



A G E N D A
SPECIAL MEETING: GLENDALE CITY COUNCIL

COUNCIL CHAMBER, City Hall – 613 E. Broadway, 2nd Floor
Glendale, CA 91206

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MARCH 26, 2019

- ROLL CALL** - 3:00 p.m.
- Report of the City Clerk of the City Council, re: Posting of Agenda. The Agenda for the March 26, 2019 Special Public Meeting of the City Council was posted on Friday, March 22, 2019 on the Bulletin Board Outside City Hall.

A **SPECIAL PUBLIC MEETING** of the City Council is hereby called to meet at 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 26, 2019, in the City Council Chamber, City Hall, 613 E. Broadway, 2nd Floor, Glendale, CA 91206 to Consider the Following item(s) of Business, to Wit;

- 1. Director of Community Development, re: Design Review Streamlining**
 - a. Motion Directing Staff Regarding Recommendations to Improve and Streamline the Design Review Process

ADJOURNMENT



Ardashes Kassakhian, City Clerk

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF SERVICE

Members of the public may address the City Council regarding any item in this notice. Service of the above Call for a Special Public Meeting of the City Council, at the time and place above designated, is hereby acknowledged, and the Notice required by Government Code Section 54956 is hereby waived:

Hour: _____ a.m./p.m., this _____ day of _____, 20__.

By _____ Title: City Council Member



**CITY OF GLENDALE, CALIFORNIA
REPORT TO THE:**

Joint City Council Housing Authority Successor Agency Oversight Board

March 26, 2019

AGENDA ITEM

Report: Design Review Streamlining

Motion directing staff re: recommendations to improve and streamline the Design Review process.

COUNCIL ACTION

Public Hearing Ordinance Consent Calendar Action Item Report Only

Approved for March 26, 2019 calendar

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

Submitted by:
Philip Lanzafame, Director of Community Development

Signature

Prepared by:
Bradley Calvert, Assistant Director of Community Development

Approved by:
Yasmin K. Beers, City Manager

by

Reviewed by:
Erik Krause, Deputy Director of Community Development

Roubik R. Golanian, Assistant City Manager

Michael J. Garcia, City Attorney

by

Robert Elliot, Director of Finance



RECOMMENDATION

Staff respectfully recommends the City Council to direct staff to proceed with the recommended streamlining and improvement efforts to the Design Review process and provide direction on implementing alternate Design Review Board members.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

SUMMARY

Beginning in 2013 Community Development began Phase I of a permit streamlining process that sought to reduce times, increase decision making efficiency, remove subjectivity, and simplify the entitlement process for applicants.

The second phase of streamlining focuses on the Design Review process. As an important element of public engagement, the Design Review process seeks to ensure that development is representative of the community and the Council's vision. While essential to public engagement, staff has identified a number of opportunities to reduce the overall review time, bring greater consistency to reviewing projects, and improve the process and results of each application.

Phase I – Permit Streamlining Results

Phase I of permit streamlining included the introduction of:

- Administrative Use Permits;
- Community Development Director Review Authority for small, less impactful projects;
- Elimination of Conditional Use Permits (CUP) for new single-family dwellings in the R1R and ROS zones;
- Modifications to Administrative Exceptions; and
- Community Development Director authority for parking exceptions.

These changes resulted in a reduced number of average annual Design Review Board hearings, from 26 per year to 15 per year. The elimination of CUPs in R1R and ROS zones reduced the overall number of projects that would have been required to go through the process, allowing more time to be dedicated to the review of other projects. Changes to the Administrative Exceptions thresholds reduced permitting time for some projects by 1 to 2 months as they were able to avoid the variance process, which includes public noticing and other elements that extend the overall timeline. Providing authority for parking exceptions has reduced noticing and hearing time, while reducing the total average time to 50 days compared to parking reduction permits at 75 days. Overall this reduction in time was accomplished with fewer planners, but an increase in total number of cases.

Phase II – Design Review Board and Application Process Improvement Recommendations

The second phase of the streamlining effort seeks to build upon the successes of the first phase, while creating greater predictability and consistency for applicants, staff, boards and commissions, and Council for the Design Review process. This will also seek to reduce the overall amount of time it takes an application to reach the Design Review Board. Currently the average time from applicant submittal to Design Review Board period is approximately 5 months.

The following are a series of staff recommendations that cover near and longer term strategies to achieve those objectives, primarily focused on the quality of submittals as well as how a project is reviewed, intended to improve review times and consistency between application submittals and the built product:

1. Review existing Design Review Board members and attendance policies.

Staff recommends that the term limits for existing board members be evaluated to determine which members have exceeded their term limit and to begin the process of appointing new board members quickly to ensure that quorum can be maintained for future meetings.

Additionally, the Design Review Board has lacked consistency in maintaining meeting quorums due to a number of factors, with attendance being a primary contributor. Consequences of not achieving quorum result in delayed reviews which create a cascading impact on projects for future dates due to re-schedulings, causing delays and unnecessarily extending review times. It has also necessitated holding special Design Review Board hearings in an effort to maintain timelines. While absences are to be expected, the Glendale Municipal Code (GMC 2.36.020) requires that board members attend 75% of all meetings in a calendar year and not miss more than three (3) consecutive meetings. Staff will review the attendance of the existing board members and discuss means to mitigate attendance challenges.

2. Alternate Design Review Board Members

Maintaining quorum for Design Review Board meetings has proven to be both a challenge and a key reason for delays. While staff believes that the intent of Step 1 will remedy attendance challenges, there are also unforeseen absences for various reasons. Delays from cancelled or postponed meetings create a ripple effect on other projects, while also creating confusion with the general public. Rescheduled reviews are required to be re-noticed, or the scheduling of special meetings, leading to this confusion with the general public.

Staff recommends that alternate board members be assigned to ensure that meetings regularly achieve quorum, resulting in the reduction or elimination of project delays due to rescheduling. There are two options for establishing alternate board members:

Option One

An alternate board member could be selected for each existing board member, creating a composition of ten (10) total members. Each alternate would be assigned to an existing board member by each Council member, and would attend meetings where existing board members are absent. This option may prove challenging in maintaining engagement amongst all board members, particularly those that are alternates as their participation would be unpredictable. Participation by alternates may be discouraged as their attendance would be dependent on only one existing board member.

Option Two

Two alternate board members could be appointed to serve for any of the existing five board members during absences. By limiting the number of alternates to two it increases their opportunities to remain engaged with the board while ensuring that meetings consistently achieve quorum. Alternates could be appointed on a rotating cycle by Councilmembers.

3. Formalizing the Pre-Application Process

Pre application meetings offer an excellent opportunity for staff and applicants to review a project prior to submittal to identify code inconsistencies, provide guidance and clarity to guidelines and standards, and improve the quality of application submittal. The scope of this service has expanded beyond initial guidance with some applicants using repeated meetings as an opportunity for staff to assume a greater responsibility in developing solutions on behalf of the applicants. While excellent customer service remains a priority for case planners, repeated meetings add time to project reviews and are an inefficient use of staff time and can result in delayed review of other projects. Additionally, the number of meetings, and often their informality, has caused feedback and comments to become lost, creating confusion in applications, and inconsistent responses from both staff and applicants.

To provide efficient and excellent customer service, as well as consistent direction to the applicants, project meetings will be reduced. Applicants will be provided an initial pre-application meeting similar to the current process. A checklist for required documents to conduct a successful pre-application would be distributed to applicants prior to the meeting, as well as one developed for applicants and case planners to ensure that all essential topics are reviewed and discussed during the meeting. This meeting will provide case planners an opportunity to review the project prior to submittal, and a formal letter (electronic or physical) will be provided within 2 weeks of the pre-application meeting. The letter will become part of the project's case file and will include direction and guidance identified as part of the pre-application meeting. At the time of application submittal, the applicant will provide the original letter and their responses to the guidance offered by the case planner to demonstrate that they responded to all comments. Applications will be deemed incomplete if the letter and responses are not included.

This process is intended to provide clear direction and minimize unnecessary meetings and allow more time for project review.

4. Update to Submittal Standards and Requirements

During the Downtown Specific Plan update, one of the most frequent comments received from stakeholders and the public was the need for consistency. This applied to application requirements, design feedback, and final project results. Consistent with the increased expectations that were developed as part of the Downtown Specific Plan update, submittal checklists would be revised to increase the quality of the submittal package as well as provide consistency.

Updating the submittal standards and requirements will ensure that each applicant is submitting consistent information needed to complete a timely review regardless of the case planner. Additionally, it will hold the applicants accountable for resolving design challenges that may be unresolved at the time of submittal, leading to project delays or inconsistent results. Updated checklists would be created for each type of application (Downtown Specific Plan, multi-family, various single-family applications, etc.) and will also require that the applicant demonstrate that they have satisfied key elements of design guidelines or zoning requirements through additional drawings, graphics, diagrams, or other suitable forms of representation depending on the application.

By requesting this additional information, case planners will reduce the amount of additional requests for information and improve clarity of key review topics, reducing overall review time. Furthermore, it will provide case planners an opportunity to accurately review and address design challenges that may not be resolved until later in the process, reducing the number of

changes that may deviate from the initial design review or approval, addressing concerns from the public regarding consistency in application and the final built product.

5. Design Review Board review checklist

To provide greater consistency in the review process, updated review checklists would be developed to serve as a guide for applicants and used by case planners and Design Review Board Members. These checklists would assist in focusing the review process on those elements regulated by design standards and the zoning code, and reduce conversations of tangentially related elements that are more subjective or not clearly regulated.

Applicants would complete the checklist in advance so that they can confirm and ensure that they have addressed areas of concern or review. Case planners and the Design Review Board would use the checklist to guide the conversation and review process. This would assist in preventing additional requests for changes later in the process, as they would be captured earlier. This would also assist in bringing greater consistency to the review process, while ensuring that the conversation and review remains on those elements that are of greatest concern and within the purview of the review process of all applicable guidelines and standards.

6. Updates to Review Process for Identified Projects

Staff will review the existing project types that are eligible for Design Review to determine if adjustments need to be made to the thresholds of when a project qualifies for the Design Review Board, or can be completed administratively. Staff will review existing code and permits to determine if changes could be made, including;

- Modifying thresholds so that smaller additions or alterations with minimal impact would be reviewed administratively including overall square footage and visibility;
- Modifying language of projects that “may” be exempt to “shall,” creating greater consistency for project review;
- Any additional thresholds that could expedite review process while maintaining the integrity of the design review process and respect to public engagement.

The intent of these changes would be to remove projects with limited or no public impact, creating more time and opportunity to review more complex projects.

7. Update and Development of Design Standards, Pattern Books, and Guide Books

Frequent comments heard during the review process and from the public are associated with the meaning and intent behind existing design guidelines, compatibility, and character. Following the completion of the Downtown Specific Plan update, it has been identified that similar standards rather than guidelines, could be applied to other neighborhoods as well. Standards that are measureable, similar to what was developed for the DSP, can assist in providing objectivity to subjective design such as compatibility.

Recognizing that Glendale’s neighborhoods are distinct in many ways, staff proposes to create standards based on neighborhoods, or groupings of neighborhoods that have similar aesthetic and character qualities. New deliberate and intentional standards would be developed for each that supports the existing character and assists in defining the elusive compatibility argument. Staff’s intent would be to bring clarity and consistency in the design and review process for these projects, while also creating a firm reference point for designers and community

members. These compatibility elements would include massing, scale, materials, windows, and other elements important to the vernacular of each neighborhood.

Guide books would also be developed to serve as reference points for staff and applicants. These guide books would provide examples of architectural elements or styles to convey to applicants concepts to fulfill the intent of standards and styles.

8. Miscellaneous Improvements

There are several other elements which the department will work to improve overall customer service, subject matter knowledge, and process improvements, including:

- Continued training and workshops on design and construction subjects;
- Cross training with other divisions to ensure consistency in review and approval, including the application process and project completion; and
- Cross training of planning staff and involvement in the development of standards and code.

The workshops and cross-training efforts intend to assist planners in assuming greater responsibility for design-related decisions. This increased responsibility would reduce dependency on senior level guidance as staff members further develop and advance their expertise of design-related topics.

Additional Considerations:

1. Consider converting existing and future AUP and CUP approvals to having no expiration. This would reduce the overall number of applications reviewed as AUP's and CUP's would not have to renew on a regular basis. The city would retain the ability to revoke or take enforcement action in the event of non-compliance.
2. During the Downtown Specific Plan updates several comments were received about Downtown projects being reviewed by the Design Review Board prior to Council. Stakeholder feedback was primarily based on the desire to have Downtown projects reviewed in a similar manner as other projects within the City. Staff has not evaluated the impacts on overall timeline and schedule to review projects, but brings forth the concept for Council discussion.

Timeline and Summary

Staff has identified near term (immediately), mid-term (beginning within the next 90 days and implemented before end of year), and longer term (to begin prior to the end of the year and implemented in 2020).

Near-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term
Review of existing Design Review Board Members and Policies	Update submittal requirements and standards	Update review process for identified permits
Alternate Design Review Board Members	Update and distribution of review checklist	Update and development of neighborhood and typology specific design standards

With these improvements to the process, staff intends to:

- Avoid review delays during the Design Review Board process from canceled meetings;
- Provide more predictable and consistent review feedback;
- Increase applicant accountability for quality of design, submittal packets, and responsiveness to code, standards, and revision requests;
- Increase efficiency and effectiveness of engagement between planners and applicants;
- Reduce unnecessary design review processes for projects that pose minimal impact to the community; and
- Clearly define and establish city and community priorities for design.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no impact associated with the recommendations in this report.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1: Direct staff to proceed with the recommended Design Review streamlining improvements and select a preferred alternate Design Review Board member composition.

Alternative 2: Do not amend the current Design Review process.

Alternative 3: The City Council may consider any other alternative not proposed by staff.

CAMPAIGN DISCLOSURE

N/A

EXHIBITS

None

MOTION

Moved by Council Member _____, seconded by Council Member _____, that the City Council hereby directs staff to proceed with the streamlining and improvement efforts to the City's Design Review process as outlined in the March 26, 2019 staff report from the Community Development Director, and further directs staff to implement the City Council's selected option for utilizing alternative Design Review Board members.

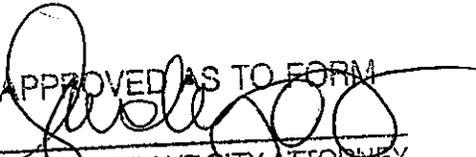
Vote as follows:

Ayes:

Noes:

Absent:

Abstain:

APPROVED AS TO FORM

CHIEF ASSISTANT CITY ATTORNEY
DATED 3/18/19

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