

# Group Living Advisory Committee – Emerging Trends Subgroup Meeting

Date and Time: Thursday, April 19, 2018, 5:30 - 7:00 PM

Location: Webb Municipal Building

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## Attendees

### ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Debra Bustos  
JR Ronczy  
Rachel Keeven  
Cole Chandler  
Loretta Koehler  
Joel Noble  
Heidi Aggeler  
Robert Fisher

### DENVER STAFF MEMBERS

Andrew Webb  
Eugene Howard  
Kyle Dalton

### FACILITATOR

Eugene Howard

## Meeting Summary

### MEETING OPENING

Eugene Howard opened the meeting, welcomed everyone and shared the meeting agenda:

1. Introductions
2. Areas of Focus
  - a. Confirmation of focus topics
  - b. Discuss any new focus topics
3. Review Sub-committee “homework”
4. Continue problem identification discussion
5. Meeting wrap up
  - a. Next meeting date and location
  - b. Confirm any new “homework” items

### 1. INTRODUCTIONS

Eugene Howard invited committee members to share their names, affiliation, and what they hoped to contribute to this process. This included two new members, Joel Noble and Robert Fisher. Joel Noble is representing the Curtis Park registered neighborhood organization, and is a current member of the Denver Planning Board. Robert Fisher represents the Colorado Cross Disability Coalition and its interests in Emerging Trends.

## 2. AREAS OF FOCUS

Eugene asked the group if there had been any discoveries of other emerging trends to add to our existing list. The current list includes: Single Room Occupancies (SROs), Tiny Homes, Cottage Homes, Co-Housing, Micro-Housing, Macro-Housing and “Mansion Apartments” (large homes subdivided into smaller rentable units). The group did not have any new items to add to this list.

- **Neighborhood Contexts: Downtown vs. Suburban.** A question was raised around the building form allowances contained in our high density urban areas (Downtown Neighborhood Context) versus our Suburban Neighborhood context, and whether this process would look to understand what residential building typologies may be missing in the neighborhood contexts in-between: Urban Edge, Urban, General Urban and Urban Center. The city of Portland, Oregon was offered as an example of how staff might consider evaluating building typologies in the range of neighborhood contexts.
- There was discussion on co-housing and the various type of building forms co-housing may utilize, in addition to the social configurations of co-housing between related and unrelated individuals and the neighborhood contexts. There was discussion that co-housing arrangements may be best accommodated in suburban areas due to their lower densities, larger homes, and larger lot sizes. There was additional conversation around attached and detached building forms.
  - There was a suggestion that maybe instead of linking co-housing uses to specific neighborhood contexts, maybe we should think of co-housing uses and the parameters they could be accommodated (or not) in every neighborhood context.

## 3. SUB-COMMITTEE HOMEWORK FOLLOW UP

- **SROs:** There was discussion on the difference between SROs and small apartments. Apartments contain all the elements of a dwelling unit (kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, living space) whereas a SRO may be just a room with the other amenities being shared.
  - SROs allowed in zone districts that allow the apartment building form.
  - SROs offer more affordability and locations better connected to other city services such as transit.
  - SROs seem more appropriate in denser, more urbanized areas of the city versus suburban areas where access to services like transit may be restricted.
  - There was mention that there used to be a SRO/Co-housing facility at Ellsworth and Fox.
  - SROs used to be popular 100 year ago. They were a common, socially accepted way for individuals to remain in housing through boarders who helped to offset household expenses. They were popular until the post-World War II era promoted suburban sprawl and the “American Dream” of home ownership, the automobile and interstate highway system. When individuals availed themselves of the American Dream, it left behind those who could not afford it, thus beginning the downward decline of SRO tenant image and the overall popularity of SRO facilities and uses. In contemporary terms, the group stated if there are any tangible issues with SROs, they should work to understand what those issues are as a component of this project.
  - It was mentioned that San Francisco has a fluid definition of what constitutes a SRO that goes beyond building form. Density of units per acre, the number of

residents per acre, or the demand on public services may be more equitable regulation tools.

- The group also questioned why SROs are not being constructed as a solution to Denver's affordability challenges. Debra Bustos was asked to consult with her development/financing colleagues to understand what challenges they face and why these facilities are not being constructed under current regulatory allowances. Is it because these are treated as a form of "lodging" in the Denver zoning code? Is it because of their public image, public perceptions, legacy of segregation and classism? Are they referenced correctly in the zoning code as lodging uses?
  - SROs are enabled under "Lodging" in the Denver Zoning Code, Section 11.12.4.5 as "a permanent lodging use."
    - There was group discussion on whether a better reference would be to categorize SROs as a residential use, and then license their operations under in Excise and Licenses.
    - If SROs are being categorized as "lodging" in the code, are we taxing them the same as we do lodging? If so, we may be financially burdening the most vulnerable residents who use SROs.
    - Questions around how SROs and Parking work together, especially considering the linkage to Lodging.
  - There was a comment that the motels along East Colfax are de-facto SROs.
  - There was also discussion that the language we use around SROs may be further stigmatizing the residents of these facilities. SRO Hotel equals "Transient". Perhaps referring to them as apartments or multi-unit structures would more closely align the users to permanent residents, removing the social stigma that has been created over time.
- Tiny Homes/Tiny Home Villages  
A committee member recently visited a tiny home village in Eugene, Oregon. There villages have been established on church lots and on available county parcels. Locating on "spare land" helps to keep their overall expenses lower. Considerations to maintain are access to transit and the best use for available land.

#### 4. PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION (CONTINUED)

- In Denver, is there any way to allow Tiny Home Villages to exist beyond their "temporary use permit" which restricts their existence in any one location to 6-month periods?
- Eugene asked, "is the phrase tiny home a broad enough term to encompass future building form configurations that aren't currently anticipated? The discussion considered how we refer to dwelling units, versus private space. Maybe there are opportunities to consider new or enhanced definitions to cover a variety of uses and configurations:
  - Private Space = living/sleeping quarters with **shared** kitchen and bath
    - Tiny Rooms
    - SROs
    - **Detached Living Quarters**
    - Private Living Units
    - Sleeping Units

- Dormitories
  - Dwelling Unit = living/sleeping space, plus private kitchen and bath
    - “Tiny Homes”
    - Micro-Apartments
    - Micro-Units
- How does size/square footage impact our definitions and relationships with the building codes, health codes?
- What’s the difference between a Tiny Home Village and a mobile home park (besides the all encompassed dwelling unit of a mobile home vs the shared spaces found in a Tiny Home Village)?
- How is Macro-Housing Defined? Independent bedrooms and shared kitchens and bathrooms. Up to 5 sleeping rooms with shared kitchen may be limit. Beyond that number of bedrooms, you transition into the dormitory category, or something similar. Distinctions seem to be with the number of people within the private space.
- Mansion Apartment: What stops someone from subdividing their large single-family home into smaller units? Answer: the zone district. If the structure is within a multi-unit zone district, they can subdivide the home as a use by right. If the structure resides in a single-unit or two-unit zone district that allows accessory dwelling units, the property could be divided to have two dwelling units with one being an accessory dwelling unit, but there could not be multiple units within the building envelope.
  - Allowing accessory dwelling units throughout the city was suggested as a way to address affordability, changing social desires for large homes and their future maintenance (allowing large homes to be subdivided may provide the resources necessary to maintain the structure in good working order).
  - Perhaps the regulating tool should be use permits versus land use zoning.
  - Are there, or should there be limits on how far a single-family home can be subdivided into smaller units? Persons per square foot? Licensing? Is this a form of co-housing?
- The number of unrelated individuals was raised. Boulder has conducted a housing study to explore this topic. Seniors there were restricted in how many unrelated individuals could live together. Conversations revolved around how codes reference “adults,” “persons,” and attempts to be gender neutral in referring to “families.”

## 5. WRAP UP

- Next meeting:  
 Thursday, May 3, 2018, 5:30 – 7:00p  
 KTG Y Offices, 820 16<sup>th</sup> Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
 In case of building access issues, please call 303-906-5808
- Homework:
  - An evaluation of the SRO landscape in Denver, other cities (JR)
  - What roadblocks prevent SROs from being developed in Denver today? (Debra)
  - ADA regulations and how they impact (or enable) Senior Co-Housing (Robert)