



Planning Commission Infill Subcommittee

Minutes

Monday, May 23, 2005 at 5:30PM
Copper Room – 600 S. Alvernon Way
Tucson, AZ

Members Present: Shannon McBride-Olson, Thomas Sayler-Brown, and Dan Williams.

Members Absent: Anne Lawrence, Sami Hamed

Staff Present: Andrew Singelakis, Sarah More, Rafael Sebba, John Beall, Michael McCrory, Craig Gross.

Invited Guests Present: Tom Doucette, Mike Grassinger, Bonnie Poulos, and Warren Thompson

Guests Present: Tina Lee, Lori Lusting, Ruth Beeker, Tracey Williams, Marilyn Robinson, Beryl Backer, Linda Drew; Cheryl McCoy, April Ortiz, Janet Marcus, Jill Bielawsle, Lisa Yanagihashi, Jay McCall, Brad Tatham, German Quiroga.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Andrew Singelakis opened the meeting at 7:35PM

II. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Motion was made by Williams, seconded by McBride-Olsen to select Sayler-Brown as Chair of the Subcommittee. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion was made by Sayler-Brown, seconded McBride-Olsen to select Williams as Vice-Chair of the Subcommittee. The motion passed unanimously.

III. APPROVAL OF APRIL MINUTES

Motion was made by Williams, seconded by McBride-Olsen to approve the minutes of the April 2005 meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. UPDATE ON NOTICE REVISIONS

It was the consensus of the subcommittee and members of the audience who were present that the revised LDO notice was clear and well written. Singelakis will talk with DSD to see which notice will be revised next.

V. PANNEL DISCUSSION ON RESIDENTIAL CLUSTER PROJECT

Sarah More, Department of Urban Planning and Design provided an overview of the history of the RCP and how it has been applied. The RCP essentially allows flexibility for lot size and setbacks and for the establishment of common area in subdivisions. One of the issues in its application has been its use in developing areas versus established areas of the City. The RCP requires a standard setback around the edge of the property. Providing flexibility for design compatibility is a goal of the RPC. Density bonuses are enabled, however not many projects utilize this incentive. Originally density bonuses were to be provided in areas where higher density is encouraged such as on bus routes or locations near schools with falling enrollment. In exchange for the bonus, the applicant is expected to provide pocket-parks, recreational amenities, bus stops, dedication of ROW, drought tolerant landscaping. Under the RPC there is no minimum lot size, and buildings within developments must be set back at least 3' from interior property lines, and open space/common areas must be provided.

Bonnie Poulos, representing the Neighborhood Infill Coalition, provided the neighborhood perspective on the now 20 year old RCP. While the goals of the ordinance are desirable, there are many issues associated with its implementation. Some of the major concerns/issues include:

- Neighbors are notified of pending applications but there is no opportunity for input.
- While intended to be a mechanism to obtain open space, the RPC is perceived to simply be a way to increase the density beyond what is allowed in the underlying zone.
- The open space that is preserved is often not usable space, and includes detention basins, and required setbacks.
- The impacts on surrounding development are not considered.
- The provision does not consider consistency with existing development.
- Impacts of the development on parking, traffic, heat associated with excessive pavement, and views are not considered.
- The RCPs should not result in negative impacts.
- Density bonus should be eliminated – should be a rezoning.
- RCPs should not be used in combination with variances, DDOs or other waivers.
- The development should have to comply with more than 1 purpose of the RCP.
- Energy efficiency in existing neighborhoods should not compromise design integrity.
- RCPs should be used in conjunction with design guidelines.
- Neighborhood and area plans should be used in determining the design of the project.
- A minimum lot size requirement is needed, but unclear as to what that lot size should be.
- Privacy of adjacent properties should be a factor in design.
- If an RCP is granted that property should not be allowed to be further subdivided.
- Barrier free accessibility should be provided throughout the project.
- Maintenance requirements for landscaping should be provided.
- There should be no reduction of standard setbacks from adjacent properties without owner's consent.
- There should be different requirements for an infill RCP vs. one involving open land.

- Flexibility should be provided for pavement materials.

Warren Thompson, an engineer who designs RPC subdivisions, has also been involved with conventional subdivision design. He stressed that there is no defined lot size for an RCP, and that the density is governed by the underlying zoning. Minimum setbacks are 3 foot from a property line, so that buildings are placed at least 6 feet apart, which is based on building code requirements. The perimeter setback is based upon building height, and is greater on scenic corridors. Detention and retention basins are governed by development standards.

Tom Doucette, Doucette Homes, representing SAHBA, said that the RCP encourages innovative types of development that would not otherwise be built. He emphasized that many neighbors object to the density of projects, but that the underlying zone determines the density. He stressed the following four points:

- More needs to be done with area and neighborhood plans, to guide development.
- Design guidelines would be helpful in the design of an RCP. However, the RCP should not be thrown out. Neighborhoods need to understand what they want, and often time, they will object to an RCP design, only to find later that a conventional subdivision will result in worse development.
- The RCP is not about added density. Most projects do not take advantage of the bonus density provisions.
- Products are changing in the marketplace: footprints are becoming smaller, and density is becoming higher.

Mike Grassinger, The Planning Center, stated that the RCPs have become the norm for residential subdivisions in Tucson. There needs to be two types of RCP, one for the developing fringe, and one for infill development. He showed the attendees layouts of a lower density subdivision where the cluster provisions were used to preserve a wash rather than make it part of several conventional lots and a more urban subdivision.

- The RCP is just one tool out of many and was never intended to work on its own.
- The RCP was intended to work with design guidelines and more detailed requirements.
- The RCP is not being applied as intended in the ordinance.
- Incentives need to be emphasized when considering changes to the RCP.

VI. CALL TO AUDIENCE ON RCP ISSUES

The following comments from members of the audience were heard:

- Definition of open space is needed.
- Natural and functional open space should be used.
- Subdivisions are already designed by the time DSD gets it.
- It makes no sense to have notification without input.
- A design review process for RCPs should be considered.
- Density bonuses do not work.

- Traffic mitigation should be considered.
- Neighborhoods don't want interconnectivity with adjacent neighborhoods and the result is an inward looking development that is not integrated with the neighborhood.
- Concurrency provisions should be considered.
- A review at the conceptual level, prior to engineering drawings, would be effective.

VII. PLANNING COMMISSION DISCUSSION OF RCP/KEY ISSUES

VIII. CALL TO AUDIENCE ON OTHER CODE/INFILL ISSUES

IX. UPDATES/NEXT MEETING

Time did not permit for these agenda items at this meeting.

X. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30PM.