

Better Housing by Design Stakeholder Working Group Meeting Notes: March 7, 2017

Date: March 7, 2017

Time: 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Location: 9955 NE Glisan Street (Ride Connection Office)

Topics: East Portland Characteristics, Development Bonuses

Attendees:

Edward Love, Todd Struble (Jade District), Bob Rosholt, Katie Larsell (Planning and Sustainability Commission), Marissa Clarke-Ritter (Rosewood Initiative), Cora Potter, Michelle Anderson, Jenny Glass (Rosewood Initiative), Wendy Klein (Reach Community Development), Kym Nguyen (Concept Design), Arlene Kimura (Hazelwood Neighborhood), Simone Goldfeder (Constructive Form Architecture), Travis Phillips (PCRI), May Dea, Eavan Moore (Community Alliance of Tenants), Andrew Kurkinen, Soren Impey (Portland Tenants United), Sam Fuqua (North Tabor Neighborhood), Stephanie Kaza, Will Roberts.

Staff: Chip Lazenby (facilitator), Bill Cunningham (BPS), Denver Igarta (PBOT), Leslie Lum (BPS), Neil Heller (BPS)

General Comments/Questions

- I want to see holistic development – communal open spaces.
- Would like to see tie-ins to the Climate Action Plan, sustainable development approaches, higher energy efficiency standards.
- Higher quality construction important.
- Higher density ties into sustainability and affordability.
- Too many requirements can drive upfront costs.
- Residential mortgages can be more affordable due to interest rate being locked in for 30 years.
- Commercial Loans (5+ units) don't sync up with residential/commercial building code (3+ units).

East Portland characteristics

Participants discussed what features are especially important to include as part of multi-family development in East Portland (generally east of 82nd Ave./I-205), so that development better responds to the areas distinct characteristics and needs. Staff presented ideas for common open spaces, including space for large trees, mid-block open spaces, and landscaped front setbacks. Participants also discussed approaches for multi-family development along the area's large, multi-lane street corridors.

- Support for keeping the middle of blocks less built up, retaining open spaces.
- How do patterns of development along block edges and interior block open spaces develop incrementally? That is not the way development in the Jade District is happening now.
- Impacts on housing costs must be considered. Can incentives help reduce developer costs?
- Provide density reward for providing public street dedications.
- Use flexible street/sidewalk design options to preserve trees, maybe sidewalk goes into lot around a tree. Also consider tree-friendly paving options.

- Concerned about impacts on housing costs from requirements for streets and stormwater facilities. This increases rents. Need to find ways of maintaining affordability.
- Parking requirements add costs to housing – maybe trade parking for amenities.
- I would like to see functional, communal open spaces. Maybe a series of “mini-centers” on the interior block open space.
- Mid-block open spaces would be really good for our community.
- There is a lot of dense housing development in East Portland. Need to do this well. Children need outdoor places to play, also indoor gathering places.
- Need master plans for these areas with large blocks, providing guidance on appropriate development and connections.
- Dogs, Roofs, Standing Spaces:
 - Some multifamily does not have setbacks for walking dogs.
 - Pitched roofs look good.
 - People waiting for buses need additional standing space and shelter from the weather.
- Like the idea of front building setbacks and allowances for small business along major streets.
- Better streets will be better for businesses.
- Don’t let allowances for commercial spaces replace potential for residential units.
- Like the idea of providing opportunities for live/work arrangements, but need to consider noise impacts on residents.
- We need space on the sidewalk for transit infrastructure.

Development Bonuses

Participants discussed priorities for development bonuses.

- Need more of a link between bonuses and sustainability. We need solar array and green roofs. Our current bonuses seem arbitrary – bonuses should tie directly to our city goals.
- Consider people density versus unit density - Ex: Could have seven 2-bed units or 14 1-bed units).
- Need more affordability tiers, such as for housing at deeper affordability levels than 60% and 80% MFI.
- Remove all existing bonuses and only focus on housing affordability.
- Quality design should be required no matter where in the city something is being built.
- How you design an amenity makes a big difference, such as providing semi-private outdoor spaces as a transition between common open spaces and residences.
- Be more multi-objective with development bonuses, aim to meet multiple goals/purposes.
- Question the use of density as the main bonus mechanism. What about using permit fee waivers, SDC reductions, tax abatements?
- Amenities don’t always pencil, developers need incentive to make them work.
- Some of these amenities should be required, not optional, such as sound insulation and security features. Or, make them part of a package of requirements for the more important bonuses.
- Affordability isn’t just about rent. Some existing bonuses affect household economics and/or family health, such as solar water heating (lower energy costs) and outdoor spaces.

- Bonuses for 3-bedroom units could be a concern in East Portland, such as in the David Douglas school district, given school crowding.
- Think about how regulations sync with construction costs (greater density/building height can cost more) – what are the market realities? – why would a developer choose to include this amenity?
- I need more information about these bonuses and how they work or why a developer would choose to use them or not.
- Add a bonus for quality design of buildings.
- We need alternative options for right-of-way connections that don't require building a full street.
- Consider flexibility in amenities bonuses that relate to needs in different parts of the city, such as 3-bedroom units in inner neighborhoods.

Development Bonus Priorities

Participants were asked to identify their top five highest priorities among the existing and potential development bonuses. Participants most frequently identified affordable housing as their highest priority. Other development bonuses that were identified as top priorities by more than half of the participants were: children's play areas, accessible housing, street connections, outdoor recreation facilities, and three bedroom units.

Participants suggested the following as additional development bonuses: indoor gathering spaces, sustainability approaches, energy efficiency (exceed energy code), senior housing, view planes.

Additional written comments on development priorities:

- I think a lot of my fellow East Portland neighbors hear "affordable housing" and associate it with "cheap," "poorly constructed," "subsidized," "Section 8," etc. The feeling of many East Portlanders is that we were incorporated against our will in the 80s + have had no seat at the table when decisions are made. Our tax dollars are taken by "Twee Portland" and goes to build more bike lanes for people who have access to all of the city's amenities. In the meantime, it seems like our open spaces are taken + developed by people who don't live here, so we have dense, "affordable housing." Maybe we could have a few housing projects that are well-built, destination homes?
- Sound insulation and crime prevention features should be a requirement.
- Perhaps weight bonuses based on neighborhood need? More 3 bedrooms close in, or more open space where parks are lacking.
- Accessible housing: 10-25% for at least 20% of units, near frequent service transit only.
- Street connections: include bike/ped only as an option.
- Outdoor recreation facilities: allow per unit sq. ft. to be combined into 1 area.
- Three bedroom units: inside of 60th only.
- Solar water heating: or other building or neighborhood scale energy systems.
- Affordable housing: we need other and better vehicles for affordability. The existing IZ thresholds are deeply flawed. Can't zone your way into affordability.
- Calibrate density bonuses wisely.
- Identify/weight criteria differently in different neighborhoods.
- Accessible housing: have to do, code requires.

- Street connections: prioritize pedestrian/bike connections, not vehicular.
- Allow mixed use/retail – better design, stronger community.
- Larger required outdoor areas: commons, plus indoor, and require private outdoor space for each unit.
- Reduce on-site parking requirements.
- Allow for alternative street design to preserve trees, more outdoor space.
- We need another list of fee reduction bonuses.
- Why can't these be incentivized by reduced permit fees?
- Group (bonuses) by key city sustainability and livability goals: A) affordability; B) Climate/carbon goals, urban heat island mitigation; C) safety and livability.
- Three bedroom units: No - let market determine.
- Solar water heating: No – doesn't contribute enough to climate goals, is just a token.
- Children's play areas: Super important! East Portland is parks deficient.
- Three bedroom units: I think this serves families and leads to more stable housing. Single units create high turnover.
- Storage areas: this is a waste of space and I'm not sure how this encourages smart development.
- Solar water heating – I like this if it leads to lower utility costs for residents.
- I think urban forestry is important.
- Affordable housing without rent caps. If you can't limit future costs, how can you cap anything?
- These bonuses are all kind of the same – how do they stack up?
- Affordable housing – this should be a base line requirement.
- Balance the incentive by need of neighborhood. So 3 bedrooms higher in close in / open space outer, etc.

Additional Feedback

- Hold similar forums in East Portland cultural gathering places that will draw sub-communities (i.e., grade schools, churches/temples, etc.). Go where residents who care about community already form a natural nexus for leadership and support. Ex: PBOT holding forums at Velo Cult.
- Organize incentives under major city goals, right now "density" appears to be the only goal.