

Architects, Designers, and Builders Focus Group Notes

July 27, 2022 – 5-7 pm

Participants (Architects/Builders)

- Terra Mazzeo
- Rod K.
- Ozi Friedrich, Radix Design
- Matthew Krick
- Niccolo Casewit
- Nathan Jenkins
- Sarah Senderhauf
- Nathan Jenkins, Oz Architecture
- Darcy Wilson, UNDR-SMI

Comments by Topic

ADU size

- Space is a premium on the building side. Very challenging to do anything without adequate space. ADUs are more complicated than a large house. Every support should be there to help people through the maze of requirements, not just zoning (all technical requirements including quality, construction, etc.)
- Square footage requirement seems redundant with lot coverage requirement.
- Applying same rules for houses to ADUs in terms of lot coverage- overhands and coverage vs. non-coverage, front porches, etc. Front porches shouldn't count towards GFA.
- Second floor deck forces interior stairway- think about square footage requirements like is being done for front porches. Important context elements for second story ADUs – having an entrance and a place to put your bike.

Raising bulk plane

- General support for bulk plane increase.
- 1.5 story and bulk plane are redundant restrictions- making sure it's a pitched, monopoly roof solution. Prefers bulk plane over 1.5 stories. 1.5 story requirement should be eliminated. Raise bulk plane. 24' height requirement is fine.
- People on AC responds favorably to ADUs on corner lot when they can face the streets. The current bulk plane prevents that from occurring. Bulk plane should be liberalized for corner lots facing the streets- helps neighborhood urban design.
- Raising bulk plane – encourages monolithic structure without allowing articulation, like dormers to break up massing. We are seeing dormer exceptions in overlay districts, but these don't apply to ADUs. They only apply to front 65% of the lot. Exception would help encourage continuity in forms – if primary dwelling has dormers, ADU has dormers.
- Want to make sure bulk plane considers potential overhangs and what that does to shadow footprint. Be cautious about making sure shadow footprint is respectful.

Privacy/windows

- If older house with steep roof, allowed whatever is required to meet pattern language.

- Balconies facing alleys should be liberalized.
- Setbacks don't always protect solar access. Usually better solar access at alley because of fewer trees. Alley is ideal for solar and net zero ADUs.
- In terms of window limitations- any more restrictions just complicate process. People are already aware of privacy issues and windows.
- Balconies that face alley do not cause privacy concerns.
- Balcony can be added in response to windows at back of ADU to enhance privacy.
- Idea of privacy is a fallacy. When you live in an urban environment, you naturally lose a little privacy. Window sizing doesn't matter. Maybe you don't have the zero setback
- Building code takes care of privacy/windows for buildings close to lot lines.
- Could be reasonable to propose acid edged glass or film depending on window location. Could get light and not views. Maybe window needs to be higher. Agrees that people already place windows intentionally, and we don't need more rules.

Height in suburban context

- Suburban homes are often one-story. Having a two-story house behind is odd and causes turmoil.
- Suburban height max- match existing roof slope with potential exceptions.
- Utilities and heating units could be put in crawl space above single story ADU. 17' height maximum to allow for that is appropriate.

ADUs with TU/RH

- Architects confirm that clients ask for ADUs accessory to duplexes and row homes.
- Detached ADUs are appropriate with two/multi-unit. Could be associated with carport or other off-street parking.
- Low-rise multifamily building, like townhomes- some percentage of the units are ADUs for the overall building. Could be used on a check-out system for residents, could share rental revenue and operating duties. Could be a great key to affordability.
- For TU/RH ADUs, allow developers to build them from scratch.
- Three story rowhomes all with ground floor ADUs: <https://www.origamipdx.com/>

Most significant barriers to ADUs

- Do more with existing structures within single family housing. Could use the basement with separate kitchenette
- Want 2nd floor deck in the rear 25%, people need bicycle parking on deck near the door
- Cost of the ADU is the biggest barrier.
- Difficult to give reasonable design fee for an ADU when the scope is the same as the house.
- Pre-approved plan sets help bring down design cost.
- More emphasis with helping people with site plans and having a resource list. Create routine checklist from the design perspective- what the process is, what you need to address, etc. or having an on-staff architect that helps people for free. Could include site visit. Would help people be realistic about the process.
- 8' plate upstairs would be helpful from real estate view for affordability.
- Tandem home building form has more leeway- consider extending same flexibility
- Permit fee waivers would be great. Subsidizing affordable housing in other building types, why don't we make those monies available at the lowest, simpler level for owners instead of developers?

- Losing clients because rezoning process takes so long. Elderly parents have to move into senior home instead of ADU because process couldn't be completed fast enough.
- ADU projects die in permitting because of trying to convert an existing building. If an existing structure doesn't meet zoning, allow ADUs although non-compliance isn't expanded.
- Surprises for owners: SUDP fee (\$5,000), tap fees, rework of concrete in front yard when doing something in back yard, sewer use fees should be a percentage
- Almost every client asks for a deck. Realize privacy concerns
- Same amount of effort, cost, permit fees, etc. is the same for 400 sf as it is for 1,000 sf.
- Makes bigger ADU more efficient per dollar. The larger the site, the larger the ADU and the sf max.
- In older neighborhoods there are a lot of odd ball lots – requirement that ADU is located in rear 35% is impossible to meet. Consider exemption for lots less than 100' or 90' or eliminate requirement.
- Impact of wastewater and DOTI- single biggest costs that no one gets to enjoy. More flexibility with review for ADUs.
- Conflict in Article 13 in measuring GFA- definition says exterior wall to exterior wall. Half story measurement is 6'. Need to clarify rule of measurement in definitions.

Comments by Participant

- Niccolo Casewit
 - Very complete work.
 - Space is a premium on the building side. Very challenging to do anything without adequate space. ADUs are more complicated than a large house. Every support should be there to help people through the maze of requirements, not just zoning (all technical requirements including quality, construction, etc.)
 - Practicalities matter as much as possible.
 - Do more with existing structures within single family housing. Could use the basement with separate kitchenette
 - 2nd floor deck in the rear 25%, people need bicycle parking on deck near the door
 - Supports bulk plane increase.
 - If older house with steep roof, allowed whatever is required to meet pattern language.
 - Balconies facing alleys should be liberalized.
 - Cost of the ADU is the biggest barrier.
 - Difficult to give reasonable design fee for an ADU when the scope is the same as the house.
 - Pre-approved plan sets help bring down design cost.
 - More emphasis with helping people with site plans and having a resource list. Create routine checklist from the design perspective- what the process is, what you need to address, etc. or having an on-staff architect that helps people for free. Could include site visit. Would help people be realistic about the process.
 - 8' plate upstairs would be helpful from real estate view for affordability.
 - Tandem home building form has more leeway- consider
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- Suburban homes are often one-story. Having a two-story house behind is odd and causes turmoil.
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- Matthew Krick
 - 1.5 story and bulk plane are redundant restrictions- making sure it's a pitched, monopoly roof solution. Prefers bulk plane over 1.5 stories. 1.5 story requirement should be eliminated. Raise bulk plane. 24' height requirement is fine.
 - ADU projects die in permitting because of trying to convert an existing building. If an existing structure doesn't meet zoning, allow ADUs although non-compliance isn't expanded.
 - Surprises for owners: SUDP fee (\$5,000), tap fees, rework of concrete in front yard when doing something in back yard, sewer use fees should be a percentage
 - Almost every client asks for a deck. Realize privacy concerns
 - More eyes on the alley can help safety/quality of life in neighborhood
 - Same amount of effort, cost, permit fees, etc. is the same for 400 sf as it is for 1,000 sf. Makes bigger ADU more efficient per dollar. The larger the site, the larger the ADU and the sf max.
 - Losing clients because rezoning process takes so long. Elderly parents have to move into senior home instead of ADU because process couldn't be completed fast enough.
 - In terms of window limitations- any more restrictions just complicate process. People are already aware of privacy issues and windows.
- Nathan Jenkins
 - Balconies that face alley do not cause privacy concerns.
 - More malleability will lead to more fun and opportunity. Want to see unique outcomes to the same set of variables discussed.
- Ozi Friedrich
 - Balcony added in response to windows at back of ADU to enhance privacy.
 - People on AC responds favorably to ADUs on corner lot when they can face the streets. The current bulk plane prevents that from occurring. Bulk plane should be liberalized for corner lots facing the streets- helps neighborhood urban design.
 - In older neighborhoods there are a lot of odd ball lots – requirement that ADU is located in rear 35% is impossible to meet. Consider exemption for lots less than 100' or 90' or eliminate requirement.
 - Impact of wastewater and DOTI- single biggest costs that no one gets to enjoy. More flexibility with review for ADUs.
 - Gets requests for multi-unit conversions.
 - Imagines detached ADUs as appropriate with two/multi-unit. Could be associated with carport or other offstreet parking.
- Rod K.
 - Raising bulk plane – encourages monolithic structure without allowing articulation, like dormers to break up massing. We are seeing dormer exceptions in overlay districts, but these don't apply to ADUs. They only apply to front 65% of the lot. Exception would help encourage continuity in forms – if primary dwelling has dormers, ADU has dormers.
 - Want to make sure bulk plane considers potential overhangs and what that does to shadow footprint. Be cautious about making sure shadow footprint is respectful.

- Conflict in Article 13 in measuring GFA- definition says exterior wall to exterior wall. Half story measurement is 6'. Need to clarify rule of measurement in definitions.
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- Idea of privacy is a fallacy. When you live in an urban environment, you naturally lose a little privacy. Window sizing doesn't matter. Maybe you don't have the zero setback
- Building code takes care of privacy/windows for buildings close to lot lines.
- Darcy Wilson
 - Utilities and heating units could be put in crawl space above single story ADU. 17' height max minimum.
- Terra Mazzeo
 - Has client that has asked about ADU on lot with duplex.
 - Lowrise multifamily building, like townhomes- some percentage of the units are ADUs for the overall building. Could be used on a check-out system for residents, could share rental revenue and operating duties. Could be a great key to affordability
 - Three story rowhomes all with ground floor ADUs: <https://www.origamipdx.com/>
 - Could be reasonable to propose acid edged glass or film depending on window location. Could get light and not views. Maybe window needs to be higher. Agrees that people already place windows intentionally, and we don't need more rules.
- Sarah Senderhauf
 - Gets multiple calls with clients asking for ADUs on duplex lots.
 - Would ADUs with rowhouses trigger SDP process?