



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item-No Attachments (PDF)

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REPORT TO PLANNING COMMISSION

SUBJECT

Design Guidelines for mixed-use projects, known as the Toolkit for Mixed-use Developments; Find that the project is exempt under CEQA pursuant to Guidelines 15060(3) and 15378(b)(5) (Study Issue)

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BACKGROUND

In 2010, the City Council sponsored a study issue to address mixed-use projects due to concerns that effective guidelines were not available for the mixed-use projects that were submitted for review at the time. The City does not have specific guidelines or policies to address mixed-use projects, and all parties were interested in better defining the expectations the City has for these types of development. The study issue was ranked above the line, but due to financial concerns and the cost to prepare the Toolkit, the study was suspended. In 2012, the City included the Toolkit into the grant application for the Lawrence Station Area Plan, which includes a mixed-use recommendation for that area.

The Toolkit is a part of the contract the City has with Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) for the Lawrence Station Area Plan, but it is intended to address mixed-use projects throughout the City, including El Camino Real, downtown, and other areas. The Toolkit is a set of guidelines, and not zoning standards, and is meant to augment zoning, the General Plan and other City policy.

Although the Study Issue paper (Attachment 1) describes an “analysis of appropriate square footage for mixed-use, especially along El Camino Real,” that type of information will be included in the updates of the Land Use and Transportation Element of the General Plan and Precise Plan for El Camino Real.

The City Council is scheduled to consider this item on April 28, 2015.

EXISTING POLICY

General Plan:

From Land Use and Transportation (LT):

GOAL LT-2 Attractive Community - Preserve and enhance an attractive community, with a positive image and a sense of place, that consists of distinctive neighborhoods, pockets of interest, and human-scale development.

Policy LT-2.1 Recognize that the City is composed of residential, industrial and commercial neighborhoods, each with its own individual character; and allow change consistent with reinforcing positive neighborhood values.

Policy LT-3.4 Determine appropriate density for housing based on site planning opportunities and proximity to services.

From Community Character (CC):

Policy CC-1.7 Encourage neighborhood patterns that encourage social interaction and avoid isolation.

GOAL CC-3 WELL-DESIGNED SITES AND BUILDINGS - Private Development: Ensure that buildings and related site improvements for private development are well designed and compatible with surrounding properties and districts.

Policy CC-3.1 Place a priority on quality architecture and site design, which will enhance the image of Sunnyvale and create a vital and attractive environment for businesses, residents and visitors, and be reasonably balanced with the need for economic development to assure Sunnyvale's economic prosperity.

Policy CC-3.2 Ensure site design is compatible with the natural and surrounding built environment.

From Housing Element (HE):

GOAL HE-6 SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBORHOODS - Maintain sustainable neighborhoods with quality housing, infrastructure and open space that fosters neighborhood character and the health of residents.

Policy HE-6.1 Continue efforts to balance the need for additional housing with other community values, including preserving the character of established neighborhoods, high quality design, and promoting a sense of identity in each neighborhood.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines 15060(3) and 15378(b)(5), CEQA does not apply to activities that are not a project. Approval of the design guidelines is not a project within the meaning of CEQA because the guidelines are in the nature of an administrative activity that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment. The guidelines do not create zoning regulations; rather they provide detailed descriptions and graphic examples to follow when implementing zoning regulations. Accordingly, they are exempt from CEQA review. Projects that are subject to the design guidelines will be environmentally evaluated on an individual basis through the entitlement process.

DISCUSSION

The Toolkit for Mixed-use Developments (Toolkit) is prepared to specifically address location and design of future mixed-use projects. It is set up to be effective for the development community to use in establishing a mixed-use project, and by community members, decision-makers, and staff in reviewing and considering these projects. It is broken down by site elements (such as site selection, surrounding area, and site planning), building design (height, architecture, etc.) and transportation and parking concerns. It also includes two sample projects that incorporate design concepts from the Toolkit.

The Toolkit is a set of focused design guidelines, and does not include development standards, such as units per acre, heights, setbacks, etc. The Toolkit does not establish how much development could

occur on a site. The zoning code and General Plan address those key areas, but the Toolkit will provide direction for concerns such as appropriate siting of mixed-use developments, how the development would integrate with the surrounding area, and how the architecture and site plan should interface with the street.

Organization of the Toolkit

The Toolkit was written to lead from high-level design elements to those more specific details, ending with examples of the design guidelines in sample projects. The main design guidelines are broken down by topic, with a listing of the intent and guidelines for each. The basic organization of the Toolkit is as follows:

Guiding Principles

The Principles consist of high-level goals of the Toolkit and incorporate concepts from other documents, including the following:

1. Provide a diversity of uses and not one main use type with a token amount of other uses. If the goal is to provide mixed-use projects in specified locations (and not all residential, for instance), the actual mix of uses should be diverse and compatible.
2. Provide a mix of uses that will serve the community and surrounding area.
3. Ensure any development integrates well into the existing neighborhood. Respect adjacent building forms and open areas, with a separation between incompatible uses.
4. Provide good pedestrian connections between adjacent areas and on-site to tie together the different uses. Also, provide good connection between the uses and pedestrian, bicycling and transit opportunities.
5. Allow reduced parking requirements when different uses on site have different peak parking times, which allows the uses on site to share parking resources. Also, shared uses on a site provide the opportunity for car and bike sharing, aggressive transportation demand management measures, etc.
6. Locate and orient mixed-use projects in a way that allows the site to become a shared community feature.
7. Take care to provide attractive architecture and design to ensure the mixed-use development is appropriate for its location and to soften the tendency of it to be larger and denser than typical single use projects.
8. Include sustainable features as part of each development.
9. Collaborate with City departments and divisions to ensure successful mixed-use projects, with the lead taken by Community Development and Economic Development.

Site Elements

The first guideline section addresses the siting of mixed-use projects through:

1. Site selection
2. Consistency with the surrounding area
3. Block pattern and size
4. Minimum lot size
5. Separation of uses
6. Site Planning

Building Design

The next section addresses building design, and includes the following:

1. Building massing and articulation

2. Building design and architecture
3. Building height
4. Building orientation, entries and facades
5. Building materials
6. Gathering places and open space
7. Landscaping

Transportation and Parking

This section describes different parking strategies and possibilities for reducing single occupancy vehicle traffic. This is not a complete discussion on all methods to reduce traffic or parking, but is more focused on options associated with mixed-use projects. The section also includes parking design guidelines for:

1. Parking lots
2. Private garages
3. Parking structures

Sample Projects

The two sample projects at the end of the document provide examples of how some of the Toolkit criteria could be used in new project design. Although actual Sunnyvale properties were used in the document, they do not depict actual projects, nor interest in the property owner to pursue such a project. The purpose of using the two sites is because each property presents different challenges due to differing site size, location and surrounding area. The sample projects are only for illustrative purposes.

Implementing the Toolkit

If the Toolkit is approved by the City Council, it will become a part of the other design guidelines in place in Sunnyvale. These guidelines have had numerous additions and changes the past couple years, including the addition of the bird-safe and high density multi-family design guidelines, and have resulted in specific guidelines for different project types and situations. The guidelines have, however, become disjointed because of the recent changes. As a result, staff will work to combine all design guidelines into a more thorough and clearly defined document by the end of 2015 so that the guidelines are easier for all parties to use.

FISCAL IMPACT

The discussion, consideration and approval of a Toolkit for mixed-use projects will not have a direct fiscal impact to the City. Indirectly it could streamline project reviews.

PUBLIC CONTACT

Public contact was made through posting of the Planning Commission agenda on the City's official notice bulletin board, on the City's website, and the availability of the agenda and report in the Planning Division and in the Reference Section of the City's Public Library. Notices were sent to the neighborhood associations, developers and design professionals involved in development in Sunnyvale, and posted at the One-Stop Permit Center. The Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter submitted their Guidelines for Residential and Mixed Use Development to assist in the creation of Sunnyvale-specific mixed-use guidelines (Attachment 4).

At their study session, Planning Commissioners requested more information on large and small scale mixed-use developments. Attachment 3 includes photos of two mixed-use projects in Sunnyvale. The

Commissioners also emphasized the need for smaller block developments (breaking down super-blocks to support pedestrian and bicycle accessibility); limiting offices on the ground floor where retail and services are desired; encourage shared parking, even with other developments; and, consider flexible use of space over time. In addition the Commissioners provided suggestions on eliminating brand names in some of the design guidelines. The Toolkit has been amended to include Planning Commission recommendations.

ALTERNATIVES

Recommend that City Council:

1. Find that the project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines 15060(3) and 15378(b)(5).
2. Approve the Toolkit for Mixed-use Developments (Attachment 2) for mixed-use projects in all zoning districts.
3. Approve the Toolkit for Mixed-use Developments with modifications. Make no changes and rely on existing zoning standards and design guidelines.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommend to City Council: Alternatives 1 and 2. Find that the project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines 15060(3) and 15378(b)(5), and approve the Toolkit for Mixed-use Developments (Attachment 2) for mixed-use projects in all zoning districts.

The Toolkit for Mixed-use Developments will provide all parties with clearly defined guidelines and expectations for these projects, and should result in better-planned and sited projects in the City. Staff recommends adopting the Toolkit to address all mixed-use projects in the City.

Prepared by: Andrew Miner, Principal Planner

Reviewed by: Trudi Ryan, Planning Officer

Reviewed by: Hanson Hom, Director, Community Development

Reviewed by: Robert A. Walker, Assistant City Manager

Approved by: Deanna J. Santana, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

1. Study Issue Paper
2. Draft Toolkit for Mixed-use Developments
3. Pictures of Existing Mixed-use Projects
4. Sierra Club Guidelines for Residential and Mixed Use Development