



Newsletter

August, 2013

Message from the President

OWL Day

The Old West Lawrence Association (OWLA) annual OWL Day will be held on Saturday, September 28, 2013. As usual, OWL Day will combine an art sale with a neighborhood wide garage / yard sale. OWLA depends upon residents' contributing a share of their sale proceeds to the organization so that it can pay its bills.

The largest use of these funds is for the annual OWL Picnic which will take place on that same evening in its usual location on the 700 block of Mississippi Street.

The "Grill Men" will be at work on their grills providing burgers and hot dogs. The tap will be flowing with Free State beer. Bring a side dish and join the fun.

Work with the Lawrence Association of Neighborhoods (LAN)

OWLA continues to work with LAN to monitor actions by the City Commission and the Planning Commission, especially as their actions impact Old West Lawrence.

In an earlier Newsletter, we reported to you on an attempt to uncouple rezoning from a demonstration that the action would be in compliance with the comprehensive plan. Such a change would permit developers to rezone single family homes into multi-family homes without having to go through the Planning Commission and its public hearing process. That change was defeated.

Recently, an applicant from another RS5-zoned neighborhood asked for a change to the development code permitting Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in RS5 zones. This change has also been defeated.

ADUs are small, but complete, apartments built within an existing home. Nearly all of Old West Lawrence is zoned RS5. (Note: the zone permits residential single-family uses on lots of as small as 5,000 square feet.) Given our small lot size and relatively high density, ADUs are not permitted in RS5 zones, but they are permitted in all less dense single-family zones. I believe that ADUs can be a useful tool to help an owner restore an older home by providing for some rental income to help defray the costs of restoration or to provide a means to care for a family member.

However, the potential for abuse is large. Duplexes are not permitted in RS5 zones. The proposed changes to the development code could easily be used by developers to convert our single-family homes into

rental duplexes by making one of the tenants a principal in a corporate or limited partnership ownership entity. OWLA pointed out the problem, and the Planning Commission recommended that the City Commission deny the change.

The City Commission agreed with OWLA and rejected the proposed change. ADUs are not legal in the RS5 zones of OWL, unless the apartment existed prior to the mid-1960s when zoning was adopted.

Communication with Residents

OWLA has a website. Check us out at: OldWestLawrence.net

You can sign up to receive an email notification whenever there is official news posted on the website. The site will never share your email address with third parties. Go to the "Top News" page and look at the sidebar on the right. Near the bottom of the sidebar, under "Follow Blog via Email," enter your email address, and you are signed up.

There is also an email listserve maintained by the Association. To be added to that list, send an email to me at: mclurefamily@sbcglobal.net

We hope you will choose to stay informed by signing up for either or both of these means of communication.

-Kirk McClure, President

Volunteers Are Needed for the OWLA Neighborhood Picnic

If you have helped in the past, we appreciate it and hope that you will help again. A big project like this is best accomplished with a large number of people, each taking on a small part.

Laurie McLane-Higginson is volunteering to coordinate the Picnic this year and hopes that many other individuals will step forward to help. If you want to volunteer for this, please contact her at 841-2178 or at laurie.mclanehigginson@gmail.com

OWLA Picnic

Date: Saturday,
September 28, 2013

Time: 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Location: 700 Block of Mississippi Street

OWL Garage/Alley/Yard and Art Sale

The OWL garage sale has become a successful and fun tradition, especially with the addition of neighborhood artists showing and selling their work.

We are asking each participant to submit a 2- to 4-line description of their sale. We will then post all the descriptions on our website (*OldWestLawrence.net*).

Include your address, hours of your sale (a minimum of 8 a.m. until noon is suggested), location (alley, art studio, porch, yard, etc.) and a brief description of your offerings.

Send the information to: *pminkin@juno.com* by Monday, September 23, and we will put an ad in the *Lawrence Journal-World* telling people about the sales and directing them to the OWLA website.

We will also provide a list of addresses at each sale location. As in past years, we ask each participant to donate at least 15% of gross sales to OWLA to support our activities.

Money can be sent to the OWLA Treasurer, Steve Lopes, at 704 Ohio Street, or given to him or Kirk at the Picnic.

Thanks, *Phil Minkin*

Opinion: Thank You, City Commission

The City Commission recently made the right decision by refusing to extend eligibility for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) to RS5 zoning districts such as Old West Lawrence. OWL would not be a single-family neighborhood anymore if the proposal had passed.

Accessory Dwelling Unit is another way to say multifamily zoning, designed to allow a homeowner to rent an apartment to a maximum of 3 unrelated individuals. ADUs are often characterized as “granny flats” to allow people to care for family members, or promoted for other similarly appealing purposes.

The problem in Lawrence is that the ordinance was not written that way; there are no restrictions regarding what purpose an ADU must have. ADUs in Lawrence are, simply put, apartments for extra income with some occupancy rules and minimal design requirements.

- The number of permitted occupants is problematic in Lawrence because the City apparently does not count persons under the age of 18 in the occupant tally.
- Owner-occupancy is problematic because, as currently written, the Lawrence ordinance allows a business entity to qualify as an owner-occupant by giving a renter a minimal, largely meaningless ownership interest in the partnership or corporation.

- Units permitted by the Lawrence ordinance are not particularly small - among the units already approved elsewhere in the city, there are apartments with two bedrooms, a living area, a bath, and a kitchen. It is not uncommon for an entire basement to fit the size limitation.

There is already flexibility in RS5 zoning districts. Grandfathered-in rental apartments, new home offices, studios, and sleeping areas for mothers-in-law, adult children and other relatives are permitted.

As a neighborhood association in a historic neighborhood, OWLA has consistently encouraged conversion of multifamily dwellings into single family homes.

As a result of the transformation, our neighborhood is desired by many as a place to live.

Long-time residents will remember what Old West Lawrence was like in the 1970s, when a lot of owners had apartments in their homes. Over the years, neighbors quietly rejoiced as the extra units were removed from the houses, one by one.

Encouraged by other people’s commitment to single-family use and investment in home improvement, the rest of us stuck our necks out and invested in our houses, too.

By 1987 a noticeable upgrade in maintenance standards had taken hold. By 1997, many houses had added nice landscaping and gardens. OWL became beautiful. Our home values have improved correspondingly.

Allowing new multifamily rentals in Old West Lawrence would reverse the trend.

Single family zoning has been critical to our success. We need to remain vigilant defending it.

Thank you City Commission!

- *Karen Kressin*

We wish **we** had thought of it . . .

Old West Lawrence Facebook Page

Nope, the old West Lawrence Facebook page did not originate with OWLA. It does not represent the official positions of OWLA, and it should not be confused with OWLA’s official website, (*OldWestLawrence.net*), but we think it is one more thing that makes our neighborhood a great place to live.

If you are a Facebook user, you can access it. In Facebook lingo, it is an “Open Group.” According to the site, “Anyone can see the group, who’s in it, and what members post.” It currently has about 170 members.

Recent postings include neighborhood news, questions about old house problems, calls to support local issues like a 4-way stop sign at 7th and Alabama and a food drive, sharing advice about service providers, reports of suspicious activity in the neighborhood, found pets, lost items, praise for nice house rehabs . . . the list could go on and on. The information passed around is like news over the back fences of bygone times.

We urge residents to visit the page and participate. It’s a fun site, and you might learn something new or even find your lost pup.

By way of disclaimer, it should be noted that the Old West Lawrence Ass’n, its officers, and staff have no official relationship with the owners of the Old West Lawrence Facebook page. Thus, any posts on the Facebook page are the opinion of the poster only and do not reflect the opinions or official positions of the Old West Lawrence Ass’n.