

NEIGHBORHOOD INFORMATION MEETING

PROJECT: Catholic Charities Group Home

DATE: September 10, 2013

APPLICANTS: Guy Mendt

PROJECT PLANNER: Lindsay Ex (for Rebecca Everette)

OTHER STAFF PRESENT: Sue Beck-Ferkiss (Social Sustainability), Sarah Burnett (Neighborhood Services), Helen Matson (Real Estate Services), Kayla Ballard (Real Estate Services)

Project Planner Presentation Summary:

The proposal is to use an existing single family house on a 15-acre parcel at 2313 Kechter Rd. as a group home. The parcel is in the Low Density Mixed-Use Neighborhood Zone District, which permits group homes for up to 8 people (not including on-site supervisors), subject to review by the Planning and Zoning Board in a public hearing (Type 2 review). The purpose of this neighborhood meeting is to allow the applicant to share information about the project and gather feedback from nearby residents and property owners in response to the applicant's proposal. This is an important step in the development review process, and your comments are welcome both at this meeting and at any time while this project is under review.

Social Sustainability/Land Bank Program Summary:

The Land Bank Program is part of the City's long term plan to provide affordable housing. There are 5 land bank properties purchased between 2001 and 2006 totaling about 50 acres. The intention is to hold the land between 5 and 15 years and then partner with a developer to use for affordable housing for renters earning no more than 50% Area Median Income (AMI) or owners earning no more than 60% AMI.

Applicants Presentation Summary:

- This project is for transitional housing which provides an affordable safe environment and comprehensive support to assist participants in reaching self sufficiency.
- Participants must contribute to rent, maintain a savings plan and remain drug and alcohol free.
- Participants will meet weekly with a case worker to review progress and address any barriers to self-sufficiency. Participants will also attend classes specific to their needs.
- Participants may stay for up to 18 months.
- The participants are women or women with children and have successfully completed our "Levels" program at the Catholic Charities Mission. This means they have an identified income stream, a savings plan, and have completed classes that have prepared them to succeed in a permanent housing environment. In a normal rental market these individuals would typically move into an apartment, however with rents averaging \$1,100 and a vacancy rate of 1.8% in Ft. Collins there are few rental options. Target participants are homeless women, 18 years and older; with or without children, at or below 35% area median income level, are able to function

independently, are willing to participate in education, job training, and employment, and are committed to making and attaining goals.

Questions, Comments & Responses:

Question (Citizen): When you say a maximum of 8, is that 8 families or 8 individuals?

Response (City Planning): The limit for a group home is 8 individuals.

Question (Citizen): What is the definition of a group home? Is it a licensed group home under state law?

Response (City Planning): City is not required to use the state’s definition of “group home.” This proposal does meet the City’s definition of a residential group home: *“a residence operated as a single dwelling, licensed by or operated by a governmental agency, for the purpose of providing special care or rehabilitation due to homelessness, physical condition or illness, mental condition or illness, elderly age or social, behavioral or disciplinary problems, provided that authorized supervisory personnel are present on the premises.”*

Question (Citizen): How long will families be at the home? How will transportation work?

Response (Applicant): We will have a time limit, with an average of 18-24 months. Regarding access to services, some will have cars. Access to transit is further than typical across the City but some are walking further than that now. I did review the current sidewalk setup on Kechter. To the east there are sidewalks on the south side of Kechter about a block to a block and a half away. To the west there are sidewalks that parallel the Kechter Crossing development on the north side of Kechter however there are none to the west of that all the way to Timberline. You as the current residents are aware of this. The closest bus stop is on Ziegler at the high school exit which I believe is Rock Creek. That is about a 1 mile walk and including walk is a 32 minute trip to the Safeway on Harmony. The people who would be moving in are quite adept at utilizing a variety of transportation options including cars, rides with friends, bus, bikes, and walking. They do the same while living at our shelter and when moving into apartments on their own.

Question (Citizen): When will a sidewalk be extended into this area? We are concerned about safety of current/new residents.

Response (City Planning): According to the City’s Pedestrian Needs Assessment (<http://www.fcgov.com/engineering/pedneeds.php>), this area is not currently ranked near the top of the list for pedestrian improvements citywide. However, new sidewalks and other public infrastructure would accompany any new development or redevelopment in the area. The specific timeframe for sidewalks on this property has not yet been determined.

Question (Citizen): How long is the proposed lease?

Response (City Social Sustainability): No more than five years, could go shorter.

Question (Citizen): Are manufactured/mobile homes likely on this parcel in the future? Allowed in this zone district?

Response (City Social Sustainability): It is not likely.

Response (City Planning): Mobile home parks are allowed in this zone district and are subject to the same type of review as group homes (Type 2 or Planning and Zoning Board review).

Question (Citizen): Would the group home remain when the site is redeveloped?

Response (City Social Sustainability): This is not planned for, but could happen.

Question (Citizen): Can more buildings be built? Could there be 8 residents per building if other buildings? How many total people?

Response (City Social Sustainability): This is proposed for a temporary use; additional buildings would not be built. We are looking to redevelop this site for affordable housing. Group homes are required to be a minimum of 1000' apart in this zone district, so it is unlikely more than one group home would be placed on this site.

Question (Citizen): Is there a height limit?

Response (City Planning): The height limit for one-, two-, and three-family dwellings is 2.5 stories. Multi-family residential buildings with more than four dwelling units can be three stories in height tall if specific design standards are also met.

Question (Citizen): Would they require 3 different housing types?

Response (City Planning): A minimum of 3 housing types is required for developments over 20 acres in size. If this property were to develop for affordable housing, this requirement may or may not be applicable, depending on the overall size of the development.

Question (Citizen): If the property is already annexed, why didn't the City install the sidewalks? Isn't that required at the time of annexation?

Response (City Planning): Annexation does not constitute development and therefore does not require infrastructure improvements as part of the annexation. Development of a parcel requires improvements, not annexation.

Question (Citizen): Our realtor told us this would be single family homes. Will it?

Response (City Neighborhood Services): Single family homes are one of the permitted housing types, but others are allowed as well.

Question (Citizen): Couldn't it be parkland?

Response (City Social Sustainability/Planning): Parks are permitted in LMN, but not allowed by the Land Bank ordinance. For projects 10 acres or larger in the LMN district, there is a requirement that 90 percent of the dwellings be located within 1/3-mile of a neighborhood park, which could be located within the development.

Question (Citizen): Could the City establish an ordinance without having a public dialogue? Feel like it is a land grab.

Response (City): The Land Bank was put in place in 2001, and went through a public information process. The Ordinance was passed by City Council. That process included first and second reading and was the recommendation of a feasibility study that included public input. Purchases of land by the City happen periodically and only requires acceptance by the City Manager. The future use of land purchased for the Land Bank Program is controlled by the City Code, including Chapter 23, Article XI Land Banking.

Question (Citizen): What is the solution when volatile situations arise?

Response (Applicant): They work with the City now with two single room occupancy (SRO) apartments. A resident manager and case workers are involved. So problems are addressed either by the behavior stopping or termination.

Question (Citizen): Some folks could have bad home situations (such as domestic violence) – how do you handle that?

Response (Applicant): Usually not active when they come into this housing. This is not a safe house. There is an active safehouse. This is for people who complete the Levels program.

Question (Citizen): How many staff members? Supervisors? What are the visitor limitations?

Response (Applicant): Visitor rules – visitation likely ends at 10 or 10:30 p.m.; not figured out at this time. The residents are not under 24-hour supervision, more like renters. At other sites, visitation hours can last until 11, but we are considering stricter rules here. Residents will have to give notice of expected visitors and visitors will need to sign in.

Question (Citizen): Will there be written guidelines?

Response (Applicant): Yes.

Question (Citizen): Will the hours be submitted with the lease plan?

Response (Applicant): Would be happy to share that when it is ready.

Question (Citizen): Studies indicate 30% of homeless individuals have serious mental health issues. What screening is in place? Guidelines for maintaining residences? Supervisor's role?

Response (Applicant): Screening – caseworkers assess individuals' ability to live in the target environment and ability to move toward independent living. Referrals to Redtail Ponds. First visit – full intake assessment (assess medical, psych, etc.).

Question (Citizen): What does affordable housing mean (to the City)?

Response (City Social Sustainability): Under 30% of income for rent/utilities

Response (City Planning): Land Use Code stipulates that affordable housing includes any units that are 80% of Area Median Income (AMI) or less.

Question (Citizen): Is that like mobile homes?

Response (City Social Sustainability): Many affordable units in the City are mobile homes, but this is not the proposed use here.

Question (Citizen): What is the current Area Median Income (AMI)?

Response (City Social Sustainability): We use the standard set by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. In 2014 that is \$73,500 for a family of four.

Question (Citizen): When you say a maximum of 8, is that 8 families or 8 individuals?

Response (City): The limit for a group home is 8 individuals.

Question (Citizen): What are the property maintenance requirements?

Response (City Real Estate): In the lease agreement, Catholic Charities is responsible inside and out; City is responsible for heating systems, etc.

Question (Citizen): How might the rest of the land be used?

Response (Applicant): Mowed and maintained on a seasonal basis, could sublet for horse grazing.

Question (Citizen): How did this property get chosen? It is far from services. Who will you provide transportation?

Response (City Social Sustainability): The land bank program has selection criteria. The land must be: acquired from a willing seller, the cost cannot exceed fair market value, the land must be located in the Fort Collins Growth Management Area, and the land is or will be , within one-half mile of at least three of the following five existing or planned facilities: transit route; school; park; employment center; or commercial center. This criteria is evaluated at the time of purchase.

Question (Citizen): Other specific impediments to development that would suggest why this parcel was selected for the land bank? Besides sewer?

Response (City Social Sustainability): Not sure we have kept record on that. All land bank properties were chosen because they had development impediments that would likely be cured over time. I do not know the specific issues with this property.

Question (Citizen): Why do you allow group homes in a residential zone?

Response (City Planning): It's a mixed-use zone district; group homes are allowed in all zone districts.

Comment (Citizen): Concern about location, public transit and distance to services/employment.

Comment (Citizen): I understand concerns expressed but this could happen to anyone – we need to care for each other.

Question (Citizen): What are the other options besides this?

Response (City Social Sustainability): Focus is on shelter first, shelters in the City are full. Also looking at renting other facilities or vacant buildings.

Comment (Citizen): It scares me the site will be re-zoned to have more units.

Response (City Neighborhood Services or Planning): It is not planned to be re-zoned, but current zoning will allow more units if or when it redevelops.

Question (Citizen): Does public comment affect the final decision? How do we oppose this project?

Response (City Neighborhood Services): Comments are considered in the review process and by the Planning and Zoning Board. Resident comments can make a difference and can help improve projects. Please contact Sarah Burnett for more information on how to participate and express your concerns or opposition.

Question (Citizen): Does the letter always come two weeks before the meeting? This one did not.

Response (City Neighborhood Services): It is mailed two weeks prior – we will correct the information in the guide.

Question (Citizen): How does this relate to the U+2 (occupancy) ordinance?

Response (City Planning): Occupancy relates to general rental units (not group homes).

Question (Citizen): Does it not need licensing by the state? (State website makes it appear so.)

Response (City Planning): The Land Use Code specifies that it be licensed by or operated by a governmental agency, but it does not specify a specific licensing/operating agency.

Question (Citizen): Are there other transitional houses in the City?

Response (Applicant): No, but there are in Denver and also The Transitional House in Greeley (with 12 individuals).

Question (Citizen): What is the difference between transitional housing and group homes?

Response (City): Transitional housing is often a bridge between emergency shelters and permanent housing. Transitional housing typically has limits on the length of time a resident can spend there, and assumes that residents will eventually move on to a more stable form of housing. The Land Use Code does not consider transitional housing as a specific use, though group homes, shelters, safe houses, and other uses may be considered forms of transitional housing, depending on how they are operated.

Question (Citizen): Did anyone else respond to the RFP?

Response (City Social Sustainability): This is the only one, though we talked with multiple agencies. Some needed more than three years or the facility didn't meet their needs, or they didn't want to go through the process.

Question (Citizen): Would the children attend local schools for 1-4 months?

Response (Applicant): There is a program (McKinney) to provide kids with transportation to their home school when there are in this type of housing, so they do not have to re-adjust to multiple schools.

Question (Citizen): Does the Levels program screen for drug abuse? Is it required by the Land Use Code?

Response (Applicant): Yes.

Response (City Planning): This is not required by the Land Use Code, so is not part of the City's review.

Question (Citizen): When will all of the specifics of the program be provided (hopefully before the hearing)?

Response (Applicant): Will likely have information from other locations.

Question (Citizen): Do you screen for sex offenders?

Response (Applicant): Yes, through the Levels program.

Question (Citizen): Will Catholic Charities pay the City rent, and will the resident pay Catholic Charities rent?

Response (City Real Estate): Yes, Catholic Charities will pay the City \$1600/month rent.

Response (Applicant): Yes, residents will pay Catholic Charities approximately \$400/month rent.

Question (Citizen): How do they go from \$400 to \$1100/month in rent (average rent in Fort Collins)?

Response (Applicant): Part of the savings plan, education plan, vouchers. (Many are students at CSU and Front Range Community College, and are working to improve their future earnings.)

Question (Citizen): Do you evict after 24 months?

Response (Applicant): The goal is that they are ready to move after 24 months, but eviction isn't automatic, not necessarily a hard line. If there's a problem, corrective action would be taken or the lease would be terminated, but there is active case management from month 1.

Question (Citizen): How do you release someone?

Response (City): They would develop a plan.

Question (Citizen): If this is approved, what do we do if there are problems?

Response (City Real Estate): Real Estate Services handles complaints (or compliments). The City has a process to address problems with tenants.

Response (Applicant): Catholic Charities would also like to hear directly about any concerns.

Comment (Citizen): Would like more specifics – guideline, lease issues, safety, etc.

Comment (Citizen): Concerned with the land use after the group home.

Response (City Neighborhood Services): Could discuss outreach around the existing and any new Land Bank properties.

Comment (Multiple Citizens): Concerned about property values.

Comment (Citizen): Concerned that Catholic Charities isn't providing any specifics, even if it's just a shell. Who lives there, who will manage it, etc. should be provided.

Comment (Citizen): There would be a lot less pushback over this if it was called a transitional house instead of group home. I wish the City would change our language to be more consistent with the State's.

Comment (Citizen): Property values

Response (City Social Sustainability): This is an understandable concern, as their home is most people's largest investment. Research does not indicate that property values are affected by affordable housing.

Comment (Citizen): Though I am concerned about this proposal, there are lower price options in Fossil Lake Ranch; they haven't affected property values.

CITY OF FORT COLLINS CONTACT INFORMATION:

Sue Beck-Ferkiss, Social Sustainability Specialist
970-221-6753, sbeckferkiss@fcgov.com

Rebecca Everette, City Planner
970-416-2625, reverette@fcgov.com

Helen Matson, Real Estate Services Manager
970-221-6276, hmatson@fcgov.com

Sarah Burnett, Neighborhood Development Review Liaison
970-224-6076, sburnett@fcgov.com