



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

PLANNING DIVISION

DATE: August 6, 2015
TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Craig Jimenez, Planning Division Manager
SUBJECT: 2015 Neighborhood Study

As you know, Monrovia is in the process of a comprehensive review of its policies and regulations related to compatibility of new development in existing neighborhoods.

On July 21, 2015, the City Council held a study session to review and discuss the status of the Neighborhood Study and to provide direction on potential policy changes. Based on the feedback provided by the City Council, Staff prepared a policy direction statement which was adopted by the Council on August 4, 2015. This provides a blueprint for the Commissions and Staff to begin working on proposed amendments to the Municipal Code.

Attached is the City Council Staff Report which includes the adopted policy direction. Staff will provide an overview at the meeting.



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT



DEPARTMENT: Community Development

MEETING DATE: August 4, 2015

PREPARED BY: Craig Jimenez, Planning Division Manager

AGENDA LOCATION: AR-6

TITLE: Review of Policy Statement and Confirmation of Direction for the Monrovia Neighborhood Study

OBJECTIVE: To confirm the policy direction and work plan for the Monrovia Neighborhood Study.

BACKGROUND: The City of Monrovia's architectural heritage is an important part of the character of the community that appeals to residents and visitors alike. Yet, to keep Monrovia financially strong and to keep businesses vibrant, it is important to encourage growth and development as well. Preserving the old – while embracing the new – requires a careful balancing act.

Based on concerns of many residents of the community, the Monrovia City Council adopted two moratoria. The purpose of the moratoria was to “take a breath” and give the community an opportunity to discuss and provide input on the status and future of Monrovia's neighborhoods.

Over the past six months, staff has engaged in a broad based public outreach component that included four community meetings, an on-line survey (with 474 responses), social media outreach and individual meetings with each Planning and Historic Preservation Commissioner. The result was a substantial amount of feedback which provided essential information in identifying issues, potential policy changes and alternatives.

Two basic themes emerged: historic preservation and neighborhood compatibility. Historic preservation plays an important role in defining and protecting the character of the neighborhoods. Compatibility of new construction has an impact on the historic character of Monrovia's neighborhoods. Compatibility and preservation relate to each other but require distinct approaches.

Generally speaking, neighborhood compatibility strategies focus on tools to maximize integration of new development within the context and character of existing development patterns. These tools typically are related to zoning regulations, such as density, bulk and massing, and maximum building size requirements. Design Guidelines are also a tool many communities use to address compatibility issues.

Historic Preservation focuses on identifying, protecting and maintaining existing historic properties. The City does this through the designation of historic landmarks, design review processes, establishment of historic districts and other regulations that protect structures that are deemed to have historic value. There are broad protocols in the field of historic preservation, however, it will be up to the community to figure out the “right way” for Monrovia. As the Historic Preservation Ordinance enters its 20th year, it is an appropriate time to revisit the goals, objectives, and policies that guide the preservation program.

ANALYSIS: On July 21, 2015, the City Council held a special study session to review and discuss the status of the Monrovia Neighborhood Study. Staff provided an overview of the community feedback,

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policy considerations and the anticipated process and schedule. The study session was an important step in the process to provide an opportunity for the City Council to comment and provide direction to staff at the onset of the policy development phase.

Based on the feedback and comments provided by the City Council, staff has prepared a summary of the Council's direction of policy areas to move forward on as part of the study. This summary is attached to this report. With this direction, staff will now work the respective Commissions and the community in researching, developing and analyzing these policies and develop ordinances which will then go through the public hearing process.

As discussed at the study session, based on the scope of the review of the City's regulations pertaining to Historic Preservation, staff is presenting an outline of work to be studied. This list will be forwarded to the Historic Preservation Commission who will then develop a long term work program to prioritize and develop a timeline which will be brought back to the City Council in the early Fall.

Timeline

Staff anticipates that the majority of the work related to the development guidelines in the Zoning Ordinance will be completed in draft form by October to begin the public hearing process. Since both moratoria are scheduled to expire on November 18, 2015, staff will also develop options for consideration of a "stop gap" to ensure that new development is consistent with the direction of draft policies.

The amendments to the Zoning Ordinance will be in the form of ordinance(s) which will require public hearings before the Planning Commission and then the City Council.

As stated previously, the Historic Preservation component is much more complex and the work program developed by the Historic Preservation Commission and staff will detail the various products and timelines for the tasks to be completed.

Conclusion

Change and development are a natural part of a community's evolution and the replacement of obsolete structures is natural. How the evolution is managed is the key. The ultimate goal will be to define a balanced approach to retaining and enhancing the unique character of Monrovia's neighborhoods as they continue to change with renovations, additions and new housing construction. Modifications to the City's regulatory processes and standards will be focused on managing change, not preventing it.

FISCAL IMPACT: At this point, staff anticipates that the amendments to the Zoning Ordinance in response to the Neighborhood Study will be completed in-house; therefore the primary fiscal impact will be limited to staff time at the existing staffing levels. Depending on the scope and breadth of the modified and potentially expanded review authority by the City, additional staffing may be necessary to process future applications on a timely and expeditious manner. This information will be part of the policy analysis.

Additionally, the tasks identified on the Historic Preservation work plan may also require both additional staffing considerations as well as the need for outside consultants to assist with the completion of the Historic Resources Survey if that is the desire of the City Council. Historic Preservation continues to be an unfunded activity of the Planning Division.

OPTIONS: The following options are presented for the consideration of the City Council:

1. Approve the policy direction statement.
2. Provide additional feedback and clarification on the policy direction statement.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the City Council confirm that the attached policy direction is consistent with the direction provided at the July 21, 2015 Study Session.

COUNCIL ACTION REQUIRED: If the City Council concurs then the appropriate action would be to approve the policy direction statement and direct staff to commence working with the Commissions on the Neighborhood Study.

Theme: Neighborhood Compatibility

Policy Objective: To develop and implement regulations in the Zoning Ordinance addressing concerns of the community regarding the compatibility of new development in existing neighborhoods in a balanced manner.

Topic: Development Standards

Issue: Building/house size

What we heard:

- New houses/additions too large in relationship to lots
- Concerns about mansionization
- Arcadia

How we currently regulate:

- RF – 30% site coverage (all structures)
- RE/RL – Sliding Scale – smaller lots, higher FAR, range from 17% (1 acre lot) - 50% (6,000 SF lot)
- RM – 40% FAR
- RH – 75% FAR
- Accessory structures (and attached garages) calculated separately

Potential regulatory tools:

- Reduce maximum house size for single family zones
- Included attached garages in maximum house size. (incentive)

Additional Study requested:

- Reduce or eliminate minimum dwelling unit sizes (SFR and MFR)
 - Base maximum house size on the average of block.
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Topic: Development Standards

Issue: Building Height

What we heard:

- Two story houses and additions out of character with some neighborhoods.
- Loss of privacy with neighboring two-story construction

How we currently regulate:

- Two-story homes allowed in all residential zones.
- 27' – 30' Ridge height in single family zones (RF, RE, RL)
- No ridge height limit in RM zones (2 story maximum)
- No height or maximum number of stories in RH.

Potential regulatory tools:

- Limit 2nd story floor area (percentage of ground, percentage of lot)
- Incentive for single story construction
- Increase 2nd story setbacks, add front and rear 2nd story setbacks
- Add maximum ridge height in RM zones.

Additional Study requested:

- Additional restrictions of 2-story structures in RL Zones (equal regulation vs. compatibility)
- Impact of vaulted ceilings

Topic: Development Standards

Issue: Massing/bulk

What we heard:

- Bulk and mass of new houses out of character
- Houses too close to property lines (rear, side)
- Concerns about mansionization

How we currently regulate:

- Front – 25' or average of block (all R zones)
- Rear – 20' all zones
- Side – All R zones have first and second story setbacks based on lot width

Potential regulatory tools:

- Increase rear setbacks in RF, RE, RL
- Add second story setbacks (front and rear)
- Additional setbacks for zoning district interfaces.

Additional Study Requested:

- Impact of additional setback requirements on design
- Review of attached/front facing garages and side yard setbacks

Topic: Density

Issue: Zoning Districts

What we heard:

- Concerns about development in the RM3500 Zone
- More open space needed (on-site)
- Concerns about parking (not enough/people don't park in their garages)
- Need more affordable housing

How we currently regulate:

- PUDs allowable in all MF Zones
- Zoning Ordinance does not distinguish between sale and rental status
- Two car garage required for each dwelling
- Carports allowed only when required parking is met

Potential regulatory tools:

- Additional parking for large houses
- Parking based on bedroom count
- Allow carports
- Review modifications of development standards in the RM3500 Zone/provide incentives for preservation

Additional Study requested:

- Expansion of PD Zones, review process
- Prohibit lot consolidation in the RM3500 Zone

Topic: Compatibility

Issue: Design Guidelines

What we heard:

- Need better design review/authority
- Need less design review/authority (SF)
- New windows (vinyl) should not be allowed on older homes
- New development needs to fit within the neighborhood context

How we currently regulate:

- Single family dwellings design review limited to roof overhang, siding and roofing materials.
- Municipal Code allows full design review on MF development.
- City does not have design guidelines

Potential regulatory tools:

- Increase review authority over single family dwellings. (DRC or staff)
- Separate *design* review from *development* review
- Create separate design review body with design professionals
- Stronger review of garage placement/orientation
- Additional development standards or more review purview related to design (modulation, window placement, porches)

Additional Study requested:

- Design guidelines (but not mandated architectural styles)
 - Garage Placement options/incentives
 - Levels of design review based on size of addition/new houses (incentive)
 - Incentives for good design
 - Unintended consequences of over-regulating future significant designs.
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Other issues:

- Review notification standards/requirements
- More training for Commissioners

Theme: Historic Preservation

What we heard:

- Preservation of neighborhood character is important
- 50-year window vs. pre-1940's
- City should encourage preservation
- Preservation should be initiated by property owner
- Create incentives for preservation instead of demolition
- Create different levels of designation/recognition
- HPC authority for design review of demo replacement homes.
- Street view and facades are primary...preserve/maintain street view
- Preserve anything built before [date]
- Code Enforcement for maintenance of older structures.
- Designate more districts.
- More education of public, realtors, developers
- Old vs. historic

How we currently regulate:

- Historic Preservation Ordinance provides criteria, process and regulations for designated landmarks and historic districts
- Mills Act Contracts available for all designated landmarks and district contributors
- Demolition ordinance requires review of homes built prior to 1940
- Zoning incentives available to encourage preservation of historic (non-designated) homes

Potential regulatory tools and work program:

- Complete Historic Resources Survey
- Establish different levels of designation
- Establish appropriate period for review (e.g. 50 years, pre-1940)
- Analysis of Mills Act Contract sustainability
- Explore use of City-initiated preservation tools such as historic preservation overlay zones (HPOZ), Planned Development zones, and designation of historic districts.
- Update of Historic Preservation Ordinance, including purview of Historic Preservation Commission
- Old Town Design Guidelines

Considerations:

- Community-wide education component should be at forefront of any actions taken by the City
- Historic Preservation decisions have far reaching implications for property owners
- Decisions should be based on thorough analysis and discussion
- Potential contributing homes need protection while discussion occurs (50 years, 6L and higher).
- Moratorium will need to be extended and/or modified to allow for appropriate discussion including a review of the existing demolition ordinance.