

Summary of GIID Sub-committee Work, 9/18/13

By Ruth Beeker, Member of the GIID Sub-committee

The Sub-committee met on May 28, June 17, July 1, July 22, and Sept. 9, each time for a minimum of one and one-half hours. Since the Streetcar Land Use Study was holding meetings on Mondays during the month of August, we did not meet then. One more meeting, to be a continuation of the Open Forum format, is scheduled for Sept. 23.

- I. Data-Gathering
 - A. Contents of IID Ordinance
 - B. Case Studies of Projects Utilizing the GIID
 - C. Field trip to areas included in GIID
 - D. Community input during Call-to-the-Audience and 1 Open Forum
- II. My Major Concerns to This Point
 - A. Neighborhoods with designations of Historic Preservation Zone or Neighborhood Preservation Zone want those specifications honored. The GIID overrides any other zoning at this time, allowing projects which would be incompatible within those zones. How can these areas be protected?
 - B. Projects range from small (an extension of a patio at Sky Bar on Fourth Ave.) to the very large (The District on Fifth Avenue). The impact which a GIID project has on the surrounding area, based on the total size of project, therefore, is enormously different. How can application procedures be tailored to acknowledge this diversity?
 - C. A GIID applicant is required to hold a neighborhood meeting, PDSD sends out public notice and comment forms; what is not clear is how any of the public comment received is used in decision-making prior to approval of the project. How can the procedures for approval be modified to insure a **meaningful** public process?
 - D. Since GIID allows modification up to, and in excess of, 25% of the amount permitted by the underlying zoning in most dimensions, the negative impact a GIID project can have on the surrounding area may far exceed that of any conventionally-zoned project. What minimal buffering standards are needed?
 - E. Group housing (university student housing) presents unique problems to the surrounding area. Where should such a project be located? Should the City require that the applicant submit an approved behavior management plan prior to being granted a CofO?
 - F. The City keeps adding layer over layer of special incentives over the same area. We heard about the DGRP (Downtown Gateway Redevelopment Plan) and the Streetcar Land Use Plan which apparently is also tied to the Downtown Links Overlay. In addition, there is Rio Nuevo and Maingate Overlay which may or may not have ideas incorporated which could be drawn upon when thinking of how to make revisions in the GIID. How does the City ever cut through the clutter to simplify, clarify and justify its land use options? What exactly is left to be in the GIID when all these other boundaries are established?

The GIID Sub-committee has received oral and written input from neighborhood representatives. Specifically, CoreBaNC, a coalition of 14 inner-city and mid-town neighborhoods; individual presidents of Armory Park and West University; and a resident of Feldman have been active participants. At the Sept. 9th Open Forum, representatives from MPA, SABHA and Keri Silvyn, a land use attorney, joined us; as far as I am aware, they did not submit any input in writing.

When on a fieldtrip of the GIID area, I saw why we are getting the input we are. Go into the N-S legs of the GIID and you find vacant, industrial or commercial-industrial sites with scant traces of housing. Come to the South and East areas which border the Downtown Core and you find predominant residential land use. Jim Mazzocco told us at the Sept. 9th meeting that it is this area which has generated all the inquiries for use of the IID. When we looked at the case studies of the applications to utilize the GIID, they clustered in this area. So, the City has the unfortunate situation that it created an ordinance which allows parameters to be exceeded by 25%, and more for the asking, being of greatest interest in the very area in which it creates the most impact on what is already on the ground.

In my mind, Mayor/Council asked the GIID sub-committee be formed to address points of conflict. I believe any revisions to the IID must give the most effective, predictable protection possible to these inner-city areas and must give the potential developers the most effective, predictable procedures possible. Based on what I heard, read and experienced on the sub-committee, I ask that the following revisions be among those made to the existing Infill Incentive District ordinance:

1. Remove HPZ and NPZ areas from the GIID

To get the HPZ or NPZ designation has been a major undertaking for these neighborhoods—that designation must be respected. Possible means to do this—declare that the HPZ-NPZ trumps any other zoning, or rework the boundaries of the IID to exclude these areas.

2. Differentiate GIID projects as MAJOR or MINOR

When reviewing the past proposed uses of the GIID, I found they ran the gamut from the intrusive District at Fifth Avenue to a patio extension of Sky Bar on Fourth Ave. Obviously one type of public engagement prior to building approval does not fit all. Establishing specific parameters to distinguish a MAJOR from a MINOR must be the result of an inclusive public deliberation, not an administrative decision. And, once specified, those definitions must not be open for staff interpretation.

3. Require a meaningful public process as part of any GIID application

MINOR PROJECT—the initial public notification should include a complete description of how this project is deviating from the normal UDC parameters and clearly state what agenda topics are open for discussion at this public meeting. Were PDSD to give applicants a form letter to complete, the chances of this meeting being informative and the public input being useful would be enhanced. Results of the public meeting submitted to PDSD should include a written

explanation of how the applicant is going to address concerns (if any) which were raised. Staff confirmation that the concerns have been addressed prior to giving final approval is needed.

MAJOR PROJECT—a Design Development Committee should be formed to work with the applicant from the start. (Note: this is **not** Design Review; it is Design Development.) Provide a Design Development Manual to address how this entire process works, including, but not limited to, what parties are to be represented, who provides the leadership, schedule framework, and elements to be addressed (such as traffic, noise, parking, view-shed, setbacks, landscaping, transitions, etc.) with criteria or general guiding principles for each. The content of this manual should be developed through a public process with inclusion of experienced stakeholders; it should be written in language which citizens can understand.

4. ***Meet or exceed minimum buffering standards on all GIID projects***

If a developer is being given the gift of major reduction of land use parameters over the underlying zoning, it behooves the City to insure that such development does not diminish property values or quality of life for those residents or business interests who were there first. Those citizens are losing the predictability of the underlying zoning which they had every reason to believe was inviolate. Requiring the project to be sufficiently buffered to lessen any negative impact on the surrounding properties is the least citizens should be able to expect as a payback. What constitutes a minimum acceptable buffer, considering, but not limited to distance, materials and appearance, must be determined by a citizen/developer committee and then codified to insure predictability.

5. ***Make group housing (student dormitories) a special MAJOR project category***

An in-depth discussion of what makes an appropriate site for this land use is needed. One condition, regardless of location, should be the submittal of a COT approved behavior/security management plan prior to receiving a Certificate of Occupancy.

6. ***Resolve overlapping special land use jurisdictions and policies***

How the IID, the Streetcar Study, the Downtown Links, Rio Nuevo, and, who knows how many other overlay designations, interface should be given priority in long and short range COT planning. Borrowing the Environmental Services' mantra: "Recycle, Reduce, Reuse" can only improve the City of Tucson's land use policies.