

## MEETING MINUTES

WASHBURN-FAIR OAKS HISTORIC DISTRICT  
 DESIGN GUIDELINES UPDATE  
 ENGAGEMENT: Community Event 1  
 March 25, 2023  
 MCAD 224 Studios

## Attendees:

Pigeon: Tamara Halvorsen  
 TEN x TEN: Maura Rockcastle, Rachel Salmela  
 City: Andrea Burke, Erin Que  
 HPC: Barbara Howard

*The following minutes constitute TEN x TEN's understanding of the meeting. Please report any discrepancies to the author within seven (7) calendar days.*

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Community Event One was organized in an Open House format. The four stations setup were: Project Introduction, Density + Scale, Sustainability, and Resources. The beginning of the event started as a group conversation to address the reasons why participants came to the event – some with concerns not related to the project and others with specific questions. Tamara and Andrea outlined the scope of this project and the reason behind the update to the Historic District Design Guidelines. Members of the Design Team and City staff were then seated at each table to answer questions and facilitate conversations with community members based on each topic. Below is a collection of the notes recorded during the event.

## 1. General

- a. There are pros/cons to increasing the housing density in the neighborhood.
  - i. There is currently an issue with vacancies.
  - ii. There is a perception that the city is changing the rules or certain purposes. (This comment was related specifically to the new 6 story affordable housing development.)
  - iii. Racism and redlining came up frequently.
  - iv. Feel high density rentals destroy the neighborhood.
  - v. Feeling that the neighborhood has reached its max in terms of density.
- b. Historic designation includes large institutions, multifamily, apartments / condos, and housing. The update is intended to make the guidelines more user friendly and clear.
- c. 2400 Stevens – participants questioning whether it was ever a full-service hotel.
  - i. Conditional use permit for battered women's shelter based on that previous use which participant thought was fictitious.
  - ii. Participants feel the historic preservation guidelines are being used to change zoning.
- d. Participants seemed afraid the Design Team was hired to change the guidelines to support more density or that we were coordinating with developers.
  - i. Request was made for the team to commit to not changing the rules or the intent of the guidelines.
  - ii. Request for an unbiased facilitator. Feeling that MCAD and the City are working together to support higher density.
- e. Four story limit is in the current guidelines and participants want to know if that is going to change that. There was a strong contingent that wanted to keep the 4-story limit.
- f. Community fearful of bait and switch tactics used during other community engagement events held by North Bay developers.
- g. The city has lost control of its streets. Participants brought a piece of Stevens Avenue to show as an example – why are these Design Guidelines being updated when the streets are a bigger problem?
- h. Questioning what is going to stop the city from drafting new guidelines next year?

- i. Feel the city is a barrier for homeowners but not non-profits, institutions, etc. Reiterating that there is a feeling that the city is developer driven.
  - j. Participants felt that “Historic Design Guidelines” means they can’t make changes to their houses.
  - k. Issues with North Bay Companies – own multiple parcels in the district, history of code violations, and participant considers them to be high risk.
  - l. New density creates a desire to leave the district.
  - m. The loss or transition of residential properties to institutional use is not desirable.
  - n. Lack of permit access leaves vacant properties.
  - o. There are no requirements for vacant lots which are often a disaster and safety hazard.
  - p. Is there a threshold for resource-based facilities?
- 2. Density & Scale Table**
- a. Commercial areas are different from residential areas, and the scale of buildings can be different in those areas.
  - b. Maximum height of four stories desired for new multi-family buildings, two stories for new single family/duplex. Requests were made to minimize the height of new construction as much as possible. Tamara noted that it would be appropriate to look at precedents and that the maximum height/stories during the POS would be the appropriate maximum height in the design guidelines.
  - c. No feedback on scale as it relates to maximizing the lot.
  - d. Setbacks are important for ecological reasons and for the feeling of the residential areas.
  - e. Design guidelines should guide materials - masonry is preferred to metal panel siding.
  - f. Parking was repeatedly brought up as an issue that new infill construction will need to mitigate in some way.
  - g. There were repeated requests for the design guidelines to regulate use, which Andrea explained they cannot do.
  - h. There were also requests that the design guidelines state that there should be no new construction in the district, this was clarified as no new multi-family or affordable housing in the district. Andrea and Tamara explained that this is not the purpose or purview of design guidelines.
- 3. Sustainability Table**
- a. Consider using sustainable performance standards as a positive parameter. (Energy efficiency, sustainability, etc.)
  - b. Solar tiles in lieu of solar panels could be a good option.
  - c. Clearly define the aesthetic criteria.
  - d. Include Geothermal Guidelines.
  - e. How does green infrastructure maintain a pedestrian feel?
    - i. Discussion around how green infrastructure can help maintain pedestrian feel.
  - f. Aesthetic parameters vs. safety and efficiency.
  - g. Reference the NPS standards for sustainability.
  - h. “Evidence of deterioration” needs to be defined more clearly and provide examples of what does and doesn’t count.
  - i. What is the value of safety within the guidelines? (lead abatement and toxic material rehab.)
  - j. Are pools allowed in the district?
  - k. If the roof is a sacrificial layer, what does that mean from a historic preservation standpoint?
- 4. Resource Table**
- a. Request for contractors for historic homes – specifically for slate roof repair.
  - b. Issues with being able to get contractors to respond to requests for small projects.
  - c. Participants would like access to the survey of the Washburn-Fair Oaks Historic District.