

on the site and its relationship to surrounding land uses. The exception to this would be for the new Historic Design Review process where architecture may be the most critical issue. With the creation of a Cultural Resources Preservation Commission (CRPC), there will be expertise available to actually review architecture of a proposed structure in a historic district.

Staff, therefore, proposes that design review be handled in three different ways: Community Design Review, Historic Design Review, and the special procedure already in place for the Meyers Community Plan area.

Areas identified as being historically significant would have the –DH combining zone district. Standards would be adopted through detailed Historic Design Review Guidelines which would provide the layout criteria necessary for new development in the historic districts. These would vary to some extent from the standards that may be adopted for other areas in order to accommodate the specific needs of historic preservation. To encourage historic preservation and compatibility for new construction, parking standards and setbacks may be reduced for example. The process would not only include staff review of the site design, but also review by the CRPC for architectural consideration.

“Standard” design review would be the process for those areas of the County that have been identified through the zoning map to require a slightly higher level of review than that done with a building permit. Most of those areas currently have the –DC or –DS combining zone and would include the non-residentially-zoned lands along the state highways; however, it also includes multifamily development. Single-family development is not included in the –DC or-DS combining zone. Again, there is a need for much more detailed design review standards in the guidelines. The real purpose of this would be to make these projects ministerial, thereby significantly shortening the time needed for processing an application. This is typically the biggest complaint that applicants have about the current process. Second is that there are no real standards that a designer can use in preparing plans for a project. This type of design review would remain at the staff level, unless the Commission feels that there is a need to continue review of projects along State highways at the Planning Commission level. Finally, because of the uniqueness of the situation in Meyers, staff proposes to leave that unchanged.

Site Plan Review

Site plan review has been a staff level ministerial review allowing for a more thorough review of new applications. It is typically used to process the water conserving landscaping plans, although it is used occasionally where the Planned Commercial (CP) zoning exists or for day-used recreational facilities in the Recreational Facilities (RF) Zone. For the latter cases, it is handled pretty much the same as a staff level design review without going through the CEQA process.

Staff proposes that the site plan review process remain pretty much the same, utilizing it on a limited basis as needed for review of the water conserving landscape plans, other focused areas of concern, and ensuring compliance with minimum development standards. Currently the CP and RF zone districts require site plan review for permitted uses not requiring a special use permit. (The CP Zone District is proposed to be eliminated, which leaves the RF Zone.) We may also look at using the site plan review process for review of uses having specific use regulations

and standards under the proposed zoning ordinance. Other jurisdictions use this tool, sometimes calling it a minor use permit, for review of certain specified classes of development.

Summary

The direction that staff recommends for design review and site plan review is to make the process as ministerial as possible, establishing appropriate standards to provide clear guidance to designers of projects, and reduce the time frames for commercial development. Staff would continue to work in the development of the historic preservation plan and incorporating the provisions into the zoning code where appropriate. Site plan review would be utilized for more focused issues, such as water conserving landscaping review, as it is now, but would be expanded to provide the vehicle for review of some of some specified uses listed under various zoned districts. The Meyer design review process and requirements would remain the same.