

City of Milwaukie - Code Assistance Phase 2 Steering Committee Meeting Summary

**March 31, 2011
City Hall Conference Room**

Overview

This was the second Steering Committee meeting for the Residential Standards Project (Project). The purpose of this meeting was to develop an understanding of housing trends nationally and in Milwaukie. A second purpose was to review “prototypes” that illustrate existing development standards for single-family and multi-family housing, and share observations on how they could be modified as part of this project.

Attendees

The following staff, consultants and Steering Committee members attended the meeting:

- Katie Mangle, City of Milwaukie Planning Director
- Susan Shanks, City of Milwaukie Senior Planner
- Marcy McInelly, Urbsworks President
- Mary Dorman, Angelo Planning Group
- Mark Gamba, Steering Committee (SC)
- Terry Whisler, SC
- Jim Perrault, SC
- Jean Baker, SC
- Dion Shepard, SC
- Joe Loomis, SC
- Greg Hemer, SC
- Julie Wisner, SC
- Stephen McMurtrey, SC

National Trends

- The meeting started with introductions and Katie Mangle provided a brief overview of the Project and introduced Marcy.
- Marcy McInelly, AIA (Urbsworks) provided a summary of demographic trends and the impacts of the recession and how they affect future housing choices and trends. Marcy’s presentation touched on the following themes:
 - 1) Smaller families need smaller houses

2) Two separate cohorts of baby boomers. The younger group (46-54) faces distinct challenges, exacerbated by the recession. The older group (55-64) is more interested in “aging in place” and 75% prefer to retire in mixed-age and mixed-income settings in urban neighborhoods.

3) Generation Y may rent longer than past generations; this group wants to live in walkable urban areas.

4) Immigrant populations will account for majority of the nation’s population growth. Immigrants tend to be younger, have larger families and more traditional households. They are more likely to favor large houses with multi-generational families.

5) Real estate research indicates that the age of suburbanization and growing home ownership that characterized the postwar decades is over.

- Katie emphasized that all of the materials from Marcy’s presentation were available on the project web site.
- There was a lively discussion of the national trends and associated implications for Milwaukie. In general, there was a consensus that Milwaukie would be attractive for new housing because of proximity to jobs, good transportation and transit accessibility, a walkable town center, strong school and community amenities.
- Even though there is a lull in development now, there will likely be strong future demand for new housing in Milwaukie, and it is a good time to be doing this type of planning and design work to prepare for future development.
- In response to a question from the Steering Committee regarding the ratio of rental/ownership housing in Milwaukie, Katie responded that she thought it was about 50/50. Susan Shanks emphasized that rental housing didn’t just mean apartments and condos.
- There was also discussion of whether the more recent trends associated with the recession would be durable. In general, there seemed to be a consensus that things have changed and this isn’t just a blip.
- When you consider the connection to the light rail system, Milwaukie is like an urban village.
- Katie emphasized that this project is not proposing dramatic change of established single family neighborhoods. However, it does make sense to think about a broader range of housing types (particularly in multi-family zones).

Prototype Site Illustrations

- Katie described that the purpose of the prototype site illustrations is to help the community understand and analyze the City’s existing development standards through illustrations and images. Illustrations are provided for vacant sites in Milwaukie: 3 sites zoned for Single-Family and 3 sites zoned for Multifamily.
- The graphics represent the maximum allowable building envelope that could be built on each site under existing development standards (lot size, setbacks, lot coverage, etc.)
- Katie also stated that we will cycle back and “test” proposed changes to development and/or design standards with the prototype site illustrations.
- There was a general question of what standards were on the table as part of this project. Katie clarified that it is not looking at rezoning, but could consider changes to development standards relating to building form, placement, and design.
- Katie emphasized that existing zoning already allows more development. However, the regulations don’t provide much say in what new development should look like. Current standards aren’t offering enough housing options (such as cottage and courtyard housing) and the City needs better tools.

- The single-family zones are simpler and we expect fewer changes. The multifamily zones do not provide enough flexibility for different housing types.
- There seemed to be interest in looking at an option of increasing lot coverage with a matching reduction in building height. This approach might help to make infill more compatible in certain neighborhoods.
- Susan clarified that all structures are counted in the maximum lot coverage, including accessory structures. Susan also clarified that there is a minimum vegetation requirement, but that requirement combined with the lot coverage requirement doesn't add up to 100%.
- There seemed to be a consensus that front yard setbacks in established residential areas were more sensitive than side & rear setbacks. If front setbacks are consistent, allowing an infill dwelling with a different setback looks out of place and jarring.

Single Family Design Standards

- Staff provided an overview of the existing design standards for single-family homes. The standards currently apply to new construction. There are two required standards: 1) Main entrance standard, and 2) 12% window standard. Additionally, 3 design features must be chosen from a menu of 12 options.
- There didn't seem to be a strong steering committee consensus on whether the existing single-family design standards were appropriate, or whether they should apply to remodels.
- A question was asked about solar standards; staff responded that the existing solar regulations are very complex and they only apply to land divisions.
- There was a discussion of the purpose of the main entrance and window standards. In general, there was discussion of having a connection to the street and providing "eyes on the street." The standards try to avoid turning a blank wall to the street.
- Susan also noted that existing regulations do not allow detached accessory dwelling units (ADU). There seemed to be a consensus to consider revising the code standards to allow detached ADUs as part of this project.
- Other items the group may want to consider include standards for garages (location, width) and removing eaves from lot coverage calculations.
- Several members of the committee expressed a desire for flexibility and didn't see the benefit of "cookie cutter" design standards.
- Katie emphasized that staff has been developing a "virtual tour" with photos and encouraged Steering Committee members to take photos of what they like and don't like and forward them on to staff.
- Several members of the Committee cautioned that we shouldn't forget the economics of remodels. If it becomes too expensive to comply with the design standards, maybe someone decides not to improve their home. There was mention of tying the applicability of the standards to the percentage of the improvement – either square footage or improvement value. We need to make sure to take remodelers' budgets into account.
- Others mentioned that baseline design standards were important - you can see some bad additions. It was suggested that the group might want to focus on what we don't want (such as T-111 siding).

Next Steps

- Katie described the stakeholder meetings. One meeting has already been held with NDA representatives. Another meeting is scheduled with builders/developers on April 5th.

- A large public workshop is planned for the evening of 4/25. The Steering Committee will be encouraged to attend and participate in the public workshop.
- In closing, Steering Committee members were encouraged to take photos of residential examples they liked and didn't like and forward them on to staff to add to the virtual tour.