

# Residential Design Standards Steering Committee

## June 30, 2011, 4:00 PM, City Hall Conference Room

### Meeting Notes

Steering Committee members:

Jim Perrault, Jean Baker, Dion Shepard, Terry Whistler, Mark Gamba, David Aschenbrenner, Greg Hemer

Project team:

Katie Mangle, Marcy McInelly, Susan Shanks, Ryan Marquardt

- Greg introduced the idea that every new home should have at least one solar powered light, rain barrel, or compost bin.
- Susan presented some of the City's existing tools for regulating the form and location of new homes, as covered in the Policy Summary on Development Standards
  - Mark asked if we should regulate the amount of hardscape on a lot
  - Katie mentioned that the standards discussed by the steering committee today can apply to single family housing development in all residential zones (not just the lower density zones).
  - Terry asked why the City does not require that new development be compatible with surrounding development. He also indicated he is interested in seeing houses designed to facilitate the installation of solar panels.
- Marcy presented the materials about regulatory tools for compatibility
  - Lot coverage: Do the existing zones have the right lot coverage percentages? Should there be different standards for larger lots?
    - Mark brought up the idea of having a set lot coverage for the primary structure and a second lot coverage allowance for an accessory dwelling unit (ADU). With current lot coverage standards, a property could use up its allowed lot coverage on the primary structure and not be able to add an ADU in the future. He also suggested that properties should be able to get additional lot coverage by giving up existing hardscaped or driveway area.
    - Susan mentioned that a property with more vegetated area than the minimum requirement could get increase lot coverage.
    - Mark believes that solar accessibility should be the primary consideration in development standards.
  - Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

- Greg thought that FAR is a good regulation
  - Mark liked the idea of a smaller footprint allowing for increased height so long as it doesn't shade neighboring property (precluding home agriculture use).
  - Jim suggested using FAR as a regulation for ADU size based on the size of the primary structure
  - Mark suggested that the two key regulations be a maximum hardscape area and FAR
  - Marcy observed that FAR is not a good compatibility standard since it allows for a range between low structures with large footprints to tall skinny structures.
- Minimum Vegetation: this is an existing standard in Milwaukie, could be modified to specify area on a property where vegetation is required, such as the front yard.
    - Mark believes that it is OK to have the entire front yard as hardscape if it is a shaded area and helps create more space for solar access and vegetation elsewhere on the lot.
    - Marcy observed that this creates some tension between standards for sustainability and standards for compatibility.
    - Terry asked under what circumstances compatibility should be a primary value. Is there a way to differentiate when it is important for an area and when it is not.
    - Greg stated that it is good to have front setbacks available for off-street parking.
- Height: the current height regulations measure building height from the front face of the building, have different measurements for different roof types, and do not account for slopes on site.
    - How height is measured on sloped sites should be addressed so that those with sloped lots are neither given more or less development rights than those on flat lots. Height restrictions for upwards sloping lots should not be overly constraining and for downward sloping lots should not be overly permissive, e.g. allowing some homes to tower over others.
- Side setbacks
    - Mark thought that side setback problems may be solved through regulating maximum hardscape and solar access.
    - Marcy noted that the group should discuss solar access parameters

- Terry stated that roof pitch and orientation are important aspects of solar access
  - Mark stated that solar access regulations should ensure that a house does not shade the house or garden area on an abutting property, such as a 'no more than X hours of shade during the hours of y to z during the growing season'.
  - General discussion about tree cutting or tree preservation vis a vis solar access regulations
  - Most of the committee recommended that sustainability needs to be added to the livability goals of the residential design project.
- Susan presented the 3 questions on page 3 of the meeting materials handout for consideration by the steering committee
  - Do we have the right goals for the project?
    - Greg reiterated that we need to add sustainability as a goal.
    - Terry added that sustainability should consider solar, water, soil, and impacts generated off-site from materials production. He added that the project should allow urban land to be better utilized since this encourages sustainability by reducing sprawl.
    - Jean believes the goals should encourage sustainability as well as have the goal of creating development that is a good neighbor.
    - Marcy summarized the discussion and noted there is a difference between maximum intensification of a property (increasing density) and maximum utilization (having single-family dwelling and ADU) and noted that there may be tradeoffs between some sustainability and compatibility goals.
    - David wants to see the possibility for large lots to be preserved, and does not want to see the loss of large lots by flag lot partitions. Katie and Marcy responded that this project will not change flag lot standards, and that there are few properties left in the city that can do a flag lot partition.
    - Marcy asked what 'intensification' means to the committee.
      - Terry thinks intensification implies the ability to have more family members live on a property in a detached ADU.
  - Is any one of the goals – sustainability, compatibility, flexibility – more important than the others?

- David does not think any one is more important than the others.
- Terry believes that compatibility is a difficult goal to define, and David agreed. It can mean uniformity with regard to height, setback, and/or many other features.
- Are there areas of the City where uniformity of development is more important than others?
  - Jean does not believe it is important, and can in fact be boring.
  - David believes that in some areas, such as an area where houses all have deep front yard setbacks, that it can be important.
  - Terry believes that it can be important; however, pursuing compatibility as a goal can undermine goals related to sustainability and flexibility.
  - The committee indicated that they are in favor of allowances for front yard setbacks to be reduced to be more conforming with surrounding development, but not with requiring increased front yard setbacks if surrounding properties had front yards that exceed the minimum setback requirement.
  - There was general consensus that existing development should not overly constrain new development.
- Should the City change its policy for regulating duplexes in lower density zones?
  - Jean thought that duplexes should be allowed outright in lower density zones.
  - Greg would be OK with allowing duplexes on smaller lot sizes. Project staff clarified that the proposal is not to change lot size requirements, as this is related to density, but rather to look at changes to the level of review for duplexes.
  - Dion believes that duplexes should have the same (or higher) review level as a flag lot partition, which is a Type II review. She would favor having both duplexes and flag lots require type III review, though she understands that the review type for flag lots would not change with this project.
  - David thinks that there is a distinction to be made between new duplex development and conversion of an existing single family dwelling into a duplex. The later typically does not look as nice or act as a good neighbor. They Type II review makes sense for new construction.

- Terry thinks it is OK to simplify the process, and that it would be good to have design standards in place for duplexes.
- Katie added that there are options for requiring different review levels for duplexes based on their location. For example, duplexes on corner lots or higher classification streets could be allowed outright, while duplexes on residential street would require some review.
- Jean added that duplexes can be disguised somewhat, and that some are split vertically, rather than horizontally.
- David believes it is OK to loosen up the review requirements somewhat.
- Terry believes it is OK to allow them outright if they are well designed and in appropriate locations, and should require Type II review otherwise.
- The committee concurred that it is OK to allow duplexes outright on higher classification streets and on corner lots if appropriate design standards are met, and that they should otherwise require Type II review.

Meeting adjourned at about 6 PM.