

WS
4-8-08

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

TUESDAY, APRIL 8 2008

5:00 P.M.

CITY COUNCIL WORK ROOM

AGENDA

5:00 P.M.

**CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION WITH THE INFILL TASK FORCE AND THE
PLANNING COMMISSION**

- I. Welcome and Introductions William D. Euille, Mayor
- II. Update on the Status of the Infill Task Force Report to Council
- III. Discussion

5:45 P.M.

**CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION WITH THE PLANNING COMMISSION TO
DISCUSS PLANNING PRIORITIES**

- I. Presentation Faroll Hamer, Director,
Planning and Zoning
- II. Discussion

Individuals with disabilities who require assistance or special arrangements to participate in the City Council Work Session may call the City Clerk and Clerk of Council's Office at 838-4500 (TTY/TDD 838-5056). We request that you provide a 48-hour notice so that the proper arrangements may be made.

April 4, 2008

ALEXANDRIA INFILL TASK FORCE MEMBERS


Stewart Dunn, Chair, Planning Commission
Stephen Koenig, Architect
Lee Weber, Builder/Developer
Gaver Nichols, Architect
Lisa Viersé May, Northern Virginia Association of Realtors
Maria Wasowski, Resident, Mt. Jefferson/Del Ray
David Brown, Resident, North Ridge
Mary M. Konsoulis, Resident, Rosemont
Ken Billingsley, Resident, Strawberry Hill


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 3, 2008

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL AND THE
PLANNING COMMISSION

THROUGH: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

FROM: FAROLL HAMER, DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING 

SUBJECT: INFILL TASK FORCE

Since August 2007, the Infill Task Force has been working on identifying issues of single family infill in Alexandria and examining various tools that may be appropriate to manage impacts of infill projects. At its March 18 meeting, the Task Force made preliminary recommendations on a number of regulations that have been discussed, which they are prepared to present to you for discussion and comment.

The regulations are intended to address the most significant infill issues they and the community identified at the monthly Task Force meetings, and the community meeting held in November 2007. The issues include:

- Height & bulk of infill projects
- Protection of historic resources
- Compatibility with neighborhood
- Visual impact of front garages, vehicle parking, expanses of concrete
- Teardowns & new construction on substandard lots
- Clarification of zoning provisions

Attached you will find a summary table of existing and potential regulations, with the staff recommendation on each and preliminary recommendation from the Infill Task Force. The table is organized by control type—Height, Setbacks, Bulk, Design-Bulk, and Design—and further divided in to the various regulations that fit within each control type. The summary table corresponds to attached detailed discussion of each potential regulation. Not all of the tools studied by the Task Force are included in the attached tables; only those that throughout the process were found to have a high potential to address issues of particular concern in Alexandria.

The Task Force will be refining its recommendations over the next couple of months, with the final recommendations scheduled to appear for hearing before the Planning Commission and City Council in June. A community meeting is scheduled for May 1.

Infill Task Force—Existing and Proposed Regulations

Control Type	Existing Regulations	Regulations to Consider	Staff Recommendation	Infill Task Force Preliminary Recommendation 3/18
A. Height	Maximum height measured to midpoint of gable.	1. a. Establish maximum % above <i>average height along blockface</i> , ensuring allowance of second story if developed as only single story.	Support Average Height	Support
	Height measured from average finished grade.	b. Reduce maximum building height.	Do Not Support Lower Height Limit at Midpoint	Not Support
	Average front threshold requirements (<i>interim</i>)	c. Measure height to ridge line.	Do Not Support Measuring Height to the Ridge	Not Support
		2. Measure height from <i>existing</i> grade.	Support	Support
		3. Identify height measurement requirements for all roof types.	Support	Support
B. Setbacks	Minimum front, side and rear setbacks.	4. Permanently adopt interim threshold requirements.	Support	Support
		5. Require basements to be 3 ft or less above grade to be exempt from FAR calculations	Do Not Support	Not Support
		1. Allow front setback for infill projects to meet average of established setback.	Support	Support

Infill Task Force—Existing and Proposed Regulations

Control Type	Existing Regulations	Regulations to Consider	Staff Recommendation	Infill Task Force Preliminary Recommendation 3/18
	Ratio to height for side and rear setbacks. Allow front setback for infill projects to be average of established blockface (staff interpretation).	2. Increase side setback requirements—either by decreasing ratio or increasing minimum.	Support in Concept – more study needed	No recommendation—needs more study. Some members not supportive of concept.
		3. Establish front setback ratio.	Do Not Support	Not Support
C. Bulk	Floor area ratio (FAR)	1. Clarify Floor Area definition to reduce excessive deductions—only basements, specified exceptions, and portions of attics (remove 7'6" language) to be deducted.	Support	Support
D. Design-Bulk	No more than 50% of required yards can be used for car parking (including driveways, whether paved or unpaved)	1. Encourage open front porches by exempting them from FAR.	Support	Support with conditions
		2. Encourage detached garages in the rear yard by exempting small garages from FAR and required rear/side setbacks.	Support	Support with conditions
		3. Allow permeable-surfaced driveways in required yards.	Support	Support

Infill Task Force—Existing and Proposed Regulations

Control Type	Existing Regulations	Regulations to Consider	Staff Recommendation	Infill Task Force Preliminary Recommendation 3/18
		4. Allow tandem parking without SUP.	Support	Support with conditions
		5. Attached garages to be set back a minimum of 8 feet from the front face of dwelling.	Support	Support
		6. Require attached garages to be side-loaded	Support	Support, but needs some further study to ensure adequate width of lot.
E. Design	<p>Subdivisions must conform to character of lots as developed over time, considering lot sizes, structures, and orientation (<i>interim</i>).</p> <p>Old and Historic and Parker-Gray Historic Districts and Board of Architectural Review.</p> <p>Special Exception (BZA review for open front porches.</p> <p>SUP for development</p>	1. Permanently adopt interim subdivision regulations.	Support	Support
		2. Establish overlay district (historic/conservation/design) in historic areas experiencing significant pressure.	Support	Support
		3. Create a pattern book for city neighborhoods, or select neighborhoods	Support	Support
		4. Consider preservation of existing trees and installation of new landscaping	Support	Needs more analysis


Infill Task Force—Existing and Proposed Regulations

Control Type	Existing Regulations	Regulations to Consider	Staff Recommendation	Infill Task Force Preliminary Recommendation 3/18
	of <i>vacant</i> substandard lot	<p>5. Require administrative permit with standards for teardown and new construction on developed substandard lots.</p> <p>Require SUP for teardown and new construction on developed substandard lots (<i>not recommended by staff</i>).</p>	Do Not Support	<p>Not support</p> <p>Support SUP for teardowns on substandard lots. Needs some criteria and standards.</p>

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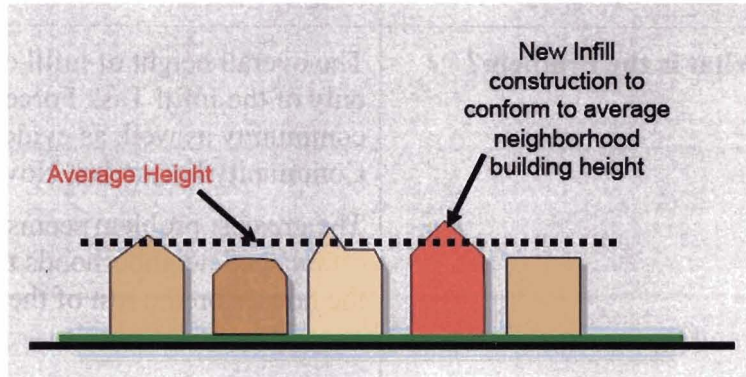
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Establish Height Limits (A.1a, 1b, 1c)

General Category	Height
<p>What is the Problem?</p>	<p>The overall height of infill dwellings are a concern, not only of the Infill Task Force, but of the larger Alexandria community as well, as evidenced by the comments at the Community Forum last November.</p> <p>The greatest problem seems to be tall houses built in established neighborhoods that are well above heights of the houses on the rest of the block.</p> 
<p>What is the Current Regulation?</p>	<p>The height limit is 35 feet measured to the midpoint between the ridge and the eaves for properties in the R-20, R-12, R-8, R-5, and R-2-5 zones. For the RA and RB properties, the height limit is 45 feet.</p>
<p>What is the Proposed Regulation?</p>	<p>There are three proposed changes to the height limits for detached single-family dwellings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A.1a) Averaging the height limit based on the existing dwelling heights in the neighborhood block; • A. 1b) Lowering the height limit measured to the midpoint of the dwelling roof; or • A. 1c) Measuring height to the ridge line instead of the midpoint of the dwelling roof. <p><u>A.1a) Averaging Height.</u> Require that the height of a single-family detached residential dwelling in the R-20, R-12, R-8, R-5, and R-2-5 zones be no more than 20 %</p>

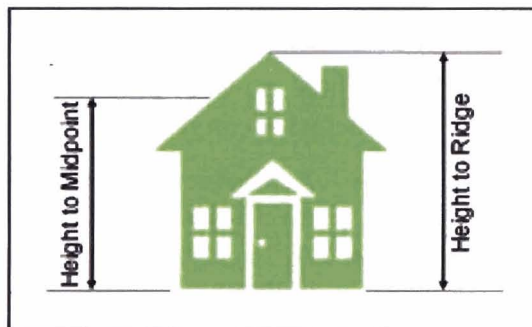
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higher than the average height of other dwellings on the blockface. In order that a property owner may be able to build a two-story house next to a single-story house, if the calculated height is less than 25 feet, the property owner will have the option to build up to 25 feet.



A.1b) Lowering the height limit. Since a study of typical blocks in the City (attached) shows that only one house is higher than 30 feet measured to the midpoint between the ridge and the eaves, lower the height limit for single-family detached residential dwelling in the R-20, R-12, R-8, R-5, and R-2-5 zones from 35 feet to 30 feet.

A.1c) Measuring height to the ridge. Since the same study of typical blocks in the City shows that no house measures more than 35 feet to the ridge line, require that 35 feet be the maximum height to the ridge line for single-family detached residential dwellings in the R-20, R-12, R-8, R-5, and R-2-5 zones. See the map that follows which illustrates the heights to the ridge for a sample neighborhood area in the City.



No adjustment to the height regulations in the RA and RB zones is recommended.

Neighborhood Impact

Assurance that new construction and additions in the neighborhood will be more in keeping with the established

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	height. However, because the average height will likely rise over time, houses will become taller, but it will be a gradual change.
Property Owner Impact	Property owners will need to take into account the neighborhood character and the heights of the existing dwellings in the community. Additional time and cost will impact application processing. Height growth is still permitted, but it is a more gradual increase in allowance.
Staff Recommendation	<p>Support Average Height. This is a reasonable way to allow for residential growth in the community, but limits the stark changes that have occurred on some infill properties.</p> <p>Not Support Lower Height Limit at Midpoint or Measuring Height to the Ridge. The staff believes that the average height proposal is a better way to address the variations in neighborhood blocks rather than lowering the height limits across the zone or to measure height to the ridge.</p>

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**Existing Residential Single-Family Dwelling Height
For Selected Blocks in the City
(Average Height in Feet)**

Street & Block	Number of Dwellings	<u>Average Height To the Midpoint</u>	<u>Average Height To Ridge Line</u>
E. Custis Ave (300 block)	12	21.7	25.3
W. Del Ray (unit block)	12	20.2	24.7
Hillside Terrace (1200 block)	7	15.8	19.2
King St (2500 block)	11	23.1	28.2
Leslie Ave (2500 block)	11	18.2	23.1
E. Masonic Ave (unit block)	11	20.0	25.8
Russell Rd (3000 block)	10	21.8	26.8
Seminary Rd (5200 block)	5	16.7	20.6
E. Windsor (500 block)	8	21.7	23.0
Total	87		

**Range of Heights
Of the 87 Properties**

Height Range (in feet)	Height to the Midpoint (Number of Houses)	Height to the Ridge Line (Number of Houses)
<15	11	0
15 – 19.9	33	14
20 – 24.9	34	33
25 – 29.9	8	32
30 – 34.9	1	5
35 +	0	3
Total Units	87	87

Notes:

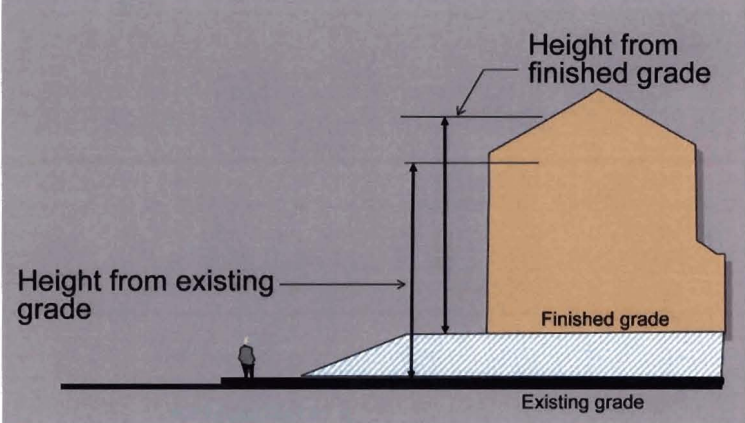
- The existing definition of height is to measure to the midpoint between the eaves and the ridge.
- Under the existing height definition, only one dwelling was above 30 feet tall and a total of 8 dwellings were above 25 feet tall.
- Using the ridge line height definition, only 8 properties were above 30 feet tall.
- Surveyor data was for the front of the dwelling facing the street. Average finished grade calculations may produce a slightly different result.

Data Source: City of Alexandria, City Surveyor

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Measure Height from Existing Grade (A.2.)

General Category	Height
<p>What is the Problem?</p>	<p>Some new homes or additions artificially mound up land around the base of the house to increase the height of the home or to meet setback requirements.</p> 
<p>What is the Current Regulation?</p>	<p>Height is currently measured from average finished grade. Finished grade is the grade of the land after the project has been completed. Average finished grade is the elevation obtained by averaging the ground surface elevation at intervals of 20 feet at the perimeter of a building.</p>
<p>What is the Proposed Regulation?</p>	<p>Continue to measure single-family building height from average finished grade, but add that for the purposes of determining building height, at no point shall the finished grade be higher than the pre-development grade. The proposed regulation would apply only to single-family dwellings in the R-20, R-12, R-8, R-5, R-2-5, RA & RB zones.</p>
<p>Neighborhood Impact</p>	<p>Houses could not be artificially mounded to result in a taller house or to meet setback requirements. Analysis of sample building plans over the past year shows that there usually is not much difference between using pre-development or finished grade, except for some notable examples where the difference could be almost 2 feet. Even a difference of this amount at ground level can amplify the appearance of the height of a dwelling.</p>

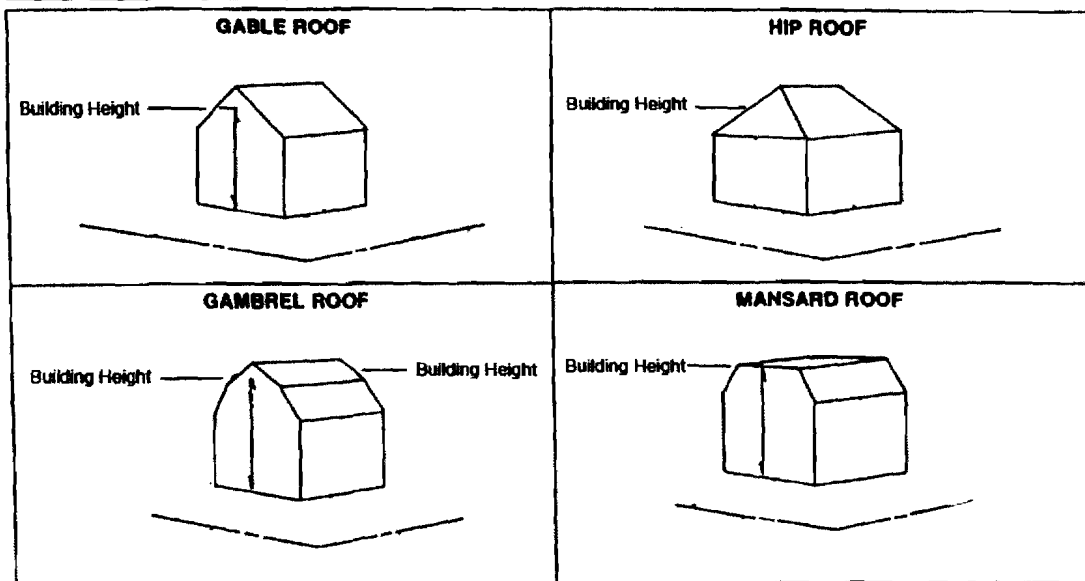
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Property Owner Impact	Minimal impact when adjustments can be made at the planning phase.
Staff Recommendation	Support. This proposed regulation would provide assurance that heights of dwellings are not artificially raised.

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Identify Height Measurement for all Roof Types (A.3.)

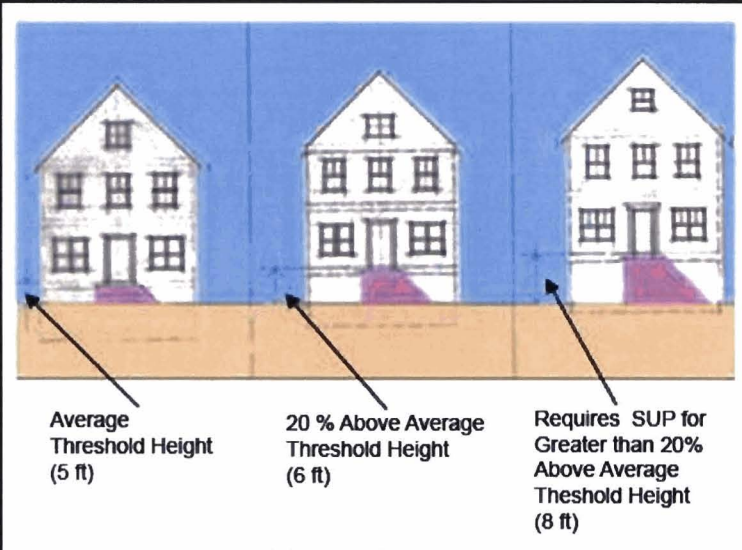
General Category	Height
What is the Problem?	The zoning ordinance describes how to measure height in the case of a gable or hip roof. Neither a gambrel roof nor mansard roof is addressed.
What is the Current Regulation?	The current height definition in the zoning ordinance says that the height of a building is measured vertically from the average finished grade to the highest point of a building, except that “in the case of a gable or hip roof, height shall be measured to the midpoint between the eaves and the ridge.”
What is the Proposed Regulation?	The height definition would be revised to clarify how to measure height for a gambrel and mansard roof
Neighborhood Impact	Assurance that height is measured in a consistent manner for all roof types.
Property Owner Impact	Assurance that height is measured in a consistent manner for all roof types.
Staff Recommendation	Support. It should be clear how to measure height with different roof types.



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Permanently Adopt Interim Threshold Height Regulation (A.4)

General Category	Height
What is the Problem?	New houses often have elevated first floors to provide light in a basement area and make it a more livable space. This however, can throw off the pattern of front elevations on a neighborhood block, and add to the perception of a larger, out of scale, dwelling.
What is the Current Regulation?	<p>The current interim threshold regulation was approved first for six months in July 2006 and then on a year-to-year basis since then. The regulation requires that the front door threshold, which includes the first floor construction, be less than 20% higher than the average height of other front door thresholds on a blockface; otherwise an SUP would be required. Height is measured from the existing grade on the lot.</p> 
What is the Proposed Regulation?	The interim regulation should be made permanent legislation.
Neighborhood Impact	Consistent expectation that the level of first floor construction is in line with existing houses on the neighborhood block.
Property Owner Impact	Minimal impact when adjustments can be made at the

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	<p>planning stage.</p> <p>Since the interim regulations were adopted, there have been 32 cases of significant additions or new construction where the interim regulations applied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 17 cases complied with the requirement upon submission• 9 cases did not affect the existing threshold and front door height• 4 cases had to be revised to meet the threshold requirement• 2 were withdrawn for unrelated reasons
Staff Recommendation	<p>Support. These regulations have been important in keeping first floor construction in line with the prevailing first floor threshold heights on the blockface.</p>

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**Require Basements to be 3 Feet or Less Above Grade
To be Exempt from Floor Area Calculations (A.5)**

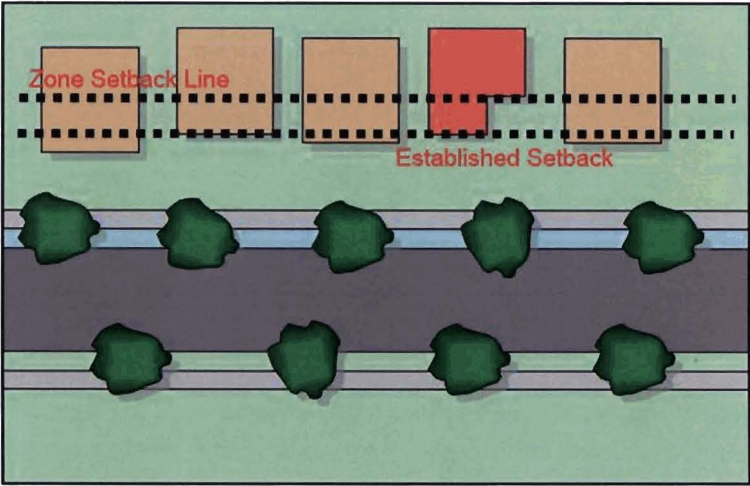
General Category	Height
What is the Problem?	An exposed basement can be a prominent and unwelcome feature of a newly constructed house. Significant exposure above grade of a basement level can add to the overall height and bulk of the dwelling.
What is the Current Regulation?	Basements are not counted as floor area for FAR purposes where they are 4 feet or less above average finished grade. There is always the option to have a basement fully exposed, but the owner must count the basement as part of the total floor area for FAR purposes.
What is the Proposed Regulation?	<p>Basements would not be counted as floor area for FAR purposes where they are <u>3</u> feet or less above average finished grade. This would force the property owner to submerge the basement even more than the current requirement so that the basement floor area would not be counted for FAR purposes.</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Current Regulation Proposed Regulation</p> <p>Basement Excluded from FAR if 4 ft or less above grade Basement Excluded from FAR if 3 ft or less above grade</p> </div>
Neighborhood Impact	Reduces the exposure of a basement for a new dwelling.
Property Owner Impact	Minimal impact when adjustments can be made at the planning stage. Existing basements that are 4 feet above grade (under the current regulation), may need to be counted as floor area, resulting in less floor area available for an addition.

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Staff Recommendation	Do Not Support. The staff feels that the threshold height regulation is a much stronger tool to make sure that first floor construction is consistent with the neighborhood blockface. In addition, there are some neighborhood blocks where an exposed basement is a predominant feature, and a new dwelling should not be penalized for fitting in with the neighborhood.
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**Allow Front Setback to Meet
Average of Existing Setbacks (B.1)**


General Category	Setbacks
What is the Problem?	<p>In many existing neighborhoods, the current houses are likely to be closer to the front lot line & street than the front setback requirement for that zone in the zoning ordinance. If a new house is built in this neighborhood at the required numerical front setback, it is possible that the house will be constructed 5-15 feet behind the average of the existing houses on the street. This could leave a “gap” in the blockface and disturb the harmonious uninterrupted frontage existing on the neighborhood block.</p>
What is the Current Regulation?	<p>The current regulation requires that a new house cannot extend <u>beyond</u> the established minimum setback line of existing houses on the block, but does not <u>allow</u> the new house to meet this established setback line. Thus new houses would be built behind this line, meeting the minimum numerical setback for the zone and not have the option of being in line with the existing houses.</p>
What is the Proposed Regulation?	<p>The proposed regulation would <u>allow</u> all new single-family detached houses in the R-20, R-12, R-8, R-5, R-2-5, RA and RB zones to be built with a front setback that meets the average of the established front setback line on the blockface.</p> 

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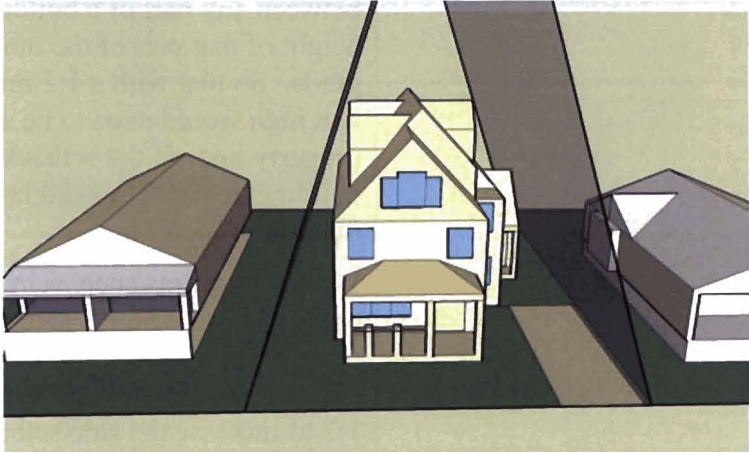
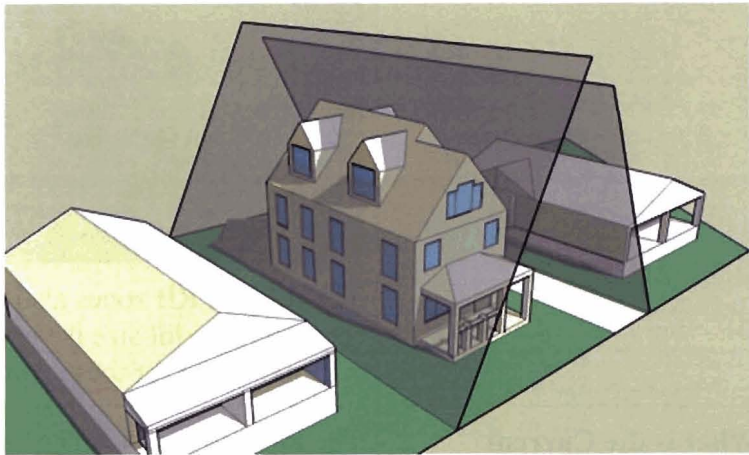
Neighborhood Impact	New houses would not disturb an established pattern of uniform front setbacks on the street. A potential negative impact could be that tall houses would be closer to the street.
Property Owner Impact	Most property owners would welcome the ability to build up to the average established front setback line, giving them more options with more usable lot area to build.
Staff Recommendation	Support. This proposed regulation would support the continuation of the neighborhood streetscape.

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Increase Side Setback Requirements (B.2.)


General Category	Setbacks
<p>What is the Problem?</p>	<p>While residential dwellings in the R-20, R-12, and R-8 zones have a side setback ratio of 1:2, the R-5 and R-2-5 zones have side setback ratios of 1:3.</p> <p>The setback ratio is the ratio of the horizontal distance between any part of a building and the side lot line to the height of that part of the building above average finished grade. So that with a 1:2 ratio, a building with eaves 20 feet high would need to be set back 10 feet from the side property line. If the setback ratio were 1:3, the same building at 20 feet would be set back only 7.3 feet from the side property line.</p> <p>With narrow lots such as in the R-5 and R-2-5 zones, tall houses built to the 1:3 setback ratio can be intimidating to people who live in more modest homes next door. The issue is: should the ratio in these two zones be changed to 1:2 to increase the side setback requirement or lower the height of new building elements close to the property line?</p> <div data-bbox="646 1183 1393 1464">  </div> <p>The RA and RB zones also have setback ratios of 1:3, but the minimum lot size is very small and the ratio seems to be appropriate for these zones.</p>
<p>What is the Current Regulation?</p>	<p>The R-5 and R-2-5 zones have setback requirements that specify a 1:3 side setback ratio with a minimum of 7 feet setback.</p>
<p>What is the Proposed Regulation?</p>	<p>Change the R-5 and R-2-5 setback ratio from 1:3 to 1:2. Maintain the minimum side setback at 7 feet.</p>
<p>Neighborhood Impact</p>	<p>Direct neighbors of new dwellings or significant additions will benefit most from this proposed regulation. The</p>

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	larger neighborhood will benefit from dwellings that are more in keeping with the neighborhood character.
Property Owner Impact	Property owners would be limited as to how close to the side lot lines and how high they can build. At the design phase, -they still have options to build the floor space elsewhere on the property.
Staff Recommendation	<p>Support. The staff supports this proposal in concept, but plans to do additional studies to determine the impact of the change.</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Del Ray House with 1:3 Side Setback Ratio</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Del Ray House with 1:2 Side Setback Ratio</p>

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Establish a Front Setback Ratio (B.3)

General Category	Setbacks
What is the Problem?	Sometimes on narrow streets (40 ft wide) in the City, tall houses close to the sidewalk and street can give the appearance of a canyon, blocking natural light and providing a closed-in feeling.
What is the Current Regulation?	There is no current regulation that specifically addresses this problem.
What is the Proposed Regulation?	<p>Require a front setback ratio, similar to the side setback ratio already in the zoning ordinance. This 1:1 front setback ratio would apply only to single-family detached dwellings on streets 40 ft wide or less in the R-5 and R-2-5 zones. It would constrain the setback distance and height at the front of the property.</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Del Ray House with a Front Setback Ratio of 1:1</p>
Neighborhood Impact	Provides a standard setback ratio for the front of dwellings on narrow streets, but does not ensure good design or provide flexibility for evolving height increases.
Property Owner Impact	May limit design options in the front of the property, but lost floor space here probably could be found elsewhere.
Staff Recommendation	Do Not Support. Staff feels that proposed height and FAR regulations would provide appropriate and adequate relief for this issue.

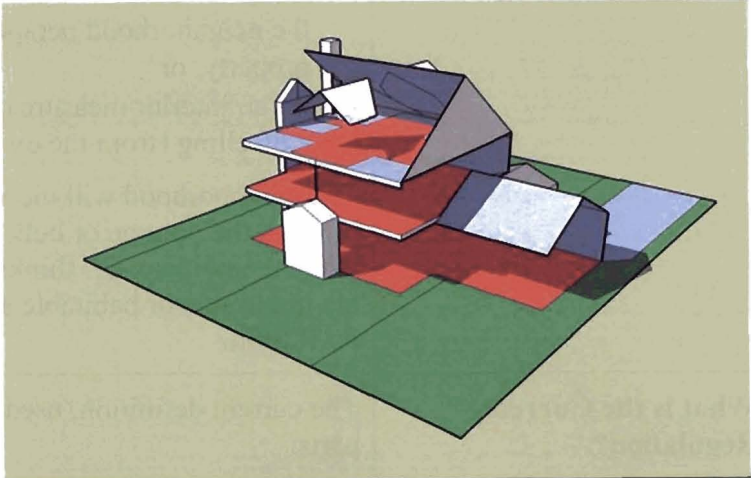
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**Clarify Floor Area Definition
To Reduce Excess Deductions (C.1.)**

General Category	Bulk - FAR
What is the Problem?	<p>The current definition of Floor Area, which is the significant component of the Floor Area Ratio (FAR), is problematic. While the definition states that areas above 7'6" in ceiling height are to be counted as Floor Area, it is not clear on whether to count areas that measure less than 7'6" in ceiling height. The language is confusing to property owners, architects, city staff, and neighbors and has resulted in varying interpretations over time.</p> <p>One interpretation can lead to the construction of exceedingly large dwellings, if areas that measure 7' in height in an attic, bathroom, or closet are deducted from the allowable floor area. Even older dwellings built before modern building codes may have ceiling heights of 7' – meaning that a whole dwelling could have no countable Floor Area.</p> <p>One problem is that those projects that maximize the FAR and take advantage of 7'6" deductions tend to be the large homes that are the focus of this Infill study.</p> <p>Another problem is that there are two ways to view FAR and these different perceptions can conflict:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• As an external measure of the volume or bulk (from the neighborhood perspective) allowed on the property, or• As an interior measure of habitable or usable space in a dwelling (from the owner's perspective). <p>The neighborhood will view the FAR requirements as a limit on the volume or bulk that is permitted on a lot, while the homeowner thinks that areas in the house that are not usable or habitable should be excluded from any FAR limit.</p>
What is the Current Regulation?	<p>The current definition, used for FAR purposes has four parts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It is the sum of all gross horizontal areas• It is measured from exterior faces of walls and

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	<p>includes to the eaves when they extend beyond the wall line</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes space with a headroom of 7'6" or more • Exclusions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Elevators, stairs, HVAC equipment areas – Basements if no more than 4 feet above grade <p>The FAR is defined as the floor area of a building divided by the area of the lot.</p> <p>There are FAR numerical standards for each zone. For example, the R-8 zone FAR standard is 0.35.</p>
<p>What is the Proposed Regulation?</p>	<p>The proposed floor area definition to apply to single-family dwellings in the R-20, R-12, R-8, R-5, R-2-5, RA and RB zones would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be the sum of all gross horizontal areas • Be measured from exterior faces of walls, but not include the eaves • Floor area with a ceiling height of 15 feet or greater will be counted twice • Drop the confusing 7'6" language • Continue to exclude basements if no more than 4 feet above grade • Continue to exclude stairs, elevators & HVAC equipment areas • Exclude attic floor area with less than 5 feet of ceiling height • Exclude unenclosed front porches • Exclude detached garages (of X size) in the rear yard  <p>The FAR numerical standards for single-family zones will</p>

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	<p>remain unchanged.</p> <p>The Infill Task Force and staff reviewed a volume measure as a possible replacement for floor area & FAR, but there was no national experience in using such a measure and the calculation of volume, especially for existing structures, appeared to be cumbersome and complicated to calculate.</p>
Neighborhood Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infill dwellings, whether new constructions or additions, would be more in scale with the existing neighborhood dwellings. • There would be an expectation of predictability, because the rules are clear. • The proposed regulations are more reflective of the expected volume of the new dwelling or addition.
Property Owner Impact	<p>With the proposed regulations, property owners would have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear expectations • More predictable plan review and processing time <p>Projects that maximize FAR and deduct high percentages of floor area rely on the ambiguous 7'6" language. In 2007, 8% of projects had deductions exceeding 20% (excluding the basement deduction) and 17% had deductions of 10% or more.</p> <p>In contrast to those projects that maximize FAR, most of the projects (76%) in 2007 did not need to take floor area deductions (other than the basement exclusion) to meet the FAR requirement.</p> <p>The proposed floor area exclusions of the front porch and the detached garage in the rear yard are design incentives to encourage open front porches and vehicle parking in the rear. The exclusions may compensate for some of the area perceived to be lost by eliminating the 7'6" deductions. The floor area involved is minor compared to the floor area inside the main dwelling.</p> <p>Most property owners would not be affected by this proposed regulation – only those who want to build excessively large dwellings in established neighborhoods.</p>
Staff Recommendation	Support. The proposed change would reduce the large

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	<p>scale of new dwellings and major additions by eliminating ambiguous language in the definition and reducing the prevalence of excessive floor area deductions.</p> <p>Staff believes that FAR should be viewed as a measure of bulk or volume and that the reason for the numerical FAR standards for each zone is to control the bulk of the dwelling so that all dwellings are compatible with the neighborhood.</p> <p>The proposed regulation would make the floor area definition and the resulting FAR calculation more reflective of the true volume of the proposed dwelling.</p>
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Encourage Open Front Porches (D.1.)

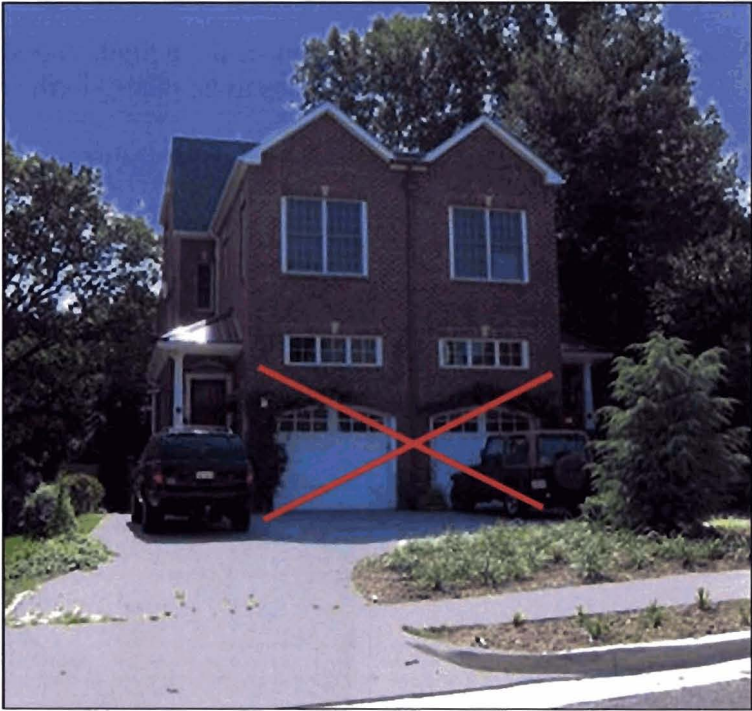
General Category	Design - Bulk
What is the Problem?	<p>Open front porches (covered, but unenclosed) can be a neighborhood-friendly design asset that enhances the value of the homeowner's property and the neighborhood as a whole. However, the floor area of covered porches is counted as floor area for purposes of FAR. If a homeowner's plans for space are tight, they may forgo including a porch.</p> 
What is the Current Regulation?	All floor area on a property covered by a roof is counted as floor area for FAR purposes. This includes covered porches, but does not include uncovered stoops.
What is the Proposed Regulation?	The proposed changes to the floor area definition include an exclusion for open front porches.
Neighborhood Impact	Enhances neighborhood appearance.
Property Owner Impact	Provides an incentive for open front porches and provides a balance for the elimination of excessive deductions in

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	calculating FAR.
Staff Recommendation	Support. The proposal promotes a neighborhood-friendly design that reduces bulk. The deduction provides some balance to the proposed elimination of excessive deductions.

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Encourage Detached Garages in the Rear Yard (D.2.)

General Category	Design - Bulk
What is the Problem?	<p>In contrast to traditional design, modern housing design often has the garage dominating the view of the front of the house. The result is the loss of focus on the design of an attractive house and the feeling that the garage is the most important design element.</p> <p>Current regulations do not allow for traditional building design that deemphasizes the garage.</p>  <p>A positive incentive to deemphasize the garage is to encourage its location in the rear yard. However, under current regulations and the setback requirements, the detached garage could end up being in the middle of a small rear yard.</p>
What is the Current Regulation?	<p>Current regulations permit accessory buildings (e.g., garages) in the rear yard, but the buildings must be set back from the rear and side lot lines using the same setbacks as for the main dwelling.</p> <p>For example in a 50-foot wide, 5,000 sq ft R-5 lot, the side</p>

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	and rear setback is a required 7 ft minimum. The garage could end up being the central feature of a small rear yard.
What is the Proposed Regulation?	<p>Special regulations for single-family detached dwellings in the R-20, R-12, R-8, R-5, R-2-5, RA & RB zones to encourage the placement of one- or two-car detached garages in the rear yard with modest setbacks from the side and rear yard.</p> <p>The proposed changes to the floor area definition include an exclusion for detached garages (of X sq ft and Y height) in the rear yard. Detached garages that do not meet the requirements for exclusion from FAR could be built, but the floor area would not be excluded from FAR calculations.</p>
Neighborhood Impact	Enhances the neighborhood streetscape by encouraging garages to be placed in the rear yard.
Property Owner Impact	Provides an incentive to place detached garages in the rear yard.
Staff Recommendation	<p>Support. This is a worthwhile design incentive to encourage detached garages in the rear yard. The exclusion of a modest amount of floor area for the garage is worth the price of removing attached garages facing the street in the front yard.</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">House with a Rear Yard One-Car Garage</p>

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House with a Rear Yard Two-Car Garage

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**Allow Permeable Driveways
In Required Side Yard (D.3.)**

General Category	Design - Bulk
What is the Problem?	<p>In contrast to traditional design, modern housing design often has the garage dominating the view of the front of the house. The result is the loss of focus on the design of an attractive house and the feeling that the garage is the most important design element.</p> <p>Current regulations are not consistent with traditional building design that deemphasizes the garage.</p>
What is the Current Regulation?	Current regulations permit accessory buildings (e.g., garages) in the rear yard. However, no more than 50% of required yards can be used for car parking – including driveways, whether paved or unpaved.
What is the Proposed Regulation?	<p>Special regulations for single-family detached dwellings in the R-20, R-12, R-8, R-5, R-2-5, RA & RB zones to encourage the placement of one- or two-car detached garages (of X sq ft and Y height) in the rear yard with modest setbacks from the side and rear yard.</p>  <p>The special regulations would include an exemption from the 50% driveway access/parking requirement to access detached garages in the rear yard as long as the driveway is permeable. Permeable driveways can be grass, gravel,</p>

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	paving strips or a grid-based system. Such a driveway exemption would not be available if there is direct access to the rear yard from an alley.
Neighborhood Impact	Enhances the neighborhood streetscape by encouraging garages to be placed in the rear yard.
Property Owner Impact	Provides an incentive to place detached garages in the rear yard.
Staff Recommendation	Support. This is a worthwhile design incentive to encourage detached garages in the rear yard especially if the driveway is permeable.

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Allow Tandem Parking without SUP (D.4)

General Category	Design - Bulk
What is the Problem?	<p>Under current regulations cars parked on private property must have unobstructed access to the street. In other words, one car parking behind another on a residential driveway is not permitted without an SUP.</p> <p>This has resulted in the construction of two-car garages in the front of houses with broad expanses of pavement to accommodate two cars parking side-by-side.</p> <p>This has diminished the attractiveness of neighborhoods and fostered a car-oriented mind-set.</p> 
What is the Current Regulation?	<p>Current regulations say that means of ingress and egress for all required off-street parking shall remain unobstructed at all times. This is interpreted to be that tandem parking, one car behind another, is not</p>

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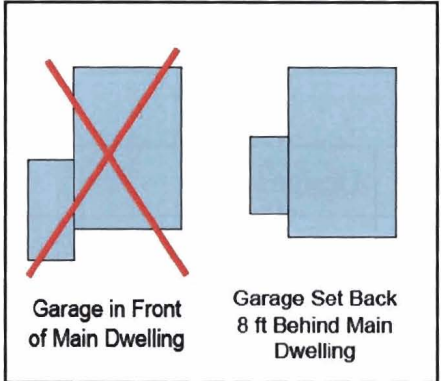
	allowed.
What is the Proposed Regulation?	<p>Clarify current regulations to allow tandem parking for single-family detached dwellings in the R-20, R-12, R-8, R-5, R-2-5, RA & RB zones.</p> 
Neighborhood Impact	Improve the appearance of the neighborhood by reducing the dominance of car parking in the front of dwellings.
Property Owner Impact	No SUP required for tandem parking. Provides an option to reduce the amount of paving in the front yard.
Staff Recommendation	Support. This provides a needed option for those who want to be more efficient in the way they address car parking. There is minimum negative impact and maximum positive impact from both the neighborhood and property owner perspective.

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**Require Attached Garages to be Set Back
From the Front Face of the Dwelling (D.5)**

General Category	Design - Bulk
<p>What is the Problem?</p>	<p>In contrast to traditional design, modern housing design often has the garage dominating the view of the front of the house. The result is the loss of focus on the design of an attractive house and the feeling that the garage is the most important design element.</p> <p>Current regulations do not allow for traditional building design that deemphasizes the garage.</p> <p>Attached garages can be located as prominently as the front building line, even though the main dwelling might be set back from this building line by 5 – 20 feet.</p> 
<p>What is the Current Regulation?</p>	<p>Current regulations allow attached garages to be on the same plane as the front building line or forward of the front plane of the main dwelling entrance.</p>
<p>What is the Proposed Regulation?</p>	<p>Reduce the prevalence and dominance of an attached garage, by requiring attached garages to be set back at least 8 feet from the front plane of the main entrance to the dwelling. This would apply only to single-family detached dwellings in the R-20, R-12, R-8, R-5, R-2-5,</p>

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	<p>RA and RB zones.</p>  <p>Garage in Front of Main Dwelling</p> <p>Garage Set Back 8 ft Behind Main Dwelling</p>
Neighborhood Impact	Enhances the neighborhood streetscape by reducing the dominance of attached garages.
Property Owner Impact	Requires the property owner to design an attached garage as a secondary element to the main residential use.
Staff Recommendation	Support. This provides a requirement to reduce the prominence of attached garages and foster a more neighborhood-friendly design.

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Require Attached Garages to be Side-Loaded (D.6.)

General Category	Design - Bulk
What is the Problem?	<p>In contrast to traditional design, modern housing design often has the garage dominating the view of the front of the house. The result is the loss of focus on the design of an attractive house and the feeling that the garage is the most important design element.</p> <p>Current regulations do not allow for traditional building design that deemphasizes the garage.</p> <p>Attached garages can be located as prominently as the same front building line as the main dwelling.</p>
What is the Current Regulation?	Current regulations allow attached garages to be built on the front building line with the garage doors/openings facing toward the street.
What is the Proposed Regulation?	Reduce the prevalence and dominance of an attached garage, by requiring attached garages to be side-loaded (i.e., have their garage doors/openings facing the side yard rather than the front yard). This would apply only to single-family detached dwellings with a minimum lot width of 65 ft in the R-20, R-12, and R-8 zones.
Neighborhood Impact	Enhances the neighborhood streetscape by reducing the dominance of attached garages.
Property Owner Impact	Requires the property owner to design an attached garage as a secondary element to the main residential use.
Staff Recommendation	Support. This provides a requirement to reduce the prominence of attached garages and foster a more neighborhood-friendly dwelling design.



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Permanently Adopt Interim Subdivision Regulation (E.1.)


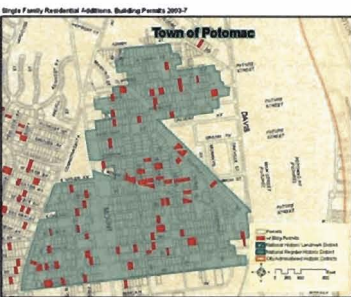
General Category	Design
What is the Problem?	<p>The subdivision regulation recognizes the importance of maintaining neighborhood character. Re-subdivided new lots must be of substantially the same character as other land within the original subdivision.</p> <p>The subdivision regulation seeks to maintain neighborhood integrity by restricting lots that would be so large, oddly shaped, or positioned to detract from a neighborhood's character.</p> <p>However, before the interim subdivision regulation was adopted in June 2006, it was not clear that neighborhood character should be looked at not only for the original subdivision pattern, but also for how the larger neighborhood has developed since then.</p> <p>The problem is that these 2006 changes are still an <u>interim</u> subdivision regulation change.</p>
What is the Current Regulation?	<p>Specifically, the interim regulation allows the "original subdivision", with which the new lots are to be compared, to be shown not only by the original plat documents, but also by amendments to them, as well as by historical development within the subdivision, in order to bring the original land division up to date with current platted and development conditions.</p> <p>The interim language also allows consideration of land beyond the original subdivision boundaries, provided it is "land in the same general location and zone as the original subdivision with the same features so as to be essentially similar to the original subdivision area." This language thus provides for a more general neighborhood consideration, where the boundaries of the original subdivision cut off pertinent but similar character-defining land areas.</p>
What is the Proposed Regulation?	<p>The interim regulation should be made permanent legislation.</p>
Neighborhood Impact	<p>Assurance that neighborhood character as to lot</p>

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	<p>configuration, lot area, and lot orientation is maintained when there is a proposed subdivision.</p> <p>The case that best demonstrates the usefulness of the new language involved the subdivision of a lot in Del Ray, where the owner intended to tear down a single-family four-square home built in 1912 to build a semi-detached structure. Although Del Ray was originally subdivided with 25 foot wide lots, which would allow semi-detached dwellings, the area around the subject property had developed over time with single family homes, combining the lots of the original subdivision. The prior subdivision regulations would have allowed the subdivision of the lot as the criteria required that a new subdivision be in character with the original subdivision. However, the new interim regulations require that new subdivisions be in character with how the subdivision has <i>developed over time</i>, which allowed for consideration that land for semi-detached dwellings would not be appropriate.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">   </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> Original Subdivision Developed Subdivision </div>
Property Owner Impact	Limits proposed subdivisions that are too large, oddly shaped, or out of character with the existing neighborhood.
Staff Recommendation	Support. The interim regulations should be made permanent so that future proposed subdivisions will be in character with the as-built neighborhood.

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Establish Overlay District (E.2.)


General Category	Design
What is the Problem?	<p>Homes are being demolished or renovated beyond recognition in certain areas of the City. The only way to slow down or limit such demolitions or renovations is through an overlay district. An Overlay District approach can be defined as a Historic District, Conservation District, or Design District. Other regulatory approaches can limit what is built and how it could look, but cannot address demolition.</p>
What is the Current Regulation?	<p>The City has a number of overlay districts that are used for different purposes. There are two Historic Districts (Old & Historic Alexandria, Parker Gray), two urban overlay districts (Old Town North, Mount Vernon Avenue), an urban retail zone (King Street), and an outdoor dining zone (King Street).</p> <p>The two existing historic districts are the closest to what would help solve the problem because they have incorporated a demolition process and procedure, but a new district would have to be created for a different geographical area.</p>
What is the Proposed Regulation?	<p>What is being proposed is a process to work with the relevant neighborhoods to determine whether the Rosemont and Town of Potomac, nationally-recognized historic districts, should become locally-regulated historic or conservation districts.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: flex-start;">   </div> <p>The purpose of an historic or conservation district is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide protection for historic or precious resources

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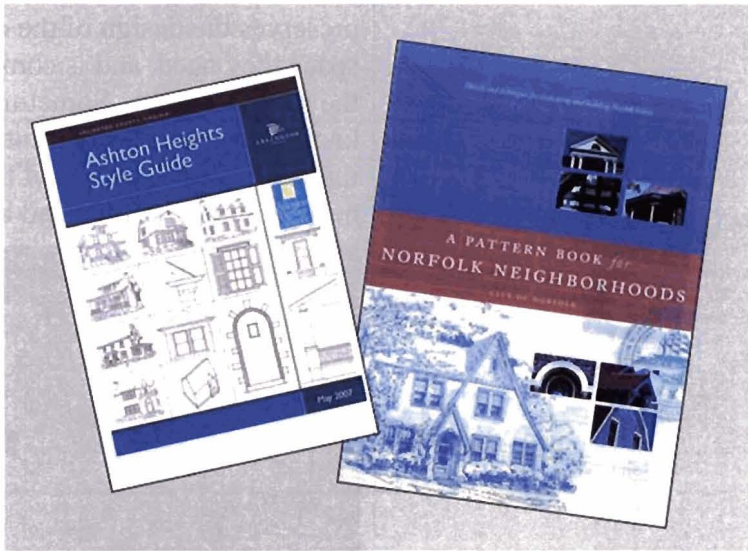
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve valuable neighborhood residences • Control design or additions or new construction <p>In broad outline the process would involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education & outreach to the community • Achieve neighborhood consensus to move ahead • Identify the specific area that warrants protection • Determine design standards to apply • Develop administrative procedures • Identify review body for appeals • Determine staff resource requirements • Prepare for and request approval of the district from the Planning Commission and City Council
Neighborhood Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a good way to protect threatened neighborhoods • Demolition/teardowns can be denied or delayed • There would be clear design standards to support preservation of historic or precious resources • More certainty about maintaining neighborhood character
Property Owner Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New construction, demolitions or additions may be limited by the standards of the district. • The process for obtaining approval for changes could be costly and time consuming. • Any proposed changes would receive scrutiny and review. • Property owner would receive guidance and advice about good and compatible design.
Staff Recommendation	<p>Support. The City should identify staff resources and begin the process of outreach to the communities of Rosemont & the Town of Potomac.</p>

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Create a Pattern Book (E.3.)

General Category	Design
<p>What is the Problem?</p>	<p>Not everyone is familiar with the architectural styles that exist in the City. New property owners and even existing property owners may not be aware of how to design a new house or to add on to their existing houses in a way that preserves the design of the original house, gives them the space they need, and is compatible with styles of homes in the neighborhood. Sometimes because of this lack of knowledge, homes are built or additions are constructed that clash with the style of the house and upset the neighborhood balance and harmony.</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Would a Pattern Book have helped?</p>
<p>What is the Current Regulation?</p>	<p>There is no current pattern book for the City. However, there are Design Guidelines for the historic properties located in the Old and Historic Alexandria District and the Parker Gray District.</p>
<p>What is the Proposed Regulation?</p>	<p>The City identify resources to hire a consultant to work with the community and staff to prepare a Citywide Pattern Book that would address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborhood character • Architectural styles & details • Guidelines for additions • Guidelines for new construction

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site & landscaping guidelines <p>A Citywide Pattern Book would provide useful information on the styles of houses in the neighborhood and provide guidance and context to homeowners, new residents, architects, and builders in constructing new houses in additions to existing homes.</p> <p>A pattern book is not a regulatory tool – it provides design guidance, a vision for the city’s neighborhoods and can help to unify the larger community.</p> 
Neighborhood Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can lead to a stronger sense of community & pride in the City’s residential resources • Can help to preserve existing neighborhood design even if there are proposed additions
Property Owner Impact	Provides guidance on residential design for new construction & additions. Property owners can choose to use the guidance or not.
Staff Recommendation	Support. A Citywide Pattern Book would be a valuable community resource, which would provide neighborhood context and architectural context for residential single-family new construction and additions.

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Consider Tree Preservation & Landscaping (E.4.)

General Category	Design
What is the Problem?	<p>Single-family infill projects often result in the removal of mature trees and landscaping, resulting in the loss of a major neighborhood asset.</p> <p>During the Infill Task Force tour in August 2007, members noted that the presence of new landscaping after construction was completed was able to hide many sins. Conversely, the lack of landscaping emphasized the design or size problems with some infill properties.</p>
What is the Current Regulation?	<p>There is no current regulation that covers the preservation of mature trees or requires landscaping after construction on single-family residential properties. For properties in the Resource Protection Areas of the Chesapeake Bay shoreline, some planting is required.</p>
What is the Proposed Regulation?	<p>A tree preservation and landscaping plan will be required for all construction on single-family detached dwelling properties that require a grading plan. A grading plan usually applies to teardowns/new construction or major additions.</p> <p>A tree preservation and landscaping plan will show existing trees and landscaping, noting existing trees and landscaping to be retained and the trees and plant material to be removed. It will also show the location and coverage of replacement trees and landscaping.</p>
Neighborhood Impact	<p>More mature trees will be retained in the neighborhood, enhancing and supporting neighborhood character. If trees must be removed, higher quality replacements will be required.</p>

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Property Owner Impact	There will be an additional requirement to submit a tree preservation and landscaping plan when a grading plan is required. This will mean additional cost and time to receive approvals.
Staff Recommendation	Support. Preservation of existing mature trees and the provision of landscaping can enhance and support neighborhood character.

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Require a Special Review Process for Substandard Lots (E.5.)

General Category	Design
<p>What is the Problem?</p>	<p>About one-fourth of existing single-family detached houses in the City are built on substandard lots. The houses are considered to be legally non-complying structures and property owners can continue to live in them and modify them in accordance with standard bulk, height and setback regulations.</p> <div data-bbox="665 761 1400 1336"> <p style="text-align: center;">Developed Substandard Single-Family Residential Lots</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Legend ■ Substandard ■ Zoning</p> </div>
	<p>Owners of vacant substandard lots cannot build on their lots unless they receive approval of an SUP. However, owners of substandard lots with houses on them can demolish the existing house and build a new one without going through an SUP process.</p> <p>The issue is fairness. Should owners who want to replace their existing houses on single-family substandard lots go through a special review process in the same way that owners of vacant substandard lots must?</p>
<p>What is the Current Regulation?</p>	<p>Owners of vacant substandard lots must apply for an SUP to build a single-family dwelling on the lot.</p> <p>Owners with an existing dwelling may demolish the dwelling and build a new dwelling on the substandard lot with only a building permit and would not need to apply</p>

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	for an SUP.
What is the Proposed Regulation?	Require an owner of an existing dwelling on a substandard lot to go through a special review process (either an administrative process or an SUP) to be able to demolish the existing dwelling and build a new dwelling.
Neighborhood Impact	There would be additional criteria to control bulk, height, and setbacks to better conform to the neighborhood character.
Property Owner Impact	Additional time and costs will be incurred to go through a special review process. There would also be the uncertainty about whether the proposed project would be modified significantly.
Staff Recommendation	Not Support. Staff feels that with the approval of the other infill changes recommended by staff, there is no need for a special review for these properties. In the last three years, only two properties were teardowns on substandard lots.

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 4, 2008

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL
THE HONORABLE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING
COMMISSION

THROUGH: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

FROM: FAROLL HAMER, DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND
ZONING

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES FOR PLANNING PROJECTS
TO BE UNDERTAKEN AS PART OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
AND ZONING'S FY 2008 AND FY 2009 WORK PROGRAM

ISSUE: Consideration of Council priorities for planning projects to be undertaken as part of the Department of Planning and Zoning's FY2008 and FY2009 work program.

RECOMMENDATION: That Council confirm the following as planning priorities:

Major Plans FY2008-2009:

- Complete the Landmark Van Dorn Plan, Fall/Winter 2008
- Complete the Braddock East Plan, Fall/Winter 2008
- Complete a portion of the Wayfinding Program (King Street, Old Town and/or Gateway areas)
- Begin work on the Waterfront Plan, January 2009

Major Plans FY2009 and Beyond:

- Beauregard Corridor
- Eisenhower West
- Potomac Yard/Route 1
- Duke Street Corridor

Implementation:

- Begin implementation of the Braddock Metro Neighborhood Plan, Braddock East Plan and Landmark/Van Dorn Plan, Winter 2008/Spring 2009
- Continue with implementation of other adopted Plans (Arlandria, Mount Vernon, Eisenhower East, Hunting Creek, King Street), Ongoing

Special Studies and Projects:

- Complete the Infill Study, Summer 2008
- Complete Small Business SUP changes, Summer 2008
- Complete work on other special studies and projects (100 Year-Old Building Survey, Washington Street Streetscape Guidelines, Green Buildings, Parker Gray Nomination)

DISCUSSION: At the joint work session with the Planning Commission and City Council in January 2008, there was discussion about program priorities for the Department of Planning and Zoning. Planning staff indicated that there are adequate resources at present to work on two major plans concurrently as well as work on several special studies and projects. Additional staff resources would be needed to include a third major plan in the work program and to dedicate significant resources to implementation efforts.

While the Department's proposed work program shows three major plans (Landmark/Van Dorn, Braddock East and Wayfinding) during the remainder of FY 2008 and into FY 2009, the schedule for the Wayfinding Plan is hampered by current staffing levels. The schedule to begin new plans, such as the Waterfront, will depend on having additional staff resources available as well as completing current plans.

Staff is aware of Council's desire to begin the Waterfront Planning process as soon as possible. The Department's goal is to begin the Waterfront Plan in January, upon completion of the Landmark/Van Dorn Plan and Braddock East Plan. Preliminary internal staff work can begin in the fall, but the kickoff meeting that initiates the Plan should not begin until Planning staff can devote full-time resources to the effort.

The Department's proposed work program for 2009 and beyond includes several major planning efforts: the Eisenhower West Plan, with associated transportation and transit issues; review/revision of the Potomac Yard Plan, possibly in combination with Route 1 streetscape and related issues; preparation of a Beauregard Corridor Plan, with associated housing issues; and a Duke Street Corridor Plan.

With anticipated changes in the development scheme for Potomac Yard and the desire to look at the viability of a Metrostation there, it will be necessary to review the current Potomac Yard Plan and possibly recommend changes to the location, density and mix of uses from what was previously approved. This will be a significant planning effort, which should be done in a comprehensive manner, involving much community outreach and participation. It is expected that this effort will take from 9 to 15 months to complete. Planning for this area is a high priority because it is a designated growth area with immediate development pressure.

The Beauregard Corridor is another area that is experiencing fairly intense development pressure. Redevelopment of existing housing in this area could severely impact the supply of workforce housing in the City. It is important for the City to plan ahead of major redevelopment here so that housing, open space and other City priorities can be considered in the context of an overall plan and not just as part of a development proposal.

Eisenhower West and the Duke Street Corridor are two other areas that will need to be addressed through comprehensive planning efforts. While we have identified Eisenhower West more recently as an area for planning in the shorter term, we need to be flexible in our schedule for this area. The Eisenhower West area is not experiencing the same level of development pressure as other areas such as Potomac Yard and the Beauregard Corridor.

Support/Partnership with other Departments on Major Planning Related Projects:

It is anticipated that Planning staff will be called upon to partner with and support other departments in the City on major planning projects. Two of the most prominent of these projects involve planning for future infrastructure needs in the City, and the possible master planning for future housing needs. Staff will work with T&ES and the Office of Housing in these efforts.

Infrastructure Planning:

A City-wide infrastructure plan for sanitary sewer and storm drain systems is needed to address known deficiencies, and to ensure that new development can occur in an orderly pattern that implements approved small area plans and the City's growth priorities. Much of the data collection and model development are funded by the current CIP, and will begin this year. However, funding will need to be identified for the remaining scope of this project. T&ES will be the lead department, with considerable support and guidance from Planning staff, particularly on land use issues.

Housing:

It is anticipated that the Affordable Housing Initiative Work Group (AHIWG) will recommend a City-wide Housing Master Plan. Planning staff will work with the City's Housing Office to provide guidance and support on land use, density bonus, zoning, parking, and other related planning and design issues. Funding for this Master Plan development will need to be identified. This is in addition to the planned ARHA Strategic Plan which is funded and will be initiated before the end of FY 2008.

In summary, with City Council and Planning Commission concurrence, staff will initiate the Waterfront Plan in early 2009, upon completion of the Landmark/Van Dorn and Braddock East Plans. Staff proposes to initiate planning for the Beauregard Corridor Plan in spring of 2009, and upon completion of the initial Wayfinding Plan, would initiate planning for a major planning area of the City (Eisenhower West, Potomac Yard, or the Duke Street Corridor). The Department's Work Program would also be able to accommodate several special studies or

projects at the direction of the City Manager and City Council, as we have done in the past with projects like the Infill and Small Business Studies.

ATTACHMENT: Planning Department Proposed Work Program FY 2009 chart

STAFF:

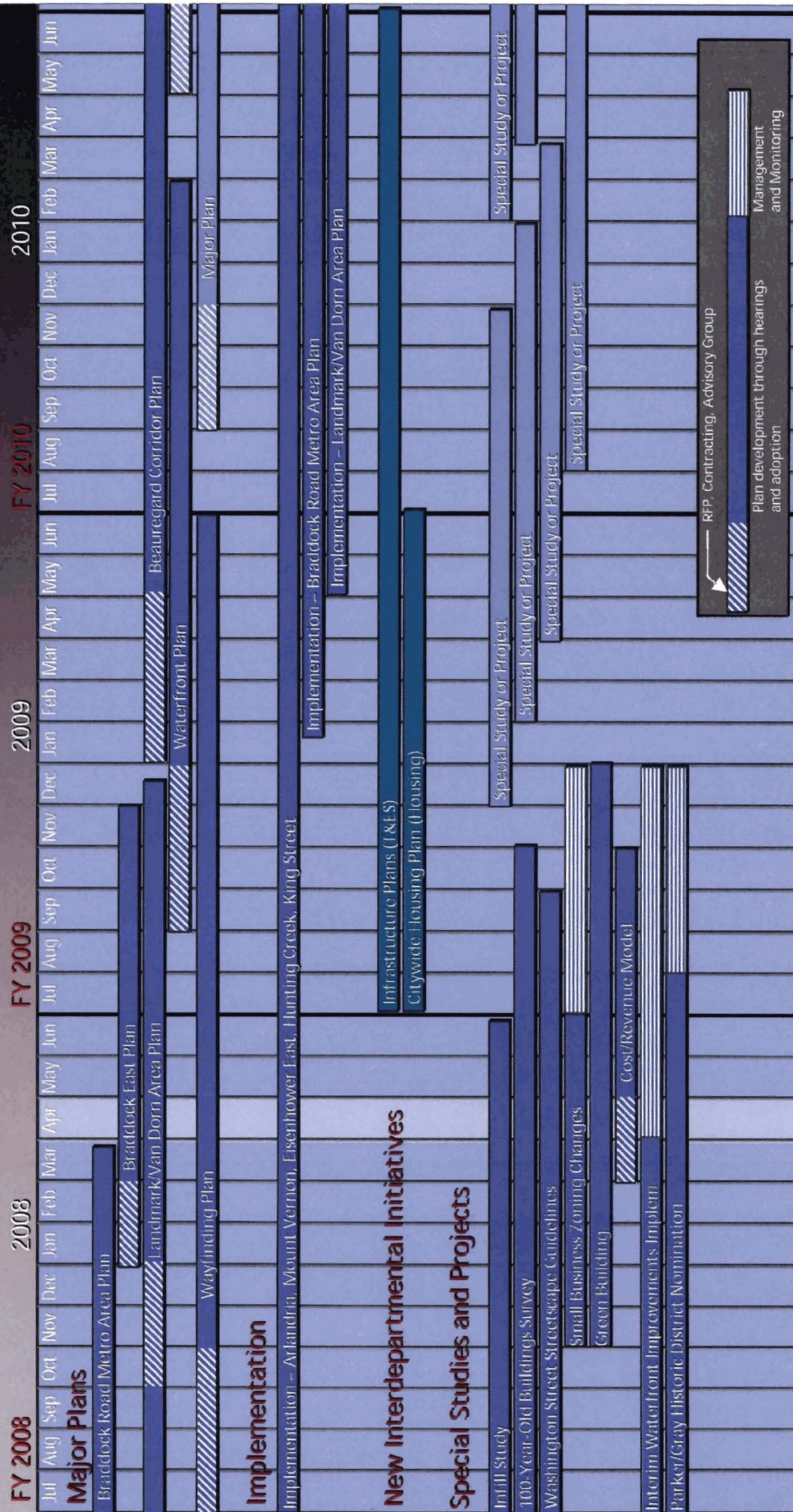
Faroll Hamer, Director, Planning and Zoning

Rich Josephson, Deputy Director, Planning and Zoning

Kathleen Beeton, Division Chief, Neighborhood Planning, Planning and Zoning

Jeff Farner, Division Chief, Development, Planning and Zoning

Proposed Work Program FY 2009



WS
4-8-08

RESIDENTIAL INFILL DEVELOPMENT

Presentation

- Introduction
- Process
- Infill Issues
- Scope of Recommendations
- Preliminary Recommendations



City Council / Planning Commission / Infill Task Force Worksession

April 8, 2008

Alexandria

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Infill Task Force - Mission

- 1) Study the impact of large new housing construction and major residential additions in existing, established single-family neighborhoods;
- 2) Analyze existing City regulations that pertain to limiting infill impacts and make recommendations to the Planning Commission and City Council for any regulatory changes;
- 3) Keep the public informed about the study, briefing the community at large on the progress of the infill study, and briefing the Planning Commission and City Council on their analysis and recommendations.

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Infill Task Force - Process

- First met in August 2007 to establish agenda



- Field trip in Sep 2007 to assess the impact of Infill problems in the City

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Infill Task Force - Process

- Held a community forum Nov 2007 – another scheduled for May 1, 2008



- Reviewed existing City regulations & assessed other tools available
- Focused on specific Infill problems & developed preliminary recommendations

4

The Infill Issue

- Infill construction can be consistent with current zoning regulations but not with the neighborhood context.



5

Identified Infill Problems

- Height & bulk of Infill projects
- Protection of historic or precious resources – need to address demolition issues
- Neighborhood compatibility
- Visual impact of front garages, vehicle parking, paving and driveways
- Teardowns & new construction on substandard lots
- Clarify some zoning provisions

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Infill Task Force – Scope of Recommendations

- Preliminary—Will be refining recommendations in next couple of months before final recommendations appear before Planning Commission and City Council in June
- Address single-family developments in residential zones only (R-20, R-12, R-8, R-5, R-2-5, RB and RA)
- Approach of recommending tools that are practical and effective without radical changes. Address most egregious cases.

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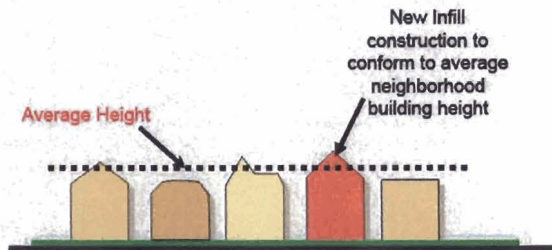
Preliminary Recommendations

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Control Type: *Height*

- A1a: Establish maximum height on the neighborhood block based on the average existing height on the block plus 20%

In blocks with mostly one-story houses, if the calculated height is less than 25 ft, the owner can build up to 25 ft.

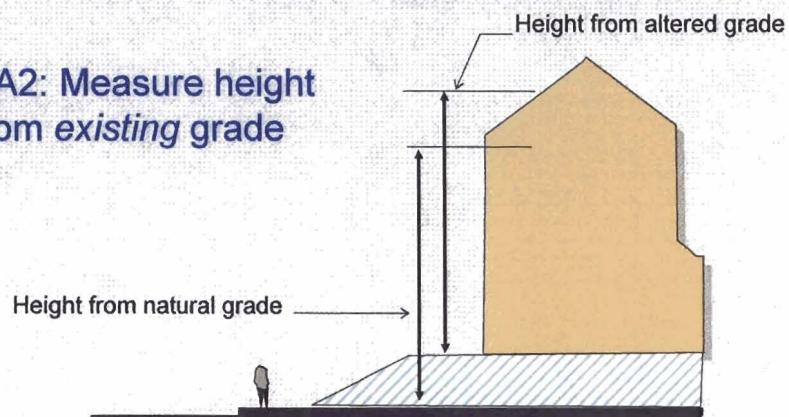


Preliminary Recommendations of Infill Task Force

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Control Type: *Height*

- A2: Measure height from *existing* grade

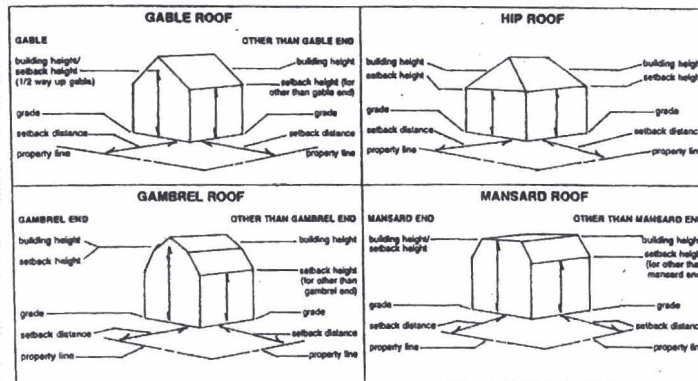


Preliminary Recommendations of Infill Task Force

10

Control Type: *Height*

- A3: Identify height requirements for all roof types

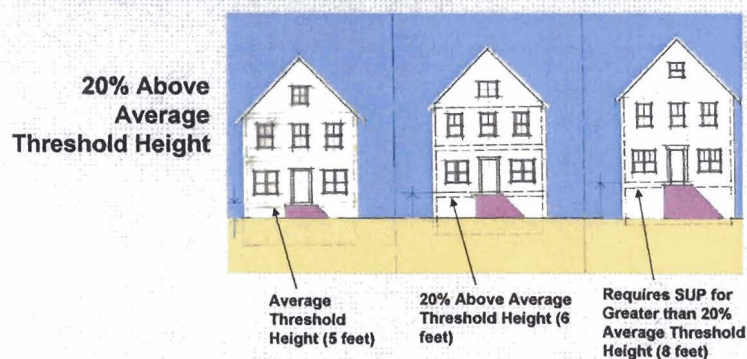


Preliminary Recommendations of Infill Task Force

11

Control Type: *Height*

- A4: Permanently adopt interim threshold height requirements – requires that the front door threshold be less than 20% higher than the average on the block

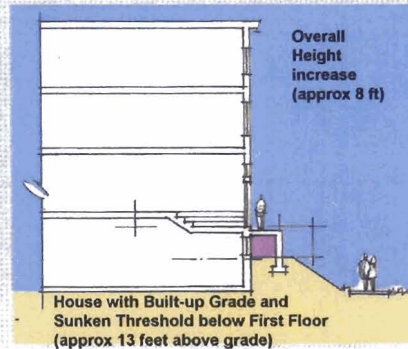
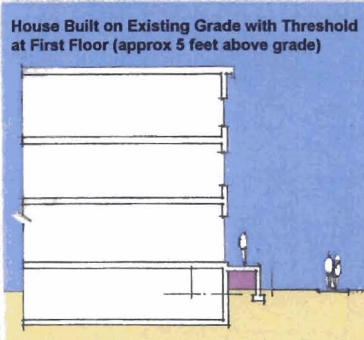


Preliminary Recommendations of Infill Task Force

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Control Type: *Height*

The height from the existing grade to the top of the threshold or first finished floor.

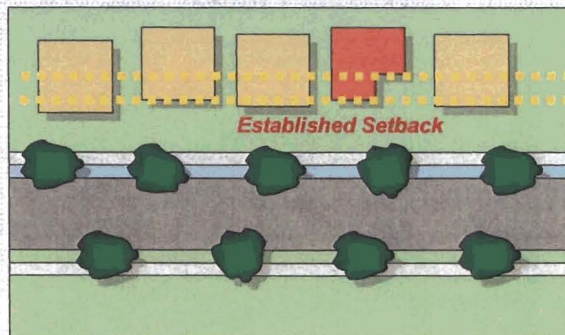


Preliminary Recommendations of Infill Task Force

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Control Type: *Setbacks*

- B1: Clarify front setback requirements to allow a new dwelling to meet the average setback of existing houses even though the average line is in front of the required setback line



Preliminary Recommendations of Infill Task Force

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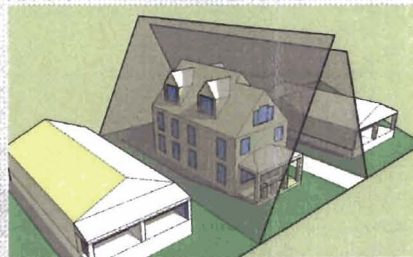
Control Type: *Setbacks*

- B2: Consider changing the side setback ratio in the R-5 and R-2-5 zones to provide more space between houses on narrow lots (and maybe reduce height near a neighbor).

(Further staff analysis presented at the April meeting)



1:3 Setback Ratio



1:2 Setback Ratio

Preliminary Recommendations of Infill Task Force

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Control Type: *Bulk*

- C1: Clarify Floor Area definition to reduce excessive deductions for FAR purposes
 - Eliminate 7'6" language (projects that maximize FAR take advantage of this language)
 - Continue to exclude basements, stairs, HVAC areas
 - Exclude attic area with less than 5 ft of ceiling height
 - Exclude open front porches (a design incentive)
 - Exclude detached garages in the rear yard (a design incentive)

Preliminary Recommendations of Infill Task Force

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Control Type: *Design-Bulk*

- D1: Encourage open front porches by excluding them from FAR calculations



Preliminary Recommendations of Infill Task Force

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Control Type: *Design-Bulk*

Incentives for Detached Garages

- E1: Encourage modest-scale detached garages in the rear yard by excluding them from FAR & current required setbacks



House with a Rear Yard Two-Car Garage



House with a Rear Yard One-Car Garage

Preliminary Recommendations of Infill Task Force

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Control Type: *Design-Bulk*

Incentives for Detached Garages

- D3: Allow driveway in required yards for access to detached garages in the rear yard



Preliminary Recommendations of Infill Task Force

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Control Type: *Design-Bulk*

- D4: Allow tandem parking without an SUP



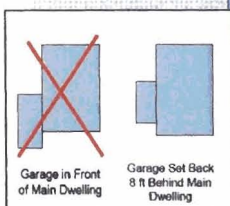
Preliminary Recommendations of Infill Task Force

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Control Type: *Design-Bulk*

Regulations for Attached Garages

- D5: Require attached garages to be set back 8 ft from the front face of the house
- D6: Require attached garages to be side-loaded when lots are 65 ft wide or greater



For lots 65 ft or wider,
require side-loaded garage

Preliminary Recommendations of Infill Task Force

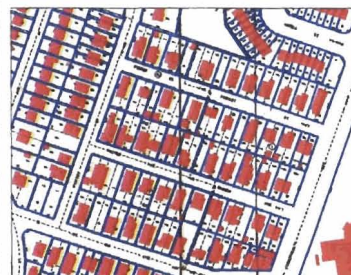
21

Control Type: *Design*

- E1: Permanently adopt interim subdivision regulations to ensure that the current “as-built” neighborhood character is considered during decisions on an application



Original Subdivision



Developed Neighborhood

Preliminary Recommendations of Infill Task Force

22

Control Type: *Design*

- E2: Encourage the establishment of overlay districts (historic or conservation districts) to protect areas experiencing significant pressure (e.g., Rosemont, Town of Potomac) – this would be a long-term effort involving the communities



Preliminary Recommendations of Infill Task Force

23

Control Type: *Design*

- E3: Create a Citywide pattern book to guide owners toward sensitive additions or new construction



- E4: Require a tree preservation and landscaping plan for Infill projects that are teardowns/new construction or major additions

Preliminary Recommendations of Infill Task Force

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Control Type: *Design*

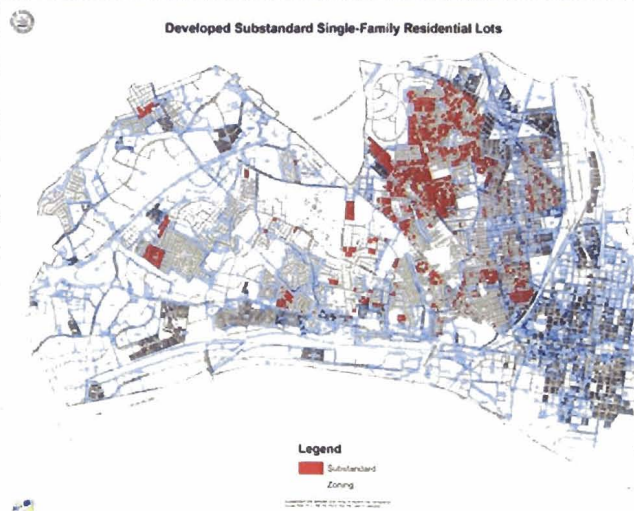
- E5: Require owners of existing dwellings on substandard lots to go through an SUP process before being able to tear down the existing dwelling and build a new house



Preliminary Recommendations of Infill Task Force

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Control Type: *Design*



Preliminary Recommendations of Infill Task Force

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