

Residential Infill Strategy: Focus Group Meeting Notes



Date: Wednesday June 21, 2017

Time: 9 a.m. – 10 a.m.

Location: 4th floor, 65 Garry St., Winnipeg, MB

Attendees: 8 people in attendance

Organizations*:

- City of Winnipeg Urban Planning and Office of Public Engagement
- Winnipeg Realtors
- Paragon Design Build
- Ventura Developers
- Sunstone Group

*Please note: not all attendees provided their organization or affiliation when signing in

Overview

- The goal of this meeting was to connect with people in the development industry to discuss how we should conduct engagement for the infill strategy project.
- The focus group discussions were based on the following questions:
 - Who should we be talking to?
 - What information should we be providing?
 - What formats for engagement should we be using?
- This event was meant to inform the Urban Planning Division about consultation that is to begin in the fall of 2017.
- The meeting began with introductions, followed by a 5-10 minute powerpoint presentation by the Urban Planning Division. Once the presentation was complete the floor was opened up for discussions focused around the 3 questions. One member of

the Urban Planning Division captured notes on a flip chart throughout the discussions. At the end of the meeting it was communicated to the group that the notes would be typed up and sent out to participants for their record and to ensure that points were captured accurately. Further, the participants were encouraged to provide feedback, either to elaborate, provide clarity, or further explore ideas related to the conversation. No further comments were provided by participants.

Who Should be Engaged in this Process?

- Need to talk to public about things like smart growth, sustainability, and how infill can be a catalyst.

What information should we be providing?

- Good examples of development will help foster public buy in. Need to set precedent in this regard. QUALITY!
- Need research to educate the public and politicians and dispel myths. Eg. Demonstrate that infill development does not decrease property values but actually lifts them. Evidence based policy.

What formats for engagement should we be using?

Other Points Raised in Meeting

- NIMBY is a problem. The public holds perceptions that come out at public hearings which are myths. Eg. Impacts on property values. Marni Capp is a good resource with respect to this topic. She shows how to get ahead of it (some of the NIMBY arguments can even be grounds for human rights violations – eg. Renters).
- Scale of development is important. People don't seem to get upset about 3 story buildings on corridors. Also single and two-family dwellings are palatable.
- Infill development has a direct tie to transportation.
- Design is very important. Context should be a basic consideration. Most developers have own design guidelines. So do non-profit organizations like Housing Opportunity Partnership.
- Consistency is very important.
- Agent/ owner concerns:
 - There is too much uncertainty.

- A lot of time developers don't get to the first stage because there is too much RISK.
- Need to set appropriate entitlements.
- Need to remove small scale development from the public hearing process. As a trade-off need to have a robust set of guidelines to ensure good development.
- 25' lots: Often a perception that they are too small, but they can be developed in an appropriate fashion.
- In terms of consultation an important consideration is ADVANCE NOTICE. Can always adjust schedules if have enough lead time. Mornings preferred.
- Infill should not be an either/or with respect to other areas where development is happening (eg. Corridors, downtown, greenfield). All have their place.
- Growth fees should not apply to infill.
- There are areas of the City where infill is happening in a good way (eg. Area 2C of the MLS). Might be that people are choosing to live in neighbourhoods closer to downtown because of traffic.
- Resident Association pre-consultation in development goes a long way.
- Political support is needed. Politicians need to see that everyone is on the same page. Not 'fractious.'
- Noted that infill development in Calgary has higher property values than greenfield. This is because infill is more desirable. Things like existing trees, services, culture, etc.
- Should use Winnipeg Landmarks in/near the downtown to promote infill. People want to live near things like the Canadian Museum of Human Rights, baseball stadium, etc. People like 'view sheds' to the downtown.