

Interoffice Memorandum

To: Bill Monahan, City Manager

From: Katie Mangle, Planning Director

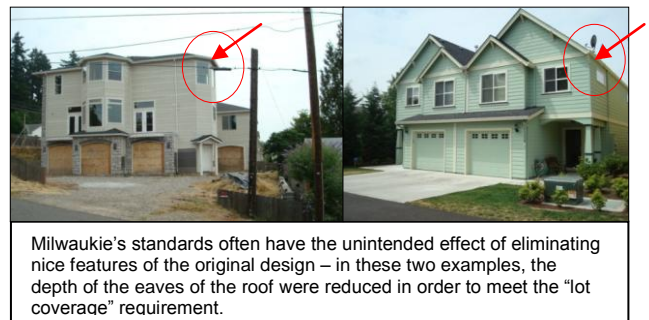
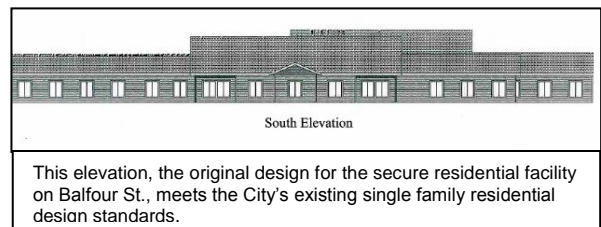
Date: February 3, 2011

Re: Residential Development Standards Project Overview

Following Council and Planning Commission direction, Planning staff is orchestrating the Residential Development Standards project, a long-range planning project whose objective is to establish a coherent set of zoning code policies to guide residential development in Milwaukie. The purpose of this memo is to explain the project, which staff is now beginning to implement. Staff is seeking participation from at least one councilor throughout the project.

Milwaukie is a city of neighborhoods. It is also a city of large lots and older homes, so there is room for both new "infill" development and expansion of existing homes. For years, many in the community have called for more attention to the design standards for infill residential development. Over time the City has added some restrictions (i.e., to restrict the creation of flag lots), but has yet to add some needed standards (i.e., design standards for multifamily housing). A 2009 code audit outlined the following specific problems with Milwaukie's housing development policies:

- Milwaukie has basic standards for single family home design that are less restrictive than those of most other cities in the region. We don't have specific standards for garages (location, length/percentage of façade), and the standards we have do not apply to significant expansions of existing homes.
- Milwaukie has standards governing minimum lot size, building setbacks and height, and lot coverage. However, the lot coverage standards are relatively restrictive, so builders are incentivized to build up if they can't build out. This contributes to the perception of new development feeling out of scale with existing development.
- The City should consider different approaches to make new buildings fit better into neighborhoods. Alternatives include variable lot coverage standards tied to size of the lot, or require a step-down in building height or larger side yard setbacks.
- Milwaukie's existing policies discourage a variety of housing types by establishing confusing standards and excessive process for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), duplexes, and prohibiting creative solutions such as clustered cottages. However, the Planning department is consistently fielding calls from Milwaukie



residents who want to pursue these types of development to make the best use of their property, often for their own family.

- Milwaukie has no design standards for multi-family residential development (only height and setback standards). Milwaukie, therefore, may have the lowest expectations in the region for how multifamily development looks and relates to its surroundings.

Since this is the first time since 1968 that the City will conduct a holistic review and update of its policies governing residential development, it will be an opportunity to discuss and address many other problems as well. Milwaukie's overall strategy for accommodating (or limiting) infill development reflects the controversial nature of the issue. The zoning code reflects an incoherent policy approach to providing needed housing investments in Milwaukie to serve the needs of the residents of Milwaukie.



The project will be focused on building design and site development standards; this project will not consider rezoning or density changes. This project will review all policies that shape new and expanded single and multi-family development, with the goal of creating a better set of standards that do not inadvertently discourage investment but result in a higher level of quality when projects are built. The community will be able to discuss the following questions and create a new set of policies.

- How can we ensure that every new building is a good neighbor?
- Given the lifestyle shifts that are shaping the housing needs of Milwaukie (retirement downsizing, while young families are moving to Milwaukie), what range of housing types should Milwaukie allow?
- Assuming that quality of design and control of impacts are essential, what kinds of limits are important to retain?
- How can our regulations encourage people to make more sustainable development choices?

Community Involvement

This discussion about the larger community questions will set the framework for the subsequent amendments to the zoning code, so it will be important to include a broad swath of the community. There will be many opportunities for community members to get involved, including a web survey, joining the Steering Committee, participating in a focus group, or being interviewed.

Though staff has been working on this project for several month, public involvement will begin in February in the following ways:

- Conducting an online survey about attitudes about different types of residential development.
- Scheduling stakeholder interviews.
- Forming a project Steering Committee. This committee, which will meet 5-6 times, is intended to include members of Council, the Planning Commission, Design and Landmarks Committee, Neighborhood District Associations, and interested community residents.
- Scheduling stakeholder focus groups, to include people with common interests, such as neighborhood leaders, residential developers, multifamily property owners, etc.

Thanks to a grant from the state, the City will draw upon the expertise of an architect who will prepare materials to illustrate existing and alternative residential development standards, and prepare draft code amendments. The grant funds to support the consultants' work will expire at the end of this fiscal year; it is anticipated that staff will continue to work on the project through completion in the fall.