

I've read through the DR Reform Project materials a couple of times now and I think that the concept of DR is valid. DR today is (and should remain) a political process to resolve questions of policy that cannot be addressed by planning code. It sounds like the arguments for changing DR and replacing public hearings with a Residential Design Committee and Hearing Officer are:

- The cost to the City to process DR's is growing
- Most DR's are "spite" DR's filed by neighbors on the West side against other neighbors
- Most DR's are about loss of light, air and view – but there is no right to a view
- Most DR's are rejected by the Planning Commission anyway

My concern is that while there are a lot of frivolous DR's, eliminating the entire option for a public hearing in front of the Planning Commission is a bit excessive. It would discard the best things about DR just because some people abuse the system. I would much rather see modifications to the front end of the DR process that would help "filter" out frivolous DR's while allowing valid DR's through to the Planning Commission.

This could include:

- Addition of a project Pre-Approval process that forces project sponsors to meet with neighbors before project designs are finalized, and expensive architectural drawings are produced. Even an exchange of a simple pre-Application form that describes the nature of the intended project and asks for suggestions and concerns and explains what rights neighbors "do have" as well as what rights they "do not have" (i.e. a right to a view), might defuse tension that otherwise would result in a DR.
- Routing all DR's to a Residential Design Committee and Hearing Officer may be a good way to filter out frivolous DR's, but should include the following stipulations:
  - Any DR that is filed by 3 or more neighbors (or a registered Neighborhood Group) should bypass the new process and go directly to the Planning Commission (as a mandatory DR).
  - Any DR filed against a multi-unit project should bypass the new process and go directly to the Planning Commission (as a mandatory DR).

I also have concerns about Hearing Officer decisions not being conducted in a public forum. I suggest that all Hearing Officer meetings be held in a large public facility, and be broadcast on public access TV and webcast on the Internet. Deliberations and discussions should stay clearly in the public eye.

I would love to explain my issues in more detail at the February 10<sup>th</sup> meeting if appropriate.

Matt