



PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: OCTOBER 28, 2013

ITEM NUMBER: PH 1

SUBJECT: AMENDMENT TO CITY OF COSTA MESA RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

DATE: OCTOBER 17, 2013

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: MINOO ASHABI, AIA SENIOR PLANNER
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DESCRIPTION

Amend the Residential Design Guidelines to reflect the following revisions:

- Apply the average second floor side yard setback of 10 feet to new two-story residential structures over 2,500 square feet in area;
- Revise the second floor to first floor ratio from 80 percent to 100 percent.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommend to City Council that the Residential Design Guidelines be amended as shown in Attachment 3.

BACKGROUND

The Costa Mesa Residential Guidelines were initially adopted in 2001 in response to the goals and policies of the City's General Plan Community Design Element. The guidelines work in concert with the City's Zoning Code to promote quality and compatible design. The guidelines have been revised in 2003 and 2005 allowing more flexibility in the review process and second story additions for existing structures with less than 10 feet side yard setback.

The guidelines recommend an average side yard setback of ten feet for second floors and an 80 percent second floor to first floor ratio. These guidelines were intended to encourage off-sets in elevations and to discourage boxy structures. Currently, single structures that do not meet these recommendations are subject to approval of a minor design review by the Zoning Administrator. If the project involves more than one unit, the deviations from the design guidelines are considered as part of the design review and subject to approval by the Planning Commission.

Average Second Floor Setback

Since 2011, this deviation has been requested for single family homes as well as multiple unit projects for a total of eighteen projects (four additional projects pending). None have been denied by the Zoning Administrator or the Planning Commission. The developers and project applicants indicate that an off-set in the elevation design is costly and not feasible for smaller homes, where the footprint of the second floor is stacked on the first floor for better floor plans and adequate size bedrooms. In addition, most average lot widths do not allow for extensive side yard setbacks without compromising the floor plans. These deviations are granted when the applicant can submit an alternative design with off-setting side windows for privacy and provide additional architectural accents to reduce the boxy appearance of the homes. The Minor Design Review process typically takes about an average of six weeks and is subject to a public notice. Revising the guidelines will streamline and eliminate a six week entitlement process; the abutting neighbors will still be notified as with any two-story construction.

It should be noted that the current guidelines allow second story additions following the same footprint as the first floor on the side, if the existing structure has a five-foot minimum setback on the first floor. This revision will allow new and additions to be subject to the same guidelines.

Second Floor to First Floor Ratio

Since 2011, this deviation has been requested for single family homes as well as multiple unit projects for a total of seven projects. The average second floor to first floor ratio for most homes range from 70 to over 90 percent, and it has been challenging to get compliance with this recommendation. The 100 percent ratio will allow for larger second floors and upper level bedrooms. The footprint of the front or rear porch will not be included in the first floor; however, balconies are included in the second floor. This revision will not allow cantilevers on the second floor living spaces or balconies that typically contribute to top heavy structures. The provisions for elevation treatment would be remaining.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION

The revision has been reviewed for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the CEQA guidelines, and the City’s environmental procedures, and has been found to be exempt pursuant to Section 15061 (b) (3) (general rule) of the CEQA Guidelines, in that it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the proposed amendment to the Residential Design Guidelines will have a significant effect on the environment.

LEGAL REVIEW

The City Attorney’s office has approved the attached resolutions as to form.

CONCLUSION

Staff is recommending revising the Residential Design Guidelines to exempt residential units of less than 2,500 square feet from the recommended average side yard setback and to allow an increase in the second floor footprint of up to 100 percent of first floor. This would be a typical three to four-bedroom house with two stories stacked to maximize the use of the lot and provide a more livable second floor plan.

The recommended revisions to residential guidelines will be consistent with the goals and policies of the General Plan Community Design Element in that excellence is architectural design and prevailing character of the neighborhood will be recommended and applicable to review of two-story structures. The flexibility in average second floor setback and second floor to first floor ratio will be applicable to average size homes and will streamline the entitlement process for smaller projects.


MINOO ASHABI, AIA
Principal Planner


GARY ARMSTRONG, AICP
Economic and Development Services
Director

- Attachments:
- 1. Planning Commission Resolution
 - 2. Current Guidelines – red marked
 - 3. Draft Revised Guidelines – Clean Copy

- cc:
- Economic & Development Director
 - Deputy City Attorney
 - City Engineer
 - Transportation Svs. Mgr.
 - Fire Protection Analyst
 - Staff (4)
 - File (2)

RESOLUTION NO. PC-13-

A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF COSTA MESA RECOMMENDING THAT THE CITY COUNCIL APPROVE AN AMENDMENT TO THE CITY'S RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES.

THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF COSTA MESA HEREBY RESOLVES AS FOLLOWS:

WHEREAS, the City Council adopted Resolution No. 01-29 on May, 2001, adopting Residential Design Guidelines,

WHEREAS, the guidelines were subsequently revised in 2003 and 2005 and the latest version was adopted on March 1, 2005.

WHEREAS, the revised guidelines will exempt new two-story residential structures less than 2,500 square feet in area from the recommended 10-foot average side yard setback for the second floor.

WHEREAS, the revised guidelines will allow an increase in the second floor to first floor ratio from 80 percent to 100 percent for two-story additions and new structures.

WHEREAS, a duly noticed public hearing were held by the Planning Commission on October 28, 2013, with all persons provided an opportunity to speak for and against the proposed project;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Planning Commission hereby recommends that the City Council amend the Residential Design Guidelines as described in attached "Exhibit A."

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 28th day of October, 2013.

Jim Fitzpatrick, Chair
Costa Mesa Planning Commission



Residential Design Guidelines

***The City of Costa Mesa Planning Division
2nd Floor, 77 Fair Drive
Costa Mesa, CA 92628
(714) 754-5245***

www.costamesaca.gov

Adopted May 7, 2001
Amended June 18, 2001
Amended August 18, 2003
Amended March 1, 2005

Draft Amendment October 2013

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1. Purpose

These Residential Design Guidelines are intended to promote design excellence in new residential construction. The 2000 General Plan includes the following policies related to residential development:

CD-7A.1 Ensure that new and remodeled structures are designed in architectural styles which reflect the City's diversity, yet are compatible in scale and character with existing buildings and natural surroundings within residential neighborhoods. Develop and adopt design guidelines for residential development.

CD-7A.2 Preserve the character and scale of Costa Mesa's established residential neighborhoods; where residential development or redevelopment is proposed, require as a condition of approval that it is consistent with the prevailing character of existing development in the immediate vicinity, and that it does not have a substantial adverse impact on the adjacent areas.

In view of these policies, the City of Costa Mesa encourages architectural diversity that considers the existing neighborhood character and anticipated trends and development.

~~It is recognized that there will be instances when these guidelines may yield an unsatisfactory design or the applicant may propose a design that meets the intent of these design guidelines but not the specific criteria. In these instances, overriding consideration will be given to meeting the intent of the Residential Design Guidelines and promoting design excellence.~~

These Residential Design Guidelines are intended to implement the goals, objectives, and policies of the 2000 General Plan as they relate to residential development. To achieve this, all residential construction shall be subject to the following architectural design guidelines, as appropriate, with the exception of single-story construction in an R1 zone.

It should be noted that these design guidelines are to be used in conjunction with the City of Costa Mesa Zoning Code, which provides numerous development standards that are applicable to new residential construction and additions. Please consult the Planning Division for appropriate zoning information.

2. Approval Procedures

Unless stated otherwise, deviations from these guidelines shall require the approval of a Minor Design Review. A Minor Design Review is a discretionary review process that requires approval by the Zoning Administrator. The City provides public notice in the form of a mailing to all property owners within 500 feet of your property and a posting of a notice on the property.

For residential projects that meet the criteria listed below, the Planning Division is the final review authority. ~~For new two-story construction or additions, the~~



Planning Division shall mail a notice of zoning approval to all owners of properties that share a common property line with the proposed project on the day zoning approval is given. An exception to this notice provision is for residential projects located on Aviemore Terrace. For Aviemore Terrace, the Planning Division shall also mail notice to owners of properties across the street within 100 feet of the proposed project. The properties owners who receive notice shall have 7 days from the date of the notice to file an appeal of the Planning Division's decision to the Planning Commission, in accordance with Section 2-303 of the Costa Mesa Municipal Code. The Planning Division's decision will become final after 7 days if no appeal is filed. Please consult with the Planning Division for any questions regarding the review and approval process.

Planning Division Review of Residential Projects		
Zone	Number of Units	Criteria¹
R1	2 or less	Two-story residential construction or addition that complies with these Residential Design Guidelines.
R2-MD, R2-HD, and R3		

1. A residential project that does not meet all of these criteria will require minor design review or design review approval. Please consult with the Planning Division to determine the appropriate review process.

3. **Second-Story to First-Story Percentage Designs**

1. Two story structures shall be designed with articulation and off-sets on all elevations to avoid a boxy appearance from the street and neighboring views. Four sided architecture should be considered by applying the same materials, finishes, and architectural treatments to all sides and not limited to only the front elevation.
- ~~1.2. Second-story floor areas should not exceed 81000% of the first-story floor area (including garage area, if attached). Open balconies are included in the footprint area of the second floor.~~
2. ~~Single-story areas with vaulted ceilings that exceed 15 feet in height shall be counted as a two-story area for the second-story to first-story percentage calculation. In instances where the second-story floor area exceeds 50% of the first-story floor area, the Zoning Administrator, through a Minor Design Review, may grant an exception if the vaulted area provides articulation and transitioning between the first and second story.~~

4. **Other Building Mass and Form Considerations**

1. To enhance variety and interest, long, unbroken building facades should be avoided and offsets and building projections made an integral part of residential design. Providing individual and identifiable entries to units is also encouraged to add interest and variety to the streetscene.
2. Variety should be accomplished through variation in building heights and forms.
3. Variation in depth of floor plans to create interesting massing is encouraged. Structures having dwelling units attached side-by-side should avoid the long-row effect by consisting of no more than 6 dwelling units. The Planning Division may approve alternative designs, which accomplish the same purpose.
4. Consideration shall be given to the effect of proposed development on the light, air, and privacy of adjacent properties.
5. Second-story construction should use additional design techniques to provide visual relief to the side yard. This includes, but is not limited to: horizontal and/or vertical plane breaks; roof plane breaks; varied roof forms; openings such as breezeways; limiting the length of the second story; and, appropriate architectural details.

Please see the following photographs for examples of inappropriate and appropriate building mass and form.

Appropriate Massing and Form



Variation in rooflines and horizontal articulation of elevations creates greater architectural interest.



Variable rooflines, porches, and balconies provide relief along facades.



Combinations of hipped and gable ended roofs are appropriate.



Recesses in building plane provide visual relief.

5. Second-Story Side Setback

1. The second-story interior side building elevation should be set back an average of 10 feet, but shall be no closer than 5 feet from the side property line.

Exception: This requirement would not apply to the following:

- a. The distance between dwelling units within the same development in multiple-family residential zones; or
 - b. The initial development in planned development zones (subsequent additions would be subject to this requirement); or
 - c. Second-story construction that is consistent with the prevailing two-story design within the same residential tract; or.
 - d. Second-story additions to existing residences with current side yard setbacks that are less than 10 feet; provided that the current width of the side yard is not further decreased. A minimum 5-foot setback shall be required; or.
 - e. Two-story new construction less than 2,500 square feet of living area (not including garage).
2. ~~In addition to the above stated setback, second-story construction should use additional design techniques to provide visual relief to the side yard. This includes, but is not limited to: horizontal and/or vertical plane breaks, roof plane breaks, and varied roof forms, openings such as breezeways, limiting the length of the second story, and appropriate architectural details.~~

6. Elevation Treatments

1. Architectural projections are encouraged to provide visual focus and emphasize some aspect of design such as an entryway or major window.
2. Elevations with stepping forms both horizontally and vertically are encouraged to soften and provide transition to second-stories.
3. With emphasis on front and street-facing elevations, building elevations should incorporate enhanced detailing, which may include articulations, projections, and use of varied building materials.
4. Elevations should incorporate multiple building planes and offsets, and may include porches and patio covers and enhancement of exterior openings (doors/windows).

Please see following photographs for examples of architectural elements.

Architectural Elements



Architectural enhancement through variation in detailing is encouraged. Note the use of shutters, decorative porch supports, stone accents around the garage.

The use of dormer elements and Palladian windows add interest to the front and side elevations.

7. Roof Forms

1. Variation in roof forms, orientation and pitch are encouraged to provide visual interest.
2. ~~Within development projects, single type or color roofing is not encouraged.~~ Consideration of a variety of roof types and color tones provides relief from monotony and enhances the appearance of a neighborhood.
3. The maximum building height of 27 feet, as specified in the Zoning Code, will only be allowed for structures with sloped-roof designs. Structures proposed ~~to with have a flat roofs~~, for either the entire structure or a portion thereof, should be designed to be consistent with the bulk and scale of the structures in the surrounding neighborhood, and overall height of the portion of the structure where the flat roof is proposed should not exceed 22 feet.

8. Window Placement

1. Second-story windows should incorporate off-sets to minimize direct views into the windows of existing, neighboring structures.
2. The use of screen landscaping to minimize privacy impacts should also be considered.

Examples of Appropriate Materials and Architectural Details





9. Integration of Second-Story Construction

1. Second-story additions to existing residential structures should be designed to appear as though they were part of the original house construction, and should be well integrated into the design of the existing structure.
2. In both new construction and additions, the second-story floor-to-ceiling dimension should be similar to the first-story floor-to-ceiling dimension, so that the second story does not appear out of proportion or top heavy in relation to the first story.

10. Site Planning Considerations

1. The location and orientation of all buildings should be designed and arranged to preserve natural features by minimizing the disturbance to the natural environment. Natural features such as trees, groves, waterways, scenic points, historic spots or landmarks, bluffs or slopes should be delineated on the site plan and considered when planning the location and orientation of buildings, open spaces, underground services, walks, paved areas, playgrounds, parking areas and finished grade elevations.

11. Consistency in Architectural Design

1. New residential structures and additions should strive to be well crafted in their own style and detail. A consistent architectural design should be considered in choosing materials, finishes, decorative details, color and accent features (i.e., shutters, window treatment, wainscot, etc.).



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