

Meeting Minutes
Single Room Occupancy Residences (SRO) Citizen Advisory Group
04-27-10

Citizen Advisory Group Members in Attendance:

Carol Millen	David Bloom	B. Nance
Brian Goforth	Helen Kennedy	Olivice Crowley
Dot Hailey	Dmitriy Stepanov	Kyle Woudstra
Katy Hancock	Jermayne Cook	Kathy IZard
W. C. McKenzie	Bob Williams	Liz Clasen-Kelly
Diane Langevin	Sylvia Nance	Bert Green
Andrea Woodruff	Grady Parker	Nathan Karow
Keith Dudley	Dale Mullennix	Andy Munn

Staff In Attendance:

Debra Campbell, Planning Department	Joshua Weaver, Planning Department	Sonja Sanders, Planning Department
Tammie Keplinger, Planning Department	Zenia Duhaney, Planning Department	

Debra Campbell welcomed everyone to the meeting. Citizen Advisory Group members and staff introduced themselves.

I. Project Background and Process Scope

Ms. Campbell explained the issues raised by the City Council's Economic Development and Planning Committee (ED&P) in July 2009 regarding special needs housing, which questioned uses permitted in the light industrial (I-1) district, and expressed concern that nearby property owners are not notified when special needs housing is locating nearby. Ms. Campbell noted that the scope was narrowed by the Transportation and Planning Committee (T&P) in February 2010 to focus on single room occupancy residences (SROs).

The Committee's charge to the Planning Department is to investigate the possibility of changing SRO standards regarding the following:

a) notification and/or increased awareness of proposed projects; b) proximity of other SROs and similar uses in an area; c) identify appropriate zoning classifications, and; d) coordinate with changes being made to Locational Housing Policy to minimize conflicts.

After reviewing the process chart for revisions to the SRO regulations it was noted that any proposed text amendments would likely proceed to hearing in January or February of 2011.

II. *Group Roles and Ground Rules*

Ms. Campbell reviewed roles of the citizen advisory group and staff, as well as the ground rules, and asked that the group abide by these rules.

III. *Meeting Objectives*

Ms. Campbell stated that the objective of the meeting was to review and discuss the current ordinance definition of SROs. In addition, staff would provide an overview of other types of special needs housing (group homes, commercial rooming house, shelters, short-term care facility).

IV. *Summary of Group Discussion*

Staff explained that prior to 1992 no definition of SRO existed in the city's zoning ordinance. In drafting the text, staff considered the use as similar to a hotel/motel, which are allowed in the I-1 district but not in residential districts. However, the exclusivity of zoning districts where permitted may result in steering the SROs to certain areas where there is existing I-1 zoning. It was stated that other standards for SROs, such as street class, parking and buffers, will be discussed.

Group members suggested that a distinction be made between SROs and permanent supportive housing. Mention was made of a Charlotte Town Manor and questions were raised about the services provided. A group member asked if there are other uses permitted in the I-1 district that are required to provide notification? Another member asked why SROs aren't classified and reviewed as planned multi-family?

A group member stated that SROs shouldn't be limited to industrial areas. Concern was expressed about allowing SROs in single family neighborhoods due to concern over how the uses are regulated and the impact on the character and property value of surrounding neighborhoods. It was suggested that SRO standards of other cities be analyzed and the impact of SROs on neighborhoods be analyzed. A group member referenced existing impact analyses from New York and Seattle, which show that SROs have had positive effects on neighborhoods.

Concern was expressed about group homes, rentals, and extended-stay hotels saturating areas and detracting from the residential character of areas. Want to see more standards provided on how such uses are regulated.

A representative from McCreesh Place, an SRO consisting of 63 apartments, responded to questions and noted that the average length of stay at McCreesh Place is five years for approximately 30 percent of the residents.

Group members stated that there are 15,000 vacant apartments in Charlotte but not all are affordable. It was noted that many SRO residents are disabled and can't afford market rate rents. There were questions about how the residents at SROs pay rent. It was determined that subsidized rent may be provided in some instances.

The group questioned how the draft text would be generated? It was stated that staff will draft the revised text and bring it back to the citizen advisory group for review.

Issues identified regarding the existing SRO definition:

SROs have outgrown the current zoning ordinance definition.

Difficult to distinguish SROs from other types of uses.

Current definition does not mention affordability (typically don't have land use related to economics. Per State legislation, affordable housing is a protected class).

SROs are expanded to various populations such as young professionals, college students, etc..

Current SRO regulations need to be inclusive of families; don't limit to singles only.

V. Follow-up Items

1. Provide a definition for multi-family dwelling.
2. Why are SROs not considered multi-family residences?
3. Provide parking regulations for multi-family residences.
4. Provide the HUD definition for SROs.
5. Provide SRO definitions and regulations for other cities.
6. Research permanent supportive housing and research similar types of affordable housing beyond SROs.
7. Provide information on the services provided at Charlotte Town Manor and specify how the land use is classified.
8. Should the zoning ordinance be amended to include staff to client ratios for certain uses?
9. Review impact analyses from other cities (i.e. New York and Seattle).
10. Specify other uses permitted in I-1 district that are required to provide notice when locating.

VI. Next Steps

Ms. Campbell thanked everyone for their participation. It was agreed that the proposed May 11, 2010 meeting date would be changed due to a conflicting meeting and that the next meeting will be held at McCreesh Place as suggested. Staff will provide answers to the follow-up items at the next meeting. The group was reminded that meeting minutes, and information for upcoming meetings would be placed on the website

VII. The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

