

**TOWN OF ERIE
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
Jan. 6, 2025**

SUBJECT: Comprehensive Plan & Implementation

PURPOSE: Discussion only

CODE REVIEW: N/A

DEPARTMENT: Planning and Development

PRESENTER: Sarah Nurmela, Director of Planning and Development
Kelly Driscoll, Planning Manager
Josh Campbell, Senior Strategic Planner

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Informational item only.

SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND OF SUBJECT MATTER:

Purpose of Discussion

The Town Council expressed the desire to review specific Future Land Use designations and their associated densities in the Comprehensive Plan. Staff will provide details on each residential land use classification as well as an overview of Comprehensive Plan implementation efforts that are in progress. Specifically, staff will provide updates on the Historic Old Town Social Capital Exercise and the Unified Development Code (UDC).

Direction Requested from Council

Staff request Council further discuss the refinements to Land Use Classifications and associated density as well as specific designations of sites. Staff will develop a path forward for evaluating, drafting, testing, and presenting potential changes to the Planning Commission and Council for consideration.

Topics Covered in this Memo:

1. Land Use Classifications & Why they Change
2. Affordable Housing
3. Policy Options
4. Unified Development Code
5. Historic Old Town
6. Next Steps

1. Land Use Classifications and Densities – Why the Change?

The Land Use chapter of the Comprehensive Plan includes both the Future Land Use Map and associated land use classifications. These classifications provide direction on how land is envisioned to be used. The classifications are general in nature and essentially work as a palette of uses with which to designate property throughout the Town. Each classification provides a description of use, density or intensity of use of the land, and potential limitations or considerations when applying the uses. The mapping of these classifications is meant to act as a guide for staff and decision-makers like the Planning Commission and Town Council as they apply the Town's codes and zone property.

Typically, Comprehensive Plan updates include an evaluation of land use classifications for their applicability to and reflection of existing development and real estate market trends. Erie's land use classifications have evolved over time with the growth of the Town. In 1999, the residential land use classifications included Low, Moderate, and Urban Density, with densities of 0.5, 1.0, and 2.0 dwelling units to the acre (du/ac), respectively. These densities were increased in the 2005 update and maintained in 2015.

During the 2024 update, the land use classifications were again evaluated to ensure they reflected existing development and market trends. For example, existing densities in the Town were used to help inform the updated density ranges, including:

- Flat Iron Meadows, single family detached, small lot, 6.7 du/ac
- Westerly Filing 1, duplexes and townhomes, 8.9 du/ac
- Erie Highlands, townhomes, 11 du/ac
- Erie Commons Cottages, single family detached, small lot homes at 12 du/ac
- Vista Ridge Enclave, townhomes, 16 du/ac
- Cheesman Residences, single family detached and townhomes, 17 du/ac
- Blue Sky Condominiums, 20 du/ac
- Aura Apartments, Colliers Hill, 25 du/ac
- Nine Mile apartments, 25 du/ac

Updating the classifications allows Low Density to accurately capture single family and duplex developments, Medium Density to capture small lot single family detached to townhomes, and High Density to capture existing and market-based apartment typologies. The areas designated as Residential High on the Land Use Map (Map) are properties that are already built at that density or are entitled to develop that way. The Map does not designate any opportunity (vacant or redevelopment) sites as Residential High.

The following chart provides a side-by-side comparison of the densities of the Unified Development Code (UDC), 2005/2015 Comprehensive Plan, and 2024 Comprehensive Plan. As shown in the table, UDC densities have not synced with Comprehensive Plan land use designations since prior to 2005.

Table 1: Density Comparison

UDC Districts (Zoning)	Density (unit/acre)	2005/2015 Comp Plan Classifications	Density (unit/acre)	2024 Comp Plan Classifications	Density (unit/acre)
Rural Residential	0 to 1	Residential Rural	0 to 2	Residential – Rural	0 to 2
Estate Residential	0.5 to 1				
Suburban Residential	1 to 3	Residential Low	2 to 6	Residential – Low	2 to 8
Low Density Residential	3 to 5				
Medium Density Residential	5 to 10	Residential Medium	6 to 12	Residential – Medium	8 to 18
High Density Residential	10 to 25	Residential High	12 to 20	Residential - High	18 to 30

The 2024 Comprehensive Plan also includes Residential and Mixed Use classifications, as mapped in the attached presentation (Attachment 2). These classifications include shopping, homes, entertainment and services all within walkable blocks. Mixed Use Neighborhood has a gross density of 6 to 12 units per acre and are typically located between commercial or employment centers and residential neighborhoods. Mixed Use Village is slightly higher density (12 to 30 du/acre) to include apartments and stacked flat housing and is typically located along arterial roads or near major transportation corridors.

2. Affordable Housing

Town policy supports a greater diversity of housing types and access to housing for households with a wider range of incomes. Since 2005, the Comprehensive Plan has acknowledged the need to facilitate affordable housing in the community. Over the years, the Town facilitated developments like the Vic Smith Senior Housing, Cheesman Residences, and planned units within North Westerly. In addition, the Town identified potential future affordable housing with the Village at Coal Creek and I-25 Erie Gateway Developments.

Affordable Housing can be in any land use category that allows residential development. Affordable housing is most effective and feasible when placed near transit and areas containing employment and commercial opportunities, and when land is used efficiently to minimize cost per unit.

3. Policy Options

Town Council may want to consider potential updates to the Comprehensive Plan, including:

- Changes to specific property designations.
- Adjustments to density ranges of specific land use classifications.

Any amendments to the Future Land Use Map or associated density ranges will require additional technical analysis, community engagement and public education, as well as public review and recommendation by the Planning Commission and final review by Town Council.

4. Unified Development Code (UDC) Update

When Comprehensive Plans are updated, updates to implementing tools like development codes and regulations typically follow. This ensures the vision and development related policies in the plan are implemented. The 2026 Budget and Work Plan include funding of \$250,000 to conduct an update to the UDC. The project will have stakeholder engagement and feedback, with an expected completion in 2027. Project goals include:

- Implement Comprehensive Plan policies and goals, including addressing the needs of infill development, water conservation, green infrastructure, and diverse housing options.
- Align land use densities and classifications with zoning districts.
- Create a transparent, predictable, and consistent process.
- Respond to feedback and concerns from the community, business owners, developers, and builders.
- Remain consistent with State and federal law.
- Ensure the last five years of individual UDC updates are cohesive.
- Increase use of standard zoning districts instead of Planned Development (PD) zone district.
- Address technical concerns identified by staff since the 2019-2022 updates.

5. Historic Old Town

During the June 3, 2025, Town Council meeting, staff presented the kick-off of the Historic Old Town Social Capital Exercise. The purpose of the exercise is to build relationships and connections within the Historic Old Town neighborhood and gain insight into existing social capital opportunities. Social capital is the value of

connections, collaboration, and partnership between people to achieve common goals, build community, and create individual opportunities for advancement.

Since the kick-off this past summer, staff attended seven Town-wide events including the Erie Farmers Market and Erie Fest. Staff also created and hosted four Old Town-wide events, including neighborhood walks, community coffees, and an ice cream social. These events were focused on connecting specifically with Historic Old Town residents and business owners, encouraging them to lead the conversations. Through these events, staff engaged in more than 200 conversations. These conversations covered a wide range of topics such as family history in the neighborhood, desires for more communal connections, struggles and traumas, and general wants and needs for the Historic Old Town neighborhood.

From these conversations, staff identified quick, medium-term, and long-term action steps that the Town could take to address frequently raised issues. The items were as simple as routine education and awareness of upcoming capital projects to developing a Neighborhood Plan that addresses items such as housing, transportation, and historic preservation. Potential actions are outlined in the table below. Any projects requiring funding would necessitate Council approval at a future date.

Table 2: Action Items

Quick Term	Medium Term	Long Term
Neighborhood Dumpster Day	Branding and Identity Program	Neighborhood Plan
Neighborhood Walk Listening Tours	Curb Appeal Grant Program	Historic Preservation Plan (Update)
Capital Project Awareness and Education	Placemaking Plan	Code Revisions
Neighborhood Volunteer Days		

6. Next Steps

Staff anticipate multiple strategic initiatives as part of the Town Council's direction and continued implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.

1. Comprehensive Plan Revisions: Staff will evaluate potential revisions to the Comprehensive Plan. This effort will include:

- Community engagement and education to ensure transparency.
- Formal review and input from the Planning Commission and Town Council to ensure alignment with strategic priorities and long-term planning frameworks.

2. Unified Development Code Update: Staff will initiate the issuance of a Request for Proposals (RFP) to begin a comprehensive update of the Unified

Development Code. This update is intended to align regulatory frameworks with current land use objectives, streamline development processes, and reflect best practices and case law.

3. **Historic Old Town Action Items:** Targeted strategies will be developed to address preservation, revitalization, and investment opportunities within Historic Old Town. These actions will be informed by community input and aligned with the Town's cultural and economic development goals.

Staff will provide regular updates and seek Council guidance as each item progresses.