

**Slot Home Evaluation & Text Amendment Task Force
Summary – Meeting 7 – August 24, 2017**

Meeting Objectives:

- Reconsider strategy for Garden Court building form in Row House (RH) and Town House (TH) zone districts
- Consider definition of Row House building form
- Review and confirm staff recommended strategy for Multi-Unit (MU) zone districts
- Discuss additional tools that may be necessary to fully address the problem statement

Task Force Members in Attendance: Nathan Adams, Dave Berton, Enrico Cacciorini, Scott Chomiak, Councilman Rafael Espinoza, Jane Crisler, Christine Franck, Heather Noyes, Sarah Kaplan, Councilman Wayne New, Melissa Rummel **Not in Attendance:** Anna Cawrse Don Elliot, Maggie Miller, Ty Mumford, **CPD Staff:** Analiese Hock, Josh Palmeri, Abe Barge, Jeff Brasel, Morgan Gardner

I. Opening Discussion

At the start of the meeting, the task force members raised a question about timing and effect of the adopted standards with specific concern for existing projects under review. Among the reactions and concerns:

- It's important to know which projects – started under an assumption that the code as it stands today would govern their project – can be grandfathered
- Developers know, or should know that their projects have to change and should be creating projects that resonate with the problem statement and anticipate the changes we've been talking about
- We shouldn't allow the problem to continue
- Developers who have paid their site development fee and are waiting in line should be able to work under the rules that existed when they filed their plans
- We need to consider those who don't know that this task force exists or that the rules are going to change
- Should developers withhold new applications until they know what the new rules will be?
- Should we continue to let projects start the process if we don't know if they are going to meet the requirements?
- Developers have purchased land and invested in plans and processing under the assumption of the current rules; we need to understand the implications for those projects
- We need to understand what the legal standards and the legal ramifications as we set the cut-off for projects that proceed under the existing code
- **The task force will return to this question in a future meeting**

II. Garden Court Building Form

Staff reminded the task force of the information they presented in the July Task Force meeting about the garden court building form. Staff highlighted the intent statement for the RH and TH zone districts as well as specific plan guidance for the areas where RH zoning has been used to implement plans. The task force discussion included the following:

- It's good to see this question in the context of the language of the problem statement and in relationship to intent statements
- The true Garden Court building form has lived its day and it's gone; that kind of design can't be implemented today

- It may no longer be feasible to build a true garden court except at the edges of the city where land costs could make it possible.
- It may be possible to allow the building form in the row house zone districts but eliminate those parts of the building form standards that allow the garden court to become a slot home
- Not generally in favor of eliminating the diversity of housing options in each zone district – this would mean that RH zones would be limited to single-family homes, duplexes or row houses with no options for apartments to be rented
- Eliminating the Garden Court form in Row House zone districts aligns the intent of the district with the allowable forms.
- This is the right solution for the RH and TH zone districts.
- It's important to remember that we are talking about a very tiny fraction of the city, on the order of 2% of the residential land
- **The task force agreed to remove garden court from the RH and TH zones**

III. Row House Building Form

The task force reviewed the definition of a “row house” considering how to interpret the idea that all row house units must face the street and not have units located behind other units. Their discussion included the following:

- Need to increase rear yard setbacks. Secondary problem with the Row House form in districts that typically have back yards is it goes against the neighborhood context
- It is an improvement to go from 4 units that are 15 feet wide to 3 units that are 30 feet wide. Is this an improvement?
- The existing outcome (with units that are behind one another and with entrances that are staggered) is acceptable, and if a builder creates a mirrored set of buildings on the next lot, it creates a Garden Court
- We need to test the zone lot size
- If row houses must all align at the front (with no unit tucked behind any other), we create an incentive for a series of duplex buildings with one unit tucked behind the other
- This is about the definition of the row house – true row houses are next to each other and not staggered forward and back
- Can any portion of one unit be allowed behind any portion of another?
- Can we just set standards for the front door so that the doors all align? The build-to requirement could do this
- **The task force agreed that the standards of the row house building form should align with the expected outcome of side-by-side units oriented to the street.**
- A member of the group noted that the Row House isn't the only instance of calling something by one name when it is actually something else. For example, townhomes are built under the apartment form despite the fact that they do not have any of the attributes of an apartment building.

IV. Upcoming Public Meeting

The members of the task force noted that the success of the upcoming public meeting depends on being able to explain the proposed changes carefully but without getting into the potentially confusing intricacies of the code language.

The discussion was as follows:

- We have to remember that the public doesn't deal with the nuances of the code language that some of us deal with every day
- What we call something, and what can be built under each zone district needs to be readily understood and predictable.
- Staff should select the photographs carefully so that the public meeting doesn't create any false impression of what the results will be

V. Improvements to the Draft Strategies Prior to Testing

The task force considered whether the strategies employed thus far – requiring that units face the street, increasing the front setback, requiring entry features for entrances, reducing height in feet, increasing a side interior setback, changing the location for 'dog houses' and rooftop decks – were sufficient to give the staff and testing group explore through testing. The discussion included the following:

Setback

- By pushing the façade back, you are getting more of a livable, accessible street
- Transition zone needs more space
- The amount of space needed in the transition zone depends on how much space is already part of the public realm
- There is also a measurement question – are we working from the property line or from the street edge? In some cases, there is additional public right-of-way, beyond the curb edge that creates a satisfactory transition zone
- If the city mandates that you have to plant street trees and shrubs, perhaps the setback can be smaller – the quality of the space is important, not just its dimension, and cobble doesn't cut it
- Staff needs to continue to work with public works and forestry to make these improvements
- 10 feet from the sidewalk is very different from 10 feet from the property line
- **Staff agreed to explore these comments with the testing group.**

Decrease Vehicle Parking area dimensions

- We have not gone far enough – the code would still allow the entire ground floor to be used for parking
- We are still providing a way to build slot houses with the current draft – there are units behind other units in areas where the neighborhood context is far lower density
- Staff is focused on the problem statement and the ways to address the units facing the street because that is what affects the neighborhood character most – density questions are questions for Denveright and the city-wide plan update
- **The task force agreed that reducing the dimensions is the right approach**

Defining a New Form

- We need to know whether we are creating a new building form
- Will our work result in a form called Slot Home?
- Is this a new building form or only an arrangement of forms that already have a definition?
- We need a name for the form of a single building and the arrangement of multiple buildings

- Then, once a form is named and created, we have to go through the zone districts and decide which districts are appropriate for the form
- **Staff are considering whether to create a new form and what it might be called**

VI. Multi-Unit District - Strategy

Revise block-sensitive setback

- In some areas, the block-sensitive setback is too large and we want more street activation
- 20 feet is too far from the edge of sidewalk
- This is a different context than in MX so a greater setback is still appropriate
- Again, we need to be specific about whether the setback is measured from the sidewalk or the property line
- **The task force agreed to accept the staff recommendation that limits the block-sensitive setback to 20' in MU zone districts and to test measuring from the inside edge of the improved sidewalk.**

Revising side setback

- If we increase the setback on the side where there are building entrances (so that we reduce impact on adjacent neighbors and create more substantial entrances), can we put the drive aisle on the other side in that side setback? We may have to in order to make the buildings work
- Or we can reduce the size of the setback on the other side
- Increasing the setback for entrances on the side is necessary but there should be give and take on the size
- **The task force agreed to present the larger side setback in the public meeting and make it part of the testing**

Increase build-to percentage

- We have to deal with parcels that have no alley and, as a result, have a front drive aisle
- Our draft doesn't address the problem of the tall, continuous façade
- We haven't addressed the issue of the impact to the neighbors
- **Staff agreed to explore these comments with the testing group.**

VII. Testing and Next Steps

- Public Meeting on September 7th, 5:30, Colorado Health Foundation
- Testing begins now – we need task force members to run tests and explore the questions posed by the task force
- Results in the October 19th meeting from 2-5pm