

PRINCETON

NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER & ZONING INITIATIVE

MEETING RECAP & ACTION ITEMS

Task Force Meeting #2

Tuesday, October 11, 2016, 10:30 a.m.

Princeton Municipal Building, 400 Witherspoon Street

Key Decisions:

- ✓ **Possible Immediate Actions.** The following topics will be considered and brought before Mayor and Council for potential adoption before the end of the year. These represent “quick fix” type activities that are a subset of potential “short-term” actions. These topics are to be raised during the focus groups.
 - *Front Setbacks.* The prevailing front setback needs to be adjusted. When there is a small block with a variety of setbacks, taking the average doesn’t work. Alexandria, VA removes the “outlier” from the calculations.
 - *Repetition.* Consider addressing repetition of house design and mirror image houses.
 - *Driveways.* Consider driveway setbacks. However, driveways on narrow lots are on the property line.
 - *Garages.* Tension between appearance and impervious surface coverage.
 - *Porches.* Porches should be incentivized.
- ✓ **Focus Groups.** Focus groups will take place in November. The three groups are: Residents, Professionals (architects, landscape architects and real estate professionals), and Boards/Commissions. The Focus Groups will “troubleshoot” the immediate actions and also undertake a broader visioning that will inform other short-, mid-, and long-term actions.

Key Action Items:

- ☐ RBA to work with planner to schedule focus groups.
- ☐ RBA to prepare list of possible immediate, short-term, mid-term and long-term actions for distribution to the task force.
- ☐ RBA to prepare plan for communicating next steps to the public through press release and website posting.
- ☐ RBA and planner to consider community-wide survey.

Topics/Points Raised:

→ **Topics Raised During Discussion.** Task force members raised a variety of issues related to new single family homes, including the following:

- Basements and Attics.
- Water table problems. Mounding of houses causing drainage problems. Consider change in the definition of basement or count it in the FAR.
- Livable space in basements is taxed differently.
- Encourage sustainability.
- Consider raising the demolition fee.
- Consider a communitywide survey.
- Subdivisions often result in larger houses being constructed then currently exists. Consideration should be given to permitting a two-family dwelling on one slightly larger lot. Is combining smaller lots permitted?
- Accessory flats are allowed in the former Borough as detached dwellings flats are permitted in the former Township only if the flat is part of the principal structure.
- Borough code has building coverage maximums, while the Township code doesn't.
- Protecting views of water.
- Light.

→ **Public Comments.**

- Stormwater is one of the biggest problems right now and the ordinance should be revised.
- We are concerned that we usually do not know about demolitions happening. They seem to happen overnight. There should be noticing requirements for demolition permits. *Response: This is not currently permitted by state legislation.*
- Public has little time also to find out about and organized around minor subdivisions. *Response: NJ rules has requirements related to this. Princeton requires a minimum 10-day notice.*

- Minneapolis imposed a demolition delay. This may be permitted in historic districts. *Response: State regulations do not allow for a demolition delay or moratorium.*
- The Housing Element of the Master Plan includes a statement about to encouraging more low to moderate income housing. Talk about only single family.
- The Master Plan should be amended to address neighborhood character so it can be used as a general guide by the Planning Board and Zoning Board when making land use decisions.
- Consider impacts to the school system.
- Consider environmental impacts.