



City of Culver City

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Staff Report

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PC - ACTION ITEM: Review and Discussion of Proposed Design Guidelines (Guidelines) Associated with a Zoning Code Amendment to Streamline the Residential Development Entitlement Process.

Meeting Date: April 13, 2022

Contact Person/Dept: William Kavadas, Assistant Planner
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Fiscal Impact: Yes ☐ No ☒ **General Fund:** Yes ☐ No ☒

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

Public Notification: (E-Mail) Meetings and Agendas - Planning Commission (4/8/22)

Department Approval: Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director (4/6/22)

RECOMMENDATION:

Review and discuss preliminary design guidelines related to the proposed Zoning Code revision to permit residential development entitlement streamlining and direct staff to return with final draft guidelines for Planning Commission consideration at a future meeting.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

On August 11, 2021, the Planning Commission considered methods to streamline the residential entitlement process to foster additional housing production and promote housing affordability. The emphasis of the proposed text amendment presented to Commission at that time involved mixed use development because density and development issues in the City's residential zones was still unresolved in the on-going General Plan Update and remained an open issue. The Planning Commission discussion on streamlining and affordability focused on the following:

- Consistency with CEQA Exemptions
- Feasibility of streamlining incentives for mixed use affordable housing projects
- Production of robust design guidelines for mixed use ministerial projects
- The level of housing affordability needed to address the lowest income categories

On January 6, 2022, the Planning Commission continued their discussion focusing on the following items:

- Expanding scope of project streamlining to include smaller sized multi-family projects
- Modifying thresholds for mixed-use ministerial development
- Ensuring that smaller projects are not held to affordability requirements that could make smaller developments infeasible
- Preparing and implementing design guidelines to promote streamlining for project ministerial reviews

Staff has researched residential design guidelines based upon the Commission direction to understand how such guidelines can promote streamlining and can be incorporated in the Zoning Code.

Design Guidelines

The Planning Commission expressed interest in establishing objective design guidelines to facilitate ministerial approval of multi-family and mixed-use development projects. The Commission suggested that staff look at existing design guidelines in Sacramento and Portland that may inform this work and suggested that staff look at Culver City's Gateway and Gateway Adjacent Multi-Family Neighborhood Guidelines. Staff also turned to the Mixed-Use Development Site Planning and Design Standards (CCMC Section 17.400.065.F). Planning Commissioner Ed Ogosta also provided direction and advice to staff. The attached draft guidelines are preliminary and for discussion only and will eventually include photos to illustrate design suggestions and concepts (Attachment 1).

Implementation of Guidelines for residential projects requires integration with existing development standards and policies of the Zoning Code. Summarized below are three key areas for Planning Commission input and direction.

Codification of Guidelines

The Guidelines could be codified into the Culver City Municipal Code (CCMC) or exist as a standalone document. Codification of the guidelines into the CCMC may complicate any future modifications to them as changes would require amendments to the Zoning Code. Alternatively, they could be adopted by resolution which would be easier to amend.

The requirements for conformance to the Guidelines would need to be codified or simply referenced by resolution number in the Zoning Code so that they are effective and are used to influence project design. The existing Gateway and Gateway Adjacent Neighborhood Guidelines are not mandatory and not part of the Zoning Code, but they inform the Planning Commission's review in the discretionary approval process. Design standards are codified as part of the CCMC related to mixed-use development and development in the East Washington Overlay Zone. These implementation issues need to be addressed in preparing the subject code amendment.

Discretionary Review and Guidelines

The Planning Commission voiced concern that ministerial review of larger projects would lead to inadequate design review and could result in problems in project design. The Guidelines are meant

to address design concerns and obviate the need for Planning Commission review with the intent of streamlining reviews, reducing overall project development permit costs, and increasing housing production.

The Planning Commission may want to consider their role as an appeal body to ensure design oversight. If a developer was unwilling to conform to the Guidelines and there were unresolved design issues at the staff level, the Commission would be the decision authority to consider an appeal. The appeal could be the default for non-compliance with the Guidelines and staff could automatically schedule them for a Planning Commission public hearing.

Other Permit Processing Issues

The Commission may also want to consider other alternative review processes such as an Administrative Site Plan Review. While this is still a discretionary review, it is less time consuming as it is considered at the staff level rather than through a public hearing process.

Next Steps

Following Commission direction, staff will proceed with public outreach meetings to obtain stakeholder comments and identify concerns. Similar public outreach has been done for the City's Mixed-Use Ordinance, Linkage Fee Ordinance, and Parking Ordinance.

FISCAL ANALYSIS:

There are no fiscal impacts associated with discussion of residential and mixed-use development project streamlining.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. 2022-04-13 - Preliminary Draft Design Guidelines
2. 2022-04-13 - Planning Commission Staff Report dated August 11, 2021
3. 2022-04-13 - Planning Commission Minutes dated August 11, 2021
4. 2022-04-13 - Planning Commission Staff Report dated January 6, 2022
5. 2022-04-13 - Planning Commission Minutes dated January 6, 2022

MOTION:

That the Planning Commission:

Receive and discuss proposed design guidelines associated with a Zoning Code Amendment to streamline the residential development entitlement process and direct staff to return with a draft Zoning Code Amendment for Planning Commission's approval at a future meeting.