



Agenda Report

TO: CITY COUNCIL DATE: OCTOBER 30, 2001
FROM: DESIGN COMMISSION
SUBJECT: ANNUAL REPORT AND FY 2002 WORK PROGRAM

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council receive and approve the annual report and FY 2002 work program for the Design Commission.

BACKGROUND:

Section 2.80.090 of the Municipal Code requires the Design Commission to submit an annual report of its activities no later than October 31 of each year. The Code also requires that report include attendance records for the members of the Commission.

The attached report documents major reviews conducted during the past year and identifies the subcommittees which work on behalf of the Commission. The attendance record and work program are included as attachments to the report.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory L. Hankins
Chair, Design Commission

City of Pasadena
DESIGN COMMISSION
ANNUAL REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL FOR FISCAL YEAR 2001

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July 1, 2000—June 30, 2001

Introduction

Since 1969, the Design Commission—as an advisory body to the City Council—has worked to strengthen public appreciation for the visual character of the City and protect the aesthetic quality of the City's built and natural environment. By encouraging excellence in design, it has also promoted the attractiveness of the City as a community for residents and business owners and as a destination for visitors.

The Commission derives its authority from two sections of the Municipal Code, Chapter 2.80 and Chapter 17.92. It has eight members, three representatives from other advisory bodies (Planning Commission, Cultural Heritage Commission, and Community Development) and five members appointed by the mayor, subject to approval by the City Council. The qualifications for membership are a “demonstrated interest in the community” and “professional expertise” in architecture, landscape architecture, planning, or historic preservation.

The Commission has three primary functions. Its most visible role is conducting design review of major new development projects throughout the City. It also reviews new construction of City-owned buildings and projects in most locations with planned developments and master development plans. These quasi-judicial reviews typically are phased: a concept-level review followed by final design review. Less well known is its work as a historic preservation commission. In this role, the Commission applies historic design guidelines (the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*) to rehabilitations and adaptive-use projects in Old Pasadena, South Lake, the Playhouse District, the Civic Center and other areas of the Central District. It also reviews alterations to historic properties owned by the City. A third area of its activity is formulating design policies and goals for the City, such as the City-wide Design Principles and Criteria in the Comprehensive General Plan and design guidelines within specific plan areas.

The Design Commission meets twice a month to review applications, to present advisory recommendations to the Planning Commission and City Council, and to receive reports from committees and City staff. On occasion, it holds special meetings to accommodate the scheduling requirements of applicants and City departments.

Summary of Fiscal Year 2000-2001.

Meetings and Reviews of Applications During the year the Commission held nineteen regular meetings and five special meetings. Overall, the Commission reviewed a total of 18 applications for design approval. It reviewed five of these applications at more than one meeting, either as continued reviews, advisory “50%” reviews, or as applications for final design review. The number of applications is one fewer than the year before, and the number with multiple reviews is three fewer. Despite an increase in applications during the last four years, the Commission still reviews fewer applications than in the years before 1994, when

streamlining amendments to the zoning code transferred many decisions to the staff and exempted some projects in the Central District from design review.

Appeals and Calls for Review. The City Council considered only one appeal affecting design review in Fiscal Year 2000-2001, at 70 N. Mentor, a request for approval of a design for a proposed new live theater. A neighbor filed the appeal. However, at the hearing on the appeal, she withdrew her appeal.

Reviews of City Projects. As in previous years, a major portion of the Commission's activities concentrated on reviews of City-sponsored projects. It reviewed eight of these projects this year:

1. Advisory Comments on draft environmental impact report for Raymond Theatre Reuse Project
2. Advisory Comments for "Pasadena Live" Concert Series in Memorial Park
3. Advisory Comments for Civic Center Midtown Project Refined Concept Plan
4. Advisory Comments on draft supplemental environmental impact report (DSEIR) for Ambassador Campus Development Plan
5. Advisory Comments on draft environmental impact report for new office building at 203 N. Lake Avenue
6. Advisory Comments on proposed therapy pool for the Rose Bowl Aquatic Center (360 North Arroyo Boulevard)
7. Advisory Comments on proposed Rose Bowl fencing
8. Advisory Comments on proposed Kidspace Museum in Brookside Park

The Commission also reviewed two planning studies:

- (a) East Pasadena Specific Plan;
- (b) North Fair Oaks/Orange Grove Specific Plan

For each of these plans or studies, it reviewed the design guidelines and aesthetic improvements and forwarded recommendations to the Planning Commission and City Council.

Special Meetings. In October, the Commission met with the Cultural Heritage Commission to review a draft Environmental Impact Report for the Raymond Theater. In December, the Commission met with the Urban Forestry Advisory Committee to review the proposed new tree ordinance. In December, the Commission also met jointly with the Planning Commission and the Cultural Heritage Commission to review the Civic Center/Mid-Town District Project Refined Concept Plan that proposes improvements to the public spaces in the Civic Center area. In January, the Commission met again with the Cultural Heritage Commission to review the draft supplemental environmental impact report (DSEIR) for Ambassador Campus Development Plan.

Delegated Reviews. Independent of the Commission, the staff reviewed approximately 100 applications for design approval. Among these applications were signs, awnings, outdoor dining installations, tenant improvements, and seismic bracing of unreinforced masonry buildings. Most of these reviews were for buildings within the Central District. The Commission has only limited authority to call for reviews of these staff decisions. All staff-level decisions may be appealed to the Commission.

Committees Members of the Commission also dedicated significant amounts of time to the work of four Committees (advisory, ad-hoc, and community-based) charged with multiple responsibilities for planning efforts in the City. These committees were:

- Urban Forestry Advisory Committee (1 member)
- City Center Task Force (2 members)
- City Hall Oversight Committee
- Community Development Committee

Major Reviews. During the year, the Commission completed numerous reviews of new commercial/office facilities, multi-family residential projects, and school facilities. Some of these reviews were especially challenging because they involved enhancing pedestrian-level amenities; assuring designs that are inviting and sustain attention; designing compatible, yet differentiated infill projects in historic Old Pasadena; and harmonizing with nearby uses and designs. Notable among these reviews were:

- A five-story, 104,000 S.F. self-storage facility at 2575 E. Colorado Blvd.;
- Kidspace museum project at 360 N. Arroyo Blvd.;
- Paseo Colorado project at 300 E. Colorado Blvd.;
- A 135,000 s.f. retail stores at 401 S. Lake Avenue (Macy's Department Store) for "The Shops on the Lake Avenue" project.
- A five-story, 120- unit apartment building at 720 E. Colorado Blvd.
- A four-story, 95,000 S.F. mixed-use facility with 32 apartments and retail and office space at 22 W. Green Street
- A two-story, 20,000 S.F. retail marketplace at 55 S. Fair Oaks Avenue
- A four-story, 53-unit condominium development at 130 N. Oak Knoll Avenue
- A new live theater building at 70 N. Mentor Avenue
- A five-story, 48-unit residential building at 280 N. Madison Avenue
- A five-story, 42-unit apartment building at 65 W. Dayton Street
- A 19,000 S.F. auditorium for Westridge School at 324 E. Madeline Street

Equally noteworthy, the Commission also concluded reviews of major adaptive use and rehabilitation projects:

- Rehabilitation and conversion of the historic Royal Laundry at 443 S. Raymond to artists' workshop and commercial uses
- Conversion of the State Theater into a 20,000 S.F. commercial/office building at 766 E. Colorado Blvd

These reviews focused on integrating new elements into historic settings and on preserving the rich collection of historic architecture that distinguishes the City's downtown. Much of the vibrancy of areas like Old Pasadena and, increasingly, the Playhouse District, in the City's downtown, with their animated pedestrian-oriented streets and attractive storefronts, stems from the ongoing work of the City's design review program during the past ten years.

Neighborhood Commercial Areas Looking to the future, the Commission will be steering its energies toward the revitalization of other neighborhood commercial areas in specific plan areas. With each specific plan, the City has been introducing additional design guidelines and requirements for staff-level or Commission-level reviews. Although most of these reviews are delegated to the staff, the Commission acts on appeals, major proposals for new development, and City projects.

Implementation of the General Plan/Permit Center. In the months to come, the Commission will be actively involved in pending revisions to the sign regulations in the zoning code, the cultural heritage ordinance, and the city's design guidelines.

Training. During fiscal year 1999-2000 members of the Design and Cultural Heritage Commissions attended a variety of training lectures, workshops, and seminars.

**MEMBERS OF DESIGN COMMISSION
FISCAL YEAR 2000-2001**

<p>Arnold Siegel (<i>Chair, Planning Commission appointee</i>) Peter L. Tolkin (<i>Mayor's appointee</i>) Gregory L. Hankins (<i>Mayor's appointee</i>) Kennon Miedema (<i>Cultural Heritage Commission representative</i>) Jan Furey Muntz (<i>Mayor's appointee</i>) Mark Nay (<i>Mayor's appointee</i>) Henry Nelson van Sant (<i>Community Development Committee representative</i>) Andrea Rawlings (<i>Mayor's appointee</i>)</p>

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FY 2001-2002 Work Program for Design Commission

- Advisory reviews of City projects;
- Training session on guidelines, specific plans, Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, and urban design
- Reviews of proposed updated and consolidated design guidelines;
- Reviews of proposed amendments to design review chapters in municipal code;
- Review updated historic resources survey for Central District;
- Advisory review of specific plan for the Central District.
- Advisory review of developer's design guidelines for major projects such as the Ambassador College redevelopment
- Advisory reviews of Environmental Impact Reports
- Tour or photo review of good designs in nearby cities to identify improved guidelines for new construction
- Staff to attend educational seminars/courses on architecture, urban design, and historic preservation
- Adopt ordinance to require design review along major corridors
- Streamline design review process, especially regarding "calls for review"

