

Taskforce Meeting – May 26, 2009

TASKFORCE COMMENTS

- Development on Atwal Court in Fairview- how did houses that large get approved?
- Development on Alexia is one of the most tight and dense single-family developments that can be seen in Castro Valley.
- Two-story “porticos” in the Alexia development really intensify the bulk of the building.

LG: Should we put that as a guideline, that two-story porticoes are not allowed; or that the entryway needs to be scaled to the door?

- Part of the issue is the lack of setback. If there was a large setback and a row of trees, a two-story portico might look good.
- The issue is that the house is just a two-story box. That’s why we need design guidelines.
- The two-story portico just accentuates uninteresting second story.
- The Alexia development has been repeated and built over and over throughout Castro Valley.
- Development on East Ave – how do you get the 14’ road?

LOT SIZE CONSISTENCY

- This issue has come up in recent projects and it seems that the method of measurement changes on case to case basis depending on who the planner is.

RO: According to the Board Policy, there are different ways you can calculate lot size consistency. For example, you can use a tract boundary, or you can use a natural boundary such as a creek, and other times you would have to consider if there’s a school in the area and that would have to be taken out of the calculation. It is somewhat case to case because you would have to consider the surrounding context when calculating lot size consistency.

- Staff wants a more specific methodology to calculate lot size consistency

BIG AND BULKY HOMES

- Neighborhood Preservation Ordinance says you can’t have more than 50% paving in your front yard.
- 6.65.030(I) –“Paving Limitations: Including any standard walkway or driveway, the paving of more than 50% of a front yard or street side yard on any residential property after 6/99.”
- This standard is in the Health and Safety section of the Municipal Code, how do these developments get that much paving?
- How is bulkiness related to lot coverage? It seems to do more with the actual building.

LG: The amount of open space around a building affects the perception of bulkiness. A building may look less bulky if there was more open space around it.

- Lot coverage could potentially be detrimental to good architects that can build big building on small site without appearing too big.

LG: What's wrong with Atwal?

- Looks too boxy.
- Height makes it look too bulky. If you cut off or pushed back the second story, it would look more natural and it would look like it would fit into Castro Valley.
- It looks like developer printed a picture out from the internet and built it.
- Mission San Jose – example of hillside development, has ornate columns, but look nice, and has lots of landscaping.
- Fremont has a design review board so they get good architecture.
- The idea should be that you establish that you can't do x,y,z, but you want to, then you would have to go through design review.
- Recommendations won't protect us from Atwal or "this"

RO: we have to define what "this" is.

LG: do you think you need design review for Atwal?

- Yes, but at what point do you decide that it goes?

LG: do you want a design review board that reviews single-family residential?

- Yes, and if you review everything, you will get better quality architecture.
- Yes, but only if you go above the standards. (For example if you want a two-story portico, you will have to go to design review.)

LG: is there enough political will in the County to establish a design review board?

- The quality of development depends on the quality of developer. If they are willing to hire an architect, they will get a certain level of quality. Should we require the work of an architect?

LG: survey of developments, are they reasonable or should they have gone to design review?

- Cardinal – reasonable
- Compass court – design review
- Vista Lane – reasonable
- Wicks – reasonable/design review (half/half)
- Atwal – design review
- Helen – reasonable
- Loukos – design review (most, 75%)
- Alexia – design review
- Not all architects are good. Projects should go through design review so have a group reviewing it.

- Seen that issues arise when architectural styles are mixed. The developments that people say should have gone to design review are ones that mix architectural styles.

LG: could write a guideline saying that whatever architectural style is uses, should have integrity in that style.

- Find community opposition if want to put a colonial style house in an area full of ranch style houses. Community should be open to different types of styles.
- Does FAR include garage?
- There should be strict guidelines, and if want to do something else, go to design review.
- If asking for variance for height, then should go through design review.
- Should have list of exceptions, so you know when to go to design review.
- Variances should not be granted, rather they should be given extra height for better design.

LG: if a development doesn't meet standards, should it go to design review? (75%-80% of Taskforce says yes)

LG: should there be a lot coverage limit? (Taskforce says yes, but not sure what that amount/percentage would be)

- Nowhere have we addressed obstruction of views.

RO: there is a view committee meeting for Fairview regarding trees.

- The media touts green, conservation, building at higher densities, but the R-1 single-family detached homes seem contradictory.

LG: The County made a big move in passing measure D. If someone wants a higher density in hillside, they would need a General Plan amendment and rezoning.

- Do we need a FAR limit in addition to lot coverage?
- Don't need FAR if there are lot coverage and yard standards.
- Sometimes FAR is related to slope. Working on a project in San Bruno where it could have been bigger but it was limited by lot coverage. It is an issue on larger lots.

LG: is FAR a tool we should explore? (Taskforce says yes)

- FAR places limit on overall size.
- FAR and lot coverage should both be used.
- Too much cement in the front and yards are too small. Shouldn't we just implement our existing standards?

RO: need standard A, which you can go past if you go through some process, but you also need a standard B, which you can never go past (upper cap)

- It's not about a particular architectural style, it's about looking at what is better.

SETBACKS

- Concord – has side yard standard that requires a minimum of 4 feet and a total of 10 feet. Is more flexible and can be an alternative side yard standard.

LG: Existing standard of 10' rear yard should only be allowed for one-story portions? (Taskforce says yes)

RO: Should require that the space which makes up for the 10' rear yard should be usable.

- Should there be a greater side and rear for two stories?

LG: should the second story portion have a rear setback of 25'? (80% of Taskforce members say yes)

- Rear setback is okay at 20'.
- Rear setback should be 25' all the way up.
- Agree that rules should change.

FRONT FACADE

- If it is a busy street, people don't want to face it. People want to face the private street where it is quieter and calmer.
- Development on Seven Hills Road faces the driveway and it was handled very well.
- Landscaping also helps the front look better.
- Disagree that there is no point in requiring buildings to face the street. The house should connect to public realm. It's a principle of community principle, where houses should respect/relate to public realm.
- Should articulate massing so it addresses both sides of the street.
- Should consider street presentation.
- Parsons – if you push back second story 5' to 10' and it wasn't all stucco, it would look better.
- Should require 3D rendering to be submitted as part of application
- Should create standards and enforce them. If applicants are required to spend more money during process, you will get a better product.
- Need realistic elevations of the proposed project.
- Should have guidelines regarding landscaping, massing, articulation, and street articulation.

DRIVEWAYS

- 3-5' landscaping on property line is good.
- What's the difference between driveway and private streets? 5 units?
- Should have special paving to designate walkway instead of curb.

- Nobody uses sidewalk.
- Can look at townhome guidelines and use same guidelines for single-family subdivisions.
- Can we ask for wider private streets?
- If put in sidewalk, people will use it.

LG: If there are 5 or more units, should we require a sidewalk? (Most of Taskforce says yes)

- Should require sidewalks for all subdivisions so residents at least have the option to use sidewalk.
- If each subdivision needs 3'-5' landscaping strip next to property line, can end up with nice median if two driveways end up side by side.
- Share driveways could be a problem because the guy next door will wait until you build a road first and then they will tap into your utilities.
- Typically, will have to pay ½ of the cost of the original street.

LG: Should we try requiring shared driveways?

- If shared driveways not work, should require landscaping along property line next to driveway.

SUBDIVISION REVIEW

- Building envelope not that hard to put on plans for application. However, should not be a site development review process.

RO: sometimes developers come back and change lot configurations

- When applicants came in with subdivision map, shouldn't they show what they are going to build?
- Need new process, not site development review.
- Use this language - "Tract/parcel" map to avoid confusion.

EXISTING HOMES AND PRIVATE STREET WIDTH

LG: option can be to require the existing house to be in conformance before allowing rear to be built

- Can require them to sell everything so everything is brand new.
- Potential hardship if not allow property owners to develop the back of their property.
- Exception can be if the private street is serving 2/3 houses, go through process with some exceptions.
- If there are 3 or more units in the back, the existing home would have to be in conformance.

HILLSIDE

- City of Hayward Fire covers Fairview area.

LG: Should height step down with slope? (Taskforce says yes)

- Grading Plan as part of application? Can't you read slope off of topography maps?
- Need grading plan to show building pads.
- So just require grading plan for hillside lots? Need to clarify that.
- Need to define "building area" of lot.

NEXT MEETING

- Monday, June 29 – 6:30pm