

REPORT TO COUNCIL

SUBJECT

Consolidation of the City's Design Guidelines (Information Only)

BACKGROUND

Over the years, City Council has adopted numerous design guidelines that set goals and policies for promoting development that is compatible and consistent with Sunnyvale's community character and desired architectural outcomes. These design guidelines supplement the development standards in the Sunnyvale Municipal Code and goals and policies in the Sunnyvale General Plan.

The City currently has ten adopted design guideline documents that set standards for various types of development, or that are specific to areas of the City. Additionally, individual Specific and Area Plans may contain their own unique set of design guidelines that are generalized for those locations. The following is a list of the various design guidelines that the City has adopted excluding those contained in Specific or Area Plans:

- **Citywide Design Guidelines** - Originally adopted in 1992 and last updated in 2014, includes general goals and policies that are applicable to a wide range of developments.
- **Single-Family Home Design Techniques** - Adopted in 2003, provides specific design techniques for single-family home developments in Sunnyvale including policies particularly sensitive to our residents (e.g., privacy and second-story additions).
- **Taaffe-Frances Heritage Neighborhood Design Guidelines** - Adopted in 2009, includes design recommendations for preserving this historic residential neighborhood. The policies in this document are specific to the single-family homes in this neighborhood and may be used in conjunction with the Single-Family Home Design Techniques.
- **Eichler Design Guidelines** - Adopted in 2009, contains various design suggestions and policies to maintain the unique architectural style of Eichler and Eichler-like homes and their neighborhoods.
- **Bird Safe Design Guidelines** - Adopted in 2014, provides specific design guidelines to promote a safe environment for birds for residential, office and industrial developments.
- **High-Density Residential Design Guidelines** - Adopted in 2014, contains approaches for both stand-alone high-density residential developments and high-density residential developments within mixed-use developments. These design guidelines focus on promoting high-quality architecture while promoting the best transition of higher density development into existing lower density neighborhoods.
- **Mixed-Use Development Toolkit** - Adopted in 2015, provides guidance for mixed-use developments that have both commercial/non-residential and residential uses within the same development.
- **Parking Structure Design Guidelines** - Adopted in 2015, establishes design policies and

guiding principles that ensure that parking structures complement nearby developments in terms of scale and character, inform design expectations from the community, ensure high-quality design, and guide parking structure design to promote walkability.

- **Murphy Station Heritage Landmark District Design Guidelines** - Originally adopted in 1980 and last updated in 2019, provides design policies intended to help maintain and preserve this historic commercial district. These design guidelines not only provide general guidelines that apply to the entire district, but also make building-specific recommendations to preserve the commercial district's historic characteristics.
- **Telecommunications Design Guidelines for Facilities in Right-of-Way** - Originally adopted in 2013 and updated in 2019, provides clear design criteria and thresholds for different levels of permitting required for telecommunications facilities in the public right-of-way.

EXISTING POLICY

Sunnyvale General Plan

Land Use and Transportation Element

Goal LT-4: An attractive community for residents and businesses in combination with the City's Community Design Sub-Element, ensure that all areas of the City are attractive and that the City's image is enhanced by following policies and principles of good urban design while valued elements of the community fabric are preserved.

Policy LT-4.3d: Ensure that new construction and renovation contribute to the quality and overall image of the community.

Policy LT-4.3e: Use the development review and permitting processes to promote high-quality architecture and site design.

Community Character Chapter

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

Policy CC-1.4: Support measures which enhance the identity of special districts and residential neighborhoods to create more variety in the physical environment.

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.

DISCUSSION

The need for orderly development that is appropriate for Sunnyvale has increased with the development and renovation boom that Sunnyvale has witnessed over the past two decades. The level and type of construction have led to the preparation and adoption of numerous design guidelines, resulting in ten separate design guideline documents (excluding those contained within specific/area plans).

Each set of design guidelines focuses on a different type of development; however, in some cases, developers are required to apply design policies from multiple sets of design guidelines because the

projects include different elements and different development types. For example, a mixed-use project that includes commercial and high-density residential developments and a parking garage would need to review the Mixed-Use Development Toolkit, the Parking Structure Design Guidelines, and the High-Density Residential Design Guidelines, in addition to the Citywide Design Guidelines.

For several years, staff and developers have found it difficult to go back and forth between the different design guideline documents that are applicable to a specific development project. Developers and their design team may not realize the City has design guidelines for certain aspects of their project. Therefore, in an effort to help streamline the process, staff initiated an internal project to consolidate the available design guidelines into one document.

The following steps were taken by staff, with some consultant assistance, in this effort:

1. The design policies in all ten sets of design guidelines were reviewed to determine if duplicate policies existed. When duplicates were found, those policies were cleaned up and merged (if possible);
2. Many of the design guideline documents were reformatted, when possible, to create a consistent look and feel of the documents. This included consistent title pages as the guidelines were adopted at different times, created by different planners/consultants, and lacking consistency in how they were laid out;
3. The guidelines are consolidated into one document and divided into 10 chapters to reflect the various situations where they are applied;
4. A new introduction was created for the consolidated document; and
5. The new consolidated guidelines, divided into the individual chapters, were published on the City's "Design Guidelines, Standards and Specific Plans" page on the City's website (Link in Attachment 1).

The consolidation of the design guidelines should help staff, applicants, and the community with better access to all the documents in an easier to find format. Thereby resulting in better customer service to those who wish to submit development applications in Sunnyvale. No substantive changes to the design guidelines were made as part of the consolidation effort. However, staff are beginning a project to review the residential design guidelines in order to ensure that the standards are sufficiently quantifiable and objective to meet the requirements of recent State law.

PUBLIC CONTACT

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

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ATTACHMENTS

1. Link to the Consolidated Design Guidelines