



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item-No Attachments (PDF)

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REPORT TO COUNCIL

SUBJECT

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

BACKGROUND

On April 21, 2015, the City Council held a public hearing to consider new land use guidelines called the Toolkit for Mixed-use Developments (see Attachment 4 for excerpted minutes from the meeting). There was input from Council members and others about specific aspects of the guidelines, and the Council requested staff to consider the input and return with changes to the Toolkit. Attached is a red-lined version of the Toolkit for Mixed Use (Attachment 1).

The Toolkit is a part of the contract for grant funding 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.

Staff recommends that Council approve the revised Design Guidelines for Mixed-Use Projects.

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(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 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; the Toolkit provides 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.

Changes from Council Hearing in May

Staff reviewed the comments to the Toolkit and made several revisions. Some are slight wording changes to better reflect the intent of the Council, while other sections are rewritten to change the

intent of the specific guideline. Listed below is a general overview of the changes; a more thorough summary is shown in Attachment 3.

Guiding Principles

The only change is to Principle 9 to remove the mention of using flexible zoning regulations to increase the range of uses in mixed-use projects.

Site Elements Guidelines

A major change includes removing the setback standards along El Camino Real and adding a guideline that sidewalk width should be increased when multi-story buildings are located close to the sidewalk line. Also included are clarifying items such as parcel assembly, customer-oriented office uses on the ground floor, and emphasis on building entry design rather than calling out a percentage of building façade setbacks.

Building Design Guidelines

Several items are changed in this section, including: removing “maximizing heights along corridors” and replacing with a focus on integration with neighboring uses; promoting the interaction of new uses with existing public gathering spaces (e.g. Plaza del Sol); allowing both active and passive open space to satisfy open space guidelines; and addressing awnings, arcades and porticos in standards.

Parking Guidelines and Strategies to Reduce Auto Use; Potential Strategies

The major change in this section is to change the order of the content and reword the section title to clarify the intent of the guidelines. This section includes two parts, one concerning parking guidelines, such as parking lots, garages, and general parking issues, and the second concerning potential strategies to reduce auto use as a part of mixed-use projects. The strategies are not guidelines, nor requirements, and do not constitute new policy for the issue. It provides information about options, should a developer or building operator be interested in exploring different methods to reduce auto use.

Sample Projects

The only change to this section is to reword the first sentence to be clearer.

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 that is easier for all parties to use. Staff will present the Council with the consolidated document when completed.

FISCAL IMPACT

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

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. 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 Planning Commission considered the prior draft (March 23, 2015) and recommended approval. The subject modifications were not taken to the Planning Commission for formal feedback; copies of the Report to Council including the revised Toolkit were provided to the Planning Commission.

ALTERNATIVES

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.
4. Make no changes and rely on existing zoning standards and design guidelines.

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 Toolkit for Mixed-use Developments 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 mixed-use projects. It will provide direction regarding the appropriate siting of mixed-use developments, how the development should integrate with the surrounding area, and how the architecture and site plan should interface with the street. This revised draft document has been updated to reflect the City Council and public comments. Staff recommends adopting the Toolkit to address all mixed-use projects in the City.

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Reviewed by: Hanson Hom, Director, Community Development

Reviewed by: Jane Chambers, Interim Assistant City Manager

Approved by: Kent Steffens, Assistant City Manager
for Deanna J. Santana, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

1. Study Issue Paper
2. Revised draft Toolkit for Mixed-use Developments
3. Summary of changes to Toolkit
4. City Council minutes on item, April 21, 2015