

DEFINITION OF FAMILY STAKEHOLDERS GROUP
Minutes from December 12, 2005

I. Welcome & Introductions

Katrina Young welcomed the group and asked everyone to introduce themselves. In addition to sharing their name and organization they represent, stakeholders were asked to share what they hope to get out of this process.

Answers included:

- Give neighborhood input on family definition to resolve neighborhood problems
- Here to learn
- New and different definition of family
- Expect consensus
- Redefine family to help with neighborhood problems
- Want to know why zoning is not working and to close loopholes
- Want to know what planning considers as “family”
- Clearer definition of family

II. Meeting Purpose

Katrina Young shared with the group the scope of the project, the process that the stakeholder group will take and the objectives for the evening’s meeting.

The objectives for the meeting were to:

- Provide background information
- Determine issues with the current definition of family
- Discuss timeline and process
- Determine criteria for evaluating alternative definitions

III. Project Background

Krista Neilson gave some background as to why zoning ordinances define the term family and explained how the Charlotte Zoning Ordinance currently defines family. The current definition of family includes an unlimited number of related individuals acting as a single housekeeping unit or up to six unrelated people acting as a single housekeeping unit. Complaints have been received by the Planning Commission regarding the number of people living in a house and the secondary impacts (trash, noise, cars) of such occupancy.

Question: How long has this definition been in existences?

IV. Issues with Family Definition

Stakeholders were asked to discuss their issues with the current definition of family. The comments received are categorized below.

More Information Needed

- What are the time limits that visitors are allowed to stay at someone’s house before they are considered occupants? How

long does a visitor have to leave before they can return and still be considered a visitor?

- How is visitation enforced? How do we know if someone is an occupant or a visitor?
- Home owners associations can have their own limits on the number of people living in a house. So why is this a city problem?
- Home owners associations formed before 1999 don't have the power to enforce their own regulations.
- Neighborhoods need guidelines on how code enforcement works.
- We should research what other jurisdictions are doing with their definition of family
- Section 8 housing limits the number of family members that occupy the same bedroom based upon their age
- Are there state laws that cities have to follow regarding how they define family or the number of family members that can live together?

Enforcement

- We need enforcement at night, or over a 24 hour period. Enforcement currently is occurring during the day, but violations are occurring at night.

Occupancy Limits

- We should consider limiting the number of working adults living in a house together when redefining family.
- Should we consider limiting the types or number of extended family members that are considered family?
- Limiting the number or types of extended families that can live together is not a feasible option because there are so many different living arrangements out there.
- We should tie the square footage of the house to the number of people living there.
- We should tie the square footage of the bedrooms to the number of occupants, not the square footage of the house, because sometimes additional residents sleep in family rooms, living rooms, garages, etc.
- We should consider a ratio of bedrooms to bathrooms as an indicator of how many people should live in a house together.
- Should the Health Department, Fire Department, Police Department be involved in this process since there is likely a health and safety concern regarding occupancy?

- Structure nucleus family by defining 2 adults with “x” number of children. And then stating how many other family members can stay in the home.

Secondary Impacts

- We should use the amount of trash generated by a house as an indicator of violations of the family definition.
- Are there currently limitations on the number of vehicles a household can have?
- Secondary impacts of the number of people living in a house are the problem.

V. *Process & Timeline*

Katrina and Krista covered the process and timeline. It was emphasized that the goal of the process is a consensus based recommendation. Consensus was defined as the best decision that could be made given the circumstances. Not all people will be equally happy with the outcome, but it is something to which they can all agree. Ground rules and responsibilities were shared with the group, as was a calendar of the work program. See the Guidelines & Protocols document for complete details of the process and timeline.

VI. *Evaluation Criteria*

Staff asked the stakeholders to brainstorm criteria to be used to evaluate the outcome of the process. In other words, how will the group know when a solution has been proposed that is close to something everyone can agree on? The following criteria were proposed:

- Is the outcome legally defensible?
- Is the outcome enforceable?
- Is the outcome equitable?
- Does the outcome adequately address secondary impacts of having many people live together?
- Does the outcome promote the health and safety of housing occupants?

VII. *Next Steps*

The next meeting is on January 9, 2006 at 5:30pm in room 280. Stakeholders were asked to review the materials provided in their binder and any other materials sent out before the next meeting.