

**Residential Infill Project – Open House #6 United Neighborhoods Reform (UNR)
SMILE Station, July 30, 2016, 10:00 AM-12:00 PM**

Question and Answer Session

These notes reflect the general conversation that occurred during the Q&A sessions after staff presented the draft proposals for each topic and a UNR representative shared comments the group had heard at other open houses.

Topic: Scale of Houses

Q1– Could you clarify the source of these comments that the person from UNR read. Are comments from the online questionnaire included also?

A: No, they do not reflect input from the questionnaire. UNR members took notes at the previous open houses and are sharing the comments they have compiled. BPS will post a Summary Report in September of all the comments we have received.

Q2—We keep hearing from UNR- what is their role in this open house?

A: We have hosted 5 open houses although slightly different format from this one— this is an additional event. UNR is cohosting this event. In addition to these open house events, staff has also presented at other events that groups have invited us to present the draft proposals.

Q3—What about recession resiliently? When the next wave hits there will be all these larger homes in a very different economic situation.

A: A good point, very large (and more expensive) homes may be more difficult to sell in a more challenging economic climate. However, the proposal would allow for internal conversions to add units in these existing larger homes, which could help with that.

Q4—I have issues with the 2,500 sq. ft. limit on houses. I have done analysis of house sizes in the Irvington Neighborhood and the range is enormous we have both bigger (than 2,500 sq. ft) and smaller houses. What we would like to see is areas with small houses we would like to have small new houses and areas with larger houses we could have compatible infill that was larger than 2,500 sq. ft. Can a developer can request a variance?

A: Yes, and an adjustment (aka a variance) would be able to respond to context sensitivity. The ability to require discretionary rules (i.e. not “clear and objective” rules) for housing is constrained by state law. At the very minimum, where a more contextual review is required, there has to also be a clear standards track.

Q5—If I go in my backyard and all my neighbors have a detached ADUs it will adversely affect my relationship with my neighbors. I don’t know how to address that maybe neighborhoods should be able to vote for particular requirements. Your proposals pushed down height but allow more on a site –it seems like a bait and switch.

A: The premise of these proposals is to limit the amount of what gets built on a site (by limiting the total square footage of what gets built, and with some changes to address height and

setbacks). Once that size limit is set, the next question is what are the effects of adding another unit in that same square footage.

Q6—I don't understand why attics can't be finished. Bay windows shouldn't be allowed into the setbacks. The new house next to me has a bay window and I can hear them talk, smell their food- it would be worse if it was in the setback.

A: The size limits don't apply to non-habitable attics. However, you could remodel an attic as long as it doesn't go above the height limit, or increase square footage beyond the size limit. I should also mention that the size limits would apply to future additions on existing houses.

Q7—I live in the Sellwood neighborhood. Overall I like the plan. My biggest concern is how quickly this can be implemented?

A: First we will get City Council guidance in November and then it usually takes us a year to do a code projects; 6 months to develop code and 6 months for the hearing process with Planning and Sustainability Commission and City Council for final approval.

Q8—I have lived in Portland my whole life. I don't consider this healthy growth and I am wondering what the City is doing to manage the growth. Aim towards good management otherwise it is not sustainable for us. We live in a Metro Area how are the cities working together?

A: This question is broader in nature than our project. Let's hold off until we get to our discussion about housing types.

Q9--Where in the process is the discussion of how we can diversify incomes?

Q10—Do basements count towards the size limit?

A: Basements will not be counted so long as they are at least 4 ft. below grade.

Q11-- One size fits all – discretionary standards is disingenuous, we would like to talk about context leading the discussion.

A: "Discretionary reviews" is a legal term, I apologize if that was not clear. There are ways to craft standards that rely on averaging other nearby structures, but there are significant challenges to this approach, and would ultimately require that each house be custom designed, which further increases the cost of housing.

Q12—Scale proposal is not a one size fits all-- it would be the new cap and you could apply discretion to go bigger with a variance. What will happen if we keep the same regulations in place today is that we are going to see even larger houses than we are seeing now.

A: Look at trends. Right now infill houses seem too big and expensive. Why is that? Whose house has gone up in value? The majority of that value increase is in the land, not the structure. People moving to the area want to live in close in neighborhoods. By offering more housing choices, that takes some of the pressure off.

Q13--Like proposals now is our best chance to create more housing units while still keeping single family character. Greatest risk is having Portland be a city that no one can afford to live in. I would like to see more flexibility to preserve trees so developers that want to preserve trees have more options. Bonus units if you really, really do preserve a large tree. There is a tendency to leave trees out of these discussions.

A: Thank you for the suggestion.

Q14—Setback proposals seem to work. Developers can apply for a variance- who determines if they get it? What is the criteria? Sunlight- what are you going to do to prevent new development from taking away sunlight?

A: We will send notification to neighbors and the neighborhood association the property is located in – during the code development phase we will develop specific criteria. There are proposals aimed at addressing height of houses, including flat roof structures. Additionally, reducing the building size will limit the amount of structure that blocks sunlight.

Q15—Are you going to talk about the carbon input on new construction? Shoddy construction not well insulated or ventilated will have more of a carbon footprint.

A: Currently there is a BPS proposal to consider rating houses using a home energy scale- this will help inform buyers and renters what the potential energy costs would be. If you think this is a good idea and you want to help you can be an advocate for the program because we think it may be controversial.

Q16—Affordable – when is the City going to perform an economic analysis to see the impact on affordability of housing?

A: That will be part of next phase

Q17—Speaking of the mad rush to build in our city, other cities have cast moratoriums on development (*claps interrupt speaker*)

A: Oregon law wouldn't let us do it. It's a pretty high bar to impose a moratorium, and one of the tests is the affect a moratorium would have on housing supply.

Topic: Historically Narrow Lots

Q18—Parking. If skinny houses don't have parking that is not a good idea. There will be lots of fights over street parking.

A: One of the impacts of having driveway curb cuts on each individual narrow lot is the removal of all on street parking opportunities. The residents of the narrow house may have a dedicated spot, but the neighborhood loses out on available street parking.

Q19—I agree, I live just off of Hawthorne and my quality of life has deteriorated rapidly because of all the apartments built without adding on-site parking.

Q20—looking at the pictures it seems like garages underground would be better.

Q21—Are we are going to demolish homes to build more skinny houses? Economic studies should have been done. It seems the assumption is that developers are going to build affordable housing out of the goodness of their hearts. They will not, all this will just make developers wealthy.

A: The math we are talking about is pretty simple. Smaller units will cost less than larger houses. Affordable housing at below market rate requires public subsidies, mandates (like inclusionary zoning) or other incentives.

Q22—I live in Alameda where they are demolishing a totally affordable home and replacing them with more expensive ones. If I sold my house right now it would be demo-ed.

Q23—Narrow lots would allow for a 1,750 s.f. house, two of these side by side would be 3,500 total s.f. which is larger than the 2,500 s.f. house on a single 5,000 s.f. lot. Do I have that right?

A: Yes, that is something we will be looking at.

Q24—I don't understand "near corridors". Also, will there be a flag lot driveway by my bedroom?

A: When we are talking about areas "near centers and corridors" we are describing a ¼ mile distance that the GIS buffered around designated centers in the new comp plan (like Sellwood) frequent transit routes (like the #75 bus), transit stations (like the orange line stop on Tacoma) and inner ring neighborhoods (like Buckman and Sunnyside).

For the driveway, we haven't got into that level of detail just yet (i.e. whether a driveway is required, whether it will have to be shared, etc).

Q25—Concerned about parking and cars driving on the street. How can we add more houses but keep the number of cars stable?

A: We have some options. We can use a "stick" and create parking minimums and other reforms so that it will cost more to drive here, or we could use a "carrot" and encourage people to drive less. SDC can be used to help create different transportation options.

Q26—What are SDCs?

A: System Development Charges – fees that are paid to help develop infrastructure systems, i.e. sewer, water, stormwater, transportation, parks.

Housing Types

Q27—I've been following this project lightly – I live in Ladd's Addition. How will you address historic districts? Why apply in historic districts at all? There are already regulations to convert historic structures into more units.

A: In historic districts there is historic demolition delay and historic review for new houses. This would not change. We will be coordinating our proposals with the historic overlay zone- and all the overlay zones—when we start to develop the code.

Q28—Metro said we have enough land in the UGB? This project is driven by developers.

A: 33% of growth in region is attracted to Portland. Economist Joe Cortright, talks about how we don't have a lack of housing, but a lack of great neighborhoods. When other parts of the region are able to develop amenity-rich neighborhoods then we will have more competition for this demand.

Q29—45% of city land is single-family neighborhoods and almost the same amount of trees is in those neighborhoods. We need to know how many trees would be lost under this proposal. We should give parking spaces to trees. We need to calculate how many trees are needed per person and preserve them.

Q30: (Points out zoning map of Sellwood has lots of commercial and multi-dwelling zoning) We should apply this in neighborhoods that don't have lots of commercial and high density zoning. Let's start with R1 and R2 zones and make them accommodate more density then look to single-family areas. Tailor to neighborhoods.

A: Quarter-mile proposal indeed captures most of Sellwood, but the extent of this area is still in concept. This project is in part about providing opportunities for more housing options. We looked at Sellwood and found there are only about a dozen available vacant single dwelling lots in the neighborhood. Sellwood will continue to attract people who want to live here. Options are to bid up existing houses, or go into new apartments but not many other options.

Q31: Where is the data to say that these smaller housing types don't exist? I live at Division and 21st; people have ADUs inside and outside and there are apartments. How would you find this out people aren't surveyed about how many people live in their homes.

A: We want to bring these options to other places. We do know how many units are in these neighborhoods from the tax assessor's databases.

Q32—I live in Multnomah. Little attention has been given to the environmental impacts of your proposal. Urban habitat corridors support non-human species. We are at a milestone: Do we want to be a green city and support non-human species? Also, many elderly people are not all interested in downsizing into apartments.

A: It's important to recognize that the proposal also includes measures to reduce the overall size of houses. The net effect of this is more space for yards, trees and habitat.

Q33—13,000 houses could already be built in the areas zoned for higher density and are being converted at a rate that will take 75 years to build out to higher density. We need economic analysis about what this will actually do before promising the public affordable housing but actually creating pockets of opportunity for developers.

Q34—I live in a duplex on a 9,370 sf lot in Eliot has been downzoned from R2 to R2.5. Would you be willing to consider allowing more than one ADU with a duplex?

A: Interesting comment. Without a land division, under this proposal, an ADU is the most additional you could have in this situation.

Q35—What I love about this proposal is that it enables individual homeowners to develop properties so that they can use the extra rental income to stay in their property. We can convert to a duplex. Often building a whole other home is not within our reach. If you don't like Airbnb, then tax Airbnb. Many people use ADUs for family members, flex space. ADUs allow flexibility to take care of members of their communities. We are planning for 20 years so we need to build in possibility for growth; options for duplexes, triplexes, and ADUs. If you want more affordability we need more density; I became a real estate agent because I care about the community. If you have a house that you don't want demolished, you can pay \$5,000 to Restore Oregon for a façade easement.

Q36—Student enrollment at Llewellyn elementary school is increasing and they are cutting programs and increasing class sizes; this is happening in the middle school too. Increasing density without thinking about infrastructure like schools, emergency vehicles, sewer, water, and parking is not right.

A: We are thinking about capacity. Concept is not to increase number of total households over what we're projecting; we're thinking about how and about where.

Q37—I live in the north end of West Moreland; surrounded by condos and apartments. I am happy with my neighbors and with the fact that density has led to investment in bike and transit and sidewalks, so now my family of 4 can life with one car. These efforts are important for affordability because I save \$5,000 a year by not having car. Even if new units coming online are higher-end that means one less person is buying a more affordable unit that someone else needs. Without increasing capacity, finding a home will become more and more expensive.

Q38—I live in Buckman. Where is the equity in this proposal? Why not allow all these housing types citywide? Why can't we allow houses in the SW Hills with their fantastic amenities and great schools to be internally converted to create more density and diversity? Quasi-gated communities; why is equity not on top of this list?

A: The SAC discussed this and some wanted the allowed housing type area to be much tighter while others wanted it more citywide for equity concerns. This proposal landed on areas close to services. We need to look at the geography. Others chimed in on political pressures.

Q39—How are you going to use our input? Are you going to modify this proposal?

A: Public comment period closes August 15th. We will develop a report that summarizes themes and concerns we have heard; we are seeking specific suggestions for ways to improve the proposal. Recommendation will be developed for City Council in November.

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