

City of Milwaukie - Code Assistance Phase 2 Stakeholder Meeting #1 Summary

**March 14, 2011
City of Milwaukie Planning Department**

Overview

The purpose of this meeting was to explore the city's existing standards for single-family residential (SFR) development and gather feedback from stakeholders. The discussion focused on case studies of residential lots in Milwaukie that were used to illustrate how the existing standards work and the type/size of development they currently allow. Because Milwaukie is mostly built out, much of new residential development is infill rather than new subdivisions. As such, compatibility with the existing neighborhood is especially important. Stakeholders were asked to consider the question "How can the city ensure that new single-family residential developments are good neighbors?"

Attendees

The following PMT members attended the meeting.

- Katie Mangle, City of Milwaukie Planning Director
- Marcy McInelly, Urbsworks President
- Ryan Marquardt, City of Milwaukie Planner
- Serah Breakstone, Angelo Planning Group

The following stakeholders attended the meeting:

- Gary Michaels, Island Station NDA
- Bryan Dorr, Ardenwald-Johnson Creek NDA
- Linda Hedges, Hector Campbell NDA
- Mary Weaver, Hector Campbell NDA
- Mary King, Ardenwald-Johnson Creek NDA
- Jim Mishler, Island Station NDA
- Pepi Anderson, Lewelling NDA

Summary

- Katie provided an overview of the project and the core issues that the city is hoping to address.



- Ryan provided a quick summary of the city’s current review and permitting process for new SFR development.
- One stakeholder asked how this project might impact flag lot development. This project will not change the regulations for creating a flag lot. Development standards for SFR on a flag lot will be the same as other SFR development (meaning any changes to SFR development standards will also apply to SFR on flag lots). Flag lots currently have more stringent setback standards than other SFR development.
- One stakeholder asked if this project is coordinating with the city’s Walk Safe Program and noted that “eyes on the street”, traffic calming, and safety/security should all be considered as part of the new residential development standards. It was suggested that safety factors should be outlined first, and then new standards should be developed around those factors.
- Marcy then began to walk through the case studies of three vacant lots in the R-7 and R-10 zones. Each case study presented an aerial photo of the lot, summary of lot characteristics, and applicable development standards. Each case study also included a prototype illustration to depict allowable building area and envelope based on existing standards.
- One stakeholder noted that a 5-foot side yard setback is too narrow for privacy and also raises fire safety concerns. Another participant stated that minimum standards for separation between buildings are based on fire safety codes. Serah noted that 5 feet for a side yard is a fairly typical setback requirement in other cities.
- A stakeholder asked if there is a minimum house size standard in Milwaukie’s code and whether or not an exception might be needed to develop a small house. The building code has some basic standards for housing size but the development code does not specify a minimum requirement for houses. Small lot sizes are likely to be more of an issue because the city does have minimum lot size requirements that could restrict development on a site.
- Ryan reviewed the lot coverage requirement, noting that lot coverage includes primary and accessory buildings and some decks, but not pavement. Lot coverage also does not take into account non-buildable areas like steep slopes; it is solely based on the total lot area. Katie noted that the city’s lot coverage standards are somewhat lower than other comparable cities.
- There was a lot of discussion about whether or not a large (relative to the homes around it) new infill home that is well-designed and well-built can be compatible with adjacent homes that are smaller and older. Many stakeholders agree that it’s difficult for a newer home (even with good design) to relate to existing houses that were built in a different era. However, there was also general consensus that variety in housing type and style is desirable, and infill homes should not be required to be carbon copies of their neighbors. One stakeholder also pointed out that a home that seems out of place in the current surroundings may become more compatible over time as other infill development occurs around it. The character of a neighborhood may change slowly over time and that’s not something the city should necessarily try to control. It was noted that a balance should be struck between regulatory oversight and a property owner’s right to express personal taste in building design.
- The group discussed the issue of remodels and expansions in terms of when design standards should apply. Currently, single-family remodels and expansions do not have to comply with design standards (they would have to comply with basic development standards such as setbacks, etc.). Several stakeholders felt that expansions should have to comply with design standards, and that perhaps a size threshold is needed to determine when standards apply.
- Several stakeholders mentioned privacy concerns particularly when homes are close together (narrow setbacks) and their windows are facing each other. The question was raised: how much

should the city try to regulate this issue? One stakeholder noted that privacy issues can be addressed through sensitive design and appropriate building scale.

- One stakeholder stated that the city should attempt to find a balance between providing quality housing stock and keeping prices affordable. The city should not be so regulatory that it discourages new development.
- One stakeholder noted that the existing fence height limit (six feet in side yards) is not always sufficient to provide privacy and that an 8-foot limit should be considered. Another stakeholder pointed out that the 6-foot limit is due, in part, to structural limitations – a fence over 6 feet in height would need additional structural elements to protect against wind damage.
- It was suggested that the city could provide a booklet of favorable design options for new infill development to encourage quality design, but not require it. Incentives such as a reduced permit review fee could also be used to encourage better development.
- Katie closed the meeting with a brief wrap-up and discussion of next steps. She highlighted upcoming opportunities for public involvement and encouraged stakeholders to attend.