

Innovative Housing Review Panel Report

To: Technical Committee

From: Innovative Housing Review Panel
David Scott Meade, Chair (Design Review Board member)
Vibhas Chandorkar, Vice Chair (Planning Commissioner)
Judd Black (Technical Committee representative)
Michael Evans (Grass Lawn neighborhood representative)
Robert Hall (Design Review Board member)
Alex Vaschillo (Youth Advocate)
Susan Petitpas (alternate, Planning Commissioner)

Staff Contacts: Sarah Stiteler, AICP, Senior Planner, 556-2469, sstiteler@redmond.gov
Jeff Churchill, AICP, Associate Planner, 556-2492,
jchurchill@redmond.gov

Date: February 5, 2009

Project Name: Rosehill Community Development

Applicant: Yuval Sofer, Rosehill Community Development

Review Panel Decision: Authorization to proceed consistent with this report and its exhibits

Project Summary:

Site size:	0.99 acres
Location:	7300 and 7306 132 nd Avenue NE
Neighborhood:	Grass Lawn
Underlying zoning:	R-6
Unit count:	9
Unit types:	Single-family detached
Unit sizes:	Approximately 1,638-2,552 square feet

Summary of Important Project Components: In addition to looking at the project as a whole, the Review Panel identified several conditions that it concluded are important to the success of the project. The conditions are to:

- Provide 10-foot average perimeter setbacks, with no perimeter setback less than five feet; the intent of this condition is to allow for limited encroachments, such as for home corners;

- Develop an alternative garage plan for review by the Technical Committee where the garage entry is from the north rather than the west;
- Reduce the size of the homes such that at least five homes meet Redmond's definition of size-limited; and,
- Provide at least one home affordable to a family earning no more than 120% of area median income.¹

Findings of Fact

1. Public Involvement and Notice

a. Neighborhood Meeting Date

The applicant hosted a neighborhood meeting on October 6, 2008.

b. Notice

The neighborhood meeting was advertised to property owners and residents within 500 feet of the proposed development, to property owners and residents in the Rose Hill Heights South annexation area, and on the City's website.

2. Public Comments

The Panel received oral and written testimony in connection with the neighborhood meeting on October 6th and Review Panel meetings on December 15th and January 12th. Sixteen residents attended the open house in October. Five citizens provided oral testimony on December 15th; six did so on January 12th. Written comments are attached as Exhibit C. Oral comments are summarized below and in Exhibit B.

❖ Privacy

A citizen commented that tall homes near property lines would reduce privacy, especially along the south property line, where an existing home is near the site. Citizens also commented that five-foot perimeter setbacks would be inadequate to preserve privacy for neighbors. Another citizen commented that proposed tree removal would compromise neighbor privacy and would harm existing trees on adjacent properties.

❖ Density

Citizens stated that the development would be denser than surrounding development, and for that reason would not fit-in with the surrounding neighborhood.

¹ The text of the Staff Report to the Innovative Housing Review Panel contains an error on the desired household income level for this unit. The intent of the Report is to require one unit affordable to a family earning up to 120% of area median income, as the criteria matrix prepared by staff clearly states.

❖ **Home Size**

Citizens stated that the applicant had originally pledged that the homes would be cottages, and not as large as they are proposed to be. A citizen also stated that the largest proposed homes are larger than the average home in the neighborhood.

❖ **Parking Quantity**

Neighbors questioned whether the number of proposed parking space (24) would be adequate. In particular, they asked whether there would be enough guest and overflow parking.

❖ **Parking Garage**

Several citizens objected to the proposed below-grade parking garage. Many said that there were no other such garages in the neighborhood and that such a design was not compatible with the neighborhood. A citizen stated that the parking garage could become transient housing, a drug trafficking location, and/or marked by graffiti; the same citizen also said that such garages are technically difficult to construct. Another citizen said that the garage could also present drainage issues. A citizen stated that the parking garage could harm or kill nearby trees because of impacts to their root system.

❖ **Home Design**

A citizen commented that the homes felt too urban for the site and neighborhood. Several citizens cited the roof forms in particular as being out of character with surrounding development. Others objected that some of the homes would be three-stories tall, where surrounding homes are not that tall. Several citizens objected to the design of the homes, calling them “pre-fab” and “anti-septic,” among other descriptors.

❖ **Site Design**

A citizen stated that the roof lines appeared too close together on one of the applicant’s drawings. Another citizen questioned the need for a community building. She noted that for all of Issaquah Highlands’ 3,500 units, there is only one community center.

❖ **Drainage**

Citizens commented that development of the site would add to drainage problems that already exist in the area. Another citizen commented that the drainage plan included rain swales that, according to her research, should be at least ten feet away from building foundations. A citizen also commented that she did not see any innovative stormwater management features in the proposal.

❖ **Traffic**

Several citizens commented that 132nd Ave. NE is a congested arterial, and that this proposal would increase congestion on that street. A citizen commented that many pedestrians use 132nd Ave. NE. A citizen asked what frontage improvements would be required as part of this proposal.

❖ **Affordability**

A citizen commented that the proposal, though more dense, did nothing to improve affordability options.

❖ **Innovation**

Several citizens stated that the proposal did not include sufficient innovative features to be considered under Redmond's Innovative Housing Ordinance. A citizen described her earlier experience with innovative housing, and commented that this proposal was not innovative by comparison.

Conclusions

1. Key Issues Discussed by the Review Panel

❖ **Parking Garage**

A Panel member with professional law enforcement and security experience believed that the parking garage as proposed was a bad idea and would invite security problems. He expressed particular concern that the garage would provide an opening for car prowlers. He suggested that there be more eyes on the entrance of the garage, perhaps by moving the entrance to the garage to the interior of the site.

Other Panel members weighed those comments against the site design and community benefits that placing the cars in a garage could afford. Panel members cited the ability to leave the surface of the site car-free as a major asset to the proposal. Putting the cars below grade opens up community space on the site and eliminates the need for an internal road. Panel members noted that cars parked at single family homes in Redmond invite car prowls.

The compromise position of the Panel was that the applicant would develop an alternative entrance scenario such that the entrance is from the north, interior to the site, rather than from the west, along 132nd Ave. NE. The Technical Committee could review this scenario and the west entrance scenario to evaluate which option is best overall.

❖ **Perimeter Setbacks**

Several citizens testified that five-foot perimeter setbacks would be inadequate to maintain privacy. A majority of Panel members felt that the perimeter setbacks should be 10 feet,

except in limited circumstances. A Panel member noted that a 10-foot rear yard setback is standard in Redmond's single-family zones, and believed that the same standard should prevail on this site in the interest of being a good neighbor.

One Panel member believed that the staff recommendation of 10-foot setbacks on the south perimeter and five-foot setbacks on the north and east perimeter was appropriate, noting that the Innovative Housing Ordinance provides for such flexibility.

The compromise position of the Panel was to require an average 10-foot perimeter setback on all sides, with no setback perimeter setback less than five feet. The Panel's intent is to allow for limited exceptions, such as allowing home corners to encroach into the 10-foot perimeter setback area.

❖ **Community Building**

The Panel discussed that the community building could be an asset to the development, but also restricted the amount of community open space. In the end, the Panel decided that it would be up to the applicant to weigh the pros and cons of including the community building on the site.

❖ **Home Style and Orientation**

The Panel was favorable to the applicant's proposal to change the roof forms on two of the homes – #7 and #9 – in order to include more traditional roof styles on homes that will be near neighbors or visible from 132nd Ave. NE. The Panel was also favorable to the applicant's proposal to reorient the living spaces in home #9 toward 132nd Ave. NE. The Panel believed it helped give the development more presence on the street.

To this end, the Panel recommended expanding the porches of Units C and E as semi-private spaces, and flipping the main floor plan of Unit E to bring more living space to the front. Panelists noted that functional porches that act as semi-private spaces were instrumental to the success of similar developments.

❖ **Landscaping**

The Panel requested that the applicant more fully screen the parking garage from the south neighbor and from 132nd Ave. NE, recognizing that the height of landscaping on 132nd Ave. NE is limited because of driver safety and visibility considerations.

The Panel discussed a variety of other aspects of the development. An issues matrix is attached as Exhibit A, and meeting summaries are attached as Exhibit B.

2. Staff Conclusions

The conclusions contained in the Staff Report as shown in Exhibit D should be adopted, except to the extent they are modified by the Review Panel's decisions.

3. Innovative Housing Review Panel Decision

The Review Panel decided that the proposal was consistent with Redmond's Innovative Housing Program and authorized the applicant to proceed with a site plan entitlement application consistent with the applicant's description of the proposal as shown in Exhibit D, subject to the conditions of the Review Panel described above.

List of Exhibits

Exhibit A: Final Issues Matrix

Exhibit B: Meeting Summaries: December 15, 2008 and January 12, 2009

Exhibit C: Public Comment

Exhibit D: Staff Report with Exhibits (includes applicant's submittal package)

Robert G. Odle, Planning Director

Date

David Scott Meade, Innovative Housing Review Panel Chair

Date

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