Zoning Ordinance Rewrite: Web Site Response

Date: 15 May 2001
Time: 15:17:25

What_infill_development_concerns_do_you_for_see_Tempe_having:

High rises without regard for neighborhoods

What_types_of_concerns_are_there_for_compatibility_of_uses:

Loud and obnixeous businesses within ear shot of neighborhoods

Are_there_any_issues_with_regard_to_Tempes_parking_requirements:

not in residential areas

What_is_your_view_on_project_application_procedures_and_processes:

not making sure the citizens stay involved and listened to. Letting the chosen few make the decisions

Where_in_Tempe_or_in_the_Valley_have_you_seen_projects_done_right:

The street narrowing of 5th st. is outstanding

Any_items_in_the_Zoning_Ordinance_you_would_like_to_see_addressed:

Making sure that there is no rezoning of neighborhood areas without the people's inputs..

Additional_Comments:

Building and planting stratigically to reduce noise

****

T1: Karyn XXXXXXX

Additional_Comments:

DATE: June 6, 2001
Phase I of this process has been completed, and I have only recently read and processed the various input on development/redevelopment/infill development regulation for our neighborhoods. This is an exciting discussion, and one in which our neighborhoods have long engaged. At this point my biggest concerns are as follows:

Concern #1: Putting appropriately revised, amended and coordinated regulations and process into place is only the first part of what needs to happen to update the development process and to ensure that it correlates with our developing urbanist collective consciousness. Having been involved as a citizen for the past 15 years, I can state from experience that much of neighborhood frustration with development comes from broken promises and failure to see the promised product materialize in the neighborhood. Too often the developer goes to the

City and submits 'necessary' revisions during the implementation phase. These are routinely granted after review by staff without additional discussion with the neighbors who agreed to the plan as a condition for its approval in the first place. Finish construction materials change, landscaping changes, major equipment impact becomes excessive, deadlines aren't met, and details are changed or omitted. There are cases in which the developer simply implements project changes without any notification. These may or may not be noticed in time to request review by the City. The City inspection process as implemented does not cover the more delicate 'social context' agreements reached with neighbors. Once built, the neighbors lose some of what they thought they were getting and the developer pockets what would have been cost overruns.

My concern is: how can we include a piece in the process that will allow ongoing monitoring during the construction process itself? It seems that this might happen if there were penalties and/or incentives included in the regulations or in the development package. It would also be helpful to include a requirement for neighborhood input and feedback during the inspection process as a project is implemented.

Concern #2: We continue to march ahead without finalizing (and having the use of) the visioning and planning work that has been accomplished to date by our neighborhoods under the auspices of the City. Thousands of hours of meeting and charette time, reviewing and planning by hundreds of people are about to fade into obsolescence because our strategic plan, though completed in spring 1999, is not yet near being shaped into a Specific Area Plan (SAP). The Planning Area Advisory Board (PAAB) was up and hobbling by the end of 1999, its main purpose, as far as some constituents could see and were told, to advise planning staff on what would need to be a thorough and meticulous garnering of public input through the creation of the draft SAP up to its presentation to Council for adoption. At that time a tentative timeline was set by staff for presentation of a draft SAP: four to six months hence; i.e., late fall or winter 1999. It did not happen. It has not happened. The PAAB still does not have its own house in order, yet it continues to sit in review of projects brought to the table as its major, and generally only, responsibility. Process issues generally, and the Specific Area Plan more specifically, continue to get short shrift. The question of when and even whether these topics should be discussed continues to engender divisiveness and dissension on this board. The PAAB was informed by Dave Fackler not long ago that the Planning Department is critically short of staff (in response to "why is the Specific Area Plan not happening?"), and that it would cost $60,000 to hire consultants to shape the Strategic Area Plan into a Specific Area Plan. He said that he would rather see that amount of money go into the hiring of permanent planning staff. (Councilmembers Cahill and Copple were in attendance at this meeting.)

The City’s first Specific Area Plan is a crucial planning piece in moving us toward our vision for the Northwest Tempe Neighborhoods. As an addendum to Tempe's General Plan it will be the foundation for the work the PAAB engages in and a point of reference for both neighbors and developers. Its importance, relative to the importance of the strategic plan, is that the City Council will have adopted it. It will have the weight of the Council and the General Plan behind it. It will be a process blueprint for planning in other Tempe regions. It will

also be a model for an inclusive community planning process, one in which the community is an active participant.

My concern is: why hasn't the City stepped back to reorder and clarify its priorities regarding resources allotted to our neighborhoods? Surely this board is not working out to be the template for similar boards throughout the City, another stated objective for the startup PAAB. Staff efforts can be better applied elsewhere, perhaps in working on the SAP itself. If this board continues to hobble along, minimally its poor leadership needs to change. In addition, staff needs to be more receptive, available and accommodating to board members. The citizens on this board should not be serving on a board that is not adequately staffed (minutes not transcribed for months, senior staff not in attendance at meetings, etc.) Members of any board would have a difficult time doing their jobs under these conditions, and sitting in these meetings has felt like an exercise in frustration to me since the board’s startup. The City of Tempe owes more respect to its citizen volunteers in this arena.

(An aside: the PAAB as a planning instrument can be compared to Phoenix’ piecemeal approach to Sky Harbor expansion. Phoenix is in hot pursuit of as much aviation development as they can make happen as fast as they can make it happen. Tempe has been confused by poor communication with constituents and surrounding communities, no master plan that integrates the components of expansion, and no overall scope. This is planning at its poorest and disregard for neighbors as well as for regional interests and needs. Comprehensive regional planning would benefit the entire valley economically. Their current development strategy has, however, allowed Phoenix to play fast and loose with federal requirements such as determining environmental impacts. My expectation is that this approach will be more costly for Phoenix in the long run.)