

Published in Coronado Eagle & Journal October 5, 2016

Eagle Journal Candidate Questions

Mike Donovan Response

No. 2 – Housing density is widely considered to be a problem in Coronado, particularly in the R-3 zone which is designated primarily for multiple family residential dwellings. Should there be re-zoning throughout the city and should the more restrictive R-1 housing standards be applied to the R-3 zone, particularly for mass and height?

Donovan Response:

I agree that housing density, size, mass, and height is an issue in Coronado and needs to be addressed. The R-3, or multi-family residential zones, are probably the most conspicuous because, for example, a modest single-family home on a 7,000 sq ft (50' x 140') lot, if not designated historical, can be demolished and four residences built on the same lot. This is a major change to the neighborhood and should take into consideration the surrounding neighborhood and residents.

I don't believe we necessarily need re-zoning throughout the city. But, we should evaluate the current building codes as they affect the size, mass, and height of newly constructed residences. During the September 20, 2016, City Council meeting, the Residential Standards Improvement Project (RSIP-3) findings gained final approval from the City Council for implementation. The RSIP-3 recommendations addressed building size, mass, and height in the Residential ("R") zones. The approved changes included 25 items covering the areas of Off-Street Parking, Design Review, Floor Area Ratio (FAR), Second Story Mass and Building Height, Non-Conforming Structures, and some Miscellaneous items. These were officially adopted at the October 4, 2016, council meeting and will become effective 30 days after that. All building permits approved before then will continue forward as approved under the old rules, and new permit applications after that will fall under the new rules. So, it will likely take 2-3 years before any actual new construction will be completed under the new rules and we can actually see the true effects.

RSIP-3 mostly affected the R-3 zones. In these areas zoned for multi-family you would expect to have larger building size and mass, but for areas zoned for single-family residences, new construction should not be oversized for the property. For example, more and more we see large homes, which might look great on a one-acre lot, being built on 7,000 sq ft lots. Many times these new homes dwarf the surrounding homes, blocking light, breeze, and view from the neighbors. Usually, mature trees need to be removed in order to maximize the size of the new home, negatively affecting the aesthetics of the neighborhood. Everyone has property rights, not just the new construction owner. I would envision an RSIP-4 effort to address the bulk and mass of new construction in the R-1A and R-1B (single-family residential) zones, similar to the considerations undertaken for RSIP-3.

A related area we should look at is the criteria for designating a home as historical. The criteria used by the Historic Resource Commission have, to my knowledge, not been reviewed or evaluated since adopted many years ago. Other cities seem to be much more committed to historic preservation and their ordinances reflect that commitment.

Building density, size, mass, and height all have a big effect on the residential feel of our city and we must properly manage this so we maintain our unique village atmosphere.