Final Report

Comprehensive Residential Code Review Committee (CRCRC)

City of Rollingwood, Texas

10/8/2025

Table of Contents

---

1. Background, Mandate & Structure

Formation and Purpose

- The Rollingwood City Council, at its regular meeting on March 22, 2023, formally created the Comprehensive Residential Code Review Committee (CRCRC).
- Its purpose is to provide a **community-based advisory forum** to ensure that a range of perspectives reflecting Rollingwood's community values help guide the city's long-term residential zoning and development policies.
- CRCRC developed recommendations were subject to approval by the Planning & Zoning Commission (P&Z) before formal submission to City Council. The ultimate decision making authority remains with the City Council.

Duties and Scope

The CRCRC was charged with (among other tasks):

- Reviewing and assessing prior public input (notably from the 2020–21 Comprehensive Plan Strike Force survey)

- Identifying gaps in public opinion or topics not addressed, soliciting additional input
- Analyzing combined public input, staff data, and council / P&Z concerns
- Developing a set of options (with pros/cons, phasing, and tradeoffs)
- Recommending priorities and interim / final policy proposals to P&Z, and eventually to the City Council
- Operating within open-meetings rules and ensuring transparency of process and deliberation

Subcommittee Structure
To manage the breadth of topics, CRCRC organized subcommittees (or focused workgroups) around themes such as survey analysis; tree / landscape / canopy; building height; setbacks and projections; and drainage/FAR (Floor Area Ratio).

Transparency & Reporting
The CRCRC maintained regular meeting schedules, posted agendas and minutes, and updated a web repository of documents for public review.

---

2. CRCRC Membership

The CRCRC is composed of seven members appointed by the City Council, selected for their interest, expertise, and willingness to serve. However, at the time of this report, only five members remain.

They are:

1. Dave Bench, Chair
2. Brian Rider, Vice Chair
3. Thom Farrell
4. Duke Garwood
5. Jay Van Bavel

Charter membership included:

6. Alex Robinette
7. Jeff Marx
8. Ryan Clinton

3. Process & Public Engagement

One of CRCRC's hallmarks has been a structured, multi-phase process that emphasizes public input, transparency, and collaborative iteration. Meetings were scheduled for the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month and were open to the public. Minutes were recorded and support was provided by Rollingwood staff.

Surveys & Data Collection

- The CRCRC built on results of the 2020–21 Comprehensive Plan Strike Force survey, which included questions on zoning and development preferences.
- In November of 2023, the CRCRC issued its own targeted survey on issues such as building height, tree canopy preservation, landscape preferences, floor area ratio, impervious cover, and setback tolerance. The survey aimed to quantify community preferences or tradeoffs.

Workshops & Public Workshops

- A public workshop was held on June 13, 2023 to solicit broad input on major topics (height, setbacks, trees, etc.).
- Subsequent workshops and public sessions were scheduled to present draft proposals, solicit feedback, and refine text. These included joint sessions with P&Z and City Council (e.g. September 4, 2024) focusing on residential building height, side yard projections, and tree/landscape policy.
- These joint sessions were opportunities to present unified drafts and gather feedback across bodies before final ordinance drafting.

Transparent Timeline & Iteration

- At several points in the process, CRCRC published a "timeline" marker: what has been done, what is next, expected deliverables.
- Meetings considered draft ordinance texts and/or recommended wording .
- Rollingwood staff maintained minutes, web postings, and document repositories to ensure public access to deliberations and drafts.
- This process has allowed evolving consensus and refinement, rather than rigid "vote once and done."

---

4. Major Policy Recommendations & Changes

CRCRC's work has coalesced around several core policy domains. Many of the its recommendations aimed to reduce ambiguity in the existing code, make measurement criteria more objective, and avoid loopholes exploited by inconsistent interpretation. While full implementation across all domains is not yet complete, CRCRC has succeeded in moving many key policy areas from concept to formal ordinance drafting and adoption.

Below is a detailed look at each area, the recommended changes, and status.

Policy Domain	Key Recommendations / Proposed Changes
Residential Building Height & Height Measurement	Building height measurement was the most contentious issue considered by the CRCRC and arguably the primary reason behind CRCRC creation. The issue was driven by public concern that developers were "gaming" the previous measurement method to gain building square footage resulting in homes with walls whose height exceeded the allowable maximum height by 10 feet. After many iterations, several submitted by the public, the CRCRC settled on a more precise definition and methodology based on a measurement technique known as "parallel plane". In simple terms, height should be measured from **original native ground surface** or **finished grade** (whichever is lower), up to the highest roof point (excluding allowable architectural elements). This addresses slope issues and ensures fairness over a variety of topographies. At its May 25, 2025 meeting, City council approved the CRCRC final recommendation which included a special exception allowance for severely challenged lots.
Maximum Building Height Limits	The existing maximum of **35 feet** remains a baseline, with limited allowances for non-occupiable features (chimneys, vents, lightning rods) and special exceptions (e.g. if utility or solar features require partial height flexibility).
Setbacks, Side Yard Projections & Encroachments	The CRCRC proposed clarifications to front, side, and rear setback depths, how much building "projections" (balanced eaves, roof overhangs) may encroach into setbacks, and treatment of accessory structures including pads for HVAC, pool mechanicals and power generators. All have been approved by City Council.

Policy Domain	Key Recommendations / Proposed Changes
Exposed Foundations	The CRCRC proposed a maximum foundation exposure limitation and required screening for that portion that is within public view. The proposal was approved by City Council.
Tree / Landscape / Tree Canopy & Critical Root Zone (CRZ) Protection	Recommendations include stronger protection of heritage / specimen trees, fees or penalties for tree removal, and stronger enforcement of critical root zone preservation during construction (e.g. fencing, limits on soil compaction). All recommendations were approved by City Council.
Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	The CRCRC considered acceptable FAR limits, but determined that FAR would be of limited value given the building height and setback recommendations already in place.
Fence Height	The CRCRC recommended a standard fence height of 6 feet with allowance for additional height with an engineered design. City council approved the recommendation with the standard being set to 8 feet.
Impervious Cover & Drainage	The CRCRC considered impervious cover thresholds, and strategies to manage stormwater/runoff (e.g. pervious paving, detention) but determined that it lacked the expertise to be effective in these areas. Instead, it recommended that a similar, CRCRC-like citizen committee armed with appropriate expertise be created to study and make recommendations on issues having to do with impervious cover and drainage.
Driveways	The CRCRC proposed that corner lot driveways connecting two streets be allowed under special exception. Although approved by P&Z, the proposal was voted down at the November 20, 2024 City Council meeting over safety concerns.
Lighting	The CRCRC considered adopting “dark sky” standards but instead proposed an ordinance based on Rollingwood’s commercial corridor lighting ordinance to restrict light trespass. At its April 2025 meeting, City Council approved the CRCRC lighting proposal as a “reference guide”. The proposal did not pass as an ordinance change.

Policy Domain	Key Recommendations / Proposed Changes
Enforcement & Compliance Mechanisms	Although the CRCRC recognized that full enforcement is beyond its direct scope, its recommended policies include clarifications to code text (to reduce ambiguity), creation of permit reviews or sign-offs tied to tree and setbacks, stronger inspection protocols, and penalties and increased application fees.
Other Considerations	The CRCRC considered several suggestions made by the public that were imbedded in survey comments. They included: creating special zoning for areas of like topography; limiting the number of allowable stories on a house; and explicitly restricting the area of a house's top story. The committee believed that the issues these suggestions intended to address were handled elsewhere in its recommendations.

---

5. Suggestions & Next Steps for the City of Rollingwood

1. **Community Education & Communication**
   Publish user-friendly diagrams, visual "before vs after" examples, simple FAQs, and possibly interactive tools showing how code changes affect a typical lot.
2. **Pilot / Phased Implementation & Monitoring**
   Consider a pilot or phased application of new rules (e.g. on certain zones or new permits) to test for unintended consequences. Monitor building permit reviews, variance requests, complaint rates, and code violations.
3. **Capacity Building for Enforcement**
   Ensure the city's permitting, inspection, and code enforcement staff are scaled and trained to implement and enforce the new standards. Develop checklists, permit review sheets, and clear enforcement protocols.
4. **Regular Review & Adjustment**
   Institutionalize a periodic review (e.g. every 3–5 years) of residential code performance. Gather post-implementation feedback and adjust rules if needed.
5. **Maintain Open Feedback Loops**
   Even after adoption, keep channels open (email, meetings, hearings) for residents to raise concerns and feedback. Consider small amendments where warranted.

6. **Transparency in Outcomes**
   Report annually to the public on how many permits used new rules, variance types, enforcement actions, and any observed effects (e.g. tree retention, changes in average home height). This builds trust.
7. **Impervious Cover & Drainage**

   Create a citizen committee armed with necessary expertise and funding to perform a comprehensive review of impervious cover and drainage issues and make recommendations.

---

6. Appendix: Key Documents & Meeting Milestones

Below is a nonexhaustive list of key documents/milestones

- CRCRC formation and Charter / duties page (City of Rollingwood)
- Rollingwood Comprehensive Residential Survey
- Public meeting agendas & packets
- Joint meeting notice (Building Height / Side Yard / Tree Canopy, Sept 4, 2024)
- Draft ordinance language (height measurement text) in meeting packets
- Updated Residential Landscaping & Tree Canopy Management Ordinance (adopted April 2025)
- Alex Robinette survey bullet points