

Residential Design Standards Steering Committee

September 21, 2011, 5:00 – 8:00 PM, City Hall Conference Room

Meeting Notes

Steering Committee members:

Greg Hemer, Mark Gamba, Stephen McMurtrey, David Aschenbrenner, Terry Whistler, Jim Perrault, Dion Shepard, Joe Loomis

Project team:

Katie Mangle, Susan Shanks, Ryan Marquardt

- Katie began her presentation about multifamily development and design standards. She asked the group why they feel multifamily design standards are important:
 - Mark said design standards are important to get good quality development because developers will tend to build as cheaply as possible
 - David said that long term maintenance of multifamily development is an important issue; these developments become run-down over time
 - Greg said that multifamily developments do receive upgrades/facelifts over time, and that property owners do this to generate better rents
 - Stephen said design standards are important so that multifamily development integrates well with surrounding development. Developers do not want to build cheaply since it costs more to maintain over time. Standards are important to make sure that multifamily development includes amenities that increase livability. This is important because not everyone can afford a single-family home in Milwaukee.
- Katie presented on the topic of public and private open space for multifamily housing.
 - Stephen mentioned that developers tend to shy away from decks since they are exposed and tend to deteriorate, which requires more maintenance.
 - Terry stated that small private open spaces are not functional and don't provide much benefit.
 - Mark mentioned that even these small spaces are sometimes the only place for multifamily residents to have a space for home projects and barbeques, etc.
 - Stephen pointed out that private open space can be problematic since it attracts clutter and insurance policies don't allow cooking with open flames on decks. He suggested the focus should be on providing quality shared spaces in a development where residents can barbeque, work on projects, etc.
 - Mark agreed with Stephen's point so long as the space is functional.

- Dion stated that she wants to encourage development that encourages/allows for ownership
- Greg supports having open space on building tops since it more efficiently utilizes land
- David suggested that both public and private open spaces should be required for the objective review path (Type I), and there should be flexibility to propose high-quality public open space in lieu of private open space in the discretionary review path (Type II).
- Katie presented multifamily design concepts related to parking.
 - Mark encouraged location of parking in front of a building since it decrease the need for on-site driveways, which reduces the overall amount of pavement
 - There was general discussion about requirements related to stormwater runoff from parking areas. Katie stated that Milwaukie currently requires development to conform to Portland's stormwater requirements, which generally require on-site management.
 - Greg suggested that alleys and access ways that are not in front of a building are an overall benefit for site design, and that flexibility should be allowed to locate some parking areas in front of a development.
- Katie presented multifamily design concepts related to building orientation.
 - Mark commented that orientation should allow for optimum solar access.
 - Terry and David clarified that the topic is more about articulation of building entrances rather than the larger orientation of structures on a site.
 - Mark stated that the articulation of the entry should be done architecturally, and not just with directional signs on-site.
 - Terry stated that there should not allow too may units to be accessed from one single entry area, even if the entrance is well-articulated. Units generally have their own defined entry areas.
- Katie presented multifamily design concepts related to building massing.
 - Mark stated that building articulation should be on all sides of a building, not just the street-facing side.
 - Jim mentioned that some of the measurements listed in the draft code were larger than the 'human-scaled' development that is expressed by the project goals.

- Katie asked the group for ideas about what makes a building façade poorly articulated. The responses included walls that are monolithic, have only one material, and unbroken in off-sets etc., and have small or no windows. Suggestions about breaking up massing include changes of colors, texture, materials, and building offsets.
 - David said that multifamily development should allow for setbacks where taller portions of a building are more distant from surrounding development than lower floors.
 - David added that lower floors of a building should even be allowed to be closer to a property line in exchange for including setbacks. Another incentive might be to allow increase building height in exchange for setbacks.
 - Stephen pointed out that buildings of 4 stories or more require developers to pay construction workers the 'prevailing wage' rate based on Bureau of Labor and Industries standards. Allowing taller buildings may not be a good incentive since constructing taller buildings substantially increases the cost.
 - Several people discussed the advantage of having setbacks next to smaller-scale existing structures and allowing buildings to be pushed more toward the street.
 - Stephen noted that requiring these setbacks can severely constrain the development potential of a property.
 - Susan and Katie noted that the city has an existing policy requiring buffers between multifamily development in higher density zones and single-family uses in lower density zones.
 - Katie noted that there is a key policy question in how we treat the relationship between new multifamily developments that are adjacent to existing single-family development when these uses are *within* the same zone. This is a significant issue in the Historic Milwaukie NDA within R-2 and R-1-B zoning. Should the development standards take the position that single-family uses in high density zones will eventually redevelop, and new multi-family development should not need to be compatible? Or, should the standards acknowledge existing single-family as a long-term use that will be present in such zones, and require more compatibility between new multifamily development and existing single-family uses?
 - Dion indicated that new multifamily should be expected to be compatible with the existing development in high density zones.
- Katie presented multifamily design concepts related to pedestrian connectivity on site

- There was general consensus that it was important to have pedestrian connections from the street to and through the site, that functionality was more important than aesthetics (although having both was desirable), and that all connections should be designed with safety in mind (both easy to find and well-lit).
- Katie presented multifamily design concepts related to sustainability
 - There was some support amongst the group for requiring some basic elements, such as solar water heating.
 - Others in the group preferred offering incentives, such as tax breaks or system development charge credits, as a way to provide incentives for the incorporation of sustainable design features.
- Susan made a presentation about rowhouses and specific design considerations for this typology
 - Greg stated that rowhouses should be allowed only on new streets. They do not fit in with existing development.
 - Terry believed they should be regulated similarly to duplexes, i.e., allowing them in higher density zones, making allowances for them in some specific situations in low density zones, and requiring a Type II review elsewhere. He also suggested allowing rowhousing with single-car garages on the front side of a street, and allowing double-car garages only from an alley.
 - Susan clarified that rowhouses would be allowed only in higher density zones and not throughout the city.
 - David stated that a setback is necessary for stairs in front of a rowhouse so that the stairs do not extend out to the front property line.
 - Stephen stated that up to 3-4 rowhouses in a row should be allowed, and that garages should be allowed in the front of townhouses.
 - David suggested that articulation to differentiate the individual units in rowhouses is a good to require.
 - Terry expressed that a group of 4 houses is a good limit to the number of consecutive rowhouses allowed.
 - Mark suggested that good rowhouse development is reflected by groups that are well built, that stretch the length of a regular block, that have a small flight of stairs, are close to the front lot line, and do not have parking in front. He stated that offsets and articulation are not necessary elements in creating good rowhouses. He elaborated that a key feature of good rowhouses is that the entry

steps serve as a transition between the public and private realm. For this reason, it may be appropriate to allow steps to encroach into a setback.

- Terry pointed out that curb cuts in front of rowhouses can lead to an uneven, undulating sidewalk, and that the sidewalk in front of rowhouses should be level.
- There was general agreement in the group there should not be more than 4 consecutive rowhouses without a break.
- The group suggested that stairs of 1/2 flight or less in height be allowed some encroachment into the front setback. There was also a suggestion that requiring at least a small flight of steps to the entrance may be desirable.
- Katie concluded the meeting by noting that the steering committee did not discuss cottage cluster housing or allowing limited commercial uses in residential zones on arterial streets through a conditional use process. The project team would address these topics at upcoming Planning Commission worksessions. The project open house will occur on October 20, 2011.

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 PM.