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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Mid-America Regional Council (MARC)

Partner Jurisdictions: Participation from staff and stakeholders from the following partner jurisdictions contributed to the Model Sustainable Development Code Website and individual jurisdiction development code audits:

- Fairway, KS
- Gladstone, MO
- Grandview, MO
- Independence, MO
- Prairie Village, KS
- Prairie Village, KS
- Raytown, MO
- Prairie Village, KS

Consultant Team:
RESOURCE CONSERVATION & ENERGY EFFICIENCY
Sustainable places conserve resources for future generations while simultaneously reducing costs and increasing economic and fiscal efficiency.

UNIQUE COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS
Distinctive communities and historical, cultural and natural assets increase the vibrancy of a region and contribute to its overall economic health.

DESIGN FOR HEALTHIER LIFESTYLES
Places designed for active lifestyles with access to healthy foods can improve the health of residents, reduce health-care costs and contribute to vibrant neighborhoods.

CORRIDORS & ACTIVITY CENTERS
Vibrant corridors connecting activity centers encourage new developments and public transportation while making efficient use of public and private assets.

HOUSING CHOICE
Housing choices for all ages, lifestyles, and income levels help support diverse communities and a healthy housing industry.

TRANSPORTATION CHOICE
Varied transportation options help reduce family travel costs, reduce air pollution, and connect families to jobs and services.

REINVESTMENT
Reinvesting in existing communities and neighborhoods ensures they remain or become vibrant, connected, green places.

INTRODUCTION
This code audit was completed as part of the Mid-America Regional Council Model Sustainable Development Code project. It was made possible by a Sustainable Communities Planning Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities. The Model Sustainable Development Code project is part of MARC’s Creating Sustainable Places initiative. For more information on the entire initiative, see http://www.marc.org/Regional-Planning/Creating-Sustainable-Places.

Approach
The Creating Sustainable Places initiative promotes a vision for VIBRANT, CONNECTED, and GREEN communities throughout the Kansas City Region. This 3-year program began in 2010 and involved more than 60 regional partners of local governments, state agencies, and civic, business and development organizations. A 40-member coordinating committee developed the 7 key principles for sustainable development in our metropolitan area.

The Model Sustainable Development Code project builds off of this vision and these principles. Through facilitated discussions with our stakeholder jurisdictions, 22 “Sustainable Development Concepts” were identified under these principles. While other sustainability issues may also be important to our region these concepts were identified as issues most impacted by our local development codes. With emphasis on these 22 concepts, the model sustainable development code website and development code audits are focused on the most pressing regulatory issues that are important to our region.
This project involves 2 main components – a model sustainable development code website and code audits of eight local jurisdictions.

Model Sustainable Development Code Website
The model code website is established as a resource for code examples from other jurisdictions – most outside of our region – that address the sustainable development concepts identified by our stakeholder jurisdictions. Rather than jump directly to regulatory language, the website first establishes the policy supporting each concept, lists benefits and outcomes from the policy, and identifies a range of regulatory strategies that implement each concept. Example codes are then provided as a resource for jurisdictions that support those policies. http://codes.sustainable-kc.org/

The model code website is organized under 3 main frameworks:

• LEARN – organizing the development code strategies and code examples around the 7 main principles and 22 sustainable development concepts.
• CODE – organizing the development code strategies around the table of contents of a model development code.
• EXPLORE – demonstrating the types of projects and project metrics that support the principles and concepts from the model sustainable development code.

The model code website is also part of a larger suite of on-line resources, including the Regional Indicators that help track our progress towards a more sustainable region with real time access to important data; a Natural Resources Inventory which includes highly refined data at various scales documenting existing resources and restoration opportunities that can allow natural systems to support development in our communities; and Envision Tomorrow and Visualization Tools that can help program and implement concepts within specific contexts. This suite of resources is intended to promote LOCAL ACTIONS, with IMPACTS ON PLACES, that produce REGIONAL OUTCOMES.

Code Audits
Eight of our stakeholder jurisdictions also participated in a code audit – evaluating their development code against the 22 sustainable development concepts. To initiate this process, each prepared a “policy profile”, ranking the sustainable development concepts from a 1 – high priority, to a 4 – lowest priority. This profile gives an order of magnitude gauge on which issues are most relevant to each community’s context and current planning priorities, and it helps tailor an action plan for code updates to each jurisdictions needs.

Evaluating how development regulations impact sustainability goals requires a two-part analysis. First, consider whether the regulations present barriers – provisions that prohibit or limit the application of “best practices” towards any specific sustainability objective. Second, and perhaps most importantly, consider how effectively the regulations limit, close loopholes or prohibit other competing practices that undermine broader sustainability issues. This two-part analysis can result in a more integrated code by identifying...
where the development code is strong, silent, or weak on certain principles, and identifying where some sections may undermine other related principles and concepts.

This report is a summary of the Prairie Village audit. The audit was conducted through an independent review and separate discussions with key staff. The audit represents a snapshot of the current regulations, highlights strengths and weaknesses with regard to the 22 Sustainable Development Concepts, and identifies an action plan to address the cities’ specific sustainability priorities as development and redevelopment occur.

The audit organized under the 7 key principles for sustainable development: Reinvestment; Transportation Choice; Housing Choices; Corridors and Activity Centers; Design for Healthy Lifestyles; Unique Community Characteristics; and Resource Conservation and Energy Efficiency. Under each topic, this report contains:

- **Principles & Concepts** - a summary of each Principle and how the Sustainable Development Concepts impact common sustainability metrics for comprehensive planning and development;

- **Opportunities and Applicability** – a quick observation of how the each Principle and the supporting Concepts could apply to the jurisdictions’ physical and planning context.

- **Code Analysis** - Analysis of how well the development code relates to each concept and typical regulatory objectives, including identification of barriers or loopholes.

- **Potential Action Steps** – Options to consider for future updates to the regulations (note: more information and examples of these action steps can be found on the Model Sustainable Development Code website.)

An action plan is also provided that prioritizes some of the potential action steps based on those that are most easily achievable under the cities current plans and policies (as opposed to those that need broader programs and community input to support them) and those that are most aligned with the cities “policy profile” filled out at the beginning of the audit process. A section by section list of raw comments used to evaluate the code, guide the analysis and determine the rating is included as an appendix to this report. These sections can be used by staff to help prioritize potential action steps, address emerging issues, and improve the Codes performance on certain sustainability concepts.
SUMMARY
Each section – and sometimes specific sub-sections – of the City’s development regulations was scored against the 22 Sustainable Development Concepts. Sections that had no real impact on the principle were given no score. The rating system ranged from 1 to 5, with one being a direct conflict with sustainable development principles, and a 5 being directly supports sustainable development principles. Also, staff and stakeholders filled out a relative priority policy profile” to indicate which of the 22 concepts were most important to the City (using a 1 to 4 scale), considering its physical context, issues and opportunities, or current planning and policy positions. In this way the raw objective scores of the code audit can be compared to the issues that are most important to the city currently, as well as identify any emerging or long-range issues to be concerned about.

Prairie Village’s development code scored in the mid-range for several categories (2.8 to 3.2 - neither directly supports nor directly conflicts with sustainable development concepts and CSP principles), including some of the City’s high priority issues on the relative priority policy profile. This indicates a fair to neutral correlation of the City’s policies with the development code, suggesting that improvements in these categories are still necessary. Some of the City’s high or moderate priority issues did score low. The lowest scores include Age in Place (2.5), Complete Street Design (2.75), Context Appropriate Streets (2.5), and Compact, Walkable Centers (2.7) (all in the “indirect conflicts” or “direct conflicts” range). The highest rated concepts – Renewable Energy (4.5) and Energy Efficient Building and Sites (4.25) – were moderate priorities. Two of the City’s priority concepts – Tree Preservation and Natural Resource Protection received no score, indicating none of the development code sections directly addressed the issues associated with that concept. In general, the concepts under Transportation Choice principle and any concepts that dealt specifically with the urban design and pedestrian characteristics of the public realm – scored lowest in the analysis of specific code sections and should be an area of focus.
### Rating Key:

1. Directly supports the best practices and promotes sustainable development concepts and principles.
2. Somewhat supports best practices and promotes sustainable development concepts and principles.
3. Directly conflicts with sustainable development concepts and principles, but may least the opportunity to improve their performance.
4. Creates indirect conflicts, somewhat undermines sustainable development concepts and principles.
5. Creates direct conflicts, likely prohibits best practices that meet sustainable development concepts and principles.

### Overall Rating

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<th>Relative Priority</th>
<th>3.2</th>
<th>3.0</th>
<th>2.9</th>
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<th>2.75</th>
<th>2.5</th>
<th>2.8</th>
<th>2.8</th>
<th>2.5</th>
<th>2.7</th>
<th>2.9</th>
<th>3.0</th>
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<th>--</th>
<th>2.7</th>
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<th>--</th>
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<th>4.25</th>
<th>4.5</th>
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The “relative priority” is based on a rough ranking of strategies that are of immediate or long-term importance to the City. These with low priority are not necessarily unimportant, but rather may take longer and more involved policy discussions before they become a key part of the city’s planning program and regulatory strategies.
REINVESTMENT
Reinvesting in existing communities and neighborhoods ensures they remain or become vibrant, connected, green places.

CONCEPTS

Infill / Rehab Housing
Infill development and rehabilitation of existing buildings helps find space for new homes within our established communities. Designing infill developments in ways that work well with their surroundings and retool property for productive use and modern needs keeps our neighborhoods, corridors and activity centers strong.

Repair Strip Corridors
Strategic investments and better land use transitions can restore value to our corridors. Car-oriented corridors reach a point of diminishing returns as each additional business competes for the visibility, access, and space needed to capture traffic and accommodate cars on high-volume streets. Coordinating public and private investments to create places for people, and connecting these places to supporting land uses can repair our declining corridors.

Strong Suburban Downtown
Strong downtowns attract investment, create a community identity, and provide a place for people to gather and walk. A vibrant and connected downtown increases the resiliency of our communities and adds diversity to our economy.
Prairie Village: Opportunities and Applicability

Reinvestment efforts are focused on “downtown” / Johnson Drive gateways area. Momentum from this may present opportunities to improve infill and rehabilitated housing on abutting parcels and in adjacent neighborhoods. Policies for nodal development and complimentary land uses may be necessary to eliminate strip development that undermines the long-term success of downtown. Outside of the downtown / Johnson Drive gateways area, Prairie Village has very little development that would be considered “strip corridors.” However sites fronting on higher-speed roads are susceptible to car-oriented focus that is a symptom of declining strip corridors. Continued management of access and other improved site design techniques can prevent this from becoming an emerging problem for Prairie Village.

CODE ANALYSIS:
Through a review of the Prairie Village Zoning Ordinance, based on the sustainability principles and concepts identified, the following issues have been identified:

- The lot split and building line modifications standards reasonable accommodate the unique neighborhood patterns within Prairie Village and should allow infill and rehabilitation within current patterns. However introducing new housing types in limited but appropriate locations may be difficult due to residential district standards.
- Non-single family districts do not reflect building types of compatible scale with detached houses; they rely on “use”, buffers and setbacks resulting in larger scale and less compatible projects, reducing opportunities for more incremental infill redevelopment.
- The C-3 and MXD districts present some opportunities for development in walkable, “downtown” patterns, but they rely heavily on discretionary or planned processes that will make implementation difficult.
- The standards for the C-1 District (neighborhood scaled commercial) are car-oriented and will not allow small scale sited to integrate well with neighborhoods. Further, application of this district and standards to multiple sites along busier arterial streets will lead to patterns similar to those of strip corridors.

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:
To address the sustainability issues identified the City of Prairie Village should consider the following actions:

- Create basic landscape design standards and/or planning design criteria to guide discretionary review processes.
- Improve the planned district approach by establishing more “default standards” and clarifying that certain degrees of flexibility from the default standards can be achieved through administrative review – particularly on small projects, or other projects clearly in line with planning policies and the intent of the development regulations.
- Improve the public realm design standards (streetscapes and open spaces), particularly for the C-1, C-3 and MXD districts.
TRANSPORTATION CHOICE
Varied transportation options help reduce family travel costs, reduce air pollution, and connect families to jobs and services.

CONCEPTS

Connected Street Networks
Connected street networks improve our access to daily needs and establish more valuable and efficient development patterns. Greater connections provide more direct routes, allow options for different routes, and make our communities more adaptable to long-range change.

Complete Streets Design
Well-designed streets provide a setting for commerce, a place for social interaction and offer a variety of transportation options. Streets and rights-of-way are one of our most valuable assets and one of the largest single landholdings in most communities. Designing these spaces to meet as many needs as possible and to better support abutting property will maximize the value to our communities.

Context Appropriate Streets
Context appropriate streets fit the physical setting and better support our distinct places. Varying street designs, even on a block-by-block basis, to account for different environmental conditions, different urban design goals, and different development patterns improves transportation choices.

Optimized Parking
Optimal parking solutions respond to the context and development patterns to improve access for people. Too much parking can be as big of a detriment to quality development as too little. When we mandate parking requirements, but fail to balance this with similar mandates that ensure access for people on foot, bicycles or transit, we limit choices.
Prairie Village: Opportunities and Applicability

The street network is largely established and additions to the network are not typically implemented through development regulations. However, capital projects can benefit from an overall street-design program that better blends transportation, public realm design and development goals. Johnson Drive and Shawnee Prairie Village Parkway present the greatest opportunity for future transit, and developing a critical mass of trip origins and destinations in a walkable pattern (as called for in the plans for this area) may be important to support viability of transit. Flexible parking strategies could benefit redevelopment – particularly for the “downtown” / Johnson Drive gateways area.

CODE ANALYSIS:

Through a review of the Prairie Village Zoning Ordinance, based on the sustainability principles and concepts identified, the following issues have been identified:

- Most of the street design references in the regulations only supply very general guidance on streets. While they do not necessarily undermine the Transportation Choice principle and Sustainable Development Concepts, it does suggest that more conventional and traffic-focused planning and design of streets will control in most circumstances. This will undermine multi-modal goals on specific corridors, and misses an opportunity to specify the important urban design role that streets play in shaping the character of our neighborhoods and centers.

- The city-wide sidewalk provisions are fairly generic and the design and planning specifications may not be appropriate for all contexts of the community. Design details – width, separation from moving vehicle lanes, vehicle speeds, degree of landscape / streetscape amenities – are all crucial details of how well or poorly sidewalks will promote walkability in specific contexts, and the general standards don’t identify these considerations. (See 18.04.130).

- The parking standards are fairly typical of most zoning codes, but that means they error on the side of too much parking and are based on highly car-oriented development patterns.

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:

To address the sustainability issues identified the City of Prairie Village should consider the following actions:

- Improve street standards city-wide variety of street design types for different contexts (as opposed to simply functional classification), and include street trees and sidewalk design and location as part of that approach.

- Consider specific street type standards for unique contexts, such as the City’s current walkable commercial centers or any emerging and potentially walkable areas. (i.e. Neighborhood Street, Pedestrian/Commercial Street, etc.).

- Improve flexibility to reduce on-site parking and loading requirements city-wide through more credits or waivers.

- Consider incorporating references to outside street design guides to help with design of specific street sections where multi-modal transportation is a priority. (See particularly: Institute for Transportation Engineers’ Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares, and National Association of City Transportation Officials Urban Street Design Guide.)
HOUSING CHOICE

Housing choices for all ages, lifestyles, and income levels help support diverse communities and a healthy housing industry.

CONCEPTS

Diverse Housing Types
A greater range of housing types: affordable, market-rate and workforce housing makes our neighborhoods more stable and resilient to outside influences. Increasing the variety of housing options can better meet the changing housing demands of our population and supplies the broad range of housing needed for more complete communities.

Age In Place
Age in place communities allow people to live where they want despite changes in their housing needs. Diverse housing options allow people to remain in their neighborhoods, stay engaged in familiar environments and established relationships, and contribute to the broader community.

Mixed-density Neighborhoods
A wide variety of housing types within the same neighborhood strengthens community diversity and increases the number of amenities available to residents. Integrating a similar scale of lots, building footprints, heights and frontages allows different housing types to mix compatibly despite wide ranges of density, and establishes the distinct characteristics of our neighborhoods.
Prairie Village: Opportunities and Applicability

Neighborhoods and development patterns are largely established, with relatively little “green field” development likely in the future. Different housing types will likely focus on the downtown / Johnson Drive gateways area. Options to meet diverse housing needs will need to be responsive to the opportunities and constraints presented by that contexts, as well as managing incremental rehabilitation in existing stable neighborhoods.

**CODE ANALYSIS:**

Through a review of the Prairie Village Zoning Ordinance, based on the sustainability principles and concepts identified, the following issues have been identified:

- Non-single family districts do not reflect building types of compatible scale with detached houses; they rely on “use”, buffers and setbacks resulting in larger scale and less compatible projects, limiting areas where different housing types can be introduced. For example the duplex standards simply take the R-1A standards and double them – resulting in a “double scale” house, rather than a compatible scale building with two units in it. A similar issue exists with other districts that rely on setbacks and density rather than building types.

- The R-4 Condominium or Common Wall Dwelling district presents some opportunity for neighborhood scale, multi-unit buildings. However requiring this to be in the condominium form of ownership (as opposed to fee owner and/or rental) my limit the application of this district with unnecessary procedural and development complications. In addition, the assumption that low density and open space requirements will make this format compatible with neighborhoods will limit the effectiveness of this housing type – both in terms of providing housing choices and in fitting in with the existing scale and character of neighborhoods.

- The accessory use / accessory living quarter option presents some opportunities for housing options consistent with stable housing but the conditions and limitations are fairly strict.

**POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:**

To address the sustainability issues identified the City of Prairie Village should consider the following actions:

- Consider standards geared more to lot and residential building type combinations, rather than simply lot size and density – particularly for neighborhood scale, multi-unit building types. These could be used to add more assurances to the discretionary planning process currently used for different housing formats. An acceptable range of types could also be tailored to improve the R-4 district as opposed to solely allowing “condominiums.”

- Update or supplement the R-2 standards to allow buildings similar in scale to a single family home. Currently it simply doubles the R-1 standards and allows you to attach the dwellings, which will result in an out-of-scale pattern where two houses appear pushed together, as opposed to a similar scale home with two units in it.

- Review accessory dwelling unit limitations and consider whether broader opportunities for implementation can be combined with increased design standards to ensure neighborhood compatibility.
CORRIDORS & ACTIVITY CENTERS

Vibrant corridors connecting activity centers encourage new developments and public transportation while making efficient use of public and private assets.

CONCEPTS

Compact Walkable Centers

Concentrating more small-scale and diverse uses in compact patterns allows people to walk to shopping, school, jobs and entertainment. Arranging a greater mix of uses around a well-connected, pedestrian-scaled public realm builds valuable and enduring places, and it improves the overall economic and environmental performance of development.

Transit-Ready Corridors -

Connecting our most common trip origins and destinations along strategic corridors will better support local and regional transit lines. More housing choices, increased employment options, and direct connections to more walkable places prepare our corridors for better transit service.

Retail / Rooftop Relationships

A strong, well-connected and accessible market makes retail more successful. Improving the proximity and relationship between neighborhoods and the amount and types of commercial development they demand makes our corridors and activity centers vital and worthy of long-lasting investments.

PRAIRIE VILLAGE SCORE

2.7

2.9

2.9
**Prairie Village: Opportunities and Applicability**

Johnson Drive is the primary walkable center for the community. Emerging development in the gateways areas could provide some larger scale development in walkable patterns or transit-supportive patterns. Continued focus on North Oak as a higher intensity, potentially transit-ready development will provide a mix of residential and commercial uses in these areas (trip origins and destinations), as well as increase the proximity of services for adjacent stable neighborhoods.

**CODE ANALYSIS:**

Through a review of the Prairie Village Zoning Ordinance, based on the sustainability principles and concepts identified, the following issues have been identified:

- The C-3 and MXD districts present some opportunities for development in walkable, or transit-ready patterns, but they rely heavily on discretionary or planned processes that will make implementation difficult. A lack of clear standards or planning and design criteria and objectives matching the well stated intent of these districts will also make the discretionary review process and results less assured.

- There is a lack of residential districts and development patterns that are clearly tailored to integrating well with commercial districts (i.e. transition blocks to compact, walkable centers). Most of the opportunities for different housing types will require large-scale projects and have open space or buffer requirements that will make integration of these uses difficult.

- The C-1, C-3 and MXD district have a lack of specific design standards and have some requirements that will prioritize car-oriented site designs (building setbacks, open-space buffers, parking and circulation requirements.) While this may be necessary in some contexts such as the busier corridors, the more walkable commercial areas and some small-scale neighborhood centers may need different design approaches.

**POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:**

To address the sustainability issues identified the City of Prairie Village should consider the following actions:

- Consider specific street type standards for unique contexts, such as the City’s current walkable commercial centers or any emerging and potentially walkable areas. (i.e. Neighborhood Street, Pedestrian/Commercial Street, etc.).

- Improve site design standards to specify less car oriented patterns. Particularly for the C-1, C-3 and MXD districts.

- Improve the R-4 district, or develop a new residential district specifically designed for coordinating with and transitioning to compact walkable centers. (i.e. neighborhood scale, multi-unit building types that bring higher densities but appropriate scale buildings and neighborhood design amenities.)

- Improve flexibility to reduce on-site parking and loading requirements city-wide through more credits or waivers.
DESIGN FOR HEALTHIER LIFESTYLES
Places designed for active lifestyles with access to healthy foods can improve the health of residents, reduce health-care costs and contribute to vibrant neighborhoods.

CONCEPTS
Active Transportation / Living
Making walking and bicycling a safe, fun and convenient way to reach our daily needs improves public health. Active modes of transportation offer a combination of recreation, exercise, and transportation. Incorporating more social and physical activity into daily routines increases our quality-of-life and reduces environmental impacts of our lifestyle and transportation choices.

Access to Healthy Foods
The design of our communities impacts how we access and distribute food and what we eat. Better integrating a range of different food production and distribution options into our communities can increase our public health, strengthen our local economy and make better use of our landscapes.

Integrated Trail System
Trail systems connect our communities and natural areas, enhance our transportation networks and promote recreational systems. Integrating trail systems into our development patterns makes us more active and more engaged in our community.
Prairie Village: Opportunities and Applicability

Development patterns and infrastructure that shapes active transportation are largely establish and not directly implemented through regulations. Strategic prioritization of capital projects near existing destinations or on priority routes will be important (eg. Rock Creek trail). However plans, conceptual designs and policies for areas where redevelopment or street improvements may occur, can support filling gaps in sidewalks, trails, bicycle routes when backed by development regulations that require these facilities incrementally. Access to healthy food may be impacted by all aspects of the zoning regulations through use and design standards for appropriate scaled food outlets to appropriate scaled food production.

CODE ANALYSIS:

Through a review of the Prairie Village Zoning Ordinance, based on the sustainability principles and concepts identified, the following issues have been identified:

• Bike and pedestrian priorities, particularly on street types that connect important walking and biking destinations, are lacking from the street design standards since they are only very general and do not give many street design priorities.

• The city-wide sidewalk provisions are fairly generic and the design and planning specifications may not be appropriate for all contexts of the community. Design details – width, separation from moving vehicle lanes, vehicle speeds, degree of landscape/streetscape amenities – are all crucial details of how well or poorly sidewalks will promote walkability in specific contexts, and the general standards don’t identify these considerations. (See 18.04.130).

• There are no standards in the regulations that impact (positively or negatively) policies regarding access to healthy food; this could be an interpretation issue or potential impediment to some of the emerging small-scale food production activities that are occurring in communities.

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:

To address the sustainability issues identified the City of Prairie Village should consider the following actions:

• Improve street standards city-wide variety of street design types for different contexts (as opposed to simply functional classification), and include streets trees and sidewalk design and location as part of that approach.

• Consider incorporating references to outside street design guides to help with design of specific street sections where multi-modal transportation is a priority. (See particularly: Institute for Transportation Engineers’ Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares, and National Association of City Transportation Officials Urban Street Design Guide.)

• Consider adding either as permitted, accessory or limited/conditional uses some of the small-scale foot production activities.
UNIQUE COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

Distinctive communities and historical, cultural and natural assets increase the vibrancy of a region and contribute to its overall economic health.

CONCEPTS

Pedestrian Oriented Public Realm

A public realm designed for people establishes our most memorable and enduring community characteristics. The design of our rights-of-way and civic spaces, and the relationships of buildings to these spaces, shapes how we experience and perceive our communities.

Natural Resource Protection

Parks, open spaces and natural areas are defining features of our communities. Arranging our built environment in ways that emphasize valuable natural landscapes as a focal point of development enriches our communities and builds distinct, desirable places.

Tree Preservation

Maintaining our well established trees and planting the right tree in the right place builds long-term value in our communities. The urban forest does more than make our streets, parks and neighborhoods pretty; it provides valuable ecosystem services that reduce energy use, clean our air and water, and keep our communities vibrant, comfortable and healthy.
Prairie Village: Opportunities and Applicability

Streets in “downtown” / Johnson Drive gateway area and adjacent neighborhoods are the greatest opportunity for an improved pedestrian oriented public realm. The recent Johnson Drive project is a significant investment of the City. More incremental and strategic improvements for pedestrian-scaled streets and public spaces will be necessary as development continues in this area, to build and improve upon this investment.

Rock creek trail improvements and maintaining the mature tree canopy – both street trees and private trees, can preserve the City’s most significant and productive natural features. Other natural resource protections strategies will be on an incremental, and site-by-site basis covered in “green infrastructure” discussions.

CODE ANALYSIS:

Through a review of the Prairie Village Zoning Ordinance, based on the sustainability principles and concepts identified, the following issues have been identified:

- Open space and streetscape standards are not tied explicitly to some of the “place-making” concepts identified in the statement of intent of the various zoning districts – particularly for areas planned for a mix of uses where the design of the public realm is a crucial coordinating amenity.
- There are very few street tree or landscape standards in the development regulations, and implementation / preservation of the city’s unique landscape character will depend on the discretionary review process and a project by project review.

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:

To address the sustainability issues identified the City of Prairie Village should consider the following actions:

- Improve the public realm design standards (streetscapes and open spaces), particularly for areas where more public gathering or walkable development patterns are desired.
- Consider a city-wide street tree program to maintain and manage existing tree canopies, and to develop standards for new or re-designed streets.
- Create basic landscape design standards and/or planning design criteria to guide discretionary review processes.
- Improve specifications for on-site BMPs and alternative designs aimed at infiltrating stormwater (particularly with respect to parking areas).
Sustainable places conserve resources for future generations while simultaneously reducing costs and increasing economic and fiscal efficiency.

CONCEPTS

Green Infrastructure
Using natural systems to serve development and designing development to incorporate natural systems can reduce costs and increase environmental performance of our communities. Green infrastructure preserves valuable ecological functions of our landscapes and emphasizes distinct characteristics of our communities.

Energy Efficient Buildings and Sites
More efficient building and site designs can improve environmental performance, increase our health, and reduce the life cycle costs of property investments. Building orientation and siting, landscape and site design, material selection, operation and maintenance practices, and the adaptability of our buildings and sites to future reuse all impact how much resources and energy we consume.

Renewable Energy
Development patterns and policies of our cities impact both our sources of energy and our use of energy. Retooling our cities for renewable energy – from the regional scale to the site scale – helps reduce our energy demand, increase our energy supply and efficiency, and make our communities more resilient, affordable and healthy.
Prairie Village: Opportunities and Applicability

Green infrastructure and “green street” designs may be incorporated into city capital projects based on stormwater master planning. The development regulations will mostly impact site-based green strategies to compliment this system. Incremental opportunities may present opportunities to re-connect green systems as corridors redevelop. The region as a whole is continuing to monitor the impact of the rapidly evolving green building practices and renewable energy strategies.

CODE ANALYSIS:

Through a review of the Prairie Village Zoning Ordinance, based on the sustainability principles and concepts identified, the following issues have been identified:

• The landscape design standards are subject to a discretionary plan approval for detailed design and there are very few design objectives related to site design, storm water or “green infrastructure.” Implementation of any specific city policies will be dependent on a project by project discretionary review process.

• There are very few standards addressing specific objectives dealing with the energy performance of buildings and sites, so the regulations neither support or appear to hinder “green building” objectives.

• The Alternative Energy standards provide the opportunity to invest in site-scale renewable energy. However some of the limitations (prohibition on ground mounted, height standards, and access easements) may impact competing “sustainability” issues such as tree canopy and passive cooling that are important in Prairie Villages context.

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:

To address the sustainability issues identified the City of Prairie Village should consider the following actions:

• Create basic landscape design standards and/or planning design criteria to guide discretionary review processes.

• Improve specifications for on-site BMPs and alternative designs aimed at infiltrating stormwater (particularly with respect to parking areas).

• Improve flexibility to reduce on-site parking and loading requirements through more credits or waivers.

• Review the site-scale renewable energy standards to keep pace with emerging technologies and applications; be sure to consider competing site design priorities that may have other sustainability benefits. (i.e. wind and solar often compete with tree canopies and the separate benefits provided by heavily treed streets and sites.)
The following action steps reflect “quick fixes” or updates that can be easily incorporated into the current development code structure and which may not need substantial planning or policy discussions.

- Adjust city-wide sidewalk standards to reflect different design standards for priority routes and walkable neighborhoods and centers.
- Add flexibility to reduce on-site parking and loading requirements in all districts.
- Incorporate references to outside street design guidance that includes more multi-modal and urban design related considerations (use the National Association of City Transportation Officials guidance).
- Adjust the R-2 standards to allow duplexes with similar scale and lot orientation as single family homes (e.g. appropriate scaled house with 2 units, rather than 2 houses attached together.)
- Revisit the accessory dwelling unit provisions for potentially broader applications and/or more specific design standards to ensure neighborhood compatibility.
- Consider allowances for limited, small scale food production activities in certain districts.

The following action steps are important to fully implement the Sustainable Places principles and concepts, but may require significant re-structuring of the development regulations and/or require more detailed planning and policy discussion prior to full implementations.

- Consider a city-wide complete street program. Improve street design standards based on outcomes of this effort with a wide variety of street design types for different contexts.
- Enhance the R-4 district with a “building type” approach based on compact, small-scale, multi-unit building types; consider how this approach could apply to other districts or contexts.
- Create additional design standards (building types, street types, civic space types) as default standards for C-3 and/or MXD districts; consider application through specific plans or design policies for the City’s existing walkable (or potentially more walkable) centers (Prairie Village Shops, Corinth, etc.)
- Develop a city-wide tree program for landscape trees and street trees; incorporate principles from this program into standards for street design and landscape design. (see. See http://www.gouldevans.com/treelists/GreatTrees.pdf.)
Completed as part of the Creating Sustainable Places initiative for MARC: