

Late Backup

Other Voices -
Karen McGraw

November 6, 2014

Re: RDCC Recommendation regarding CodeNEXT approaches

Mayor, Mayor Pro-Tem, and City Council,

On October 1 George Zapalac made a presentation to the RDCC regarding the proposed approaches that Council might adopt for the CodeNext rewrite.

While the consultant team has provided a lengthy document explaining the possible approaches to the code rewrite, these explanations do not clearly describe what the consultant is anticipating for the final result – the document lacks substantive examples of the alternatives. For this reason, the RDCC cannot make any recommendation on the selection of one of these approaches.

The RDCC works solely with the “McMansion” ordinance developed in 2006 by a citizens Task Force: our mission is focused on facilitating compatibility between residential structures. The McMansion code set is an overlay; when we asked, we were told that the desire for CodeNext would be to incorporate these regulations in the new base districts. However, the Approach 1 outline shows the overlay as a separate section, and Approaches 2 & 3 do not identify the location of the regulations, but rather identify “overlay districts” in general.

In order to feel comfortable with a specific approach and thus with a recommendation, it would be useful to us as commissioners to see sample sheets specifically indicating how these regulations might be incorporated in the different approaches.

Being the only Board or Commission with a mission to consider residential design standards, we have already expressed our recommendation that the current charter of this commission be eliminated and that the commission be reinitiated as a “Neighborhood Compatibility Commission”. Given that revised scope and the Commission’s expertise, other issues such as building compatibility and Neighborhood Planning approaches could be addressed in the context of broader neighborhood compatibility issues. As you are aware, many citizens and groups have expressed concern for the treatment of Neighborhood Plans, McMansion regulations, and Compatibility Standards in the code rewrite. For this reason, it is important to consider how these additional elements will be incorporated in the new code.

We believe that studying possible resultant code sections would be invaluable in choosing a direction for further code work and we urge the City Council to request this work prior to selecting any “approach”. We believe that such a request, while not likely to be fulfilled in the remaining City Council meetings this year, would provide a valuable resource to the new City Council in charting the path for the remaining work.

Sincerely,

Residential Design and Compatibility Commission

William Burkhardt AIA, Chair
Karen McGraw AIA, Vice Chair
Lucy Katz
Keith Jackson
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