



Agenda Report

September 8, 2014

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Planning & Community Development Department
SUBJECT: MANSIONIZATION AND NEIGHBORHOOD COMPATIBILITY OF SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive the report and direct staff to bring the issue of mansionization to the Planning Commission to develop a strategy and recommendation for potential revisions to the City's Zoning Code.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

As property values citywide have increased in recent years, property owners and developers have torn down original, modest-sized houses and replaced them with much larger structures, or significantly remodeled existing structures with large-scale two-story additions which are out of scale with neighboring properties. Recent construction activity has resulted in structures that are larger than existing homes and built out to the required setbacks with only minimum spacing between houses and large second stories, which has the potential to create a congested relationship between adjoining houses and a reduction of the neighbors' access to direct sunlight and privacy.

Although the City has existing rules in place that govern single family development designated as historic and in certain hillside areas, there are no regulations in other single family residential zones. The question before the Council this evening is whether or not to consider new rules to govern future development in these unprotected areas.

BACKGROUND:

At the May 19, 2014 City Council meeting, Councilmember Tornek expressed concerns about the incompatibility of some new homes and additions with their surrounding neighborhoods and the issue of mansionization. Mansionization describes a trend in development of replacing older homes with new construction that is larger and potentially out of scale with homes around them.

This discussion focuses on development that is outside Hillside Districts and also excludes designated historic resources because new single-family residences and major additions within these areas are reviewed for neighborhood compatibility through Hillside Development Permits in the Hillside District and Certificates of Appropriateness for properties with a historic designation. Properties that are designated historic include individual landmarks, landmark districts, local, state and national landmarks. In addition, there are more stringent setbacks, height and size regulations that apply only to the Lower Hastings Ranch Area. A map of all Single-Family Residential (RS-) designated parcels is included as Attachment 1.

All other new single-family residences and additions are reviewed under basic zoning standard (i.e., height, setbacks and floor area) and are not subject to design guidelines or a separate entitlement process that would review the project for neighborhood compatibility. The allowable height, Floor Area Ratio (FAR), lot coverage and setbacks are determined by the zoning of the parcel and parcel size, not by neighboring characteristics. Other general development standards such as maximum front yard paving, minimum and maximum driveway widths and required landscaping in the front yard contribute to the amount of open space required for each parcel.

ANALYSIS

Based on City records, from 2010 through 2014 the City has conducted final inspections for 21 new single-family residences, 38 second-story additions, and 180 additions over 500 square feet, located outside of the Hillside Overlay and Landmark Districts. This accounts for less than two percent of the total 13,481 building permits issued during the same time frame but represents well over 200 single-family residences throughout the City. Although this may be a small percentage of total permits issued, projects that are incompatible and out of scale with the neighborhood have the ability to adversely impact the character of a neighborhood and may encourage further mansionization to occur. These types of concerns have been raised about the development on 747 S. Los Robles Avenue and 580 Madeline Drive (Attachment 2).

Revising the standards at this point in time could help to ensure that new development is more compatible with the neighborhoods they are going into. This would be a proactive approach to address the issue before additional out of scale development is proposed in these neighborhoods.

In the recent past, the City has modified zoning regulations in an effort to protect the scale and character of single family neighborhoods.

The City has processed several zoning code amendments to address mansionization:

- Ordinance 6434 (1991) – Established a maximum top plate height limit, a maximum floor area ratio, an encroachment plane and changes to maximum lot coverage limits.

- Ordinance 7057 (2006) – Required garages to be located behind the primary structure if it is the prevailing location for other garages on the block and established a maximum size for accessory structures.
- Ordinance 7179 (2009) – Limited matching nonconforming setbacks and encroachment plane projection for new additions; lowered the maximum height limit for RS and RM12 lots; increase the maximum lot coverage for RS and RM12 lots; establish new FAR maximum based on lot size; redefined how FAR is calculated.

Other cities have also implemented measures to prevent mansionization, including:

- **Encourage “good design practices” by offering incentives** such as providing a 20 percent residential floor area bonus if the second story is not more than 75 percent of the largest floor of the primary structure, or at least 20 percent of the building frontage facing the front property line is stepped back at least 20 percent of the building depth, or if the project is Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified.
- **Create Overlay Districts** such as a “Residential Floor Area District” where the baseline FAR is more restrictive than the general development standards or a “Single-story Height District” where second-story development is prohibited.
- **Establish a maximum home size regardless of lot size.**
- **Require discretionary review for certain development rights** by establishing “by-right” development standards; any development in excess may be permitted through a discretionary review process.
- **Require Design Review by staff or a commission** to address issues related to design, massing and neighborhood compatibility for new single-family residences and major additions.

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:

Protecting the character and scale of the City’s residential neighborhoods is a stated The General Plan – OBJECTIVE 7 – RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS: Preserve the character and scale of Pasadena’s established residential neighborhoods.

Policy 7.1 – Mansionization: Ensure that all new development in residential neighborhoods discourages mansionization.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

This report is for information only, no action is proposed that would be subject to environmental review.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This report is for information only and will not result in any fiscal impacts.

Respectfully submitted,



VINCENT P. BERTONI, AICP
Director of Planning & Community
Development Department

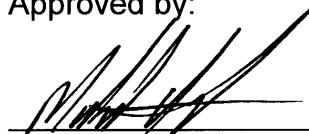
Prepared by:


Ha Ly, AICP
Associate Planner

Concurred by:


Laura F. Dahl
Senior Planner

Approved by:


MICHAEL J. BECK
City Manager

Attachments (2)

Attachment 1: Map of All Single-Family Residential (RS) Designated Parcels
Attachment 2: Photographs of 747 S. Los Robles Avenue and 580 Madeline Drive