



City of Culver City

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Staff Report

File #: 20-980, **Version:** 1

Item #: PH-1.

CC - PUBLIC HEARING: Introduction of an Ordinance Approving a City-Initiated Zoning Code Amendment Modifying Development Standards for the Single-Family (R1) Residential Zone.

Meeting Date: May 26, 2020

Contact Person/Dept: Michael Allen/Current Planning
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Fiscal Impact: Yes ☐ No ☒ **General Fund:** Yes ☐ No ☒

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

Public Notification: (E-Mail) Meetings and Agendas -City Council (05/21/2020); (Posted) City Website (05/21/2020); Single-Family Residential Study Email List Serve (05/15/2020); Gov Delivery (05/07/2020); NextDoor (05/07/2020); Published in Culver City News (05/07/2020).

Department Approval: Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director (05/20/2020)

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the City Council introduce an Ordinance approving a Zoning Code Text Amendment modifying development standards for the Single-Family (R1) Residential Zone.

PROCEDURES:

1. The Mayor seeks a motion to receive and file the affidavit of mailing and posting of public notice.
2. Mayor calls on staff for a brief staff report and the City Council poses questions to staff as desired.
3. Mayor opens the public hearing and receives comments from the general public.
4. Mayor seeks a motion to close the public hearing after all testimony has been presented.
5. City Council discusses the matter and arrives at its decision.

BACKGROUND

Over the past four years the City has been engaged in studying single family design standards in order to create a better fit between new development and the surrounding residential neighborhood. There has been significant public outreach to gather public input during this process which has informed the production of single family residential design guidelines leading to the preparation of the subject Zoning Code amendments. The purpose of the proposed Zoning Code Amendment is to modify the development standards for Single Family Residential (R-1) Zone to address community priorities related to development standards.

In January of 2016, the City Council adopted various zoning code amendments to address large single-family homes in all R-1 neighborhoods including:

- Introduction of Floor Area Ratios (FAR)
 - Adoption of a 0.60 FAR
 - Inclusion of garages as part of FAR
- Modification of Setback Requirements
 - Introduction of 25-foot second story setbacks
 - Introduction of 5-foot side yard setbacks and 10-foot side yard setbacks for corner properties
 - Introduction of 15-foot rear yard setbacks
- Introduction of 26-foot height limit for flat roof structures
- Introduction of new definition for “Basements”

As a part of the approval, City Council directed staff to engage with a consultant team to conduct a more focused study into neighborhood trends.

In May 2017, John Kaliski Architects (JKA) was retained to conduct a citywide development study of R-1 neighborhood preferences. In response to unique life safety conditions, the study began immediately in the Culver Crest neighborhood. A culmination of community meetings, study sessions, and public hearings led to the adoption of the Culver Crest Hillside Overlay Zone on February 11, 2019 and a new Hillside Grading Ordinance Building Code Amendment to address specific hillside conditions. The citywide study progressed between June 2018 and October 2019. JKA and staff conducted community meetings with the remaining seven single-family residential neighborhoods to obtain input about community priorities. Meetings were held with residents from Blair Hills/Hetzler Road, Carlson Park, Park West, Studio Village, Sunkist/Blanco Park, McLaughlin, and Culver West. Residents of all seven neighborhoods expressed their interests and concerns. During this period, large numbers of single family residences have been demolished and replaced with significantly larger homes that were incompatible in bulk and mass and covered significantly more of a lot than existing homes in the neighborhood. Participants in the community meetings and online survey favored homes that fit with prevailing neighborhood character, provided articulation, and minimized mass. Residents also supported second floor additions that were set behind

ridgelines to maintain a single-story character to existing homes.

On May 8, 2019, a Joint Study Session between City Council and Planning Commission was conducted to review recommendations for single-family zone development standards. After review of the information, input from the public, and discussion, the members of the Joint Study Session provided staff with recommendations and refinements to proposed language for Zone Code Amendments. Discussion topics included support for reduced FAR, modifications to height limits, modifications to parking requirements, privacy assurances, and pedestrian friendliness.

At the request of the members of the Joint Study Session, staff and JKA took back the recommendations to an additional round of community meetings to obtain feedback from the public. Between October 15 and October 24, 2019, staff and JKA held a second round of community meetings with the seven single-family residential neighborhoods to obtain input about the revised recommendations for the R1 Zone. The participants of the community meetings were supportive of the proposed code amendments overall. Participants consistently asked for more restrictive FAR standards and swift resolution to the process to ensure additional oversized homes were not approved or built before the new regulations were in place.

On January 22, 2020, the Planning Commission recommended approval of the proposed Zoning Code Amendment with modifications or clarifications to some of the original proposals as discussed in detail below.

Planning Commission members provided feedback to ensure that rooftop equipment on flat roof structures would be screened appropriately within the parapet height as part of overall building height. To address the request, staff proposes that all equipment placed on rooftops and upper level terraces, patios, and balconies provide a one-foot setback from building edge for every one-foot in equipment height.

The Planning Commission modified a provision from the recommendations to maintain the second-floor front yard setbacks at 25 feet and expressed concerns that the additional setback at the second floor was unnecessary as it unnecessarily forced additional square footage toward the rear of the property in areas that could otherwise be used for on-site open space.

The Planning Commission also modified language related to calculating floor area, to count the floor area occupied by staircases and elevator shafts for each floor/story that it occupies vertically. This language was originally added to promote single-story construction and ensure staircases and elevators do not unnecessarily add to bulk and mass. The Planning Commission provided direction that any staircase or elevator shaft that was more than 14 feet in height to be counted twice towards floor area as appropriate per the proposed definition for residential floor area.

The Planning Commission further requested additional language to state that detached garages needed to be in the rear one-half of a lot in order to be excluded from FAR calculations.

As part of the joint study session on May 8, 2019, City Council and Planning Commission considered a reduction of FAR to 0.50 to allow for adequate square footage for a single-family home and an accessory dwelling unit (ADU). During the time between the Joint Study Session and the Planning Commission hearing, new State laws were adopted that removed local jurisdictional ability to count ADU square footage towards FAR development standards. State law currently allows 850 square

feet for one-bedroom ADUs and 1,200 square feet for two or more-bedroom ADUs. This results in total square footage in exceedance of 0.60 FAR that is in place today, undermining the original intent of the recommended FAR responsive to community feedback.

Staff recommended a FAR reduction to 0.45 to fit neighborhood character, align with surrounding jurisdictions, and accommodate the provision to allow an ADU that does not count towards FAR. The Planning Commission requested that FAR be increased from staff recommendation of 0.45 to 0.50.

Planning Commission members requested a 0.50 FAR out of concern for unanticipated restrictions to construct a moderately sized home for the modern family. Internal discussion between the Planning Commission led to a split 3-2 vote in favor of recommending a 0.50 FAR to City Council for final decision. Staff has received correspondence (attached) indicating support for the more restrictive requirement.

Very recently, staff was alerted to concerns from residents in the lower Culver Crest neighborhood that fill slopes that otherwise comport with Building Code requirements to raise and lower a building pad may create a potential problem for neighborhood compatibility, particular when there are cross slope conditions ,where lots step evenly up a slope. Staff is evaluating this issue and may have additional information and recommendations to provide during the May 26th City Council Meeting.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Final Recommendations

The following eleven recommendations synthesize input from public hearings, community meetings, and a Joint Study Session of the City Council and Planning Commission:

1. Establish a Residential Hillside Overlay District

Staff recommends combining the existing Culver Crest Overlay with Blair Hills/Hetzler Road into a Residential Hillside Overlay District and Designation (-RH) to acknowledge the distinctive physical environmental character of their hillside topographical features, and to provide area-specific zoning regulations for incremental improvements to these hillside neighborhoods. Blair Hills residents raised no objection to the overlay and accompanying standards presented during additional outreach meeting on October 24, 2019.

Proposed updates to the Residential Hillside Overlay include 200 square feet of attached garages exempt from FAR and detached garages inclusion towards FAR. The height of a flat roof structure increases from 26 feet to 27 feet, and the "Floor Area, Residential" definition for hillside properties is modified to align with proposed height standards for the flats.

2. Amend the Single-Family Residential FAR Standards

Staff recommends amending the FAR for single-family neighborhoods from 0.60 to 0.50 to better fit the existing character and scale of neighborhoods that consist largely of one-story structures. A 0.50 FAR would allow for the construction of a 2,500 square foot house on an average 5,000 square foot lot. Per State law, ADU do not count towards FAR. FAR in the

Hillsides would still be administered by slope band methodology per previous code adoptions and could not exceed 0.45.

Staff also proposes editing existing garage FAR allowances to only allow garages located in the rear one-half of the lot to be exempt from FAR to encourage rear loaded garages that promote a fit with neighborhood character in areas with rear garages.

3. Reduce Building Height

Staff recommends modifying height allowances for flat roof structures to 27 feet including parapets to reduce the bulk and mass of new residential structures. This proposed standard will decrease building height while also allowing for construction of flat roofed two-story homes with 10'-0" floor-to-ceiling heights and a 42-inch parapet.

Staff also proposes introducing a maximum slope of 1:1 (45 degrees) for a sloped roof. This will help to ensure that a sloped roof does not have the effect of creating incompatible bulk and mass with an adjacent structure.

Staff proposes modifying height allowances in the hillside overlay for flat roof structures from 26 feet to 27 feet to facilitate administration of the Zoning Code.

Staff also recommends any mechanical equipment mounted on rooftops or upper level terraces, patios, and balconies be setback to meet a 1:1 upward and inclining plane starting at the base of the roof or exterior deck surface along front and side yard-facing facades. This setback requirement will help to better shield any roof-mounted mechanical units from public right-of-way view.

4. Modify the Front Yard Setback Requirement

Staff recommends defining anything above 18 feet in height as a "second story" in order to better define when second story development standards are required to apply. Current CCMC does not define where a second floor begins which can create one-story homes that are not consistent with surrounding character. Defining a second floor as anything over 18 feet will better relate new construction and second-story additions to prevailing one-story residences by maintaining more consistency with the existing single-story scale at front yards.

5. Modify the Side Yard Setback Requirements

Staff recommends implementing a 45-degree encroachment plane starting 18 feet above property line to reduce instances where new two-story structures overpower adjacent older homes. A 45-degree encroachment plane will also provide additional opportunities to preserve sunlight, air, and privacy in relationship to neighboring properties while also reducing overall mass and bulk alongside yards.

6. Count Double Height Volumes Twice Toward Floor Area

Staff recommends calculating double height volumes greater than 14 feet twice when determining floor area with an exception for 250 square feet of area for structures in the flats.

Building height and bulk and mass are affected by double height space that does not add usable floor area to a home. The first 250 square feet of double height area is exempt to allow for the construction of skylights, clerestory windows and the like while also keeping such features from becoming incompatible with the prevailing character of one-story homes seen in Culver City.

The proposed Residential Hillside Overlay has an existing definition for “Floor Area, Residential” that includes all double height floor area to reduce overbuilding in hillside neighborhoods. This was studied and adopted during the Culver Crest Overlay review in 2018. Language would change slightly to better define what is included as “double height floor area”, but the intent and execution of the code standard would not change.

7. Amend Parking and Garage Standards

Staff recommends allowing parking to be half-covered or uncovered on R1 lots, when such parking is in a side yard setback or behind a primary structure. If parking is to be provided with a front-loading orientation, the parking would need to provide an enclosed garage. Front loaded garages would also need to meet a 25-foot setback from the public right-of-way as opposed to the current 20-foot requirement. Uncovered parking allowances would encourage side and rear loaded parking facilities that help to promote an active street front while also controlling the visual impact that uncovered cars have on the streetscape. Additional garage setbacks would help to further reduce the impact of blank facades facing the street. Uncovered parking provisions would apply to both hillside and flats neighborhoods.

8. Modify Accessory Residential Structure Setbacks to Match Accessory Dwelling Unit Setbacks.

Staff recommends modifying accessory residential structure setbacks to match the recently adopted setbacks for accessory dwelling units and increase the allowed height of these structures from 26 to 27 feet. This would mean accessory residential structures need to meet a four (4) foot setback when adjacent to a residentially zoned property and two (2) foot setback when adjacent to a non-residentially zoned property. Accessory residential structures would always need to meet front yard setbacks per the underlying zone. This is proposed by staff to reduce confusion and inconsistency with ADU laws passed by the State, as any accessory residential structure can be converted to ADU. Height standards are proposed to be consistent with the height standards in the R-1 zone as discussed in Recommendation 3.

9. Introduce a Side Yard Adjacent Roof Deck Standard

Staff recommends requiring a five (5) foot roof deck setback from any side yard adjacent building edge to increase privacy in rear yard open space.

10. Develop Citywide, Educational, Single-Family Residential Design Guidelines and/or Informational Handout

Staff proposes an educational single-family residential design guideline document as part of a longer-term goal for architectural compliance in neighborhoods. A set of citywide single-family design guidelines and/or an informational handout could be developed that would act as a

supplement to the Code, provide graphical interpretation of the development standards, and be consistent with adopted Code and State law. The guidelines would be used as an educational tool for residents and developers alike to better understand City character and how to adapt their projects.

11. New Definitions

Staff proposes existing R-1 Hillside definitions to apply to all R-1 zones, including Attic, Covered, Dwelling Unit, Kitchen, and Mezzanine Loft. Residential Floor Area definitions would remain unique to the R-1 and R-1 Hillside zones due to differing topographic conditions. The proposed relocation of definitions to the overarching R1 Zone will help to better define all single-family uses in Culver City.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Public comment received prior to the Planning Commission Hearing is available in Attachment 6. Public comment received after the Planning Commission Hearing but prior to finalization of the City Council Agenda is available in Attachment 7.

CONCLUSION:

Staff and JKA conducted community meetings with single-family neighborhoods during the summer of 2018 to obtain input on various neighborhood issues related to new single-family residential development. Staff presented preliminary findings and proposals to City Council and Planning Commission in the spring of 2019 to obtain feedback and direction. Staff and JKA conducted additional community meetings with single-family neighborhoods during the fall of 2019 to present proposed code language to the public and collect feedback. In January of 2020, the Planning Commission recommended text amendments to the City Council with specific modifications to FAR, front yard setbacks, double height floor area, and building height. The culmination of these previous actions resulted in proposed regulations that will address the concerns of the public by using several different development methods to help increase compatibility between new and existing development. In accordance with CCMC Section 17.620.030, Exhibit A to Attachment 1 references the five necessary findings all made in the affirmative in order to approve the zone code amendment.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:

The Project is considered exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b) (3) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the Project to amend the Zoning Code will have a significant effect on the environment. The proposed Zoning Code Amendment, modifying single family home development standards, by itself does not result in any physical changes nor any significant effects on the environment, and does not result in an intensification of development beyond what the Zoning Code already currently allows. Furthermore, the proposed Zoning Code Amendment is not in conjunction with the specific approval of any existing development or use permit applications. Therefore, any projects seeking approval subsequent to the proposed

Zoning Code Amendment, would be subject to appropriate CEQA analysis at that time of any such application.

FISCAL ANALYSIS:

There is no fiscal impact related to this item.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. 2020-05-26_ATT - City Council Ordinance No. 2020- and Exhibit A Proposed Code Amendments
2. 2020-05-26_ATT - Summer 2018 and Fall 2019 Community Meeting Summaries
3. 2020-05-26_ATT - Joint Study Session Minutes May 8, 2019
4. 2020-05-26_ATT - Planning Commission Hearing Minutes January 22, 2020
5. 2020-05-26_ATT - Proposed Residential Hillside Overlay Map Area
6. 2020-05-26_ATT - Public Comment Received Prior to Planning Commission Hearing
7. 2020-05-26_ATT - Public Comment Received Prior to City Council Agenda Confirmation

MOTION:

That the City Council:

Introduce the proposed Ordinance, amending Zoning Code Text Amendment P2019-0036-ZCA modifying standards for the Single-Family (R1) Residential Zone.