



City of Culver City

Mike Balkman Council
Chambers
9770 Culver Blvd.
Culver City, CA 90232

Staff Report

File #: 18-0703, **Version:** 1

Item #: A-2.

CC - (1) Receipt and Filing of Recommendations for R-1 Neighborhood Hillside Development Standards Relating to the Upper Culver Crest Neighborhood; and (2) Direction to Staff to Proceed with Recommended Actions.

Meeting Date: January 22, 2018

Contact Person/Dept: Michael Allen / Planning Manager
Sol Blumenfeld / Community Development Director

Phone Number: 310-253-5727

Fiscal Impact: Yes ☐ No ☒

General Fund: Yes ☐ No ☒

Public Hearing: ☐ **Action Item:** ☒ **Attachments:** ☒

Commission Action Required: Yes ☐ No ☒ **Date:**

Public Notification: (E-Mail) Meetings and Agendas - City Council (01/17/18); (Posted) City Website (01/17/18);

Department Approval: Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director (01/10/18)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the City Council (1) receive and file the recommendations for R-1 Neighborhood Hillside Development Standards as it relates to the Upper Culver Crest Neighborhood; and (2) provide staff with direction to proceed with recommended actions.

BACKGROUND

In order to address on-going concerns regarding development in the Culver Crest hillside neighborhood, the City Council adopted Urgency Ordinance No. 2017-005, establishing a 45-Day Moratorium on the issuance of any new building permit for development and construction in the Lower and Upper Culver Crest hillside neighborhoods.

On April 18, 2017 the City Council adopted Ordinance No. 2017-006, extending the temporary moratorium by 10 months and 15 days (including a reduction in the area and properties subject to the moratorium) in order to allow the City time to thoroughly research options for regulating the

development and construction on the hillside and prepare and present recommended regulations to the Planning Commission for recommendation to the City Council.

On May 30th, 2017 City Council approved an agreement with John Kaliski Architects (JKA) to prepare a study of hillside design and development standards (Study). As a result, JKA submitted a proposed expanded scope of work to address concerns discussed at the December 20, 2016 meeting between community members and City staff.

On November 27, 2017 while the Study continued to look at design guidelines for the hillside area, City Council adopted Urgency Ordinance No. 2017-017 to address the following immediate issues related to hillside development density and ADUs which surfaced during the study:

- (1) There are existing substandard roadway widths coupled with curvilinear roadway configuration that may limit or prohibit emergency vehicle access or response time during an emergency.
- (2) The eastern half of the Culver Crest neighborhood is in a “Very High Fire Hazard”; and
- (3) The area contains potential liquefaction zones and potential surficial landslide hazards.

DISCUSSION

The Lower and Upper Culver Crest Hillside Neighborhood (Culver Crest) has historically experienced a series of surficial landslides and more recently development and design concerns related to construction of larger homes. JKA was tasked with outlining planning methods and providing recommendations to guide design and development within the Culver Crest hillside. This included the review of existing City plans and policies, existing slope conditions, the geotechnical history of landslides, available hillside plans, and relevant hillside development standards and policies, in order to develop recommendations that address community concerns; as well as three community meetings and study sessions to discuss findings with the community and provide preliminary recommendations for community feedback.

Two community meetings were held at Veterans Memorial Building in Culver City in July and August of 2017. The first community meeting sought to survey the participants regarding neighborhood design and character preferences as well as serve as a listening workshop to hear overall concerns of development in the hillside. The second community meeting reported out the findings from the first meeting and presented categorized issues for the participants to discuss in greater detail (i.e., soils conditions, development standards, and slope conditions).

Based on a summary of the community concerns and findings from the review of City plans and policies, a third community meeting was held on December 7, 2017 to present the draft version of this report to the community and to receive comments before the draft was finalized and presented to City Council. Feedback from the community at this meeting was generally positive and in favor of the proposed recommendations with requests for further development of two of the recommendations.

Key findings included:

1. The existing slope instabilities in the Culver Crest neighborhood cause surficial slope failure and not deep-seated landslides.
2. The existing grading regulations for Culver City include older City, Los Angeles County, and State of California standards. Other comparative cities have adopted newer and additional grading standards into their municipal codes and/or building codes.
3. The existing hillside maximum floor area ratio (FAR) allowed in Culver City is about 25% greater than FARs observed in other hillside cities.

In order to address the three findings above, key recommendations include (further explained in Attachment 1):

1. The following amendments to the City's Building Code -

The adoption of an "H" designation for private properties located in Culver City's hillside areas to ensure that the unique building code-related safety conditions associated with hillside lots and zones are consistently addressed. Upon adoption of the hillside designation, the City should consider the following policies:

- a. The adoption of additional grading requirements into the Culver City Municipal Code and/or Building Code for hillside areas to increase standards of care and safety for grading, excavations and fills, soils and foundations, and associated seismic design.
- b. Adoption of a cumulative grading maximum to reduce the potential of and impacts associated with large grading projects in single-family residential neighborhoods.
- c. Expansion of the scope of soils and geotechnical report findings and the associated review process.
- d. Establishment of criterion for appropriate and adequate protective devices such as: interceptor terraces, diverter terraces, berms, vee channels, inlet structures, down drains and outlet structures, runoff computations, drainage dispersal walls, sub-drains, gutters, site drainage, drainage around buildings, and maintenance of drainage.
- e. Landscape criteria that facilitate erosion control with the requirement for preparation of a landscape slope protection plan submittal for all new building addition projects at "H" designated properties.

2. The following amendments to the City's Zoning Code -

The adoption of a "CC" Zoning Code overlay for all private properties located in the Culver Crest neighborhood to ensure that the unique planning and development concerns of this hillside neighborhood are addressed. These overlay standards may be further utilized in other Culver City hillside communities and used as a basis for developing revised standards in the residential single-family "flats" of the City. The City should consider the following policies:

- a. Reduction of the maximum floor area ratio for "CC" designated properties and adoption of a slope band analysis (the relationship between degree of slope and amount of lot development) to better describe on a property-by property basis the maximum floor area allowed on sloping lots.
- b. Increase of second-story front yard setbacks and first-floor side yard setbacks.
- c. Introduction of second-story side yard setbacks.
- d. Modification of the allowable floor-to-floor height of stories and/or maximum height of allowed floor plate heights above grade.
- e. Modification to landscape requirements for driveways, trees in street-facing front yards, and screening of retaining walls.
- f. Adoption of voluntary and educational design guidelines.

In order to accomplish the above outlined recommendations, numerous amendments to the City's Building Code and Zoning Code are proposed, which will take additional time to develop a work program and timeline for implementation. To provide time to implement the appropriate code amendments, City staff will be returning to City Council to recommend an extension to the existing moratorium, Ordinance No. 2017-06 which is set to expire March 19, 2018.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

There are no fiscal impacts associated with the receipt and filing of this report.

ATTACHMENTS

- 1. Recommendations for R-1 Neighborhood Hillside Development Standards Report

MOTION

That the City Council:

1. Receive and file the recommendations for R-1 Neighborhood Hillside Development Standards as it relates to the Upper Culver Crest Neighborhood; and
2. Provide staff with direction to proceed with recommended actions through necessary Building and Zoning Code amendments.