



Multi-family Background

Multi-family residential has been a contentious topic for community discussion in Sugar Land. Though most of the existing multi-family complexes were brought into the City through annexation, the multi-family that has been developed in the City sparked significant public debate and discussion on the topic.

The 2004 Land Use Plan recognized the need for a variety of housing types including multi-family, townhomes, and condos. Its policy direction limited the density and concentration of stand-alone multi-family complexes in order to limit their number and disperse them throughout the community. The Plan also provided for Planned Residential and Mixed Use categories, which have been implemented through the Planned Development zoning process and has allowed for significant Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council review of plans for these areas. In 2010 City Council approved Resolution 10-21 which provided direction for the design of multi-family development.

Many of the components of Resolution 10-21 are incorporated and further expanded upon in this Plan's policies.

- c. Locate new multi-family units in vertically mixed use settings that are appropriately scaled to their surroundings and are designed to retain their value over the long-term.**

In the future, the City should not approve new stand-alone single-use multi-family residential complexes. Any new multi-family units (condo ownership or rental) should be located in a mixed use area designated as a Regional or Neighborhood Activity Center, or a Medium Density Mixed Use. Vertically mixed-use buildings¹ are the preferred architectural style for multi-family in order to maximize pedestrian activation and use integration. However, these can be achieved in other ways. For example, pedestrian interest can be created by placing a multi-family's fitness center and leasing office on the first floor, or including front porches and stoops for those units along the pedestrian area. Additionally, integration within a mixed use development could be achieved if the multi-family component was part of an integrated, pedestrian-friendly, mixed use development application. In this example, phasing protections should be included to ensure the remainder of the project is built at the same time or prior to the multi-family. When additional multi-family is proposed in a mixed use development, a school impact analysis should be completed to evaluate the expected impact on schools.

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Design and quality of space influence the experience of a place regardless of the number of units per acre. Multi-family residential should be integrated within mixed use developments that provide easy pedestrian access to goods and services, employment, and public spaces. In order to ensure cohesion with adjacent uses, multi-family buildings should not have perimeter fences. Parking for multi-family should not be in surface level parking lots, but rather in integrated structured parking garages. Parking should be connected to the residential portion of the building and wrapped to minimize visibility from adjacent streets and access ways. Architectural features and building finishes on multi-family buildings should add to the pedestrian-friendly quality and cohesiveness of the mixed use development. In order to ensure their long-term durability, buildings should utilize high quality building finishes.

¹A vertically mixed use building contains multiple uses, such as retail or restaurant on the ground floor and residential or office on the upper floors.