

23 May 2011

Mr. Charles Blaser, Chairman, and Members of the Lawrence-Douglas County Planning Commission:

I am writing with regard to **ITEM NO. 16:** Text Amendment to City of Lawrence Development Code; Multi-Dwelling Residential Zoning District RM 64 and **ITEM NO. 17:** Text Amendment to City of Lawrence Development Code; Chapter 20; Planned Development Overlay District.

I am a bit confused by the staff reviews that 1) indicate that RM 64 zoning would be inappropriate because it is considered too high a density and then 2) recommend a change to the Planned Development Overlay District allowing for development to an even higher density.

The staff notes in the review of the Multi-Dwelling Residential Zoning District RM 64 that in 1999 the city had a diagnostic review of the development regulations that state that the RM-3 (43 du/ac) and RD (54 du/ac) Districts of the code at that time “appear to represent a theoretical maximum rather than realistic or meaningful standards” and that it was a conscious decision to reduce the high-density districts when drafting the current code. The Staff Response to the request for RM64 says that *Horizon 2020* outlines an overall density range of 16-21 dwelling units per acre for high-density residential districts and that the proposal is almost 3 times higher than the highest density outlined in the plan.

If the proposal for 64 units per acre is not in conformance with the comprehensive plan, why is a proposal that allows for 80 units per acre, almost 4 times higher than the highest density outlined in the plan considered to be in conformance with the plan?

Both approaches can be site specific. The staff is arguing that better planning will result through use of the Planned Development Overlay District. I would be very interested in a discussion of:

- Opportunities for flexibility in development that exist for development on small infill lots
- How a PD Overlay can take into consideration the character of the neighborhood and the surrounding property
- Likely public benefits that might result in a determination from the City Commission that an increase in the maximum Net Density beyond that of the Base District is warranted

The change that has occurred is the consideration of underground parking for development. Although parking is central to this discussion, there is no mention of the fact that twice as much parking would be required for four-bedroom rather than two-bedroom units while the maximum occupancy for unrelated individuals would be the same. It also should be noted that as density increases, demand for on-street parking for visitors increases without any corresponding increase in the number of those spaces available for residents of the area. Additional requirements for visitor parking on site should be considered.

I would also like to see the density calculations give some consideration to counting studio and one-bedroom units differently than two-bedroom units; perhaps counting studio and one-bedroom units as .5 Dwelling Units, and two-bedroom units as .75 Dwelling units or as .4 and .6. If the intention is to seriously encourage a mix of sizes, this would give some incentive for that.

Thank you very much for your good work and your consideration of these proposals.

Marci Francisco, 1101 Ohio, Lawrence, KS 66044



## Lawrence Association of Neighborhoods

*Neighborhoods Working Together*

Dear Chairperson Charles Blaser and Planning Commissioners:

TA-3-3-11: The Lawrence Associations of Neighborhoods supports the staff's recommendations for denial of the addition of a RM64 zoning district. The idea of using the RM64 as a way to slow sprawl is not appropriate. Adding density where density is already high does not avoid sprawl but does increase density beyond sustainability. As the staff report states this density is almost three times higher than outlined in the highest density and we as a community have the Smartcode for sustainable density development. Sprawl does happen not in already dense areas, but in areas where there is a half or one acre lots. The RM64 would change the character of the neighborhoods it is imposed upon since heights would have to overshadow present development and change the character of the neighborhood. For every additional person will require a car in most cases and therefore additional parking.

The staff states that "it would be impossible to develop residential projects at anywhere near the maximum densities of those districts".

The idea is to have as many bedrooms as a four bedroom RM32 project and therefore there would be as many people in the RM64 as in a four bedroom RM32 project. The RM32 density calculations are based on the premise that most students want their own room. In a small way this maybe correct, but with the cost of apartments in many cases more than one person per bedroom is needed in order to be able to afford the apartment. It may be true that the four bedroom apartments are not renting as well as expected, but the majority of apartments complexes in Lawrence are studio, one and two bedroom and do not need a density calculation for parking. The RM64 could be built even in west Lawrence where there are as of now no buses and cars are required and the need for required parking must meet the standard parking requirements.

A note is the staff statement, "no four bedroom units allowed." It is understood the idea is to double the number of people living in a similar area.

According to the staff review this is a project in the Oread neighborhood and this project seemed to have trouble getting a density calculation with a RM32 approved and the applicant has now come back with the RM64 request for the same project. And the applicant is also asking for a PD text amendment to increase density one way or another in a highly dense neighborhood. The applicant is asking you to support at least one way to build more density in a dense neighborhood with an across the city application. There must be a suitable way for the applicant to build this one project without making major changes to the codes.

LAN asks that the Planning Commission to support the staff's request for denial.

Gwendolyn L. Klingenberg  
Lawrence Association of Neighborhoods - President