

# Agenda Report

TO: CITY COUNCIL

DATE: OCTOBER 21, 2002

FROM: CITY MANAGER

RE: Adoption of Updated Citywide Design Principles and New Guidelines for the Central District Specific Plan

## **CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Find that adopting an updated version of the Citywide Design Principles in the Land-use Element of the General Plan and design guidelines for the Central District Specific Plan is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (Class 8: an action by a regulatory agency for protection of the environment).
2. Acknowledge that the Land-use Element of the General Plan (Objective 5—Character and Scale of Pasadena) supports the application of Citywide urban design principles to new construction and the adoption of design guidelines for areas targeted for development and design review.
3. Adopt by resolution (ATTACHMENT A) the updated version of Citywide design principles (Design Principles in the Land-use Element of the General Plan) and new design guidelines for the specific plan area in the Central District (ATTACHMENT C).

### **Recommendation from the Design Commission.**

The Design Commission on September 23, 2002 voted to recommend approval of the updated Citywide Design Principles in the Land-use Element of the General Plan and the design guidelines for the Central District Specific Plan.

### **Recommendation from the Planning Commission.**

The Planning Commission on October 9, 2002 voted to recommend approval of the updated Citywide Design Principles in the Land-use Element of the General Plan and the design guidelines for the Central District Specific Plan.

### **Executive Summary.**

Periodically since the 1970s the City Council has adopted design guidelines for targeted areas of the City or for special uses. Altogether the City has 38 design guidelines and five new guidelines in draft form awaiting approval. It also has two sets of design principles outlining urban design goals and policies.

The current proposal involves updating the Design Principles and Criteria in the General Plan and introducing a new set of design guidelines for the Central District. It replaces dated material with more current thinking about urban design and illustrates recommended treatments for new

design in a consistent format. Its purpose is to improve the usability of the City's design guidelines and to offer property owners, architects, and developers with a clearer image of the City's expectations for new construction.

Unlike development standards in the zoning code, design guidelines are "performance goals." They present the City's image for the design of new development projects, and they coordinate the overall development of the City. Describing actions to be taken by public agencies and private developers, they address site design, materials, landscaping, signs, public and private spaces. They are also the criteria used during design review to evaluate the design of new projects.

## **BACKGROUND:**

One objective of the update of the General Plan, the re-write of the zoning code, and the completion of a specific plan for the Central District is a reworking of the City's design guidelines. This undertaking focuses on two areas at the core of the City's design review program: the Citywide Design Principles (the existing Design Principles and Criteria in the Land-use Element of the General Plan) and guidelines for the Central District.

Many of the changes proposed to the principles and guidelines are visual, such as new graphics, illustrations, and a standard format to unify the presentation of the material. The Design Principles, while expanded in length, retain the same organization and much of the same wording. The guidelines for the Central District reiterate urban design themes already in the General Plan and existing plans such as the draft Pasadena Playhouse Mixed-Use and Arts-Inclusive Plan and the Pasadena Downtown Urban Design Guidelines.

### **I. Citywide Design Principles**

Adopted in 1994 with the Land-use Element of the General Plan, the Citywide Design Principles are the foundation for all design review in the City. They are a policy statement about the City's vision for the future. They apply citywide to all projects requiring design review, and they are a starting point for property owners, developers, designers, and contractors proposing new development in the City.

The existing four-page presentation in the General Plan ("Design Principles and Criteria" and "Fundamental Qualities of Buildings and Open Space") has been expanded into 23 pages. The narrative has been rewritten in places with more explanatory information and with supporting examples and illustrations. The headings, terminology, and organization of the original document remain in the updated version. At the request of the Design Commission, the term "criteria" has been omitted from the title.

### **II. Guidelines for Central District Specific Plan Area**

As with all of the City's design guidelines, the guidelines for the Central District supplement the Citywide Design Principles by offering more direction for designing a project. They illustrate options, techniques, and solutions to achieve excellence in new design.

Drawing material from existing guidelines, the Design Principles, and other sources, these new guidelines are intended to be a three-chapter section of the Central District Specific Plan. They are grouped thematically under the headings of public realm, private realm, and sub-districts. The public realm guidelines address "community character" and the "street environment." The community character chapter includes view corridors, publicly accessible passageways, and

transitions among different uses; the street environment focuses on street furniture, trees, and lighting. The private realm chapter sets forth performance objectives for new construction. It includes specific recommendations for the design of urban residential projects. The third chapter targets four sub-areas of the Central District: Civic Center/Mid-town; Old Pasadena, Playhouse, and Lake Avenue.

These guidelines are coordinated with the Citywide Design Principles in the General Plan. Each page, for example, has a footer citing a policy statement in the Design Principles. The new guidelines also reiterate many of the existing provisions in guidelines for the Central District (e.g., Pasadena Downtown Urban Design Guidelines). They have, however, been carefully edited and expanded to omit information that is obsolete, such as the treatments for signs and alleys in the "Design Guidelines for Old Pasadena," and material that conflicts with existing zoning development standards and other guidelines, such as the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation & Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*.

Removing outdated information and adding new material, the new guidelines replace five existing guidelines for the Central District: the Design Guidelines for Old Pasadena (1978); the Pasadena Downtown Urban Design Plan (1983); the Pasadena Downtown Urban Design Guidelines (1992); the General Guidelines in the Civic Center Specific Plan (1989); and the Pasadena Playhouse Mixed-use and Arts-inclusive Plan (draft 1993). At the same time, they supplement—but not replace—four other guidelines that are up to date, newly adopted, or in draft form. These guidelines, which focus primarily on public space, are: the Streetscapes and Alley Walkways Plan for Old Pasadena, the Pasadena Playhouse Streetscapes, Walkways, and Alleyways Plan, the Civic Center/Mid-town Programming Effort Report, and the Pasadena Civic Center/Mid-town District Design Project. These guidelines will continue to be used for design review in the Central District. The format of these guidelines will also remain unchanged.

#### **Other Design Guidelines.**

A list of all of the City's design guidelines is attached to this report (ATTACHMENT B). Many of these guidelines are in other specific plans (e.g., North Lake, West Gateway, Fair Oaks/Orange Grove), master development plans (e.g., Caltech), redevelopment plans (e.g., Lincoln Avenue), park plans (e.g., Memorial Park), and portions of the zoning code (City of Gardens). Several guidelines also apply to specific uses, such as service stations and automobile washing facilities. These guidelines are not proposed for revision as part of this project. The Design Guidelines for Signs and Awnings, slated for adoption with the new sign ordinance, will replace the existing design guidelines for signs and awnings in the Central District, building identity walls signs, and the sign guidelines in Old Pasadena.

#### **Public Outreach.**

In July 2002, the Design Commission held a publicly noticed workshop on the design guidelines in the Pasadena Conference Center. The notification for this meeting, which included mailings and newspaper advertisements, primarily targeted businesses, organizations, and property owners in the Central District because the new material in the guidelines is limited to the Central District. City staff also posted drafts of the design principles and design guidelines on the City's Website. The design guidelines were also included in the "public open house" meeting on the Central District Specific Plan in the Conference Center on October 1, 2002.

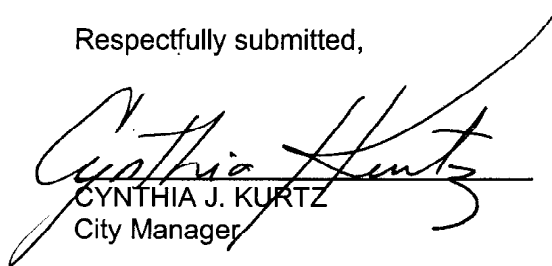
The Design Commission and the Planning Commission each reviewed the revised Design Principles and draft guidelines on three occasions. The Design Commission requested the inclusion of an introductory page to describe the difference between the design principles and

guidelines and to describe the difference between regulatory standards in the zoning code and guidelines. This one-age introduction precedes the Citywide Design Principles in ATTACHMENT C.

**FISCAL IMPACT.**


Adopting updated and new design guidelines does not affect City revenues. The City recovers the cost of conducting design review through fees in the General Fee Schedule and fees for plan check. The cost of printing and photocopying guidelines is passed along to customers in the Permit Center.

Respectfully submitted,




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