



PROGRAM GUIDELINES FOR  
RAPIDS REDISCOVERED -  
A NEW HOUSING INVESTMENT  
PROGRAM

May 2023



# Rapids Rediscovered Guidelines

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# Rapids Rediscovered Guidelines

## 1. **Program Objectives**

- To encourage investment and the construction of new homes in transitional neighborhoods in order to strengthen them.
- To support the creation of new quality housing stock within the City designed to accommodate families.
- To remove blighted homes and vacant lots to reduce their negative impact on the surrounding neighborhood.
- To facilitate the construction of new housing on previously tax-deeded parcels currently held by the County to move them back onto the tax roll.
- To reduce barriers created by the need to remove functionally obsolete housing from properties located throughout the City.

The program objectives have been established by the City Council to serve as guidelines for the program and are anticipated to be achieved through the provision of incentive grants to homeowners and builders meeting the intent of the program.

## 2. **Definitions**

*Applicant:* An individual who submits an application to participate in the Rapids Rediscovered program. Applicant may be a builder, landlord, or the end buyer.

*Buyer:* An individual(s) who will own and occupy a new housing unit through this Program. The City may entertain applications from a builder or landlord wherein the end buyer is not yet identified.

*Builder:* Contractor who has signed a contract with the buyer to build the home submitted for consideration under the program.

*Contract for Private Development:* The contract between the City of Wisconsin Rapids and the builder, landlord or buyer which details out the conditions for the project and the level of grant support.

*Landlord:* Person who intends to buy the property to construct the home for rental purposes.

*Lot list:* The listing of lots that are eligible for the program. Ownership, price and lot details are included.

*Planning Commission:* The entity of the City responsible for the review of the applications and recommendation to the City Council of approval or denial.

*Program:* The Rapids Rediscovered housing incentive program.

*Redevelopment Lot:* A lot with an existing functionally obsolete housing unit that must be removed prior to a new home being constructed.

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*Vacant Lot:* A lot without an existing home or structure that is ready for new home construction.

### **3. Program Basics**

- The Community Development Department publishes and maintains a list of available vacant lots or redevelopment lots eligible for the program.
- The Builder/Landlord/Buyer completes an application meeting the minimum program requirements and submits the application along with an offer to purchase.
- The Planning Commission and City Council review the application and for compliance with the program.
- The lot is purchased by the builder, landlord or buyer either from the City or another third party.
- Builder constructs the new home meeting the requirements of the program; projects must be completed within one (1) year of approval.
- Typical grant support of \$5,000 for a vacant lot or \$10,000 for a redevelopment lot is provided to the applicant.

### **4. Application Requirements**

A complete application shall include the following items:

- Completed Application Form (no fee). Forms are available from the Community Development Department.
- Building Plans Including:
  - Blueprints. Floor plan and layouts of all levels including basement and unfinished areas.
  - Elevations. Elevations of all 4 sides of the proposed home, including views of the garage.
  - Site Plans. Site plan shall include location of the home, garage, accessory buildings, paved areas and landscaped areas.
  - Materials. Details of proposed building materials.
- Project Timeline. Timeline must show the project being completed within the 12-month timeframe allowed under the program. The Community Development Department can extend the timeline 6 months if under construction.
- Builder Contract. Signed copy of the contract between builder and buyer; if the buyer is known at the time of application.
- Purchase Agreement. Copy of the proposed purchase agreement for the eligible vacant lot or redevelopment lot, or at a minimum an accepted sale offer agreement.
- Financial Capability. A statement from a financial institution indicating willingness to provide the necessary construction capital to complete the project.

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## **5. Additional Program Requirements**

The following requirements are intended to ensure that both parties are in agreement as to the final outcome and expectations of the program.

- *Design Meeting.* Prior to the submission of an application, the applicant must meet with a design/architectural professional for the development of the necessary supporting documentation.
- *Property Purchase.* In the event the lot to be developed under the program is purchased from the City, the purchase price shall be the market value, however Common Council shall have the authority to entertain offers for less than the established price.
- *Contract for Private Development.* A contract for private development shall be signed between the City and the applicant. The contract is a standard form which includes conditions for the acquisition (if applicable) and development of the property as well as the grant amount. By submitting an application, the buyer is expected to agree to the terms of the contract.
- *Minimum Improvements and Development Value.* All approved projects will include a required minimum end value and minimum building standards.
- *Claw-back Provisions.* In the event the Buyer fails to complete the project as approved by the City, the City may exercise its rights provided in the contract to reclaim the property, if applicable.

## **6. House Design and Site Development Requirements**

All projects submitted must meet the minimum standards outlined below. All projects are subject to the review and approval by the Planning Commission and City Council. Housing design is critical to the success of the program and for maximizing the impact of the project in the chosen neighborhood. Design elements of importance include exterior materials, façade presentation and alignment, architectural elements, lot landscaping, and interior functionality. Chosen designs should blend with and enhance the surrounding neighborhood. All projects must meet the minimum standards found within the City's Zoning Code.

### *House Standards.*

- Owner occupancy is recommended but not required.
- Two-family dwellings can qualify if lot size standards are met.
- Include a minimum of 2 bedrooms.
- Include a minimum of 1 bathroom.
- Include a minimum 1 car garage.

### *Site Standards.*

- At the completion of construction, the site must be fully landscaped, including foundation plantings, grass seed or sodded, and a minimum of two shade trees

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within the front yard. Existing trees may meet the requirement and to the greatest extent possible, existing trees should be preserved.

- Site drainage shall be designed to prevent a detrimental impact on the adjoining properties and neighborhood.
- All vehicle use areas shall be hard surfaced in compliance with 11.06.66 of the City Zoning Code.

### *General Requirements.*

- The value of the home must meet or exceed the minimum value specified in the Contract for Private Development.
- Homes constructed through the program shall be stick-built new construction, however a modular home could be proposed if applicable standards are met.
- Exterior materials should be low maintenance and durable. Examples include brick, aluminum, vinyl and fiber cement siding.
- Size of the home in respect to height and square footage shall be compatible with the scale of the surrounding homes.
- Where possible, the dominance of any attached garage should be minimized through placement and architectural design. Garages that face the street shall not be located closer to the front lot line than the front of the principal building façade.

## **7. City Review Procedures**

- Pre-application meeting with Community Development staff before plans are finalized.
- Application is submitted a minimum of 30 days before the next regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting.
- Once an application on a specific lot is received, that lot is considered reserved until the review/approval process is completed.
- If staff determines that the application is incomplete, the applicant will be provided an additional 30 days to provide the missing items and/or information.
- Staff reviews the application to ensure conformance with the program.
- Staff prepares a report and recommendation for the Planning Commission.
- The application and report is placed on the next regularly scheduled Planning commission meeting agenda.
- Planning Commission reviews the application and recommendation from staff in order to make a recommendation to the City Council.
- If the recommendation from the Planning Commission is for approval, a draft Contract for Private Redevelopment is developed between the City and the applicant.
- City Council reviews the recommendations from staff and Planning Commission and takes action to approve or deny.

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- If the City Council action is to approve, the Contract for Private Redevelopment will be signed by the City and the applicant.
- Once the Contract has been signed the buyer closes on the lot, if applicable.
- Grant to be provided in concurrence with the issuance of a building permit to construct the dwelling.

### **8. Contact Information**

Questions regarding the Rapids Rediscovered Program should be directed to:

City of Wisconsin Rapids  
Community Development Department  
444 West Grand Avenue  
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495  
715-421-8225  
[kkearns@wirapids.org](mailto:kkearns@wirapids.org)  
[www.wirapids.org](http://www.wirapids.org)