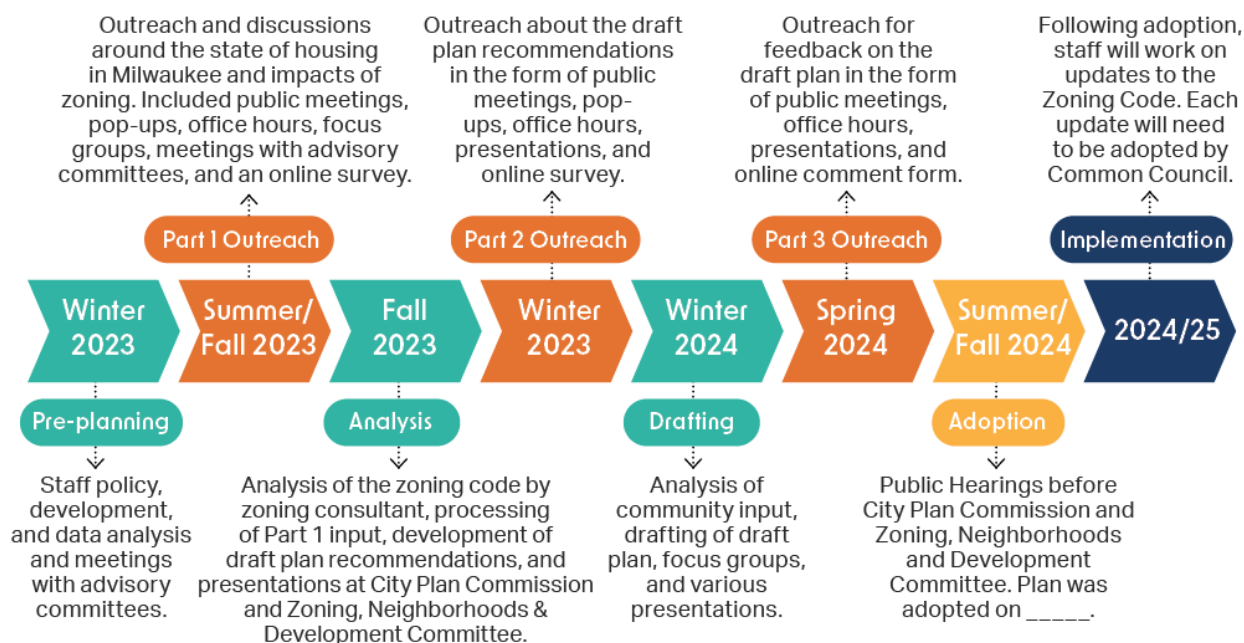
Planning Process Overview

The policies and recommendations in the Growing MKE Plan amendment were developed through a comprehensive planning process over the last year and a half.

Each policy was developed through a review of recently completed planning efforts, adopted City of Milwaukee Comprehensive and Area Plans, extensive engagement, and research of best practices in land use and zoning policies in cities throughout the country.

The policies are based on the citywide goals to: increase housing choice and equity, support fiscal sustainability and economic development, foster walkable neighborhoods and connectivity, support a healthy and thriving community, and make Milwaukee and more sustainable and resilient city.

Timeline



Public engagement for Growing MKE included:

- 7 Community Open House public meetings across 3 rounds of engagement.
- 2 Webinars with Q & A + a Virtual Kick-off with Q & A
- 33 “office hour” events at Milwaukee Public Libraries throughout the city
- 14 focus groups & community meetings with neighborhood groups & local developers
- 20 Pop-Up engagement events at senior centers, farmers’ markets, and other community events
- 3 Technical Advisory Committee meetings
- 3 Community Advisory Committee meetings

- 2 community-wide online surveys: The surveys were set-up as virtual versions of the Part 1 and Part 2 Open Houses. A shorter version of the same questions were asked at pop-ups, focus groups, and displays at each library.
- Displays at each library with new information for each round of engagement.
- 800+ views of meeting recordings
- 1,750+ people directly engaged at in-person and online meetings and events
- 5,800+ visitors to www.engage.milwaukee.gov/GrowingMKE
- Multi-lingual outreach materials throughout the process and Community Open House public meetings in English, Spanish, and Hmong.

Events were promoted through flyers, community partners, social media (Facebook, Instagram, and X), e-notify, the Growing MKE email list (over 1,000 emails), and displays at libraries.

Part 1 – Engagement – Checking in on the state of housing

What types of housing would you like to see in your neighborhood?

What types of housing would you like to see in the city?

What excites you about this project?

We asked these questions across multiple platforms –pop-ups, open houses, libraries, focus groups, and online. What we heard:

- In their neighborhoods and citywide, people want to see more of what they are familiar with and like, especially single-family homes, duplexes, and mixed-use multi-family buildings.
- Most people liked the idea of more gentle-density housing types in their neighborhoods, including in neighborhoods where they don't exist - especially in the forms of duplexes, cottage courts, townhomes, and accessory dwelling units. There was excitement about having more flexibility of what can be done on a homeowner's property.
- There was a recognition by many that people need different types of housing during their lifetime and that we should make sure everyone has access to the housing they need.
- Other comments included concerns of displacement with development; worry of only allowing density in certain areas; a desire for safe and walkable neighborhoods; a need for more housing for seniors; a need for more housing units with accessibility features, a need for healthy and safe housing; encouraging the development of amenities; and varying views on parking.

Part 2 – Engagement – Goals & Draft Recommendations

Draft Growing MKE recommendations were presented to the public for review. Prompts for feedback were related to whether the draft recommendations helped us achieve City goals in housing choice & equity, economic development, connectivity, and climate resilience.

After reviewing the Growing MKE draft recommendations, participants were asked to rate the recommendations on their ability to help meet our citywide goals in economic development, connectivity, housing choice & equity, and climate resilience.

Many respondents said the recommendations will help the City meet its goals “To a great extent.”

- Overall, responses illustrated widespread support for gentle density in neighborhoods and increasing density on major corridors.
- There was recognition of how changes to the zoning code could make small-scale development easier, how the changes could open up more housing availability, and that growth in the city’s population means greater economic stability for Milwaukee.

Concerns varied:

- Some wanted more emphasis on homeownership in the plan. While this meant detached single-family houses to many, we also heard a desire for homeownership opportunities in other housing types like duplexes, townhomes, and multi-family buildings of varying sizes.
- Some were concerned that multi-family residential buildings would be oversupplied in some areas and not in others.
- There was also concern that more development could decrease green space.

Part 3 – Engagement – Draft Plan

After analysis of community input, staff drafted the Draft Plan. The Draft Plan was posted on April 30th, 2024, and feedback was requested through open houses, office hours, pop-ups, and online. Zoning recommendations did not change from Part 2 to Part 3, but Part 3 included an expansion on the policies and implementation information.

There were over 1,000 visitors to the Draft Plan website (engage.milwaukee.gov/GrowingMKE/Growing-MKE-Draft-Plan) and staff engaged directly over 250 people at in-person and online meetings and events.

Overall, community members continue to express a desire for more inclusive, affordable, and diverse housing options. Many comments expressed general support for the plan overall. Comments also reflect a range of community concerns and suggestions, highlighting issues related to affordable housing, accessibility, transit infrastructure, rising rent prices, safety, community amenities, and equitable development.

In support of the Draft Plan, we heard:

- Desire for more housing choices and types for all as new housing is built.
- Recognition of the need for additional housing units – There is broad support for low-density middle housing including accessory dwelling units (rear cottages), duplexes, and cottage courts. Additionally, many expressed a desire for more senior housing and ADA-accessible units.
- Recommendations to encourage more homes in areas that already allow for multi-family developments including commercial corridors and existing multi-family zoning districts have received support.
- Many mentioned a strong desire for walkable, bikeable neighborhoods and support multi-family development near transit routes.

- Small, medium, and large developers expressed a need to streamline the approval process for development and excitement about the extent to which the recommendations would simplify the process.

Concerns expressed in the comments:

- Some are concerned that some of the proposed zoning changes may intensify the speculative real estate practices that have led to increased housing costs and poor housing quality in Milwaukee's low-income neighborhoods.
- Some are concerned that allowing triplexes and small multi-family buildings, could lead to more renters and fewer detached single-family homeownership opportunities. This concern was also expressed specifically to the potential of conversions of homes into student housing in the neighborhoods near UWM.
- Concerns about the loss of homeownership because of zoning code changes comes from two perspectives:
 - Concern that there will be an increase of rental units with lack of property upkeep by transient renters and/or absentee landlords will lead to reduced housing quality and neighborhoods.
 - Concern that recommendations will reduce the housing supply of single-family detached homes for owner-occupancy for middle to low-income families.

Additional Thoughts:

- Respondents have expressed various opinions about short-term rentals as either harmful to the housing supply or a source of income for families.
- There are diverse views on parking requirements including support and opposition to removing parking minimums with some advocating for parking maximums.
- Additionally, there were comments regarding how to support small businesses, the need to improve transit infrastructure, and the importance of safety and environmental quality in building and site design.

Equitable Engagement: A citywide plan update requires engaging the community in many different ways. The Growing MKE team focused on meeting people where they are and put equitable outreach at the forefront. Over 80% of all in-person engagement activities (office hours, focus groups, pop-ups, Open Houses, etc.) were located in or directly adjacent to Qualified Census Tracts (QCTs) and/or Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Areas (NRSAs).

- Qualified Census Tracts are census tracts in which more than 50% of households are below 60% of the Area Median Income. 53% of the city's overall population lives in QCTs and a higher percentage of Black and Hispanic households live in the city's QCTs.
- A Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA) is a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) grantee-designated area targeted for revitalization. The Milwaukee's NRSA areas include census tracts where at least 70% of all residents are considered low income.

Summary of Updates to the Plan

Comments received during the Draft Plan comment period (April 30, 2024 – June 2, 2024) reflected a range of opinions, and while many were supportive, there were some comments that suggested adjustments to the draft recommendations. DCD has made a number of adjustments to the Draft Plan based on the feedback received since its release. Not all public comments resulted in changes to the Plan. The adjustments below are being proposed in areas where changes to the recommendations may be warranted to respond to public comment and still achieve overall Growing MKE plan goals. The following is a summary of substantive changes made based on comments received, including some edits made to help with clarity in response to comments and questions. It is organized chronologically based on the section of the plan. Edits that were made to correct typos or other non-substantive edits are not included in this memorandum.

GOALS & POLICIES

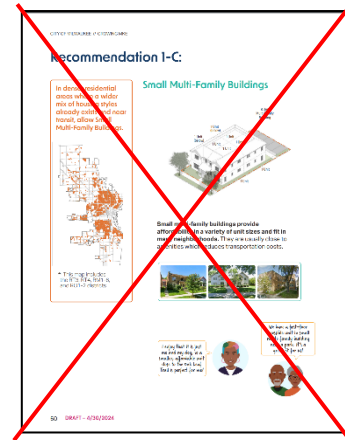
- **Page 31** – The Draft Plan released on April 30, 2024 included a recommendation to allow small-multi-family buildings to be permitted in RT3 and RT4 residential districts (Recommendation 1-C on page 50). Based on some public and stakeholder feedback from neighborhoods that include the RT3 and RT4 zoning districts, the recommendation to permit small multi-family buildings throughout the RT3 and RT4 districts has been removed from the plan on page 50. A new targeted policy has been added to the Plan to discuss small multi-family buildings in general (New Policy 1.A.2). Small multi-family buildings already exist in many areas of the city and do help provide housing diversity. This policy supports small multi-family buildings in appropriate locations and in manner that allows for additional alderperson and neighborhood review.
 - Updated the following policy to reflect the change in the recommendation:
 - ***I.A.1** Update the zoning code to permit a variety of housing types throughout city neighborhoods including single-family homes, accessory dwelling units, duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, townhomes, and cottage courts, ~~and small multi-family dwellings~~.*
 - New Policy regarding small multi-family buildings:
 - ***I.A.2.** Explore opportunities to allow new small multi-family dwellings in appropriate locations within residential neighborhoods. This could include corner lots, major streets, uniquely configured lots, and other locations near transit and walkable commercial corridors where they may align with neighborhood housing goals and will not conflict with the City's Anti-Displacement Plan. Small multi-family dwellings already exist in many one and two-family residential zoning districts and can promote housing diversity and affordability in city neighborhoods and may also provide new opportunities for homeownership.*
 - Note: This was inserted as policy I.A.2, so the policy numbers for the remaining policies under I.A. were also adjusted)
- **Page 32** - The following policy was added in response to comments about continuing to make code updates and monitor progress.

- o ***I.B.4.** Continue to monitor housing developments, market trends, and shifting community needs to make ongoing strategic technical updates to the zoning code as needed to increase efficiency and access.*
- **Page 32** – This additional policy complements the existing Growing MKE policy I.D.1. which references supporting the Collective Affordable House Strategic Plan’s strategies for homeownership.
 - o ***I.C.8.** Continue to implement the priority strategies identified in Milwaukee’s Collective Affordable Housing Strategic Plan to support systems and allocate resources to increase and preserve the supply and availability of affordable rental homes.*
- **Page 35** – Based on feedback requesting more language supporting renters, this language was added to policy II.A.8
 - o ***II.A.8.** Continue to advocate for tenants’ rights to safe and well-maintained housing and fair rental practices and expand resources available for landlords and tenants, such as training, eviction prevention services, referral services and a single point of contact to assist tenants access programs and services.*
- **Page 36** – Additional wording to encourage multiple scales of development.
 - o ***III.A.3.** Increase the housing diversity and residential density of neighborhoods citywide, and prioritize higher density mixed-use and multi-family development, at a variety of scales, along commercial and transit corridors.*
- **Page 36** – Additional policy to clarify how zoning map changes could be undertaken based direction from planning efforts.
 - o ***III.A.9.** Utilize the Area Planning and corridor planning process to identify where zoning map changes may be appropriate along current and planned transit corridors.*
- **Page 42** – Short addition to place emphasis on reducing conflicts between curb cut locations and transit access.
 - o ***IV.D.6.** Assess design standards for street facing façades of parking structures. Consider additional regulations to ensure that parking lots, garages, and structures do not detract from the pedestrian environment. Curb cuts should be minimized to the greatest extent possible to protect pedestrians, ~~and~~ bicyclists, and transit users.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Page 50** – Removed Recommendation 1-C for small multi-family buildings. The explanation for this change is included above next to Page 31)

The removal of Recommendation 1-C created space to turn Recommendation #2 into a two-page spread (pages 50-51).



IMPLEMENTATION

- **Page 56** – Update to Implementation item #5. A definition will still be created for a Small Multi-Family building to differentiate this type from larger buildings.
 - o **Small Multi-Family Dwelling:** Create a new use definition and standards for a Small Multi-Family Dwellings (5-8 units). ~~Allow Small Multi-Family Dwellings in RT3 and RT4 districts.~~
- **Page 58** - Addition to the Implementation Chart under Process Improvements
 - o **Renaming and Grouping districts**
Consider renaming or grouping zoning districts as appropriate to provide greater clarity on the uses and housing types allowed.

GLOSSARY

Added definitions for the following: Age in place, Major Streets, Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED), Infill development, Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Areas (NRSAs), and Qualified Census Tracts (QCTs)