

Agenda Report

TO: CITY COUNCIL

DATE: OCTOBER 19, 2009

FROM: CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: ADOPTION OF DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL & MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL ZONING DISTRICTS

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Find that the adoption of design guidelines is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act under §15061, the general rule that CEQA only applies to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment;
2. Acknowledge that the Design Commission has held five public workshops preceding the preparation of this final draft of the Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-family Residential Zoning Districts and that the final draft of the guidelines adequately addresses all public comments that have been received throughout the review process;
3. Adopt the attached resolution approving the Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-family Residential Zoning Districts, including the additional recommendations about the process for preliminary consultation phase of design review and the use of the guidelines as a supplement to existing design guidelines in specific plan areas outside of the Central District.

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE DESIGN COMMISSION

On September 14, 2009, at a noticed public hearing, the Design Commission voted to recommend adoption of the Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-family Residential Zoning Districts, including the additional recommended changes to the process for the preliminary consultation phase of design review and the use of the guidelines as a supplement to existing design guidelines in specific plan areas outside of the Central District.

BACKGROUND

In its 2008 work program, the City Council included a project to prepare detailed design guidelines for neighborhood commercial and multi-family residential

zoning districts. The intent of this project was to establish detailed design in furtherance of the Citywide Design Principles in the Land Use Element of the General Plan. In particular, the Council was concerned about the design of projects in Multi-family Zoning Districts and how designs related to the existing built environment.

On June 9, 2009, the Council authorized the City Manager to enter into a contract with Moule & Polyzoides, Architects and Urbanists, to assist staff in the preparation of the design guidelines.

Preparation Process & Public Review

The process of preparing the design guidelines was conducted in three phases (full details and dates provided in Attachment B): information gathering, first draft & appendices/final draft. The information gathering phase consisted of touring the city to analyze recently completed development projects, reviewing existing planning documents and design guidelines, conducting interviews with stakeholders (local architects, landscape architects, developers, neighborhood association representatives, community members and realtors) and obtaining input from the public at two workshops conducted by the Design Commission.

After the information gathering phase, staff and its consultants prepared a draft of the guidelines. After a lengthy public review and comment period, the Design Commission conducted a third public workshop. After editing the draft in response to 22 comments from the public and Design Commission, staff and its consultants prepared a final draft of the guidelines, including an appendix describing the basics of five architectural styles that are prevalent in Pasadena's history along with a section devoted to an explanation of "Contemporary Pluralism." The Design Commission conducted two public workshops on the final draft and subsequently voted to recommend that the Council approve the guidelines.

Changes to Design Review Process

The adoption of these design guidelines will create a fundamental shift in how design review is conducted citywide. The early phases of the process, particularly the enhanced Preliminary Consultation process, will focus on how a building responds to its context. Designers will be required, at a very early stage, to explain in narrative terms the context of the new building, how the building responds to its context, and how it relates to Pasadena's climate and architectural legacy. The final design review phase will continue to focus on materials and detailing and staff will conduct additional inspections during the construction process. Finally, upon approval of a Zoning Code amendment, a licensed architect will be required for all new construction projects subject to design review, and will be involved in development of projects from conception to occupancy.

For all projects subject to design review in Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-family Residential Zoning Districts, a finding of consistency with these guidelines

will be required. The guidelines allow for various paths to successful design and do not mandate specific solutions. Designers will be responsible for explaining, in narrative terms, how their projects achieve consistency with the design guidelines.

Summary of Guidelines

Main Body

The main body of the design guidelines is divided into three chapters: Street Character, Block Character & Building Character—preceded by a preface, an introduction and a summary of the guidelines. The Street Character chapter focuses on how a building should relate to and activate the street, the Block Character chapter discusses how a building should relate to its surrounding built context, primarily by defining three differing contexts—historic/sensitive, definite/incomplete and contexts in transition—which determine the level of design sensitivity recommended. The Building Character chapter defines how to arrange masses and provide architectural detail and materials that emphasize the permanence of a building.

Appendices

Four appendices are attached to the main body of the design guidelines, as follows:

Appendix A1: Architectural Basics. This appendix describes the basic elements of five architectural styles or property types common to Pasadena: Craftsman, Mediterranean, Monterey, Main Street Commercial, and Mid-Twentieth-Century Modern as well as a discussion of Contemporary Pluralism as the dominant design strategy of today. This appendix is intended to provide guidance to designers choosing to design buildings in these styles without indicating that these styles are preferred over others, however, the choice of style is dictated by the preliminary research.

Appendix A2: List of Recommended Drought-tolerant Plants. This appendix provides designers, particularly landscape architects, with a list of drought-tolerant plants that the city recommends for use in new development projects. The list was compiled from a presentation created by the Department of Water & Power.

Appendix A3: Preliminary Review. This appendix outlines the recommendations from the consultant about improvements to the Preliminary Consultation phase of design review and the most significant recommended change. This phase of design review precedes submittal of a formal application for either Concept or Consolidated Design Review. It requires informal meetings with staff and applicants without any specific submittal requirements. The recommended process would require applicants to study the existing built context, submit preliminary design concept sketches and a narrative explaining their design concept and their response to the existing context for review and comment. This process would allow staff and the Design Commission to conduct an early and

informal review of a design—without issuing an actual decision—before a project receives its land-use entitlements. Staff expanded the consultant's recommendations with a more detailed recommendation about the Preliminary Consultation process in Attachment C.

Appendix A4: Conformance Review. This appendix outlines the consultant's recommendations about improvements to inspections of projects during construction to ensure conformance with the approved design drawings.

Specific Plan Areas

During public workshops, members of the public spoke about updating design guidelines in specific plan areas, particularly the North Lake Specific Plan area. In response to these concerns and because of a need to use resources efficiently, staff recommends that these design guidelines be adopted as supplemental to existing design guidelines in specific plan areas, outside of the Central District (due to their relatively recent adoption and success). As these guidelines require detailed analysis of the context in which a proposed building is to be placed, these guidelines can serve Specific Plan areas. Staff has conducted a cursory review to compare existing specific plan design guidelines to these new guidelines and found no areas of conflict.

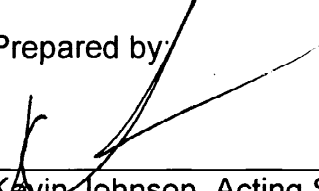
FISCAL IMPACT

The adoption of design guidelines will have no fiscal impact to the city. Adoption of an additional step in the design review process (and in inspections of projects under construction) could result in the need for additional staff time, although a specific cost cannot be determined at this time, and there may be a modest proposal to change the fee schedule to address this cost.

Respectfully submitted,



MICHAEL J. BECK
City Manager

Prepared by:


Kevin Johnson, Acting Senior Planner

Approved by:


Richard J. Bruckner, Director of Planning & Development

ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT A: Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial & Multi-family Residential Districts, Final Draft Dated September 29, 2009

ATTACHMENT B: Elements of Design Guidelines Preparation Process

ATTACHMENT C: Recommended Preliminary Consultation Process

ATTACHMENT A:

**DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR NEIGHBORHOOD
COMMERCIAL & MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL
DISTRICTS**

FINAL DRAFT: SEPTEMBER 28, 2009

**ATTACHMENT B:
ELEMENTS OF DESIGN GUIDELINES PREPARATION PROCESS**

Original Scope of Work	Status (as of October 19, 2009)
1. Consultant will review existing design guidelines and identify portions that could be applied to neighborhood-commercial and multi-family residential areas;	Completed on September 2, 2008
2. Consultant will conduct an illustrated evaluation of five previously approved and/or recently constructed projects —to be selected in consultation with City staff—in neighborhood-commercial zones, ten multi-unit residential projects, and five projects in specific plan areas outside the Central District (20 projects in total);	Completed on August 26, 2008
3. Conduct interviews with stakeholders in the design review process including neighborhood association presidents in affected areas, architects, preservationists, developers and realtors.	Completed on September 3, 2008
4. Public meetings with the Design Commission to present and to receive comments from the public, from developers, from local architects, and the Design Commission on the findings;	Design Commission held these meetings on September 8 and 22, 2008
5. Consultant will prepare a summary of findings and preliminary recommendations for new neighborhood commercial and multi-family guidelines and new or amended specific plan guidelines based on an evaluation of existing guidelines and the 20 projects described above;	Completed on September 2, 2008 and presented to the Design Commission on September 8 and 22, 2008 – recommendations combined with report on review of existing guidelines
6. Consultant will prepare a preliminary draft of the illustrated guidelines (multi-unit residential and neighborhood commercial) for review;	Completed for meeting of the Design Commission on April 3, 2009
7. Consultant will present working drafts of the guidelines at a public meeting with the Design Commission to receive comments from the Commission and the public (including developers and local architects);	Completed at Design Commission meeting on April 13, 2009

Original Scope of Work	Status (as of October 19, 2009)
8. Final revisions of the guidelines for presentation to the Design Commission and to the City Council;	Design Commission reviewed final drafts on August 24, 2009 and September 14, 2009.
9. Submittal of adopted guidelines suitable for publication and for posting on the City's website (both printed copy and a digital version).	To be submitted upon City Council approval
10. Evaluation of existing design guidelines for areas with specific plans (excluding the Central District) to determine the extent to which these guidelines should be amended, updated, streamlined, or supplemented with newly developed guidelines for neighborhood commercial districts. This will include an analysis of each of the Specific Plan areas, and the North Lake Specific Plan area in particular, to determine whether the new guidelines address specific needs and circumstances in these areas.	<p>Staff and the Design Commission recommend that the guidelines be adopted as a supplement to existing design guidelines in specific plan areas outside of the Central District.</p> <p>The enhancement of the existing Preliminary Consultation phase of design review, including full contextual analysis at the early stages of design development, will apply to all projects subject to design review, including projects in Specific Plan areas.</p>

ATTACHMENT C: RECOMMENDED PRELIMINARY CONSULTATION PROCESS

As stated in §17.61.030.D of the zoning code, the Preliminary Consultation phase is “an informal discussion between the Director and the applicant to explain to the applicant the applicable design guidelines, findings, and procedures that will apply to the project, and to discuss compliance of the project with the design guidelines.” Currently, this takes place when a project is presented to staff at the public counter, in meetings requested by a project applicant or through the Predevelopment Plan Review process.

Appendix A3 to the design guidelines document has recommendations from the consultants to enhance the existing Preliminary Consultation phase of design review. These recommendations include using a “design narrative.” This narrative, and the accompanying photography and sketches, will explain the context of the proposed project and how the project responds to the context. In addition, it will answer questions about the design concept, the permanence of the new building and its response to Pasadena’s legacy and climate, and other items enumerated in the document. The intent of these recommendations is to make better use of these early discussions before submittals of formal applications.

Staff recommends that Appendix A3 be adopted as administrative guidelines to enhance the Preliminary Consultation process, including the establishment of following thresholds and terms for the Preliminary Consultation process:

- The submittal requirements listed in appendix A3 should be required for all projects that require design review, with the exception of signs and minor/storefront alterations. The design narrative that is suggested could also be a diagrammatic presentation that responds to each of the items listed in the appendix, with limited text.
- At this stage, staff would review the preliminary sketches and design narrative submitted by the applicant and recommend any necessary revisions based on the applicable design guidelines. The applicant may choose to revise the preliminary sketches or design narrative based on staff’s comments, or proceed without making any revisions. After the applicant notifies staff of its decision to revise or not, staff would present to the Design Commission for its input those projects that meet the thresholds for Design Commission-level design review. At this time, the Commission could provide advisory comments on the preliminary sketches and design narrative.

This procedure is similar to that of the Predevelopment Plan Review (PPR) process, in which staff provides comments to applicants and presents projects that meet the threshold for “community-wide significance” to the City Council.

- The design narrative/diagrammatic presentation that is developed and refined in this phase should be included in the formal application for design review and should be considered by the reviewing authority in its action on the project.

RESOLUTION NO. _____

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PASADENA
ESTABLISHING DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR NEIGHBORHOOD
COMMERCIAL AND MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS AND A
DESIGN REVIEW PRELIMINARY CONSULTATION PROCESS**

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Pasadena recognizes the importance of promoting excellence in urban design and the City's celebrated tradition of supporting residential, institutional, and commercial architecture of distinction; and

WHEREAS, the City Council is committed to enhancing the visual character of the City and the attractiveness of its neighborhoods, its commercial zones, and its public facilities; and

WHEREAS, the City has formally reviewed the design of new construction in Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-family Residential Zoning Districts and elsewhere in the City for over twenty-five years and periodically adopted design guidelines to set performance goals for this review; and

WHEREAS, the City Council believes that the design review process should be modified to require review at an early stage of the development process and should be focused on how new buildings respond to their existing context; and

WHEREAS, the City retained an architectural consulting firm to draft the new guidelines and to assist the staff with five public workshops to review drafts of the guidelines;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City Of Pasadena that:

1. The Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-family Residential Districts, dated September 29, 2009, attached and incorporated by reference, are hereby approved for use in design review.

2. The Design Guidelines shall supplement, but not replace, the existing design guidelines in the North Lake Specific Plan (1997), the Fair Oaks-Orange Grove Specific Plan (2002), the East Pasadena Specific Plan (1992), the East Colorado Boulevard Specific Plan (2003), the South Fair Oaks Specific Plan (1998), and the West Gateway Specific Plan (1998).

3. The Preliminary Consultation Process as set forth in Attachment C to the October 19, 2009 agenda report shall serve as administrative guidelines for project processing and shall establish thresholds and terms for preliminary consultation. This Process may be administratively amended as required by the Director of the Planning and Development Department.

Adopted at the regular meeting of the City Council this _____ day of _____, 2009, by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAINED:

Mark Jomsky, CMC, City Clerk

Approved as to form:



Theresa E. Fuentes
Assistant City Attorney