

Public Affairs MAAR's Infill Housing Policy

Several cities in the Twin Cities area are debating the pros and cons of tearing down existing homes and replacing them with larger properties, especially if the new home differs in design and appearance from the rest of the neighborhood. Edina, Minneapolis and Minnetonka have discussed infill housing and approved various ordinances or policies to regulate the size and appearance of newly constructed homes on these infill sites.

MAAR encourages the wise utilization of private property ownership. Ownership should not physically infringe on the property rights of others. A city infill policy or ordinance should recognize that a "one size fits all" approach can easily result in unintended consequences. Any policy or ordinance should not result in making many properties nonconforming or inhibit the ability of owners to improve their lots or homes.

Cities need to keep in mind that reinvestment is positive action, increasing the tax base, allowing residents to stay in their current homes, and is friendly to growing families and new immigrants. Our neighborhoods are attractive because of the variety of housing that is offered within blocks and neighborhoods.

When considering infill policies or ordinances, changes should occur in proportion to the existing neighborhood. For example:

- 1) Grade should be defined as the grade that existed before the reconstruction occurred.
- 2) Building height should be determined by measuring from existing grade at the front of the structure and be controlled by zoning ordinance.
- 3) Floor area ratio (FAR) should be large enough so existing properties are not nonconforming.
- 4) Context should be used to allow for a range of houses.
- 5) Provisions should be included for simple case-by-case consideration of appropriate exceptions.

We are continually looking for opportunities to be involved in the discussion of these and other housing issues.

