



City of San Marcos

Joint City Council/Planning & Zoning Commission

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, December 10, 2020

5:00 PM

Virtual Meeting

This meeting was held using conferencing software due to COVID-19 rules.

I. Call To Order

With a quorum present, the joint workshop meeting of the San Marcos City Council and Planning and Zoning Commission was called to order by Mayor Hughson at 5:10 p.m. Thursday, December 10, 2020. The meeting was held online.

II. Roll Call

Council Members Present: 5 - Mayor Pro Tem Melissa Derrick, Mayor Jane Hughson, Council Member Maxfield Baker, Council Member Alyssa Garza and Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Scott

Council Members Absent: 1 - Council Member Saul Gonzales

Commission Members Present: 5 - William Agnew, Travis Kelsey, Griffin Spell, Kate McCarty and Mark Gleason

Commission Members Absent: 4 - Mike Dillon, Matthew Haverland, Gabrielle Moore and Betseygail Rand

PRESENTATIONS

1. Receive a presentation from Staff and project consultants, Winter and Company, on the update to the downtown design standards and guidelines; and provide direction to Staff.

Bert Lumbreras, City Manager, provided an introduction on the downtown architectural design standards and guidelines. Mr. Lumbreras mentioned the City Council approved a contract with Winter and Company in January 2020 to update the city's existing downtown architectural standards and guidelines. The contract includes creating new standards to address design issues identified by the community, incorporating new graphics to clearly illustrate the standards and guidelines, and tailoring those standards and guidelines to various areas in downtown. Mr. Lumbreras stated as part of the update, staff and consultants conducted several outreach events in the Spring and Summer of this year to gather community feedback. These included a Kickoff Survey, focus group meetings, a virtual workshop, and a joint presentation to the City Council and Planning Commission. Based on the feedback and ideas provided by the community and staff, Winter and Company have some suggested changes to the City's architectural standards and guidelines.

Mr. Lumbreras introduced Andrea Villalobos, Senior Planner, with Planning

and Development Services to begin the presentation and introduce the consultants presenting the recommendations.

Ms. Villalobos explained that the purpose of the presentation is to provide information to City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z). Items to be discussed include the following:

1. Present recommendations of updates to the standards (Development Code) and guidelines (Design Manual)
2. Gather input from City Council members and Commissioners regarding the recommendations
3. Explain ongoing community engagement
4. Explain next steps for the project

Ms. Villalobos introduced Nore Winter and Marcia Boyle, of Winter and Company to lead the discussion.

The purpose of this workshop is to provide guidance as to Updates to Design Guidelines and Standards including: New standards to address design issues identified by the community, new graphics to clearly illustrate the standards and guideline and standards and guidelines to various contexts within downtown.

The public participation to-date was presented along with recommendations.

The first topics discussed include the following:

1. **Nonconforming Streetscapes:** Discussed a small text change in this section to ensure that a forecourt can be counted towards the required planting area on a site.

2. **Character District-5D Zoning District:** Discussed updating the description of CD-5D zoning to emphasize historical development patterns.

3. **Mixed Use Shopfront Building Type:** Discussed updating the Mixed Use Shopfront building type to add new standards for ground and upper story transparency requirements based on historic buildings downtown.

Council Member Baker asked how the transparency standards fit with energy efficiency goals. Staff will look into this further to ensure that the standards are in step with energy efficiency codes.

4. **Minimum Two Story Requirement:** Discussed providing more information in

the text regarding when an Alternative Compliance is requested for a one-story building in CD-5D zoning.

General consensus of the City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission is to accept the recommendations as presented for the following topics: Nonconforming Streetscapes, Character District 5-D Zoning District, Mixed Use Building Type, and Minimum two-story requirement.

The next set of items include the following:

1. Varied Massing: Discussed the recommendation to remove “upper floor” from the title, updated graphics, new language in the intent statement and adding an additional varied massing option that encourages variation in the full façade height rather than just over 3 stories as the two existing options provide.

Commissioner Agnew pointed out that the varied massing (Option 3) visual does not reflect the text standard. This was a typo and an edit to the visual to reflect the correct standard will be made.

2. Transparency: Discussed removing “ground floor” from the title, added standards to ensure sight lines are maintained from the street into the buildings to see activity and business, defined how transparency is measured in upper stories, and added a new graphic.

3. Blank Wall Area: Discussed adding language regarding four-sided design to this section and to reference examples in the Design Manual.

4. Expression Elements: Discussed recommended change to increase the number of expression tools that are required on a primary building façade from one to two and also included new language for the Alternative Compliance process and updated diagrams.

5. Building Elements: Discussed the recommended updates to the forecourt building element and adding a new building element for a rooftop amenity deck.

The Planning Commission and City Council discussed concerns regarding the rooftop deck element and the noise that travels from the deck to surrounding neighborhoods. The participants considered whether to add regulations to prohibit amplified music. The participants also discussed adding regulations to address a setback between the public street below and the edge of the rooftop

deck. The commission also discussed whether to allow the rooftop deck for both residential and commercial uses.

Council member Baker inquired if rooftop amenities will also cover things like green roofs and roof gardens and things such as that. The consultants stated this is something they will take a look at further and explore more in the standards for the rooftop amenity deck building element.

Commissioner Agnew stated the most important thing for rooftop decks is that they be unobtrusive. He stated he didn't see anything in the standards to address this. Consensus was that this needs attention. Consultants assured that more language will be provided in the intent statement about it not being obtrusive, and standards for the rooftop being setback from the primary façade to minimize visibility will be included. He notes it's not historically appropriate.

Mayor Pro Tem Derrick expressed her concern about noise from rooftop bars; the sound travels very far from a downtown rooftop across the city. She suggested perhaps rooftops could be limited to residential uses only. There was no consensus to restrict the use to residential only.

Mayor Hughson stated there are complaints about noise that go to the Police Department but the problem is that it still happens and people get tired and quit calling. Mayor Hughson said that we would get that information to Council Member Garza. Mayor Hughson suggested perhaps we not allow amplified music on rooftops and this can be done on a case-by-case basis through the Alcohol Conditional Use process.

Mr. Lumbreras noted that as the city grows, there will be more commercial and more residential in the downtown area. When this is not regulated from the onsite, it's very hard to get under control later. Commissioner Spell noted concerns from his experience on the Historic Preservation Commission. There was always concern about aesthetics and noise. We need to look at both.

- As far as the rooftop amenity deck visual that is proposed, there is a setback in the visual that increases the attractiveness from the street side. General consensus of the City Council and Planning Commission is in support of the visual indicating a setback, with a "maybe" vote from Council Member Baker.
- Do you want the rooftop amenity deck to be allowed for residential and not for commercial?

There was a consensus of the City Council and Planning Commission to not restrict a rooftop amenity deck to only residential, but to instead allow it for

both residential and commercial uses. Commissioner Agnew and Council Member Derrick dissented.

- As far as the noise, can this be addressed in another way and not in the design standards for the rooftop amenity deck?

There was a consensus of the City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission to address noise outside of the design standards.

6. Durable Building Materials: Discussed recommendations to add additional alternative compliance language in this section.

Other Discussion:

Mayor Hughson stated that we need to preserve the view shed and asked if they were going to be defined later.

The consultants stated the specific views are not defined. They have on their list a recommendation that a view study be done at some point but that it is not part of this scope. Discussion can be held regarding the creation of a map to show where those view sheds are but it is not something that we have right now.

Consensus of the Council and Commission is that preserving views is something we need to do and that we need to get a list of what they are because somebody new to town may not have the same appreciation to know what we're talking about. General consensus of the City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Mayor Hughson asked for a final thumbs up all the elements just discussed and the discussion that occurred. General consensus of the City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission.

The next topic addressed Neighborhood Transitions:

1. Property Adjacent to a Sensitive Site: Discussed recommendations to the transition options for properties adjacent to a sensitive site. The recommendations include two options that can be selected.

The Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council discussed the combination of options 1 and 2 regarding step backs and setbacks. Currently, option 1 has a 10' setback adjacent to the sensitive site. Option 2 has a 25% step back along the street/corner of the property adjacent to the sensitive site.

General consensus from the City Council and the Planning and Zoning

Commission to have option 1 and 2 as the requirement.

2. Property across the Street from a Sensitive Site: The recommendations includes three options that can be selected. The Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council discussed whether or not they liked option 3 (with the forecourt) and whether to leave it as an option. P&Z and Council liked option 1, 2 and 3.

Questions posed by the consultants:

Next is to review, for property across the street from a sensitive site: whether to leave upper story setback at 10 feet or to increase it to 25 feet; this applies to third story and above. General consensus of the City Council and Planning Commission is to increase the step back from 01' to 25'.

General consensus of the City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission to leave option 3 in the recommendations.

- Are you OK with an increase from 12' (existing code) to a 25' upper story step back after the third story as currently proposed in the recommendations? General consensus of the City Council and Planning Commission to increase the step back from 12' to 25'.**

The topics discussed next include:

1. Design Principles: discussed recommendations to add new principles regarding design excellence and other key themes heard throughout the outreach process.

2. Description of Context Areas: discussed edits to the purpose statement and renaming of design contexts.

The Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council discussed concerns with the names of West Downtown and South Downtown and the general boundary of the University Edge/Downtown Core design context in the Hutchison Street/University Drive area.

Questions posed by the consultants:

- How many would like to see a different name (to be determined later and should not be called "Downtown") for South Downtown and to not be promoting that for development? General consensus of the City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission to see a different name for South**

Downtown and not to promote it for development.

• How many would like to see a different name for West Downtown? General consensus of the City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission to see a different name for West Downtown and not to promote it for development.

Regarding the University Edge area and considering the allowed height of buildings, we would like to not have Hutchison to University in the University Edge as it is shown now. Commissioner Spell noted that a recommendation in the Historical Resources Survey is to extend the Historic Downtown along N LBJ Dr. to Hutchison. Council determined the best solution is to split University Edge context area at the end of University Drive/N LBJ Drive. Our concern is we do not want taller buildings that is going to divide town and gown in that area. General consensus of the City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission to split / evaluate the University Edge design context boundary in this area.

3. Design Traditions: Discussed recommended changes to add annotated diagrams and images to emphasize and provide guidance for new buildings on historical building design downtown.

4. Height Strategy: Discussed recommended changes to update the design context names and language regarding compatibility with historic buildings in the downtown historic district.

The Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council discussed concerns regarding height abutting a neighborhood and statements about areas where additional height may be appropriate.

The consultants are trying to narrow the discussion of height down as to where it might be considered from the language that currently exists in the code. This is based on the feedback we received during the initial outreach. For example, there were suggestions during the outreach that the eastern portion of the Transit Neighborhood could handle a bit more height. This also works in conjunction with the map with the sensitive sites and we could reiterate that in this section talking about the potential for height. They can go back to ensure that we refine any sub areas and strengthen any language.

Mayor Hughson asked for a thumb vote on Nore Winter's response about changes to the height section (detailed above) in the response to Mayor Hughson's/Councilmember Derrick's concerns.

General consensus of the City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission.

5. Varied Massing: Discussed recommended changes to provide new illustrations as well as additional guidelines.

6. Expression Elements: Discussed new illustrations and alternative compliance options. Discussion begins at 1.58.00 on South Downtown and West Downtown terminology and expression elements.

The Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council discussed strengthening this section to add more options for expression elements or to add various columns in which applicants would pick from. South Downtown NO, new name to be determined later.

Question posed by consultant:

Are you OK with requiring two expression elements? (If you want something different then thumbs down)

General consensus of the City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission to revisit the expression elements to add more options.

Discussion continued on the following items:

1. Four-Sided Design: Discussed new language added to the code regarding how additional detail and varied massing can be applied to all sides of the building.

2. Views: Discussed how the “views” guidelines supplement the varied massing requirements to preserve views to important buildings. The Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council discussed that they liked the option that provides for the most view of protected sites, bottom visual of views on the slide and wanted to ensure that the top visual (in which a church steeple is obstructed) would be prevented. Consultants will look further into view protection.

3. Neighborhood Transitions: Discussed recommendations to provide considerations in the text and in illustrations for designing a transition from higher density to residential.

4. Building Materials: discussed that guidelines provide considerations on how to apply building materials and not what materials are permitted. The section

includes many visuals on and examples of what materials are appropriate and where including expression elements. Mayor Hughson asked about whether a building could be completely glass and metal. In the text of the code, the language still says that they can be considered as alternative materials and implies they can be primary materials. Consultants will look back at this and make sure it's clear. Council and Commissioners agreed.

Question posed by consultant:

Questions about types and scale of plants were noted and our design manual addresses this.

5. Pedestrian-Friendly Ground Floor: Recommendations included guidelines and illustrations to show how a ground floor should be designed downtown.

6. Forecourts: Discussed recommendations to define a street wall of a forecourt. Mayor Hughson stated that she was concerned that the images don't look very historic. The consultants said they are a simplified level of images and that a lot of historic aspects are in the detail, but we will look at the images further and provide information in the narrative.

General consensus of the City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission that they agreed to this solution.

7. Improving an Existing Front Setback: Discussed new visuals for improving an existing front setback.

8. Outdoor Space: Discussed new visuals to demonstrate how to create and activate outdoor space.

9. Connectivity: Discussed recommendations regarding additional information about providing pedestrian pathways through sites, especially for large new developments.

10. Topography: Discussed new guidelines for how to design a building to consider the topography and minimize large foundation walls.

11. Activating Street Frontages: Discussed new visuals for how buildings that are slightly set back from the property line can activate their frontage.

Other discussion:

Council Member Derrick asked whether we removed the dangerous spiky plants in downtown near the sidewalks. She requested someone to get an answer from the Parks Department on that subject.

Mayor Hughson and Council Member Scott requested the addition of a question to the follow up survey that asks what street on which individuals reside to provide some geographic context. Staff was able to edit the survey to add this question.

III. Adjournment.

A motion was made by Council Member Scott, seconded by Council Member Derrick, to adjourn the Design Guidelines Workshop on December 10, 2020 at 8:45 p.m. The motion carried by the following vote:

For: 7 - Mayor Pro Tem Derrick, Mayor Hughson, Marquez, Council Member Baker, Council Member Gonzales, Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Scott and Council Member Garza

Against: 0

Elizabeth Trevino, Deputy Interim City Clerk

Jane Hughson, Mayor

Cesly Burrell, Administrative Coordinator

Mark Gleason, Chair