



City of Sebastopol Design Review Board Staff Report

Meeting Date: July 25, 2023
Agenda Item: 7A
To: Planning Commission
From: Design Guideline Subcommittee
Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director
John Jay, Associate Planner
Subject: Objective Design Standards Recommendation
Recommendation: Recommend adoption to Planning Commission and City Council

Introduction/Background:

The State of California has adopted legislation in recent years that impact the ability of a local jurisdiction to implement their adopted discretionary Design Guidelines and requirements for certain residential projects, including certain multi-family residential development (vis SB35) and, most recently, SB9 for single family residential zones related to additional units on single family parcels through either lot subdivisions (“lot splits”) and developing homes on a newly subdivided lot or through the conversion of existing single-family homes into multiple units.

The City Council created a Design Guideline Subcommittee in 2019 to address updates to the City’s Design Guidelines and in response to these state laws. The committee includes Paul Fritz from the Planning Commission, Design Review Board members Lars Langberg and Christine Level, and, until his retirement from Council, Patrick Slayter (the Council decided to let this committee continue with out council representation due to the technical nature of the committee). This committee has already developed Standard Conditions of Approval, which can be utilized for both standard city projects, and streamlined (SB35) projects.

Discussion:

The Design Guideline Subcommittee is working with Planning staff and Opticos, the City’s consultant for this project, to develop Objective Design Standards and SB9 standards. Once adopted, the Objective Design Standards (ODS) can be utilized for SB35 applications which are exempt from the normal ‘discretionary’ design review process. The SB9 standards will be adopted to guide development requirements for lot splits of single family zoned properties in compliance with state law.

It is anticipated that these will also provide more certainty for both developers and the community in terms of the intent of the existing design guidelines. Note, this will not replace the existing design guidelines, which would still be administered by the Design Review Board.

Staff began working with Opticos on the project in September 2022, and the ODS/SB9 project kicked off with the Design Guideline Subcommittee in November 2022 and the Subcommittee has met several times since then to develop the draft Objective Design Guidelines presented here for review by the Design Review Board.

General Plan Consistency:

This action supports the following City Council Goals:

Goal 4.1 - Create a Safe, Healthy and Attractive Environment for Residents and Visitors

Goal 7 - Provide and Develop a Plan for the Future for the City of Sebastopol with the Implementation of the new General Plan

7.2.1 Incorporate the Small Town Character values into the City's land use policies

7.2.2 Review, evaluate and update the Design Review Guidelines

Goal 9 - Enhance housing opportunities in Sebastopol and, when possible, provide assistance to housing projects.

9.1.3 Engage with community on housing issues and suggested review of City policies to facilitate a positive jobs/housing balance.

The following General Plan Actions:

Goal CD 1: Preserve and Enhance Sebastopol's Unique Character, Design, and Sense of Place as a Small, Compact Town

Policy CD 1-1: Ensure that new development is constructed in a manner consistent with the City's Design Guidelines, and any design guidelines for specific areas or types of development.

Policy CD 1-2: Ensure that new residential and commercial development is sensitive to the surrounding architecture, topography, landscaping, character, scale, and ambiance of the surrounding neighborhood.

Policy CD 1-3: Discourage repetitive designs in residential and commercial areas, while establishing a cohesive visual relationship between structures and their surroundings.

Policy CD 1-6: Maintain and enforce Zoning Ordinance provisions and design guidelines that prohibit auto-centric strip development.

Policy CD 1-12: Require the design of new residential development to be consistent with the City's design guidelines, to ensure that new development contributes to the small town character of Sebastopol.

Financial Impact:

The project is being supported by a state planning grant (SB2 grant) funding, and the City's General Plan Update fund.

Public Comment:

No public comments have been received as of the writing of this staff report.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends the Board review the draft and provide any recommended modifications.

Staff further recommends that the Design Review Board adopt the attached resolution recommending the City Council to adopt this document.

Attachments:

Objective Design Standards Final Draft