



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item

15-0989

Agenda Date: 1/29/2016

2016 COUNCIL STUDY ISSUE

NUMBER

CDD 16-13

TITLE Solar Access Requirements

BACKGROUND

Lead Department: Community Development
Support Department(s): Environmental Services

Sponsor(s):
 City Manager

History:
 1 year ago: N/A
 2 years ago: N/A

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

What are the key elements of the study?

Solar access requirements were adopted in 1986 when most solar energy systems were thermal water heating. Solar hot water installations were primarily located on the roofs of buildings-close to the location the hot water would be used. Advances in solar technology now allow greater flexibility in locating solar facilities on a property. The study would examine whether the current regulations are still appropriate or if modifications to the regulations are desirable. The study would look at solar access to the entire parcel and not just the roof-top solar access. The study would examine whether additional areas of the City should have no solar access or different solar access requirements. The types of structures being shaded might also suggest different standards, such as shading of residential or non-residential buildings. The study could also look at whether solar easements or other compensating requirements are possible or appropriate.

What precipitated this study?

Recently, the Planning Commission has considered variance applications for solar access associated with multi-story buildings along El Camino Real. In two cases the proposal for a 5-floor hotel building created shadow on the roof of adjacent small one-story buildings in excess of allowable shading. In one case there was additional shadow on the outdoor use (miniature golf). The Planning Commission also expressed that the criteria for solar shading should be reevaluated, i.e. whether the maximum amount of solar shading should apply to the winter solstice (shorter day of the year) or consider a broader criteria such as a year-round average. There are pending applications in other areas of the City with similar issues where the zoning code allows or incentivizes taller buildings to meet the vision for that area, creating tension between the two standards. The Downtown Specific Plan area has a blanket exemption from the solar access requirements. Plans for the Peery Park Specific Plan,

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Lawrence Station Area Plan and update to the Precise Plan for El Camino Real are opportunities to craft regulations specific to those areas.

Planned Completion Year: 2016

FISCAL IMPACT**Cost to Conduct Study**

Level of staff effort required: Moderate/Minor

Amount of funding above current budget required: \$ 0

Funding Source: N/A

Explanation of Cost: N/A

Cost to Implement Study Results

Some cost to implement

Explanation of Cost: Depending on what new regulations are adopted there would be a range of costs for training of staff. These costs could be offset with development application fees.

EXPECTED PARTICIPATION IN THE PROCESS

Council-approved work plan: No

Council Study Session: No

Reviewed by Boards/Commissions: Planning Commission, Sustainability Commission

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Position: Support

Explanation: Staff finds this issue a priority based on the type of applications that are currently pending. If ranked high, the study could be completed early in 2016 to provide potentially alternative solar access requirements for pending applications.

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