Two-family dwellings (duplexes), townhouses, and multifamily (apartment) buildings developed in response to a number of factors, including population growth, economics and availability of land. The earliest multifamily structures attempted to appear as a single-family house in order to fit within the surrounding neighborhood. As the idea of multifamily structures became more acceptable and the demand for housing increased, the larger apartment building and/or complex developed as its own building type with its own distinct design criteria. The City of Roanoke experienced phenomenal periods of growth in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. By the 1920s, growth continued at a steady pace as the City expanded its boundaries several times with annexations. This growth, coupled with the need to provide quality working class housing led to the development of multifamily structures throughout the City. The three main types of multifamily structures found in Roanoke are discussed below.

This section also serves as a guide for building new two-family dwellings, townhouse, and multifamily apartment buildings. The examples below provide a template for how to appropriately site and build a new multifamily construction project that will respect and fit into the surrounding neighborhood. The scale of the examples below varies significantly, providing a variety of options for different scenarios.

**Two-Family Dwelling**

The duplex was a common form to develop in Roanoke. Duplexes are located throughout the City, although primarily found in the Downtown and Traditional neighborhoods. These two-family houses are found intermingled with single-family residences in these neighborhoods.

The duplex mimicked the single-family house in form, style, and detailing. This was accomplished by maintaining the same building setback, yard configuration, and incorporating the two units within one building form. The duplex often appeared as a single-family residence. The duplex had either a single exterior entrance into a vestibule, with separate interior doors to each unit, or two exterior entrances. It may also have had either one single, full-width porch, or two separate porches. Beyond the entrance and porch, the duplex appears much like a single-family house on the exterior with a single roof and regular window and door openings. Interior plans typically consisted of a single unit per floor (so that two interior staircases were not necessary and so that kitchen and bath plumbing could be stacked) or placed side by side with each unit consisting of two levels. The most common styles used for duplexes were the Colonial Revival or the American Foursquare as their
symmetrical form allowed for the dual units. In some cases, duplexes are found in either the Tudor Revival or the Craftsman/Bungalow style where modulations in the roof form and side entrances help to hide the two units.

The lot layout for a duplex is similar to that of a single-family dwelling, although it may be slightly wider. The duplex usually features a single, shared front and rear yard. Typically, one walkway led from the public sidewalk to the single front porch or split in front of the house to two porches.

Accessory structures, such as garages, are also similar to that of a single-family dwelling, although expanded to accommodate two cars. As in single-family dwellings in the Downtown and Traditional neighborhoods, the garages are usually located at the rear of the lot with access either from the alley or driveway.
Townhouses are found throughout the various neighborhoods of Roanoke and are seen as a less obvious form of multifamily housing than the apartment building. Constructed as single-family units that are attached to adjacent single-family units, the townhouse differs from the duplex in that they are located on individual lots and are always arranged side by side. Townhouses always have individual porches, entrances, and walkways. While the townhouse fits into a traditionally single-family neighborhood, it does feature a more condensed rhythm as the units are smaller than a typical single-family dwelling. The attached townhouse may include more stories on a shallower footprint to allow maximum light from the front and rear elevations, which will have the only exposure available for interior units. A variety of styles are used in designing attached townhouses. The simpler, more symmetrical Colonial Revival style is often used to give the row of townhouses a unified appearance. On the other hand, the more picturesque revival styles, such as the Tudor Revival with its varying materials, window and door arrangements, and roof forms, are often used to help differentiate the various units within a row.

The lot layout of the townhouse is similar to a single-family dwelling, just smaller. It will feature its own walkway and may have its own backyard or front courtyard. Garages may be shared as either one large unit along the rear of the lot or as single or double units. In the more modern examples, or where topography allows, the garages may be integrated into the rear or basement level of the townhouse.
The apartment building emerged as a new building form in Roanoke in the early twentieth century. Built as early as 1909, apartment buildings are typically integrated into the fabric of Downtown and Traditional neighborhoods. In the earlier neighborhoods, the apartment building was typically located on a larger lot located along a public streetcar or bus route. Apartment buildings in Roanoke, with a few exceptions, are three or four stories, as all levels were typically accessed by a stairwell. The primary design challenge was to get as many units on a site in an efficient manner that also provided adequate light and ventilation.

The smaller apartment buildings, often found in the Old Southwest or Gainsboro neighborhoods, were rectangular in form with four to six units per floor along a central, double-loaded corridor that allowed each apartment to have an exterior wall for light and ventilation. These smaller apartment buildings typically have a single entrance, in keeping with the single-family dwellings around them. The apartment building shown in the example contains 4 units on a 9,874 square foot lot.
As apartment buildings grew in size, they began to take on “U”- or “W”-shaped configurations to allow for more units with the same requirement of an exterior wall for light and ventilation. This new configuration also began to change the way an apartment building was organized. The size now required more than one staircase or corridor, which in turn led to more exterior entrances, often one or more per building block. Although the larger apartment building or complex typically respects the same setback of its neighbors, the new configuration was oriented around an interior courtyard rather than the street, so the entrances no longer directly addressed the street. Even though the U- and W- shaped configurations broke the facade into house-sized segments, the apartment building no longer tried to hide the fact that it housed multiple housing units.

Although the apartment building often differed in size, massing, and form from the surrounding single-family neighborhoods, they typically used the same materials and stylistic detailing that were popular at the time and found throughout the neighborhood. Apartment buildings are found in a variety of styles throughout Roanoke, including Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, Georgian Revival, and International styles. The symmetry and formality of Colonial Revival and Georgian Revival styles were based on early plantation examples in Virginia where the primary house was flanked by wings or dependencies. In contrast, the varying forms, materials, and massing of the Tudor-Revival style also lent itself to making the large building form more intimate or personalized. The International style was used to embrace the modern style of living in its construction, design, and form.
The primary difference in the large apartment building is its configuration on the lot. While following the same setback as its surroundings, the “U” and “W” shaped configurations turned away from the street to an inner courtyard for the first time. This created a central, shared yard or green space for the residents. In an effort to maximize use of the lot, the apartment building typically had no rear or side yard. Garages were either located in the rear of the building on the basement level, where topography allowed, or in a separate building along the alley.

The example on the opposite page of the “U” shaped apartment building contains 12 units on a 25,093 square foot lot. The example on this page of the “W” shaped apartment building contains 60 units on a 50,026 square foot lot. Both are integral components of a residential neighborhood containing a mix of single-family, two-family, and multifamily dwellings.
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