

League of Women Voters of Lawrence-Douglas County

P.O. Box 1072, Lawrence, Kansas 66044

April 22, 2007

Holly Krebs, Chairperson
Lawrence-Douglas County Planning Commission
City Hall
Lawrence, Kansas 66044

RECEIVED

APR 23 2007

**City County Planning Office
Lawrence, Kansas**

RE: MISC. ITEM NO. 2, REQUEST FOR DECREASE IN ACCESS REQUIREMENTS

Dear Chairperson Krebs and Planning Commissioners:

We ask that you not grant the applicant's request for a reduction in access requirements from those in Chapter 20, Article 8, Section 20-810(d)(2)(iii) of the Land Development Code. In fact, we ask that you not change the current Code unless it would be to increase the access requirements by reducing the number of lots and dwellings from thirty-five per access outlet to a collector or arterial street system.

In his proposal that the current Code, which requires one access outlet to collectors or arterials per 35 dwellings, be changed to allow 100 dwellings per access outlet, provided they all have sprinkler systems, he seems to be assuming that the need for more than one access outlet is only for fire protection, but is clearly ignoring the other compelling exigencies of urban planning and urban design. On the other hand, we base our request on the unfortunate outcome that would likely occur if the current standards are reduced. The Land Development Code is the verbal expression of the physical design of the city. Seemingly minor wording changes in the Code can create major physical changes in the functioning and sustainability of the city.

There are many reasons for having alternative access outlets available for all households wherever the constraints of the land do not prevent it.

- A. Rapid access to emergency services, including police and medical services, as well as fire protection, is critically important. The fewer access outlets per population, the greater is the likelihood that an access outlet will be blocked in an emergency, thereby increasing danger to the residents.
- B. Traffic safety is enhanced by providing multiple access outlets to the greatest number of residents practicable. Conversely, when more residents are forced into fewer outlets, longer traffic queues result, and intersections become congested, with concomitant increases in risk-taking and accidents as motorists lose patience.
- C. Internal routing within neighborhoods for neighborhood-oriented trips reduces congestion along arterials. Conversely, congestion increases when internal neighborhood traffic is directed to collector streets and arterials simply to get to otherwise inaccessible locations within the same neighborhood.
- D. Multi-modal transportation is encouraged by street circulation patterns that provide internal neighborhood accessibility. For instance, pedestrian routes are safer on sidewalks adjacent to local streets, and more likely to be used than isolated paths. Thus, neighborhood street configurations should facilitate internal access to neighborhood non-residential service uses—shopping, schools and parks—for pedestrians, bicyclists and private automobiles. Conversely, internal neighborhood access routes are prevented when street configurations reduce access choices, as happens with neighborhood street circulation patterns that direct traffic only to collector streets and arterials.
- E. Safe, quick, and convenient pedestrian routes to bus stops may be designed into a neighborhood by providing multiple access outlets rather than by limiting accesses, thereby facilitating use of public transit.
- F. Energy consumption is reduced where street configurations allow more transportation choices and shorter distances to destinations.

For these reasons, we encourage the Planning Commission to require, where possible, more access outlets for residential areas, rather than reducing them as requested in the applicant's letter.

Sincerely yours,



Paula Schumacher, President



Caleb Morse, Member
Land Use Committee