


COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO  
INTER-OFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

August 16, 2005

TO: PLANNING (MSA)

FROM:  CINDY H. TURNER, Clerk  
*Board of Supervisors*

SUBJECT: **Interim Design Review Program Planning (MSA)**

The Board of Supervisors meeting in regular session on July 27, 2005, directed staff to use the Draft Commercial and Mixed-Use Guidelines in the review of discretionary projects, and provide applicants revised instructions and submittal requirements as discussed in the Interim Approach section of the staff report.

CHT/fg

cc: In house

For the Agenda of:  
July 27, 2005  
Agenda Item \_\_\_\_\_

To: **BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**  
From: **PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**  
Subject: **INTERIM DESIGN REVIEW PROGRAM**  
Contact: *Nedzlene Ferrario, 874-6141*

### **RECOMMENDATION**

**DIRECT** staff to implement an interim design review program immediately, including:

1. Use of the Draft Commercial and Mixed-Use Design Guidelines in the review of discretionary projects.
2. Providing applicants revised instructions and submittal requirements as discussed in the Interim Approach Section of this report.

### **DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS STATUS**

The design review program is composed of 2 phases. Phase I is the preparation of Commercial and Mixed-Use design guidelines, establishment of design review authority, procedures and Zoning Code standards. Phase II is the preparation of residential design guidelines and Zoning Code standards. The Draft Commercial and Mixed-Use design guidelines are complete and have been endorsed by the Board of Supervisors in September 2004. Since then, Planning staff has retained Mintier and Associates to assist in the selecting the design review process procedure and Zoning Code standards. Four design review hearing options were studied and the options were narrowed down to two – Planning Commission Acts as Design Review Committee (Option 2) or New Design Review Advisory Committee (Option 4). Refer to Attachment A for more information about the options. Both Project and Policy Planning Commissions were provided progress updates and training on June 9, 2005.

Upon selection of the preferred option, Zoning Code amendments will be prepared and Planning staff anticipates completion of Phase I in Spring 2006. A Request for Proposal for Phase II will be released in Fall 2005.

## **INTERIM APPROACH**

Planning staff anticipates that the formal design review program will be effective in Spring of 2006. However, due to the Board's desire to require better quality projects in the interim, the following are the recommended components to implement the draft design guidelines on an interim basis.

- Apply the Draft Commercial and Mixed-Use design guidelines to non-residential and mixed-use developments that require discretionary approval.
- Require applicants to submit a context board in conjunction with an application. A context board consists of an aerial and/or site plan and photographs of the surroundings. This tool will assist staff and hearing bodies in identifying constraints, opportunities and understanding the impacts of the proposed development.
- Require applicants to submit color and materials board, elevations, landscape, and signage plans on all non-residential projects.
- Distribute new instruction materials and notices to applicants regarding the interim approach.
- Additional fee will not be charged in the interim until a formal program fee has been identified and adopted.

## **ATTACHMENT**

- A. Design review process options

# Design Review Process Options

## **Option 1: New Design Review Commission**

The creation of a new, independent design review committee has the potential to be consistent with most of the evaluation criteria. The primary point of departure is the addition of a new step in the entitlement review process. Under this option, the design review function would be added after agency and CPAC review and be designed to advise the Planning Commission as a part of its deliberations. This would necessitate consecutive rather than concurrent application processing. It would also require the creation and staffing of a new hearing body. Finally, it is unclear how many of the DRC members would be design professionals. The advantage of including primarily design professionals on a design review commission is their ability to identify alternative or compromise design solutions. The fewer the number of design professionals, the less effective the DRC may be in resolving disputes or reaching creative design compromises.

## **Option 2: Planning Commission Acts as Design Review Committee**

Reliance on the Planning Commission to perform project design review raises two primary concerns - design review expertise and increased Commission workload. This option would largely preclude the participation of trained design professionals in advising staff and hearing bodies and assisting in refining design aspects of projects. The Commission's workload would also increase under this option. The extent to which the workload will increase is uncertain.

## **Option 3: Subdivision Review Committee Acts as Design Review Committee**

Similar to Option 2, reliance on an existing hearing body, the Subdivision Review Committee (SRC), to perform project design review is consistent with all but two of the evaluation criteria - design review expertise and increased workload of existing hearing bodies. This option would largely preclude the participation of trained design professionals in advising staff and hearing bodies and assisting in refining design aspects of projects. SRC membership is largely tied to representation of departments and agencies concerned with the land division process. Those agencies and departments typically will not include design professionals.

The SRC's workload would also increase under this option. The extent to which the workload will increase is uncertain. Planning staff has also observed that the membership of SRC may be too large to perform an effective design review function.

## **Option 4: New Design Review Committee**

The creation of a Design Review Committee (Committee) would result in an additional review body, but that review would be conducted as advisory to staff only. Their review could occur concurrently within the existing application review process. While this option requires the creation of an additional hearing body, it should not necessarily result in any additional application processing time. The process would be consistent with all other evaluation criteria.

# Sacramento County Design Review Guidelines

## Example Design Review Process Flow Chart

