

INFILL IMPACTS

This material is excerpted from the “Chambers Revisited Neighbors’ Report,” November 1, 2005. The report was produced by residents of the affected area.

Functional impacts on immediate neighbors

This category covers direct impacts of a structure and its associated driveway/garage/parking on adjoining properties. Impacts include loss of privacy, restricting views, blocking the sun, car noise, etc. Whereas the next section covers primarily aesthetic concerns, this category addresses tangible effects on neighbors, such as the loss of view or sunlight.

Reduced privacy impacts (P)

P1. Views into adjacent dwelling. New infill creates close, direct view into room(s) of an existing dwelling that are typically unscreened in this neighborhood’s development pattern.

P2. Views into adjacent backyard. New infill creates close, direct view into the backyard of an existing home.

Notes: The proximity, height, and slope of both the existing and new structures’ adjacent walls, roofs, and dormers are factors that affect these types of impact. Window placements in both structures are also factors.

Reduced view impacts (V)

V1. Excessive wall adjacent to existing dwelling. New infill places excessively high wall too close to rooms of an existing dwelling from which people typically look out for full or partial view in this neighborhood’s development pattern.

V2. Excessive wall adjacent to existing backyard. New infill places excessively high wall too close to backyard of an existing backyard. The “walling in” effect applies to the residents’ activity in their yard, rather than to their views from the interior of the house, as in V1.

Notes: The proximity, height, and slope of both the existing and new structures’ adjacent walls and roofs are factors that affect these types of impact.

Excessive artificial light or reduced sunlight impacts (L)

L1. Excessive exterior area lighting. New infill has exterior lighting (e.g., spotlights) that cast excessive light into an existing dwelling’s windows or yard.

L2. Sunlight obstruction. New infill has proximity and height that excessively reduces sunlight reaching an existing dwelling’s windows or yard. New obstruction may be on east or west, as well as south, side of existing dwelling’s windows or yard.

Note: The existing siting pattern of the immediate neighborhood provides an important comparative reference point. In the CR project area, typical houses on the numbered

“avenues” face either north or south with yards in the rear of the house. Typical houses on the “presidents” streets face east or west, also with yards in the rear. There are typical solar exposure patterns associated with each of these compass orientations and whether a house is on a corner or mid-block lot.

Excessive noise impacts (N)

N1. Excessive noise from building-related equipment. New infill has exterior machinery or venting (e.g., heat pump, A/C compressor, gas furnace powered vent) that emits excessive noise nearby an existing dwelling’s windows or yard.

N2. Excessive noise from parking and/or driveway traffic adjacent to existing dwelling or backyard. Vehicle traffic associated with new infill creates excessive noise for cars driving or parking on property.

Traffic, parking, and pedestrian safety impacts (T)

T1. Parking or excessive driveway surface in front of structure (i.e., between structure and street), or excessive curb cut. These practices degrade pedestrian safety and the walking appeal of the affected side of the block.

T2. Excessive, poorly located, and/or poorly screened on-site parking. When an excessive amount of a property is used for parking, or the parking is poorly located and/or inadequately screened, it degrades adjacent properties’ immediate surroundings.

T3. Excessive alley traffic due to alley-access parking for multi-unit infill. The cumulative effect of multiple units on a single alley block can lead to excessive alley traffic, which creates noise, dust, and pedestrian safety impacts.

Note: As identified in T1, parking should be in the rear or setback to the side of single-family and multi-family infill. However, multi-unit apartments that have alley-access parking can lead to excessive alley traffic.

Appearance or aesthetic impacts

This category covers the aesthetic or “style” characteristics of a structure and associated driveway/garage/parking, particularly in relationship to the surrounding structures. This includes things like placement of the dwelling and garage on the lot, roof styles, relationship to the street, setbacks, etc. Most of this type of consideration is purely a question of: “Does this structure fit in with the area visually.”

The external appearance of a building and its surrounding landscaping and driveway (or parking) are important both in how they please the eye of neighbors and in how they contribute to the hard-to-define “feeling” residents and visitors have about a neighborhood. In the Westside, the prevalent “traditional” single-family homes, with their generally modest size, sloping roofs, front porches, and a clear orientation to the sidewalk and street evoke the sense that this is a neighborhood where a regular part of your life includes walking and connecting with neighbors on the sidewalk, on your porch, or standing in your adjacent front yards.

In addition to encouraging pedestrian activity, the street orientation of this neighborhood's traditional character also enhances community safety. This benefit arises from the well-established role of "eyes on the street" in discouraging criminal activity.

Appearance – Generally applicable; related to neighborhood-wide character (SG)

SG1. House or apartments adjacent to street aren't oriented towards street. New infill entrance(s) don't face the street; no visible front door(s); inappropriate front façade(s); etc.

Note: Several of the following items are related to this impact.

SG2. "Snout-nosed" (garage in front) dwellings.

SG3. Apartment with open garage (carport) underneath, facing street or adjacent dwelling.

SG4. Parking (or excessive driveway surface) in front of dwelling structure.

SG5. Excessive impervious surfaces. New infill covers too much of the site with its footprint, pavement, and other impervious surfaces.

An excessive cumulative footprint of buildings, parking, and driveways can prevent adequate private (and publicly visible) green space and fall short of the amount of uncovered ground that a *mature* shade tree needs in order to thrive.

SG6. Infill on alleys doesn't meet appropriate aesthetic standards. New houses or apartments facing or accessed from the alley fail to meet relevant design standards e.g., orientation to the alley as a "lane," landscaping, etc.

Appearance – Related to site-specific or block-specific character (SS)

SS1. Excessive scale or mass. New infill is too high, too wide, too large, or inappropriately organizes the mass for site or setting.

SS2. Incompatible overall "style". New infill has grossly incompatible style for site or setting.

Style elements that may be involved:

- Siding
- Roof line
- Articulation of walls
- Etc. (See prior section on neighborhood character.)

SS3. Excessively plain wall facing street or adjacent to existing dwelling. New infill places excessively plain wall facing the street or an existing dwelling.

SS4. Incompatible setback to street. New infill front is setback too close or too far from street in relation to residences on the same block.

SS5. Inadequate landscaping.

Vegetation can soften some of the larger expanses of building and should present a “green” face to the neighbors. However, using landscaping as a screen should *not* be considered an excuse to allow substandard building design.”

There is a cumulative, positive effect of private, but publicly visible, greenery on a neighborhood. By contrast, excessive reduction of greenery, through the cumulative effect of individual infill, degrades the neighborhood.

SS6. Removal of existing mature trees.

General impacts on neighborhood

This category concerns the individual and cumulative impacts on the “nature” of a block or the neighborhood as a whole. The concept of a cumulative impact can best be illustrated with an example. Suppose you live on a typical Westside street with eight or so single family houses on each side of the street. Replace one of those houses with an exceptionally well-designed four-unit apartment complex and the block may retain the general character of single-family, mostly owner-occupied residences. But, replace four of the houses on the same block with multi-unit apartments and the block will inevitably “tip” to the point where the now fragmented single-family owner/occupants no longer have the same sense of immediate community.

Despite this being a difficult design element to quantify, it’s crucial to deal with because the cumulative effects of multi-family infill can dramatically destabilize the neighborhood even if each individual apartment meets minimum siting and design standards.

Eugene’s land use policies recognize the importance of cumulative effects, as evidenced by the fact that both the Westside Neighborhood Plan and the Jefferson/Far West Refinement Plan have explicit policies that call for block level planning.

Neighborhood impacts (NG)

NG1. Too many multi-family structures added to a block with predominantly single-family houses. Cumulatively, there is excessive infill that is not traditional, single-family, street-oriented housing.

Note: Different types of infill contribute at different magnitudes to cumulative effects. For example, on a single block, two lots with four-unit apartments have much more impact on the neighborhood character than four lots with a single-family house on the street and a small, single-unit “granny cottage” in back.

NG2. Excessive impervious surfaces. Cumulatively, infill covers too much additional land with impervious surfaces leading to excessive storm water runoff.

NG3. Demolition or removal of existing dwellings. Existing, compatible dwelling(s) are demolished or removed and not replaced with dwelling(s) of similar scale and use (e.g., single-family).