



REPORT TO COUNCIL

City of Sacramento

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Staff Report
September 12, 2006

Honorable Mayor and
Members of the City Council

Title: Design Review Report Back: Citywide Residential Design Review (M06-049)

Location/Council District: Citywide

Recommendation: Provide feedback and recommendations to staff on citywide residential Design Review.

Contact: Luis R. Sanchez, AIA, Design Review Director, (916) 808-5957, William Crouch, Urban Design Manager (916) 808-8013; David Kwong, Current Planning Manager (916) 808-2691

Presenter: William Thomas, Development Services Director

Department: Development Services

Division: Current Planning Division

Organization No: 4881

Description/Analysis

Issue: The City Council requested staff to report back on how residential projects are reviewed citywide. Currently all 1 and 2 family new construction has some form of design review. In the Expanded North Area Design Review District, both new construction and additions/remodels are reviewed with the ministerial checklist process. In Design Review Districts, all residential projects receive standard discretionary design review that includes notification of the review process (see map, page 5). The rest of the City that is not in Expanded Review or standard Design Review Districts receive review of only new construction of 1 and 2 family homes with the checklist process (see map, page 6). Multi-family projects (three units and up) are also reviewed by staff and the Design Review and Preservation Board in standard Design Review Districts, and require staff level review only in the Expanded North Area Design Review District (see map, page 7).

Staff has developed information for City Council review related to Citywide residential review and provided relevant statistics and estimated staffing impacts and other recommendations should they choose to expand the residential design review process Citywide in the future.

The three key issues related to citywide residential Design Review are the following:

- Verify desired levels of residential review citywide for potential future changes to the current process.
- Determine if the Council supports modification of the current residential checklist to provide more comprehensive ministerial project review to ensure better designs, as well as standardizing the process so it is handled the same way for all residential projects that are not within a Design Review District.
- Discuss estimated staffing impacts if citywide residential review process is recommended for consideration by the Department in fiscal year 2007-2008.

Policy Considerations: The statistics and information provided to the Council at this time do not require policy considerations, unless additional steps are taken by the City Council to recommend further expansion of Design Review in the future.

Environmental Considerations: The Environmental Services Manager has determined that expanding Design Review to additional areas in the City does not have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment and is therefore exempt under California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines Categorical Exemption Section 15061(b) (3), and Section 15378(b) (5) - "organizational or administrative activities of governments that do not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment." However, subsequent actions or decisions made on proposed projects reviewed in the any expanded Design Review areas may be required to undergo CEQA review.

Commission/Committee Action: There has been no committee or commission action on this issue; this report back was requested by the City Council.

Rationale for Recommendation: Staff has provided information to the City Council on potential impact of providing design review to residential projects in areas currently outside of any Design Review District.

Financial Considerations: This project has no fiscal considerations, unless follow-up steps are taken by the City Council after this report back to augment City staff in the future for additional Design Review functions.

Emerging Small Business Development (ESBD): No goods or services are being purchased under this report.

Respectfully Submitted by: 
William R. Crouch, Urban Design Manager

Approved by: 
William Thomas, Development Services Director

Recommendation Approved:

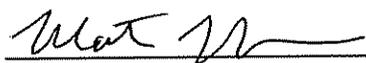
for 
Ray Kerridge
City Manager

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ATTACHMENT 1**Background Information:**

Within the existing Design Review Districts in the City, all residential new construction as well as additions and remodels are reviewed. In the Expanded North Area, a ministerial checklist process is utilized to review 1 and 2 family new construction as well as additions and remodels visible from street view. In the rest of the City outside of Design Review Districts and Expanded North Area, only new construction of one and two family homes is reviewed with the ministerial checklist. The ministerial checklist process is a pass/fail approach. If the applicant cannot meet the design criteria on the checklist, the project is then subject to the standard design review process, including posting of the site, and notification of adjacent property owners. At this point the project is a discretionary action handled by Design Review staff. Approximately 310 to 350 one and two family new construction projects are processed in a year, with about 80 to 90 requiring standard Design Review staff level review, equating to about 25%.

Staff recommends standardizing the process so all one and two family homes not reviewed with the standard process in Design Review Districts are reviewed the same way, i.e., both new construction and additions/remodels visible from street view are subject to the checklist.

In addition, staff recommends that the current checklist be updated, since this was developed and adopted by the City Council over ten years ago. Staff feels that the categories of the checklist can be further expanded, clarified, and additional design elements added that will improve the overall project designs citywide with a more comprehensive approach. The process can remain ministerial since the design options for applicants to select will all be listed in the ministerial checklist.

Multi-family projects (three or more units) that are not subject to the Multi-family Streamline Ordinance, are not in a PUD, or are otherwise reviewed by Special Permit, are reviewed within standard Design Review Districts. This also the case in the Expanded North Area Design Review District, with the exception that in the Expanded North Area, even large multifamily projects are handled at staff level unless appealed to the Design Review and Preservation Board (see map, page 7). All other Multi-family projects not falling within the above categories at this time are not subject to any form of design review. If more comprehensive review of multi-family projects is desired citywide, the rest of the City that is not within standard Design Review Districts could adopt the same process of standard staff level design review.

There are multiple layers of residential design review, accomplished in many forms, including the use of Codes, Covenants and Restrictions, condominium and homeowner associations reviewing projects per their standards, as well as Planning Commission and City Council call-ups, etc. With a comprehensive checklist process for projects not within standard DR Districts, city staff can provide consistent, predictable project reviews.

Based on projected staff hours required to efficiently deal with current levels of design

review in addition to expanding design review to residential projects Citywide with a more comprehensive checklist, would require from 3800 to 4000 staff hours per year, or an increase of 2 full time employees. Staff is continuing to review this information to improve the process and fine tune resource needs for Fiscal Year 2007-2008. At that time, the Department can return to the City council with all relevant information.

General Plan Update Vision and Guiding Principles: While the City's General Plan is being updated, the City Council has adopted a vision for the future of the City as well as several guiding principles to help achieve this vision. Staff is ensuring that in the process of analysis for design review we retain the following key principles: promote developments that foster accessibility and connectivity between areas and safely and efficiently accommodate a mixture of cars, transit, bicyclists, and pedestrians; include a mix of housing types within neighborhoods to promote a diversity of household types and housing choices for residents of all ages and income levels to promote stable neighborhoods; use the existing assets of infrastructure and public facilities to increase infill and re-use, while maintaining important qualities of community character. The General Plan update will include an urban design component that will provide direction for urban form on a citywide level.

