

**EL DORADO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
PLANNING COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT**



Agenda of: April 24, 2008
Item No.: 12.
Staff: Peter N. Maurer

DESIGN GUIDELINES

FILE: Missouri Flat Design Guidelines

APPLICANT: El Dorado County

REQUEST: Adoption of Design Guidelines for the Missouri Flat Corridor
SA06-0503

LOCATION: The proposed Design Guidelines cover the area of land fronting Missouri Flat Road from El Dorado Road to Pleasant Valley Road/Highway 49 and the area to be served by the proposed Diamond Springs Parkway, Supervisorial District III. (Exhibit A)

APN: A complete list of Assessor's Parcel Numbers on which these guidelines will apply is contained in Attachment 2

ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT: Exempt pursuant to §15061(c)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION: Adoption of Guidelines

BACKGROUND

In August, 2006 the Board of Supervisors expressed an interest in coordinating the private sector improvements expected in the Missouri Flat corridor area and the public sector improvements being made to Missouri Flat Road and the interchange. Of particular concern was the desire to ensure the highest quality architectural design and site improvements, and provide a comprehensive look at overall development in the corridor.

The County hired a consulting firm, RRM Design Group, to hold public workshops and develop the draft guidelines. The contract was entered into in November of 2006, and workshops held throughout the spring. Initially, the work involved an analysis of land uses in the corridor, but that was scaled back to focus solely on architectural and site design guidelines, which are presented with this staff report.

Several years ago, the County applied a Planned Development Overlay zone to much of the area covered by these proposed guidelines. The purpose of this action was to ensure discretionary review of all projects and participation in funding of the Missouri Flat Road and interchange improvements under the Master Circulation and Financing Plan (MC&FP). Other parts of the study area are the subject of large development proposals that are undergoing discretionary review at this time.

STAFF ANALYSIS

The County has long identified the Missouri Flat area as the hub of economic activity for the central part of the County. Several large project have been built recently (Walmart, El Dorado Village shopping center), with several other projects in process. These include the El Dorado Crossing (formerly known as Sundance Plaza) and the relocation of the materials recovery facility and redevelopment of that land for a retail center. Several other smaller-scale projects are also underway or in the early planning stages. The County has undergone significant infrastructure improvements for circulation, notably the Highway 50 interchange project and widening of Missouri Flat Road. These improvements will serve as a catalyst for further commercial development.

With all of this activity underway, the resultant development can occur haphazardly, or can be addressed comprehensively, with standards relating to architecture, site design and landscaping, and lighting and signage provided to give the area a more pleasing and uniform look. This will further attract shoppers to the area, improving the chances of success for development of the corridor.

The proposed guidelines have two main components: a section on architectural character appropriate for the region, and specific development guidelines. The latter section addresses site planning, landscaping, building design, utilitarian aspects, and signs. The document also contains an overview of the process used and public participation in developing the guidelines. The intent of these guidelines is to facilitate the development of aesthetically pleasing, functional, pedestrian friendly, and convenient commercial development, while allowing design flexibility for the project proponent.

Architectural Character

The consultants reviewed architectural styling on structures in the mid-level elevations of the Sierra Nevada foothills, both contemporary and historical. They found that four styles predominate: mountain, agrarian, craftsman and gold rush. Examples of these styles are provided in Section 2 of the Guidelines.

Development Guidelines

The greater part of the document is the guidelines themselves. Section 3 contains five general areas described below:

- Site planning – This subsection addresses grading and drainage, lot layout, access and circulation, parking and pedestrian circulation.
- Landscaping – The landscape section includes discussion of appropriate plant types, parking lot planting and paving treatments.
- Building Design – This section discusses building form, articulation, materials, roofing, fenestration, and entry features.
- Utilitarian features – Section 3.5 looks at design issues related to trash enclosures, loading and service areas, lighting, walls and fences, and general utility placement.
- Signs – This subsection provides an overview of different sign types and how to appropriately incorporate signage into the overall design of a project.

While there are no specific standards contained in the document (These are established in the zoning code.), the guidelines provide recommendations and suggestions to enhance the development both aesthetically and functionally.

GENERAL PLAN

The 2004 El Dorado County General Plan contains several policies under Objective 2.4.1, Community Identity, that address design guidelines. Policy 2.4.1.2 directs the County to develop design guidelines unique to different communities, working with community members. Several community workshops were held and outreach made to various stakeholders in developing these guidelines. Policy 2.4.1.4 discourages strip commercial development in favor of clustered, contiguous facilities, utilizing connections between separate parcels, and similar landscape styles. These concepts have been incorporated into the proposed design guidelines. The adoption of guidelines is also called for under Implementation Measure LU-F.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Section 15061(b)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines provides that a project may be exempt from CEQA if the lead agency finds that there is no possibility that the action will have a significant effect on the environment. Further discussion in the CEQA Guidelines describes this as the “common sense” rule. This section is based on the idea that CEQA applies to activities which have the potential for causing environmental effects.

The adoption of these guidelines does not permit any development to occur without first going through discretionary entitlements, which would be subject to CEQA. They simply provide guidance with regard to enhancing the aesthetic aspects of a project, improving circulation in and between projects, and applying certain architectural styling to the area. Staff finds that this is an appropriate application of this exemption to CEQA.

RECOMMENDATION

Forward a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors to take the following action:

1. Find that the adoption of the proposed design guidelines is exempt from CEQA, pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines, and
2. Adopt the proposed Missouri Flat Design Guidelines, based on the Findings contained in Attachment 1.

SUPPORT INFORMATION

Attachments:

- Attachment 1Findings
- Attachment 2Applicable Assessors Parcel Numbers

- Exhibit ADraft Design Guidelines
- Exhibit BGeneral Plan Land Use Map
- Exhibit CZoning Map

ATTACHMENT 1 FINDINGS

Missouri Flat Design Guidelines

Based on the review and analysis of this project by staff and affected agencies, and supported by discussion in the staff report and evidence in the record, the following findings can be made:

1. The project has been found to be Exempt from CEQA pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) stating that it can be seen with certainty that the project will not have a significant effect on the environment because these guidelines do not provide for any development that is not otherwise permitted or must obtain discretionary approval prior to construction.
2. The proposed use is consistent with and implements the policies in the El Dorado County General Plan, specifically Policies 2.4.1.2 (development of community design guidelines), Policy 2.4.1.4 (discouraging strip commercial), and Implementation Measure LU-F (Community Design Review standards and guidelines).