


**M-GROUP**
*a new design on urban planning*

policy planning • urban design • environmental review • historic preservation • community engagement • staffing solutions

**AGENDA**  
**CITY OF SANTA ROSA**  
**DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS**  
**JOINT MEETING OF THE DESIGN REVIEW BOARD AND**  
**PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**June 15, 2017 | 2:30 PM – 4:00 PM**

**I. INTRODUCTIONS (5 minutes)**

M-Group will provide a summary of the project status, highlight feedback received through various stakeholder meetings to date, and set out next steps.

**II. OVERVIEW OF PROJECT AND GOALS (10 minutes)**

A brief synopsis of project goals to be provided by staff.

**III. DISCUSSION (70 minutes)**

The discussion for the Joint PC/DRB discussion will be focused on the overlap between the authorities for projects requiring both Design Review and land use entitlements, a review of Design Guidelines and Zoning Ordinance regulations, and potential expansion of administrative review authority. M-Group is seeking input on areas to focus on when identifying regulatory or policy refinements to improve the permitting process. It is not necessary to identify specific solutions at this stage. The discussion will be organized into four components:

**1. OVERVIEW OF DESIGN REVIEW PROCEDURES, ROLES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES (20 minutes)**

M-Group will summarize the Design Review process to highlight the (potential) overlap between the Planning Commission and DRB, then lead a discussion to identify opportunities to improve the process. Specific discussion topics include:

- Providing design input to inform PC-only projects (land entitlements, etc.)
- The potential value of DRB Concept Review to inform PC-only projects.
- Sequential review to provide DRB comments to PC prior to making a decision and to allow the DRB to have more substantive input than may be allowed after PC decision that impacts site layout.

**2. ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS (20 minutes)**

This discussion will focus on identifying specific text amendments and supplemental language or diagrams to clarify the Zoning Ordinance as it relates to Design Review. Specific focus areas include:

- Procedure and Concept Review applicability
- Interpretations of dimensional standards, and opportunities to add flexibility
- Nonconforming lots, structures, and uses
- Signage
- Noticing requirements

**3. DESIGN GUIDELINES AMENDMENTS (15 minutes)**

M-Group will lead a focused discussion on potential text amendments and supplemental language or diagrams to clarify the Design Guidelines.

**4. PROJECTS ELIGIBLE FOR ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (15 minutes)**

M-Group will lead a discussion on opportunities to expand the number of projects that are eligible for administrative review, particularly in terms of changes to approved projects.

**IV. ADJOURNMENT (5 minutes)**

M-Group will provide summary comments.



## SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. **PC/DRB Overlap-Design Input.** For projects that are subject only to Planning Commission review but that may benefit from DRB (non-binding) input, discuss whether a requirement for DRB concept review (on specific projects) may improve the outcomes and efficiency of Planning Commission review of other entitlements. Possible areas of interest for the discussion include: defining density allowances, reviewing variance requests, use permits, parking and traffic impacts, and environmental mitigations.
2. **PC/DRB Overlap-Multiple Entitlements.** Discuss potential opportunities to improve the review process for projects that involve multiple permits with decisions from both the Commission and the DRB, where the decision of one authority has the potential to influence the scope and authority of the other.
3. **PC/DRB Overlap-Density.** Discuss opportunities and challenges created by the current standards for density bonuses with respect to design outcomes. Are there opportunities to address the challenges more effectively?
4. **Staff Reports.** Do staff reports and presentations provide the necessary information to conduct an appropriate review of a project? How can staff reports be improved generally?
5. **Changes to Approved Projects.** Are there opportunities to streamline the process for reviewing changes to an approved project? Would it be appropriate to allow for administrative review of changes when the change involves a reduction in project scale or scope, even when the reduction addresses an aspect of the project that is a trigger for Board or Commission review? What kind of project or scale of change may not necessarily require a return to the Board or Commission?
6. **Project Narratives.** In your role as a review body do you feel that project narratives provide an accurate and informative explanation of how “superior” design has been achieved? Could more defined project narratives provide more insight to the Planning Commission on possible design outcomes when reviewing other entitlements? Which aspects of a project would benefit most from deeper insight through project narratives?
7. **Zoning Ordinance.** Are there consistent challenges with interpreting Zoning Ordinance standards and regulations? Which standards or regulations are the most challenging to interpret and enforce equitably and consistently?
8. **Nonconformity.** Describe the limitations or challenges the City may face with addressing (re)development projects involving non-conforming lots, structures, or uses. What aspects of regulating nonconforming projects could benefit from more clarification, flexibility, and/or predictability?
9. **Design Guidelines.** Are there consistent challenges with interpreting Design Guidelines?
10. **Design Guidelines.** Discuss design guidelines that are problematic or unclear with respect to achieving “superior” design? What recommendations can you provide as a review body to address qualitative assessments of project design, particularly scale and compatibility.