

Agenda Report

TO: City Council
THROUGH: Finance Committee

DATE: May 21, 2007

FROM: Cynthia J. Kurtz, City Manager

SUBJECT: Appropriation of \$85,000 from the Unappropriated General Fund Balance to the Planning & Development Department for Consultant Services to Assess Existing Design Guidelines and Prepare Updates as Required

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council appropriate \$85,000 from the Unappropriated General Fund Balance to account number 8115-101-444100 for consulting services to:

- a) develop design guidelines and building setback regulations for neighborhood commercial areas outside the Central District;
- b) to update the design guidelines for multi-unit residential projects (City of Gardens) projects in the RM zoning districts; and,
- c) to evaluate development standards for large single-family residences in non-hillside areas.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

During the past year the staff and the City Council have had discussions regarding the design guidelines for multi-family dwellings (City of Gardens projects) and commercial development outside the Central District. The design guidelines for these two types of development have not been revised for several years. In addition there have been several large homes and home expansions in non-hillside areas that have raised concerns about the adequacy of the development standards for large lots. This recommendation will provide funding for a consultant to work with staff to address these areas.

BACKGROUND:

Several months ago, in response to a request from Council, staff presented an overview of the City's design principles and design guidelines at a Council meeting. This presentation described how the existing principles and guidelines apply to project reviews throughout the City. It also described how the existing guidelines target specific plan areas, historic properties, and specific uses. It concluded with an explanation of the difference between development standards in the zoning code, which are mandatory, and design guidelines, which are applied with limited flexibility to allow creativity.

In its discussion, Council asked about development standards for ground-floor setbacks of commercial buildings (outside the Central District) and lot coverage in residential neighborhoods. It also queried whether the existing design guidelines adequately addressed the issues of scale with surrounding neighborhoods, architectural compatibility with surroundings, and quality of building materials. Members of the Council suggested that design guidelines may need to be updated for commercial areas—outside the Central District—to identify an appropriate context for new construction. The discussion ended with a request that staff return with a work plan to address these issues.

The work plan drafted in response to the request from the Council proposes that the City contract with a qualified consultant to evaluate three issues:

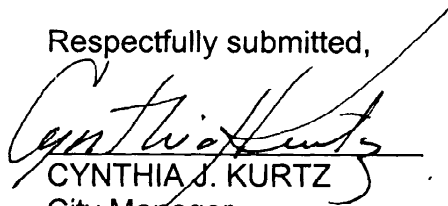
1. Develop new design guidelines for commercial buildings outside the Central District and determine if the existing setbacks in neighborhood commercial areas should be adjusted to achieve more compatibility with their surroundings and a more inviting appearance for pedestrian activity.
2. Develop new design guidelines for new multi-unit residential projects (City of Gardens) in the RM districts.
3. Determine if the lot coverage (and/or floor-area ratio) for new residential construction in certain single-family zoning districts should be modified to ensure that the scale of new construction is appropriate with existing development.

If approved, staff anticipates bringing recommendations and draft guidelines to the City Council approximately ten months after selection of a consultant.

FISCAL IMPACT:

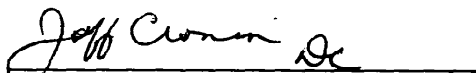
Funds in the amount of \$85,000 are available in the Unappropriated General Fund Balance.

Respectfully submitted,



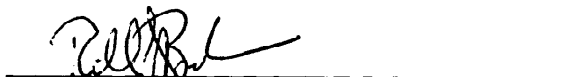
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