

City of Culver City, California
City Council Agenda Item Report

Meeting Date: 09/22/2008		Item Number: <u>A-3</u>	
AGENDA ITEM: Discussion of Community Input on Discretionary Development Projects			
Contact Person/Dept.: Thomas Gorham, Planning Manager		Phone Number: (310) 253-5727	
Fiscal Impact: Yes ☐ No ☒		General Fund: Yes ☐ No ☒	
Public Hearing: ☐		Action Item: ☒ Attachments: ☐	
Public Notification: Master E-Mail Notification List (09/17/08)			
Department Approval: Sol Blumenfeld (09/11/08)		City Attorney Approval: Carol Schwab (by H. Baker)(09/16/08)	
Chief Financial Officer Approval: Jeff Muir (by M. Noller) (09/17/08)		City Manager Approval: Jerry B. Fulwood (09/17/08)	
<u>RECOMMENDATION:</u> Staff recommends the City Council receive and file the report on community input on discretionary development projects and direct staff as deemed appropriate. <u>BACKGROUND:</u> At its August 13, 2008 Council meeting the Council requested information about the process for obtaining community input on discretionary development projects. Typical development projects which are reviewed by the Planning Commission and the City Council include site plan reviews, conditional use permits, tentative tract maps (subdivisions), variances, and general plan and zoning code amendments also referred to as "entitlements". The Planning Commission and the City Council have discretionary authority to approve or deny these entitlements based on required findings. The typical path for a discretionary project starts with the applicant meeting with Planning Division staff to discuss their proposed project at a preliminary stage. At this time staff goes over the development standards the project will be subject to as well as the entitlements (i.e. site plan review, conditional use permit, tentative tract map, etc.) the project will need, and the review process through which the project must proceed. At this preliminary stage staff encourages the applicant to meet with the community or neighborhood adjacent to the project to obtain early input on the proposed project prior to submitting an application. Staff provides the applicant with the name and contact information for any Homeowners Association (HOA) or other citizen group and any businesses in the vicinity of the proposed project.			

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The first step in the application process is Preliminary Project Review (PPR). At this stage preliminary plans (typically a site plan and elevations) are submitted by the applicant. The plans are routed to the various City departments for internal review and comment. Approximately two weeks following PPR submittal, the applicant meets with the City's Project Review Committee (PRC) which is made up of representatives of the various City departments (Public Works/Engineering, Building Safety, Fire, Transportation, Police, City Attorney, and Redevelopment) that review the plans and provide comments and direction to the applicant. This is a staff only meeting where the various departments go over their comments on the proposed project with the applicant. The PPR process is intended to help streamline the application process by providing the applicant with early input on entitlement and code requirements, design recommendations, environmental issues, neighborhood issues, noticing requirements, fees, and identification of any necessary technical studies to which the project may be subject. The applicant can then decide if they want to continue in the application process and, if so, proceed to prepare refined plans and any necessary technical studies (i.e. traffic study, noise study, geotechnical study, etc) that may be required for the project prior to formal application submittal.

Following the PPR stage, an applicant then submits a formal application which includes a formal written project description, detailed project plans addressing any issues identified at the PPR stage, any necessary technical studies and reports, and payment of all applicable fees. Submittal of the formal application can take up to six months following the initial PPR review. Once a formal application is submitted, a Project First Notice Letter is sent to all properties owners and occupants within a 500 foot radius (extended to the end of the block if mid block) of the subject site and to all HOA's within the vicinity of the project. The First Notice Letter describes the proposed project, provides the applicant information, and contains information on the availability of the plans for review. The letter also notes that once a hearing date for the proposed project is determined, an official public hearing notice will be mailed out at least 21 days in advance of the hearing. At the formal application stage, staff again encourages the applicant to meet with the community for comment and input on the proposed project prior to the public hearing.

Following submittal of the formal application, the project plans are routed again to the various City departments and a second PRC meeting is held where staff provides the applicant with final comments and recommended conditions for the project. Following the PRC meeting, the planning staff makes a determination on whether or not the application can be deemed complete. If deemed complete, the project is then scheduled for a public hearing which typically occurs within 60 days. If staff cannot deem the application complete, the applicant is informed of what additional information is required before the application can be deemed complete and scheduled for public hearing.

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Once a public hearing date is established, a formal public hearing notice is mailed to all owners and occupants of property within a 500 foot radius (extended to the end of the block if mid block), all HOA's within the vicinity of the project, any interested party, and the master e-mail notification list at least 21 days prior to the public hearing. In addition, a sign is posted along each project street frontage with information about the project and the date of the public hearing.

DISCUSSION:

As outlined above, the public input and participation occurs at various stages of the application process. First, the applicant is encouraged to meet with the community prior to fully developing project plans and formal application submittal to identify and address any neighborhood concerns early on. Second, once a formal application has been submitted, a project First Notice Letter is sent out and the applicant is again encouraged by staff to meet with the community. Finally, once a public hearing date has been set, an official public hearing notice is mailed and the project site is posted with a sign at least 21 days in advance of the hearing date inviting the public to participate in the hearing process.

The City Council has made it clear that public participation in the development process is important to the Council and to the community. In recognition of the importance of community involvement throughout the application process, staff recently commenced with requirements for applicants to submit a plan for community involvement outlining proposed outreach, meetings, and any other methods they intend to use or have used to adequately present the project to the community and to solicit community input outside of the public hearing process. This Public Participation Plan must be submitted as part of their formal application submittal. The applicant is also required to submit a summary of the results of any community meetings and outreach and how the applicant addressed the public concerns and what if any changes to the project were a result of community input.

The following summarizes the development application process and opportunities for community input:

1. Initial meeting with Planning Division staff to discuss proposed project at a preliminary stage
2. Applicant solicits community input
3. Preliminary Project Review (PPR) submittal
4. Applicant meets with community
5. Formal Application submittal
6. Project First Notice Letter sent
7. Applicant meets with community

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8. Public Hearing Notice sent
9. Public Hearing
10. Project Decision

Based upon the City Council's direction, staff has prepared this report to both provide the City Council with information on the City's current process and allow the City Council an opportunity to provide comment and direction on this subject. The City Council may determine that the current process meets the City Council's goals or the Council may determine to provide additional measures related to public participation in the development process.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Discussion of this topic does not create a fiscal impact. However, based upon any modifications the City Council may deem necessary, additional notification efforts would have an associated cost.

ATTACHMENTS:

None

MOTION:

That the City Council:

Receive and file this report and direct staff as deemed appropriate.