

Slot Home Evaluation & Text Amendment Task Force
Summary – Meeting 4 – April 12, 2017

Meeting Objectives:

- Explore additional tools proposed by consultants
- Task Force confirmation of key tools
- Provide feedback on successful developments and site designs that address the problem statement

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

I. Slot Home Resident Perspectives

Knowing that some of her coworkers live in slot homes, Sarah asked them to tell her about what they like and don't about their new homes. One is a Rino resident and two live in West Colfax. They offered these observations:

Advantages:

- The building is a neighborhood within a neighborhood – residents of the same building see one another regularly and get to know one another
- Rooftop decks are their outdoor space – the new backyard
- Because the decks are completely visible to all others, they talk over the walls; this reinforces sense of community
- The residents are either 30-something professionals with no children or very small children or are empty-nesters – Those with children expect to need a different kind of home as their children grow up
- They feel safer within the private entry and vehicular entry than the public walkway in front of the building
- The proximity to neighbors adds to the sense of safety
- Price – more attainable than single-family home or condo alternatives
- Location – easy access to the west matters

Disadvantages:

- Losing views as more slot homes are built
- Garages are small – typically park one car, use the rest of the space for storage and park one car on the street (if parking is available); no off-street parking for 2nd vehicle
- Units all look the same
- Driveway turn aisle is tight
- Neighbors are always around and noise carries through walls and windows; can always hear neighbors on roof; noise reverberates through the interior; dinners sound like parties
- The lifecycle break is good for couples, empty nesters, etc but once they have kids it is more difficult to manage
- Private alley doesn't get trash pickup so they carry bins down the street; too many trash bins for the alley

II. Tools from Other Cities

Staff presented zoning tools that other cities have used in similar circumstances.

- Bulk Plane - Nashville
- Upper story setback - Philadelphia
- Rooftop Deck Setback from all four sides - New Orleans
- Build-to: Nashville and Fort Worth
- Rear setbacks – New Orleans, Nashville, Fort Worth, Seattle
- Alley-Access: Seattle and Nashville
- Parking Placement – Seattle, Nashville, Fort Worth and New Orleans
- Building type – Seattle, Nashville and Fort Worth
- Ground floor transparency – Seattle, Nashville
- Street Facing Entrance and entry feature – Seattle, Nashville, Fort Worth
- Articulation – Seattle and Fort Worth
- Design Review – with a review board Seattle and Fort Worth
- Ground Floor Active Use – Nashville
- Inactive ground floor screening – New Orleans

Discussion – Which Tools Seem Most Useful for Our Work?

- Design incentives
- Articulation requirements
- Design review – including quality of material
- Entry feature requirement
- Articulation (but worry about requiring certain materials)
- The deep rear setback helps with vehicle turn around, parking for 2nd car and guest parking
- The requirement that 50% of units must have a street-facing entrance
- Street-facing entrance and entry feature requirements
- A good incentive for articulation would be to encourage flexible setbacks – If 7-ft setback is the standard, allow part at 5 ft and part at 9 ft so that it meets the average
- Street-facing entry requirements and well designed and well-articulated buildings
- Street-facing entry is the best tool
- Articulation could be helpful but there are worries about the not-so-great results that could come from it
- Context-sensitivity: need design review with triggers/thresholds
- Design Review should have variance powers to give added flexibility to design review board
- Landscaping requirements
- Rooftop deck setback
- Anything that addresses building height
- Rooftop setback seems appropriate with flat roof, but not pitched roof
- Would love to know if other cities have no-site-grading requirements for landscaping and for addressing fair housing accessibility requirements
- Do other cities have open space requirements (back yards or ground-level open space)? Yes, some do

Staff is working with the consultant to finalize the report. Once the report has been finalized, it will be distributed to the task force.

III. Most Promising Tools – From the Task Force Deliberation Thus Far

Staff offered their observation that the following five tools seem to hold the most promise, given task force deliberation to this point, and **the task force confirmed the list:**

Discussion:

1. Front setback
 - Some neighborhoods that are entirely redeveloped have enormous front setbacks that don't make sense
 - All-residential buildings built in main street or mixed-use zones that have zero setback don't work – we need to set back the residential buildings in these zones if we are going to allow all-residential development in these zones
 - We will have to calibrate the specific setbacks in different contexts
 - We need to examine how block-sensitive setbacks work (or fail to)
2. A real entrance with entry features
 - Today, the code requires one entrance, but doesn't require articulation or emphasis
 - It seems insufficient to require only one
 - Apartment buildings have only one entrance
 - The flat front is problematic – the entry feature must be real, and substantial
 - The number of street-facing entrances is the most crucial question
 - Seattle's requirement that 50% of the units face the street produced a new form with one set of units along the street, then a second set on the back half of the lot
 - We should require front porch or entry feature and allow it to encroach into the front setback or, at least, count toward active use requirement
3. Measuring height in feet
4. Expanded garden court and
5. Landscaping requirement
 - This is a good start, but doesn't settle the question of whether the garden court form is inappropriate for some districts

Discussion – Other Concerns:

Building a connection between the two halves of a slot home development to cover the slot

- This would address some of the mass and scale questions
- Developers are exploring ways to do this – it results in some interesting vehicular access questions

Parking

- The biggest issue is parking
- The list of above is a good start, but we must deal with the car – vehicle access and parking

Naming conventions including the height in stories

- For RNO members and for the public – the name of the zone district and how we measure building heights is confusing – we are seeing a 6-story building in MS-5 district. Is so confusing to public that it is zoned for this number of stories and then they can count that they are higher. These slot homes and building forms should look like that zone district to pedestrians at street level.

Rooftop setbacks

How do we govern a form that isn't designated – there is no slot home form in the code

- We apply things to the apartment or shop front form when the reality is these aren't apartments or shop fronts
- The task force will need to address the question: which forms are allowed in which district?

IV. Photo Activity

The task force looked for photos that demonstrated an effective response to some element of the problem statement — engaging public realm, mass and scale, vehicle-oriented design, impact on neighbors, neighborhood context

Each task force member spoke to one photo:

- A low-income housing project with lots of front doors facing the street – a successful and affordable project where you can always see kids playing out front
- A building that engages the public realm, has character and appropriate mass
- Front doors on the street and variety of setbacks, two-story
- A zero-lot-line building that is articulated so that doesn't feel like its falling over into the public realm, with plane breaks; it steps back subtly from the street; it has garages that open to one of the street faces, but that doesn't dominate; it is an interesting example of minimal setbacks without being overwhelming
- Row house with porches on the first, second and third level; hides vehicular access; variety of scales
- A 3-story row house that doesn't feel like 3 due to the articulation and the entrances
- Sloping site helps with massing. Even though there is concrete and not much landscaping it feels friendly and not modern or foreign
- Contextually appropriate architecture with sloped roof, delineated 3 stories, traditional windows, modern materials integrated into structure. Looks like rowhome but only have 2 doors on street side, and that's okay in this kind of composition and materials
- Commercial uses on the ground floor in a commercial context
- Multi-gabled row house; it is the next generation high density version of craftsman bungalows; easy to maintain units, one material on roof (all shingle), every façade is defined, playing with brick massing and bringing it out to make a deck or balcony; long-term this form could easily incorporate the changes we want to make to slot home regulations.
- Public realm engagement – putting in three stories that aren't in-your-face
- The problem with these pictures – they aren't on lots with the dimension of Denver's zone lots; we're going in a direction that we can't go
- Street-facing orientation, articulation on the street-side; follows the sloping contour of land; nice transparency; front setback, but without the street facing requirement it could look different
- We want to produce buildings with all street facing units but we're limited by the lot sizes and some buyers don't care, will buy with or without street facing entry
- Engages the public well, looks like a single-family home at the front and may have more units behind
- Everyone's said they like the front entrances – recessed/covered, entry features, we can do that

V. Next Steps

- Next meeting – June 8 – 2:00-5:00