

LAND USE SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING
4TH FLOOR CYPRESS ROOM, MULTNOMAH BUILDING
501 SE HAWTHORNE BLVD, PORTLAND OR
APRIL 1, 2015 3:00-5:00 PM

MEETING SUMMARY

I. Welcome, Introductions and Announcements

In attendance:

Subcommittee members

Catherine Dishion
Tim Larson
Kathy Taggart

Project Team

Kevin Cook
Matt Hastie

Absent:

Will Rasmussen

Public: Carol Chesarek; Stephanie Nystrom (CAC member).

The committee, staff members, and visitors introduced themselves.

II. Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Policies

Staff summarized the background document/research regarding ADUs. The general conclusion is that due to State law and Rural Reserves, there is no ability to add second dwelling units in rural, unincorporated Multnomah County, with the one exception being the Springdale Rural Center in the East of Sandy River Rural Plan Area.

The Subcommittee was interested in exploring the feasibility of adding ADUs as a use in Springdale, but only if there is sufficient interest in the Springdale community to warrant further exploration of the idea. The subcommittee was concerned about advancing the idea of allowing ADUs in Springdale considering possible physical limits such as lot size, septic system capacity, high water table, etc. Consider appropriateness of detached ADUs vs. attached (duplexes). Consider size limitations for the ADU.

Action Item:

Poll the Springdale community to gauge interest in allowing ADUs in the district.

III. Parcel Aggregation Policies

Staff summarized the parcel aggregation requirements in resource zones. The subcommittee favors keeping existing aggregation requirements in order to prevent further parcelization of resource zoned lots.

Recommendation:

The subcommittee recommends retaining existing parcel aggregation requirements in resource zones. The subcommittee further recommends improving the implementation of the aggregation requirements through approval conditions requiring deed covenants and or lot consolidations.

IV. Uses in Rural Centers Policies

A. Floor Area Limits:

The subcommittee discussed current uses, and floor area requirements in Rural Center districts. There are floor area requirements for commercial and industrial uses in the RC districts. The County is more restrictive in terms of floor area requirements for industrial uses. Given the smaller parcel sizes in the RC districts, the subcommittee agreed that the existing floor area limits are appropriate. However, subcommittee members are concerned about the under utilization of existing buildings. When a new use is contemplated in an existing building that would otherwise exceed the floor area limits, the buildings often sit vacant for lack of a buyer/tenant.

Recommendation:

The Subcommittee recommends a policy that retains existing floor area limits with the exception that existing lawfully permitted buildings may be fully utilized beyond the current 15,000 sq. ft. limit for listed industrial uses subject to all other approval requirements.

B. Uses Serving the Rural Area:

The Rural Center districts allow limited commercial and industrial uses provided they primarily serve the population of the immediate surrounding rural area and tourists traveling through the area.

The County planning office requires applicants for new uses to demonstrate that 51 percent or more of the customers served are likely to be rural and/or tourists and conversely that no more than 49 percent are likely to be city residents. Property owners in the close-in Rural Center Districts such as Pleasant Home and Orient have found it difficult to develop businesses or sell to potential buyers that can meet the (51% test).

The subcommittee contemplated the issue and agreed with the overall concept that the Rural Centers serve a different purpose than urban commercial and industrial zones. However, the subcommittee is very interested in exploring ways that keep to the overall rural nature and scale of the Rural Centers but to loosen strict adherence to the 51% requirement. The subcommittee felt that perhaps for close-in Rural Centers the threshold could be something less than the 51% if the business itself maintains a rural scale and

character and primarily serves the local vicinity, which could include customers from both the rural and nearby in-town residents.

Recommendation:

The subcommittee would like to contemplate a policy that allows businesses whose customer base is less than 50% of the rural community provided the business will be serving the rural community and maintains a rural scale and character.

V. Rural Design Standards

The subcommittee discussed design review standards currently applied to rural businesses. These standards are focused on site design, parking and landscaping. The question of whether these standards are appropriate in the rural areas was contemplated. The subcommittee felt that landscaping standards by themselves do not necessarily achieve much in terms of protecting the rural character and maintaining a distinct sense of place particularly in the Rural Center districts. The subcommittee felt that there ought to be a wider range of things considered in terms of achieving a compatible, nice rural feel for businesses in the rural areas. The subcommittee would like to see the design review toolbox include building design, façade, and frontage considerations.

Recommendation:

Consider a policy that specifies design review standards for rural businesses that include a combination of landscaping, plantings, parking, building orientation and design that together achieves a pleasing rural aesthetic.

VI. Tree Protection

Subcommittee members are concerned that existing Significant Environmental Concern (SEC) overlay zone standards stop short of protecting trees that are removed in preparation for selling properties as speculative home sites with a view or are cleared after the fact for dwellings that were approved in locations that would have a view once the trees are removed. In theory, logging that is not included in a development proposal is subject to restocking requirements by the Oregon Dept. of Forestry (ODF). In practice, ODF is kept busy with larger commercial harvests and does not go looking for view improving clearings. This has resulted in a noticeable increase in these types of clearings particularly in the West Hills Rural Plan area and is contrary to the goal of minimizing the 'edge effect' in the forest canopy per the 1996 West Hills Reconciliation Report. The subcommittee agreed that additional tree protections in the Significant Environmental Concern for Wildlife Habitat (SEC-h) overlay should protect trees from permanent clearing.

Recommendation:

Consider a policy that protects the forest canopy and requires reforestation of cleared non agricultural areas and minimizes the amount of landscaping associated with a dwelling.

VII. County Permitting Processes

The subcommittee did not have a policy level recommendation but encourages county staff to continue down the road of simplifying and streamlining processes where possible. The subcommittee would like to see the county focus on making the code more understandable and user friendly, and to figure out ways to make the costs and length of time lower for land use permits.

VII. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at approximately 5:00 pm.