

## Meeting Notes

To: Eunice Kim, City of Salem  
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From: Heather Austin, 3J Consulting  
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**Project Name: Salem Multifamily Housing Design Project**  
**Project No: 18510.3**

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On February 27, 2019, the City of Salem conducted a public workshop to present initial code concepts to update Salem's design standards for multifamily housing. The workshop was part of the Multifamily Housing Design project, which aims to help meet Salem's housing needs by removing barriers to the development of multifamily housing and ensuring that new development is compatible with our neighborhoods.

The public workshop began with a [presentation](#) by the City's project manager Eunice Kim and consultant Elizabeth Decker. Eunice provided an overview of the project, including its goals, purpose, and timeline. Elizabeth then briefly described initial code concepts that would be discussed in further detail in small groups. Those concepts were grouped into five topics: Project size, parking, setbacks/compatibility, open space, and process. Input from the small group discussions is provided below. It will be used to help refine the initial code concepts as part of the next step in the Multifamily Housing Design project.

Following the small group discussions, City staff and the consultant team reported the input they heard in their groups to all meeting participants. The public workshop concluded with a question and answer session. That information is provided at the end of this meeting summary. More information about the public workshop can be found on the [project website](#).

### Project Size

#### *Three-family and four-family developments*

- General support for exempting three- and four-family developments from multifamily design standards with comments and concerns listed below
  - o There are current examples where an existing single-family residential home is converted to a multifamily complex with up to seven dwelling units, but no additional parking is provided.
    - City/consultant response: Parking is proposed per dwelling unit, so this situation would not be permitted by the proposed code.
  - o Would there be a maximum size for the three- and four-family developments?
    - City/consultant response: The size would be determined by the setbacks, lot coverage, and height standards of the underlying zone.
  - o Are there limits to the heights of these developments?



- Response: The maximum heights for multifamily housing are 35 feet in the Multiple Family Residential (RM-I) Zone and 50 feet in the Multiple Family Residential (RM-II) Zone.
- It would be nice if these three- and four-family developments look more like single-family homes.

*Small to medium-sized multifamily developments*

- General support for limiting the review standards for small to medium-sized multifamily developments with comments and concerns listed below
  - It might be a good idea to look at the small/medium projects as five to 10 units instead of five to 12 units based on recent State legislation regarding rent control thresholds.
  - Parking in the back is preferred. Tuck under parking is preferred by neighbors, but developers find it to be prohibitively expensive.
  - Buildings should be oriented to street, with at least one unit's entrance facing the street or a thoughtful street-facing design.
  - The project at 25<sup>th</sup> and State is good example of a small project built with no parking on-site, but it seems to work.

**Parking**

*On-street credit*

- General support with comments and concerns listed below
  - Support for using on-street parking for a credit, especially if you increase on-street parking (for example, converting parking to angle parking, which increases the number of spaces)
  - Count the length available on the curb to determine how many spaces fit, and use this for the parking credit on streets that do not have striped parking
  - Site-specific reductions supported: On-street parking is available in some neighborhoods, so there would be support, but some neighborhoods cannot handle more parking on the street
  - Some neighborhoods have RP (Residential Parking) permit restrictions. They may not support more on-street parking, due to the demand that already exists.
  - On-street parking can create conflicts between neighbors
    - Fighting for parking
    - Calls to police about "suspicious car" on the street

*Reduction to 1 space per unit*

- Unanimous support for three and four-unit developments
- Majority (but not total) support for three to 12 unit developments (or maybe only three to 10 units)
- Additional comment: Studio and micro units should not require any parking

*Basing parking on bedroom size (1 space for studio/1 bedroom and 1.5 spaces for 2+ bedrooms)*

- Unanimous support



*Reductions for proximity to transit stops*

- General support
- Some think it should not be considered until transit service gets better
- Traffic concerns in town/lack of transit use

*Reductions for additional bike parking, better bike amenities*

- Unanimous support
- Unsure of appropriate reduction allowed

*Reductions for regulated affordable housing units*

- Unanimous support
- Unsure of appropriate reduction allowed

*Reductions for developments with car share*

- Unanimous support
- Unsure of appropriate reduction allowed

*Other Comments*

- Better options for shared parking: Make it easier to share parking amongst developments/uses
- New State rent control law treats 10 units and less differently than larger complexes. The City should consider matching these rules (parking and others) to the rent control law. Maybe make it easier to adjust standard (easier process).

**Setbacks/Compatibility**

*There was not a clear general consensus on setbacks and compatibility.*

- Mature trees are effective for screening
- Reducing setbacks allows for better circulation and open space in the site
- A 1:1 ratio of height to setback creates a “no man’s” land that isn’t really usable, but may be appropriate for very large structures with a lot of building bulk
- Four-story structures are unlikely next to single-family homes
  - o What about adjustments to make height greater? (Already an option today)
- Why require a fence? It may create barriers.
  - o What about hedges or obscuring vegetation instead? Big hedges are appropriate for screening
- A closer setback poses a potential building and life safety hazard
- Opinions were mixed about whether or not a children’s play area should be allowed in the setback. Some liked the idea while others thought it should be internal to the site.
- Opinions were mixed on whether or not balconies should be precluded on the building side overlooking the Residential Agriculture (RA) or Single Family Residential (RS) zones
  - o Some feel it enhances safety
  - o Some appreciate the idea of having personal open space
  - o Some feel it should be up to the builder
- A 20-ft setback is appropriate depending on the height of the building and/or the landscaping
- Mixed feedback about stepped height for buildings



- Some feel it enhances compatibility
- Others feel that height heterogeneity is attractive, and restrictions can sometimes make buildings look weird
- Emphasis on making sure stepped is an option rather than a requirement

### Open Space

- General support for a reduced on-site open space requirement with comments and concerns listed below
  - 30% is an excessive amount of common open space
  - 30% is especially excessive for five to 12 units or smaller developments
  - Balconies should not be considered as open space
  - Play structures are not really utilized. Open grassy areas would be better than having children's recreation areas with play structures that are not utilized.
  - Other amenities should be allowed to be provided in-lieu of play structures
  - Smaller developments may not need play areas
  - Small broken-up open space areas that are spread out from each other are not as beneficial as larger, better located, open space area
  - There was support for providing more flexibility in the types/ways open space is provided
  - Green stormwater infrastructure also takes up space on development sites
  - Support was expressed for allowing a reduction in the amount of required open spaces next to parks. A suggestion was made that on-site open space could entirely be eliminated if a property was within one-quarter mile of a park and the applicant paid a fee to the City for further enhancement of the park. Another suggestion was made that you could allow for varying reductions in the amount of required open space depending on different distances from parks, rather than just one, one-quarter mile distance
  - Less overall open space could mean better/usable space

### Process

#### *Group consensus is that:*

- The current Type III review process (requires a public hearing) can be unpredictable and can be a barrier for development.
- Allow for a staff level, Type II review process (requires public notice but no public hearing) for projects where one to five standards need to be adjusted.
- Projects needing more than five adjustments should still be subject to the current Type III review process.

### Notes from the Question and Answer Session

- Multifamily is required to be located along arterials. Staff responded that this is not the case.
- What is the process/timeline for this project? Staff gave an overview of the schedule with the next public outreach occurring in April and possible public hearings this summer.
- Would like to see notification of Type I reviews sent to neighbors and neighborhood associations
- A public hearing should be limited to only those items that cannot meet the objective standards (not the entire project)



- Solar access is important: Shadows on a street are fine, shadows on a neighbor's property are not
- How will the comments from the work session be weighted/measured? (Elizabeth responded that the thoughts will be summarized, and a survey will be produced that will be used for more measurable results)
- Before allowing credits for on-street parking, it should be determined that the street is built to a standard that accommodates on-street parking
- Before allowing credits for on-street parking, the existing amount of parking on the street should be known
- Parking should never be limited to one side of the street in design because that is not what actually happens. People park on the side marked "no parking," and there is no enforcement done by the City to stop this.
- When considering what changes to make to the code, City staff and the consultants should widen the sphere of where the information comes from- not just from neighboring jurisdictions but from other, larger cities like San Francisco.

