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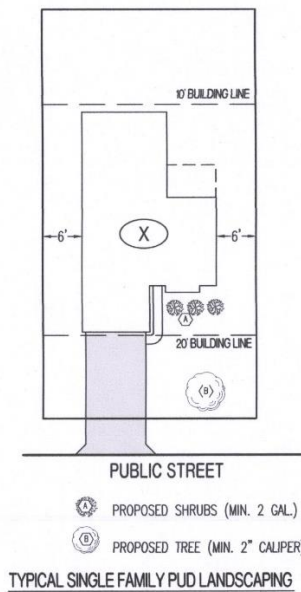
RE: CC Case #B5-21/P&Z Case #201-2020, the “Cottages of Northridge.”

Dear City Council:

I am writing in reference to City Council Case #B5-21/P&Z Case #201-2020, the “Cottages of Northridge.” There was discussion at 12/10/2020 Planning & Zoning Commission meeting regarding reasons to encourage this type of project - and I am in full support of those reasons. There are particulars about this specific project that were not discussed, however, that I believe should be taken into consideration.

The city’s Unified Development Code (UDC) limits “cottage” type development in parcels not classified as a subdivision to 1 acre. This limit makes sense because of the density that the cottage standard introduces – cottage standard density works at a small scale, but when applied to larger parcels, can introduce a level of concentration that is fatiguing. The Northridge parcel under consideration is 2.4 acres.

The widths of the existing R-1 lots in this neighborhood generally range between ~65’-0” and ~90’-0”. The proposed width for the cottage lots is generally shown at ~40’-0” and the PUD plan includes the following “typical landscaping plan.”



One of my concerns is that the proposed PUD plan allows 2-car garages in addition to 1-car garages – however the PUD plan does not include a landscaping plan for a home with a 2-car garage. If the garage and driveway width are doubled in the above diagram on a lot 40’-0” wide, it leaves approximately ~5’-0” for a front entrance to the house along the side of the garage and places all of the first-floor living spaces to the rear of the property behind the garage.

Should the street be developed with cottages with 2-car garages, the resulting development could appear to be more of an alley than a neighborhood street with no front porches to promote impromptu neighborly interactions and few “eyes on the street” to contribute to safety. This could be addressed in a variety of ways including: limiting the homes to a single car garage, increasing the minimum width of the lots to ensure a habitable room can face the street even when the home has a 2-car garage and/or varying the mix of lot widths and unit plans/types.

Another concern is that while the “landscape diagram” above identifies one possible footprint, there doesn’t appear to be anything in the PUD that prohibits the footprint of the home from extending to the setbacks. Based on an average lot size of ~40’-0” X ~95’-0”, this could result in a ~1,820 SF footprint – including ~240 SF for a 1-car garage or ~440 SF for a 2-car garage. At this size, the footprint of the home is more analogous to a standard single-family home than a “cottage” – on a lot of approximately half the size.

In addition to supporting the construction of affordable housing, we should be ensuring development is creating – and maintaining – appealing and safe neighborhoods for all Columbia citizens. The UDC includes standards to both allow the “cottage style” development and to limit it. This provides the opportunity to mix housing types, while limiting potentially adverse effects. While I fully encourage the use of the cottage model, I do not believe this proposal does enough to limit the potentially adverse effects of concentrated housing.

Sincerely,

Sara Loe