

**Residential Infill Project – Open House #3 North Portland
Historic Kenton Firehouse, July 6, 2016, 6:30-8:30 PM**

Question and Answer Session

These notes reflect the general conversation that occurred during the Q&A after the staff presentation by Joe Zehnder, Chief Planner of the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability and Morgan Tracy, Project Manager of the Residential Infill Project.

Q1– On a 2500 square foot R2.5 lot, would you still be able to do a house with an internal ADU and a detached ADU?

Morgan – Yes, a house with both an internal ADU and external ADU would be allowed. The house (and internal ADU) would be limited to 1,750 sf total (based on the 2,500 sf lot) with 400 sf allowed for the detached/external ADU.

Q2– It appears a lot of the city is in the centers and corridors area. Why not make it the whole city? The property next to me is in it, and I’m not. Why not the whole city?

Morgan – Comp Plan process concluded that focusing future development around centers and corridors met more of the city’s goals than other growth strategies we looked at. Also, part of the rationale for encouraging additional units in these areas is their proximity to transit and services. When transportation costs are reduced, people can spend more to get into housing.

Joe – Going more broadly, just means that the new construction would be more dispersed.

Q3 – In the multiple objective pie chart, I didn’t see historic preservation or preservation of neighborhood character. How does this address the demolition epidemic? Has the city decided not to address the demolitions?

Morgan – Lots of questions in there. For the wheel, these issues would fit in the “neighborhood context” section. Historic preservation not called out explicitly because that’s outside the scope of this project. In terms of addressing demolitions, there’s not much we can do. Houses will continue to be demolished. But we can address what gets built in the place of the demolished house.

Joe – If a demolition happens, this project means that what replaces it will be more contextual. We’ll also potentially reduce demolitions IF the demolish is motivated by the desire to build something enormous.

Morgan – Also, the proposal includes incentives to retain existing houses, such as allowing bonuses for internal conversions, or allowing historically narrow lots to create flag lots behind the existing house.

Q4 – Would that apply to somebody who already owns the house and just wants to convert it?

Morgan – Yes.

Q5 – What’s the size limit for units in a duplex on a 5000 square foot lot?

Morgan – The duplex structure is limited to the same size as a single house structure (2500 sf). The units within the duplex would have to split that allowed area (1250 sf each if split equally). Basements are not included if 4 ft below grade. Detached ADU would get extra square footage.

Q6 – Will the code reflect the concerns about utility capabilities?

Morgan – yes, the longer answer is that city council gave us direction to find and zone areas “appropriate” for smaller units. We have to model it to make sure that the infrastructure can support it, but we’re not there yet.

Joe – that comes after we get the guidance from council on these concepts.

Q7 – back to demolitions issue. That was the impetus for this whole project, people’s concerns about demolition. I’m on the deconstruction advisory group. Deconstruction is demolition, just including reuse. When RIPSAC was set up, they were told they couldn’t deal with demolitions because it’s not in the scope. This project DOES deal with demolitions because it incentivizes developers to tear down existing houses. Does this project allow more houses and increase demolitions?

Joe – The project would allow for more units in a limited size structure. This would rein in any demolition motivated by an intent to build something large.

Q8 – 2500 square feet is not contextual. There is no regulation that makes them be contextual.

Joe – Okay. Instead of contextual, I’ll say that they are smaller than what could currently be built.

Q9 – New stuff doesn’t fit at all. Little house on Greeley, with a commercial use and has a triplex in the backyard, 2 stories.

Morgan – That sounds like it’s probably a commercially zoned area. This project is only about single-dwelling zones.

Q10 – I’m very concerned about the quality of the materials coming into these houses. How are they going to last? My house was built in 1909 and it’s still solid. Five realtors want to sell it, and I want to grow old in my house. To what this lady is saying, the difference between deconstruction and demolition. “By right” - those words are just as bad as the F word! The workers are just working with no protection. We’re not protecting the daytime workers. We need to pay attention to the workers. You can see beautiful renaissance homes and I’m five feet tall and I can put my head on one wall and my feet on another.

Q11 – it seems to me the only way for this whole middle housing plan to work is for you to demolish every house in Portland! You’re encouraging demolition!

Joe – this is not going to suffice as an answer, but I want to make this point. We need to absorb 20,000 households in the sf zoned areas. There is a demand side to this. The zoning doesn’t dictate the pace of change, the market does. As we grow, we want to grow in a way to meet our goals.

Q12 – I see the ADU conversions as a really positive thing. Let’s make our garages into ADUs; I think it’s great!

Q13 – In my neighborhood they tear down a 300K house, and put up three 800K houses. What assurances can you give us that this isn't going to happen with this project.

Joe – this proposal would say that there's only 2500 square feet on that lot that you can build. If somebody wants to build that and charge over a million dollars for it, I don't know how we can stop that. We are trying to ensure the size of new homes is limited and in some cases, that there be more units in that smaller size structure.

Q14 –Portland is growing so much just in the last few years. Prices are going up because there's not enough supply. For every 300K house I put on the market, there are 14 qualified buyers. If there were enough available units for those buyers, prices would not be escalating so fast. Nothing is going to stop people moving here. Some of the ideas that are being proposed are in the most sought after areas. People want to live there. These ideas aren't just something that's made up. North Portland has a wide diversity of housing already, this just allows more of it.

Q15 – Let's build wealth. Middle housing is just for renters. But what if lots could be split 50/50 when there is an alley. An owner could split the lot so half is accessible from the alley, half accessible from the street so the existing house could be saved. Why isn't that on the proposal?

Morgan– if you're looking at the historically narrow lots, the proposal would essentially allow you do that with a flag lot. The flag 'pole' is needed because of utility access from the street.

Joe – we'll look at the best way to utilize alleys as we draft the code, it's consistent with this project.

Q16 – how can I find out what you did with my comment?

Morgan – We'll include all the comments and suggestions in a Summary Report posted on the project website in September. The Summary Report will influence the recommended proposals we prepare for City Council.

"Q17 – Just wanted to follow up on affordability question. I live in an area where a lot of people are being displaced. When developers buy properties **and demolish them, they **destroy truly affordable existing housing and this works** against affordability. This project thinks that the development industry is going to actually make affordability happen. I don't believe it. Why can't you **add the necessary new units by letting** existing homeowners divide their **existing homes and build ADUs on them, instead of imposing a de facto zoning overlay that will dramatically increase demolitions?"**
*(red reflects revisions sent in by the commenter- 07/28/16)***

Morgan – Existing homeowners can do this. They have the same ability to do that as a developer/builder.

Q18 – recent article in NY times about how zoning and planning laws can really have an impact on cities. Regulations affecting zoning and planning that are too restrictive actually negatively impact the city.

Audience Member – Can you name a city that has built itself into affordability?

Audience Member – Somebody's got to be the first.

Joe – I understand why the proposals seems that way to you. This project is not sufficient to provide low income affordable housing. We still need to be doing that. Those approaches have to be there as well. This will not deliver that kind of housing. But without some kind of action, the situation will get worse.

Q19 – Developers should be regulated heavily. I think density is good, but homeowners should be allowed to do things, not developers.

Audience Member– I support this guy. I see a lot of this being driven by the developers. Need to support homeowners making improvements to their property. Grants for homeowners. North Portland has been completely rezoned. This is all going to be a higher density area. I have no problem with ADUs, but it should be pay as you go as needed. You should be building houses that can be added on to as you go. No requirements to finish house, so you can just build it incrementally over time.

Q20 – You can't put everything on this project. New bond would include elements for I believe people to make improvements so they can stay in their homes. But that's only part of this. We can't put that all on what these guys are doing.

Q21 – This is a comment about process. I find it very strange that you haven't done economic analysis yet. I work in natural resource protection. Biologists do their work, economists do their work, then we have a public meeting to share this information. We're expected in this planning process to buy into this affordability thing. I just think it's really odd that you don't have economic information to share with us yet.

Joe – I'd like to talk to you about that and explore that, because this is pretty different.

Morgan – We're very early in the process. Also, this is not a project to provide affordable housing. It's about providing more diverse options for more people that is less expensive than the default (if we did nothing/make no changes).

Q22– But you're encouraging demolitions!

Joe – I'll talk about this with anybody who wants to gather round after this.

Q23 – Why aren't you working on zombie houses?

Joe – I am not familiar with the issue, so I don't have an answer for you.

Q24 – We recently bought a house in Concordia, have a little kid. We want continued economic diversity in our neighborhood. School is one of the most economically diverse, and we want to preserve that. I think these proposals are really important. I would love to see all of those options for people with different incomes in my neighborhood.

Q &A session ends; audience is invited outside to continue the open house where display boards illustrate the proposal and project staff is available to answer questions.

For more information visit the project website at www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/infill