

**Residential Project Committee
Meeting June 7, 2010**

Members Present: Kate Connolly, Michael Hingston, Joan Garipay, Judith Esmay

Staff Present: Judith Brotman, Vicki Smith

Michael Hingston had prepared a document entitled *Dimensions in Zoning* as a background piece for the meeting. Rather than focus on his prepared document, he posed the question: *What is neighborhood character in terms of the physical dimensions?* Members of the Committee identified the following as determinants of character:

- Size of building- building mass/volume
- The existence of front porches and their setbacks
- The location of the garage and how far the garage protrudes beyond the house
- Distance of the house to the street
- The ability to talk to a person on a porch from the sidewalk or street
- Open area around the house
- Cohesiveness and the sense of enclosure a streetscape provides
- Visual penetration from the street into lots
- Privacy fences
- Level of traffic
- The height of the wall facing the street relative to the pitch of the roof
- Projections such as dormers, bay windows, and entries which break up the wall
- Placement of doors and windows which breaks up the wall
- How it feels given the roof pitch and height of wall
- How many cars you see
- Size and location of parking area
- Fencing and type of fencing
- Presence and absence of, or type of outbuildings
- Open area around the house
- Type of landscaping
- There are no use considerations listed for this description of neighborhood character

When thinking about the character of West End, members had these descriptors:

- Shade trees
- Peace and quiet
- People conversing in the middle of the street
- There is a subtle transition in house size and feel of neighborhood occurring in the West End without much difference between the SR and GR. Downing Road feels different from everything else, but is not that much different than the feel of Wetherby Road.
- Lots include some steep slopes that are not readily buildable
- All lots are relatively small
- Except for the West-Maple and Pleasant to School, all traffic is local.
- Tandem parking
- No architectural consistency
- The corner of School and Pleasant is the only place where there is a building seems tall.

- Student use changes character
- Most everybody knows everyone else in the West End.

The following topics were discussed:

- What appears to the viewer from the street determines how people relate the neighborhood and how it feels.
- The setback for the front porch setback could be changed to allow for non-enclosed additions to homes to be closer to the street than the building line. Kate thought that setbacks in GR district are as shallow as they should be in order to accommodate snow storage.
- Considering keeping garages behind the front line of the building
- How buildings allow people to interact.
- How the back of the house can relate to the street.
- Encouraging a house to be part of the landscape, not a barrier.
- Building separation was originally for fire safety, but now depending on the code compliant materials you use, separation requirements vary.
- Fire protection access between buildings is a consideration
- Height limitations are a consideration for fire protection
- Height measurement should be from sidewalk not average finished grade
- The distance of the façade from the street determines the angle that you have to look up to see the top of the building. This measurement should be considered.
- Most people like what they have in their neighborhood and don't want to change it. Their perspectives vary, so how can we really know what they are talking about.
- Keep variety in neighborhood types. Do not try to homogenize the town.
- Lot coverage is much too generous in the current zoning ordinance.
- A steeply pitched roof is like a wall; a shallower pitch has a different feel.
- The interaction between height, roof pitch, projections, and how close it is to the street should be considered.
- Maybe consider a minimum height façade to have properly bounded street.
- The graduated building height between the residential and I districts is form-based.
- Maybe properties on private roads should be considered in the same way streets are for setback purposes.
- What it feels like when there is more than one entrance to the house on the street.
- It is the aspect of the house that you see from the front- the relationship of the house to the public space that is important.

For next Monday, the group was assigned to consider how elements of the Ordinance advance or hinder neighborhood character. In Michael's view building height, setbacks, and building footprint is related to neighborhood character. In his view, lot size and frontage not related to neighborhood considerations.

The meeting time will be changed to 2PM on Mondays. These meetings will run for no longer than two hours.

Meeting adjourned at 3:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Vicki Smith