

MINUTES
FLOOR AREA RATIO (FAR) STAKEHOLDER GROUP
1-12-10

Stakeholders In Attendance:

Elizabeth Barnhardt	Peter Franz	Natalie Beard	Caroline Tate
Jack Chamblee	Chip Cannon	Ann King	Jill Walker
Dennis Mayo	Ken Szymanski	Barbara Highfill	Jack Fenlon
Kelsey Mayo	Andy Munn	Katie Zender	Susan Desoto
Sandy Weathersbee	Bob Williams	Rebecca Anderson	Bill Nichols

Staff In Attendance:

Katrina Young	Laura Harmon	John Howard
Sonda Kennedy	Tammy Keplinger	Shad Spencer
Tim Manes	Solomon Fortune	Linda Beverly
Mark Fowler	Sandra Montgomery	

Katrina Young introduced herself and welcomed everyone to the meeting, which began at 6:05 p.m. Ms. Young introduced herself, and thanked everyone for agreeing to participate in the stakeholder group. Two meetings are anticipated. She reviewed the items on the agenda.

I. *Introductions and Housekeeping*

Ms. Young asked everyone to introduce themselves. She also addressed several housekeeping issues: the location of the restrooms and parking ticket validation.

II. *Why are we here?*

Ms. Young stated that there may be the need in the future for existing institutions within residential districts to grow or expand. Since these uses are vital to the community, how can we address the emerging needs before they become an issue? Often times, the opportunity to expand is limited when other parcels are not available for expansion. In addition, since institutional uses are permitted in residential districts, there is also the need to protect the character of the surrounding residential area.

The goal of this stakeholder process is to examine the existing regulations for floor area ratio (FAR) and review and discuss staff proposed alternatives to address the issue.

III. *Institutional Uses*

Ms. Young reviewed the types of institutional uses that are currently permitted in residential districts. These include child care centers, cultural facilities, religious institutions, adult care center, stadiums and coliseums, government buildings, recreation centers, schools, civic, social service or fraternal facilities, nursing homes, universities and colleges, orphanages and children's homes.

In residential districts, the residential density is calculated by density, while the non-residential uses are calculated by floor area ratio (FAR).

IV. Floor Area Ration Discussions

Ms. Young reviewed the definitions for floor area and FAR, and showed several examples.

Floor Area: The gross square footage of the principal buildings and any accessory buildings or structures.

FAR: The total floor area of the building or buildings on a lot or parcel divided by the gross square footage.

Ms. Young proposed one alternative for consideration by the stakeholder group: If a parking deck is constructed as part of a building or as an accessory structure for an institutional use, the parking structure would not be included in the FAR square footage calculation.

V. Feedback

Ms. Young discussed several benefits to this alternative:

- Does not punish the owner for using decked parking by counting it towards the FAR.

- Preserves open spaces.

- Environmentally friendly – reduces impervious area.

Feedback from the stakeholders (with staff responses bulleted underneath) included the following:

1. What is the purpose of having an FAR?
 - a. It limits the size of square footage on a lot.
2. Can trees be built into the equation? All sides of the deck?
 - a. There are currently standards for parking decks now that require screening and landscaping and separation.
3. What is the impact of promoting underground parking since it is expensive?
 - a. Underground parking is easier to do if the topography is not flat.
 - b. There would be no benefit, no disadvantage. It would be neutral.
4. Would parking deck exemption also apply to surface parking lots?
 - a. Staff will review this suggestion further.
5. Is the exemption for parking decks only for the first floor if underground parking is provided?
 - a. The exemption would be for all floors.
6. Is there a height limitation? For parking decks?
 - a. There is not a height limitation currently. However, the Heights in Residential Districts stakeholder group is proposing a maximum height of 100', based on the distance the use is to the nearest single family use or district.

7. Would existing parking decks now be exempt? Would it allow more development on existing sites?
 - a. Yes. The amendment would impact existing uses.
8. What is the FAR now?
 - a. .5
9. If parking decks are exempt, would it apply to decks that are conforming with respect to meeting the requirements for screening and landscaping? Would the decks that don't meet these standards be included in the exemption?
 - a. The exemption should only apply to parking decks that meet the current standards.
10. How would the exemption of parking decks affect property in the Watershed?
 - a. It would reduce the impervious surface, but the pervious surface coverage would still be counted toward the Watershed percentage.
11. If a parking deck is exempt, then it should look appealing.
 - a. Urban design standards and landscaping requirements can address this.
12. Is the FAR absolute?
 - a. Yes. Staff recommends keeping the FAR at .5 because other institutional uses in the institutional districts have an FAR of .5.
13. Some impervious surface lots look like a park: Myers Park Church. If the surface lot is changed into a parking deck, what controls would there be?
 - a. The parking deck would have to be on the same site as the church to be exempt. The lot is across the street now.
14. A parking deck that is attached to a structure should only be counted toward the FAR if it is attached.
15. A parking deck should not be counted if attached or not.
16. Consider a bonus to the FAR if a green roof is provided on top of the parking deck.
17. Could there be abuses with exempting parking decks?
 - a. Other development standards would have to be met: buffers, no parking in the setback, height limitations, screening, etc.
 - b. Accessory structures would have to be on the same site.
18. The total mass of parking decks would not be counted. How would the neighborhood be impacted?
 - a. Yes, it would allow more buildings on site, but mitigation measures could be added to protect neighborhoods.
19. Pros:
 - a. Parking would move from on-street in residential neighborhoods to on site with parking decks.
 - b. More green space.
 - c. Creates less impervious surfaces.
 - d. Adds to the economic feasibility of real estate.
 - e. This alternative takes the urbanization of the City into consideration.
 - f. It would be more appealing if the parking deck was attached to the building.
 - g. Compact footprint for development
 - h. Appearance design standards.

20. Cons:

- a. Does not control mass on a site by exempting parking decks.
- b. Parking decks are not neighborhood friendly.
- c. Discourages underground parking.

VI. *Next Steps*

Ms. Young noted that the next meeting will be held on January 21, 2010.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.