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Summary of Park West Listening Workshop Comments

Date: September 14, 2018
Re: Park West Listening Workshop Summary
Location: Culver City Senior Center, Room C71, 4095 Overland Avenue, Culver City, California, 90230

On July 31, 2018, from 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM, a community meeting was held at the Culver City Senior Center to discuss single family development in the Park West neighborhood. John Kaliski Architects (JKA), with City Staff input, heard feedback from residents about their vision and concern for future development in their neighborhood.

Community members who attended included:

- Francisco Duenas
- Toni Glick
- Terry Kiel
- Rosa Maurtua
- Sue Newman
- Jane Thomas
- John Thomas
- Jennifer Trapwell
- Gerald Weiner

Staff and consultants that attended included:

- City of Culver City, Current Planning Division: Michael Allen, Susan Herbertson, Deborah Hong
- City of Culver City, Advanced Planning Division: Tracy Bromwich
- City of Culver City, Planning Commission: Edward Ogosta
- JKA: Carolyn Matsumoto, Wenchong Lai

A sixty-minute survey exercise was conducted with the group as a whole. The survey exercise consisted of twenty site photographs of Park West. The group voted with red and green cards to indicate their “like” or “dislike” of each photograph. A second ten-minute community comment exercise followed which gave participants the opportunity to share their interests/concerns and to describe what works and doesn’t work in their neighborhood.

Survey Exercise Findings

1. Massing should be modulated along both the front and side yard setbacks.

Residents felt that houses lacking modulation along both the front yard and side yards lack architectural character, lack sensitivity to adjacent properties by creating looming and monolithic walls, and “overfill” the average 50-foot wide lot. A resident noted that the five (5) foot second-story front yard setback is not sufficient to ensure modulated and well designed houses and that the City may consider standards similar to the Maximum Residential Floor Area Bonus utilized by the City of Los Angeles that regulates mass by limiting the maximum façade length or the allowable percentage of second story area above the first story. The flexibility of these standards better avoid the “wedding cake” effect of setbacks based on uniform dimensions. Houses that were considered attractive or well designed by residents were still voted negatively due to unmodulated massing being too large for the average 50-foot wide lot. “My main concern is proportion. Don’t build so much on a small lot.”

2. Second-story additions that are stylistically consistency with the main house and setback behind the first-story roof ridgeline are preferred.

Examples of second-story additions shown to residents included: additions that covered the full first floor footprint, additions that were a different architectural style than the main house, and additions built behind the roof ridgeline in a consistent architectural style. Residents differed in how much design consistency should be maintained between additions and the main house. Some residents disliked the inconsistency between traditional tract homes with modern additions. Other residents were open to additions built in a different style as long as there were some consistent elements with the main house, such as consistent windows or materials.

3. Residents prefer houses designed for individuals versus houses designed for market value.

Houses built to maximize the allowable floor area ratio (FAR), zoning envelope, and height are perceived as insensitive to neighboring properties and change the character of neighborhoods from one-story homes averaging a 0.28 FAR (1,400 square feet¹) to two-story homes utilizing the maximum 0.60 FAR (3,000 square feet¹). The design intent of these houses were perceived to maximize resell market value rather than design intended for an individual i.e. a community member of Culver City. Most residents agreed that speculative housing or houses that maximize the 0.60 FAR with no modulation depersonalize the character of the neighborhood.

4. Different architectural styles should not be prohibited but architectural styles should be well executed.

Overall, residents favored well-maintained houses with architecturally consistent styles, modulated massing, and landscaping that is consistent with the architectural style of the house. Houses that lacked a clear architectural style were strongly disliked. Residents didn't want to limit the types of architectural styles allowed. However, residents did want to ensure that buildings commit to an architectural style and conform to the highest quality expression of that style.

5. New front facing garages will change the pedestrian-oriented character of neighborhoods as more driveways and curb cuts dominate sidewalks.

The original tract development of Park West placed garages predominantly within the rear yard. New construction, including renovations, favor front facing two-car garages with 16-foot wide driveways that are allowed as an exception to the 25% maximum allowed paving within a front yard setback on the average 50-foot wide lot. Some residents favored maintaining the existing character of the neighborhood with pedestrian-oriented porches located at the entry door and with detached garages in the rear yard. Other residents noted the convenience of a front-facing garage. Encouraging tandem parking was discussed as a possible option. Some residents noted that with new larger houses, a two-car garage no longer fits in the rear yard and that providing open space in the backyard is a favorable convention. Several residents noted that cars regularly parked in driveways are common and convenient but detract from the pedestrian nature of the street.

¹ On a typical 5,000 square foot lot.