



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item

17-0910

Agenda Date: 2/16/2018

2018 COUNCIL STUDY ISSUE

NUMBER

CDD 13-02

TITLE Consideration of Usable Open Space in Required Front Yards

BACKGROUND

Lead Department: Community Development

Support Departments: Office of the City Manager
Office of the City Attorney

Sponsor(s): Planning Commission

History: 1 year ago: Ranked, Below the Line
2 years ago: Deferred

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

What precipitated this study?

Developers of small townhouse developments have requested and the Planning Commission has approved, through a Special Development Permit, the ability to count a portion of the required front yard area towards the minimum usable open space requirement. This practice is now relatively common; when the zoning regulations for usable open space were adopted townhouse developments that allowed access from the public street were not typical. Design guidelines adopted since then have put more emphasis on activating the streetscape with entries and private areas. The portions that have been credited toward required open space are the privately fenced yards in front of the townhouse units.

What are the key elements of the study?

Usable open space is required for multi-family residential projects in the City. Pursuant to Sunnyvale Municipal Code Section 19.37.100, landscaped areas in the required front yard cannot be counted towards usable open space. This study would review open space regulations and evaluate whether there are instances or criteria that would permit required front yard areas to be counted towards required usable open space and not be deemed a deviation from the Sunnyvale Municipal Code (SMC).

Estimated years to complete study: 1 year

FISCAL IMPACT

Cost to Conduct Study

Level of staff effort required (opportunity cost): Moderate

Funding Required for Non-Budgeted Costs: \$0

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Cost to Implement Study Results

Minimal or no cost expected to implement.

EXPECTED PARTICIPATION IN THE PROCESS

Council-Approved Work Plan: No

Council Study Session: No

Reviewed by Boards/Commissions: Planning Commission

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Support. This policy issue merits discussion at the 2018 Study Issues Workshop.

The study issue would develop clear criteria for allowing front yards to partially meet the open space requirements for residential projects (primarily townhouse projects). By providing specific zoning standards or guidelines that define the conditions and situations where the front yard can be counted toward required open space, it would streamline the review process. Staff had anticipated being able to complete this policy change as part of the zoning code retooling; however, the schedule for the retooling effort has fallen behind due to other workload items and staff availability. The retooling effort will recommence when sufficient staff time is available.

Prepared by: Trudi Ryan, Director, Community Development

Reviewed by: Teri Silva, Interim Assistant City Manager

Approved by: Kent Steffens, Interim City Manager