



Culver CITY

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REVISED **PLANNING COMMISSION** **MEETING AGENDA** **TUESDAY, APRIL 21, 2009**

PUBLIC COMMENT

The Planning Commission will listen to the public on any item on the agenda or item of interest that is not on the agenda. The Planning Commission cannot legally take action on any item not scheduled on the agenda. Such items may be referred for administrative action or scheduled on a future agenda.

If you wish to speak to the Commissioners, please complete a Speaker's Card and present it to the Secretary before the agenda item is called. You will be called to the podium by name when it is your turn to speak to the Commissioners.

PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

Persons wishing to speak on agenda items will be called at the time the agenda item is brought forward. Comments will generally be limited to five minutes per speaker; however, a three-minute limit may be declared by the Chairperson for agenda items for which many Speaker Cards have been submitted.

PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

A total of twenty minutes shall be devoted to audience participation at the beginning of the agenda. Speakers will be called on in the order cards were received by the Secretary. If additional time is needed, the Chairperson will allow for same at the end of the agenda.

When the Secretary calls your name, please advance to the podium and state your name and city of residence. Speakers must limit their comments to five minutes. A three-minute limit may be declared by the Chairperson if there is a large number of individuals desiring to address the Commissioners.

NOTE: AT OR ABOUT 11:00 P.M., COMMISSION MEMBERS WILL DETERMINE WHETHER TO CONTINUE WITH DISCUSSION OF REMAINING ITEMS ON THE AGENDA OR TO CARRY SOME/ALL OF THE ITEMS OVER TO A FUTURE MEETING DATE.

CELL PHONES AND OTHER DISTRACTIONS

Use of cell phones, pagers and other communication devices is prohibited while the Planning Commission Meeting is in session. Please turn all devices off or place on silent alert and leave the Chambers to use. During the meeting, please refrain from applause or other actions that may be disruptive to the speakers or the conduct of City business.

MEETING INFORMATION

Planning Commission meetings are regularly scheduled for the second and fourth Wednesdays of every month. Planning Commission Agenda information is available 72 hours before each Planning Commission meeting via a tape recorded message by calling 310-253-5741.

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ALD

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AGENDA
Planning Commission
Tuesday, April 21, 2009
7:00 p.m.
Mike Balkman Council Chambers

CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

David Rockwell, Chair
John Kuechle, Vice Chair
Linda Smith Frost, Commissioner
Anthony Pleskow, Commissioner
Linda Shahinian, Commissioner

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PUBLIC COMMENT – Items Not On The Agenda

D-1. Discussion of Gateway Neighborhood Multi-Family Design Guidelines.

CONSENT CALENDAR. *Note: Consent Calendar items are considered to be routine in nature and may be approved by one motion. Public requests to discuss Consent Calendar items must be filed with the Secretary before the Consent Calendar is called.*

C-1. Secretary's Report. **Approve Report.**

C-2. Approval of Minutes of December 10, 2008, January 14, 2009 and January 28, 2009. **Approve**

ITEMS FROM STAFF

ITEMS FROM PLANNING COMMISSION

ADJOURN

**Next Planning Commission Meeting
May 13, 2009
7:00 PM**

Upcoming Public Meeting Schedule –Tentative – 2009

Date	Day	Time	Location
City Council			
April 27	Monday	7:00PM	Council Chambers
Redevelopment Agency			
May 4	Monday	7:00PM	Council Chambers
Civil Service Commission			
May 6	Wednesday	7:00PM	Council Chambers
Cultural Affairs Commission			
May 12	Tuesday	7:00PM	Council Chambers
Parks & Recreation Commission			
May 5	Wednesday	7:00PM	Patacchia Room
Planning Commission			
May 13	Wednesday	7:00PM	Council Chambers

- Meetings may be added or changed.
- Times and date may be changed.

Meeting Date: April 21, 2009	Item Number: D-1
AGENDA ITEM: Discussion of Final Draft of the Gateway Neighborhood Design Guidelines.	
Contact Person/Dept.: Thomas Gorham	Phone Number: (310) 253-5727
Public Hearing: []	Discussion Item: [X] Attachments: []
Public Notification: Emailed to the Master Notification List and participants of February 4 th and February 25 th Neighborhood Workshop 4-15-09; Notice sent to Gateway Neighborhood 4-15-09	
Department Approval: Thomas Gorham, Planning Manager	

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Planning Commission:

Review the final draft of the Gateway Residential Neighborhood Design Guidelines and provide staff with direction for adoption.

BACKGROUND:

The Planning Division has completed its survey study of the Gateway Neighborhood (which is bounded by Duquesne Avenue to the east, Madison Avenue to the west, Culver Boulevard to the north, and La Ballona Creek to the south) and presented the study findings and draft design principles to the neighborhood at a workshop on February 4, 2009. On February 25, 2009, staff held a workshop with the Commission and presented the study findings and draft design guidelines based on the study, draft design principles and feedback from the neighborhood. The meeting notes from this meeting are included herein as Attachment No. 1. Following discussion and input from the neighbors and the Commission, staff indicated that they would refine the guidelines and prepare a final draft to be presented to the Commission in a workshop format for final input prior to formal adoption.

DISCUSSION:

The Final Draft Guidelines are included herein as Attachment No. 2. The guidelines now include an introduction and an applicability section. The guidelines have been written to not appear to be regulatory with language such as "should" and "encourage" being used as opposed to "shall", "prohibited" and "required". In addition the guidelines have limited the use of the words "abutting", "adjacent", and "vicinity" and rather are written to apply on a block by block basis. Finally, the objectives and the guidelines have been simplified and made more consistent and have been written to allow flexibility with the ultimate objective that projects are compatible with the neighborhood and provide genuine and interesting architectural design without dictating any particular style.

Staff will also be preparing graphics and photos showing examples of some of the guideline elements that will be integrated into the final document that the Commission ultimately adopts.

Staff is still preparing information on the potential financial implications of the guidelines as they relate to parking, density, and unit size. Supplemental information on this issue will be provided to the Commission prior to the meeting.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Summary of Comments from 2/25/09 Workshop
2. Final Draft Guidelines

Attachment No. 1
Notes for design Guidelines Meeting
February 25, 2009

Public Discussion:

- Curious about the weight of guidelines, example if architect can't or doesn't want to follow it what happens?
- City Attorney will review guidelines for legality.
- Can guidelines be considered Findings?
- They will help commission make subjective findings and help staff make recommendations.
- Guidelines are not regulation. Example there shouldn't be use of words like: "prohibit." Should use words like "encourage." Should look at projects and figure out how well it is compatible with the Design guidelines.
- Should look at remodels/consistency in single family home as well like multi-family.
- Guidelines should look at median height of structures – top & bottom ranges.
- There should be massing information to inform new construction.
- Design guidelines should limit two lot ties.
- Pointed to existing "ugly" buildings and that existing is not always good.
- We should look at the best examples.
- The guidelines should have some good/bad examples.
- Using appropriate elements to have genuine architecture.
- Having "cheat-sheets" to improve builder designs
- Noted that neighbor's comments were heard by staff & directly used.
- No "faux" neighborhood
- Evolve "naturally"
- No dictation of a particular design
- "Neighborhood feel"
- Street trees, "suburban feeling" that is better than new suburbs being developed.
- Concern of reduction of landscaping.
- Parking needs of today's world – cars with old lots
- Flexibility in driveway design
- Shared driveways
- Smart growth principles
- Balance of having enough parking vs. smart growth ideas to encourage people not to use cars.
- Thanks to staff for hearing neighbors

- Encourages canopy trees, not palm trees which are considered grass
- Landscaping should break up massing & help with global warming.
- Zero-scape landscaping
- Lincoln Av project as bad example.
 - Massing in front
 - Boxy
 - “un-natural”
 - Fencing closed-off and un-inviting
- Landscaping should be an integrated plan for landscaping not an afterthought.
- Mass, setbacks are most important for design guidelines
- Parking problems are related to density.
- Density causes parking/ traffic problems
- Felt neighborhood was heard and thanked staff.
- Shading of buildings
- View obstruction
- Landscaping/trees are inhabitants for wildlife not just for people.
- Congrats to staff for an amazing job
- Neighborhood consulting
 - Defining neighborhoods
 - Guidelines for applicant to do community outreach
 - Green building requirements
 - Construction green practices
 - Economic developments – impact of projects
- Neighborhood association – don’t want to be “official” – it’s expensive and harder to do.
- Instead it’s very grassroots, informal/ no officers, and boundaries are chosen by the neighborhood.
- Neighborhoods should identify/defy their neighborhood boundaries
- Leave it to the neighborhood not the city to decide
- Concern over non-conforming structures
 - Should new development take that into account in designing their project so they make it “conforming?” so that the non-conformity doesn’t become worst?

Commission/Staff Discussion

Commissioner Pleskow

- Design guidelines should be open to different design as long as it is “integrated” into the neighborhood.
- What’s existing is not always good
- Good example of design that doesn’t match existing buildings but is good design – SBF building on east Washington.
 - Interesting design although style was not prevalent
- Guidelines will give commission some weight in making decisions.
- Can’t transplant a “good design” in another design – depend on existing environment as well.

Commissioner Keuchle

- Priority issues – setbacks and massing
- Don’t try to do too much with the design guidelines; don’t make it complicated.
- Have these guidelines deal with external design issues rather than internal issues such as solar power.
- Final landscaping plan should be integrated into project and presented to commission.
- Community input was great because it was from the start
- Include in the design guidelines good/bad examples of window design
- Patio covers discouraged and patios are encouraged in another part – check on this – competing points.

Commissioner Rockwell

- Input from developers is important so there’s a balance and both sides are heard
- Massing, scale, and integration and the three top points
- Allow flexibility in design – no “Design Police.”
- Get the “right” words, example abutting, adjacent versus neighborhood, vicinity.
- Should neighborhood compatibility be defined e.g. within 300’ vs. “surrounding area.”

Staff

- Will meet with City Attorney to discuss legality of document
- Will look into parking issues
- Financial implications
- Look at neighborhood instead of adjacent/ abutting area
- Next informal meeting: fully develop ideas.

GATEWAY NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

The Gateway Neighborhood is a major portion of Tract #1775, filed in 1912 by the Washington Improvement Company. The neighborhood is bounded by Duquesne Avenue to the east, Jackson Avenue to the west, Culver Boulevard to the north, and Ballona Creek to the south. Within this small district are a diversity of housing types and aesthetic styles. The earliest single and duplex houses date back to the 1900's through 20's, and some are City-designated with historic status. Most Gateway dwellings date from the 1930's through the 50's, and are often marked by later additions and renovations. Infill development of recent times, 1980s to present, number few, but tend to have larger building forms that take up a large portion of the lot. The neighborhood streetscape is characterized with tree-lined streets with the canopy of mature trees lining both sides the street. The front yards of the neighborhood are notably generous characterized by broad, planted yards that join to create a continuous landscape

The neighborhood is divided into two zoning districts, RMD and R-2. The RMD zone allows up to 4 units per lot and the R2 allows two units per lot. The RMD portion is primarily made up of a mix of newer larger 4-8 unit buildings and older small court yard apartments with up to six units arranged around an interior court and significant amounts of landscaping. Lots with one and two family housing in the RMD zone largely remain underdeveloped under current zoning standards. The R2 portion is made up of single family or two family housing characterized by generous setbacks, extensive landscaping, and open courtyards and uninterrupted landscaped parkways.

There is a wide mix of architectural styles in the neighborhood including Craftsman Bungalows, various Spanish and Mediterranean styles, Tudor, Contemporary, and Modern styles. The neighborhood's best architectural examples have interesting façades that create scale and visual interest no matter what the style.

GENERAL DESIGN OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the design guidelines for residential structures are as follows:

- A.** Beyond meeting the Zoning Ordinance's minimum standards, new residential projects should reflect the adjacent development patterns and respect the character of the neighborhood on a block by block basis relative to prevailing lot size, building orientation, scale, prevailing building setbacks, yards, open space and lot coverage.
- B.** Projects should minimize bulk and mass.
- C.** The privacy of abutting existing residential uses should be protected.
- D.** Existing parkways and existing mature landscaping and street trees should be protected to maintain the character of the neighborhood.
- E.** Landscaping should be integrated into the project to complement the building architecture.
- F.** The percentage of lot area devoted to parking and driveways should be minimized and parking shall be located to reduce visual impacts and maximize open space and landscaping.
- G.** Lighting should be used to complement and enhance the architecture and landscape of projects.

APPLICABILITY

The Zone Code sets minimum standards that are intended to address neighborhood consistency issues relative to setback, building height, lot coverage, density and other development requirements. These guidelines are intended to complement the area zoning and be used to guide development in the neighborhood to ensure that new projects are compatible with the neighborhood and will help inform the decision making of the Planning Commission and staff relative to design and development.

GUIDELINES

Site Design

- 1. Building Location.** The visual impact of proposed development should be designed to respect neighboring properties as well as views from the public rights-of-way. Examples for achieving this objective are as follows:
 - a. Establish setbacks consistent with the prevailing setback along the block where the project is located.
 - b. Provide building orientation consistent with adjacent buildings and street frontage.
 - c. Require the majority of building entries to face the Public Street or courtyard setback.
 - d. Place new structures or additions in locations that minimize impacts on existing neighboring structures.
 - e. Require corner sites to maintain the minimum setback requirements for at least one of the street frontages consistent with the prevailing setback along the project block.
 - f. To the extent feasible buildings shall be located to allow for natural cooling
 - g. Building lot coverage should be consistent with the prevailing lot coverage for the block
- 2. Building Privacy.** Buildings should minimize the disruption of privacy and outdoor activities of adjacent sites. Examples for achieving this objective are as follows:
 - a. To the extent feasible place windows where they do not directly align with existing neighboring windows.
 - b. Screen or locate windows away from direct views of private outdoor areas of adjacent properties.
 - c. Place second floor balconies and decks in locations that minimize the loss of privacy for neighboring properties.
 - d. Provide landscaping along side and rear property lines to help maintain privacy.

3. Parking. The percentage of lot area devoted to parking and driveways shall be minimized and parking shall be located to reduce visual impacts and maximize open space and landscaping. Examples for achieving these objectives are as follows:

- a. The visual impact of parking areas and garage openings should not adversely affect the character of residential streets. Examples of negative visual impacts are: expansive blank walls, garage doors and driveway openings that dominate the street frontage and parking facilities located in the front yard.
- b. If feasible, on-site parking should be located at the rear of sites. Access to parking areas should be from alleys wherever possible.
- c. Carports, garages, and accessory structures should be designed as an integral part of the project architecture. They should be similar in materials, color and detail of the principal building.
- d. Open-air driveways and other outdoor vehicle-maneuvering areas should try to integrate permeable surfaces whenever possible and designed to include special paving materials. Materials such as gravel, decomposed granite, or grass-crete are encouraged.
- e. Driveway apron size and driveway area along the street frontage should be minimized.
- f. Shared driveway should be used where feasible.
- g. Avoid locating driveways in the center of the site. Load driveways on one end of a lot in a project so that the driveway is not the central feature visible from the street edge. Use existing driveways and maintain current landscaping where feasible. Driveways should not be placed where removal of trees would be required.
- h. Landscaping should be used to screen driveways from view.
- i. Where subterranean parking is used, it should be entirely below grade and with the driveway located to the side of the lot to ensure that it cannot be seen from the street. In order to allow opportunities for landscaping on grade rather than over structure, subterranean parking should not occupy the entire lot. Podium parking should be restricted to not more than 1/2 of the site so that it is not visible from the street frontage and all grills and ventilation openings must not be visible from the street.
- j. The parking footprint should be minimized on double wide lots to allow for more on-grade landscaping.

5. Landscaping and Open Space. Landscaping and open space is an integral part of any project. Landscaping can be used as a unifying element within a project to obtain a cohesive appearance and to help achieve compatibility of a new project with its surroundings. Examples for achieving these objectives are as follows:

- a. Landscape elements should include plant materials, walls, gates, sun shelters, lighting, fountains, and paving materials. Desirable landscape elements include the use of color and contrast, pedestrian scaled lighting, plant materials and structures that provide shade and seating opportunities, such as raised planters and walls.

- b. Landscape elements should compliment the architectural style of the primary structure. The scale of proposed landscape materials should also be proportional to the size of the primary structure.
- c. Landscaping should be developed to contain a combination of low, medium and tall plant materials as appropriate. Low planting should be used in the foreground, proceeding back to the tallest in the background.
- d. Permeable surfaces should be used whenever possible. The reduction of paving in all yards is encouraged. Extensive paving is discouraged because it intensifies surface runoff and prevents rainwater percolation.
- e. All unpaved surfaces on the building site, such as building and property edges, patios, and spaces between structures should be landscaped with trees, shrubs, and ground-cover.
- f. When limited space is available, the use of raised planters, window boxes, potted plants and the installation of vines should be included.
- g. Planting shall be used to soften or screen parking areas, alleyways, and trash and service areas.
- h. A clear line of sight should be maintained from the street into the development by requiring that fences and hedges at a maximum height of 42" in the front yard. Fence and wall materials, colors and detailing should be consistent with buildings on the site.
- i. Proposed projects should accommodate existing mature street trees and there removal shall be prohibited to the extent feasible.
- j. Whenever possible, Multifamily Project Landscaping should be provided on grade rather than over structure to encourage use of large trees and shrubs and to reduce heat island effect of new development and facilitate ground water recharge.
- k. Wherever possible design of public and private open space should be integrated and to connected to maximize open feel for a development.
- l. Open space and landscaping should be used open up the project to the street.
- m. Use of courtyard design or other type designs that increase open space and landscaping is encouraged.
- n. Common open space should be open to the sky. Building projections that block sunlight and air in the courtyard/front setback and patio covers, green house enclosures, and other similar enclosures which vary from the architectural style of the approved primary structure are discouraged.

6. Lighting. Lighting can be used to complement and enhance the architecture and landscape of projects. A lighting scheme should be functional and aesthetically pleasing while providing a sense of security. Examples for achieving these objectives are as follows:

- a. Lighting should not spill, reflect, or produce glare onto adjoining properties or into windows, and/or public rights-of-way. Illumination should be screened and reflected away from adjacent properties.
- b. Exterior project lighting should be designed to contribute to the aesthetic quality of the project. Lighting of a building façade should not wash out architectural features. Exterior lighting that reinforces the architecture and blends into the landscape is strongly encouraged.
- c. Lighting of pedestrian pathways, entrances, driveways, and parking areas should be generally consistent in type, number and spacing of fixtures.
- d. Lighting fixtures should be compatible with the architectural style, materials, and color of the project.

Building Design and Architecture

1. **Mass and Scale.** A structure that is out of scale with its site and neighboring buildings is incompatible with its surroundings. The following design guidelines are intended to address building massing and scale:
 - a. Harmonize building scale relative to existing prevailing scale of the block.
 - b. Height and bulk of multi-story buildings should be reduced by dividing the building mass into smaller-scale components and adding details such as projecting eaves, dormers porches, and balconies.
 - c. The base of the building should anchor the building by establishing a strong visual connection to the ground and the site. The base of the building should appear more massive than the upper stories. This can be achieved by stepping back the upper floor and eliminating exposed podium parking.
 - d. The lower portions of multi-story buildings adjacent to streets and public pedestrian areas should incorporate sufficient small-scale elements (such as entry ways, stoops, steps, windows, canopies, etc.) to relate them to pedestrians. Large entries that dominate the front façade and appear to be two-stories are strongly discouraged.
 - e. The upper stories of the building should exhibit a lighter character than the base, possibly by reducing floor area and building mass and using stepbacks. Architectural details on the upper stories should be at a scale that relates to the overall building composition. As a general rule, massing and details should be proportionate to the scale of the building.
 - f. The building height shall be consistent with the prevailing height of the block. When the prevailing structures of the block are one story, a multi-story project shall maintain the one story building height along the street frontage at the front building setback and step back the upper floor.

- 2. Building Façade.** Façade treatment and building details provide visual interest and can contribute to the overall architectural quality of a building. To create a better visual relationship between older and newer development, common block or neighborhood building materials and color, building fenestration, building details, roof lines, patio design, balcony design and other architectural features should be identified to provide a design vocabulary for new projects. The following design guidelines deal with the treatment of a building's exterior surfaces, materials, details, colors, and finishes and are not intended to require any particular style of architecture but rather respect the diversity of architectural styles in the neighborhood and provide interesting design that is integrated into the neighborhood.
- a. Façade treatments should be relevant to the building's architectural style and be carried through the entire structure and any accessory structures. For additions or alterations of an existing structure, materials and finishes should be consistent with the original structure. New windows or doors should match those existing on the structure.
 - b. Articulation of the building façade can be achieved by utilizing reveals, changes in surface texture and variations in the building plane. These techniques can help divide a wall plane into smaller components that relate to human size and scale. Areas of flat, blank walls and lack of treatment shall be minimized, especially on street facades.
 - c. Surface materials or treatments should not produce excessive reflected glare which could adversely affect the comfort or safety of pedestrians or drivers.
 - d. The use of appropriate architectural details and materials are encouraged and design should avoid random mixing of decorative details and the use of too many exterior materials.
 - e. Building design should be enhanced by use of appropriate architectural details and materials including: porch columns, decorative moldings, door and window designs, porch and balcony railings, dormers, roof overhangs, fascia boards, gables, awnings, steps and stairs. Examples of appropriate accent materials include, but are not limited to: stone, brick, wood and contrasting finish treatments.
 - f. Architectural details and exterior materials should be applied consistently on all sides of the structure. The use of details and exterior materials should take into consideration all possible views of the building. Visual conflicts between the street facade and sides or rear views must not exist.
 - g. Accessory structures shall be consistent in design, material and color with the primary structures on the site.
 - h. The use of genuine architecture without any dictate to any particular style is encouraged. The use of faux architecture or the mix of architectural styles is strongly discouraged.