

Taskforce Meeting – June 29, 2009

TASKFORCE COMMENTS

- Have you cross checked the areas that you have identified as multi-family and mixed-use zones with the General Plan?
- There are questions regarding densities for mixed-use
- Are we getting rid of R-3/R-4 zones?

RO: This project will not look at whether or not the R-3/R-4 zones should be gotten rid of. The County, in the long term, is looking at the viability of the R-3/R-4 districts.

- Should have condos, mixed-use, higher density projects in transit corridors and Specific Plan areas, ie. East 14th, that's where you want the higher density development
- Do the colored areas on map indicate where the County wants higher density development?

LG: There's a difference in context between residential neighborhoods and the Specific Plan areas so there are recommendations for multi-family residential and mixed-use.

- Adequate parking is an important issue. Whether it is parking for studios or 3 bedrooms, every piece of parking gets taken up, residential areas take on overflow of parking, and the residential areas get crowded.

LG: Recommendations will get more fine-grained in terms of reduced parking

- The market determines unit size, the units in the diagrams are too small for the market in Alameda County. Should have bigger units for more realistic diagrams.

LOT COVERAGE, OPEN SPACE, AND LANDSCAPING

- Would parking be allowed under courtyard? Would courtyards be considered landscaping?

LG: The category of "site landscaping" is landscaped areas on the ground; courtyards above ground can count towards "common open space"

- Unrealistic to show courtyards built over residential units. Any developer will tell you that it's a lawsuit waiting to happen in terms of leakage issues
- There was a Fremont project where it was waterproofed between the deck and units below
- What about raised planters/trees on the courtyard no on the ground floor? Will that count as landscaping?
- What about the idea of green roofs?
- In the prototypes/diagrams, the bedrooms are too small. People in Alameda County do not want one bedroom units. They want three bedroom units.
- Courtyards over living space is unrealistic
- The commercial overlay districts not set yet in the General Plans

- Need to ensure that Guidelines need to fit for all the commercial districts, not just one district
- East 14th new mixed-use project was supposed to be apartments; the site doesn't have a lot of landscaping, just a few trees.

LG: If you have 2 or 3 stories over parking, you can achieve a decent amount of landscaping

- Why is mixed-use landscaping reduced?

LG: Mixed-use is often in a different context. It's more urban, and has a commercial component

- Streets for pedestrian oriented development are not always wide enough; hesitant to support lower landscaping because of these circumstances
- Don't understand densities which were assigned by ABAG. Higher densities will be developments for lower income people and want recommendation to acknowledge that amenities such as trees and open space will still need to be provided.
- The private sector can't build under the parameters of the Kent project, shouldn't base design guidelines of of Kent
- For common open space, what are you trying to achieve? The guideline to combine open space in one place?
- Combining open space in one place for 1,000 sf contiguously is too restrictive and limiting (Recommendation #7)
- Balconies? Each dimension has to meet the min dimension recommendation

HEIGHT

- Four stories is an issue (too tall in residential areas)

BUILDING FLOOR AREA LIMITS

- More rules versus less rules
- Need more rules because need backup for when applicants exceed the limit
- There's a trade-off between generality and specificity

LG: Do we need FAR?

- Yes, need an additional cap to dwelling units per acre
- FAR - divided on issue

LG: The issue is do you get density and then meet some of the guidelines or do you need to meet all the guidelines? The recommendation is that projects need to meet all the guidelines.

- That only works if community/politicians/staff support it

LG: "not entitled to maximum density" – Will write that in the Guidelines

- Need to work out inconsistencies so developers can't try to get around it
- Can take out FAR limit if there is language in the guidelines saying that maximum density may not be met.

MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL BUILDING FACADES FACING THE STREET

- What does min horizontal area mean?

LG: area such as a porch, etc; substantial projection, not just two feet

- What part of this has to be covered?
- For a main entrance, the 100 sf dimension is okay.
- Project across the street from BART – there are lobby entrances with elevators; you can enter the building at certain points and go up to units.
- In the Wilbeam project, there's no entrance. You enter the gate, narrow walk, and then there are entrances every few feet
- What does Recommendation #26 mean? Why can't it be more than 4 feet above the sidewalk elevation.

LG: Recommendation #26 – will tailor that/reword it for clarity. Purpose is so that people won't be staring at a blank wall when walking by.

- Recommendation #31 - PG&E will not allow landscaping close to electrical panels and will not allow landscaping as high as the panels
- Idea: side wall for electrical panels

PARKING

- Guidelines need a reference to space dimension standards
- Problem with transit corridors - buses don't come often enough, doesn't run on time, hard find parking at BART
- Have to be careful about "shared" parking
- Effectiveness of shared parking also depends somewhat on the type of commercial uses. For example, restaurants and cafes are usually open later. Shared parking depends on operating hours of the commercial component.
- Okay with tandem spaces
- Shared parking affects the commercial component of mixed-use projects. Commercial will not be successful if there is not enough parking
- With townhomes and condos, are you buying the parking spaces?
- Are you assigned parking with condos and apartments?
- Issue with all the concrete of parking surfaces
- Need to deal with all the impervious materials that comes with parking

- Problems with sustainability, Greenhouse Gases
- Parking – too much asphalt; need incentives for these big developments to consider alternative materials
- Should consider alternative materials such as glasscrete, gravel, pervious paving, pervious concrete
- This society is still stuck with the idea of housing parking and housing people

LG: Should we write “encourage use of alternative materials as they are proven”?

- No, if you use the word “encourage” you shouldn’t even put it in the guidelines
- The developer is happy with less parking because you can get increased density
- Need certain amount of parking; for example, families with older children will have more cars
- Want sufficient parking so overflow doesn’t go into neighborhoods

LG: additional parking may be required depending on existing context/conditions?

- When buying a home, people will always consider the amount of parking available

LG: Who thinks the recommended residential parking standards is not acceptable/too low? (5 members)

LG: Who thinks the recommended residential parking standards are reasonable? (4 members)

- County/community should explore uncoupling parking from residential units
- There is a problem with lack of guest parking

LG: Who thinks half a space of guest parking per unit is reasonable? (4 members)

- What’s the difference between a 3 bedroom condo and a 3 bedroom house? There’s an equal demand for parking between the two and a house has more parking, so condos need to provide the same amount

LG: Looking at multi-family residential in terms of stacked units, the units are typically smaller

- If the unit is 3 bedrooms, should have more than two spaces
- The biggest problem with guest parking is that residents park in those spaces
- Simplify Recommendation #35 regarding frontages

BUILDING FORM

- Separation recommendation is okay, can have stair exits, forces designer to create different forms
- 150’ is reasonable
- How are we defining “tacked on”? For example, foam. How is that going to be judged?

LG: Will add pictures and drawings to guidelines to clarify

- For the 150’ recommendation, clarify that podium can be continuous

- The parking ratio in the Ashland Cherryland Business District Specific Plan was based on anticipated transit didn't come to fruition

MIXED-USE

- Unsure about the retail/commercial requirement
- Feel that the recommendations have a narrow concept regarding mixed-use
- Planning assumptions in the recommendations is that development will be parcel by parcel, find those assumptions restrictive

LG: Would you recommend minimum lot width?

- Unhappy with narrow concept of mixed-use; Retail on bottom with housing on top (limits horizontal mixed-use)

RO: The guidelines do not mandate that mixed-use just be residential and commercial; there are areas where development can solely be residential or commercial

- What about recommendations for office/retail?

LG: Will write in the Guidelines that this part only applies to mixed-use with residential prototype. Preamble about how it is only one prototype and can show other examples.

- Meekland: there are industrial buildings that could turn into live-work
- Should encourage reuse/adaptive reuse
- Don't want to lose potential commercial but shouldn't be boxed into following a narrow prototype
- What about commercial?
- Add standards for half up, half down (podium parking)
- Vertical separation should be required for housing along busy streets
- Why should we allow res. on bottom?
- East 14th new mixed-use project is poorly designed; if both sides had side setback, could look onto landscaping from both sides