

Taskforce Meeting Notes – October 7, 2010

PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT

- What is the intent of Standards/Guidelines; what is the relationship with existing General and Specific plans?
 - RO: Will need to update Zoning & Specific Plans. Changes to the Specific Plans or the “amendment” will go with standards/guidelines. “Amendment” will just speak to the issue in the design standards/guidelines.
 - VK: Zoning, Specific Plans may need to be updated to ensure consistency with General Plans.
- What about the tree ordinance on Fairview? Will there be potential conflict with Standards/Guidelines?
 - VK: Might have to make adjustments to the Standards/Guidelines.
 - RO: When adopt future ordinances, will add them into the standards/guidelines.
 - SR: Staff reorganized concurrent planning activities to help minimize conflict.
- What about the example of tree preservation?
 - VK: Don’t see conflict between preserving trees and standards/guidelines. With trees, planning director has authority to make decisions.
- When Standards/Guidelines are presented at community meetings, the question of “how it will apply to me” will come up.
 - VK: Will apply to new construction.
 - RO: Want to keep record of what is said; want to say general consensus but speak about issues that were more controversial. Taskforce members are encouraged to attend public meetings and speak up regarding concerns.
- Should provide copies of the Standards/Guidelines at libraries, counter, etc.
- Add acknowledgements section.
- New construction in Fairview will fall under the guidelines.

- Taskforce okay with commencing with community meetings with draft Standards/Guidelines.

DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS CONTINUED

- Public Noticing:
 - SR: Still posting on poles around perimeter of site.
- Need publicly accessible database on website that shows current applications.
- Notice on site is acceptable to people adjacent to site but people farther away need access.
 - SR: Have permit software staff has been using for one year. Need to work with staff to enter most up to date activities.
- Mailed notice may be more desirable for those not as involved in community.
 - RO: Will continue to mail out notices.
 - VK: 3 types of Noticing –
 - Notice on site: what form shall it take?
 - Mailing list: what kind of mailing list should county maintain? Include those who requested to be on mailing list?
 - Website
- Is Site Development Review (SDR) going to survive this process?
 - VK: Standards/Guidelines will provide meat for SDR.
- So SDR will become design review?
 - VK: It will not be a new process; Standards/Guidelines will enhance SDR.
- Need applications to show existence of streams. Need description of existing trees on site.
 - SR: County currently has a formal pre-application process.
- Table misleading: should say EIR Process (not typical development process).
- Started with design standards/guidelines. Why are we worried about approval process? Should worry about passing the standards/guidelines, not process.
- People will get bogged down with tracks and checklist.
 - RO: Right now, 4-unit project can be approved over the counter. Staff has been criticized for approving it without public review. So we need to establish process.

- Single-family additions should have design review process, not checklist. It's these projects that are killing the community.
- If go in to add 300 square feet to 1,100 square feet house, where do I go? Track 1 or Track 2?
- If bring checklist to meeting, people will get caught up with issues. Should have a real checklist before making decision.
 - VK: An alternative would be no design review for small residential projects.
- General concept is fine, but the sample is not adequate.
- Checklist is one mechanism of applying Standards/Guidelines.
- Walnut Creek requires details, color documents. If have checklist, should not present a "sample." That's not good.
- Not getting to the question – What do people think about usefulness of a checklist?
- No objection to using a checklist to determine track, but the sample presented is not adequate.
- High level of suspicion from community about County holding projects to standards.
- Concerned that checklist might be too narrow.
- Concerned that someone can meet standards and still have slightly skewed project.
- Design is subjective and need more planning professionals with more training in design.
- Reluctance to fully endorse checklist, might become a straight jacket.
 - RO: Should there be public notice for new single family homes?
- There's a certain freedom in this Country allowing construction of single-family dwelling; reluctant to create checklist.
- But also creates accountability.
 - VK: If not use checklist, two options:
 - not require review, or
 - review case by case.
- If no checklist, planner will have to do report. (Discusses whether project meets or does not meet the Standards/Guidelines).
 - VK: 3 choices:

- Meet standards and get building permit,
 - Everybody gets through design review (by in-house staff, body, etc.) and becomes discretionary review,
 - Use checklist.
- VOTE: 3 for continuing to explore of checklist; 1 wants something besides checklist.
- Favor the idea of building up staff expertise.
- If you don't have mechanism of implementation, how will you make it happen? Checklist standardizes process somewhat.
- Fairview Specific Plan says can't come in and build something different than surroundings.
- Not opposing concept of checklist but a checklist as a cheatsheet shouldn't be used. Standards/guidelines quantifiable enough for design professional.
- Checklist should have an introduction where it explains different tracks and what to expect.
 - VK: For required landscaping, no requirements for landscaping means 50% maximum paving, county adopted standards, etc.
- Clarify landscaping requirements, etc. Required landscaping should be reworded, not a clear reference.
- If landscaping not required, shouldn't be on there.
 - RO: Required not to pave over a maximum amount. And unpaved areas are landscaped, therefore doing landscaping subject to County requirements.
- What if neighbor replaces single-driveway with two-car, don't need permit, where's the authority?
 - RO: No authority until it's done. (Code Enforcement.)
- If no permit, no need for requirement.
 - VK: Required landscaping not exceed 2,500 square feet?
- Whenever "alteration to structure", need to clarify statement.
- How will checklist apply to signs?
- Change wording for "modification of more than..."
- Right now, don't have standards regarding landscape design.

- VK: Required landscaping if removing landscaping.
- Should clarify – applies to reduction of landscaping.
- Someone wants to add parking, add parking somewhere else and take out landscaping.
- Apply to single-family homes?
 - RO: No, unless 5,000 square feet. “For mixed-use, MFR...”
- 5,000 square feet too large for single home.
 - VK: Change to FAR standard? 5,000 square feet, FAR, coverage—whichever more restrictive.
- “Abutting” – only two neighbors? Need to define, or do everyone on block? Or just do abutting and confronting?
- Abutting, confronting, block front—what should it be?
- Rewrite methodology for “average?”
- VOTE: voted on abutting: includes rear and across the street (confronting); also caveat about width of street.
- Blockfront (does not include rear)
 - VK: Depend on block, on district boundaries?
- Radius?
- Goal? Protection for those around or protect character?
- Problem having to submit architectural plans with tentative maps.
- With tentative maps, engineers will draw everything and already costing lots of money.
 - VK: If not proposing to build, no design review.
- Property owner with approved tentative map who chooses to see land can defer design review?
- Need distinction that it is not required for architect to work with on tentative maps.
 - VK: Key in submission requirements.
- Will there be design professionals on Design Review Board? Should have professionals on Board.
- Should have prerequisites for expertise, training, education.

- Not good idea to give to Planning/Commission a bag or list of issues.
- Review based on guidelines, not on a panel who then determines how it should work.
- Build up sensibility of staff, should not go with appointed body.
- Don't think Planning Commission should function as design review board.
- In-house expertise is ideal (keep design review portion with staff and they advocate at the Planning Commission meetings).
- Include taskforce recommendations in staff report.
- Need staff to go out to field to check built project.
 - SR: Each planner should be responsible from cradle to grave.
- Problem in that building department should check plans but don't.
- Recommend that building and planning under same department.
- What are the consequences if built project and plans do not match?
 - VK: Issue if someone in building authorized the permit. Depends if County can legally enforce. May cost a lot in the end.
- Should have building and planning under same department. That should be prominent in recommendations report.
- Have only hit half dozen issues.
- Other recommendations?
- Design review should be with staff, not board.
- Reasoning behind not having board?
- Staff has know-how and expertise.
- But if have board, can have requirements of design background.
- Issue with "experts" on panel; believe in ordinary people making decisions.

NEXT STEPS

- Staff take crack at checklist and bring back to taskforce. Need to schedule public meetings.