

Date: December 4, 2024

To: Mark D. Israelson, ICMA-CM, City Manager

From: Christina D. Day, AICP, Director of Planning

Subject: Presentation of the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance Rewrite Diagnostic Report

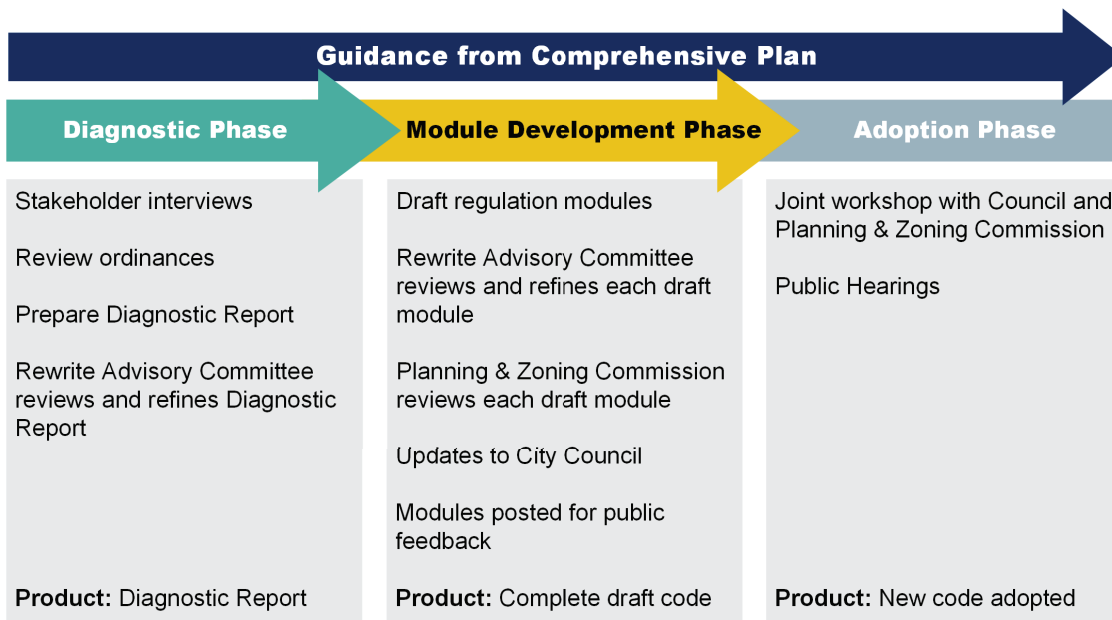
Plano City Council initiated the process to review and rewrite the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances in April 2024. These ordinances are fundamental tools in implementing the land use policies of the city and, while incrementally updated throughout the years, they are rooted in the development needs and goals of the comprehensive plan originating in 1986. A rewrite of both ordinances will ensure the development regulations best align with the city’s current land use and development policy objectives as outlined in other recently updated and adopted documents, including the comprehensive plan.

Rewrite Advisory Committee

In June 2024, City Council appointed a committee of stakeholders comprised of Plano residents who are experts and professionals in allied fields, who know Plano and the North Texas real estate market, and who are equipped to provide technical feedback to the project team on the possible effects of the draft development regulations. This [Rewrite Advisory Committee](#) (RAC) will provide feedback to the consultant and staff on the initial ordinance drafts and will serve as an advisory group to the Planning & Zoning Commission (Commission).

Project Structure

The project timeline is organized into three phases: a diagnostic phase, a module development phase (consisting of four modules), and an adoption phase.



Diagnostic Phase

The diagnostic phase began with stakeholder interviews and the consultant's review of the existing development regulations. The consultant, Freese and Nichols, Inc., interviewed more than 70 individual stakeholders, including the local development community (for-profit and nonprofit developers), design professionals, City employees, business owners, residents, and elected and appointed officials.

This review and interview process resulted in a Diagnostic Report, which includes an overview of the project, including community outreach and project objectives; a list of comprehensive plan actions the project will help to implement; and high-priority recommendations for the new code covering general, zoning, and subdivision regulation topics. The RAC held three meetings where they reviewed, refined, and accepted the Diagnostic Report:

- [October 2, 2024](#): The consultant introduced the Diagnostic Report and the report's recommendations. RAC conversations were focused on structure and general content.
- [October 23, 2024](#): The RAC held discussion to provide input on the issues and recommendations contained within the Diagnostic Report. After which, the report's content was modified based on these discussions.
- [November 7, 2024](#): An updated draft was provided for final review by the RAC and consensus on the content. The RAC voted unanimously to accept the Diagnostic Report with one addition.

On December 2, 2024, the Planning & Zoning Commission received a presentation on and voted unanimously to accept the Diagnostic Report, which is included as Attachment A ([staff report](#) | [video](#)).

Code Module Development Phase

The crafting of zoning and subdivision code language will be conducted in phases, dividing the regulations into manageable pieces. This work begins in January 2025 and will consist of four modules, each of which follows the same structure. The process of drafting each module will start with the consultant and staff. Once prepared, the draft will be provided to the RAC for review, discussion, and consensus. Opportunities for public comment will also be available throughout the phase as described in the following Community Outreach and Involvement section, and in section 2.1 of the Diagnostic Report. Each module will be presented to the Commission and City Council following acceptance by the Rewrite Advisory Committee.

The four modules are as follows:

1. Zoning Districts and Uses,
2. Zoning and Subdivision Definitions, Provisions, and Procedures,
3. Subdivision Regulations, and
4. Zoning Development Standards, including parking, landscaping, and use-specific regulations.

Community Outreach and Involvement

The Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances are technical documents that implement the vision set forth in the comprehensive plan. The new development regulations are expected to reflect established land use

policy already endorsed by the community. The project includes public outreach and involvement as follows:

- A [project webpage](#) with key milestones, documents including draft ordinance text, and staff contact information;
- Project updates posted on the City website, email newsletters, and social media;
- Discussion items on regular Commission meeting agendas;
- Staff updates to City Council as milestones are reached;
- Additional outreach based on module topics, such as software that allows public comments on proposed text, “office hours,” or feedback surveys; and
- Public hearings before the Commission and City Council, including:
 - A mailed citywide notice prior to the first public hearing;
 - Associated noticing in the Dallas Morning News; and
 - Feedback opportunity via the [Zoning Case Response Map](#).

Next Steps

Work on the first module, Zoning Districts and Uses, is underway. A refined draft will be provided to the Rewrite Advisory Committee in Spring 2025 for further review and refinement before being presented to the Commission and City Council. This process will be repeated for each module before the full draft is presented before the Commission and City Council for public hearings and adoption, expected in 2026.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that City Council accept the Diagnostic Report.

Attachments:

Attachment A – Diagnostic Report

Zoning Ordinance & Subdivision Ordinance Rewrite



Diagnostic Report

November 20, 2024

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Overview

Plano is working to update the City's Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances (referenced as the "code" throughout this report) to continue providing a quality built environment as the city matures and redevelopment projects occur more often. With the adoption of the current Comprehensive Plan in 2021, the City recognizes a need to manage development in new ways. The City hired Freese and Nichols, Inc. (FNI) to conduct stakeholder engagement, analyze the current codes and plans, and draft a new code. The first step is this Diagnostic Report, which assesses current ordinances and updated subdivision and zoning regulations that reflect the policy goals articulated by the Comprehensive Plan, the recommendations of the Rewrite Advisory Committee (RAC), and the input of other stakeholders.



Phase 1 of this project centers around this Diagnostic Report, where the current code language is evaluated and analyzed in the context of other City policies and plans, professional best practices, current statutory and case law, and stakeholder input. In addition to documenting general project goals, this report identifies issues with existing ordinance language and proposes recommendations to address those issues. **This report will be used to guide the remaining project phases.**

Phase 2 will consist of the drafting of a new code, reflecting the strategies identified in the Diagnostic Report. Once the new code is drafted, text revisions will occur via City staff and RAC feedback, with check-ins with the Planning & Zoning Commission and City Council.

With consensus built around the newly proposed code, Phase 3 will entail refining the final document and gaining traction for the code's adoption.

1.2 Project Purpose

The purpose of updating the code is two-fold: to modernize and streamline the regulations and processes governed by the code, where beneficial and appropriate, and to position Plano for the future. Throughout its history, Plano has grown from a small farming community to a bedroom community to a global leader excelling in exceptional education, abounding with world-class businesses and vibrant neighborhoods. When the current code was initially created, Plano enjoyed abundant undeveloped land and consistently experienced rapid residential and commercial development growth, often in the form of large master-planned communities, office parks, and large regional commercial shopping centers.

As Plano matures and available land for development becomes more scarce, its potential for future growth and success will increasingly shift to infill development and redevelopment opportunities. Infill and redevelopment, by definition, rely on older established infrastructure and must occur in context with a wide spectrum of existing conditions, many of which are difficult to anticipate within a regulatory framework primarily focused on the development of raw land. The new code will inherently require new strategies to meet this reality while still being guided by the vision and values adopted by the citizens of Plano.

1.3 Process and Methodology

The diagnostic process included five primary actions:

- Review Plano's existing planning and policy documents.
- Engage with and listen to stakeholders' experiences in Plano.
- Review and analyze Plano's current Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances and development processes.
- Identify opportunities to alter or add ordinance language to address problems identified through stakeholder input and the review process. Opportunities include researching practices from peer communities that meet Plano's needs and goals.
- Provide recommendations to align regulations with City goals, growth strategies, and redevelopment plans.

2 OVERARCHING THEMES

2.1 Community Outreach with Stakeholder-Driven Process

The Zoning and Subdivision update and rewrite process will include public input and outreach opportunities. This Diagnostic Report will serve as a resource for residents and applicants to see and understand major issues that will be addressed in the drafting of the new code. Public meetings, and eventually public hearings, for the future code amendments, will be held by the Planning & Zoning Commission and City Council. These hearings will be in addition to the input received during the creation of this report and review by the Rewrite Advisory Committee. The City staff and the consultant team (FNI) will be available to discuss development issues as requested by the public or the development community at various milestones during the update process before City Council consideration.

Project Outreach
P&Z and Council Meetings
P&Z Meetings, including Public Hearing Council Meetings, including Public Hearing Joint Council and P&Z Workshop
Stakeholder Outreach
Rewrite Advisory Committee Meetings (open to the public) In-Person Stakeholder Sessions Online Stakeholder Sessions
General Outreach
Project Webpage Social Media and Newsletters Mailed Citywide Notice Zoning Case Feedback

- Outreach for the public includes a number of public meetings and engagement opportunities. FNI and City staff are working with the Rewrite Advisory Committee to ensure that the new code responds to current needs and includes workable standards. Committee meetings are open to the public, with the meeting agenda and packet posted on the City [website](#).
- The Planning & Zoning Commission (Commission) will receive regular updates at key milestones, such as the completion of a rewrite module. Commission meetings are open to the public and include opportunities for public comments. Agendas and packets are posted on the City [website](#).

- City Council will receive updates throughout the project. Council meetings are open to the public and include opportunities for public comments. Agendas and packets are posted on the City [website](#).
- A joint workshop with the Commission and Council is planned during the adoption phase. This workshop will be open to the public and include opportunities for public comments. Agendas and packets will be posted on each groups webpage, linked above.
- FNI hosted 20 in-person stakeholder interviews at the Municipal Center to prepare the code analysis and understand the current regulatory and development context. These interviews enabled direct conversations with the local development community, design professionals, City employees, nonprofit organizations, and elected and appointed officials. Additionally, FNI facilitated 16 virtual stakeholder interviews. In total, more than 70 stakeholders participated in these interviews, enhancing the project team's ability to identify challenges facing the city and link them to potential code updates that address those challenges.
- Existing public engagement channels, such as social media and the City's website, will be leveraged to keep the public informed of the project process and provide a channel to provide feedback and ask questions.
- The dedicated [project webpage](#) contains a project summary, timeline, links to the relevant Commission, Council, and Rewrite Advisory Committee meetings, and Planning Department contact information. The webpage will be updated with new information as needed throughout the project.
- Prior to the public hearings on the new code, a citywide mailout will also be sent to all addresses in Plano and all property owners with addresses outside Plano. The mailout will be tailored to this project and include information on the date and location of the public hearings, the project webpage, and staff contacts.
- Once the Commission calls a public hearing for consideration of adoption of the new code, public feedback can be provided via the [Zoning Case Response Map](#).

2.2 Project Objectives

The following are project objectives identified by the City of Plano through the Request for Qualifications phase that the code update should achieve or work toward:

- Align the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Ordinance with policies of the Comprehensive Plan (see page 7) and other applicable plans. The resulting regulations will:
 - Incentivize economic development through redevelopment and revitalization of underperforming properties, with a focus on retail and multifamily;
 - Help meet the housing needs of residents, especially those who are aging, caring for dependents, or who have additional support needs;
 - Simplify the development and redevelopment process;
 - Streamline analysis of projects that include legal exceptions to basic ordinance requirements, such as nonconformity or variances;
 - Make the ordinances easier to use for property owners, developers, and City staff;
 - Utilize industry standards, applicable locally, where possible;
 - Implement the land use priorities of the City as efficiently as possible; and
 - Align the regulations with other comprehensive plan policies as identified by staff and the consultant.
- Create and implement a public outreach strategy that permits public input, transparency, and consensus around development regulations.

3 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

3.1 Comprehensive Plan Matrix

In 2021, the City of Plano adopted its Comprehensive Plan to guide its future growth and redevelopment and provide policy direction on land use, transportation, housing, municipal services, and other important aspects of the community. The Comprehensive Plan includes a set of guiding principles, pillars, policies, and action statements related to land use regulations and the City's preferred development patterns.

A critical step in implementing the Plan involves updating development regulations to align with its policy recommendations. The matrix on the next page outlines the actions, policies, and related actions from the Comprehensive Plan relevant to updating the City's Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances; the policies addressed by the code update are highlighted in white. The recommendations found throughout the diagnostic report will reference the relevant policies and action statements from the matrix to show how they align with the Comprehensive Plan.

 PILLAR #1 BUILT ENVIRONMENT	 PILLAR #2 SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT	 PILLAR #3 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	 PILLAR #4 ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT	 PILLAR #5 REGIONALISM
3 COMPONENTS LAND USE & COMMUNITY DESIGN TRANSPORTATION HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS	3 COMPONENTS SAFETY & SERVICES QUALITY OF LIFE SENSE OF COMMUNITY	2 COMPONENTS BUILDING & SITE EFFICIENCY ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	2 COMPONENTS ECONOMY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT	1 COMPONENT REGIONALISM
14 POLICIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land Use • Community Design • Redevelopment of Regional Transportation Corridors • Undeveloped Land • Transit-Oriented Development • Redevelopment & Growth Management • Roadway System • Bicycle & Other Micromobility • Public Transit • Transportation Demand Management • Pedestrian Environment • Neighborhood Conservation • Revitalization of Retail Shopping Centers • Special Housing Needs 	14 POLICIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Management • Public Safety • Property Standards • Facilities & Infrastructure • Social Services • Parks & Recreation • Active Living & Citizen Well-Being • Libraries • Educational Opportunities • Placemaking & Public Spaces • Arts & Culture • Heritage Preservation • Community Building • Community Involvement & Participation 	6 POLICIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building & Development Design • Renewable Energy • Stormwater Management • Water Conservation • Waste Minimization • Open Space & Natural Resource Conservation 	2 POLICIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse & Resilient Economy • Jobs & Workforce Development 	6 POLICIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population Growth • Regional Transportation • Air Quality • Regional Water Conservation • Consistency with Neighboring Cities • Regional Education

Comprehensive Plan Matrix

Policy	Related Actions
<p><u>Land Use (LU)</u></p> <p>Plano will support a system of organized land use to provide housing and employment choices aligned with the market, where new and redevelopment areas respect the viability and quality of life for existing neighborhoods, businesses, and institutions.</p>	<p>LU1. Review and evaluate the Zoning Ordinance and make appropriate amendments based on guidance from the Comprehensive Plan.</p> <p>LU2. Review development regulations and implement standards that configure development to provide complementary uses and foster good connections, using a combination of streets, trails, and sidewalks for vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle circulation, that enhance the quality of neighborhoods.</p> <p>LU4. Create regulations that incentivize the redevelopment and revitalization of underperforming retail and multifamily development.</p> <p>LU5. Review and ensure residential adjacency standards provide appropriate transitions in building height and bulk that are sensitive to the physical character of adjoining neighborhoods.</p> <p>LU7. Develop review criteria that provides guidance on the community’s preferences regarding mixed-use developments, such as desired mix of uses, densities, parking, phasing plans, minimum open space, building placement, quality of building materials, residential adjacency, and other urban design elements.</p>
<p><u>Community Design (CD)</u></p> <p>Plano will incorporate community design components within public spaces and streetscapes and will promote compatible design components within new developments, to enrich areas throughout the city, create distinctive visual character, and encourage a pedestrian-friendly environment where appropriate. Plano will also promote Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and Universal Design within all of the above.</p>	<p>CD1. As part of the Community Design Plan, develop review criteria to provide guidance on the desired functional and aesthetic qualities of various development contexts in Plano, such as streetscape design, lighting, signage, building and paving materials, and landscaping. Functional guidance shall include Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and Universal Design.</p> <p>CD5. Evaluate parking regulations and revise to meet parking demand and ensure good community form.</p>

<p><u>Redevelopment of Regional Transportation Corridors (RTC)</u></p> <p>Plano will encourage reinvestment and redevelopment of identified regional transportation corridors to create cohesive developments that incorporate well-designed commercial, retail, and housing opportunities where those uses are appropriate according to the Future Land Use Map and other related Comprehensive Plan standards.</p>	<p>RTC2. Adopt regulatory strategies that permit and encourage a viable mix of residential, employment, and other diverse land uses in locations identified as Urban Activity Centers.</p>
<p><u>Undeveloped Land (UL)</u></p> <p>Plano will reserve its remaining undeveloped land for high quality development with distinctive character, prioritizing businesses offering skilled employment. New housing in these areas will only be considered appropriate where it is consistent with the Future Land Use Map and other related Comprehensive Plan standards.</p>	<p>UL1. Develop review criteria to provide guidance on rezoning undeveloped properties including such considerations as appropriate location, environmental conditions, and impact on public service facilities, infrastructure, and adjacent land uses.</p> <p>UL3. Ensure that new housing growth on undeveloped land provides functional and appropriate environments for residential uses and activities such as proximity to existing compatible residential development, configuration to support housing, and access to neighborhood parks, and ensure any development standards include adequate green space. When adjacent to existing residential neighborhoods a compatible transition in building height and bulk should be provided.</p>
<p><u>Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)</u></p> <p>Plano will proactively encourage development within walking distance of existing and planned transit stations to create an integrated mix of uses including residential, employment, retail, and civic spaces.</p>	<p>TOD4. Implement parking best practices in transit-served areas and identified Urban Activity Centers where increased land productivity provides opportunity for additional open space.</p>

Redevelopment & Growth Management (RGM)

Plano will protect and preserve the well-established built environment of Plano and prevent overcrowding by requiring new growth and redevelopment to respect the unique development patterns, suburban character, housing needs, infrastructure capacity considerations, and fiscal constraints of our community.

RGM3. Develop zoning and design guidelines incentivizing single-family housing options compatible with current market conditions and community needs.

RGM4. Revise regulations and administrative procedures to ensure new residential and mixed-use development provides sufficient public open space, green space, and pedestrian connectivity.

RGM5. Ensure that any rezoning requests for multiuse development include:

- a. No more than 50% square footage for residential uses. Requests should also conform with other identifying elements (density, building height, etc.) in the applicable Dashboard descriptions. Requests that do not conform with these requirements must be justified by findings; and
- b. Phasing requirements that prevent the disproportionate completion of residential uses prior to nonresidential uses within the development. Nonresidential square footage must constitute a minimum of 33% of all square footage approved for occupancy during development (e.g., every 2 square feet of residential development requires at least 1 square foot of nonresidential development); and
- c. Key design features provided prior to, or concurrent with, the construction of any residential uses. These include elements of the development supporting the long-term value to the overall community and specifically new residents, such as open/green space, amenities, street enhancements, and trails.

RGM8. Limit new residential development to areas that are appropriate based on individual site considerations and consistency with the Future Land Use Map and Dashboards. Multifamily developments should also meet a housing diversification or economic development need of the city, including transit-oriented development, special housing needs (as defined by the city's Consolidated Plan), or be constructed as part of a high-rise 10 stories or greater.

RGM9. Limit small-scale multifamily to developments that are at least 10 acres in size, have a unit mix of no more than 25% multifamily units, and are controlled by a governance association.

<p><u>Bicycle & Other Micromobility (BOM)</u></p> <p>Plano will enhance and maintain a micromobility system to provide recreation and feasible options for travel to destinations, which is safe and accessible to all users.</p>	<p>BOM3. Create development guidelines that improve the safety and convenience of bicycling and micromobility transportation to assist property owners who wish to provide related amenities.</p>
<p><u>Pedestrian Environment (PE)</u></p> <p>Plano will pursue a safe, universally accessible, and well-connected pedestrian system that enhances walkability, improves navigation of major thoroughfares, and provides connections to nearby destinations desired by the community.</p>	<p>PE2. Update development standards to prioritize streetscape design that enhances Plano's pedestrian environment through greenery, wider sidewalks, lighting, street furniture, shade structures, wayfinding guides, paseos, and other amenities where appropriate.</p>
<p><u>Neighborhood Conservation (NC)</u></p> <p>Plano will conserve and enhance established residential neighborhoods through city programs, initiatives, and regulations that support neighborhood identity; ensure safe, walkable communities; and preserve the suburban form that contributes to the overall character and livability of the neighborhoods.</p>	<p>NC3. Conserve Plano's established residential neighborhoods to maintain an inventory of entry level housing.</p> <p>NC6. Review residential zoning to ensure housing standards allow residents to age in place, care for dependents, and meet special needs, while maintaining neighborhood integrity.</p>
<p><u>Revitalization of Retail Shopping Centers (RRSC)</u></p> <p>Plano will encourage reinvestment, revitalization, and redevelopment of underperforming neighborhood retail corners to accommodate a viable combination of local commercial, retail, and entertainment uses. Where appropriate transitions can be maintained, redevelopment may present opportunities to introduce residential uses and improve access.</p>	<p>RRSC3. Modify regulations to promote retail center redevelopment inclusive of creative design solutions, active open space, adequate green space, sustainable retail, and walkable streetscapes to create desirable destinations.</p> <p>RRSC4. Establish design guidelines that provide safe connections for residents to conveniently access commercial businesses, open space, and other amenities in retail centers. Implementation should be limited to locations where connections are desired by the adjoining neighborhood.</p>

<p><u>Special Housing Needs (SHN)</u></p> <p>Plano will support the special housing needs of residents including seniors, people with disabilities, and low- to moderate-income households through inclusive regulations and programs and actions furthering the goals stated in the Consolidated Plan. Proposed locations for special housing needs should be afforded the same health and safety considerations as other housing.</p>	<p>SHN5. Review zoning regulations to provide reasonable opportunities for safe and healthy housing in support of special needs populations.</p> <p>SHN6. Identify methods to incorporate Universal Design practices and encourage their implementation in new housing projects and home renovations.</p>
<p><u>Placemaking & Public Spaces (PPS)</u></p> <p>Plano will create memorable and unique public spaces to enhance community character and build neighborhood identity.</p>	<p>PPS7. Review development regulations as needed to ensure site design requirements support and encourage public spaces.</p>
<p><u>Heritage Preservation (HP)</u></p> <p>Plano will embrace its unique historical character and authenticity by identifying and preserving historic and cultural resources that promote the understanding of the city's history and enrich the city's sense of place.</p>	<p>HP3. Review, and amend as necessary, the zoning ordinance for compatibility with the character of the existing historic districts.</p> <p>HP4. Increase compliance actions to meet the adopted heritage district guidelines.</p> <p>HP5. Utilize adopted design standards to guide appropriate infill development within heritage districts.</p>
<p><u>Building & Development Design (BDD)</u></p> <p>Plano will implement energy efficient building codes and make sustainable investments to new and existing facilities to reduce energy consumption, improve air quality, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.</p>	<p>BDD6. Create a building incentive program for new development and redevelopment projects to incorporate sustainable design elements such as: solar energy; natural lighting; reflective roofs or green roofs; low Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) materials and ventilation; heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) energy performance and efficiency systems; on-site renewable energy; waste minimization; and water reclamation and conservation.</p> <p>BDD7. Create regulations for sustainable building and site planning practices such as tree preservation, reduced impervious coverage, and green infrastructure.</p>

<p><u>Renewable Energy (REN)</u></p> <p>Plano will increase the use of solar power and other renewable sources for city infrastructure, facilities, and operations and encourage residents and businesses to make renewable energy improvements that diversify the energy supply, reduce dependence on fossil fuels, improve air quality, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.</p>	<p>REN9. Review the Zoning Ordinance and amend as necessary to facilitate the development of alternative fuel distribution facilities.</p>
<p><u>Stormwater Management (SM)</u></p> <p>Plano will improve water quality by requiring design and use of erosion control plans and stormwater pollution prevention plans to ensure compliance with federal, state, and local regulations, minimize pollution and contamination of water ways, and enhance and protect biodiversity and ecosystems.</p>	<p>SM3. Expand city regulations for post construction stormwater management in new developments and redevelopments by a combination of structural and nonstructural Best Management Practices (BMPs) appropriate for the community.</p>
<p><u>Open Space & Natural Resource Conservation (OSRC)</u></p> <p>Plano will conserve and restore open spaces and natural resources to increase resilience, adaptability, and biological integrity and maintain the city's urban forest as a key component of the natural infrastructure network to improve air quality and the health of Plano's citizens.</p>	<p>OSRC7. Evaluate the commercial landscaping requirements within the Zoning Ordinance as part of the Urban Forest Master Plan updates to ensure zoning regulations meet the intent of the urban forestry policies.</p>
<p><u>Regional Water Conservation (RWC)</u></p> <p>Plano will assume regional leadership regarding water issues and work with North Texas Municipal Water District (NTMWD) member organizations to encourage more efficient water use and conservation.</p>	<p>RWC5. Require drought-resistant and native plants for required landscaping on all new development and replacement of current landscaping throughout the city.</p>

4 GENERAL HIGH PRIORITY TOPICS

4.1 Tailor regulations to address infill development and redevelopment scenarios

4.1.1 Background

"Infill" refers to the use of land in developed areas, typically with existing infrastructure, platted lots, and surrounding land uses. Infill standards are important for any city with limited greenfield development opportunities, as is the case for Plano. As with existing standards, standards governing infill and redevelopment should align with the objectives of the Comprehensive Plan by protecting and preserving the well-established built environment of Plano and preventing overcrowding by requiring new growth and redevelopment to respect the unique development patterns, suburban character, housing needs, infrastructure capacity considerations, and fiscal constraints of Plano.

4.1.2 What We Heard

- Plano's regulations are primarily focused on greenfield development.
- It is burdensome for small lot landowners to redevelop their land because redevelopment often requires variances or another procedure to facilitate relief from the current regulations.
- Redevelopment needs to align with the Comprehensive Plan and recognize property owners' rights to develop their land as permitted by the code.
- Large underutilized or vacant properties, like some industrial sites and office parks, are prime for redevelopment and should appropriately account for other in-demand uses such as mixed-use, retail, and housing developments that conform to the Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Map (See Comprehensive Plan links at the end of each recommendation).

4.1.3 Recommendation(s) and Analysis

4.1.3.1 Establish infill and redevelopment standards

- The Comprehensive Plan highlights the importance of infill and redevelopment to the future of Plano. Generally, infill standards should include specific requirements to ensure development is compatible with buildings in an existing neighborhood or area in conformance with the Comprehensive Plan. Infill standards should generally create an appropriate transition within an existing neighborhood or area between established development and new development or redevelopment, using compatible standards for height, building size, setback averaging, and use allowances. Additionally, buffering provisions may be appropriate to support the compatibility of new development types in infill areas. Finally, the new code should establish procedures to evaluate infill projects and incorporate standards to better accommodate infill development and redevelopment.

4.1.4 Comprehensive Plan Link

Land Use (LU): LU4, LU5, LU7

Community Design (CD): CD5

Redevelopment of Regional Transportation Corridors (RTC): RTC2

Undeveloped Land (UL): UL1

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD): TOD4

Redevelopment & Growth Management (RGM): RGM3, RGM4, RGM5, RGM8, RGM9

Neighborhood Conservation (NC): NC6

Revitalization of Retail Shopping Centers (RRSC): RRSC3, RRSC4

Heritage Preservation (HP): HP5

Building & Development Design (BDD): BDD6, BDD7

Renewable Energy (REN): REN9

Stormwater Management (SM): SM3

Open Space & Natural Resource Conservation (OSRC): OSRC7

Regional Water Conservation (RWC): RWC5

4.2 Consolidate Zoning and Subdivision into a Unified Development Code (UDC)

4.2.1 Background

Plano's existing development ordinances – the [Zoning Ordinance](#) and the [Subdivision Ordinance](#) – are located on the City's website on the Planning Department's webpage.

4.2.2 What We Heard

- Continuity between the two sets of regulations is necessary for the future administration and defensibility of the code and a positive user experience.
- A UDC seems to be a more user-friendly approach.
- Be mindful of distinctions in Texas enabling legislation (Chapter 211 for zoning regulations and Chapter 212 for subdivision regulations) and state law that can impact a unified approach.

4.2.3 Recommendation(s) and Analysis

4.2.3.1 Create a Unified Development Code (UDC)

- A UDC is a development ordinance that houses all development-related regulations in one document. In Texas, UDCs primarily include subdivision and zoning but may also include some or all elements of the sign ordinance and construction permitting. UDCs are often a favorable approach because of the ability to streamline regulations into one combined document accessible to the public, design professionals, developers, and City staff. Additional benefits of this code format include:
 - Purpose and applicability statements for each of the UDC's divisions to communicate to the user the division's intent and regulatory application;
 - Consistent numerical format throughout the code;
 - A single section identifying review and approval authorities, public hearing procedures, and notification requirements for all types of development applications, making identification of each step in the development process easier to identify; and
 - Enables sharing of definitions more easily, which ensures consistency in terminology across regulations.

4.2.3.2 Minimize nonconformities caused by the code update

- Any comprehensive code update has the potential to create nonconforming uses, structures, and site conditions (e.g., parking). The update should recognize and account for current state law requirements and situations where inequitable impacts may occur with the introduction of new standards or imposing new conditions or requirements. Where such impacts are anticipated, consider flexible standards related to uses, buildings, and site features with the goal of:
 - Not unreasonably restricting the use of land,
 - Minimizing impacts to businesses and property owners, and
 - Ensuring that development and redevelopment in Plano remain attainable and high-quality.
- To help provide for reasonable regulations regarding infill and redevelopment, the updated code should include specific triggers to indicate when compliance is required for each development standard. For example, compliance with current landscaping standards may be required if a building's square footage is increased by a certain percentage or size. The code should also allow pathways toward partial compliance if full compliance is not feasible due to site constraints.

4.2.4 Comprehensive Plan Link

Land Use (LU): LU1

4.3 Optimize the development process and paths to success

4.3.1 Background

When public hearings are not required, it is often desirable to have development approval processes assigned to City staff to improve efficiency. Decisions from staff are most appropriate when very clear regulations minimize the need for interpretation or discretion. Where development has unique or unresolved impacts, consideration may benefit from a public review by a Board or Commission.

The Subdivision Ordinance could benefit from distinguishing the approval process from standards and content requirements. Reorganization should be considered to more closely align relevant information on a topic or consolidate information based on the relevant application type.

- Example: [Section 5.4.b](#) contains a list of "Design Standards." The list intermingles general standards with design or construction standards contains a list of "Design Standards," but the list contains several items that identify what general improvements must be constructed, intermingled with standards that describe how an improvement must be designed and/or constructed.

In other cases, requirements could be placed in locations that are more highly relevant to that section.

- Example: [Section 3.2.c.2\(d\)](#) includes the checklist of items needed for a completed plat submittal. (d)v. requires that the centerline of creeks be shown with accurate dimensions. The last sentence of v. states, "No unplatted remainder will be allowed between property boundaries and centerlines of creeks." This statement would be more appropriate in a section governing subdivision design.

4.3.2 What We Heard

- Plat approvals by City staff have been well-received and work well
- Transparency should remain a priority
- There was mixed feedback about the site planning process over the use of preliminary site plans and whether those plans should require Planning & Zoning Commission approval.

4.3.3 Recommendation(s) and Analysis

4.3.3.1 Provide City staff-level code relief options like alternative compliance and minor modifications

- The code should provide relief options such as alternative compliance or minor modifications with appropriate guardrails and guidance to provide clear expectations and outcomes for both staff and code users. Consider alternative development standards like dimensional requirements, lighting, landscaping, screening (e.g., dumpsters), buffering, access, and parking as potential options to improve the code and incentivize redevelopment, particularly for infill, smaller, and mixed-use sites. If flexibility is not able to be provided within the limits of alternative compliance, the code should direct applicants to other relief processes, such as variances or appeals, as appropriate.

4.3.3.2 Use a standard code layout for all procedural content and consolidate where possible

- As the code is updated, development procedures should be coordinated with related sections and maintain a uniform layout for each code section and approval process to keep the development code easy to follow. Each section relating to a specific application should have subsections that address the questions seen in Table 4.3.3.2-1: Sample Procedural Subsections.

Table 4.3.3.2-1: Sample Procedural Subsections

Component	Question the Component Addresses
Applicability	Who needs to go through this process?
Initiation	How and to whom is an application submitted?
Completeness	What is required when an application is ready to process?
Notice and Hearing(s)	What noticing requirements apply to a development application? Are there any public hearings required, and how many?
Decision	Who reviews, recommends, and makes decisions, and how?
Standards	What specific standards or criteria apply to the application?
Subsequent Applications	If an applicant withdraws or is denied, can they file a new application, and when?
Appeals	Who and how can an applicant appeal a decision?

Component	Question the Component Addresses
Scope of Approval	What does this approval allow the applicant to do? What is the next step in the process? When does the approval expire, if at all?
Recordation	Who will record the final document, and where can it be found?

- Review and consider any best practices from other Texas cities regarding the implementation of State Law on plat and permit application completeness.
- If subdivision design considerations must be addressed in the context of a process (e.g., the required elements of a plat or the relationship of various improvements to one another, such as parking areas and stormwater facilities), a reference and hyperlink should be provided to a "Subdivision Design" section or technical manual.

4.3.3.3 Create a consolidated subdivision design section

- Consolidate standards or regulations that establish a design standard or quantifiable standard into a "Subdivision Design" section that addresses how subdivisions are to be laid out and how infrastructure is to be constructed.
- This section may contain basic design standards and qualifications required to design subdivisions, plans, and facilities, lot layout standards, block lengths, access standards, and other information that can be read and understood by someone who is not a technical professional, surveyor, or engineer.
- Beyond non-technical standards, the Subdivision Design section should apply by reference all applicable design manuals or technical manuals that have been adopted by the City. The Subdivision Regulations should generally not duplicate any design standards that are found in these documents.

4.3.3.4 Review and improve the graphic depictions of development approval processes, showing clear lines of authority, notice requirements, and decision-making authority

- While the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Ordinance address who acts on each development application, flow charts or other forms of graphic depiction can more clearly indicate to the user who reviews and acts on a specific development application. The City of Plano maintains these graphics as part of the Development Handbook for ease of upkeep, customer convenience, and clear separation between enforceable code and reference documents. The Development Handbook should be reviewed, updated, and improved as needed to maintain alignment with the updated code.

Figure 4.3.3.4-1: Sample Authority Table from City of Brownsville UDC

Table 2.1-1. Summary of Approval Authorities							
Application Types	City Commission	Planning & Zoning Commission	Board of Adjustment	Historic Preservation Commission	City Staff	Required Noticing	UDC Section
R = Review or Recommending Body DM = Decision-Making Body (final decision) <> = Public Hearing Required Hearing Notice(s): N = Newspaper; M = Mail [#] = Refer to notes section							
SUBDIVISION RELATED							
Preliminary Plat	-	DM	-	-	R	-	3.2.1
Final Plat	-	-	-	-	DM[1]	-	3.2.2
Minor Plat	-	-	-	-	DM	-	3.2.3
Amending Plat	-	-	-	-	DM	-	3.2.5
Replat (Nonresidential)	-	DM	-	-	R	-	3.2.4
Replat (Residential)	-	<DM>[2]	-	-	R	M, N	3.2.4
Amending Plat	-	-	-	-	DM	-	3.2.5
Conveyance Plat	-	DM	-	-	R	-	3.2.6
Determination Certificate					DM		3.1.5B.4
Plat Extension (All plats except plat vacation)	-	-	-	-	DM	-	Refer to the UDC section for the plat type
Plat Vacation	-	<DM>	-	-	R	-	3.2.7
Construction Plans	-	-	-	-	DM	-	3.3.3
Development Agreements	DM	-	-	-	R	-	3.3.8
Subdivision Waiver	-	DM	-	-	R	-	3.5.1
Waiver of Right to 30-Day Action	-	-	-	-	DM	-	2.3.4H

4.3.3.5 Coordinate with legal staff during code update to ensure defensibility and legal compliance

- The project team will work closely with the City's legal team to ensure that all proposed process changes are aligned with legal requirements and do not create future administrative, interpretation, or defensibility concerns for the City or applicants.

4.3.4 Comprehensive Plan Link

Land Use (LU): LU1

4.4 Utilize additional graphics to improve readability

4.4.1 Background

Not all topics addressed by a code can be enhanced by the inclusion of graphics, but regulations addressing certain characteristics of built form and dimensions can often be clarified through tables, figures, or reference images. Processes and procedures can also be clarified through flow charts representing the sequence of actions required.

4.4.2 What We Heard

- Graphics can improve understanding of the code's regulations
- Ensure that graphics and visual aids align and avoid interpretation issues, particularly during the site planning and construction process

4.4.3 Recommendation(s) and Analysis

4.4.3.1 Use reference images, graphics, and tables to depict dimensions and design requirements, when appropriate

- Contemporary and user-friendly development codes typically include graphics that are integrated with related code provisions to help explain the vocabulary. Graphics should illustrate dimensional relationships and site planning concepts and can help to explain or amplify material that is sometimes difficult for casual or non-technical users to understand. There are currently few graphics scattered through the existing code's contents, making the documents text-heavy. The revised regulations will include improved graphics integrated into the text that effectively communicate dense regulations to the user.

- Figure 4.4.3.1-1 shows examples from other codes of figures that could be added to the text.

Figure 4.4.3.1-1: Sample Lot Figures



4.4.4 Comprehensive Plan Link

Land Use (LU): LU1

5 HIGH PRIORITY ZONING ORDINANCE TOPICS

5.1 Reassess the current zoning districts

5.1.1 Background

The existing Zoning Ordinance establishes 31 zoning districts (16 residential districts and 15 nonresidential districts), 9 overlay districts, and numerous Planned Development districts. The current zoning districts have produced positive development outcomes; however, there can be redundancies and difficulty with development in some districts for various reasons. Some of those reasons include difficulty understanding district regulations, outdated dimensional requirements, and layered and granular district specifications. Zoning districts are a focal point of the Zoning Ordinance, and revisions should be prioritized to encourage preferable development patterns.

5.1.2 What We Heard

- There are numerous zoning districts, some of which do not often appear on the zoning map relative to most districts.
- Some districts are overly complicated and too specific, which poses development challenges.
- The newer districts (mixed-use) tend to work well and produce the desired development outcomes.
- Zoning districts may not adequately address infill and redevelopment.

5.1.3 Recommendation(s) and Analysis

5.1.3.1 Evaluate the current zoning districts for consolidation or elimination and add new districts where needed

- While the current Zoning Ordinance provides many districts, a few are seldom used or functionally similar and could be consolidated. For example, most of the city's residential zoning is for low-density development with nearly identical standards except for minimum lot size, so it may be unnecessary to have an abundance of these districts if each provides similar outcomes. Consolidated zoning districts should provide for development variety where appropriate and not result in monotony.
- The Comprehensive Plan includes a Future Land Use Map with ten Future Land Use Categories (FLUC). Each FLUC has a desirable mix of uses, character-defining elements, and priorities. The current zoning districts may not contain the tools

needed to implement the vision of the FLUC, and modifications to existing districts or entirely new districts may be appropriate. It should be clear which zoning districts are appropriate to achieve the development goals of a FLUC. The current zoning districts should be compared against the FLUCs to determine where gaps exist.

- Consider Comprehensive Plan goals such as conservation of neighborhood character, maintenance of housing attainability for multiple generations of residents, and revitalization of multifamily and commercial areas. Opportunities for housing diversity that are aligned with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan and the market may be present in certain areas where the market has significantly shifted over the years or opportunities for development have changed. These include medium and high-density residential districts such as NBD near transition areas with commercial uses on sites that are at least 10 acres in size in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan.

5.1.3.2 Implement mixed-use districts in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan

- The current ordinance categorizes all zoning districts as either residential or nonresidential, with mixed-use districts categorized as nonresidential districts. This can lead to inequity when residential uses in a nonresidential district are not afforded the same protections from nuisance as a residential district. This distinction should be re-evaluated.
- Ensure that districts allowing for a mix of residential and nonresidential uses on a single lot or development follow the guidelines and actions specified under the "Redevelopment & Growth Management (RGM)" policies and Future Land Use Categories supporting mixed use (e.g., SA, UA) of the Comprehensive Plan.

5.1.4 Comprehensive Plan Link

Land Use (LU): LU1, LU2, LU4, LU5, LU7

Redevelopment of Regional Transportation Corridors (RTC): RTC2

Redevelopment & Growth Management (RGM): RGM3, RGM4, RGM5, RGM8, RGM9

Neighborhood Conservation (NC): NC3, NC6

Revitalization of Retail Shopping Centers (RRSC): RRSC3, RRSC4

Special Housing Needs (SHN): SHN5, SHN6

Placemaking & Public Spaces (PPS): PPS7

Heritage Preservation (HP): HP3, HP4

5.2 Recalibrate parking regulations to address demand and ensure good community form

5.2.1 Background

An important action from the Comprehensive Plan is to review and revise parking regulations to promote redevelopment and ensure good community form. Parking regulations typically establish a minimum number of parking spaces for new development, usually tied to land use. These regulations normally spell out the geometric design of parking spaces and bays, along with required surfacing.

5.2.2 What We Heard

- Plano faces challenges with both over- and under-parked commercial developments.
- Structured parking facilities should be attractive and complement the development's overall design.
- Over-parked developments should be prioritized for redevelopment or increased green space.
- Large "seas" of parking should be avoided.
- Parking needs have changed as an increase in valet services and curbside pickup parking are becoming more prevalent.

5.2.3 Recommendation(s) and Analysis

5.2.3.1 Determine the best method for parking calculation

- The City requires minimum parking ratios for most uses, meaning a developer must provide at least the minimum amount and may exceed the minimum at their discretion; however, when the development exceeds 110% of the minimum parking, then additional regulations apply, such as permeable paving to accommodate increased stormwater runoff and additional landscaping to lessen the "sea of parking" appearance. The City should consider whether this regulation is functioning as intended and whether it should be continued or modified.
- The Zoning Ordinance currently determines parking ratios using a combination of primary building square footage and other use-specific considerations, such as occupancy or seats. Because the development process tends to locate the Site Plan (where parking ratios are solidified) before the building plan review process (where occupancy is determined), using seats or occupancy as a standard can

result in inconsistent outcomes. Any new ratio method should rely on building square footage because it is reviewed during the Site Plan process along with parking.

- Parking based on a specific land use creates challenges in re-use of a site. Having more general standards may be a more flexible long-term solution, allowing the use of a building to change more easily over time. Parking by use category is an option that would utilize the ten use categories from the current Zoning Ordinance (or similar categories) and assign standard parking ratios to each type. Any need for use or district-specific parking standards could still be addressed in conditional standards for that use or development context (such as special parking standards in the BG district or shared/public parking scenarios). Table 2 below depicts sample ratios that could be considered for each category.

Table 2: Parking by Land Use Category (Sec. 16.700 of current code)

Use Category (current code)	Sample Parking Ratios for Uses in this Category
Accessory and Incidental Uses	No additional parking except in the case of accessory office or retail use exceeding 5,000 square feet
Commercial, Manufacturing, and Industrial Uses	1:750 square feet (up to 25,000 square feet of building size) 1:1,000 square feet (over 25,000 square feet of building size)
Educational, Institutional, Public, and Special Uses	1:500 square feet
Office and Professional Uses	1:400 square feet
Primary Residential Uses	1:unit (1 bed) 2:unit (more than 1 bed)
Retail Uses	1:300 square feet
Services Uses	1:150 square feet (restaurant) 1:500 square feet (other uses)
Transportation, Utility, and Communications Uses	No parking required
Wholesale Uses	1:1,000 square feet
Vehicle and Related Uses	1:500 square feet (showroom or office) + 1: service bay

- Some applicants may feel the required number of parking spaces exceeds the demand that will be generated by their use. The updated code should include options for reducing the parking requirement in certain cases (for example, if a parking study is provided supporting the request or proximity to transit, on-street parking, or public parking).

5.2.3.2 Match required parking to development context

- A one-size-fits-all parking approach tends to promote overparking. The code update should align with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan to calibrate parking ratios for mixed-use areas, transit-oriented developments, shopping centers, and commercial developments to achieve a more pedestrian-friendly environment, increase the building footprint, and preserve open space.
- Many streets have on-street parking spaces, but outside of select districts and some Planned Developments, this parking does not count toward the required minimum parking for a development. The new code should consider options to incorporate on-street parking spaces in the minimum parking requirements.
- Overlay districts may be a useful tool to modify parking requirements or incentivize certain design in a specific area, such as near a transit station.
- Regulations should be mindful of scenarios where a site was parked at the prior ratio and is redeveloped to a use that conforms with the Future Land Use Map. In such cases, the goals of the Comprehensive Plan may be hindered if the requirement for additional parking (or removal/reuse of existing parking) is financially burdensome. The new code should provide tools to increase value creation or efficiency in such scenarios, such as increasing the distance allowed for shared parking with adjacent developments.

5.2.4 Comprehensive Plan Link

Land Use (LU): LU7

Community Design (CD): CD5

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD): TOD4

Redevelopment & Growth Management (RGM): RGM4

Bicycle & Other Micromobility (BOM): BOM3

5.3 Effectively manage housing regulation within the code

5.3.1 Background

The Comprehensive Plan offers abundant guidance on Plano's housing priorities and policies that will speak directly to the code update. **Land Use (LU)**, **Undeveloped Land (UL)**, **Redevelopment & Growth Management (RGM)**, and **Neighborhood Conservation (NC)**, among others, each speaks to strategies the code can employ to provide housing at appropriate density and character. The policies emphasize organized land use to provide housing choices aligned with market demands while respecting existing neighborhoods. They encourage the redevelopment of underperforming retail and multifamily developments and ensure residential adjacency standards provide appropriate transitions in building height and bulk. The policies also support special housing needs for seniors, people with disabilities, and low- to moderate-income households through inclusive regulations and programs. Additionally, they promote the development of mixed-use areas near transit stations to create integrated residential, employment, retail, and civic spaces.

5.3.2 What We Heard

- If new residential developments are created, then these developments should be built in a manner that respects and is compatible with the surrounding existing residential character.
- Most of Plano's housing stock is single-family residences and large apartment complexes with relatively few housing types in between and little opportunity to add housing variety, relative to what exists today.
- Properties in many older residential neighborhoods have become so valuable that they are attractive for redevelopment.
- Increased density should be targeted to certain areas and align with the Comprehensive Plan.
- Backyard cottage regulations have been used sparingly since adoption.

5.3.3 Recommendation(s) and Analysis

5.3.3.1 Implement standards for medium and high-density housing and mixed-use that align with the Comprehensive Plan

- Where housing density increases are addressed in the code, they should meet the vision expressed in the Comprehensive Plan, including "appropriate transitions in building height and bulk that are sensitive to the physical character of adjoining neighborhoods" (LU5) and limiting multiuse developments to 50% residential and ensuring completion of nonresidential with residential uses (RGM5).
- "Multifamily developments should also meet a housing diversification or economic development need of the city, including transit-oriented development, special housing needs (as defined by the city's Consolidated Plan), or be constructed as part of a high-rise 10 stories or greater" (RGM8).
- "Limit small-scale multifamily to developments that are at least 10 acres in size, have a unit mix of no more than 25% multifamily units, and are controlled by a governance association" (RGM9).
- Any housing density changes addressed within the code update should be accomplished with consideration of "location, environmental conditions, and impact on public service facilities, infrastructure, and adjacent land uses" (UL1). Specifically, new housing growth should provide functional and appropriate environments for residents and ensure that such areas have convenient access to parks and green space (UL3, RGM4).
- Density along major regional transportation corridors is addressed in RTC2, which directs the adoption of regulatory strategies that place higher-density housing in an appropriate context of supporting uses such as commercial and retail within Urban Activity Centers.

5.3.3.2 Calibrate residential design guidelines to market conditions and community needs

- Where minimum standards for design are established for housing, they should be sensitive to imposing cost increases to housing that are out-of-line with the market or unfairly burden existing or prospective residents, while focusing on maintaining or advancing the policies and standards adopted by Plano.

5.3.3.3 Address housing demand and creative solutions evolving in the market.

- Housing demand is driving creative solutions that are not fully, explicitly anticipated in the current zoning ordinance. Additions or alterations are needed to align with the current housing market and anticipate future needs.

- Accommodate for office and business park conversions to residential “in appropriate locations” in accordance with the policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

5.3.3.4 Evaluate Backyard Cottages for regulatory hurdles

- Since Backyard Cottages (BYC) have been introduced as by-right in most residential districts, they have been sparingly used. Where the City can make improvements to the standards governing BYCs, such as changes in minimum or maximum sizes, building placement restrictions, or parking specifications to increase opportunities for BYCs, it should be incorporated into the code update.
- Evaluate for efficiencies and improvements to the Accessory Dwelling Unit/BYC regulations in relationship to the Estate Development (ED) zoning district.

5.3.4 Comprehensive Plan Link

Land Use (LU): LU1, LU2, LU4, LU5, LU7

Redevelopment of Regional Transportation Corridors (RTC): RTC2

Undeveloped Land (UL): UL3

Redevelopment & Growth Management (RGM): RGM3, RGM5, RGM8, RGM9

Neighborhood Conservation (NC): NC6

Special Housing Needs (SHN): SHN5, SHN6

Heritage Preservation (HP): HP3, HP4

5.4 Calibrate Planned Development zoning to promote good land use outcomes

5.4.1 Background

Planned Developments (PDs) are frequent throughout the city, and the complexity of requests have significantly increased over the years. The City has over 300 adopted PDs. This frequent use of PDs invites the question of whether its zoning districts perform as intended since a substantial number of rezoning cases use this tool. PD overuse may be indicative of several issues, as detailed below:

- Districts and standards that do not contain the tools to implement the vision of the Comprehensive Plan. Frequent PD requests can be an indicator of the need to update regulations due to the development community seeking alternatives to the current Zoning Ordinance's regulations.
- Development standards that are seen as optional or flexible. PDs are intended to offer "public benefits" in exchange for an "innovative" development; however, some applicants may instead attempt to use PDs to circumvent the Zoning Ordinance requirements.

The use of PD-specific standards may lead to inconsistent outcomes over time. This lack of development consistency can become increasingly problematic because PDs have their own requirements and workarounds, which can create conflicts with the city's existing developments, preferred development patterns, and current regulations. In the long term, PDs present administrative challenges as they age, as City staff is tasked with enforcement, preemption of updated approaches, and similar issues.

5.4.2 What We Heard

- Plano has too many PDs.
- PDs are burdensome to administer over time.
- Sometimes PDs are used to circumvent the Zoning Ordinance, while other times, they are used to provide innovative development.

5.4.3 Recommendation(s) and Analysis

5.4.3.1 Create zoning districts and development regulations that are robust enough to curtail PD use

- Zoning districts and development regulations should be inclusive enough to accommodate innovative development by-right instead of through discretionary approval processes. The Zoning Ordinance should, consistent with the vision and recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan, provide consistent standards for

mixed-use development, commercial development variety, and increased housing options in base zoning districts to steer from PD development (see Recommendation 5.1 above).

5.4.3.2 Strengthen PD criteria

- PD use should generally incentivize uniquely innovative development and should have stricter criteria to avoid overuse and the perception of spot zoning. A proposed PD should demonstrate a public benefit through characteristics such as open space preservation, land use mix, and design qualities that align with multiple goals of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Consider zoning text amendments to incorporate successful PD zoning standards.

5.4.4 Comprehensive Plan Link

Land Use (LU): LU1, LU2, LU4, LU7

Undeveloped Land (UL): UL1, UL3

5.5 Prioritize context-sensitive standards

5.5.1 Background

Mature, built-out cities like Plano have unique development characteristics. These characteristics establish different contexts within the city. For instance, a "Main Street" type downtown, a large swath of residential neighborhoods, and multiple areas for corridor commercial activity are all different contexts that must be supported by the Zoning Ordinance. Under these conditions, citywide or "one-size-fits-all" standards may prove inadequate when applied to specific conditions, leading to variance and PD requests. Context-sensitive design aligns standards to particular locations or situations to ensure development and redevelopment not only occur smoothly but are accomplished in a way that matches local form and conditions.

5.5.2 What We Heard

- Landscaping standards should better address the various development contexts in Plano.
- There is a need for more urban landscaping standards.
- Baseline design standards (building articulation, glazing, fenestration, etc.) should be addressed and reflect the community's expected preference for quality development.
- Context sensitivity is becoming increasingly more important as Plano continues redeveloping underused and vacant properties.
- Waste receptacle management needs to be adequately addressed to fit different development contexts and infill scenarios.
- Increased building height and mix of uses should be allowed along Regional Transportation Corridors in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan.
- Stakeholder interviews conducted for the code update, along with interviews the City conducted with owners and tenants of Legacy and Granite Park in April-June 2024 indicated that revised standards for the redevelopment and adaptive reuse of existing office buildings and office locations for additional types of nonresidential use would serve a market-driven purpose and help to stabilize the City's tax base. Frequent impediments mentioned to redevelopment included adapting older property to current building codes, construction of sidewalks, and updating Site Plan information based on old or nonexistent site information.

5.5.3 Recommendation(s) and Analysis

5.5.3.1 Implement context-sensitive zoning and development standards

- To accommodate the various contexts and build on the City's recently-adopted Street Design Standards, the code should prioritize the implementation of context areas in accordance with the Thoroughfare Map.
- The Zoning Ordinance should provide enough specificity to produce the preferred development outcomes in the various contexts throughout Plano. For instance, some stakeholders mentioned difficulty understanding and applying current landscaping regulations. Also, more intensive landscaping requirements may be better suited for certain contexts (e.g., greenfield sites), whereas less intensive requirements may be most practical in other contexts (e.g., infill sites). Other context-sensitive regulations may be updated, including screening, design, open space, waste receptacle management, parking, and loading standards.

5.5.3.2 Recalibrate standards in certain areas

- The Zoning Ordinance currently contains various regulations to control and mitigate nuisance uses, including, but not limited to, the Residential Adjacency Standards in Article 21 and Performance Standards in Article 24. These regulations need to be re-evaluated to ensure they are serving the intended purpose and can be applied fairly in a mixed-use context.
- Redevelopment of "Four Corner Retail" was a key theme of the Comprehensive Plan, with policies that the new code should implement, such as creative design solutions, active open space, and additional walkable connections to existing residential areas where desired by the adjoining neighborhood.
- Consider standards that relate to the reuse of existing office buildings and building sites for other types of nonresidential use and align those standards with the current site context (for example, an office campus or park that was built in an auto-oriented environment but is now in the context of a walkable area).

5.5.4 Comprehensive Plan Link

Land Use (LU): LU2, LU5, LU7

Community Design (CD): CD1

Redevelopment of Regional Transportation Corridors (RTC): RTC2

Undeveloped Land (UL): UL1, UL3

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD): TOD4

Redevelopment & Growth Management (RGM): RGM3, RGM4, RGM5, RGM8, RGM9

Pedestrian Environment (PE): PE2

Bicycle & Other Micromobility (BOM): BOM3

Neighborhood Conservation (NC): NC3

Revitalization of Retail Shopping Centers (RRSC): RRSC3, RRSC4

Heritage Preservation (HP): HP3, HP4

Open Space & Natural Resource Conservation (OSRC): OSRC7

6 HIGH PRIORITY SUBDIVISION ORDINANCE TOPICS

6.1 Increase the flexibility of subdivision standards for redevelopment

6.1.1 Background

The processes and requirements of the Subdivision Ordinance generally assume that most land being subdivided consists of large tracts that are developed over multiple phases and require the construction of new infrastructure. However, the Subdivision Ordinance may not provide adequate tools for issues related to redevelopment, such as the applicability of various plat and development plan types or requirements related to access and easements.

6.1.2 What We Heard

- As Plano runs out of vacant land for development, redevelopment of existing properties causes challenges because the current Subdivision Ordinance is not necessarily calibrated to redevelopment scenarios. This puts pressure on City staff and developers to navigate regulations that are not well-suited to redevelopment project types.

6.1.3 Recommendation(s) and Analysis

6.1.3.1 Review driveway and access flexibility

- Consider the costs and benefits of cross access easement(s) to provide access from a lot to a public street.

6.1.3.2 Expand administrative exceptions for setback encroachment

- Section 1.5.i allows the Building Official to approve a building permit without revising building lines on a plat when a zoning variance to the setback is approved by the Board of Adjustment. This flexibility is good and could be expanded to a form of alternative compliance allowing administrative approval of setback exceptions under certain conditions.

6.1.4 Comprehensive Plan Link

Land Use (LU): LU2, LU4

Redevelopment of Regional Transportation Corridors (RTC): RTC2

Pedestrian Environment (PE): PE2

Revitalization of Retail Shopping Centers (RRSC): RRSC3

6.2 Distinguish private street types

6.2.1 Background

"Private Streets & Alleys," "Public Way," and "Quasi-Public Street" are potentially confusing with terms that sound similar or have similar functions. The linear construction of Section [5.4.h](#) causes difficulties when comparing applicable standards and features of each street type.

6.2.2 What We Heard

- Feedback during the stakeholder interviews indicated that "Private Streets & Alleys," "Public Way," and "Quasi-Public Street" are sometimes difficult to distinguish and create confusion when other development regulations are applied. The terms themselves are also easy to confuse because the terms are not descriptive of the differences in function in each facility.
- Private streets that are publicly accessible serve an essential access function that may be interrupted when the owner of the property closes the street.
- Distinctions in ownership and intended use of private or semi-public streets occasionally create issues with street maintenance, administration of the sign ordinance, and Police enforcement.

6.2.3 Recommendation(s) and Analysis

6.2.3.1 Clarify and visually compare differences in private street types

- If renaming these terms is impractical, the regulatory distinctions between them may be better differentiated by comparative tables and possibly diagrams and/or sections that outline the details of each.
- Clearly assign ownership and maintenance responsibility, including standards for demonstrating fiscal capability for maintenance, for each private street type and procedures for closing the street (which may be partially or completely outside the jurisdiction of the Subdivision Regulations).

6.2.4 Comprehensive Plan Link

Land Use (LU): LU2

Community Design (CD): CD1

6.3 Clarify the need for and role of various plats

6.3.1 Background

Development Plats, Conveyance Plats, and Minor Plats each serve a role in the Subdivision Ordinance that may not reflect the current development realities of Plano. Development Plats and Conveyance Plats are largely useful in an undeveloped context to allow for the preliminary review of new development and the conveyance of undeveloped land, respectively. With approval authority delegated to staff for all plats except residential replats and plats with variances, the major/minor distinction becomes unnecessary. The benefits and efficiencies of Subdivision Improvement Agreements, Preliminary Plats, and Concept Plans may represent an additional opportunity for evaluation during the drafting phase.

The replatting procedures are currently in Article VII and are different from other plat types. As Plano enters a redevelopment phase, the use of replats will likely increase and take a greater role in the development process.

6.3.2 What We Heard

- Development Plats are rarely, if ever, used.

6.3.3 Recommendation(s) and Analysis

6.3.3.1 Review Conveyance Plats

- Based on the number of Conveyance Plats currently being processed there is still a role for this plat type in Plano, but the governing standards for Conveyance Plats should be clarified to state any improvements that are required (or not required) with the filing of a Conveyance Plat.

6.3.3.2 Eliminate Development Plats

- Development Plats may be considered for elimination with the rewrite or at a future date if an analysis of remaining undeveloped land reveals limited areas available for division into parts larger than 5 acres, which is the current threshold for requiring a Development Plat.

6.3.3.3 List replats more prominently

- Review the location and prominence of replatting procedures for ease of access and clarity.

6.3.4 Comprehensive Plan Link

Land Use (LU): LU4

6.4 Improve requirements for certain types of security

6.4.1 Background

The City requires a 10% maintenance bond for public improvements secured through a letter of credit (LoC). As described in Section [4.1.b.1](#), the LoC is primarily a means of security for construction rather than maintenance and may not sufficiently address the City's interests in securing maintenance and repair of improvements before they are fully accepted.

6.4.2 What We Heard

- This recommendation was discovered by the evaluation team when reading the Subdivision Ordinance. Although no direct feedback led to this recommendation, it is consistent with general feedback described in other sections of this Diagnostic Report.

6.4.3 Recommendation(s) and Analysis

6.4.3.1 Separate provisions governing the use of a construction letter of credit and maintenance letter of credit

- If a LoC is used to secure maintenance or warranty completed construction, the guidelines and requirements should be updated to ensure that a maintenance LoC has separate considerations and specifications from a construction LoC.

6.4.3.2 Address future cost escalation following the construction of improvements

- Allow the City the flexibility to update the LoC amount to cover maintenance of the as-builts if the original construction cost estimate used in the construction LoC is outdated. Since this amount isn't indexed to inflation, it may be insufficient to cover maintenance or repairs during the maintenance period prior to City acceptance.

6.4.3.3 Extend the maintenance surety period

- Consider extending the maintenance bond/surety period from one year to two years.

6.4.4 Comprehensive Plan Link

Undeveloped Land (UL): UL1

7 CONCLUSION

7.1 Summary

Plano's Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Ordinance have served the community well. The regulations, combined with the efforts from elected and appointed leaders, City staff, the public, the development community, and the market, have built Plano into a highly desirable community that aligns with the City's vision statement (as shown below.)

"Plano is a global leader, excelling in exceptional education, abounding with world class businesses and vibrant neighborhoods."

In continuing to strive for excellence in community planning and design, this update process builds upon the successes Plano has experienced from growing from a small farming community into an internationally known destination for business and a high quality of life. As the current Comprehensive Plan highlights, Plano has reached a new milestone in its development history, with minimal undeveloped land remaining. As Plano excelled at planning and regulating greenfield development (i.e., farmland being developed into residential subdivisions or corporate business campuses), this code update will enable Plano to excel equally at planning and managing redevelopment. In order to prepare for the increase in redevelopment cases and to implement the Comprehensive Plan's recommendations, the code will be revised to ensure alignment with the City's overall vision and shift the focus of the development regulations from greenfield development to redevelopment. The City has been undertaking updates for years to improve the codes on an as-needed basis to address new items, such as commercial drone delivery hubs. This code update is the opportunity to holistically update the zoning and subdivision regulations and set a course for Plano to excel in planning and managing redevelopment for the next 50 years and beyond.

7.2 Next Steps

This report is one of the initial steps in the rewrite process as it sets the road map for the City's revised code. The rewrite process will build on this report's recommendations and be further discussed to determine the best approach to each of the issues presented.

The code will be drafted in phases, including reorganization and technical edits, updating existing language, and developing new language. The final code will go through the standard adoption process, including public hearings at the Planning & Zoning Commission and City Council.