

Council Committee Focuses on Historic Resources

The city of San Diego Land Use and Housing Committee recently discussed at-length the rules governing historic preservation. The four-hour marathon covered a variety of topics including Mills Act Reforms, the creation of conservation areas and incentives to protect historic resources. Much of the testimony from residents and planning group participants focused on the desire not to wait for community plan updates to create conservation areas. Once adopted, conservation areas would establish additional restrictions on development and redevelopment to preserve ‘community character.’ Councilmembers were concerned about the subjective nature of policy that could lead to confusion and directed staff to return with guidelines for committee consideration.

The committee also called for additional public information to be placed on the city’s web site and to extend the public input comment period from 5 to 10 days. It also voted to require additional input from local individuals and historic preservation groups to determine a building’s historic value.

THE ACTUAL MOTION AND VOTE

ACTION: Motion by Council President Pro Tem Faulconer, second by Councilmember Lightner, to request that staff: Amend the Historic Resources Guide (HRG) Section II (A)(1) to require the City to seek input from local individuals and groups with expertise for use in determining whether a potential historic resource exists, even in situations where a site-specific survey has been submitted by a project applicant, not just to help determine if a site-specific survey will be required; Clarify in the HRG that no process, such as the “preliminary review” process, can be used to bypass input by individuals and community groups into the existence of potential historical resources; Clarify the process so that if there is a disagreement between staff and the public as to whether a specific property is potentially historic, based on valid documentation, the decision should be forwarded to the full Historic Resources Board for determination; Revise the process to allow ten days for review by local individuals and groups with expertise; Direct the Neighborhood Code Compliance Department to develop, with input from stakeholders, potential policy language pertaining to fines for the unpermitted destruction of potentially historic resources; Bring forward an amendment to the Land Development Code to require



that demolition permits be posted and visible on all construction and demolition sites, and that permits provide consistent information regarding all of the addresses and parcels involved in the application; Report back to the Committee about how relevant information about permit applications can be included on the Development Services Department website in a timely manner, and direct staff to work with stakeholders to determine what information is necessary.

· Include, to the extent possible, the suggestions contained in the memos from the Uptown Planners and the Neighborhood Historic Preservation Coalition into the formal process. Staff is also directed to prepare a response to these memos within 90 days, describing how these suggestions will be incorporated, and explaining the justification in the instances where the suggestions cannot be implemented.

VOTE: 4-0; Gloria-yea, Lightner-yea, Faulconer-yea, Young-yea