



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item-No Attachments (PDF)

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REPORT TO COUNCIL

SUBJECT

Approve the City of Sunnyvale Parking Structure Design Guidelines and Find that the Project is Exempt Under CEQA Pursuant to Guidelines 15060(3) and 15378(b)(5) (Study Issue CDD 15-01)

BACKGROUND

The City has experienced a recent influx of higher density residential and higher intensity office projects. These types of developments typically include underground or structured parking areas. Although the pending Toolkit for Mixed-use Development includes design guidance on parking structures in mixed-use development, there is no adopted design guidance specific to parking structures in the current zoning code or City-wide Design Guidelines. In an effort to better guide the public, developers and decision-makers when considering projects that include structured parking, a study issue was selected for the development of specific design guidelines for parking structures (Attachment 1).

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-4.2 Require new development to be compatible with the neighborhood, adjacent land uses and the transportation system.

From Community Character (CC):

Policy CC-1.3 Ensure that new development is compatible with the character of special districts and residential neighborhoods.

GOAL CC-3 *Well-Designed Sites and Buildings* - 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.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines 15060(c)(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 draft Parking Structure Design Guidelines (Attachment 2) focus on providing criteria to guide developers in the design of structured parking and to help the public, staff and decision-makers in reviewing and considering these projects. The Guidelines are a set of guiding principles that also include development standards for setbacks, height and landscape buffers which comply with equivalent standards set forth in the Zoning Code. Other standards such as floor area ratio, lot coverage, etc. are not included in the Guidelines and are addressed by the Zoning Code.

Organization of the Guidelines

The Guidelines are organized to first address design principles for structured parking in the City. This section is followed by defining four types of structured parking: parking deck, underground parking, podium parking, and parking garage. Specific design criteria for each type of structured parking are addressed, as well as general design guidelines that apply to all parking structures. The Guidelines also include special contextual guidelines for five major areas within the City.

Design Principles

The design principles are intended to give a general direction for the development of structured parking and include the following:

1. Design parking structures to complement nearby structures;
2. Subordinate parking structures to the primary buildings;
3. Enhance the pedestrian environment;
4. Minimize vehicular/pedestrian conflicts;
5. Promote efficient site circulation and street access;
6. Design parking structures with strong architectural integrity;
7. Integrate substantial landscaping into all projects; and
8. Minimize impacts to adjacent neighbors.

Parking Structure Types

Each parking structure type is defined and specific design criteria for each type are addressed after the general design guidelines, which apply to all types of structured parking. The following parking structure types are addressed in the guidelines:

- Parking Decks

- Underground Parking
- Podium Parking
- Parking Garages

Guidelines cover site development, landscaping, plan layout, and architectural design and details. Parking garage guidelines also cover rooftop uses.

General Design Guidelines

The general design guidelines apply to all parking structure types in combination with the specific guidelines for each individual type. This section specifically discusses criteria for the following elements:

1. General - Addresses overall design issues.
2. Site Development - Addresses the siting and relationship of structured parking to surroundings on the same site and adjacent properties.
3. Landscaping - Addresses incorporating natural elements and the relationship of structured parking with the natural environment.
4. Plan Layout- Addresses the layout of structured parking, including interiors.
5. Bicycle Parking - Addresses the incorporation of bicycle accommodation and access.
6. Architectural Design and Details - Addresses exterior treatments and materials.
7. Lighting - Addresses appropriate lighting design.
8. Security - Addresses public safety issues.
9. Noise - Addresses operating standards regarding noise.

Special Contextual Guidelines

This section discusses specific criteria for structured parking located in five major land use settings or areas in the City, including office parks, Downtown, El Camino Real, residential districts and areas adjacent to residential.

Implementing the Guidelines

If the Guidelines are approved by the City Council, it will be added to a growing collection of adopted Sunnyvale design guidelines. These collective guidelines have been expanded in recent years to address specific topics, such as bird-safe building design, high density multi-family housing and, soon to be adopted, mixed-use development. For easier reference and use, staff will combine all of the City's design guidelines into one organized document. Staff is targeting completion of this effort by the end of 2015.

FISCAL IMPACT

Consideration and approval of design guidelines for parking structures will not have a direct fiscal impact to the City. Indirectly, it could streamline project reviews.

PUBLIC CONTACT

Public contact was made by posting the Council agenda on the City's official-notice bulletin board outside City Hall, at the Sunnyvale Senior Center, Community Center and Department of Public Safety; and by making the agenda and report available at the Sunnyvale Public Library, the Office of the City Clerk and on the City's website.

Public Outreach

Staff sent information via email to developers, architects, brokers and other interested parties announcing an outreach meeting. The outreach meeting was held in the morning on April 29, 2015; one developer attended. The attendee supported the development of guidelines for parking structures and offered feedback to staff to address exhaust vents in the Guidelines. Further, he noted that underground parking can be costly and that there are environmental issues due to grading, ventilation, water intrusion, etc.

Study Session with the Planning Commission

At their study session on April 27, 2015, the Planning Commissioners were receptive to the concept of the Guidelines as a whole. They expressed a desire to see guidelines that placed a focus on promoting: high architectural quality and integrity; design compatibility with surrounding buildings; interesting use of exterior treatments to disguise the bulkiness of structures; incorporation of pedestrian safety measures; and use of environmental friendly measures, such as landscaping, solar panels and active recreation on the top parking deck. The Commissioners' comments have been taken into consideration in developing the Guidelines.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Find that the project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines 15060(c)(3) and 15378(b)(5).
2. Approve the Parking Structure Design Guidelines with modifications recommended by the Planning Commission (Attachment 2) for structured parking projects in all zoning districts.
3. Approve the Parking Structure Design Guidelines with further modifications.
4. Make no changes and rely on existing zoning standards and design guidelines.

PLANNING COMMISSION AND STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Alternatives 1 and 2: 1) Find that the project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines 15060(c)(3) and 15378(b)(5); and 2) Approve the Parking Structure Design Guidelines with modifications recommended by the Planning Commission (Attachment 2 to the report) for structured parking in all zoning districts.

The Parking Structure Design Guidelines 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 Guidelines to address all projects that incorporate any form of structured parking.

The Planning Commission considered this item at its regular meeting on June 22, 2015. The motion passed 6-0 to recommend approval of the draft Guidelines with the following modifications:

1. Revision to Guideline No. 3 for Bike Parking on page 11 of 26 (page 7 of the Guidelines) to remove the specific description of the type of bicycle rack to be used and replace with language that encourages the use of a variety of bicycle rack types that are both aesthetically pleasing and functional. (*Staff recommends relocating this guideline to the Parking and Circulation section of the Citywide Design Guidelines.*)
2. Revision to Guideline No. 6 for Plan Layout on page 11 of 26 (page 7 of the Guidelines) to clarify the intent of the guideline.
3. Revision to Guideline No. 2 for Site Development on page 23 of 26 (page 19 of the Guidelines) to elaborate on the use of art to improve the visual environment surrounding the parking garage.

4. Addition of Security and Noise as elements in the General Design Guidelines.
5. Basic grammatical and format revisions.

The Planning Commission found that the draft guidelines address their issues and concerns and are an important step in providing direction on appropriate design of parking structures in Sunnyvale.

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Reviewed by: Trudi Ryan, Planning Officer

Reviewed by: Kent Steffens, Assistant City Manager

Reviewed by: Hanson Hom, Director, Community Development

Approved by: Deanna J. Santana, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

1. Study Issue Paper
2. Planning Commission Recommended Draft Parking Structure Design Guidelines
3. Planning Commission Minutes of June 22, 2015