

Dimensional Standards Working Group Summary

4/26/11

The Dimensional Standards Working Group focused on the first ZAP Discussion Draft, Article 59-4 Zoning District Regulations (October 13, 2010).

A variety of issues were discussed, ranging from the residential private garage parking options to the setbacks, height and coverage requirements for single-family detached houses in the residential zones. There were areas in which the group agreed that Code Studio's proposed changes had merit and other areas where the group felt proposed changes warranted comment and discussion.

Proposed Changes with Merit

The working group believes the following proposed changes have merit and should be retained:

- *Certain Setback and Coverage Requirements* (pg. 4-22 through 4-25): Code Studio proposed some changes to setback and coverage requirements that the working group, along with Staff, feel have merit. For instance, both parties support removing the "sum of side yards" requirement and both parties see merit in reducing the coverage in R-60 to 30% so as to better align with ZTA 08-11 (aka Infill Development Bill). However, it should be noted that the working group and Staff believe some of the changes do not have merit, and thus should revert back to existing standards in future drafts.
- *Residential Private Garage Options* (pg. 4-14): The working group believes there is merit in providing standards for the placement of attached and detached garages for residences. The main comment here is that a relief valve needs to be provided for instances in which the characteristics of a property/lot prevent the standards from being met.
- *Setback Planes*: The group sees a lot of merit in using setback planes to achieve the goals of ZTA 08-11, namely controlling mass and bulk (i.e., addressing McMansions).

Proposed Changes without Merit

- *Building Form and Building Elements* (pg. 4-11 and 4-12): While this working group likes the idea of balconies and porches and would like to see them included in residential projects, the inclusion of design standards for these elements (e.g., porch: at least six feet deep, contiguous with a width not less than 50% of building façade; stoop: no more than six feet deep) seems excessive and unnecessary. The zoning code should allow for encroachments of these elements into the setbacks, but shouldn't dictate size/dimensions. Additionally, the working group does not believe there should be a street facing entrance requirement for buildings in residential zones.

Proposed Changes Needing Further Discussion

The working group believes the following proposed changes need further discussion:

- *Placement of Accessory Structures* (pg. 4-22 through 4-25): Currently in all residential zones and some agricultural zones, detached accessory structures are required to be placed in the rear of the yard. The October 13 draft proposes allowing accessory structures in the side yard, as long as they're flush with or up to 5' behind the principal building (depending on zone). Some of the concerns expressed by this working group include the impact on the visual appearance of the street. If accessory structures are to be permitted in the side yard, should there be standards/regulations that preserve the architectural integrity? In other words, design standards such as "a detached accessory structure must be of the same architectural style, colors and materials as the principle building."
- *Height* (pg. 4-9): The working group was skeptical about the discussion draft's proposal to measure height from the top of a roof regardless of roof type (flat vs. pitched) out of concern that it would encourage flat roofs. However, after numerous discussions, the group believes that measuring to the top of the roof regardless of roof type is acceptable. However, if this is to be the case, the group thinks the height in smaller lot residential zones should be reduced from the proposed 40' to the existing 35', perhaps with a process-option similar to what we have now (such as going to Planning Board) for building a roof up to 40'. Additionally, the group believes that the measurement of height should not get into the definition of an attic and basement vs. cellar. Rather, height should just be concerned with the building envelope. Further, the group agrees with Code Studio's proposal to measure height from the average grade and using the more restrictive of natural or improved grade to determine average. The group also believes that there should be some restriction/regulation in place to prevent terracing/grading prior to getting a building permit.
- *Impervious Cover* (pg. 4-7): The working group believes a maximum impervious cover requirement could have merit in residential and agricultural zones. The working group particularly supports the idea of an impervious cover requirement if the definition of impervious cover is altered so that pavers and porous pavement gravel are not considered impervious.
- *Side Wall Length* (pg. 4-17): While the group thinks there may be some merit to requiring articulation of the side wall, the 30' requirement seems too short.