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Date: January 9, 2013

To: Planning Commission

From: Cary Teague, Community Development Director

Re: Zoning Ordinance Amendments – Residential Development (History of “Massing” Issue since 2006)

Over the past six years the City of Edina has studied and attempted to address the issue of smaller single-family homes be replaced by much larger single-family homes. Edina has referred to the issue as the “Massing” of single family homes; other communities have called it McMansions replacing smaller homes.

The following is a summary and history of what the City has done to address this issue over the past six years.

Also attached is a comparison of Edina’s Zoning Ordinance regulations to surrounding cities; and examples of recent homes built on 40-foot, 50-foot and 75+ foot wide lots that have been maxed to the City’s Zoning Ordinance regulations.

August 2006 – A Massing Study was completed. The complete study can be found on the city’s website at: http://www.ci.edina.mn.us/Departments/L4_MassingTaskforce.htm
A Citizen Massing Task Force was created to assist with the study. The study concluded that the new large homes being constructed generally fit into their neighborhoods. There may be a few exceptions. Minor changes to the Zoning Ordinance were recommended.

November 2006 – The Planning Commission considered the Massing study. (See attached minutes.)

January 2007 – Council work session on Massing. Three changes are considered by the City Council to address the massing issue:

1. Measure height from existing grade, rather than proposed grade. A noted problem was new homes being built on fill that seem to tower over adjacent homes.
2. Increase side yard setbacks on lots 60-75 feet wide. This would reduce building mass from the street. The problem of big homes tended to be on smaller lots.



3. No more bay window setback exceptions. The City was experiencing two level bay windows being created to extend into required setbacks.

March 2007 – Planning Commission review of three (3) Zoning Ordinance changes recommended by the City Council at the January work session. (See attached minutes.)

June 2007 – City Council considered and approved the three changes.

1. No more bay window setback exceptions.
2. The increase in side yard setbacks. (Implementing a sliding scale based on lot width increasing the separation between houses on lots that are between 61-75 feet in width). The required interior yard setback of 5 feet shall increase by 1/3 foot (4 inches) for each foot that the lot width exceeds 60 feet.
3. Restriction of the first floor elevation for new homes. (The lowest floor elevation of the new home may not be more than one-foot above the lowest floor elevation of the home that was torn down).

The height issue was continued for further discussion. The Council asked that the Massing Task Force meet to consider the height issue.

July – Sept. 2007 – the Massing Task Force re-convenes to look at the height issue. The following recommendations are made:

1. Building height should be measured from existing rather than proposed grade.
2. The first floor elevation of a new home should not exceed the first floor elevation of the previous home by more than one-foot. This is to ensure street level consistency of homes.

October 2007 – The City Council supports the recommendation of the Massing Task Force.

October 2007 – The City Council refers the Massing Task Force recommendation to the Planning Commission.

November 2007 – The City Council approves the Ordinance changes as recommended by the Massing Task Force and Planning Commission. As a result of a tear down and rebuild on Oaklawn in the South Harriet Park Neighborhood the City Council directed staff to further consider creating regulations to be more restrictive, and directed staff to prepare a moratorium ordinance that would prohibit the demolition of single-family dwellings in Edina.

December 2007 – The City Council does not adopt a moratorium to prevent homes from being torn down. The Council directs staff to draft an ordinance that further restricts the size of large new homes.



January 2008 – Staff hired the Collaborative Design Group to assist in preparing some 3D modeling to visually demonstrate proposed Ordinance Changes.

February 2008 – Staff drafted an Ordinance for the City Council to consider that established a maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR) based on lot width. The maximum proposed was between 40-50% depending on the width of the lot. Examples of enforcement of the Ordinance were run in several Edina Neighborhoods. Council referred the Ordinance to the Planning Commission for review.

March/April 2008 – The Planning Commission recommended denial of the Ordinance regarding FAR, and approval of a maximum height to the highest point of a roof of 35-40 feet depending on the width of a lot. The Planning Commission recommended denial of the Code change on FAR, and recommended, further study of the use of FAR in a vicinity manner and/or the use of FAR as part of character districts in a future rezoning of all homes in Edina. (See attached minutes.)

June 2008 – The City Council denied the proposed use of FAR, **but approved the maximum height to the top of a home (35-40 feet maximum)**. *There was not maximum height to the top of a home previously.* (See attached minutes.)

