

REVIEW OF CITY DESIGN REVIEW PROCEDURES

DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS

Design Review is generally required for all projects with a Building Permit and exterior changes (excluding single-family detached homes on a standard lot)

LEVELS OF REVIEW

I. Director (Staff)

- Ex.: Signs

II. Zoning Administrator (Minor)

- Ex.: Projects less than 10,000 sq. ft. in size, small improvements

III. Design Review Board (Major)

- Projects over 10,000 sq. ft. in size
- Visually Sensitive Areas
- Projects over 5,000 sq. ft. in historic district
- Major Telecommunication installation

STEPS IN PROCESS

I. Pre-Application Conference with Staff

- Optional, but encouraged
- Staff provides guidance on Design Guidelines and other applicable regulations

II. Neighborhood Meeting

- Required for projects that include:
 - Discretionary Review
 - Public Hearing
 - Impacts to Residential Neighborhood

III. Application

- Staff determines if project will be processed as a Minor or Major Design Review

- Applicants are required to sign "Attachment A" acknowledging compliance with submittal requirements.

MAJOR DESIGN REVIEW

I. Concept Review

- Encouraged by staff
- Mandatory within "-H" combining district
- Purpose is to provide an opportunity for an applicant to get informal, non-binding feedback on project
- No staff report or formal analysis by staff
- Individual comments from Board Members OK, but Board should conclude by providing majority opinion/direction to applicant

II. Preliminary Design Review

- Application for Preliminary Design Review represents the applicant's best effort on a project.
- Staff report prepared that provides overview of project, analyzes project for technical compliance with Design Guidelines and other applicable regulatory documents, summarizes past Board discussion and/or actions, and recommends action for Board to take on project
- Staff relies on Board for detailed design analysis and direction
- Staff acknowledges that some projects may require two Preliminary Design Reviews by Board prior to action.
- Projects requiring a Subdivision Map or Conditional Use Permit often go to Planning Commission first before coming to the Board for Preliminary Design Review approval
- Planning Commission may refer a project to Board for Design Review when deemed appropriate and/or needed.
- Board action requires formal vote by motion or resolution – may include conditions or other direction.

III. Final Design Review

- "Ministerial" in nature
- Review to ensure that final design matches what Board approves during Preliminary Design Review and/or incorporates directed revisions.

- Board has option of delegating Final Design Review to staff.

FINDINGS FOR PROJECT APPROVAL

- Design Review approval shall require that the Board find all of the following:
 1. The design and layout of the proposed development is of superior quality, and is consistent with the General Plan, any applicable specific plan, applicable Zoning Code standards and requirements, the City's Design Guidelines, architectural criteria for special areas, and other applicable City requirements (e.g., City policy statements and development plans);
 2. The design and layout of the proposed development will not interfere with the use and enjoyment of neighboring existing or future developments;
 3. The architectural design of the proposed development is compatible with the character of the surrounding neighborhood;
 4. The design of the proposed development will provide a desirable environment for its occupants, visiting public, and its neighbors through the appropriate use of materials, texture, and color, and would remain aesthetically appealing and be appropriately maintained;
 5. The proposed development will not be detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare or materially injurious to the properties or improvements in the vicinity; and
 6. The proposed project has been reviewed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).
- Board members should not vote to approve project if member does not believe that the above findings can be made.

APPEAL OF DESIGN REVIEW

- Applicant may appeal decision within ten days of action.
- Appeal of a Staff or Zoning Administrator action considered by Board
- Appeal of a Board action considered by City Council.

JOINT REVIEW WITH CULTURAL HERITAGE BOARD

- Joint Design Review required for all projects of 5,000 square feet or larger within the "-H" combining district.
- Concept Design Review only required before Cultural Heritage Board, staff does encourage Design Review Board participation at this point in review process.

- Approval requires majority of each board to pass resolution, voted on in separate actions by each board.
- Often includes Cultural Heritage Board deliberation of Landmark Alteration permit prior to joint action on joint design review.
- Final Design Review made by Design Review Board only.

PROJECTS IN DOWNTOWN

- In effort to improve public awareness of downtown projects, City Council has directed that all downtown area projects be reviewed by Board at 5:00 p.m. or later in City Council Chambers and be televised.

VISUAL ANALYSIS

Visual Analysis required for projects located in:

- CD (Downtown) Zoning District
- "-G" (Gateway) Combining District
- "-H" (Historic) Combining District
- "-SR" (Scenic Road) Combining District
- Hillside or infill sites, major intersections
- Some residential, commercial or industrial sites

Analysis must consist of:

- Rendered project perspectives
- Photo-montages
- Computer generated simulations

BOARD DISCUSSION POINTS ON DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS

1. Concern that Board comments during Concept Review are not binding, can be disregarded by applicant.
2. Concern that there is no professional design analysis until project is presented to Board for action.
3. Concern that projects are not completely thought out / fully developed when they are presented to Board for Preliminary Design Review approval.

4. Recognition that multiple reviews by the Board and multiple design iterations cost applicant and City time and money.
5. Concern that approved projects are not being adhered to during building permit process
6. Interest in knowing if the projects that have gone through Concept Design Review proceed more smoothly through Preliminary Design Review process than projects that go directly to Preliminary Design Review.

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

1. Is the overall process for Major Design Review adequate?
2. Is the Concept Design Review process achieving its objective?
3. Should professional design guidance be provided earlier in process to minimize the potential for design issues at the time the project is presented to the Board for action? What form would such guidance take?
4. Are additional procedures needed for ensuring project conformance at the time of building permit?