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MEMORANDUM

DT: November 22, 2010

TO: Mayor and City Council Members

TH: Darin Atteberry, City Manager
Diane Jones, Deputy City Manager
Karen Cumbo, Interim PDT Director

FM: Joe Frank, Advance Planning Director
Megan Bolin, City Planner

RE: East and West Side Neighborhoods Design Standards Study – Public Feedback on the Potential Implementation Options

On November 15, 2010, staff hosted a third public meeting to discuss potential implementation options related to the East and West Side Neighborhoods Design Standards Study. A presentation provided background information and introduced five potential options, and staff answered questions. Over 100 citizens attended. For those who were not able to attend, an online comment form was created to record feedback on each of the options, available from November 15-19. Due to the timing of the meeting, staff was not able to include citizen feedback in the Agenda Item Summary for the November 23 work session; instead, the questions and comments heard at the meeting, as well as those received from the online comment form, are summarized below.

Questions and comments heard at the November 15 meeting include:

- Several questions about “who is behind this?”, “why are we here?”, and “how many people complained?”.
- Concern that a few “squeaky wheels” are imposing something on the silent, busy majority who do not have time to counteract the activism.
- A lot of concern about reducing the allowable size of houses. The sentiment is that reducing the size limit would not allow families to live in Old Town and reduce property values.
- Comment that variety is the essential quality to preserve, which is the result of the neighborhood changing over time without having any design standards. Variety is what sets this area apart from newer subdivisions that have covenants/Home Owners Associations (HOAs).
- Concern about the fairness of small-house blocks being limited – it gives people on blocks with big houses an unfair advantage over people on blocks with small houses.



- A few statements of interest in design standards to protect the unique, rare qualities that differentiate these neighborhoods from newer developments. Some of these comments include the idea that design, rather than size, is more important to how well new construction fits in.
- A few statements of interest in size limits, to protect the character (which small houses are a part of). The sentiment is that big houses can be built in many other places, including appropriate parts of these neighborhoods. The City should not allow someone to simply build the biggest possible house for their money, at the cost of changing the neighborhood for everyone else.
- Concern that the average-plus concept is not worth doing. Why bother if it includes a 2,000 square foot allowance and keeps the current limits as the cap? Why bother if there is not a problem currently with people building up the maximum limits?

Summary of input received from the online comment form:

The online comment form was formatted so that there was one page of information for each option, which provided a description and pros/cons, and the following page provided a text box where citizens could type in their thoughts about the option. Citizens were not required to provide a response, and could comment on any/all that were of interest. The number of responses are recorded below, and staff has categorized those responses into “in favor”, “opposed”, or “neutral”. The full responses are attached to this memo.

Of those that responded and provided input, there is clear consensus that “no change” is the preferred option.

Option 1 – No Change

34 responses were recorded for this option: 28 in favor, 4 opposed, 2 neutral.

Option 2 – Design Assistance

33 responses were recorded for this option: 4 in favor, 29 opposed.

Option 3 – Voluntary Design Review

27 responses were recorded for this option: 5 in favor, 21 opposed, 1 neutral.

Option 4 – Average-Plus Concept

35 responses were recorded for this option: 6 in favor, 26 opposed, 3 neutral.

Option 5 – Design Standards

36 responses were recorded for this option: 3 in favor, 33 opposed.

Attachment

1. Comments from online comment form.