

## Better Housing by Design

### Stakeholder Working Group Meeting Notes: April 19, 2017

**Date:** April 19, 2017

**Time:** 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

**Location:** 4815 NE 7<sup>th</sup> Ave (Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods Office)

**Topics:** Street frontages – garages, entrances and setbacks; Inner Neighborhood development approaches

#### Attendees:

Eavan Moore, Simone Goldfeder, Susan Novak, Sam Noble, Doug Klotz, Laura Becker, David Schoellhamer, Ben Earle, Katie Larsell, Kym Nguyen, Soren Impey, David Sweet, Gina Whitehill-Baziuk, Gary Whitehill-Baziuk, Julie Hoffinger, Julia Metz, Terry Parker, Linda Nettekoven, Alessandra Novak, Jay Fesler, Margaret Davis, Sam Fuqua, Garlynn Woodsong, Jessica Engelman

Staff: Bill Cunningham (BPS), Neil Heller (BPS), Chip Lazenby (Facilitator)

#### A. Street Frontage Design – garages, entrances, and setbacks

##### Question 1: Should the amount of ground-level street frontage that can be garages be limited?

- Yes – should limit front garages.
- Need smaller front setbacks to make it easier to bring parking to rear.
- Garages add costs – focus on real multifamily housing, not townhouses.
- Garages are cheaper to build than finished space – so not more expensive, and providing off-street parking with front garages does not cause loss of parking (typically provides 2 spaces).
- Front garages and curb cuts - sacrifices public on-street parking for private parking.
- Off-street parking should always be required, but not necessarily garages.
- Equity concerns in catering to needs of households with two cars.
- Focus on the future - may not include private car ownership.
- Garages are used for storage and as multi-purpose space – windows in garages help activate.
- Better to have good street frontages and street trees.
- Rear parking can be converted later to other things, such as gardens, community spaces.
- Many people park on the street anyway, even when they have garages – so don't assume garages equate parking.
- Don't make assumptions about houses being occupied by low-income or high-income households. Can have multiple adults living together, with lots of different needs.
- Front garages are ugly and should be prevented.
- Parking permit program will help address competition for on-street parking near corridors and transit stations.
- More than 70% of apartment residents have cars – need to design for this.
- Corridor apartment development brings competition for on-street parking between rowhouse owners and renters. Off-street parking ensures rowhouse owners have parking spaces.
- Zoning code should be context sensitive – where alleys exist, parking access should from the alley, reinforcing neighborhood character.

- Figure out what areas are important to have pedestrian-oriented design, and focus pedestrian-oriented design standards in those areas.
- Front garages detract from positive street environments.
- Shared driveways could help reduce multiple curb cuts.
- Parking permit program – could change decisions on including off-street parking in new multifamily buildings.
- City should improve existing alleys so that they can be used.
- Garages can be designed to look nice – look at how design of front garages can be improved through design, promote good design instead of banning front garages.
- Reality is that many people use cars – need to build housing to reflect this reality.
- Reality is lower income households drive less – need to think about costs of requiring parking facilities.
- 59% of low-income people drive to work.
- Maybe bike/transit during week, but car is stored until weekend and used for out of town trips.
- Various lifestyles have various auto usage patterns.
- Parking permit programs are discriminatory toward existing residents (they didn't cause the parking shortage).

**Question 2: Should a similar limit on garages apply to ground-level structured parking for larger multi-dwelling buildings?**

- Structured parking along street frontages should only be allowed when partially below grade (3' above grade max).
- First floor parking eliminates ground-level, accessible units. This is contrary to our goals.
- Should be based on site/location – garages can be designed well, with visual screening.
- Should encourage mixed-use instead of structured parking along streets.
- Underground parking is very expensive and will increase rents.
- Use a hedge to screen the parking from sight.
- Visibility into parking garage is good for safety.
- Windows should provide views to people activity, not parking. Would be better to activate the ground floor – maybe even some commercial space.

**Question 3: Should street-facing entrances be required for multi-dwelling development?**

- Not having front entrances is unpleasant – Alberta example should not be allowed to happen.
- Apartment buildings should have entrance facing street, or to a courtyard connected to a street.
- Should be location specific – only require in pedestrian-oriented areas.
- Not having a front entrance is car biased - need to encourage bike/ped, not orientation to car parking.
- Can design a project well without street-facing entrances – this is a design issue, not something that should be required. Need to consider privacy issues.
- Entrance requirements can constrain certain desired typologies – consider clustered housing, especially on deep lots. More about where paths are located and connections to streets.
- Consider how you define “entrance” – should allow orientation to courtyards.

- Should we consider neighborhood context if neighborhood context is bad? When Alberta example was built, Alberta was not an active pedestrian area.
- Alberta example is a good example of a place that eventually became pedestrian oriented – design standards should support this.
- What to do about corner lots with more than one street frontage? Quiet side streets can be a better place for orientation and entrances than busy corridor.
- Entrances on the street offer safety, should be accessible.
- Keep opportunity for alternate arrangements.

#### **Question 4 – Front Setbacks:**

**A: Should small front setbacks be required in the higher-density multi-dwelling zones?**

**B: Is it important to limit height to 25' within 10' of the street?**

- Will we allow more height if we require a setback?
- Should allow a mix of zero setbacks, with portions of buildings setback with landscaping.
- R1 zone on corridors shouldn't have step downs or setbacks – should match the mixed-use zoning on the corridors.
- Step down is bizarre, too limiting – don't need this.
- Consider context if requiring setbacks – base requirements on what is there. In more residential areas, should have landscaping.
- Landscaped setbacks add costs and this is a city. Apartments should be urban. Also, setbacks are not useable space.
- Need building setbacks to provide space near transit stops.
- Consider functionality/usability. 3' setbacks seem arbitrary.
- Look to Vancouver, BC (multifamily with landscaped setbacks) as example – we should respond to the Northwest “greenness,” good for residential areas.
- Consider tenant preferences – setbacks less important than affordability.

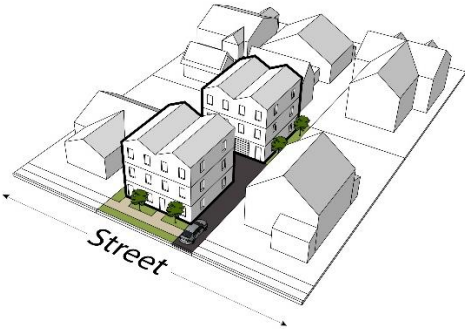
#### **Question 5 – Revise side setbacks?**

- Yes, definitely revise the side setback requirements. Courtyard apartments hard to do with existing requirements, even on large lots.
- Allow T-shape apartment buildings, with no side setbacks up near corridor street frontages.
- Reduce to 5' and allow projections, accessory structures in setbacks.
- A uniform approach is not good – maybe reduce required setback on one side, larger setback provided on other side.
- Should be area specific. There are differences in Northwest versus 60<sup>th</sup> Avenue area, where setbacks are important.
- Minimal side setbacks allow for more useable space on lot, such as a rear yard.
- Should promote zero setback allowances.

## B. Alternative Development Approaches – Inner Neighborhoods

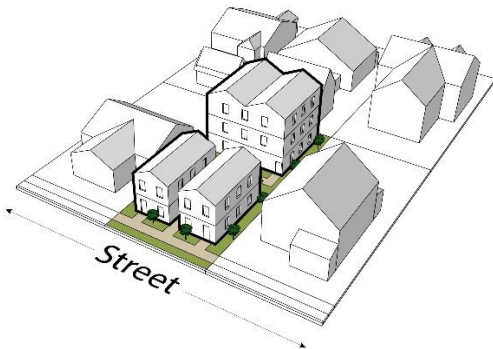
Participants were presented with examples of a range of alternative development approaches, in order to gauge if some outcomes are preferable than others. These alternative development examples were based on site configurations common in Inner Neighborhood areas with multi-dwelling zoning. Participants were asked to rate each example as an outcome that would be “Preferred,” “OK/Acceptable,” or “Should Discourage.”

### Alternative Development Approaches – Medium Density (Single Lot):



**Family Size Townhouse Units:**

**3 preferred, 9 ok, 6 discourage**



**Small-scale Buildings Along Street:**

**1 preferred, 13 ok, 4 discourage**



**House-like Plex:**

**10 preferred, 6 ok, 1 discourage**

**Medium Density Double Lot – Access/Courtyard Options**



**Central Driveway (off-street parking):**

**0 preferred, 3 ok, 12 discourage**



**Courtyard (no parking):**

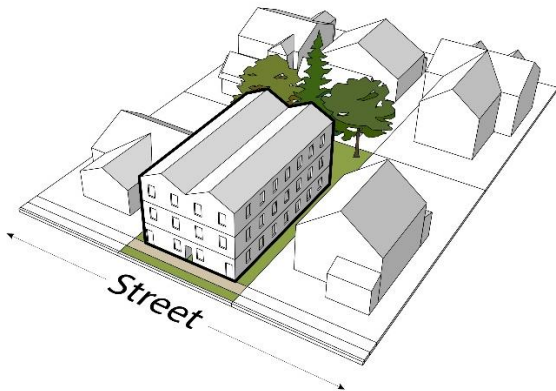
**7 preferred, 10 ok, 1 discourage**



**Courtyard Cap Over Parking:**

**10 preferred, 6 ok, 0 discourage**

**Alternative Development Approaches – High Density:**



**Single-lot Development:**

**5 preferred, 8 ok, 0 discourage**



**Portland Courtyard:**

**10 preferred, 6 ok, 0 discourage**



**Perimeter Block:**

**13 preferred, 3 ok, 0 discourage**

**Comments:**

- House-like Plex:
  - The house-like plex is an efficient use of space: small side setbacks, with some rear yard, veg garden in back, fenced for pets/kids.

- We have a lot of beautiful existing examples of this type – plexes are a good housing type.
- Make these possible again. Multiple stacked units are more affordable than townhouses.
- Variety is important.

### **C. Submitted Written Comments:**

David Schoellhamer

I attended the April 19 workshop, the presentations and comments were interesting. Here are some additional comments for you to consider:

#### Q1: Garages:

limiting the % frontage of garage is good, similar to single family zones. The building should be inviting to people, not cars.

Tuck under garages are better than grade level.

Grade-level garages on the front get worse as the width of the unit decreases

#### Q2: Ground level parking

This type of parking is not appropriate for our neighborhood. Residential use of the ground floor is preferred. If required, parking should be below grade like commercial zones.

Houseplex: While the pictures you showed were attractive, I worry that allowing such buildings in R1 would result in a 4 story boxy building rather than a nice looking oversized house. R1 should not have 4 story boxy buildings. Perhaps a sufficient FAR limit would prevent this.

#### Setbacks:

I had to catch a bus so I missed most of the setback discussion. A 5 foot setback seems reasonable if combined with a height reduction and FAR limitation discussed two workshops ago IF the neighboring property has the same or denser zoning. If the neighboring property is a less dense zone, then the set back should be dependent on the building height and a step down should be considered. The boundaries where zoning density decreases are where we have the greatest conflicts.

David Schoellhamer

Sellwood Moreland Improvement League (SMILE)

Land Use Committee Chair