

December 6, 2017 CAC Minutes
Topic 3: Development Review and Historic Resources

Members Attending: Brian Cooke, Chris Aronson, James MacDowell, Janelle Kechter, Matt Robenalt, Sarah Payne, Sherry Albertson-Clark
Staff: Anna Simpkins, Brad Yatabe, Cassandra Bumgarner, Karen McWilliams, Maren Bzdek, Spencer Branson, Tom Leeson

Agenda: Review of Action Items to Date
Discussion: Topic 3-Development Review and Historic Resources
Other Questions and Comments

1. Next Steps – Originally expected that CAC would meet through February. Review is running a bit slower than anticipated due to consultant’s delay and staff’s desire to not rush these important discussions. Would CAC members be available to meet in March and possibly April? Members agreed that this would be beneficial. Staff will follow up via email.

Resolution: CAC will meet in March, and if needed, in April.

2. Documenting CAC input—what’s the best way to capture the comments from this group? One idea is a survey, with opportunity to add comments. Other ideas? Question: Has the intent been to submit recommendations from this group? Answer: Want to capture CAC input and comments. Difficult to record nuances with a straight vote, i.e. thumbs up/thumbs down, when many recommendations are “yes, but” or “no, but.” Consensus that the group would like a short list of Clarion’s recommendations that they could respond to. Support for an online survey. Comments: We need a list of comprehensive action items tethered to the problem statements to identify priority action items so that we are sure that we’ve not strayed from solving the problem we were asked to solve. Staff will provide a list of Clarion’s recommendations and a prioritized list of action items (organized by topic). Staff asked for CAC involvement in adding to the list of action items that they would like to comment on.

Resolution: Support for an online survey. Staff will reiterate problem statement, provide a list of Clarion’s recommendations, and prioritize recommendations/action items, with linkages to the current codes and Clarion white paper.

2. Clarion Report on Development Review and Historic Resources

Historic preservation’s review process is a city-wide process, but is less used in south Fort Collins because it has a smaller concentration of historic resources. The review serves dual goals: 1. Retain eligibility of historic resources; and 2. Evaluate compatibility with existing character.

Goal 1: Protecting a historic resource’s integrity relies upon the seven aspects of integrity established by the Secretary of the Interior, and a review of the proposed development’s impact on these seven aspects. For abutting properties, the project potentially could affect integrity of design, materials, workmanship, setting, and feeling. The project would not likely affect integrity of association and location. If the proposed development is not abutting but is adjacent/nearby to a historic property, the Clarion feels that the aspects most

likely to be affected are the historic property's integrity of setting and feeling, and it is less likely to impact integrity of design, materials, workmanship, location, and association.

Discussion of some of the aspects of integrity and their meaning: Setting is about the context of the area. In a residential setting, you would think of planted lawns, the set back, relatively consistent height, etc. The Secretary of the Interior's definition also focuses on the how. Think of how a building is oriented, such as facing east towards the sun, that's part of the setting. Feeling is more ambiguous. It asks if the building would still reflect its original use, era, and purpose – it is about the experience. Because there is some ambiguity to feeling, it relies on retaining design, workmanship, and materials—if it has those three, it likely has retained integrity of feeling. Association is different than feeling. Association is tied to a person, event, or purpose. For example, the train depot is associated with the railroad. The Forney Mansion with J.D. Forney and his accomplishments.

Question: Related to area of adjacency? i.e., if I build something glass next to a historic building, how it can affect the integrity of the abutting historic property? Staff answer: Yes, related to area of adjacency and yes, abutting development would likely impact historic building more than adjacent/nearby development.

Goal 2: The second goal of the development review process is compatible infill development that respects established character. To do this, staff is proposing context-sensitive standards for all infill. Create general compatibility standards for each character area, with specific compatibility standards for projects adjacent to historic resources when needed.

Question: Denver Highlands, how did the concrete box buildings get built? Does that not hurt the neighborhood? How did it happen? Are Denver's codes different? Could it happen here?

Staff Answer: Denver only reviews designated landmarks. Also, change is incremental, and so overall impact to character not recognized in beginning. Once one is successfully built, it becomes the template because it has already been through the approval process and the result is often repetition. Also, neighborhoods change over time so it is a continuum. You could argue that the context of that neighborhood in the future will be the concrete block buildings.

Comment: A lot of those buildings were very dilapidated or not individually eligible. It is a great example though to see if that's the sort of development we would want to allow here. It does allow for the more contemporary designs. Zoning in that area also allows for a lot of density.

Comment: In Denver, home owners of the older homes don't have the incentives to fix up older, dilapidated homes.

Area of Adjacency: Clarion recommends adopting a defined radius. They have suggested that we should have three categories—abutting; within 200 feet; and between 200-500 feet. More than 500 feet there is no review. They are using a conical radius, by adding height qualifications. If the proposed development is less than three stories, it might not be reviewed. It addresses the issue of predictable.

Comment: Would like Clarion to address lot size and size of building. A building that is 300x300 feet that's only three stories is more impactful than a 55x55 building that's four plus stories.

Question: 500 feet as typical city block, is that true for Fort Collins? Answer: Staff will verify typical blocks in Fort Collins.

Abutting: Clarion's recommendation is for new development abutting a designated resource,

review height, massing, setback, step backs, floor to ceiling height, materials, and windows and doors. For new development abutting an eligible resource, review height, massing, setbacks, step backs.

Comment: It would make more sense to treat designated and eligible resources the same. Offer more predictability to simplify and combine designated and eligible. Would it reduce the eligibility of the non-designated structure since you are reviewing less? Staff Answer: No.

Within 200 feet: Clarion's recommendation for development within 200 feet of a designated resource, and the new project is three or more stories, to review height, massing, setbacks and stepbacks. Less than three stories in height, review height and massing. If within 200 feet of an eligible resource, no review.

Between 200 and 500 feet: new projects 3 or more stories in height between 200 and 500 feet of a designated resource, review massing and setback. If the new project is less than three stories in height no review. Again, no review of eligible resources in the area.

Question: Is the area of adjacency serving as a de facto way to survey? How many properties are you discovering are eligible that you were not already aware of? Staff Answer: We aren't discovering new ones that we did not already suspect would be eligible.

Comment: Not reviewing eligible resources could potentially eliminate our history of those not represented in Old Town. This is currently the only reliable way to evaluate those resources.

Comment: Looking at peer cities, should we be relying on recognizing historic districts to retain historic character rather than individual property designating. This is kind of whack a mole.

Staff comment: Districts are community driven and communities that face development pressures see an increase in district designation.

Comment: Would like to find out from Clarion why Fort Collins is different—why does our community not embrace districts?

Comment: Perhaps members of the community see Fort Collins as a whole, rather than "I live in x community."

Comment: Must think of the developer's point of view. Right now it's fairly easy to continue doing the standard area of adjacency process, but maybe in ten years it will be a lot more. They should have support in this as well.

Staff comment: Speaking as staff, this is not as simplified as we would have liked. It places the historic preservation requirements in the Land Use Code. Would like to combine eligible and designated, simplify into two categories, if possible, and limit the distance. Consultants are saying that there are other ways to address compatibility beside historic codes.

Staff Question: Is the conical-radius idea best? Are the radius/height distances appropriate?

Comment: Some felt that Clarion did a great job. They feel that it definitely helps the predictability. They support the clear purpose, what it's applicable to, and simplifying the process. However the standards come out, this framework is good.

Comment: Provide a comparison of current examples for radius/height distances with recommendations.

Staff comment: Clarion's radius shows a squared out circle because it reflects 500 feet from

each side of the lot.

Comment: Need to address character of streets, standards for character of areas. Each character area has different context. There's a big difference between the River District, Historic Core, and Innovation Districts.

Comment: in favor of area of impact rather than area of adjacency.

Comment: Only focusing on designated properties is not a best practice. We cannot make the hierarchical difference between designated and eligible. Imbedded in that is a lot of value judgements.

Comment: Not every eligible property will get designated.

Comment: We cannot assume that eligible properties will be or will not be designated. There are two parts to this - two hierarchical schemes at once. There's the distance/abutting vs nearby, and that makes sense. The part that I don't agree with is designated vs eligible. If the goal is to protect the resources, they need to be protected at the same level.

Comment: The best solution is for staff to continue what they are doing with a certain metric. This is a critical step where we document eligible properties. This is a place where community involvement can occur. If that process was clearly stated upfront with a clear radius, it makes it predictable and clear.

Comment: The root problem is that there isn't enough survey. The City Council should be funding the survey work rather than putting onus on developers/owners in this process. You shouldn't learn this through the development review process. It is a great unknown. The value is the City Council stepping up to fund survey and that's a gap that we have right now. There needs to be routine dollars going toward survey.

Comment: Important to think about how to strategically get survey funding rather than the one offs. Then updates to surveys would be less expensive.

Comment: It does make sense that eligible and designated should be treated the same way.

Comment: Would it be simpler if you just accepted the fact that neighborhoods like Old Town West have eligible or designated properties every 500 feet? In some of the historic neighborhoods, you could do a district approach.

Comment: So long as eligible remains a legally defined term, you have to justify why it's eligible. The way to justify its eligibility is through survey work. I agree that designated and eligible should be reviewed similarly for abutting properties. You can't call a property eligible until survey is done. You can't assume that a neighborhood is eligible.

Comment: What's more important? Preservation of resources or ease and predictability? We have a responsibility to the historic resources; both are important, but this is the historic preservation code committee. We have to be the voice for the eligible properties. It is equally important to the future of our city for us to protect the eligible historic properties as make development easy. The stakes are equal.

Staff Question: What are the most critical compatibility considerations?

Comment: Materials, massing, and height.

Question: Is staff considering changes to 3.4.7 to make it guidelines rather than standards?

Staff answer: No, will remain standards. Staff reviews for compliance with standards as part of development review process. LPC provides recommendation to decision maker on compatibility with historic resources. Planning and Zoning board wanted recommendation from LPC for their

expertise in historic preservation.

Comment: It should be two or three categories: abutting, within 200 feet, within 500 feet. It doesn't need to be split by height.

Comment: Stepbacks are part of massing as a massing technique. It could be cleaned up by only using massing. Stepbacks should be a subset option of massing.

Comment: Façade articulation is important.

Comment: Needs to consider human scale—how does the building relate to pedestrians?

Comment: Think about floodplain requirements in neighborhoods, the basement has to stick out of the ground a few feet because of those requirements. Need to take that into consideration. Does not recommend floor to ceiling height.

General feeling is that floor to ceiling height should not be used. Data points on the historic buildings are important, but not actual floor to ceiling height.

Comment: Windows and doors equals fenestration pattern, solid to voids.

Material proportions, not exactly a pattern but proportion of materials in new construction.

Height, massing, materials. For height, nearby within 3 stories and mitigate height with massing.

Staff needs to map and analyze how far these distances actually are (200 ft, 300 ft, etc.). Need real-life examples and data. Need modeling.

Next Meeting: January 10, 2018

~~Topic 4: Demolition/Alteration Review, Dangerous Buildings and Demo by Neglect~~

Due to the importance of this issue and number of absent members for this discussion, the CAC has decided to continue this topic into the January meeting.