

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
**PLANNING COMMISSION & CULTURAL HERITAGE
COMMISSION**

CITY OF SOUTH PASADENA

Thursday, September 2, 2021 at 6:30 P.M.

AMEDEE O. "DICK" RICHARDS, JR. CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
1424 MISSION STREET

ROLL CALL

The meeting convened at: 6:32 pm

Planning Commissioners (PC)

Present: Chair John Lesak, Vice-Chair Lisa Padilla, Commissioner Laura Dahl, and
Commissioner Amitabh Barthakur

Absent: Commissioner Janet Braun

Cultural Heritage
Commissioners (CHC)

Present: Vice-Chair Mark Gallatin and Commissioner Kristin Morrish

Absent: Chair Rebecca Thompson, Commissioner William Cross, and Commissioner Conrado
Lopez

Staff Present: Margaret Lin, Interim Planning and Community Development Director
Marina Khrustaleva, Assistant Planner

City Council Liaison: Evelyn G. Zneimer and Mayor Diana Mahmud

City Attorney: Andrew Jared

Please Note: These Minutes are a summary of the meetings and are not a fully transcribed record.

PUBLIC HEARING

1. ADU Design Standards and Design Guidelines for Historic Properties.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Planning Commission and Cultural Heritage Commission review and provide comments on the draft Design Standards and Design Guidelines for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) on Historic Properties (Phase II ADU Ordinance) for the recommendation to the City Council.

Presentation by Staff:

Assistant Planner Marina Khrustaleva presented the project and project background including the City of South Pasadena received the state certified local government grant from the California Office of Historic Preservation.

Presentation by the City's Consultant:

Evanne St. Charles, Senior Associate and Architectural Historian and Katie Horak (virtually) of the Architectural Resources Group (ARG) presented a presentation explaining in detail design standards and design guidelines and the differences between them. Presentation of the proposed Design Standards and Guidelines for ADU Development on historic properties - South Pasadena Accessory Dwelling Units Ordinance Amendment. Specifically, regarding the updates associated with ADU projects on historic properties.

Commissioner Questions regarding the Ordinance:

CHC Vice-Chair Gallatin asked how was the discrepancy resolved between the State Department of Housing and Community Development regarding the City's inventory of historic resources and the California Register of Historic Resources.

Assistant Planner Khrustaleva responded that the issue has not yet been fully resolved.

City Attorney Jared clarified that the issue is predominantly that the City's approach is broader than the Department of Housing and Community Development wants.

PC Chair Lesak asked how the City Attorney believes it will be resolved.

City Attorney Jared stated that perhaps through legislation, a better understanding on HCD's part of a different approach or litigation. He believes there will be an accommodation made, most likely through additional legislation by the California Legislature.

Commissioner Dahl asked a question regarding the timeline.

Assistant Planner Khrustaleva responded that this project is developed under a grant financing from the state, so the timeline is driven by compliance with those requirements.

The Commissioners discussed the proposed height requirement specifications.

Commissioner Dahl asked approximately what percentage of property in the City would fall under these guidelines and rules.

Assistant Planner Khrustaleva stated that there are 5,000 single family homes in the City and about 2,800 of them are deemed historic, designated eligible so more than 50 percent of single-family homes.

PC Chair Lesak asked if the pitch should be in the definition section, *e.g.*, low pitch defined term vs. medium pitch defined term, etc. so that it becomes more objective.

Assistant Planner Khrustaleva explained that the Commissioners were switching from the Design Standards to the Design Guidelines.

Vice Chair Gallatin stated that the current Ordinance requires a historic resources evaluation, or HRE – a different kind of an HRE than what is used in other contexts requires an HRE - this can be seen as an HRE light for accessory buildings.

Mayor Mahmud stated that CHC Vice-Chair Gallatin does raise a good issue in that what is ‘historic’ based upon.

Assistant Planner Khrustaleva responded that the City has a city-wide historic context statement. This historic context provides very specific recommendations for how to determine if something is historic or not.

PC Chair Lesak clarified that there are some different word choices in the draft, so it needs to be clarified.

CHC Vice-Chair Gallatin added that what Mayor Mahmud was saying was to make clear the connection or the cross-reference that is already in existing Municipal Code.

CHC Vice-Chair Gallatin had a question regarding wall cladding and material. It mentions cladding materials such wood, stucco, and masonry. Would this allow for siding, like Hardie product.

ARG Consultant St. Charles responded that it could and that is why the language “same or similar” is included and the idea behind the “and or the color with texture” allows for some flexibility.

PC Chair Lesak suggested a different approach in a residential estate neighborhood. Maybe it could be based on the underlying zoning.

Assistant Planner Khrustaleva responded that maybe staff and the consultant can use certain feet for residential estate zoning.

PC Chair Lesak concluded the questions regarding the Ordinance and opened the meeting for questions regarding the Guidelines.

Commissioner Questions regarding the Design Guidelines:

CHC Vice-Chair Gallatin commented on digital page 28, regarding the number of designated historic districts in the City. Are they 9 or 11?

ARG Consultant St. Charles responded the two are commercial and that was the difference.

CHC Vice-Chair Gallatin said that his next question is on digital page 56, page 36 in the document, on Victorian-era styles. There is a statement included that states ‘Victorian became the dominant architectural idiom of the 20th Century,’ and he believes it is the 19th Century that was meant.

PC Chair Lesak asked how does this document relate to our standing guidelines for other projects?

Assistant Planner Khrustaleva asked for clarification.

PC Chair Lesak clarified that he was inquiring about design guidelines for non-historic properties, too.

Assistant Planner Khrustaleva replied that there is a chapter on historic properties. No specific guidelines for non-historic properties.

PC Chair Lesak commented on the survey. There were some questions that had 450 respondents and some questions had 5. He was curious what there was such a discrepancy in the numbers.

ARG Consultant St. Charles stated one of the first questions they were asked when completing the survey was whether or not you have already developed an ADU on the property so that number 5 is the one percent of residents who have actually developed ADUs.

Commissioner Barthakur wanted to make a couple of quick clarifications. He was curious if the same design guidelines and standards apply to ADUs as it relates to historically designated multi-family structures.

Assistant Planner Khrustaleva stated that yes, they do apply. The existing ADU ordinance allows one to convert existing non-usable spaces in multi-family structures to create ADUs within the footprint of the existing multi-family house.

Commissioner Barthakur asked if these applications include historic properties which are designated.

Assistant Planner Khrustaleva responded that they do include historic properties.

Commissioner Barthakur stated this his question is related partially to Commissioner Dahl's question of how does withholding this until the housing element is adopted actually have implications on the housing element - there's a double-edged sword.

Assistant Planner Khrustaleva responded that any property owner, any homeowner in South Pasadena is allowed to have a JADU and ADU in addition to his primary residence.

PC Chair Lesak closed the question portion of this item. He asked for any public comments and noted that there was no public in the Council chamber. However, he asked for any comments via virtual attendance.

Public Comment:

Josh Alberktson - commented via Zoom.

PC Vice-Chair Padilla asked if there were any written comments.

Assistant Planner Khrustaleva responded that there was one written comment from the same resident.

PC Chair Lesak closed the public comments section of the meeting.

Discussion:

PC Chair Lesak opened the meeting for discussion by the Commissioners; first on the Ordinance revisions and then on the Guidelines.

PC Chair Lesak pointed out the difference between a district and individual properties. South Pasadena has 2,800 or 2,700 properties under inventory. About 440 of them are eligible for individual designation and the rest of them are contributors to a district. And districts are about the grouping of contributors and elements.

CHC Vice-Chair Gallatin stated that he generally shares his concern over the lack of context.

PC Chair Lesak stated that it is still within the boundaries of the historic district. It is still within the historical district.

PC Chair Lesak stated that the direction is that staff should study it and bring back options that at least consider – but he thinks at a minimum – and this would be more of a direction - that the illustration should be showing a neighborhood relationship.

Mayor Mahmud responded to PC Chair Lesak and asked if his concern would be adequately addressed if it was just adjacent properties that were looked at.

PC Chair Lesak stated that he believes it would because of the span.

Mayor Mahmud responded that she thinks that would be much more feasible considering that we are talking about ministerial review.

CHC Vice-Chair Gallatin offered a follow up to Mayor Mahmud's suggestion.

PC Chair Lesak called on PC Vice-Chair Padilla.

PC Vice-Chair Padilla stated that there are a lot of great topics to discuss and that is another one. She stated she absolutely agrees on the districts as an urban designer, but she is struggling with how to capture the essence of what is critical for this kind of document for the City, make it manageable

Mayor Mahmud addressed PC Vice-Chair Padilla.

CHC Vice-Chair Gallatin addressed PC Vice-Chair Padilla and added a caveat to Mayor Mahmud's comments.

PC Chair Lesak stated that it is a Building Code and Fire regulation differential.

PC Vice-Chair Padilla asked about fire treated shingles.

Councilmember Zneimer stated that she lives in District 1. Her situation is a little bit different. This is a follow-up to PC Vice-Chair Padilla's comments on the hillside.

PC Chair Lesak said that there are very many historic districts within the hillside.

Commissioner Barthakur stated that the diagrams were really helpful for him.

Commissioner Dahl asked her fellow Commissioners their opinions on not allowing the ADU to be attached to the historic structure. It seems to her that in some cases that might be less impactful than having an ADU be substantially far away from the historic structure.

PC Chair Lesak stated that he thought there was a legal reason why they were detached. He asked staff to respond.

Assistant Planner Khrustaleva responded that the current Cultural Heritage Commission Ordinance requires any additions that are bigger than 200 square feet to be reviewed by the full Cultural Heritage Commission and any addition smaller than 200 square feet to be reviewed by the CHC Chair, regardless of the visibility factor.

Commissioner Dahl stated that we could amend our Ordinance.

Assistant Planner Khrustaleva stated that she believes the way the ADU Ordinance is proposed is still allowing people to apply regularly for an addition to their house. This addition would be reviewed by the Cultural Heritage Commission.

Commissioner Dahl said that on page 32, it talks about entrances to the ADUs and it says that if you convert an accessory structure, the entrance should not face the street, but if you build a new ADU, the entrance should face the same way as the house. That seems contradictory.

ARG Consultant St. Charles stated that the language can be clarified, but that the assumption was that if the garage door was kept in place, that is not considered a new opening. It would be a new door opening and by keeping the garage door opening so it looks like it still was a historic garage or a historic accessory structure from the street, and putting a new pedestrian door on the side, that would be more appropriate, but we can clarify the language or amend it as needed.

Commissioner Dahl said that her understanding is that at least in the City of Los Angeles when you are changing the use from a garage to a unit, they may make you do something to comply with that 10-foot requirement.

PC Chair Lesak added that it may be converted but they may make you put in sprinklers, for example.

Commissioner Barthakur asked – would that be true even if you were to increase the size of that garage?

CHC Vice-Chair Gallatin said that he would imagine that probably varies from city to city whatever the trigger is. Some cities say if you're adding more than x percent, then you know it has to be fully compliant.

Assistant Planner Khrustaleva responded the historic properties can utilize a section of the Municipal Code for parking requirements.

PC Chair Lesak wanted to offer the opportunity back to the Ordinance revisions – he does believe the 10-foot issue needs to be studied.

Commissioner Barthakur stated that unless any structure or vegetation cannot be removed by any other City ordinance like a heritage tree or something like that.

Assistant Planner Marina Khrustaleva stated that we should not call it visibility, but something else.

PC Vice-Chair Padilla asked a question of the Cultural Heritage Commissioners.

CHC Vice-Chair Gallatin explained.

PC Chair Lesak said another comment was just he noticed some inconsistency of language regarding kind of existing dwelling versus existing primary dwelling. There needs to be consistency. And then there is a definition of kind of primary structure in the Zoning Code, so he felt like just making sure that ties together.

Commissioner Barthakur asked question about the visibility language.

Commissioner Barthakur added but the size standard here is the size of the ADU shall not exceed the size of the primary dwelling.

The PC and CHC Commissioners discussed the composite materials, clad wood materials, glass..etc.

Commissioner Dahl stated that she was disappointed in the lack of public interest and comment on this and was wondering if staff could outline any additional outreach they're going to do between now and the 23rd to get more comments from homeowners or architects.

Assistant Planner Khrustaleva provided responses that staff will continue the public outreach effort.

Councilmember Zneimer asked if it would be possible to put on the website frequent asked questions – like from the survey – and other ideas.

Assistant Planner Khrustaleva suggested they could also consider putting something into the newspaper – other than public notice. Maybe extend an invitation to attend the next meeting.

PC Chair Lesak asked for any other comments. There being none, this item was closed.

ADMINISTRATION

Comments from Council Liaisons:

Councilmember Zneimer commented on the Rialto ribbon cutting.

Mayor Mahmud wanted to compliment the consultant and staff. It really is a wonderful document and given all of the comments and the serious dedicated effort of our Commissioners.

Comments from Commissions:

PC Vice-Chair Padilla stated that the meeting went as long as it did and the conversation was very lively because of the content developed by staff and the consultant.

Commissioner Barthakur thanked the consultants. In particular, the drawings were really helpful for him.



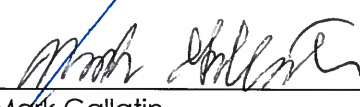
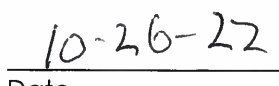
Commissioner Dahl concurred with what everyone else said. She thought the diagrams were beautiful and the photographs, too.

CHC Vice-Chair Gallatin echoed what his fellow Commissioners have said.

PC Chair Lesak wanted to thank the planners, in particular, for getting the grant. Because in a City that is short on resources, to have this level of effort, and it is a great effort, he really appreciates it.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:13 pm to the next Special Joint Meeting of the Planning Commission and Cultural Heritage Commission on September 23, 2021 at 5:30 pm.

APPROVED,	
	
John Lesak Chair, Planning Commission	Date
	
Mark Gallatin Chair, Cultural Heritage Commission	Date