

# Housing Policy Analysis

## For the Cities of Long Prairie, Little Falls, Walker, Brainerd, and Wadena

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Region Five Photos at <http://s1184.photobucket.com/home/mnregionfive>

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## Introduction

The following document analyzes Long Prairie, Little Falls, Walker, Brainerd, and Wadena city policies relating to housing. This document is one piece of a larger analysis that addresses the five cities' policies regarding topics of land use, transportation, housing, economic development, parks, trails, open space, and recreation, water and natural resources, intergovernmental coordination, and healthcare. To ensure clarity, each topic is analyzed separately in its own document. Research and analysis was undertaken to provide the Region Five Development Consortium with a clearer understanding of how current policies relate and differ from each other across the cities. The following analysis will be helpful for workgroups to develop regional policies and recommendations, which will be adopted by the full consortium to guide the future growth and development of Region Five in a sustainable manner.

## Methodology

The following policies were taken from the most recent comprehensive plans from the cities of Long Prairie, Little Falls, Walker, Brainerd, and Wadena. This document addresses the similarities, differences, and potential conflicts between city policies regarding housing. Due to the uniqueness of each plan, not all cities addressed similar issues around the topic at hand. For this reason, policies were only included if at least two of the five cities addressed the issue. Additionally, each city's policies are written at a different level of specificity making it difficult to compare/contrast a detailed policy with a vague policy. For the purpose of this analysis, policies were considered similar to each other even when they differ on the level of detail.

For this analysis, sub-topics were created to guide the reader throughout the document. For example, this document contains sub-topics of orderly residential growth, downtown housing, housing rehabilitation, and so forth. Under each sub-topic, similarities, differences, and conflicts between city policies on an issue were analyzed and grouped into categories. Categories are listed as follows: Very Similar, Similar, Somewhat Similar, Unique/Potentially Conflicting, and Unique. Policies in the Very Similar category are ones that relate to each other at a clear level of specificity; policies under the Similar category are ones that relate in vision but not in detail; policies under the Somewhat Similar category relate to each other more similarly than uniquely; policies under Unique/Potentially Conflicting category are in potential disagreement with other policies pertaining to the same issue; and policies that are considered unique have some relationship to the issue at hand but are not similar to each other. Due to policies relating to more than one sub-topic, it is possible that the same policy will be included across sub-topics and categories. It is also possible that not all categories were used in this document, depending on how city policies relate to each other.

To make it clear to understand, each policy has been assigned a color that corresponds with a city. The county color code can be seen in the footer of each page. Additionally, text that is

bolded and highlighted signifies the relationship between policies under a category. Furthermore, a sources list is included below in this methodology section to provide readers with links to each county's most updated comprehensive plan.

## Sources

### 1) Long Prairie 1999 Comprehensive Plan:

<https://r5dcscrp.basecamphq.com/projects/7032816/file/100569548/Long%20Prairie%20Comprehensive%20Plan.pdf>

### 2) Little Falls Comprehensive Plan 2006-2020

<https://r5dcscrp.basecamphq.com/projects/7032816/file/101701381/Little%20Falls%20Comp%20Plan0001.pdf>

### 3) Walker Comprehensive Plan (adopted 2010)

[http://www.communitygrowth.com/\\_asset/ldkz5/Walker-Plan\\_Final\\_050310.pdf](http://www.communitygrowth.com/_asset/ldkz5/Walker-Plan_Final_050310.pdf)

### 4) Brainerd Comprehensive Plan (adopted 2004)

<http://www.ci.brainerd.mn.us/planning/docs/compplan.pdf>

### 5) City of Wadena Comprehensive Plan (adopted 1986)

<https://r5dcscrp.basecamphq.com/projects/7032816/file/101701382/Wadena%20Comp%20Plan.pdf>

## Findings

### I. Orderly Residential Growth and Annexation

Long Prairie and Brainerd continue the trend of including very similar policies in their housing portion. Both communities seek to guide residential growth in an orderly manner so new developments may be served by public improvements and the quality and character of neighborhoods may be preserved and enhanced.

Long Prairie and Brainerd also include unique policies regarding annexation. While Long Prairie seeks to annex land around the city for development of single and multiple family housing, Brainerd aims to work with adjacent units of government to promote growth through the development of orderly annexation plans.

## **II. Housing Density**

Brainerd and Wadena are the only two communities to include policies or goals relating to housing density. All of the policies are unique. Brainerd seeks to place high density housing only near areas with adequate transportation infrastructure and also to encourage low and high density housing in areas designated on the Land Use Plan. Furthermore, Brainerd will work with the County and adjacent townships to maintain low residential densities. Wadena only mentions maintaining existing residential densities.

## **III. Housing Infrastructure Suitability**

Long Prairie and Brainerd include somewhat similar policies addressing the sub-topic of housing development in areas with suitable infrastructure. Long Prairie wants to encourage in-fill housing in areas of the City already served by infrastructure. Brainerd's policy seeks to only allow high density housing in areas with adequate transportation infrastructure.

## **IV. Variety of Housing Types**

The comprehensive plans for each city discussed providing a variety of housing types, including senior or affordable housing. However, these sub-topics were not always discussed in more than one plan; therefore they were included under the broad topic of Variety of Housing Types.

The first sub-topic includes several broad policies from Long Prairie, Little Falls, and Walker which seek to provide a variety of housing options. Long Prairie and Little Falls include similar policies which aim to provide a variety or mix of housing types. Walker, however, includes a more unique policy, seeking to allow regulatory flexibility to expand housing options within the city.

Long Prairie, Little Falls, and Wadena all address the sub-topic of affordable housing somewhat similarly. Long Prairie wants to ensure that there is an adequate amount of housing maintained to serve families in need of affordable housing. Little Falls seeks to improve housing in terms of cost, including a second policy which aims to provide a variety of housing types and sizes, including affordable townhomes and condominiums. Finally, Wadena encourages the development of lower cost and subsidized housing to provide for low and moderate income families or individuals.

Long Prairie's comprehensive plan is the only one which addresses the topic of senior housing. The plan includes two unique policies aiming to promote the development of assisted and congregate care facilities for the City's growing elderly population.

## **V. Downtown Housing**

The topic of housing downtown is unique to the comprehensive plans of the cities. Little Falls and Brainerd both address this topic in a somewhat similar manner. Little Falls policy discusses mixed use development, specifically mentioning providing housing above the ground floor.

Though this particular policy does not mention downtown, it was included in the downtown portion of the comprehensive plan. Additionally, Little Falls seeks to make the Mississippi River the “focal point” of downtown by allowing and encouraging housing. Brainerd’s downtown housing policies differ slightly, but the message is the same. The city seeks to retain and attract an appropriate mix of housing opportunities downtown and includes a second, broader policy, which aims to encourage and support innovative housing opportunities downtown.

## **VI. Housing Rehabilitation**

Long Prairie, Little Falls, and Brainerd address the topic of housing rehabilitation. Little Falls and Brainerd both encourage the rehabilitation of housing. Brainerd’s policy only seeks to promote rehabilitation in appropriate areas of the city. Long Prairie includes a unique policy which involves using leveraging and the Revolving Funds, including those from the Housing and Redevelopment Authority, to serve as a catalyst for rehabilitation of structures.

## **VII. Housing and Land Use Planning**

Some comprehensive plans addressed the topic of housing within the land use portions. Because of this, many policies incorporate land use planning into housing development policies. Long Prairie and Brainerd include similar policies seeking to encourage the development of housing in areas designated in the Land Use Plan or that are compatible with adjacent land uses. There are several unique policies as well. Long Prairie includes broader policies encouraging residential growth in appropriate areas of the city or planned, residential growth. Walker seeks to properly scale and design neighborhoods so they enhance the public realm. Finally, Brainerd encourages well-designed residential subdivisions at urban densities only in designated growth areas.

Avoiding conflicts between industrial or commercial development and residential development was discussed very similarly by both Long Prairie and Brainerd. Both communities want to design and locate industrial or commercial development to avoid routing truck traffic through residential areas. Brainerd mentions buffering such developments from residential areas of the city.

## **VIII. Multi-Family Housing**

The topic of multi-family housing is addressed somewhat similarly by Long Prairie, Little Falls, and Brainerd. Though the terminology differs between the policies, all of the communities either encourage or acknowledge multi-family housing expansion. Long Prairie wants to encourage the development of multi-family housing units as well as annex land around the city for housing development and growth (specifically mentioning multi-family housing). Little Falls promotes the rehabilitation and upgrading of both single and multiple family housing. Finally, Brainerd seeks to prepare design standards for multi-family housing.

## **IX. Parks, Trails, and Housing**

Both Little Falls and Brainerd include policies recognizing the impact of parks and trails on housing development. Little Falls seeks to protect housing values and improve neighborhoods by planning for adequate parks, trails, and open space. Brainerd, somewhat similarly, encourages the development of trails and open space in new residential developments.

## **X. Neighborhood Character and Quality**

Four of the communities discuss neighborhood quality and maintaining or developing neighborhood character. Long Prairie and Brainerd include very similar policies which seek to guide residential growth in an orderly manner so that the quality and character of existing neighborhoods may be maintained or enhanced. Wadena includes a similar goal, to maintain the character and condition of residential neighborhoods. Walker's policy is unique, as it seeks to develop interconnected neighborhoods to create a sense of community.

## **XI. Housing Stock and Supply**

Long Prairie and Wadena are the only communities to address the maintenance of existing housing stock or an adequate housing supply. Each of the policies is unique. Long Prairie seeks to promote the maintenance and improvement of the existing housing stock. To ensure housing is being maintained, the city will evaluate the need to implement inspection procedures.

## **XII. Intergovernmental Coordination**

Long Prairie, Little Falls, and Brainerd all mention coordination with developers and government agencies. Both Little Falls and Brainerd promote working with the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA), though their motivations are unique. Little Falls seeks to use leveraging and Revolving Funds (specifically mentioning the HRA) to serve as a catalyst for rehabilitation of structures. Brainerd wants to strengthen and maintain a diverse retail base by cooperating with the HRA, among other agencies.

Long Prairie includes a broad policy seeking to work with federal, state, county, and local agencies to achieve its housing goals. Brainerd includes two additional policies seeking to work with adjacent townships to maintain low residential densities in growth areas and develop orderly annexation plans to promote orderly growth and development.

## **XIII. Coordination with Developers and Other Agencies**

Long Prairie is the only plan including policies that also encourage working with developers and other agencies. These policies seek to develop the best strategy to encourage construction of new residential subdivisions and additional senior housing through collaboration with developers, appropriate agencies, and non-profit organizations.

# **Policy Analysis**

## I. Orderly Residential Growth and Annexation

### A. Guiding Residential Growth in an Orderly Manner

#### 1. Very Similar

- a) Continue to guide residential growth in an orderly manner so that new developments can be effectively served by public improvements and that the character and quality of the City's existing neighborhoods can be maintained and enhanced
- b) Plan for the orderly and efficient growth of residential development in the City
- c) Continue to guide residential growth in an orderly and compact manner so that new developments can be effectively served by public improvements and that the character and quality of the city's existing neighborhoods can be maintained and enhanced
- d) Plan for the orderly, efficient and fiscally responsible growth of residential development in Brainerd

### B. Annexation

#### 1. Unique

- a) Annex land around Long Prairie for development of single family and multi-family housing to provide for future growth
- b) Work with adjacent units of government to develop orderly annexation plans for areas that are urban or are about to become urban in character located within the city's planned growth areas, as services can be provided to those properties. Work cooperatively with the adjacent townships, the county, and property owners to encourage orderly growth and development

## II. Housing Density

### A. Housing Density

#### 1. Unique

- a) Only place high-density developments in areas with adequate transportation infrastructure

- b) Encourage development of low density and high-density family housing units in those areas designated on the adopted Land Use Plan
- c) Work with the County and adjacent townships to maintain low residential densities in planned growth areas to promote the efficient extension of public utilities.
- d) Encourage well-designed residential subdivisions at urban densities in the designated growth areas of the city. Locate higher density residential developments in areas adjacent to higher density development and major transportation systems to efficiently address traffic volumes
- e) The City of Wadena will maintain the existing density of residential uses and will promote the continued quality and character of the residential neighborhoods

### III. Housing Infrastructure Suitability

#### A. Development in Areas with Suitable Infrastructure

##### 1. Somewhat Similar

- a) Encourage in-fill housing in areas of the City that are already served with infrastructure
- b) Only place high-density developments in areas with adequate transportation infrastructure

### IV. Variety of Housing Types

#### A. Housing Options

##### 1. Similar

- a) Support the opportunities for a balanced population by encouraging a variety of housing types
  - i. Follow through with the recommendations made in the Long Prairie 2001 Housing Plan on the needs and resources necessary to provide a variety of housing types
- b) Improve the quality, condition and mix of housing in terms of size, type, and cost

**2. Similar to Above (IVA1)**

- a) **Encourage the dispersion of housing types throughout the city**, as long as it is consistent with appropriate zoning and compatible with adjacent land uses

**3. Unique**

- a) **Allow regulatory flexibility within the city to expand housing options**

**B. Affordable Housing**

**1. Somewhat Similar**

- a) Promote the improvement and maintenance of the existing housing stock to **ensure that an adequate amount of housing is maintained to serve families in need of affordable housing**
- b) **Improve the quality, condition and mix of housing in terms of** size, type, and **cost**
  - i. **Provide a variety of housing types and sizes including affordable quality townhouses and condominiums**
- c) **To promote lower cost housing and encourage the development of subsidized housing for low and moderate income families and individuals**

**C. Senior Housing**

**1. Unique**

- a) **Work with local developers, non-profit organizations and others to locate, build and manage areas for additional senior housing, including congregate care and assisted living facilities**
- b) **Plan for and encourage development of additional assisted and unassisted living facilities for the City's growing elderly population**

**V. Housing Downtown**

**1. Somewhat Similar**

- a) **Encourage and promote some mixed use development with some developments to include housing above the ground floor**

- i. **Make the Mississippi River the public focal “point” of downtown** by advocating more prime mixed-use, improving and enhancing public space, **allowing and encouraging housing** and promoting and supporting festivals, art fairs and similar events
- b) **Retain and attract the appropriate mix of** retail/service business activity and **housing opportunities in Downtown**
  - i. **Encourage and support innovative housing opportunities in the Downtown area**

## VI. Housing Rehabilitation

### A. Housing Rehabilitation

#### 1. Similar

- a) **Promote rehabilitation** and upgrading **of single family and multiple family housing**
- b) **Encourage housing rehabilitation and redevelopment in appropriate areas**

#### 2. Unique

- a) **Continue to use leveraging and the Revolving Funds** (Economic Development Association, **Housing and Redevelopment Authority**, Downtown Special Service District, Historic Development Committee) **to serve as a catalyst for rehabilitation of structures** and for redevelopment.

## VII. Housing and Land Use Planning

### A. Housing and Land Use Planning

#### 1. Similar

- a) **Encourage the dispersion of housing types throughout the city, as long as it is consistent with appropriate zoning and compatible with adjacent land uses**
- b) **Encourage development of low density and high-density family housing units in those areas designated on the adopted Land Use Plan**

#### 2. Unique

- a) **Encourage residential development in appropriate areas in and around the City**
- b) **Provide available land for planned, continued residential growth**
- c) **Ensure that new housing is properly scaled at the neighborhood level and is designed in a way that enhances the public realm**

## **B. Industrial/Commercial and Housing Development**

### **1. Very Similar**

- a) **Design and locate industrial and commercial developments to avoid routing truck traffic through residential areas**
- b) **Locate and design industrial and commercial developments to avoid the routing of traffic through residential neighborhoods**

### **2. Somewhat Similar to Above (VIIB1)**

- a) **Buffer commercial and industrial developments from** environmentally sensitive areas and **residential areas within the community**

## **VIII. Multi-Family Housing**

### **A. Expansion of Multi-Family Housing**

#### **1. Somewhat Similar**

- a) **Encourage development of multiple family housing units** in those areas designated on the adopted Land Use Plan
- b) **Annex land around Long Prairie for development of** single family **and multi-family housing to provide for future growth**
- c) **Promote rehabilitation and upgrading of** single family and **multiple family housing**
- d) **Prepare design standards for** commercial, industrial and **multi-family housing development**

## IX. Parks, Trails, and Housing

### A. Parks, Trails, and Housing

#### 1. Somewhat Similar

- a) **Preserve and protect the housing values and improve neighborhoods by planning for adequate park, trails and open space**
- b) **Encourage the development of trail systems and open spaces in new residential developments** with “points of interest” destinations

## X. Neighborhood Character and Quality

### A. Maintaining Neighborhood Character and Quality

#### 1. Very Similar

- a) **Continue to guide residential growth in an orderly manner so that** new developments can be effectively served by public improvements and that **the character and quality of the City’s existing neighborhoods can be maintained and enhanced**
- b) **Continue to guide residential growth in an orderly and compact manner so that** new developments can be effectively served by public improvements and that **the character and quality of the city’s existing neighborhoods can be maintained and enhanced**

#### 2. Similar to Above (XA1)

- a) **To maintain the character and condition of existing housing and residential neighborhoods**

#### 3. Somewhat Similar to Above (XA1)

- a) **The City of Wadena will maintain the existing density of residential uses and will promote the continued quality and character of the residential neighborhoods**

#### 4. Unique

- a) **Develop neighborhoods that are interconnected and create a sense of community**

## XI. Housing Stock and Supply

## **A. Maintaining Housing Stock**

### **1. Unique**

- a) **Promote the improvement and maintenance of the existing housing stock** to ensure that an adequate amount of housing is maintained to serve families in need of affordable housing
- b) **Evaluate the need to implement inspection procedures to ensure the continued maintenance of housing stock**

## **B. Maintaining an Adequate Housing Supply**

### **1. Unique**

- a) **To encourage an adequate supply of housing to meet the needs of the residents in the community**

## **XII. Intergovernmental Coordination**

### **A. Coordination with Housing and Redevelopment Authority**

#### **1. Unique**

- a) **Continue to use leveraging and the Revolving Funds** (Economic Development Association, **Housing and Redevelopment Authority**, Downtown Special Service District, Historic Development Committee) **to serve as a catalyst for rehabilitation of structures and for redevelopment**
- b) **Strengthen and maintain a diverse retail base through the cooperation of the Brainerd Economic Development Authority, (EDA), Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA), BLADC, business organizations and community leaders**

### **B. Coordination with Townships, County, State, and Federal Agencies**

#### **1. Unique**

- a) **Work closely with federal, state, county, and local agencies and organizations that can help the City achieve its housing goals**
- b) **Work with the County and adjacent townships to maintain low residential densities in planned growth areas** to promote the efficient extension of public utilities

- c) **Work with adjacent units of government to develop orderly annexation plans** for areas that are urban or are about to become urban in character located within the city's planned growth areas, as services can be provided to those properties. **Work cooperatively with the adjacent townships, the county, and property owners to encourage orderly growth and development**

### **XIII. Coordination with Developers and Other Agencies**

#### **A. Coordination with Developers and Other Agencies**

##### **1. Unique**

- a) **Work with residential developers and appropriate agencies to develop the best strategy to encourage the construction of new residential subdivisions**
- b) **Work with local developers, non-profit organizations and others to locate, build and manage areas for additional senior housing**, including congregate care and assisted living facilities