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## NEIGHBORHOOD INFORMATION MEETING NOTES

These notes capture questions, comments and ideas from the meeting, but are not a verbatim transcript.

**PROJECT:** Oakwood School Addition of a Permitted Use for Row Houses  
1401 West Mountain

**DATE:** June 11 (June 2 meeting date)

**PLANNER:** Clark Mapes

**APPLICANT/OWNER:** Bill and Marcia Coulson

### City Staff Presentation

Clark reviewed the agenda, the purpose of the meeting, and guidelines for conduct of the meeting. The developer will to share ideas for their proposed development; the neighbors can share their feedback & input. The City is facilitating meeting, and would review project for compliance with Land Use Code standards if an application is submitted. If the project proceeds to a hearing, the notes will eventually go to the decision-maker (in this case, the Planning and Zoning Board).

Clark explained that the site is in the Neighborhood Conservation Low Density (N-C-L) zone district. When asked for a show of hands, most or all in attendance were aware of this zoning. He noted the permitted uses in the zone district are limited to single family detached homes, schools, churches and group homes for development on private lots like this. The proposed development is for a use that is not in the list of permitted uses, but the Land Use Code has a provision for Addition of Permitted Uses (APU) to a zone district, which would be required in this case. An APU application is for a specific project on a specific site, which can be allowed if the Planning and Zoning Board determines that the project would not be detrimental to the public good and meets compatibility criteria in the Land Use Code, Section 3.5.1.

### Developer Presentation

Bill and Marcia Coulson explained that they are the new owners of the property. They were also the developers of the Cortina building at Howes and Canyon. Jeff Errett, architect with The Architects Studio, was introduced as having developed the design drawings for the Coulsons.

The current building is proposed to be removed and replaced with a new building. Concept drawings showed three units facing McKinley with two-car garages facing the alley. One unit was shown facing Mountain, with a one-car garage facing Mountain. The new building would have approximately the same footprint as the Oakwood building; it does push the building closer to McKinley or Mountain. The west unit is lower than the others to step down to the adjacent property. The existing fence line would be replaced with a new fence. Existing trees in parkway strips would remain.

## Discussion

Q – Are there garages on the alley?

A (Developer) – Yes

Q – What is the square footage of the units?

A (Developer) – 9,200 square feet in habitable space, and 1,600 square feet in garages. Each unit would be about 2,100 square feet, excluding the garage. This is all preliminary and could change when actual design is developed further.

Q – What is the size of the site?

A (Developer) – Approximately 16,340 square feet.

Q – What is the setback from the house to the west?

A (Developer) – It is the same as the existing setback.

Q – It looks the garages extend further to the west than the existing building. Do they?

A (Developer) – Yes, they would be 5 feet from the lot line, which is the allowed minimum. This was done to ensure a usable scale of garages so that people will park in their garage rather than on the street.

Q – Are there 6 garage spaces?

A – There are 6 spaces on the alley plus a single car garage on Mountain for a total of 7 spaces.

Q – Earlier you said you were exploring multifamily and single family. Why did you abandon single family?

A (Applicant) – I don't want to build monster houses. I could split this into two lots, and sell for development. Then you would end up with 3,000-4,000 square foot houses with a carriage house on each lot for a total of four families.

Comment (public) – That is a misstatement. The zoning here is for 2 single family houses or a single family house with carriage house.

Comment (City) – This parcel is big enough to divide into two lots, but those lots would not then be large enough to permit carriage houses. One house with a carriage house would be allowed if it remains a single parcel.

Q – Is there any precedence for row homes in Old Town? This looks appropriate for Old Town North but not here.

A (Developer) – There is a development on Cherry, Cherry Street Lofts, and also apartments a couple of blocks to the west.

Q – With the extensive building going on, can you sell these?

A (Developer) – I expect the units will be sold before they are completed. We expect older people who are looking for a way to size down without leaving the neighborhood may be interested. These will offer a smaller home, with less maintenance, in a nice neighborhood.

Comment (public) – But it will change the neighborhood.

Q – What is the bedroom/bath configuration?

A – 2 bedrooms and den; 2.5 baths.

Q – What is the price range?

A (City) – \$500,000-600,000.

Q – Is a group home allowed in zone district?

A (City) – Yes, for up to 8 people.

Q – The developer wants to do something not allowed in zone district, correct?

A (City) – Yes.

A (Developer) – I want to reduce the commercial intensity to residential. It could be commercial like a school, group home, or church use.

A (City) – We’re into semantics here but the group home is a residential use and the school and church are institutional uses, not commercial in the sense we use the term.

Q – So your argument for the Planning and Zoning Board is that you would save the neighborhood from a more onerous use? Is that a valid argument?

A (City) No, that’s not a criteria or consideration.

Comment (former P&Z member) – The P&Z board would make the determination.

A (Developer) – We would rather see this type of residential use than have it become a commercial use such as a school or group home.

A (City) – To clarify, schools, churches, and group homes are classified as “institutional” uses, not commercial uses.

Q – This site was a school and a church before that. A home for elderly is fine too. This looks like this is a two story. I have a concern about houses being scraped and converted to two-stories, and houses next door have suffered. Where does the City stand on this?

A (City) – This meeting not a time for City to take a position, as it is first time we have seen the drawings too. An APU has high compatibility standards and high scrutiny under review.

Comment (Public) – Gina Janett, of Protect our Old Town Homes (POOTH), noted that POOTH was active in working on the recent code changes regarding height and solar access. Zoning is N-C-L. Under zoning today, two detached homes could be built on this site. POOTH believes in protecting character in terms of size, setbacks, style, etc. The West Side Neighborhood Plan gives sense of vision for the area, and said the site could be kept as school or converted to single family use.

Q – Would the floor area ratio standards (FAR) apply to this project?

A (Developer) – Yes. This proposal exceeds the FAR limit by 20%. He said that this parcel is an anomaly in size and the building on it. The style on the front (north) was left largely left in the same style as exists now. The existing school building is part of the historical character of this neighborhood.

[Follow-up note from staff: floor area ratio (FAR) standards set limits on the total size and mass of buildings on a lot by limiting the total floor area of buildings on a lot depending on the lot size. The FAR for the proposal would be .4, meaning that this 16,340 square foot lot would be limited to a total of  $16,340 \times .4 = 6,536$  square feet]

Q – What is the footprint of the existing building?

A (Architect) – 5300 square feet.

Comment (Public) – I am concerned that this will set a precedent. Then, more people would tear down houses to put up other uses not allowed in the zone district.

Comment (Public) – When I bought in this neighborhood, Oakwood was here, and I was not thinking about how Oakwood School might be changed. The neighborhood may not be enamored of the look of the building, as the developer is. My starting point is no APU and no variances. Stick to the adopted zoning.

Q – I like look of building, but the first floor is mostly glass. It looks like an office building. Did you think about designing 4 units that could look like a big house, with multiple units in it to make it look more like this neighborhood?

A (Architect) – Yes, I did. This represents a vision that the developer had. It borrows more from the building that is here now. I acknowledge that it doesn't reflect character of neighborhood. The owners feel that the school building has charm, and wanted to use some of those same lines and character.

Comment – My daughter went to school here. The existing school is brick; that makes it fit in more. I question the idea of these being good retirement homes - a 2 story plan not is conducive to older people. The building design doesn't seem very homey.

A (Developer) – I haven't pushed out the building out to the property line as I could have – I'm keeping the same setbacks. I thought that was an important part of the look.

Q – I hear that you don't care about fitting in with the neighborhood, and do not like the modern design.

A (Architect) – The existing building isn't homey either.

Q – 2100 square feet is a big home. We live in 1500 square feet, and that seems huge.

A (Developer) – Nothing is set in stone. These units do not have basements, unlike other old town properties. I bought the old grocery store by Lincoln Center, at age 25, and lived in 1000 square feet. Now we live in Cortina in about 2200 square feet, and it feels too big. The upper level could come in handy for guests or caretakers.

Q – There was a question earlier about precedent that was not answered. Can the City respond?

A (City) – If this proposal proceeds to an application, then review and a public hearing, it will be evaluated individually on its merits. This is the only one of its kind, and every proposal is evaluated on its own merits for its own site and context. I do not think that there's a risk of setting a precedent.

Q – Is P&Z where our efforts should be focused?

A (City) – Yes, and it's best to submit your comments through Clark Mapes, the planner for the proposal. City Council members should not be contacted regarding specific development review projects, because they can be appealed to City Council, and Council needs to only deal with projects within the process.

Q – What is required next in the process? Is there another meeting we can come to?

A (City) – This is the only required neighborhood meeting. (The consensus was that another neighborhood meeting would be preferred if the project proceeds.)

Q – I am familiar with the variance process but not APU. The variance process has quite specific standards for determining approval. For an APU, it doesn't sound like you have to meet specific standards. Does staff recommend how they meet the standards of APU, and if the FAR variance is justified?

A (City) – Yes, the APU does have to meet certain standards. It might help to understand the intent of APUs, to think about one of the first APUs which was in this zone district, at Shields & Mulberry, the big brick house. Because of the increasing traffic on those two arterials, it seemed to be beyond its lifespan as a good single family home and the owners wanted to use it for offices. Another APU now currently under review is a B&B facing West Mulberry.

Q – Has the Board denied any APU requests?

A (City) – Yes.

Q – Does an APU application require a full workup? Can I go to the Board and request a new use for my property?

A (City) – It does require a complete application and processing of a development plan.

Comment – The APU at Mulberry/Shields was presented as legalizing a long-standing non-conforming office use for their own business to continue. Once the APU was approved, it was sold immediately and is now a real estate office, which is not a service to benefit the neighborhood. Now, another house has converted to office use through APU next to a church. The City does not look at whether there are a lot of changing uses in neighborhood, nor consider the impact of these on a neighborhood. These do not benefit the neighborhood.

Comment – This is an overwhelming edifice. I assumed it was office building when I saw the pictures. Oakwood is a 5300 square foot brick one-story building – it fits in better. The neighborhood has lots of older houses, but none that big. A church use would be fine too?

A (Developer) – Yes. What if we wanted to turn it into a church, group home, or school? How many would oppose? (No one raised hands.)

Comment – The newer homes by the cemetery were designed to be sympathetic to neighborhood. This is not.

Q – How much does P&Z care about what we think?

A (former P&Z Board Member) – As a former member, I can say yes, P&Z listens. Send comments to Clark.

Q – Are the recent FAR limitations on the recent Code changes the same for a church?

A – The recent changes introduced a new formula for single family houses where the FAR varies by lot size. For other than single family houses, a .4 (40%) FAR limit would apply.

Comment – Discussion about using the building as a school, church, group home are not financially feasible, and are scare tactics by the developer. This is not fair. It seems like a threat.

Q – I'm concerned about density. At Shields & Mountain, attached houses are proposed where the gas station is now, but it is a different zoning district.

A (City) – Yes, that is a different situation, different zone district along with Beavers Market, and there the developer is responding to requests from the neighbors to remove the gas station.

Q – I'm not enamored with the design. Four units may be too many. Are you interested in ways to work with the neighborhood?

A (Developer) – That's a nice thought. Yes we would. We would like to discuss it with an open mind. We could see some opposition. But how do you get even three people to agree on anything?

Q – Several here represent a neighborhood association. We have seen many changes. I understand having variety in styles. I live in Aspen where there are many different styles of houses side by side. But this is institutional and cold - you wouldn't want to go inside to check it out. Soften it up so that it would be more amenable to the neighborhood.

Q – I don't like the look, but am not necessarily opposed to the number of units.

Comments in reaction from others: the number of units is a problem.

Q – I am an architect. The Architect's Studio is a good quality modern architecture group, but this is out of context. It doesn't fit into the neighborhood context. It's too big (over FAR by 20%). It is imposing on the street and the neighborhood. I object to your comment that you are 'saving' us from a group home. This is the most restrictive zoning in City of Fort Collins. Do you understand why that is?

A (Developer) – I assume that a neighborhood group has gone out and lobbied.

Comments in reaction from others: No, that's not why.

Comment – Find out why it is as restrictive as it is. You are far across that line.

Comment – There is a West Side Neighborhood Plan. You need to look at the plan. I'm a landscape architect, and I see the design. The design is nice, but does not fit this neighborhood.

A (Architect) – We were tasked with taking a use not in the Land Use Code that fit the client's vision. After several iterations, we knew that it fell short of a lot of the Land Use Code and West Side Neighborhood Plan. This is their vision that we floated out there for this meeting.

Comment (Public) – Earlier, you mentioned the Cherry Street row houses as an example of a similar project, but that site is zoned downtown commercial. That zone is very different.

Q – Will the FAR from the recent ordinance apply? Is it different for a school? Does the detached garage allowance apply?

A (City) – The recent ordinance has a special exception to encourage single family houses to have small detached garages. They don't count against FAR limits. For any use other than single family houses, all building floor area counts. FAR is different for uses other than houses; houses have a formula based on lot size, and other uses have a FAR of .4 or 40%.

A (Architect) – The figure of 20% over the FAR limit includes the attached garages.

Q – How does FAR get calculated?

A (City) – For anything other than single family, the limit is 40%. The ordinance that went into effect recently has a more detailed formula for single family detached, as that was the main issue in this zone district. The formula for houses results in FARS that range from about .32 to .4 depending on lot size.

Comment (public) – The recent character study found that neighbors wanted smaller houses and there are problems with the biggest houses. This jumps outside of that.

Comment (public) – The relevant thing is the context of neighborhood – all single family detached. Multifamily is out of context with neighborhood. It is unacceptable to go to four families instead of two.

Q – I believe this sets market precedence (instead of a regulatory precedence) to investors and developers. I will be at Council regarding excluding APU in certain zone districts. An example is a Lemay/Drake apartment complex – City Council rejected a large apartment complex in a low density residential (RL) zone on appeal.

Comment – Put in two houses and all will be fine, or two units in this building.

A (Developer) – I have an open mind even though I got beat up a little bit here today. I could sell to someone else. I could change the setbacks on both sides.

Comment (public) – I respect the thought that went into maintaining the current setback. Some recent projects in other areas like the District in Campus West are too tight. I live in a mid-century modern house and actually like the style. I'm not from Mountain Avenue. I urge you to think about what Mountain Avenue means to the history of this city. It has a romantic image and memories. It is a dream of kids to live on Mountain Avenue someday because of the character of the neighborhood. That's behind the passion of people who do live here.

Q – I've lived on the street since the 1970's. Our block (1500 W. Mountain) has an unfortunate huge house between ranch homes. It has never sold though it has been on and off the market several times. I don't doubt you've put a lot of time, effort, and money into the project, but I cannot understand how you could come to a meeting of neighbors with a project that is so oversized and cold. I think of the State Patrol office and the Visitor Center. There is no warmth in the plans. I expected to see two-story places like those on Maple that are jammed in and inappropriate, but they are not as offensive as this. Neighbors do have to speak up. I'm also surprised you would bring stucco.

A (Architect) – There is stucco on the yellow house across the street to the east.

Comment (Public) – Most people like what happened on Jackson Street, where an old house was removed and replaced with three gorgeous homes that fit in the neighborhood.

Q – If there is another meeting, can you bring alternatives, including showing two single family houses?

Q – Can there be another meeting?

A (City) – They will be encouraged to.

**Comments received outside of the meeting via emails and letters:**

- I was unable to attend the meeting regarding the potential of this being built in our neighborhood. I took out the word atrocity but I think that's what these architectural rendering represent. In my opinion this looks like a jail or a jiffy lube and does not belong in any neighborhood and certainly not in a historic neighborhood!
- I'm not one of those who think we should continue building Craftsman style homes in Old Town (now midcentury modern bungalows is a different story :). I love some of the modern homes but this is so ugly and sterile that I almost wonder if the architects are throwing this out there so when they present the "real" plan they can say they listened to what the public said and made changes.

I also strongly disapprove of changing the density and occupancy regulations. I don't want to have to worry that when my 95 year old neighbor dies that some developer will buy the house next door, gut it and put 4-6 apartments in. Once the precedence is set every developer will want to turn the biggest profit they can.

- Not only was the design completely out of line with our neighborhood, it is not zoned for such a building and, apparently, is also over on the percentage allowed and would need a variance for that, too.

It is not the neighbor's fault that these people purchased property hoping to skirt all the zoning ordinances in place for our very special neighborhood. It is not our responsibility to make sure they make money or break even on their proposed project, nor is it the responsibility of the city. I implore you to express to the decision makers to stick to the zoning rules in place for that property and not issue any exemptions. Whether each and every project is looked at independently, I do fear that this is setting a precedent and will only cause more heartache for our neighborhood and, by extension, you and the zoning board in the future.

- The proposed project is objectionable for several reasons. First, it apparently exceeds the FAR (floor area ratio) by a whopping 20%, secondly, it does not meet the current allowable usages, and third, the design of the project is such that it seems the architect did not put much effort into designing something that would not stick out in that neighborhood like a sore thumb. It seems like a lot of architects just don't "get" Old Town design. There are also concerns about density, but that probably takes a back seat to the aforementioned concerns.

Residents in this part of town went to a great deal of effort to secure the FAR in the current ordinance for a reason. It seems that so many projects want to just get variances to get around this, and so residents are constantly feeling the need to organize, attend meetings, and try to stave off this kind of egregious development. It's not that we are against change, but we are tired of developers getting around what ordinances we do have (which in the opinion of many are not strong/protective enough), in order to wring every last possible drop of money out of a patch of available space. We are tired of attending meetings and writing letters when we could be enjoying the nice weather. This building looks like a retail building on the south end of town and DOES NOT belong in Old Town amongst houses that were built mostly between 1890 and 1930. Please consider the thoughts/feelings of the residents who live near this project and love Old Town for what it is; we hope that Old Town can retain the characteristics that make it charming. The proposed project is the sort of thing that erodes the character of the area.



- I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed addition of a permitted use of the Oakwood School. There are at least two significant reasons why this project should not go forward. The proposal to put attached units on Mountain Avenue will detract from the character of Mountain Avenue and particularly City Park Neighborhood, the area surrounding the Oakwood School. The residential blocks near 1401 Mountain are largely historical in both appearance and heritage. These blocks, which include City Park, are as traditional in architecture as any neighborhood in Ft Collins. Most of us bought our house because we wanted to live in this neighborhood that feels like a neighborhood. Secondly, this will detract from the financial value of our homes. As we all know, you pay a premium to live in Old Town and on Mountain Avenue. Our homes are a significant investment and we have the right to protect what we know is the value we are paying for. To live here, we pay more for less square footage and sacrifice modern conveniences because we want that traditional neighborhood atmosphere. Having attached multi-family housing across the street clearly is not consistent with why people want to live here and reduces that value.
- This project is completely inconsistent with our neighborhood and overwhelmingly disliked based on the neighbors I have spoken with. Multi-family housing should not be part of the future of City Park neighborhood. This neighborhood is one of the gems in our city and if it is approved here, I would not feel that my neighborhood values would be protected anywhere in Ft Collins.
- As a resident who has lived in this neighborhood since 1983, I am adamantly against putting in attached row houses. Our City Park neighborhood is the nicest neighborhood in the city and I feel fortunate to have lived here all this time, including raising my now 23 year old daughter here. This is a single family home neighborhood and should remain that way. It looks like the site sits on 2 lots. Therefore, each lot should have only one detached home on it. Please keep our neighborhood the wonderful place it is by denying this proposal.
- I have lived here for 84 of my 88 years. I was fortunate enough to purchase a lot and have built and remodeled our home, always keeping the same architectural appearance. We dearly love this part of town, now referred to as a city. I find it quite disturbing and distressing that a set of 'row houses' would even be considered by city planners.
- I am fine with the proposal to demolish the school and build attached row houses. I would recommend including appropriate on-site parking for residents' autos, to avoid overloading Mountain with their parking.
- We agree with the general consensus from the residents. Our concern is that this becomes a precedent for developers not only in this neighborhood but throughout the city. Tearing down structures that sit on oversized lots in order to construct high density living structures is the wrong approach. Not only does it not fit into the historical nature of our unique neighborhood, it is not properly zoned for this purpose. I urge the planning and zoning department to encourage the developer to consider the input and concerns of the residents and come up with an agreeable plan that is more in tune with this area. The plan that was presented illustrated in my opinion, the developer's sole desire to make the most return on his investment with absolute no regard for the existing residents and how ultimately higher density living would impact us. More homework needs to be done to fully understand the zoning and building restrictions and certainly, it

needs to go back to the drawing board with a consideration of 2 single family dwellings which I think the majority of the neighbors would be amenable to.

- To permit the proposed units at 1401 West Mountain would represent a HUGE change in the nature of the neighborhood, and, more to the point an extremely drastic departure from the "single family detached home" zoning that is current. Beyond the fact that it will make a lot of money for the developer, there can be NO justification for approval of such a huge change in zoning which would both degrade the neighborhood by having high density housing cheek by jowl with single family homes, and worse yet, set a precedent that future developers will undoubtedly cite to justify putting high density (which equals high profit) housing on any piece of property they can get in neighborhoods zoned "single family detached homes". The neighborhood, one of the most historic in the city, is being encroached on all sides by high density housing. To grant this exemption would open the floodgates and completely alter the nature of the neighborhood. I can see NO way in which the neighborhood or the community will benefit by allowing this request. Rather the benefits will all accrue to the developer, in the form of profit. Everybody else will lose.
- One of my concerns about the proposed "attached single family homes" at Mountain and Shields was that it would set a precedent for other exemptions, and I specifically cited the 1401 Mountain Avenue as a potential site for this type of request. To grant this change in zoning would be catastrophic for the neighborhood, and would indicate to all that zoning is a mere inconvenience when highly profitable developments can be devised for areas which SPECIFICALLY exclude this type of development. Why have zoning if such drastic variances can even be considered?
- We are greatly opposed to this proposed project. The proposed project far exceeds the requirements of the Land Use Code, the NCL Zone and the West Side Neighborhood Plan. Many quantitative reasons for denying this project are found in these approved planning documents.
- It seems that the only reason this proposed highly incompatible project is being presented is due to the fact that an APU may be considered which potentially allows such unpermitted and highly incompatible proposed projects to be introduced, infiltrating the NCL zone, and effectively discounting and completely ignoring the historic single family residential neighborhood NCL zoning, Land Use Code and the West Side Neighborhood Plan.
- While zoning in residential districts should allow for some limited flexibility, incompatible use does need to be regulated to protect a neighborhoods character, quality and stability. For the most part the current land use codes and guidelines are working to protect the residential areas, with the exception of the allowed APU process. The APU's non-specific and ambiguous language is simply a way for any individual to spot rezone a specific property, with the potential of introducing an incompatible development that for many significant reasons will tear away at a historic residential neighborhoods fabric. We should not allow any single property Owner/Developer's business proposition create an irreversible negative impact on any of our stable historic single family residential neighborhoods.
- As a 30+ year resident of the East Side neighborhood and now the West Side/City Park Neighborhood, we have made a long term investment in these important historic single family neighborhoods. I feel strongly

these old town area residential neighborhoods are critical resources of the City of Fort Collins requiring specific regulation to protect these valuable areas for future generations. Poor planning in these neighborhoods creates instability and unwanted change - having moved from our old house in the east side neighborhood due to the construction of an very large alley house nearby we have seen firsthand the negative impacts of poor planning decisions. We must do everything that we can to protect the historic neighborhoods and help them grow in a more positive way.

- This proposed project is an unwise and unpermitted land use conversion that will have a negative and detrimental impact on the West Side/City Park Neighborhood.
- I live two doors to the west of the Oakwood School property. I attended the meeting on June 2 and was impressed by the number of persons who spoke and the quality of their comments. Although I was not among the speakers, I do want to register my opinion on the proposed development. I am opposed to it for the following reasons: (1) the **density** of four units on what should be at most two residences; (2) the **size** of the proposed structure both in terms of its footprint relative to lot size and its massive bulk; (3) the detrimental effect it would have on **parking and traffic** in the immediate area; and (4) the fear that it would serve as both inspiration and **precedent** for other similar projects in Old Town.
- To say we are opposed to the proposed project is an understatement. I was actually shocked when I saw the pictures of the proposed development. I have read the Westside Neighborhood Plan and the Neighborhood Conservation Low (NCL) Density zoning information and feel adamantly that the current proposal not move forward! I look forward to hearing about a revised proposal that is in compliance with the current zoning and the integrity of the neighborhood at a follow up neighborhood meeting. We bought this house based on the historic, single family home characteristics of the neighborhood and would not have made the same decision if we had known that there was even a possibility of a condo development going in across the street.