

Meeting Notes
Infill Task Force
Tuesday, October 16, 2007
City Hall Room 2000
7:00 p.m.

Members Present

Stew Dunn (Chair)
Lisa May
Maria Wasowski
Mary Konsoulis
Lee Weber
Gaver Nichols
Dave Brown

City Staff Present

Steve Milone
Peter Leiberg
Mary Christesen
Ignacio Pessoa
Valerie Peterson
Hal Phipps (Consultant)

Welcome

Valerie Peterson, Urban Planner, opened the meeting welcoming members and explained that Chair Stew Dunn and member Mary Konsoulis would be a few minutes late for the meeting. Valerie also said that an Infill Forum would be held during the month of November, either the week of November 12 or the week of November 26. She said that once the forum date was set, Task Force members would be notified. This would be an opportunity for citizens to learn about the Infill Task Force and to ask questions and comment about infill issues. She encouraged as many members as possible to attend.

Member Observations and Reflections on the Infill Tour

Valerie invited members of the Task Force to discuss their observations and reflections from the Infill Tour. She reviewed the questions that were passed out on the tour as a way for members to organize their thoughts. Task Force members took their turn in talking about their impressions and comments. (A summary of their comments will be available at the October 25 meeting).

Presentation and Discussion of Interim Infill Regulations

Valerie Peterson provided background on the interim infill regulations. She explained that these two regulations, threshold height and subdivision regulations had initially been approved by the Planning Commission and the City Council in June 2006 as interim measures with an expiration date of December 31, 2006. They were continued as interim measures in January 2007 with a new expiration date of December 31, 2007. The Council is looking to the Infill Task Force to make a recommendation about continuing the measures past the end of this calendar year.

Valerie went through a presentation of threshold height explaining that the regulation requires that for new construction and additions to the front of a dwelling, the height of the threshold or first finished floor can be no greater than 20% above the average threshold height of the neighborhood blockface, unless an SUP is approved. She discussed some changes that were made to strengthen the regulations when it was re-approved in January 2007. She gave an example of how the threshold height on the blockface is calculated and then provided a review of the projects that were affected by the regulation. A Task Force member asked how height is measured. The staff responded that height of a structure is the vertical distance measured from the average finished grade to the midpoint between the eaves and the ridge for a gable roof. However, for the purposes of threshold height, height is the vertical distance between the average existing grade to the top of the threshold or finished first floor.

Valerie described the interim subdivision regulation changes as strengthening the ordinance language to determine compatibility of proposed subdivisions. She reviewed a recent subdivision case that had been denied by the Council because the new language provided the support for looking at the built neighborhood in assessing compatibility. In response to a question, Ignacio Pessoa, City Attorney, said that the interim changes to the subdivision regulations go about as far as the regulations could be legally pushed to deal with the issue of compatibility with neighborhood character.

Valerie said that the staff recommendation was to continue the two interim regulations. After a discussion by the Task Force members, a motion was made by Dave Brown and seconded by Gaver Nichols to recommend that the threshold height and subdivision regulations be continued as interim measures until the Task Force has an opportunity to prepare a final report and recommendations. All Task Force members present approved the motion (Mr. Billingsley and Mr. Koenig were absent).

Presentation and discussion of Teardowns on Developed Substandard Lots

Hal Phipps, consultant, reviewed the issue of teardowns on developed single-family substandard lots. Maps had been prepared by GIS to show the location of developed single family substandard lots and vacant substandard lots. Currently, vacant substandard lots, if they meet certain conditions, may apply for an SUP to build a single-family dwelling. However, lots that already contain single-family dwellings may demolish the existing dwelling and build a new single family dwelling with a plot plan and a building

permit. Hal reviewed the figures on the number of single-family substandard lots, saying that about one-fourth of single-family developed lots are substandard as to lot size. Within the last three years, only two substandard developed lots have had teardowns and redevelopment.

The issue for the Task Force was: Should new houses that replace existing houses on single-family substandard lots go through a special review? Discussion by Task Force members followed. One member thought that a torn down house should be treated as a vacant lot and that a public review of the new dwelling helps to achieve the best result. Staff distributed a discussion paper that contained possible design standards. If appropriate design standards are codified in the zoning ordinance, building a replacement dwelling on a developed substandard lot could be approved administratively, subject to the standards.

Public Comments

- Consider open space requirements as an infill control tool.
- Consider options to reduce impermeable surfaces.
- Change the definition of height so that it is measured from existing grade rather than finished grade.
- Provide definitions for renovation versus new construction.
- Consider using a measure of volume rather than the current FAR.
- Tree loss is an issue.

Next Meeting

The next Infill Task Force meeting will be held October 25, 2007 in City Hall.