

City of Milwaukie - Code Assistance Phase 2

Stakeholder Meeting #2

Summary

April 5, 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 developers and real estate professionals in the Milwaukie area. 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 Milwaukie achieve the community's goals for compatibility without dissuading new development?

Attendees

The following PMT members attended the meeting.

- Susan Shanks, City of Milwaukie Senior Planner
- Marcy McInelly, Urbsworks President
- Serah Breakstone, Angelo Planning Group

The following stakeholders attended the meeting:

- Dale Smelser, DB3 Construction Company
- Steve Smelser, Smelser Homes
- Ernie Platt, Home Builders of America
- Mark Meek, Markram Properties, LLC

Summary

- Susan provided an overview of the code amendment process and explained the focus on single-family development and design standards.
- Marcy gave an overview of national trends in household size, and the impacts on the housing market of the current recession, the baby boomer generation, and immigrants and their families.
- Marcy also provided a quick explanation of the prototypes for single family development in Milwaukie. She explained that the focus of this discussion is on infill development and

compatibility solutions such as requiring transitions, limiting scale, using gradients, or a combination of all these elements.

The following are stakeholder comments and questions, along with any response from the project team:

- Does the city allow deviations or adjustments to dimensional standards without a variance? The answer is no, but the city has recently revised its variance language with the intent of making the variance process simpler.
- ADU development is a significant issue since it has the potential to impact density without being accounted for (ADUs are not included in density calculations).
- ADUs should have a size limit but the current limits (600 or 800 sf) are too restrictive and don't allow for quality ADU development.
- It's important to note that feedback from citizens is different depending on how you approach the issue – most people want regulations to apply to others, but not to them.
- It's likely that good design standards can help to alleviate concerns about density increases and associated compatibility issues.
- When land values are high enough, it becomes feasible to tear down existing development and rebuild larger homes that may not be consistent with surrounding homes.
- Why shouldn't a land owner be able to build a large "McMansion" if they want to? It has the potential to have negative impacts on surrounding development, and can be perceived as incompatible and unattractive. It also has the potential to create privacy concerns for neighbors.
- Building a house totally out of character with its surroundings does not make good business sense because buyers will not be interested. However, not all projects are done by developers and the city has many examples of "undesirable" development.
- How significant is the incompatibility issue? The answer is that incompatibility issues have been raised on several occasions and tend to generate a large, negative response from citizens. In addition, it creates concerns about what could happen in the future as infill development continues.
- Detached ADUs are generating concerns in Portland regarding privacy because they are built above a garage and have windows that overlook neighboring yards and homes.
- To address compatibility/privacy issues in Portland, side yard setbacks are sometimes based on the square footage of the façade facing the neighboring yard. As the square footage of the façade increases, so does the setback. This is something Milwaukie could consider in its code amendment project.
- The menu approach for design standards makes sense and could be extended to the development standards as well. For example, a developer could meet 3 out of 5 of the development standards (and not have to go through a variance for the 2 it does not meet). This approach would provide flexibility without using the variance process.
- ADUs are important for mother-in-law apartments and should be accessible. The city should consider limiting detached ADUs to one floor in height. This would address both accessibility and some privacy concerns.
- Off-street parking requirements in Milwaukie are currently two per single family dwelling and one per ADU. The city may want to consider revising the ADU requirement down to zero in order to encourage more ADU development.

- ADUs should not require conditional use approval – the process serves as a disincentive to ADU development. In addition, the occupant of the ADU should not be required to be related to the property owner or be owner-occupied.
- Could the city consider some kind of compatibility assessment for infill development that considers surrounding development and adjusts the standards accordingly?
- Do setbacks help mitigate incompatibility concerns? Yes, setbacks can be useful for compatibility. However, setbacks also effectively decrease buildable land on a site so setback requirements must be balanced with the need to have adequate building area.
- The city needs standards to regulate the size, location and design of garages. Garages should be setback from the front of the house to avoid “snout house” development.
- “Snout house” development often occurs because it is an economical design – they are simpler and less expensive to build and provide affordable homes.
- The city could consider using incentives to discourage snout house development. For example, the front yard setback could be decreased for the house (without needing a variance), but not the garage.
- The current list of design elements on the design menu is reasonable. However, the 12% window façade requirement is difficult to meet, especially on narrow infill homes. The city could consider including doors, porches, balconies, etc in the window calculation to make it easier to meet.
- Instead of roofline off-sets, the city could require articulation along the house façade. This would automatically create roofline off-sets.
- Eaves should not be included in the lot coverage calculation because it discourages the use of eaves.