

Adams School Reuse Committee

Meeting Minutes – Thursday January 25, 2007, Cummings Center, 7:00pm

Committee Members: Dan T. Haley, Jr. and Matt Thayer Co-Chairs, Cythia Fitzgerald, Eric Stark. City Staff: Carrie Marsh, Urban Designer, Amy Grommes Pulaski, HCD Program Manager (note taker)

1. Review Meeting Minutes for January 21 and February 8, 2007

Due to the collapse of the City Hall computer server the meeting minutes were not available. Both sets of Meeting Minutes will be tabled to next meeting.

2. Review of the R-6 Design Standards

Carrie introduces information concerning cars per household memo from Mark Adelson dated July 28, 2003, Replacement Housing Code, and Incentives for Affordable Housing.

Carrie discusses R-6 Infill Development Design Principles and Standards. Building should contribute to and comprise the character-defining architectural features of the neighborhood. The following principles describe the design standards that are being reviewed by the Planning Board for design requirements for the R-6 zone.

Principle A: Overall Context. To make new buildings compatible with existing structures is by scale and form, principle facades, and how it is related to the street.

Principle B: Massing. The buildings size, volume scale shape should compliment surrounding structures, similar roof forms, and subsidiary roofs, roof pitch, façade articulation. This information is reviewed at the staff level, than is referred to planning board if there are any conflicts.

Principle C: Orientation to the street. Building façades and sense of public realm provide a sense of transition from home to street. This includes Entrances, visual privacy and with transition spaces.

Principle D: Proportion and Scale. Building proportions are to be complimentary to the neighborhood and human scaled including windows, fenestration, and porches.

Principle E: Balance. Façade elements should crate a sense of balance with symmetry. Areas of focus include window and door height, alignment and symmetrically.

Principle F: Articulation, visually interesting. Focus on articulation, window types, visual cohesion, delineation between floors, porches, main entrances, etc.

Principle G: Materials. Utilize appropriate building materials harmonious with character of neighborhood. This includes materials, façade design, chimneys, patios and plaza.

This information is still being reviewed by the planning board and will be presented at the next meeting next week. These standards are currently in place, but are currently being revised.

The committee opens the floor to questions.

Dick questions whether R-6 is the only zoning available for this site. Carrie then describes some of the characteristics of R-7 which is a lot less stringent.

Audience questions how green building materials will affect the material restrictions. Carrie responds that the city is in the process of adopting green guidelines but have yet to turn down a green building.

Eric questions who will review the standards and Carrie explains it depends on how this project is presented.

Cynthia questions whether we can divide the lots back to residential spots and sell those. Carrie and Eric discuss the possibility.

3. Non-profit Collaboration Models and Innovative Ownership Models

Nonprofit collaboration models allow for nonprofits to work together for shared benefits. A multi-service center, an incubator, or a foundation center allows non-profits to utilize shared space, increase visibility, lower overhead costs, and \ focus on what is being provided, rather than their own existence. These centers help to build capacity and stability for the non-profit sector. Local examples include The Peace and Justice Center on Pleasant Street, the Peoples Free Space on Cumberland Avenue and Fedco Seeds in Waterville.

A Consumer Cooperative, for example a food co-ops, is where the people who buy the food, own part of the food. This would be an example of what might go on to the Adams site. Rising Tide in Damiriscotta is a local example of a food co-op.

Amy presented an email from Saul Amety (sp?) of People Free Space about the fact that 5-10 groups in Portland have been talking about finding a co-op space. This group is calling itself “Building Collaborative”. The email included a number of links on collaborative non-profit spaces. It may be that children and youths could be involved and help to build community. There could be opportunity for cooperative housing. Having a space would allow cooperatives to have a space to sustain them.

The committee opens the floor to public comment on non-profit collaborative models.

The question was raised as to how the Building Collaborative would develop, own and manage the space. The answer was that the Building Collaborative would own the real estate, and that the tenants would become cooperative in the running of that place.

The question was raised if non-profits being pushed out? Or they just can't afford to pay as much as developers? The Company of Girls is an example of a non-profit being pushed out.

The comment was made that socially this makes sense, but it needs to sustain itself economically.

The question was raised as to what the zoning would need to be for the Building Collaborative model.

The comment was made that this is a City property – what is the bottom line – what does the City need to get out of this? What needs to be said to the City so that the City realizes that a non-profit center is a desirable use. Amy responds that another question to answer is how to make the construction of the buildings profitable for a developer. What ever is built needs to be able to pay for itself because if it doesn't make economic sense that a developer will not build it. This introduces more questions from the audience.

Does it generate income for the City? Can it sustain itself? A mix of uses might allow for income generating uses and non-profit uses. It could be a mix of developers that allow it to be different uses and different designs – not all the same design for the whole site.

It might be a citizen based initiative where citizens could have a say in the non-profits.

The question was raised as to whether the building needs to be knocked down? There is an impact to the environment to tear it down. The answer was that it might cost more to upgrade the building to meet the code.

The question was raised as to how much square footage might be utilized by the organizations in Building Collaborative. This information is not known.

Amy begins the discussion of Co-housing

Co-housing is a co-operative for housing. The people living in the houses, own the entire space. There may be common land, gardens, rooms, kitchens, meals, childcare, etc. Eco-village at Ithaca is an example. Co-housing can be urban, and also specified for elderly in elder housing. This provided co-housing for older populations, there is a lot of support built in to the community.

Amy also describes Community Land Trusts as a means to keep housing affordable. In this case individuals own the house, but lease the land from a land trust. The house is more affordable if people don't have to own the land.

The topic is opened to the public.

General discussion about cooperatives. South Mountain Developer on Martha's Vineyard. The Building Cooperative has been encouraged to discuss their ideas and business plans with the City of Portland's Economic Development Department.

4. Examples of Infill Development Projects

Carrie reviews LEED and green building. She also reiterates the LEED ND requirements and describes the items that are relevant to this site. They are looking for 130 pilot projects, and Adams School Site could be a possible project.

Carrie describes New Urbanism, a group who worked with the USGBC in developing LEED ND. Also she provided an overview of smart growth projects in Massachusetts.

Carrie also provided a "book" of Successful Infill Development and highlighted the most relevant projects and design techniques.

Infill Development Strategies, pages 12

Design Principles for Infill page 27: Citizen involvement, economic opportunity, diversity, neighborhoods, mixed use, connecting streets, accessibility, respects local architecture character, respects design codes.

Quality that create Safe Spaces, page 29

Design for density, p33

5. Conclusions

Eric questions what format the committee will be presenting to council. Does the committee present one idea or several ideas? What is the goal? Matt responds that we will present something that reflects the community objectives; however the committee may have a several viable options. The purpose of this committee was to distill all of the information that has been presented and come up with a recommendation to give to council that they could then approve and which then go into a RFP. Dan describes it as a funnel of information that is now narrowing.

Matt questions whether we need to revisit the community objectives. We will hear more from the neighborhood at the community workshop, however the committee can re-shape those objectives prior or post to the community workshop.

6. Next Meeting

Thursday March 8, 2007 in Cummings Center at 7:00pm.