

**Slot Home Evaluation & Text Amendment Task Force
Summary – Meeting 6 – July 20, 2017**

Meeting Objectives:

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

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

I. Staff Presentation: Multi Unit

Staff presented an overview of their recommended strategy for the multi-unit zone districts. The staff recommended applying of the following tools:

- Unit orientation to the street
- Require entry feature for street-facing entries
- Revise side setback
- Revise block-sensitive setback
- Reduced height in feet

II. Task Force Discussion

The Task Force raised the following questions and provided the following comments:

- If the intent is to have a 3-story building, building height in feet might not be the best tool. There is a need to consider upper story setbacks or other tools that address the appearance.
- Rule of measurement and sloping lots need to be considered in the review of this tool. It is important to maintain flexibility.
- The entrance and the entry features need to open into real living spaces and not just a garage.
- Unit orientation to the street is good, however we need to think about how to get enough units at the street so they read as a row house or a town house from the front.
- The rooftop deck issue persists and will need to be discussed.
- The back-out space for at least one unit is limited. We need to discuss potential revisions to the vehicular access.
- Concern over allowing too much flexibility – everyone – landowners, neighbors, developers – should know what to expect.
- The code needs to address parcels that abut a public open space/park and treat that edge of the private development as part of the public realm, as if the development were facing a public street.
- If you conclude that you only need four of these five tools to accomplish the goal, remove the fifth to reduce complexity; simpler is better.

The task force concluded that the staff recommended strategy option was the correct option to pursue further for MU zone districts.

III. Staff Presentation: Garden Court Building Form

Staff presented an overview of the recommended strategy for the Garden Court building form – eliminating this form from the Row House and the Town House zone districts. To clarify their thinking, staff also presented an alternative – a set of potential revisions to the Garden Court building form.

These revisions could be applied in the Row House or Town House zone districts if the task force chooses not to eliminate the form in these two zones:

- Increase courtyard width,
- Require landscaping in courtyard,
- Enclose the garden court with residential units on three sides, and
- Setback unenclosed driveways and drive aisles.

Although the revisions could improve the form, they also make it highly unlikely that a developer would use the form in Row House and Town House zones. The staff concludes that the best course of action is to remove the form from all RH/TH zone districts.

IV. Task Force Discussion on the Garden Court Building Form

The Task Force raised the following questions and provided the following comments:

- Concern over removing the garden court form from the code altogether. Country Club Gardens and other garden apartments are good buildings. *Staff Note: The examples provided by the task force are within multi-unit districts. The staff recommendation is to remove the form only from the Row House and Town House zone district, not to eliminate the possibility of garden apartments in multi-unit districts.*
- It is useful to require landscaping for garden courts, in a way that can benefit the street.
- The current moratorium requires a courtyard width greater than the height of the building, prohibits stacking and requires a 50% permeable courtyard surface.
- There is room for the form, but the issue that we are specifically talking about is the RH/TH district. Those who live in R-2 have accepted the idea that RH or TH zoning can be compatible with their neighborhood only to get something completely out of character – a slot home development. In some cases, those buildings come with a below-ground level parking, which is visible from the street or from adjacent properties and is out of character with the neighborhood.
- When you go around Denver, there is typically a pattern of orientation, but isn't always consistent. We should avoid removing the natural flexibility occurring over time. We have courtyard apartments on streets that are otherwise very densely built. The sudden shift to a beautiful courtyard is welcome.
- We have very different forms of garden courts. Perhaps we need to look at traditional apartments and garden court units and better calibrate option A and look at how historical examples map in city (not new garden courts).
- Where do historic garden court exist in city, and does it occur as an apartment, town house, etc.? *Staff Note: The large majority of existing courtyard buildings in Denver are apartments, which are in higher intensity multi-unit zone districts which can still be built under the apartment building form.*
- Some of the task force agreed that because garden courts are higher density, they do not belong in RH/TH districts.
- Sunken driveways not appropriate in these districts.
- It seems like the type of recalibrating we want to do will make development impossible. Removing it might be best option. Focus the form in high density apartment areas; it doesn't belong in RH and TH zone district.
- A garden court building form is not appropriate in RH district, the form conflicts with intent statement.
- As much as I love the true garden court look, I agree to remove the building form in RH/TH district.
- I agree with getting rid of the form on RH and TH. The garden courts I love are in higher density multifamily zones.

The task force did not come to a consensus on the staff recommended option to remove the garden court building from in the RH/TH zone districts. Staff will consider this discussion as they produce a draft for task force consideration.

V. Staff Presentation: Row House and Town House Building Form

Staff presented a recommended strategy for the Row House and Town House building form in RH/TH zone districts. The recommended tool would require side-by-side units oriented to the street.

VI. Task Force Discussion on the Row House and Town House Building Form

The Task Force raised the following questions and provided the following comments:

- The saw-tooth form in the problem-statement slide is acceptable. It relates to the street.
- Others disagree, seeing this as not on par with a true row house or town house.
- The RH and TH zones are clearly established with the expectation of a real entry on the street. If you're building a four-plex, units might have entries on the side or share an entry. The problem with four townhouses facing the side, not the street, is that you get units all the way to the back of the lot. This is very different from the existing pattern. In favor of having RH and TH building forms be what their names say.
- Maintaining flexibility is important. Garden court breaks the pattern much more than this four-plex form does.
- This form brings people's doors all the way to the back of the lot. It feels wrong for RH and TH. Garden courts correct this by giving a buffer.
- An entire block of four-plex buildings or staggered multi-unit buildings in an RH or TH zone is not what makes sense in the RH/TH districts.
- A full block of row houses is unified. Allowing the four-plex or the stagger breaks the pattern.
- No other section of code is this specific. RH has a distinct connotation. The staggered or four-plex forms are not rowhomes. They fit into multi-unit districts.
- The four-plex building can reasonably be called a town home.
- Others disagree, indicating that a four-plex should not be called a town home.
- If a zone lot is sufficiently deep, we should promote primary residences in the front and accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in the back.
- In the code update process, the issue of form not matching the name has caused many problems at the neighborhood level. We should be mindful of that during this process, even if ensuring continuity between zone district names and building forms doesn't necessarily fall within the purview of this process.
- A RH and TH zone district is not a description of the form. RH and TH zones don't have only RH and TH forms. Maybe we should change the name of the zone district to allow variety.
- There are other forms allowed in RH district – the nomenclature is to describe the highest intensity form allowed.
- If we exclude this opportunity, the developer will find another way to create the same outcome.
- This is exactly what this task force has to prevent – the code should not create opening for developers to work around the intent.
- The code needs to require actual, live-able, useable space on the ground floor on units facing the primary street, and the parking requirements are part of what is driving the problem.

The task force did not come to a consensus of the staff recommended option to revise the row house and town house building form to require side-by-side units oriented to the street.

VII. Bike Rack – Items for Future Discussion

- Timing – the effect of the text amendment on current or future projects.
- Accessory Dwelling Units as accessory to other uses beyond single family residential.

VIII. Break Out Discussion

The task force broke into three groups to review design outcomes produced by these four additional tools:

- Side setback encroachments
- Rooftop stair enclosures and heights
- Build-to percentages
- Entry features

Side Setback Encroachments

- Group 1 – Something between B & C are appropriate. Allow (not require) encroachments such as shading devices that create ownership of the space. Do not need to go as far as a multi-story porch.
- Group 2 – Canopies should be allowed, but possibly not upper story encroachments. Porches might be okay, however is it possible to have a quality space and a porch in 10-feet.
- Group 3 – Allow for something and encourage some acknowledgment of the entryways but don't allow for enough to really encourage gathering and things that might increase perceived mass and scale. No closer than 5 ft from property line. C is too far. This is in a G-MU district.

Rooftop Stair Enclosures and Heights

- Group 1 – These features should be pushed away from the street and neighboring properties. There is no need to remove, however some minor revisions may be appropriate.
- Group 2 – Same as first group. Needs to be something greater than today but not prohibit doghouses. Don't create a standard that eliminates them all together. Upper story setback might be different way to approach this question.
- Group 3 – Lots of talk of doghouses being as invisible as possible while preserving ability of street-oriented buildings to still have a roof deck. MU and RH/TH context applies here too. If height is measured to the top of the roof deck, and open railings are required (important that roof decks and railings appear open and light), the height can be lower. It is possible to create context-sensitive heights that allow 3-story buildings.

Build-To Percentages and Alternatives

- Group 1 – Having a consistent street frontage is appropriate and alternatives should only be permitted when necessary or when the alternative supports an enhanced public realm. Also, discussed need to revise vehicular access standards and active use.
- Group 2 – with street-orientation of units, build-to is less important – market will determine, keeping build-to may not be a bad thing. Garden wall does not add anything to public realm engagement. Encourage public realm engagement. Increase width of drive aisle.
- Group 3 – Alternatives such as garden wall are not same as build-to and not as meaningful. Either get build-to right or get rid of the alternative. In terms of where percentage is set, some thought D's leftover space is awkward, maybe go closer to B or C. C's high build-to might be too restrictive. Handicap accessibility might become an issue.

Entry Features

- Group 1 – Examples ABCD and E are good. The details of the entry feature are less important than the what is required.
- Group 2 – The market could decide entry features. Maybe a menu approach – a series of elements that are required to add up to a feature. Landscaping and trees are important. Too much of a setback takes away from street engagement. The features should create a sense of ownership for the units.
- Group 3 – A is good. Make sure there is a real entry feature. Landscaping is key. In C, might not be a problem in terms of setback dimensions, but entry feature might end up not being substantial enough.

IX. Next Steps

- Next meeting – Apologies for moving from the 10th to the 24th of August
- The meeting will be August 24, 2:00-5:00 Webb 4.F.7