

## **B. FUTURE LAND USE** (CONTINUED)

### **CHARACTER AREAS**

#### **➤➤ LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL**

##### **RECOMMENDED PRIMARY USES:**

Traditional detached single-family homes are the primary use, located on lots that are generally larger than the other residential Character Areas. While this is the lowest density of residential designations, these areas were developed prior to widespread use of the private automobile.

In the interest of restoring a critical population mass, existing two-family homes (as-built or legally converted) should be allowed as-of-right and no longer subject to lost rights through abandonment or destruction. Over time, if Rochester's population increases, the City should consider additional affordability strategies that increase housing options, such as allowing one extra (subordinate) unit in the this Character Area. For now, those uses are and should continue to be permitted in the remainder of residential areas.

New construction of two-family homes should not be permitted in the Low Density Residential Character Area but encouraged in other residential Character Areas. Single-family homes that are attached, such as townhomes, should remain permitted as-of-right. Permitted uses and associated regulations should be revised to accommodate emerging housing types that diversify our housing stock, reflecting changing demographics, household sizes, and lifestyle preferences.

New single-family home construction, such as scattered site infill projects, is most appropriate in Low and Medium Density Character Areas. Multi-family residential development (new construction or rehabilitation of historic buildings) should be focused in Medium and High Density Character Areas, as well as in all mixed-use areas.

An effective way to prevent vacant buildings while furthering the traditional small-scale, walkable development pattern is to allow the opportunity for built-as commercial buildings located in all residential Character Areas the opportunity to be occupied with a low-intensity commercial use. This use should be allowed as-of-right.

Lastly, the City should reexamine the definition and design/performance regulations related to home occupations and live-work spaces. This is consistent with the notion of "zoning for jobs", a goal supported by multiple strategies in the Placemaking Plan. The option of starting a business from a home allows an entrepreneur a low-cost opportunity to build a business to a point where it is successful enough to move to a commercial space. Most homes, however, are located in a residential district so home-based business activities are limited by current zoning regulations to avoid the encroachment of commercial activities into residential neighborhoods. Regulatory burdens should be reduced to further encourage these uses while not compromising the character of their surroundings.

##### **EXAMPLE AREAS:**

Browncroft, 19th Ward, Maplewood, Highland Park, Lyell-Otis, 14621

##### **GEOGRAPHIC PATTERNS:**

The geographic relationship between Low and Medium Density Residential is both reflective of the desired pattern of restored density and somewhat concentric in nature. Low Density Residential areas generally fill the spaces beyond the Medium Density Residential Character Area that encircles downtown and in between the higher-density corridors.



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## B. FUTURE LAND USE (CONTINUED)

### CHARACTER AREAS

#### ➤➤ LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL (CONTINUED)

##### DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS FOR ALL RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER AREAS:

There are several core features that define the longstanding character of all residential neighborhoods that should be celebrated and preserved. Urban neighborhoods are unique because of unifying elements that provide a sense that residents belong to something bigger than themselves and their property. These pedestrian-scale elements include sidewalks, street trees, tree lawns, streetlights, front porches, and a relatively consistent, shallow setback of homes from the street.

Together, these features create a sense of spatial intimacy that makes walkable urban neighborhoods different from car-oriented neighborhoods. These features also act as a stabilizing and somewhat predictable visual rhythm of a neighborhood and encourage residents to take care and pride beyond their yards. They make Rochester's neighborhoods special while encouraging a strong sense of community.

These unifying elements should be encouraged in future construction and preserved in redevelopment and general maintenance. Specifically, converting front porches to enclosed rooms should continue to be prohibited, and the City should continue to discourage property owners from placing major visual obstructions like fences and parked vehicles in front yards. However, regulations for all residential Character Areas should be more flexible so as to not necessarily require that new homes match existing traditional architectural styles, as long as they do not compromise the core features mentioned above.

Current code, regulations, and policies, namely the 5,000 square foot minimum lot size in residential (R) districts and the "unbuildable lot" policy, are inconsistent with the current built form of the city and our desired restoration of urban vitality, density, and pedestrian scale design. When applied to infill development on large parcels, they prohibit subdivision into lots that match the typical lot sizes found throughout the city. These regulations and policies should be revised so as to encourage the continuation of scale and form that define Rochester's historic neighborhoods. Consideration should be given to basing the minimum lot sizes for single-family detached homes on the average size of residential lots in the surrounding area, allowing for some percentage of variance, rather than dictating a one-size-fits-all approach.





## A CELEBRATION OF SIDEWALKS AND FRONT PORCHES

A consistent five-foot wide walkway is found along nearly every residential street in the city, encouraging people to walk for leisure, social, and practical reasons. Sidewalks not only connect all houses to their neighbors on a block, but are a human-scale, elaborate transportation network that links to nearly every home and business in Rochester. The presence of that network, which is largely decorated with tree lawns and street trees, is a major point of pride and unity for residents.

As well, the front porch serves as a transition zone between private and public space in support of the sidewalk commons. It is a design feature unique to North American residential architecture. It is so integral to urban and village living that the front porch is part of the Landmark Society of Western New York's 2017 *Five to Revive* list, which celebrates and advocates for the preservation of key community assets.



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