

**Community Forum on Infill**  
**Meeting Notes**  
Thursday, November 15, 2007  
Minnie Howard School, Library/Multi-media Room  
7:00 p.m.

***Infill Task Force Members Present***

Maria Wasowski (Acting Chair)  
Mary Konsoulis  
Lisa May  
Lee Weber  
Dave Brown  
Ken Billingsley  
Stephen Koenig

***City Staff Present***

Rich Josephson  
Steve Milone  
Peter Leiberg  
Mary Christesen  
Lee Webb  
Valerie Peterson  
Pat Mann  
Hal Phipps (Consultant)

***Welcome & Introductions***

Maria Wasowski, Acting Chair, opened the Community Forum, welcomed the public, and asked the Task Force members present to introduce themselves. About 25 community members were present.

***Presentation on Residential Infill Development***

City staff gave a presentation on Residential Infill Development. Staff reviewed the infill issue in Alexandria, described how the City regulates infill development, reviewed other tools that were available to regulated infill, and provided an overview of the Infill Task Force and what it has done to date.

***Group Exercise***

Community members present were divided into four small groups and asked to review 10 picture examples of new and renovated homes in Alexandria. As a group they reviewed each picture and discussed what they liked or disliked about each example and why. A

series of questions were provided to help focus the discussion on the reason why the group liked or disliked an example. An Infill Task Force member facilitated each group discussion and another member or staff recorded the group findings on a flip chart.

### ***Reports from Group Exercise***

A community member from each of the small groups summarized the group's comments as each picture example was shown on a projection screen. These summaries and the information from the flip charts will be used to highlight common themes to help define what aspects of infill projects enhance or undermine neighborhood character. The Infill Task Force will use this information to help determine what, if any, changes need to be made in City regulations to address the issue.

### ***Public Comment***

Comments and questions from the public focused on how the information from the Community Forum will be used by Infill Task Force and when and how they will address the infill issue. A calendar and agenda of upcoming Task Force meetings was distributed at the Forum. The community was encouraged to attend Task Force meetings and to keep track of Task Force activities on the City's Department of Planning and Zoning website.

## **THEMES AND SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY COMMENTS FROM GROUP EXERCISE\***

### **Design Themes**




- Good design is critical for a good infill project. The design has to have good proportions and fit well into the context of the neighborhood. The proper selection of quality materials and appropriate detailing and articulation are important.
- Design features such as window arrangement are important while a lack of windows on a blank wall facing the street have a negative impact.
- Excessive paving and prominent garage doors on the front of houses facing the street are unattractive and should be discouraged.
- A third story and/or complex rooflines are not compatible with Alexandria single family neighborhoods.
- Sensitive landscaping and the retention of trees are important to a good infill project.
- Front porches are a good neighborhood-friendly design element.

### **Bulk Issue Themes**




- Some infill projects are just too large for the existing neighborhood. Controls are needed to prevent large volume houses, houses that cover a large portion of the lot, or are too close to neighboring properties.
- Maintaining a neighborhood established threshold height and front building line is important to a good infill project.

\*See following pages for detailed overview of comments from group exercise.




## Community Forum on Infill – Flip Chart Comments from Group Exercise

Example	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
<p><b>1</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard to judge without context</li> <li>• Height is problematic</li> <li>• Volume is problematic</li> <li>• Footprint is similar to existing</li> <li>• Character not compatible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neighbors liked it</li> <li>• Need neighborhood context - down street – across street</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Height, style, setback</li> <li>• Size problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Footprint not radically different</li> <li>• Light &amp; air</li> <li>• Height &amp; location in relation to property lines</li> <li>• Could have changes roofline</li> <li>• Volume control needed</li> </ul>
<p><b>2</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crammed onto the lot</li> <li>• Not a good example</li> <li>• Front yard too small</li> <li>• Too busy - poorly proportioned</li> <li>• Looms over neighbors - affect on natural light</li> <li>• Too much house on the lot</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Out of context with other houses (style, mass, height, setback)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not bad design, but it is too big for the context</li> <li>• Not a historically appropriate design</li> <li>• But front porch &amp; height of 1<sup>st</sup> floor look ok with neighborhood</li> <li>• Primary issue: size</li> <li>• Too many deductions on FAR</li> <li>• 3<sup>rd</sup> level not in character</li> <li>• Dwarfs neighbors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Style ok</li> <li>• Volume control problem</li> <li>• Positioning of driveway</li> <li>• Setbacks</li> <li>• Reduced heights, can build closer</li> <li>• Height</li> <li>• Front okay</li> <li>• Multiple rooflines</li> </ul>
<p><b>3</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fits in pretty well</li> <li>• Looks ok from the street</li> <li>• Well proportioned at street façade</li> <li>• Roof forms have symmetry &amp; constancy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ugly dormers</li> <li>• Good setback</li> <li>• Too much lot coverage?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pretty good</li> <li>• Size seems to work well with neighbors</li> <li>• Design acceptable</li> <li>• House looks much larger in proportion to the lot compared to neighbors</li> <li>• FAR problem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping with neighborhood</li> <li>• In line with existing front setback</li> <li>• Better design</li> <li>• Takes up most of backyard</li> <li>• Height is more appropriate</li> <li>• Not overwhelming</li> <li>• Lot coverage?</li> <li>• Close to lot lines</li> </ul>


## Community Forum on Infill – Flip Chart Comments from Group Exercise

<p><b>4</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bad</li> <li>• Looks like a fire station (garage doors)</li> <li>• Side entrances without a front porch – discourages neighborly interaction</li> <li>• From looks like a back</li> <li>• Garage doors on the front should be discouraged/prevented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subdivision problem</li> <li>• Inconsistent with historic character of neighborhood</li> <li>• Unwelcome street appearance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reverse gables don't fit</li> <li>• Constipated look</li> <li>• Paved too much of service</li> <li>• Fails on all counts – height, size, placement</li> <li>• Auto oriented as opposed to street oriented</li> <li>• Not example of good infill</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fills whole back yard</li> <li>• Lot coverage problem</li> <li>• Design issues – looks industrial</li> <li>• Not in line with prevailing front setback</li> <li>• Garages</li> <li>• Large amount of paving in front yard (circular driveway)</li> <li>• Height &amp; width inconsistent?</li> <li>• Need volume control</li> <li>• Rooflines don't match neighborhood</li> </ul>
<p><b>5</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Horrible – unfriendly</li> <li>• Large blank unsymmetrical façade</li> <li>• Lacks detail</li> <li>• Doesn't address the streets well (corner lot)</li> <li>• Out of character in Delray</li> <li>• No landscape solution (yards too small)</li> <li>• Vertical volume too great for offsets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Out of character (design, façade)</li> <li>• Uses too much of lot</li> <li>• Mix of materials doesn't work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brick &amp; siding do not match</li> <li>• Scale is completely out of character</li> <li>• Bad infill</li> <li>• Where are the windows? – blank walls</li> <li>• Built by right!</li> <li>• No back yard</li> <li>• Atrium not in character</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lot coverage</li> <li>• Volume</li> <li>• Corner lots hard</li> <li>• Design – materials</li> <li>• Large house to maintain – resale value? – future for large homes?</li> <li>• Orientation</li> <li>• Prevailing setback?</li> </ul>
<p><b>6</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beautiful house – does it fit?</li> <li>• Replaces bungalow – occludes light of neighbors</li> <li>• Volume should be regulated</li> <li>• Storm water drainage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Side yard problem</li> <li>• Adjacent house makes worse</li> <li>• Height issue – consider neighborhood houses – not just adjacent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not horrible looking</li> <li>• Some members think it is too big – some think it is ok</li> <li>• Very big house on small lot with smaller side yard</li> <li>• Dormer does not fit in</li> <li>• FAR problem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lot size – lot coverage?</li> <li>• More in keeping with houses across the street</li> <li>• Design – top dormer?</li> <li>• Turned out to look nice</li> <li>• Centered on lot</li> </ul>

## Community Forum on Infill – Flip Chart Comments from Group Exercise

	issues			
<p><b>7</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very high – looms over neighbors</li> <li>• Lot elevation creates threshold issue</li> <li>• Awkward</li> <li>• Footprint too big</li> <li>• Attempts to mimic neighborhood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a nice look</li> <li>• Height ok in context</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slightly big but not a bad design</li> <li>• Threshold too high – makes house look huge next to its neighbors</li> <li>• House is too large but if threshold were in line it would not be so offensive</li> <li>• Style fits in and might work in different context</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retaining wall at sidewalk – consistent with block</li> <li>• Threshold too high – basement on top of grade</li> <li>• Too tall</li> <li>• Design &amp; materials ok</li> <li>• Design of rooflines could be changed</li> </ul>
<p><b>8</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good example</li> <li>• Symmetry</li> <li>• Compatible with neighborhood</li> <li>• Not massive</li> <li>• Windows fit neighborhood – align</li> <li>• Good corner solution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fits in well, ok – design, size</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not bad looking</li> <li>• Not unusual for neighborhood</li> <li>• Landscaping and green space helps this one work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good design</li> <li>• In keeping with neighborhood</li> <li>• Good lot coverage</li> <li>• Plenty of open space</li> </ul>
<p><b>9</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bad</li> <li>• Awkward</li> <li>• No articulation – too flat – barn like</li> <li>• Too far back on the lot</li> <li>• No curb appeal</li> <li>• No porch – not inviting</li> <li>• Doesn't fit the neighborhood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long wall view from next house</li> <li>• Design – poor</li> <li>• Out of character</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not enough windows – looks stark</li> <li>• Debate about whether we can/should legislate taste</li> <li>• Setback ok</li> <li>• Just doesn't look like it fits</li> <li>• Staff: should we have conservation district?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close property lines</li> <li>• Too much lot coverage</li> <li>• Not in keeping with neighborhood</li> <li>• Too tall</li> <li>• Pitch of roof too high</li> <li>• Bad color – design – combination of building materials</li> <li>• Dormers make it look bigger</li> <li>• Grade built up</li> <li>• Higher threshold than neighborhood</li> </ul>
<p><b>10</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nice design</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nice!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nice porch</li> </ul>

## Community Forum on Infill – Flip Chart Comments from Group Exercise

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 stories feels like 1.5</li> <li>• Good porch</li> <li>• Inviting</li> <li>• Works well on the corner</li> <li>• Well articulated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fits in well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because threshold sit on ground level, not too tall, design good &amp; fits in with neighborhood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saving big tree a plus</li> <li>• Close to side property</li> <li>• Garage too small (not useable?)</li> <li>• Very attractive house</li> <li>• A lot of square footage, but without 3<sup>rd</sup> story</li> <li>• Incorporated materials of neighborhood</li> <li>• Made good use of land</li> <li>• Reduced impact on neighborhood</li> </ul>
<p><b>Summary</b></p>	<p>(+) Articulation (-) Flat planes          (+) Fiting in          (+) Volume controls (-) FAR</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treescape preservation – landscaping very helpful (too much concrete a problem)</li> <li>• Common problem with many of the problem houses is bulk/size – out of proportion</li> <li>• Once there are basic general rules maybe each neighborhood should then decide if they want an overlay district</li> </ul>	