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**R-TRAC
Meeting # 5**

**Topic: Council Work Session Update and Chapter 6 Review
Wednesday July 14, 2010, 3 – 5:30 pm**

PARTICIPANTS IN ATTENDANCE

Utilities Green Building Team

Amanda Sutton – Green Building Program Coordinator
Doug Swartz - Green Building Program Manager
Felix Lee – Green Building Code Project Manager

Facilitator

Susanne Durkin-Schindler

R-TRAC Members

<u>Company</u>	<u>Representative</u>
Care Housing, Inc.	Chadrick Martinez
Aspen Construction	Gil Paben
Highcraft Builders	Gordon Winner
Aspen Homes of Colorado	Rob Sabin
Dana McBride Custom Homes	Dana McBride
The Group Real Estate	James Mitchell
Sovick Design Builders	Dennis Sovick
Larkspur Homes, LLC	Michael Bello
Fort Collins Board of Realtors	Michelle Jacobs
IBE student	Laura Barrett
Crown Jade Design and Engineering, Inc.	Mark Benjamin
Vignette Studio	Terence Hoaglund
Armstead Construction	Jeff Schneider
Vaught-Frye-Ripley Design	Linda Ripley
The Atmosphere Conservancy	Alex Blackmer
Merten Design Studio	Rob Ross

Building Officials

<u>Jurisdiction</u>	<u>Representative</u>
<u>Safe Built</u>	<u>Russ Weber</u>
<u>City of Longmont</u>	<u>Chris Allison</u>
<u>City of Fort Collins</u>	<u>Russell Hovland</u>

Key Points

City Council Work Session Summary - Doug Swartz

On July 13, 2010, City Council held a Work Session to discuss an update on the development of the Green Building Program. All Council Members were present. Staff members making presentations and answering questions were Utilities staff Patty Bigner, Doug Swartz, John Phelan, and Felix Lee.

There was extensive discussion and many clarification questions regarding the Green Building Program. Each Councilmember provided their individual perspective and feedback. Council supports moving ahead with the approach proposed by Staff, with the exception of timeline. Major points of discussion were:

Integrated framework. Council supports the market transformation approach of the Green Building Program, balancing voluntary, market-driven, above-code elements to “pull” the top end of the market while a green building code “pushes” the bottom end.

Green building code. Council supports integrating mandatory green building practices into existing City regulations rather than establishing a standalone green building code. Council Members have varying perspectives on the scope of the green building code enhancements and degree of push they provide.

Costs and benefits. Council would like to see a costs and benefits analysis of the proposed green building code enhancements. The costs and benefits should be considered from a Triple Bottom Line perspective.

Resources. Council needs more specific information about the proposed elements of the Green Building Program, with estimated resource needs, before they can address resource availability. Additional resource requests should come through the Budgeting for Outcomes process.

Timeline. Council would like another Work Session on this topic in late 2010 and a final green building code proposal for consideration no later than the end of February 2011.

Next Steps

- Continue development of Green Building Program, continuing quarterly progress reports.
- Green Building Program update at Work Session on December 14, 2010.
- City Council consideration of the adoption of green building code enhancements, First and Second Readings completed, first quarter 2011.

Committee Comments

- The committee would like to know what the new International Residential Code (IRC) covers and where the gaps are. If the IRC energy section is 20% more efficient where can we fill in the gaps?
- Staff and this committee should not create a new code by picking and choosing parts of the template to put into the code. It will take too long and is not an effective use of time.
- If we are going to deviate from the National Green Building Standard (NGBS) then it might as well not be used at all.
- The committee should not have to rush through this process because council wants to vote before elections.
- Even if the NGBS is adopted at a lower level it is still educating consumers and contractors.
- This code should not raise the bar so much that it adds substantial costs to a home. Lower income families should still be able to buy a home.

Staff Comments:

Staff expected to be working with the NGBS and IgCC for this process. However, as staff has gotten further into these documents neither one appears to be feasible for a code in Fort Collins. The NGBS is not similar to any codes that Fort Collins has enforced in the past. There are redundancies with other code, the language is vague, and enforcement may be difficult during a time when the building department staff resources are scarce. It makes more sense to go through and green existing codes further instead of adopting the NGBS as is. Staff understands that we do not want to raise the

bar too high or not high enough. The committee is needed to help staff determine what a reasonable step up is.

The major green building categories have not changed. The committee will be addressing all of those categories and picking out items to add to code. Staff is not planning on having a large number of amendments to existing code. Initially, only the items that are going to result in the greatest impacts are going to be included. The green building codes will evolve over time. This is not the last chance to get things into the code. Staff would like the committee to give feedback on items that should be mandated including low hanging fruit and high value items. Staff needs the input of the committee to help decide what aspects should be mandated.

Site and lot section recommendations were passed along to the Plan Fort Collins team. They will be responsible for deciding how to implement those recommendations.

Committee Comments:

- Need to be careful about not having too many amendments. It may turn builders off and create frustration and confusion in the industry.
- Builders have complained in the past about having too many local amendments to the code. The most recent building code review process tried to reduce the number of amendments.
- It may make more sense to have a stand alone green building code as opposed to amendments to the existing code.
- If Fort Collins writes its own code who is going to validate it? What is the point of having a green building code if it cannot be validated and stand out in the market?
- Flexibility is important. The NGBS is great because it provides many choices for compliance.
- Instead of focusing on changes to the energy code, the City could make a requirement that all new construction needs to reach a HERS rating of 60. Then the other green building sections of the code can be looked at.
- Maybe staff should think about making the commercial requirements based on a point system to mimic the NGBS.
- Need to be able to justify committee decisions to City council.

- It is going to be very difficult to create our own code. It would be easier to go with something that is already established.
- If council wants us to push the bar higher it may be possible to do a Bronze+ system where we raise the bar on certain sections.
- If we need to get something to council by December, adopting the NGBS will be much more time efficient. However, staff needs to make sure that there is not too much of a cost increase in the affordable housing market.
- The points system offers flexibility and the rating system can act as a marketing tool.
- The NGBS could be tweaked easily to satisfy council. Third party verification can be the responsibility of the builder if they would like to reach top levels.
- Need to make sure that this code addresses the remodel aspect of construction. Don't want to limit participation for remodel projects.
- The NGBS is much more refined and flexible than the commercial IgCC. It may make sense to pick and choose amendments from the IgCC, but the NGBS is already a document that has been through several revisions and verifications.
- There are some serious concerns with any code that is going to increase the time that is needed to obtain a permit.
- If we make this a mandatory program - we are going to need more resources in the form of staff for the building department.
- There are other jurisdictions that are adopting the NGBS. It may be beneficial to have a code that is used throughout the Front Range.
- It may not be necessary to check every single thing that a builder does. It may be enough to have the threat of a full inspection in order to keep people in check.
- Don't want to have to force people to hire a consultant in order to complete a project.

- One option is to have a hybrid where only certain chapters are mandatory and the rest is voluntary.
- It is important to have options to present to Council. Voluntary programs sound great because they are less resource intensive. However, that will not be acceptable to council.

Staff is going to have to regroup and digest all of the committee comments. Staff will develop options to bring back to the committee on the direction this process will take from this point on.

Chapter 6 Review - Felix Lee

601.2 Material Usage

601.3 Building dimensions and layouts

601.4 Framing and structural plans

The intent of these sections is to reduce the amount of material that is wasted during the construction of a building.

Committee Comments:

- Advanced Framing technology was looked at during the 2009 code review process and the structural engineers said that it would not be possible due to the wind and snow structural requirements that are required in this area.
- Dimensions and layouts are driven by design and architectural features. Don't want to limit design so much that all houses start to look the same. This will impact the custom design homes.
- Customers drive the decisions that are made on the design and layout of the house. Don't forget that they can change their minds which may result in the use of more resources.
- Due to the economy, builders are already trying to be as efficient as possible with resources.
- Are there some advanced framing techniques that make sense in today's market that would be easy to implement and not cause an increase in cost?
- These are issues that would require education of the project managers and framers so that the framers are thinking about the best way to do

things. There are going to be situations where advanced framing will not work, but it would work a majority of the time.

- If certain advanced framing techniques are made mandatory, there should be an exception for innovative designs that do not require framing (ex. straw bale houses).
- An effort needs to be made to educate the tradesmen that are working on a project about resource efficiency and green building. It takes the conscious work of everyone involved to make it successful.

NEXT MEETING

July 28th – R-TRAC Meeting #6:

3-5:30 p.m. City of Fort Collins Streets Facility