

**RESIDENTIAL PROJECT MEETING
MEETING SUMMARY
NOVEMBER 14, 2011**

Present: Judith Esmay, Jonathan Edwards, Vicki Smith, Kate Connolly, Iain Sim, Joan Garipay, Judith Brotman, Robin Nuse, Carolyn Radisch, Sarah Buckey, Cynthia Barrette, Janine Kanzler, Joanna Whitcomb, Susan Davidson

Minutes November 7, 2011

The minutes of November 7, 2011 were reviewed and amended. On a motion by Kate Connolly and a second by Joan Garipay, there was unanimous support for approving these minutes as amended.

Discussion about Neighborhood Character

Carolyn Radisch and many of the neighbors present are concerned about the trend of reconstruction in the West End neighborhood. Carolyn distributed a photographic survey of the houses in the neighborhood. One could conclude from the survey that new houses do not fit with a distinctive and established neighborhood character. Carolyn explained that the neighborhood is unique by virtue of lot size, house style and massing and walk-ability of the neighborhood.

The neighbors are of the opinion that a new house recently built on a vacant lot on Downing Road is hostile to the street and neighborhood given its orientation, fenestration and architectural style. The design could be anywhere- but certainly not New England. Recent tear downs have shown the same sort of insensitivity. The neighbors are worried about this trend and the loss of existing streetscape. Someone suggested that architects don't get the concept of neighborhood design although they are very good at designing from the walls in. From the neighbors' perspective the street is much more than a place just to put your car. Development needs to be respectful of the fact that people walk on the street and interact with people who are on their porches and in their yards. The neighbors feel a certain sense of urgency. There is one house for sale on Downing Road that is a candidate for tear down and many modest homes on River Ridge which could be tear down candidates.

All agreed that we need to value and protect our historic resources. One suggestion which has been studied by the Planning Board is to amend the zoning ordinance to provide design standards with regard to the relationship of the front door to the garage. Carolyn suggested that the Planning Board consider a heritage district which is much less strict than an historic district. Carolyn provided a model ordinance and application form. She also noted that the NH Division of Historical Resources' *Preserving Community Character* which lists all of the towns with heritage and historic districts.

A lot of the houses in the neighborhood have had a lot of work that has been consistent with the neighborhood character. The tear downs are the problem because the respect for the basic building design is lost. For example, a single car garage set behind the house is a common pattern that never survives a tear down.

Tear downs, new construction on vacant lots and significant additions should be considered for design review.

Robin Nuse wants to protect the character of the neighborhood because she has seen utter disregard for the rest of the neighborhood. Some people were worried that the new house on Downing Road will affect the value of the neighboring Tudor House and maybe other houses on the street.

Susan Davidson does not like garages being so prominent. Iain Sim commented that it takes both the architect and property owner to agree on what is built so the architects should not take all the blame.

People felt that if you are in a neighborhood, there must be more consideration for the neighborhood context and houses. Development on a large lot with no close neighbors should not have to go through design review and the owner should be able to build in whatever style is desired.

Kate suggested that a garage be at least 20 feet from the front façade of the house so it is not the first thing that greets you.

Components of a neighborhood plan are listed in Neighborhood Design District handbook. Many of the components go beyond the use and dimensional controls currently in the zoning.

Judith Esmay summarized the work of the Committee: defining neighborhoods and creating zoning districts for each to account for the diversity in the neighborhoods. She liked the idea of considering Downing Road and West End a Heritage District.

Providing information to architects about neighborhood character was suggested. If that information could be provided before the design was final and submitted to the Town, it might be useful.

Joanna Whitcomb reported on changes in her neighborhood, Reservoir and Dresden roads. One out of five significant projects has been in keeping with the character of the neighborhood. The existing houses are really small and the new homes are much larger.

Guidelines could be developed and those criteria reviewed by a neighborhood design review committee. Significant additions might also be reviewed by the heritage commission. Any change to the exterior could be reviewed, but is not desired by most at the meeting.

Bulk, coverage, height, style, setbacks (from public and private roads) and house orientation are all issues in the West End which should be addressed. Carolyn said that parking must be considered when accessory units are proposed.

The neighborhood representatives would very much like a heritage district to come to Town Meeting 2012. The comprehensive re-write of the zoning ordinance is planned for consideration at Town Meeting 2013.

The neighborhood group could bring forward a petition if the Planning Board would not sponsor the amendment.

At the December 6 Planning Board meeting, the proposal to create a heritage district will be discussed. The proponents will need to convince the Planning Board that there is a problem, explain what the problem is, explain that there is a vehicle in NH law to address the problem, describe what area will be regulated and the specific criteria that would be reviewed for a proposal in a heritage district. In addition, the differences between a historic and heritage district must be explained.

Next week there will be no meeting next week. On Monday November 28 at 1:30 PM, the next meeting will be held. Accessory uses, buildings and structures will be discussed.

Meeting adjourned at 4: 05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Vicki Smith, Scribe

NEXT MEETING ON MONDAY NOVEMBER 28th at 1:30 pm.