

**PLACE Design Task Force and Board of Architectural Review
Joint Workshop Minutes
August 17, 2017, 1:00 – 2:30 p.m.
City Hall Basement Conference Room**

PLACE Members Present

Chair Mike Stoneking, Rachel Lloyd, Chris Henry, Tim Mohr, Andrew Mondschein

BAR Members Present

Chair Melanie Miller, Carl Schwarz, Tim Mohr

Staff Present

Lisa Robertson, Carrie Rainey

Guests Present

Mark Rylander, Ashley Davies, Nicole Scro, Steve Blaine, Greg Powe, Mark Kestner

Call to Order

Chairs Mike Stoneking and Melanie Miller called the work session to order at 1:00pm.

Agenda

1. Height Definition and Calculations

Chair Stoneking: Provided an overview on potential options for modifying the definition of height in the Zoning section of the code of ordinances (Chapter 34) and the resulting calculations necessary.

Mr. Powe: Prefers measuring from the street grade because from the street where the public perceives the building. The back yard is an issue of setbacks and bulk plane. County does this (measures height from street, does not measure height from the back).

Ms. Robertson: Provided the existing definitions of height and the grade. Building height is something different in the definition. She pictures suggesting something not currently in the text (suggests height from street for height

Mr. Schwarz: Prefers getting rid of the average height part that [Ms. Roberston] is highlighting in document, so the result is height is measured from grade to the highest point of the building.

Mr. Rylander: In theory this could apply to detached residences and other less urban areas.

The group discussed whether the City could have multiple building height calculations, such as different calculations for residences and commercial buildings.

The group discussed lots with multiple street frontages. If multiple streets front a lot, there could be multiple grade planes on one lot. Another potential option could be to calculate the average grade for the lot.

Mr. Mohr: Could use increments to find grade plane, perhaps 100 foot spacing, for each section, then use that as basis.

Chair Stoneking: Provided research on what other cities do on measuring height.

Mr. Powe: The question is: how do you find the average?

Mr. Blaine: Proposes measuring the average level of the grade adjacent the exterior wall adjacent to the [primary] street. We are talking about measuring the building, so why not base it on the building?

Mr. Schwarz: Read the definition of height of grade plan and building from the International Building Code (IBC). He noted this is close to what we have now. We should be figuring out how tall the building can be before it is designed, not figuring out the height after it is designed.

The group discussed how to break up the grid to use the massing system Mr. Schwarz described so that it does not end with problems shown on board that Mr. Blaine pointed out (end up with short portions on grade).

Ms. Davies: We need to remember that the end user is staff and the public, the solution needs to be simple and easy to understand.

Mr. Schwarz: We also need to have predictability.

Mr. Henry: Building height cannot control the entire character of the building, we need bulk plane and other items as well.

Mr. Schwarz: We only have bulk plane in the West Main [districts] right now, so there is a risk.

Mr. Powe: Most zones have thoughtful requirements in the zoning requirements that speak to the residential areas that are nearby. Zoning has ways of crafting the mass; the height definition should not craft the volume.

The group discussed buildings farther from the street, and how relief could be given to measure from the building instead of the street.

Mr. Powe: Proposed a weighted average of the total façade: square footage of the facade divided by the length. We create height regulations because we don't want things higher than a certain thing- so we don't want the ability to create something bigger with averaging. Otherwise, just get rid of regulations.

The increments would be arbitrary, and could create unexpected problems that are symptomatic of the increments. Could be a range of increments, must have two breaks for 100 feet, not increment every 50-feet.

Rules should be your safety net. The rule should protect us from the worst outcome.

Ms. Lloyd: We should avoid ways of measuring of height that creates discrepancies as shown now and let those be figured out with FBC.

Maybe we ignore long buildings and massing later in the zoning code, but work out definition of height now.

Every section of façade (segment) would establish a centerline as measured from grade at that point to height of that point must be below the height of the district. But where is the breakpoint between different sides of the building?

Allowing flexibility in the middle of a lot can still affect light levels, etc.

Mr. Rylander: The grade plane is the simplest [option] from the staff's perspective (Arlington uses this), take four (4) points along the building to set the grade plane and then measure up from that.

Mr. Henry: The limits are really for protection of the public realm.

The group discussed a weighted plane on the street, because grade can also drop away from the street. 20 feet into the plane of the building is where we are measuring. We can incentivize breaking up the building because the result is set by each façade.

Ms. Davies: We could have a separate system to measure residential areas (plane).

The group expressed some consensus that height should be measured from the street.

The group decided to create memorandums for each represented group (PLACE, BAR, CADRE) that builds upon this discussion.

Meeting adjourned at 2:40pm.