



## **Land Use and Zoning Meeting #4 Notes**

August 17, 2015  
1:30 pm to 3:30 pm  
City of Grand Rapids Parking Services  
50 Ottawa Avenue NW

**WORKGROUP MEMBERS PRESENT:** Sarah Abel, Pamela Benjamin, Janay Brower, Dotti Clune, Lamont Cole (Co-Chair), Sue DeVries, Nancy Haynes, Jim Jones, Ruth Kelly, Lee Nelson Weber (Co-Chair), Julie Niemchick, Kristin Rahn-Tiemeyer, Margo Johnson, Denavvia Mojet, Jim Talen, Victor Vasquez, and Stephen Wooden.

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

Notes from the August 3, 2015 meeting were reviewed.

Landon Bartley introduced the inclusionary zoning alternative policy ideas developed by staff. Suzanne Schulz explained the City Attorneys have stated the City cannot pass inclusionary zoning requirements but there may be room to explore incentive programs. The group discussed the time it would take to make any changes to state law on inclusionary zoning given the political climate.

### **PREVIOUS GOALS AND STRATEGIES:**

The group reviewed the goals from the Master Plan and the Michigan Street Corridor Plan. They considered which tools and strategies would most accurately address each goal. The group considered prioritizing the goals based on the tools. Planning Department staff provided a matrix which highlighted where the tools overlap with the group's goals.

The group focused on the following goals:

- Provide choice of neighborhood types
- Promote range of housing choices
- Encourage racial, ethnic, and income diversity
- Encourage a diversity of uses
- Promote a broad range of high quality housing choices

Height and density bonuses were discussed. Staff provided an overview of the history of ground floor retail bonuses. Ms. Schulz explained the City has considered removing that incentive since most developers are already doing it. Instead, she proposed, there could be another incentive put in place that is not already being done.

### **PARKING REQUIREMENTS AND WAIVERS:**

Janay Brower mentioned there are other cities that have removed parking requirements for smaller developments. Ms. Schulz explained she is able to waive half of the requirements of a development if it provides access to another mode of transportation and the Planning Commission has the ability to waive 100 percent of the requirement. The group discussed the banks requiring parking in order for a project to receive financing.

Lee Nelson Weber stated the ability to waive parking requirements affects the interests of neighborhoods. Ms. Schulz responded parking requirements can only be fully waived by the Planning Commission for that reason. Sue DeVries asked whether the City keeps track of where they waive the requirement and any complaints that come in. Ms. Schulz responded the Planning Department has anecdotal information on the effects of parking waivers.

Stephen Wooden proposed instead of following the recommendation in the GR Forward Draft Plan to remove the parking requirement downtown for all new construction, the parking requirement could be waived on a case by case basis to incentivize affordable housing or another incentive. Lee Nelson Weber questioned whether this strategy would be used in neighborhoods as well. Ms. Schulz explained the Planning Commission must consider neighborhood detriment when deciding on parking waivers. Mr. Wooden proposed the parking waivers be used as an incentive only downtown because there are other transit options. Sarah Abel commented the tool could be used in both areas. Ms. Schulz suggested the Planning Commission be unable to waive 100 percent of the parking requirements and instead require that a developer meet at least one of the required alternatives. The group discussed parking requirements as being very important to developers which would make it an effective incentive. Kristin Turkelson stated affordable housing not located near transit may not be actually affordable anyway. The group decided parking requirements is a tool which could be used if it balances the competing interests.

#### **CODE ENFORCEMENT:**

The group discussed code enforcement as a tool. Connie Bohatch explained code enforcement of single-family homes used to be complaint based but now the department does proactive rental inspections. The group discussed the difficulties that arise when attempting to enforce occupancy limits. Ms. Schulz commented the recommendations from this group can identify code enforcement as a tool to preserve and provide safe housing options. Lee Nelson Weber suggested the recommendations reiterate the value of code enforcement. Ms. DeVries proposed the recommendations also address the enforcement of the code in single-family owner-occupied homes.

#### **CO-HOUSING AND COOPERATIVE HOUSING:**

Landon Bartley revisited the group's conversation about co-housing and cooperative housing. He explained the Zoning Ordinance does not define those terms and proposed the group consider whether adding definitions was sufficient. Jim Jones explained there are different kinds of cooperative housing. He explained Madison WI, a college town, wanted to distinguish between cooperatives and fraternities/sororities/college housing. Mr. Jones explained some communities define every different kind of cooperative but that approach may not be as

important in Grand Rapids. The group discussed whether it could assist in aging-in-place. Mr. Jones stated it could address that issue but emphasized there is also significant demand from millennials. The group discussed the difference between co-housing and cooperative housing. Lee Nelson Weber asked what the group wanted to do with this tool given that it does not meet the most goals compared to the other tools. Ms. Schulz stated it has come up in the City Planning Department. Kristin Turkelson stated making an explicit definition would make it easier to distinguish between cooperatives and fraternities. Ms. Turkelson explained currently the sharing of kitchens and amenities can be allowed under variances, but noted if this housing type is one the City should be encouraging, it would be more effective to handle it differently. Ms. Schulz suggested it could be a Special Land Use which allows for public input and Planning Commission review. Jim Jones mentioned the Planning Commission approval process can prevent fraternities from forming what looks like a cooperative on paper.

**PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The group reviewed the proposed recommendations document.

Accessible housing:

The group decided to develop an incentive to develop type B accessible units.

Accessory Dwelling Units:

The group decided to continue to treat them as a Special Land Use. The group decided not to reduce the fees but to remove the 12 month owner-occupancy requirement.

Demolition Policy:

The group decided to leave the demolition policy as it is.

Height Limits and Bonuses:

Ms. Schulz clarified the minimum lot size only applies to two-unit dwellings so it should be its own box.

The group discussed the missing middle as the missing available units affordable for middle-income households.

Landon Bartley explained the policy would be complicated because it would require access to continuous data. The group discussed the political complexity of promoting a policy which desegregates based on income and housing types. Ms. Schulz said staff will continue to look at creating a policy that could do it effectively. She explained the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) model and how it might play a role in a proposed policy. Mr. Bartley explained the overlay district idea which would loosen zoning requirements to incentivize development in certain areas. For example, if a neighborhood has not seen much reinvestment or market rate development, market rate developments of any type could be made by right as long as the design fits in with character of the neighborhood. The group decided to change the name to inclusionary housing or inclusionary incentives to capture what these policies would creating.

Land Banking:

The group decided to refer this conversation to the Housing Finance workgroup.

Connie explained all of the co-chairs and staff will meet in a few weeks to further develop the recommendations.

Parking Requirements:

The group decided to add parking requirements to their list of recommendations.

Occupancy limits:

The group decided not to change the occupancy limits but noted they could be enforced better.

Micro-units:

The group decided to define and incentivize micro units in the ordinance.

Tiny Houses:

The group decided to allow tiny houses as a Special Land Use.