

HISTORIC REVISIONS COMMITTEE

STAFF TRACKING COMMENTS March 10, 2008

Step down from adjacent contributing buildings

- How is adjacent defined? Which building lots are considered adjacent? Should adjacency be treated the same across a boulevard, tithing street, lane? Rules may vary depending whether adjacent building is historic or not? Adjacent should differentiate between historic and non historic.
- On sites next to adjacent historic structures create quantifiable offsets (cutouts)- maximum two stories above historic structure for so many feet.
- How to quantify the step-down – full stories? May depend whether it is in a commercial or residential area. How do you bridge from commercial to residential on Boulevards such as Liberty and Oglethorpe where they back up across a lane to residential? Can create a brick wall along the lane. What happens on height map when one side of lane is 5 stories and other side is 4 stories. In some instances two heights cut same block. One person suggested that the higher height should be on the front of the lot.
- What should the measurement be for the width of the step-down – 30 feet was suggested. Qualify what percentage can go above height limit.
- There seems to be a hierarchy of height with the higher buildings on the square facing lots and stepping down to the outer ends of blocks.
- Traditional residential development patterns were 50% main building, 25% open space courtyard and 25% carriage house. New construction in 75% zones tends to put 75% on the front of the lot and leave 25% strip parking on the lane. The ordinance needs to discourage the latter.

Floor Area Ratio

- Use FAR; height incentives for better materials; allow other compatibility factors to come into play in the incentives.
- Use FAR – scalable maximum over existing height
- Do not allow 100% lot coverage for other incentives. (I think he meant that good materials should be baseline, not incentive etc.)
- Height should not be open ended – needs to be calculable.
- Don't create wording that creates maximums that may be visually incompatible

Maximum square footages or width that reach up to whole height

- Create incentives to give more height, but only over a certain percentage of the footprint.
- Use a percentage of rooftop that can be built to the maximum.
- On a show of hands the majority of the committee felt height could exceed the height map under certain limits.
- Should not be open ended – needs to be calculable.

Lower height map overall

- Should the height map be lowered over all? (in certain wards?) in order to grant incentives for additional height?
- Look at height map block by block – lower in certain sensitive areas with certain criteria to allow to go higher. *
- Additional height is too often tied to profit requirement of developer. Needs to be tied to the public good. Policies should match social conditions – focus on things like affordable housing rather than developers profit for criteria. Tighten up ordinance language.
- Allowing developers opportunity to go higher might have a snowball effect.
- Allow development to go higher when it is not adjacent to a historic structure.

Absolute vs Relational Heights

- Use absolute heights to guide hotels to certain areas and relational in more sensitive areas. Should there be hotel zones?
- Can relational and absolute heights be used in a way to steer large scale development into certain areas of the City?
- Allow extra height in areas where you want to encourage development, not in sensitive areas.

Incentives not to build to maximum

- Incentives to not build to the maximum potential – ie transfer of development rights, property tax

Lot Coverage

- What is the capacity of any given ward or boulevard in Savannah to handle more big buildings
- Would the 15,000 maximum footprint ever conflict with the 75% lot coverage requirement?
- Would Civic buildings be allowed to vary from the standards? **Address in Civic Buildings**
Address Week Six Definitions
- Should we calibrate lot coverage to site size – one % for 15,000-12,000 and another for less than 12,000? Smaller building site more likely to be closer to 100%. Reduce footprint for maximum height.
- There is a danger in areas without historic context to create boxes and canyons. Need variety. Don't be just punitive, but allow transfer of development rights.
- Require that several devices be used to break up mass rather than just one. **Implemented**
- Distances such as the width of a recess should relate directly to a division of the 60 foot Oglethorpe Plan lot width. Where did the 35' width come from?
- How should the flush wall option be broken up at street level? **Address in Week Five Entrances**
- Regarding minimum and maximum footprint sizes what do you do when the developer owns the whole block face? **Break building into individual buildings**
- Explain bays

Procedures

- Stronger and stricter as to what we require from architects. **UZO**
- Better enforcement **UZO**
- Make variance process more onerous (Rigorous?) need specific criteria for all variances. **UZO**
- The Board still needs to make subjective judgments which is why the members need to be qualified and have capabilities to sit on the Board. **Week eight**
- The Board needs training particularly in the visual compatibility factors.
- Strategies to insure construction is consistent with approved plans. **Staff has begun to meet with contractors and site managers at pre construction meetings. Sample board to be discussed Week five.**
- Pay for enforcement position through fines (Washington D.C.)

General comments re developers

- Allowing developers the opportunity to go higher might have a snowball effect
- The same developers push the rules each time
- Developers are turning meetings into bargaining game.

Definitions

- Contributing and non-contributing
- Compatible