Conserving Traditional Neighborhoods in Los Angeles: A Strategy for Sustainability

October 18, 2014
Winter & Company
What makes LA Special?

• Diversity of its Neighborhoods!
  – Culturally
  – Geographically
  – Periods of development
  – Layers of occupation by different cultural groups
  – All-American!

Neighborhood Conservation and Sustainability
Conserving traditional neighborhoods is green

- Reusing resources
- Walkable neighborhoods
- Healthy neighborhoods
- Energy conserving

See also: Preservation Green Lab, National Trust for Historic Preservation
Reusing Resources

- Building continue in use
- Materials remain in use
- Embodied energy is saved
Walkable neighborhoods

• More connected
• Accessible to transit
• Accessible to services
Healthy Neighborhoods

- Invite activity
- Close to food, health care, personal services
- More diverse socially and economically
- Diversity of housing options
- Permit "aging in place"
Energy conserving

• When traditional features are used actively
  – Porches
  – Awnings
  – Operable windows
Windows

- Repair and retrofitting has the same, or better, payback.
Job creation

New Construction

Rehabilitation

Materials

Labor

Neighborhood Conservation and Sustainability
Property values in historic districts

Average Property Values -- Memphis 2002

Neighborhood Conservation and Sustainability
The 3 Aspects of Sustainability

• Historic and traditional neighborhoods support all three of these!
Why Care about Neighborhood Character?

- Supports sustainability initiatives
- Keeps neighborhoods vital
  - Attracts investment in maintenance
  - Maintains property values
The Challenge:

• Dealing with your own success!
What Others are Doing:

• Context-sensitive zoning
• Tailored overlay districts
  – HPOZs
  – Conservation Districts
  – Other special overlays
Contexts in Denver

Neighborhood Conservation and Sustainability
Standards Focus on Building Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standards Focus on Building Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**TANDEM HOUSE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Height</strong></th>
<th>M-RH-3</th>
<th>M-RX-S</th>
<th>M-MX-S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stories (max)</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feet (max)</td>
<td>40'</td>
<td>40'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side Wall Height (Max)</td>
<td>24'</td>
<td>24'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Siting</strong></th>
<th>M-RH-3</th>
<th>M-RX-S</th>
<th>M-MX-S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zone Lot Size (min)</td>
<td>4,500 ft²</td>
<td>4,500 ft²</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone Lot Width (min)</td>
<td>50'</td>
<td>50'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwelling Units per Primary Structure (min/max)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Setbacks**

| D Primary Street (min) | 10' | 10' |
| E Side Street (min)   | 10' | 10' |
| F Side, Interior, for Primary Structure #1 (min one side/min combined)* | 5'7½' | 5/7½' |
| G Side, Interior, for Primary Structure #2 (min one side/min combined)* | 5'7½' | 5'7½' |
| H Rear, for Primary Structure #1, as a % of lot depth (min) | 50% | 50% |
| I Rear, for Primary Structure #2 alley/no alley (min) | 5'7½' | 5'7½' |
| J Required Separation Between Primary Structures (min) | 6' | 6' |

**Parking**

| Parking and Drive Lot Coverage in Primary Street Setback (max) | 50% |
| Vehicle Access | From alley or side street |

**Accessory Structures**

| Detached Accessory Structures Allowed | see Sec 9.7.3.2 |

**Design Elements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Configuration</th>
<th>M-RH-3</th>
<th>M-RX-S</th>
<th>M-MX-S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Structure Width (max)</td>
<td>36'</td>
<td>36'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Structure Length (max)</td>
<td>42'</td>
<td>42'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Street Facing Attached Garage Door Width in first 50% of lot depth (max)</td>
<td>33% of the entire width of the facade of the dwelling or 16, whichever is greater</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attached Garage Allowed</td>
<td>Shall not project closer to the front line of the zone lot than does any other part of the front facade of the dwelling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ground Story Activation**

| Primary Street Facing Entry Feature or Building Entrance Required | Yes |

*Must be offset to be visible from the street if to the rear of Primary Structure #1 (side setbacks may be reversed from Primary Structure #1)
Zoning Standards & Design Guidelines

- Zoning Standards
  - Use
  - Setbacks
  - Height
  - General Massing

- Design Guidelines
  - Compatibility
  - Building Scale, Orientation and Massing
  - Architectural Style
  - Detailed Design Considerations

West Palm Beach
Historic Districts in a Broader Community Character System

Heritage Conservation System

- Historic Landmarks and Districts
- Conservation Districts
- Context Sensitive Zoning

Neighborhood Conservation and Sustainability

Tacoma, WA
Indirect Initiatives

- Supportive building codes
- Supportive energy/sustainability codes
- Demolition delays
- Demolition debris re-purposing
- Solar access ordinances
Building Tools

- Solar Fence
- Bulk Plane

Building form steps down to increase solar access

Neighborhood Conservation and Sustainability
Demolition waste reduction program

"65% of demolition materials must be repurposed" - City of Boulder, CO
Some Themes:

• Coordinate the tools
• Keep the system simple
• Use the correct tool for the specific objectives
re:code LA and neighborhood conservation:

• A complete re-write of the code
• Existing regulations will be retained
• New zone districts will be created to be available that will be more context-sensitive
• Re-mapping will occur in response to neighborhood requests
PLAN re:code

A New Zoning Code for a 21st Century Los Angeles
To create livable communities, encourage sustainable development and foster economic vitality, we need a modern and user-friendly zoning code – we need to re:code LA.

Zoning Code Evaluation Report

OCTOBER 06, 2014
## 1. Distinct Neighborhoods

1.1. Combine the Existing Residential Requirements into a New System
1.2. Continue to Protect Historic Resources and Established Neighborhoods
1.3. Address Impacts within Single-Family Residential Neighborhoods
1.4. Enhance Multi-Family Design Standards
1.5. Improve the Transition Between Corridors and Neighborhoods
1.6. Retain the Rural Lifestyle

## 2. Housing Affordability and Diversity

2.1. Continue to Provide Incentives for Affordable Housing
2.2. Minimize the Displacement of Core Transit Ridership
2.3. Provide More Prescriptive Setting of Housing Options
2.4. Improve Regulations for Second Units
2.5. Enhance the Design of Small Lot Subdivisions
2.6. Remove Barriers to Micro-housing
2.7. Improve Options for Shared Housing Communities

## 3. Centers and Corridors

3.1. Improve Base Zoning Options for Commercial Corridors
3.2. Require Enhanced Walkability and Form Standards
3.3. Expand and improve the Approach to Commercial Corridors
3.4. Provide Enhanced Standards for Landscaping
3.5. Integrate Sign Types and Design Standards within the New Zoning
3.6. Consider Improved Options for Design Review
Conserving Neighborhood Character

• A major concept in the Code Evaluation Report
• Have base zoning do the "heavy lifting"
• Keep it simple!
• Use conservation tools strategically
Modeling Current Trends

Boulder, CO

Neighborhood Conservation and Sustainability
Neighborhood Typologies

Typology A1

Description
This area typifies many of the earlier single family residential neighborhoods in the City. The development pattern in this area has particular high lot coverage, with long street blocks concentrating consistently narrow lots. Detached sidewalks and mature street trees contribute a maturity and consistency to an already relatively cohesive pattern of housing. Fenced backyards tend to be consistent while the building form varies considerably either between lots or within the block. Building height is also relatively consistent. This would seem to be the most consistent of the residential typologies.

Differs from other traditional typologies:
- Very high lot coverage and narrow streets
- No front accessed parking
- Very consistent pattern of street trees

Framework Features
- Block Pattern: Regular Rectilinear Grid
- Street Orientation: Long, Narrow
- Lot Shape & Orientation: Lot Bounded by Streets, Narrow, with Some Exceptions
- Lot Coverage: 50% & Greater
- Building Orientation: GEN. With Lot Forward
- Parking Access/Location: GEN. Rear Access
- Site Features: 38'4" by 145'
- Site Setback: 20'
- Roof Height: 25'-35'
- Roof Form: Front Gable, Some Hip
- Consistent Front Porch
- Transparency (Window Location 1%): 30-50%

Building Placement Diagram

Extract of the Snapshot Area - Aerial Photograph (Left)
Extract of the Snapshot Area - Building Placement Diagram (Right)

The photograph of Congress Park above shows the consistent pattern of front porches and back of front vehicle use prevalent in typology A1.

As shown in the photograph of Congress Park above, A1 tends to have the most consistent pattern of street trees among typologies.

The sloping elements of typology A1 are not always recognized in contemporary infill projects.

As shown above, there is usually a consistent pattern of detached alley-loaded garages in typology A1.
Defining Context

Neighborhood Conservation and Sustainability
Computer Model Contexts

Context C - Eastside

Neighborhood Conservation and Sustainability
Trends compared with Max. Envelope
Development Potential
Starting Conditions

Boulder, CO

Neighborhood Conservation and Sustainability
Conversations
Today

• Be forward thinking!
• Get creative!
• What can you do next?
  – Assessing your neighborhood
  – #LASToryhood