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## Study: St. Charles must accommodate future growth with multifamily housing

By James Fuller

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A new regional study shows St. Charles will grow 27 percent by the year 2040, fueling a need for expanded housing options. While residents surveyed in the study agree multifamily housing and rental units are both a current and future need, nobody wants that type of housing in their current neighborhood.

The study is the work of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning and Kane County. St. Charles joins Batavia, Geneva and North Aurora as the Fox Valley Cluster section of an overall plan that will determine housing stock needs in the communities between now and 2040.

Affordable housing is a recurring topic in the city. Before the housing market crash, the city was nearing a trigger point where state officials could intervene to require cheaper living options. The market crash created a big jump in the city's affordable housing stock. City officials have been watching the impacts of an economic recovery on that number ever since.

The new study involved a survey of city residents. Most participants were single-family homeowners 45 or older. They generally agreed the placement of new multifamily housing should be done only through redevelopment projects or rejuvenation of vacant property. Specifically, the Oliver Hoffman property by The Quad mall on the east side of town is a site residents would support for townhouses or condos. Likewise, participants said the old St. Charles Mall site should be redeveloped.

A small majority said types of housing should be segregated by neighborhood rather than having a mix of rental, single-family and townhouses all in one area. In general, large apartment complexes would not fit anywhere in the city, participants said.

That notion fits in with a catch-22 revealed in the study.

Although residents agreed on the need for multifamily housing, when shown photos of actual multifamily housing developments, and asked how the building would fit in the city, all such projects were deemed as "Not in my neighborhood, but elsewhere in the community." The only types of housing participants said they would like to see in their own neighborhood were pictures of single-family homes.

The report is still in development. Aldermen will get a chance to review a final version later this year.

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