



CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date: August 6, 2013

To: Honorable Mayor & City Council

From: Jonathan Lait, AICP, City Planner/ Assistant Community Development Director
Peter Noonan, AICP CEP, Senior Planner, Community Development Department

Subject: Progress report on completing the "Central Area Single Family Home Bulk and Density Study" and "Zoning Code Reorganization"

Attachments:

1. Draft Central Area Single-Family Dwelling Study – Issues and Options Paper
2. Working Outline for the Central Area Single-Family Dwelling Study
3. Proposed Annotated Outline – Zoning Code Reorganization
4. July 11, 2013 Presentation to the Planning Commission on the Issues and Options Paper
5. July 11, 2013 Presentation to the Planning Commission on the Zoning Code Reorganization

INTRODUCTION

This is an update on the Single-family Bulk and Mass Study and Zoning Code Reorganization. On July 2, 2013, the City Council received the initial products for both of these programs; those documents have also been included with this report as Attachments 1, 2 and 3.

On February 6, 2013, the City Council authorized a contract in the amount of \$225,000 with a contingency of \$25,000 for Dyett & Bhatia, Regional and Urban Planners to complete the work. To date, approximately \$66K has been paid for the following:

Single-family Bulk & Mass Study

- Background research
- Issues and options paper (provided)
- Outline for bulk & mass study (provided)
- Preliminary options and incentives

Zoning Code Reorganization

- Preliminary outline (provided)
- Draft Reorganized Code
- Draft charts, graphics, illustrations
- Minor language changes for readability

There remains approximately \$159,000 plus the \$25,000 contingency in the contact and the project is proceeding on time and on budget.

BACKGROUND

Background on the Central Area Single-Family Dwelling Bulk and Mass Study and the Zoning Code Reorganization can be summarized as follows:

Central Area Single-Family Dwelling Bulk and Mass Study

City Council directed the Planning Commission and staff to review the bulk and mass and parking for homes in the Central Area, and develop options for ensuring that new homes are compatible, in terms of scale and mass, with existing neighborhoods, and that adequate parking is provided on site.

Staff proceeded, with direction from the City Council/Planning Commission liaisons, to consider modifications that would not alter allowable floor area. Staff, working with a subcommittee of the Planning Commission and the City's consultants, is also exploring opportunities to provide incentives that would tend to reduce the perceived bulk and mass of new homes in exchange for exempting basement floor area¹.

The Single-family Bulk and Mass Study is guided by the following goals and principles:

Draft Goals

- Reduce Perceived Mass and Bulk of Homes in the Central Area
- Ensure Adequate, Obscured Parking in the Central Area

Draft Guiding Principles

- Preserve the opportunity to build homes to current floor area standards
- Ensure new construction is compatible with, and enhances, neighborhood character
- Better account for basements as contributing to intensity of new home construction
- Utilize incentives to achieve bulk and mass reductions and parking standards
- Reinforce garden quality image of the city

Zoning Code Reorganization

The intent of reorganizing the Zoning Code is to rearrange, but not substantively change, the City's Zoning Code language so that requirements and regulations governing similar uses of land and buildings are grouped together. Minor language changes and Zoning Code amendments will also be proposed during reorganization in order to improve readability and user-friendliness.

Reorganization is also expected to improve the community's ability to apply the City's Zoning Codes to development projects, and may reduce the time required to issue zoning approvals, and in some cases building permits.

¹ Currently basement square footage is not included in the City's calculation of floor area. As proposed, this would change and the City would begin counting a certain percentage of basement square footage as floor area unless certain development standards are applied to the property.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

An important component for both projects is community outreach and involvement. Community outreach will increase in the next two months, reaching out to a broad representation of the community and culminating in a community meeting in September and public hearings before the Planning Commission shortly thereafter. Currently, both projects are on budget and on schedule, and are expected to be brought before the City Council for consideration by spring of 2014. Information on both projects can be viewed and downloaded by visiting the Community Development Department, Planning Division webpage at: www.beverlyhills.org/planning.

The following are key aspects of outreach for these projects:

- Stakeholder Meetings, From November to June 2013, representatives of the Planning Commission held meetings for the following groups:
 - Design Review Commission (November 5, 2012);
 - Homeowners Associations (January 9, 2012);
 - Former City Council Members (January 31, 2013);
 - Architects and Builders (March 6, 2013);
 - Owners of New Homes (May 16, 2013);
 - Neighbors of newly built Homes (May 29, 2013).Turnout at the stakeholder meetings varied; however, the meetings identified core issues and concerns to be explored.
- Community Meeting(s), The Planning Commission will host a community meeting in September, 2013. Staff is currently working on the agenda.
- Website, Webpages providing additional information on both projects are available by visiting the Planning Division webpage at: www.beverlyhills.org/planning.
- Newspaper Announcements, Announcements for all upcoming community events will run in both local newspapers.
- Beverly Hills TV Advertisements, News segments might be developed for each project.
- Visits to Local Organizations, City staff will be visiting local organizations associated with development or sale of single-family homes in order to further reach out to members of the community.
- Planning Commission Public Hearings, All Planning Commission discussions will be noticed in both local newspapers and mailed to interested persons.
- City Council Public Hearings, All City Council discussions will be noticed in both local newspapers and mailed to interested persons.
City Council hearings are anticipated to begin shortly after the 2014 new year.

PROJECT UPDATES

The City's consultants have completed the fact finding and data gathering, and have recently released initial draft documents for both projects.

Central Area Single-Family Dwelling Bulk and Mass Study

For the Central Area Single-Family Dwelling Bulk and Mass Study, the City's consultants have released a paper on "Issues and Options" for addressing the perceived size and scale of new single-family homes (Attachment 1). This initial document is based in part on input received at the six stakeholder meetings and Planning Commission subcommittee discussions. Observations made by staff and the City's consultants in residential neighborhoods, and through review of recent single-family home projects.

Issues and Options Paper (Attachment 1)

Core issues identified by stakeholders and the City's consultant are:

- Bulk and mass of some new homes is perceptually too great from City streets,
- Upper level bulk and mass of new homes could be perceptually reduced. However, requiring upper-story step-backs could limit flat-faced architectural designs (Colonial, Mediterranean, Beaux-arts),
- Incentives could be developed to encourage one-story parts to new homes,
- Incentives could be developed to encourage new homes to be compatible, in terms of bulk and mass, with existing homes,
- Current side yard requirements do not adequately create a separation or buffer between properties,
- Porte-cocheres are not adequately regulated and lend a sense of visual crowding along property lines,
- Traditional housing forms with "true roof pitches" could be encouraged,
- Greater landscaping requirements could be established for the side and front yards to help reduce mass and enhance the garden quality of the City,
- The Zoning Code could incorporate diagrams and illustrations,
- The Zoning Code could be reformatted,
- City's Residential Design Style Catalogue over-emphasizes the use of traditional architectural styles and does not address specific concerns regarding bulk and mass.

Working Outline – SFR Bulk and Mass Study (Attachment 2)

The consultant has provided options for rearranging the allowable floor area on site so that the perception of building bulk and massing is reduced.

The Objectives and Standards for the Study are proposed as:

DRAFT OBJECTIVES

- Modulate Street-facing Sides
- Reduce Perceived Volume
- Increase Sense of Openness, Light and Air Between Homes
- Establish Additional Standards for Landscaping
- Obscure or Reduce Visible On-Site Vehicle Parking
- Employ Comprehensive Approach to Incentivize Development
- Better Connect Zoning Code and Design Review Catalogue

DRAFT STANDARDS – The draft objectives have been further refined and developed into a series of standards, or actions, which could be established as a means of achieving each objective. Some examples of the actions proposed in the Working Outline (Attachment 3) are:

- Greater Landscape Requirements,
- Prohibiting light wells in side yards,
- Limiting architectural projections in side and front yards,
- Development Incentives encouraging desired building setbacks modulation, and parking.

Issues and Options Presentation (Attachment 4)

On July 11, 2013, The City's consultant, John Kaliski, gave a presentation to the Planning Commission on the issues and options (Attachment 1) and also introduced the draft outline for the upcoming Central Area Single-Family Dwelling Bulk and Mass Study (Attachment 2).

Next Steps

On July 11, 2013, the Planning Commission reviewed the Working Outline and indicated its support for staff and the City's consultant to continue developing the draft objectives and potential standards for the study in preparation for the upcoming community meeting which will be held in September. The potential standards are currently being analyzed through hypothetical case models, and prior to the September community meeting, graphics and images will be developed that illustrate how such standards could limit the perceived bulk and mass of single-family homes.

Zoning Code Reorganization

Reorganization will not change the City's requirements, but will improve the code's readability through the use of charts and illustrations. Reorganization is also expected to improve the community's ability to apply the City's zoning codes to development projects, and may reduce the time required to issue zoning approvals, and in some cases building permits.

Proposed Annotated Outline (Attachment 3)

The City's consultant has completed a draft outline for reorganizing the zoning code. The new outline would rearrange the language in the existing code so that requirements and regulations governing similar uses of land and buildings are grouped together. As part of the reorganization, the City's consultant will also be proposing some language changes that will not change the meaning and intent of the code, but will improve the codes readability.

Zoning Code Reorganization Presentation (Attachment 5)

On July 11, 2013, Michael Dyett of Dyett and Bhatia gave a presentation to the Planning Commission on the zoning code reorganization. The presentation includes examples of charts, graphics, and images that will be developed and embedded in the City's zoning code as a means of further illustrating the City's development standards and requirements.

Next Steps

On July 11, 2013, the Planning Commission indicated its support for the proposed new zoning code outline. The City's consultant is currently populating the outline with the City's zoning code language and prior to the community meeting scheduled in September will have a draft copy available for members of the community to review. The draft document will include proposed charts, graphics and images that illustrate the City's development standards and requirements.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff will proceed with this item as detailed in this report unless otherwise directed by City Council.


Susan Healy Keene, AICP
Director of Community Development

Approved By