

### 3/20/17 Public Review **SUMMARY**

Open House Summary will be sent out to the public and posted on the website. Final summary will be integrated into the problem identification section of the report.



## COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE SUMMARY

On the evening of March 8, 2017, the City of Denver hosted a Community Open House to kick off the Slot Home Evaluation and Text Amendment project. The purpose of the open house was to:

- Introduce the project scope;
- Gain public insight into, and feedback on, problems associated with slot home development; and
- Promote continued public engagement throughout the process

Over 70 community members attended the workshop in northwest Denver, including Councilman Rafael Espinoza and 6 other members of the Slot Home Task Force. The Department of Community Planning and Development promoted the event with a special edition newsletter and notified Registered Neighborhood Organizations (RNOs). The Task Force engaged with their community to invite interested members of the public.

Open house comments generally expressed concerns over a loss of neighborhood identity and character through the development of slot homes that do not positively engage the public realm, respect the existing mass and scale, and cause for negative impacts to the traditional street character and adjacent properties.

The Open House began with a welcome and presentation by City staff. The presentation addressed:

- Project Scope
- Existing Conditions
- Problem Identification Statement
- Criteria for Successful Solutions

*The presentation is online and attached to this open house summary.*

Following the presentation, the attendees were directed to participate in the open house. The open house consisted of 12 different boards with content related to the project, slot home types, problem statement and criteria. Attendees were encouraged to move throughout the room and provide comments and engage in discussion with other attendees.

In addition to the open house activities, individual worksheets were provided to all open house participants to submit additional comments and feedback. A smaller portion of participants utilized individual comment sheets. Comments provided via way of the worksheet have been integrated into the comment summary.

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*Key comments and themes are summarized below:*

**Garden Court Moratorium:** The majority of comments felt that language in the garden court moratorium relating to the width of the “garden court” was appropriate and should be kept.

**Comments on the slot home types** (single row, center drive, center court, detached parking): Comments focused on specific issues relating to the photos shown. All forms received comments that a front setback is good and features such as porches and landscaping should be integrated. The detached parking type had the least negative comments, with positive comments relating to the location of the parking off the alley respecting the traditional layout of the neighborhoods. Participants found that buildings with all or most units facing the primary or side street, the outcome was the best.

The majority of comments provided were related to the **problem statement** elements.

- For those concerned about poor street activation, lack of front porches for socialization to develop “community among neighbors,” or a connection to the street, these topics are captured in the **public realm engagement** element of the problem statement.
- Comments calling for neighborhood-specific solutions that maintain the character of the neighborhood as opposed to destroying the existing character of the neighborhood are captured in the **neighborhood design** element of the problem statement.
- Comments relating to the incompatible building scale (height), need for setbacks, and lack of human scale are topics captured in the **building mass and scale** element of the problem statement.
- Comments described the need for driveways to be hidden from street view as it can impact character of the street and sidewalk, these problems are captured in the **vehicle-oriented design** element of the problem statement.
- Comments highlighted the need to respect the existing adjacent properties with special consideration to a loss of sunlight and privacy with an increase in noise often a result from roof-top decks. These topics are captured within the **impacts to neighbor’s** element of the problem statement.

Comments on the **criteria for successful** solutions were minimal, however comments reinforced that the criteria are important and while it should result in predictable outcomes, it should not result in a “cookie cutter approach” for the entire city that fails to respect the neighborhood character. Comments also highlighted the need to be respectful of property owner rights affirming the predictability criteria.

Additional comments not specifically addressed in the problem statement are summarized here:

- Concerns about construction quality and inspection services, comments comparing these homes to “slums”
- Comments calling for design review to promote higher architectural quality

Additional comments were received that may be outside of the scope of the Slot Home Evaluation and Text amendment, but related to the Denver Zoning Code (DZC) are summarized here.

- Confusion regarding the relationship between DZC building forms and what can be built using those forms (i.e., the DZC Shopfront building form allows for construction of slot homes and rental apartments)
- Confusion about difference between ownership parcels and zone lots

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- Comments highlighting the need for density along with opposing comments against density.
- Comments stating the need for commercial streets to have commercial ground floors.

Additional comments were received that related to broader city or state-wide topics:

- Increased development requires more city services, such as fire and police.
- Affordable Housing is a concern
- State of Colorado construction defects laws discourage condo construction

Following the Open House segment of the meeting, staff, task force members and attendees were provided the opportunity to report back to the entire group of participants.

Comments shared to the group during the report back:

- Slot Homes should not be allowed in Denver
- The density of slot homes is not appropriate
- The way in which lot homes are happening is unpredictable, these are not “apartments”
- Neighborhood impacts include noise, sunlight and privacy
- The better, more pleasant slot homes are set back and have landscaping
- The way the lots are subdivided as fee-simple town homes is changing the land use pattern
- Slot home development is leading to a loss of neighborhood identity and character
- Development without yards, decks or porches, does not engage the public realm
- Additional standards need to be applied to slot homes
- The construction quality appears to be lacking
- Slot homes may have adverse impacts on infrastructure
- Slot homes do not provide adequate open space for the character of the neighborhood
- Slot homes are having adverse impacts on neighborhood commercial streets
- Denver is losing “community” through the development of buildings that do not engage with neighbors
- There are significant challenges with developing affordable for-sale housing at the state level
- Trees and landscaping are an important component of the neighborhood context

At the conclusion of the meeting, city staff encouraged the public to stay engaged throughout the process moving forward. Methods for continued public engagement include:

- Upcoming open houses in Phase 2 & 3 of the project – Open house meetings will be noticed a minimum of 2 weeks prior.
- Task Force Meetings – All open to the public, agendas are posted to the website 7 days prior
- RNOs and Community Meetings – City Staff will come to RNO and other community meetings as requested
- Slot Home Website – All meeting summaries and content will be posted to the website
- Slot Home Newsletter – Sign-up to receive updates and notice of upcoming meetings

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*All written comments received are provided below:*

#### **Comments related to Garden Court Moratorium**

- Keep these amendments! (pointing to current moratorium language)
- “Projects that Have a street-facing courtyard width equal to or greater than the height of the associated buildings” <-keep these amendments!
- If going to be called “garden court” they should be required to include grass/greenery/unpaved inter-courts.
- The current zoning and use seems reasonable – there’s no need for a moratorium
- Space between should be equal to height of building
- Only fifteen feet separation between buildings is ridiculously inadequate
- Should not be allowed in RH districts where front doors facing the street are expected

#### **Comments on Single Row**

- If on a corner, should respect setbacks of both streets
- Cantilever is horrible, if adjacent to homes
- Impersonal and future slum-like buildings
- Like less dense land use, but needs more greenery

#### **Comments on Center Drive**

- Image 4 is best of these because it nods at least to the concept of a welcoming lawn with entryways that face street. Lose the gas meters. Images 1, 2 and 3 look like office buildings. Unfriendly, soulless, that have been squeezed into too little space.
- All canyons in asphalt and concrete – more problems with heat islands and no place for a family in a multi-family
- Not quite as pretty as a cinderblock and less windows
- Awful...
- (pointing to center drive), great place for crime, trash, fire and vermin
- Inhospitable, turns shoulder to street

#### **Comments on Center Court**

- Need larger courtyards where the sun will reach air circulate
- Stepped building might help with transition to street
- Image #3 is absolutely horrible. Looks like an ominous cave – stay away! Image #2 is best of these with front lawn, neutral colors, logical roofline. Images #1 and #4 at least have front lawns but the towers on #1 and the jetty tops on #4 are unpleasant.
- If building in mixed-use are the center-court, require storefront from activation
- The ones with front setbacks that are landscaped with greenery, things are better but calling these “courtyards” is a travesty
- This looks like a dog yard – excusable unless its back doors (Image #5)
- Image #5 – urban canyon, no air or light or reason to be in space
- Only works if pedestrian area is generous; 2 aisles for parking is wasteful

#### **Comments on Detached Parking**

- Yes to detached garages in historic neighborhoods – respects alley-centric land use

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- This seems to be the best of all the forms. Street-facing units, transparency on street-front, alley access for parking. Not built up next to sidewalk. Green/outdoor space/setback on street.
- Better but with required setback but with required setback and responsible landscaping. No rocks!
- Puts living space at street level and possibility for even postage-stamp yard.
- Picture #3 is the best of these with lawn and a bit of landscape. #1 is the worst; ugly office building lurking behind fence. #2 is okay but not as welcoming as #3.
- Best option – parking appreciated and looks good from the street.
- Best looking option yet, worst return on investment.
- The only acceptable form is the corner type with detached parking. The other three share same design/functional/disrespect of public street
- Only reasonable solution, if rooftop decks are eliminated
- Must activate pedestrian frontage
- By far my preference, if new construction wants to take the majority of the lot, detached parking is compatible with the alley garages in most historic neighborhoods

#### **Public Realm Engagement**

- Designs that have all units facing the main streets or side streets works well
- Exempt front porches from max lot coverage. Move tops back.
- Front porch street activation and inviting design from street side
- Walkway from sidewalk to front door
- Street activation and inviting design from street
- There are no active facades on slot homes
- This does not connect to the street, balconies are up, not street level
- Entry on the street should be prominent-porch, large canopy look
- Sustainability and safety, long term evolution, heat islands, no solar access, no outdoor space, no defensible space, no eyes on the street
- I see the lack of engagement with the street as one of the main problems. By turning their “shoulder” to the street, it cuts off neighborhood engagement. These remind me of a series of Army barracks that the neighbors outside of the barracks can’t interact with those inside.
- Consider how neighbors engage with/meet/see each other in the neighborhood
- Walkways to front doors are dark and narrow, not welcoming
- Street-side units should be oriented to face the street – may two units should face the street to look like duplex
- If -MS and -MX zoning is to be used for all residential these must be a residential front setback, landscaped. They may lose a unit but that is just tough
- Why can’t meters be screened?
- All gas meters should be located on side of building
- Utilities shown in the front need to be reworked.
- Street activation. 4hr vs 8hr vs 24hr presence of community and neighborhood
- No social interaction
- Eyes on the street? Defensible space?
- Exempt front porches from max building coverage. Require front porches and move mechanical and taps to alley side.
- Setbacks, landscape improvement, negotiate use of street facing unit to something more friendly
- Some setback is good

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- Yes to front lawns/generous setbacks that is in keeping with the rest of the neighborhood.
- Require 3-5 ft setback on front street and exempt side porches from max allowed lot coverage
- Too close to sidewalks
- All Slot homes need setbacks unless they are retail
- If all residential in -MS or -MX, should require a residential setback
- Respect front setback of street – right now allowed to be too close to sidewalk
- Important- Setback! Uniform with neighborhood, not necessarily with zoning requirements
- Tree Lawns (not rocks) with grass and trees

#### **Neighborhood Design**

- These forms encourage the destruction of single family homes to put more units on the property. This is ruining the character of our old neighborhoods.
- Lack of permeable surface. Lack of Vegetation
- This kind of development destroys the character and scale of historic neighborhoods
- Neighborhood killers. Big blank walls of nothing along sidewalks
- Needs a functional transition to neighborhood instead of wall for all 4 configurations
- As a Denver native, I see that the charm of many neighborhoods change, not a big fan.
- Neighborhood specific solutions, rather than general (blanketed) solution
- The lack of green space with these properties being built lot-line to lot-line is a big issue. This pushes the issues of pet waste from this property into the rest of the neighborhood that does have green space.

#### **Building Mass and Scale**

- Development should be in scale with Neighborhood
- Very incompatible. Slot homes stacked do not contribute to the character of this [next-door] home
- A 50' wall on the street is too large without breakups – not enough glass
- Building feels imposing because it's zero-lot line and 3 stories and a plain wall
- Why flat roof in Colorado?
- Need Human Scale and set backs on street facing units

#### **Vehicle-Oriented Design**

- Insufficient Parking for residences and guests
- No guest parking for units. 2<sup>nd</sup> car or guest takes street parking from local small businesses
- Most slot home owners/renters have more than 1 car-no place to park 2<sup>nd</sup> car
- Driveways should be hidden from street view. Really unpleasant looks
- Parking off alley, street activation, affordable

#### **Impacts on Neighbors**

- Great consideration should be given to existing adjacent properties- light and privacy
- Guard Tower Effect- The historic 1 Story home gets a 3-story neighbor, creates a loss of privacy and probably loss of property value for the 1 story owner.
- Sunlight for Slot Home residents and neighbors
- Blocks neighbors light and view shed
- Great consideration should be given to existing adjacent property light and privacy
- Do not allow roof top decks or other compromises of privacy of existing neighbors

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- Should not be able to build any looking into existing neighbor's yard, unless you plant a tree line at least 3-stories tall first.
- Decks are a must for our amazing climate and must not be hindered
- No privacy and no sunlight for neighbors
- Blocks sun and robs privacy of traditional home with backyard
- What do they do with snow? Where do they shovel snow to?
- No guest parking? Odd they take parking from the small local businesses
- Drainage into main roads
- Living next door to a single row. Autos, living space and rooftops overlook my yard. All noise projects into my home and outdoor space. Privacy severely limited. Building is also out of scale and proportion of surrounding properties when single pops up it creates a very chaotic feel and appearance. (provided pictures)
- Neighborhood character is being trampled
- Sounds and sightlines need to be addressed for neighbors.

#### **Other Comments not specifically addressed by the problem statement**

- This design belongs on alley-side – design review is necessary
- Constructive Quality Issues should be addressed
- Will these be the slums or the ghettos of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Configuration not unlike main cell house at Alcatraz
- Long-term viability, short term – yay for businesses!
- Ten years from now these buildings will be throwaways
- Calcutta slum – but at least the residents ruin their own privacy and not the neighboring lot
- Not affordable for middle class family at \$600k per unit
- No place to shovel/plow snow if unit has no green space
- Landscape treatments need greenery and maintenance
- Need design review, especially for 0' setback
- They are (f)ugly
- A-toddler with blocks seems to be the guiding aesthetic
- No mix of age, economic, family size etc.demographics
- Not promoting livable sustainable communities. These are transitional temporary units where people do not intend or become long-time civically engaged residents
- Too many already. Need new zoning laws to stop all slot homes. Brings in too much traffic into the 'hood...cars and people.
- Developers have limited options! Regulatory costs and trade costs are too high and growing (affordable housing fee) thus, have no choice but to max out square footage for a moderate return, at the cost of design.
- Be conscientious of private property owner's rights
- Does not respect property rights on traditional home layouts
- Be careful about removing rights from individual property owners

#### **Comments related to criteria**

- Equity- "apply equally in neighborhoods across the city".
- Predictability- Cookie cutter appearance that fails to respect neighborhood character
- Good Points- Buildings *should* be for long term these aren't addressed here

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#### **Other comments on the Slot Home Evaluation & Text Amendment**

- I smell contradiction. Do you really think slot homes logically fulfill this purpose [statement]?
- No slot homes in G-MU-3 (perhaps no apartment form)
- These need to be in higher-density zones
- Promotes Smart density to support business
- Why is the 5 or 6 deep, 2-3 story unit assumed? Can we live with 1 story, 2-3 unit slot homes? Is density level part of the problem?
- This should not have been approved by CPD

#### **Other comments related to Denver Zoning Code**

- Confusing that building form names do not control architectural style
- Lots subdivided for individual town houses cannot be put back together, do not allow this subdivision of lots
- Specifics from residential zones should be applied to residential use buildings in mixed zones
- We need a min lot size for all of Denver and every lot must have direct street access
- Spotting zoning is a problem. There should be a better transition between zone districts while allowing moderate density everywhere while the city grows.
- If less units allowed the land price would go down
- Encourage density. Keep existing use and form intact.
- On commercial streets, the first floor should be required to be a storefront, at least the part that meets the street
- On commercial streets, should have ground floor commercial uses
- Need shop fronts on retail streets
- Green incentives and requirements for builders and homeowners
- MX-Zone = Mixed Use, right? We are not experiencing mixed-use, just future slum

#### **Other comments related to City of Denver**

- What would an independent Fire Protection Expert say? Slot homes represent a significant fire risk increase, yet where are the new fire stations or the enlarged fire stations? FIRE RISK
- Density requires increase in Fire and Police Services, increase in City Services
- It disrupts the traffic flow as they are being built with all required utilities vs a single house
- Current fire code limits window opening % and restricts balconies making them 100% opening. Update code to allow for reasonable amount of windows and designs will get less boxy.
- How is 600K per unit affordable for the average family?
- Long term vs short term goals. What does Denver want to be now and in the future?

#### **Other comments outside of City of Denver**

- Spend energy and political capital to promote condo construction
- Work to revise condo defect. Problem solved!
- Promote Condo construction
- Promote condos! Problem solved!
- Promote Condo construction

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#### **Additional Comments**

- Calcutta slum
- How about a tax credit on my Tennyson building taxes, it can be like a “sorry note”
- Imagine you walk up to a person and this is their facial expression (blank face)
- I expressed my concerns to the city and had a kind follow-up, thanks; but I was basically told “it was too late for me, but hey, join a task force and help others.”
- Shame, shame greedy developers; shame, shame Denver for feeding the monsters.
- Deny all slot home proposals, it’s insulting that we have to be so analytical with the obvious.
- It would have been nice to have been part of a task force before ruining the block where my business/property is #thanksnotreally
- Frank Lloyd Wright would be disgusted with all slot home styles designed by current developers and American architects.
- Stucco task force needed
- You, the city, by allowing Tennyson (44<sup>th</sup>-46<sup>th</sup>) have ruined the long term character and viability of MY investments
- Selling “slot homes” which are not sold as condos is developer driving to avoid class action lawsuits. Denver needs better inspection and construction liability laws. Don’t give the keys to the kingdom to developers. Get better inspection laws and inspectors. Give builders a longer time to be responsible for construction defects and this division of ownership perhaps even ugly slot home themselves might just go away. Protect the eventual buyer not the virtually anonymous developer. Already a bad idea for urban Denver. Build it and run. Buyer beware.
- Question, at 8AM when everyone wants to leave the single drive land all at once, what do you do. How about the flat roof “garden” in heavy rain or snow, we can do better.
- These do not belong to some neighbors as they do not fit in architecturally
- Fire danger, constructing wood frame buildings within in close proximity is unconscious irresponsibility