CAC Special Meeting, January 10, 2018
Development Review and Areas of Adjacency, Take 3

Goal for these discussions is to come to some decisions. Staff will bring the CAC's comments and preferences to City Council in April. This will be the last opportunity to meet as a group on this topic. Next month the CAC will be discussing Clarion's paper on the Review of Older Buildings (demo/alt review), as well as Demolition by Neglect and Dangerous Buildings. As this is the 3rd meeting on this topic, some of this will be a repeat. The topic is important enough that we feel it warrants the extra meetings and discussion.

Slide 1: Title

Slide 2 - Emphasize that Development Review has two separate goals: Goal 1 is to protect historic resource's integrity and viability. This is based on the 7 aspects of integrity. Review new development abutting historic for development's impact to design, materials, workmanship, setting, and feeling of historic building; not likely any effect on association and location of historic building. Review nearby development for its impact to historic building's setting and feeling; not likely have an effect on design, materials, workmanship, location, and association.

This would apply to both individually eligible and designated buildings. At the last meeting, the CAC members, nearly unanimously, agreed that both designated buildings and buildings individually eligible for designation should not be treated differently – the significance of the building and its importance is the same.

Per: So nearby throws out the idea of a context? New infill can have big impact on character of block. For instance, if there was a vacant lot, we could put a large chrome rectangle in the middle of a block of otherwise historic buildings.

Matt: Secretary of the Interior's definitions of setting and feeling?

Karen: Setting is very similar to context. Per is correct, integrity of setting should also take into account context. Think about setback, tree lines, grass, rural setting, etc. What are the characteristics of this place? It can include if a building was meant to face a certain direction.

Feeling is whether you can look at that building and get a sense of its importance. If the building is significant for architecture, it's relatively easy to do this. Can you readily tell that the building was built at a certain time? Would you be shocked to learn how old the building really is (because its been altered and now looks much newer)? A building can also be designated for other reasons, but it does need a preponderance of aspects of integrity, including feeling.

Slide 3: Second goal is compatible infill development that respects the established historic character. Will use general compatibility standards in LUC along with specific compatibility standards for projects abutting/adjacent to historic resources. Compatibility standards apply to all of the city, not just the Downtown Character Areas.

Jennifer: make sure that you note that staff will be adding better general compatibility standards to the LUC. Right now, what we have isn't very strong.

Slide 4: This slide has the key concepts for addressing design capability. Promote a balance of differentiation and design reference. We want the old building to make a statement and the new

building to make a statement. Mix of quantitative standards with options for creating visual ties.

      Maren: These principals will be the basis for the specific code sections. We need to know if you feel comfortable with these design principles. This is the foundation for the specific code section.

      Per: How much definition is there explaining what each of these things is?

      Maren: We want to know from you—how much definition does there need to be?

      Per: We need clarity. Maybe there needs to be more visual codes. Composition? That's a difficult one to describe.

      Tom: One could argue that we don't need compatibility standards because it will be addressed in other sections. Are we being duplicative?

      Spencer: The way that we've been looking at it is that 3.4.7 stands alone and is a companion to Article 4. What's the extra level of consideration in addition to the general compatibility standards when looking at historic buildings?

      Per: Different for historic compatibility, versus standard compatibility. For example, historic setbacks are different than standard setback requirements. Standards need to address historic compatibility references.

      Spencer: The way I'm thinking of them is general, character areas compatibility, and then historic preservation. Think of it as building blocks. They are building in detail or specificity, but not fighting against each other. Things should be more specific, but not in conflict.

      Matt: Is it possible to add intent sections in the code so that the purpose/intent is clear? It should be clear to future planners and commission members that they are meant to be harmonious and work together.

      Brad: You can certainly put that in there. The more restrictive will always be the one that trumps, but it should always be harmonious. We can put that in the code though to make it more apparent.

Slide 5: Summarizing previous CAC meetings, staff is presenting these three options for area of adjacency. Option 1: Historic resources on abutting parcels only. Option 2: Historic resources within 150-ft radius, regardless of height. Option 3: Two-tiered approach, based upon the height of the new development. Clarion has said that most communities do Option 1 to review for compatibility.

      Note that CAC previously has, nearly unanimously, agreed that the area of adjacency for reviewing compatibility should be the same as the area of adjacency for reviewing integrity – one area of adjacency – which is how we are presenting these concepts.

Slides 6-8: Discussion of Option 1. Focuses standards on historic resources most likely to be affected. The same standards would apply to the entire area of adjacency. Simplifies compatibility discussion, particularly in diverse contexts where you might have a one story building next to a three-story building next to a modern 1960s building. This would not capture buildings across the street.

      Per: Where did the 150 feet come from? Why is it so small of a context?

      Spencer: You could get katty corner with 200 feet along College.

      Per: The 150 feet feels very arbitrary. The block face and street faces (in existing code) are not great, but at least there was an intent.

Jennifer: I don't think CAC had settled at 150 feet. I think we were looking for options to decide between.

Dave: I think that a geographic limit makes sense, numerical number that makes sense and is predictable. Haven't defined number.

Spencer: It is a potency thing with the limit. It's stronger the smaller the area is. Maybe you have a 500 ft radius you identify three structures, but you're sacrificing the predictability. How do you keep it defensible and potent and predictable?

Slides 9-11: Option 2, this is a 150 foot radius, regardless of height of new construction. This would get just across the street and along part of the block. This is more complicated compatibility discussion and less predictable.

Jennifer: If you went with this option, for abutting you only do the top part and if it's not abutting, you just do the height, massing, setback, stepback, materials? So doesn't that add predictability?

Per: is there a setback requirement? (Yes)

Slides 12-14: Option 3 is a two-tiered approach based on the height of the new construction. Development 3+ stories, would review within 150 ft; development 1-2 stories would review abutting only.

Per: Would this be city-wide? (yes)

Karen: This option recognizes the potential impact of height on compatibility. This option is also the most complicated and least predictable. Stories would need to be defined. Exceptions, such as a tower on top of a two story, mechanical on top, a patio deck, a covered patio deck, a roof stairwell?

Brian: Where do we start counting the radius? (From the edge of the property line/parcel). Differences between a place like the Powerhouse versus in Old Town.

Slides 15-19: Karen: Maps showing radius in different areas of town.

Per: So the 150 foot line just barely grazes across the street—do we review those?

Karen: review if touches the parcel line.

Jennifer: But are we gaining anything more than current block face language?

Karen: Block face doesn't consider what's located behind the development at all. There are also many cases in the City where you don't have a typical block with a block face. Block faces across the street? What about corner lots – what is the block face? It is less predictable than a radius.

Per: The intent of that code was to understand the context. It was meant to emphasis how important the character of the block is in context. I worry about the disruption of the block face's context and character.

Matt: I'm appreciative of the examples that have been shown. I'm looking at Union too. If you're in an area of uniformity, it doesn't matter if you're 150 ft away or 500 ft away, within that context you won't be negatively impacting something 500 feet away without impacting 150 ft away. I think it's important that we're about to hit the place where we protect the character of the area without including multiple contexts that actually don't impact the development.

Maren: Having something more narrowly defined incentivizes historic districts. It incentives

owners to protect their own character.

Karen: Character should be LUC's responsibility; historic preservation should be focusing on the abutting properties as it pertains to historic resources. There's a lot of argument to do just abutting.

Jennifer: Then you lose context. I want to protect historic resources, but not kill creativity. A lot of the time we get things that are different, but works. The abutting bothers me because you have some things that the mass and scale are so far off that it does affect much further out than just abutting.

Tom: So did Uncommon affect the integrity of the Armstrong Hotel?

Jennifer: Yes, it does affect the setting. To me, the sweet spot is abutting and review over two stories.

Matt: Do we have a context for Uncommon? I would argue that the empty lot before also broke up the historic context.

Brian: I appreciate Maren's comments about districts. If we are limiting our conversation to protecting integrity, it is different than if we're looking to protect neighborhood sense of place and we need to present that missing piece to City Council. We're only looking at a piece of the puzzle.

James: LUC doesn't apply to single-family residences? So a single family glass box could happen in any neighborhood? There's nothing to protect them? (Correct.)

James: 3.5.1 is general compatibility, 3.4.7 is historic compatibility. There is a risk of impact to the aspects of integrity. I think what I've really struggled with is this sense that only the extreme examples are affecting historic resources. I think once you get past abutting, it could be hard to justify. It seems like we're trying to get to neighborhood protection by using aspects of integrity. It's ultimately still fuzzy and subjective.

Tom: Jennifer is arguing that the setting changed next to the Uncommon, others would say it's still a downtown context.

Jennifer: Yeah, there's no way to get around the subjectivity.

Per: I think it's pedestrian impact—when you're walking, it feels like a wall rather than a building.

Tom: Just so you know, City Council will receive all our recommendations, including the CAC discussion. They will understand the deliberation of these decisions.

(Straw Poll)

Karen: Note that all three options would treat abutting the same.

Jennifer: I like Option 3. It captures that things that could have an impact and adds predictability. Seems like the sweet spot.

James: Modified Option 3. Larger buildings have a larger impact. I think it should be 150 ft for two or fewer stories, 300 feet for 3 or greater stories.

Matt: I like Option 2, primary reason is it avoids conundrums when context is differing. Caveat that not one of these options works unless surveys and contexts are getting funding. Those are what get people to make informed decisions. It also helps neighborhoods recognize resources like you were talking about, Brian.

(All agreed.)

Brian: Option 2—simplicity, with caveat that City needs more neighborhood based preservation strategies.

Dave: Option 2—but wants visible results of what are eligible and not eligible. Make it easier for predictability. We'll be the first in the nation, as we should be. If we aren't trying something new, we aren't moving forward. If it doesn't work, we can always come back to the table.

Per: I'd like Option 2 because it's simple and predictable, with a larger radius. I think the 150 ft radius is terribly artificial, with no strong rationale or basis – just arbitrary. I think the idea of doing surveys makes a whole lot of sense. We need to understand individual buildings in a larger context, especially as resources from the 50s and 60s become more important.

Meg: I agree with Option 2. I would like Council to hear the resounding support from this group for survey.

Karen: Summarize: Most are supportive of Option 2, with many caveats; all appear to agree with decision that individually eligible and designated buildings should be treated the same; that abutting properties will be reviewed with more criteria than adjacent properties; to not differentiate the reviews due to different heights of buildings; supportive of the basic design principles we presented.