



LAND USE AND ZONING MEETING #1

July 6, 2015

1:30 pm to 3:30 pm

City of Grand Rapids Parking Services
50 Ottawa NW, 49503

WORKGROUP MEMBERS PRESENT: Sarah Abel, Janay Brower, Dotti Clune, Lamont Cole (Co-Chair), Sue Devries, Tanya Gonzalez, Nancy Haynes, Margo Johnson, Jim Jones, Tom Koetsier, Denavvia Mojet, Kristin Rahn-Tiemeyer, Brad Rosely, and Stephen Wooden

STAFF PRESENT: Erin Banchoff, Landon Bartley, Connie Bohatch, Johanna Schulte, Suzanne Schulz, and Kristin Turkelson

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS: Lamont Cole (Co-Chair) welcomed workgroup participants and facilitated introductions.

DOCUMENT REVIEW:

- a. Landon Bartley introduced Chapter 3 of the Master Plan -- Great Neighborhoods, the City of Grand Rapids Zoning Ordinance and relevant excerpts, density photos, and the Michigan Street Corridor Plan.
- b. Connie Bohatch introduced a Toolkit comprised of various housing strategies and policies. Ms. Bohatch explained it is a working document that can be added to as needed.
- c. Suzanne Schulz went over the 2002 Master Plan.
 - i. The Plan discusses neighborhood types, densities, transportation, walkability, and zoning among other topics.
 - ii. The perception, desirability, and reality of density development is changing.
 - iii. The goals and objectives will be useful in this process.
- d. Ms. Schulz discussed the Michigan Street Corridor Plan. The group discussed that addressing different housing types and models is a weakness of the current zoning policy
- e. Out-of-state and international rental property management companies were discussed.
- f. The group discussed the number of unrelated people that can live in a unit and how many units can exist in a building.

ZONING ORDINANCE DISCUSSION:

- a. The group discussed the enforceability of the limit on the number of unrelated individuals in a unit.
- b. Stephen Wooden discussed East Lansing's policy, which allows only two unrelated persons per unit. When the policy was passed, it pushed higher density developments outside of the center of the City.
- c. Jim Jones commented a one size fits all approach to housing is problematic in Grand Rapids. Mr. Jones explained Ann Arbor allows a different number of individuals in units based on the zoning district. Evanston, IL has a limit of two

- unrelated individuals per unit but it isn't enforced. Residents end up being unable to report problems because they do not want to lose their housing.
- d. Margo Johnson explained that in some neighborhoods, the higher density units push out affordable units for families because property owners can rent to several college students and make more money than renting to small families. This displaces families in typically single-family neighborhoods.
 - e. Nancy Haynes, with the Fair Housing Center of West Michigan, suggested the group look at the number of bedrooms and not the number of individuals.

TOOLKIT DISCUSSION:

- a. Landon Bartley led the group through a preliminary review of the Toolkit with each tool identified as relevant to the workgroup discussed.
- b. Accessible housing – There is nothing in the Grand Rapids Zoning Ordinance about accessibility. The group discussed Lafayette, CO's visitability ordinance. Ms. Schulz mentioned it may require amending the Uniform Building Code. The importance of aging-in-place was discussed. Other options for funding and incentivizing accessible housing were also discussed.
- c. Accessory Dwelling Units – The group discussed current restrictions on accessory dwelling units in Grand Rapids. Ms. Schulz explained the City receives only a couple requests per year and they are generally in the Heritage Hill area in carriage houses. The group discussed an ordinance adopted in Traverse City. The group discussed whether accessory dwelling units could be incentivized as an affordability tool. The group decided to continue to look at the tool.
- d. Co-Housing and Cooperative Housing – Mr. Jones explained there are differences between co-housing and cooperative housing and there are different types of cooperative housing. They are all organized living approaches to housing. Group housing is not currently recognized in Grand Rapids. Ms. Schulz stated there have been discussions about the how to distinguish between cooperative housing, fraternities and sororities, boarding houses, and halfway houses. The group discussed whether the Zoning Ordinance could incorporate shared spaces within for-profit rental properties and whether that would be an effective approach to increasing affordability.
- e. Community Land Trust (CLT) – the group considered looking into CLTs but decided it was more relevant to the Housing Finance workgroup. The group acknowledged there are sometimes problems with CLTs due to their lengthy terms and types of ownership.
- f. Demolition Policy – The group discussed the current demolition policy. Ms. Schulz acknowledged Grand Rapids' policy is one of the most restrictive in the state. Kristin Turkelson explained how homes fall into disrepair because of a lack of maintenance and then the City receives requests to demolish. The group considered whether there is a policy that could be implemented that would encourage and incentivize more maintenance before there are requests to demolish. The group discussed how the single-family rental certification program may reduce the amount of demolition requests over time.
- g. Height Limits and Bonuses – The group discussed how significant an affordable housing height bonus would be to make the projects work. Landon Bartley explained the Zoning Ordinance defines the amount of affordable housing (15%-30%) for a project to receive the mixed-income housing bonus (Chapter 61 Zoning Ordinance 6.17). The group discussed whether policies that require market-rate and affordable units to be of the same quality are inhibiting

affordability in some way. The group discussed how it may be problematic to allow differences between the units. The group decided to continue to explore this tool.

- h. Inclusionary Zoning – The group discussed the difference between bonuses and requirements. The group discussed the recent Supreme Court decision on disparate impact and how it may affect the legality of inclusionary zoning requirements despite the state law. Ms. Schulz stated that downtown Grand Rapids has 30% affordable units which exceeds some other community's goals for inclusionary zoning. The group talked about the success of the Montgomery County policy and Connie Bohatch mentioned the policy's success may be attributed to the fact that it is a county-wide policy. The group noted many affordable units are dedicated as permanent supportive housing and the demand for this type of housing exceeds the supply. The group decided to continue to look at this policy.
- i. Land Banking and Publicly-Owned Land – The group would like to continue to discuss how land banking might be used more effectively. The group would like to explore Traverse City's policy which does not have a right of first refusal for non-profit housing developers. This may be best reviewed by the Housing Finance workgroup.
- j. Occupancy Limits – The group discussed the consequences of policies that are based on unrelated persons in a unit, the number of people per square foot, or a limit on the total number of individuals in a unit. The group considered the relationship between these different policies and fair housing. The group decided to continue to look at different models especially in terms of fair housing and college student housing.
- k. Small homes, Tiny Homes, and Micro-Units – Ms. Schulz explained dimension requirements in the current zoning ordinance were originally meant to prevent single-wide mobile homes on City lots. Ms. Turkelson explained the City is receiving calls about how they can begin to break up lots and develop tiny home communities. The group distinguished between affordable and subsidized housing in terms of tiny homes. The group acknowledged there would need to be specific policy requirements for tiny homes.

PLANNING AND ANALYSIS:

The group began to prioritize different topics. Incentives and bonuses (i.e. height bonuses) for affordable housing and inclusionary zoning were discussed as important topics. The group acknowledged some topics will be easier to tackle than others. The demolition policy and land banking were mentioned as being lower-priority tools for discussion.

Problems accessing and using the collaboration site were directed to Johanna Schulte (jschulte@grcity.us).

Next meeting: July 20, 2015 from 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm