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Summary of Culver West Listening Workshop Comments

Date: September 27, 2018  
 Re: Culver West Listening Workshop Summary  
 Location: Alexander Park, Recreation Center, 4162 Wade Street, Culver City, California, 90066

On August 28, 2018, from 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM, a community meeting was held at the Alexander Park to discuss single family development in the Culver 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:

- Jean Ballantine
- Noel Bell
- Deborah Boynion
- Madrona Carey
- Kelly Finn
- Jerry Kaye
- U Maid
- KC Mancelo
- Judy Schwafil
- Ryan Zufryden

Staff and consultants that attended included:

- City of Culver City, Current Planning Division: Michael Allen, Susan Herbertson, William Kavadas, Deborah Hong
- City of Culver City, Advanced Planning Division: Ashley Hefner
- JKA: John Kaliski, Carolyn Matsumoto

A thirty-minute survey exercise was conducted with the group as a whole. The survey exercise consisted of twenty site photographs of Culver West. The group voted with red and green cards to indicate their “like” or “dislike” of each photograph. A second twenty-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. Residents prefer two-story houses that maintain the existing building footprint, modulate the front and side yard facades, and retains an existing architectural style found in the neighborhood.**

Although residents were not opposed to architectural styles different from the existing minimal traditional and ranchettes found in Culver West, residents consistently voted more positively for houses that follow existing styles. One resident commented, “Even though it’s a two-story, it stayed within the character of the neighborhood.” Residents gave credit to houses that did not maximize the floor area ratio (FAR) and zoning envelope, “It’s a traditional two-story and not trying to maximize the square footage of the lot. You can see they simply wanted a larger house.” A concern several residents shared was the loss of privacy when houses are built to maximize the zoning envelope, “There’s no privacy for the neighbors. It’s looming over their yard.” One resident who commented on adjacent two-story houses noted, “They have a good setbacks. I’ve been sort of used to it: two houses next to each other with setbacks and space in the front and trees.”

**2. Residents prefer second-story additions that are set behind the ridgeline, are consistent with the existing architectural style of the original tract, and do not maximize the zoning envelope.**

Residents were tolerant of second-story additions as long as they did not maximize the FAR or zoning envelope, at which point residents felt the additions would loom over and intrude on the privacy of neighboring yards. One resident commented, "That second-story is part of the house. At least it's in the back and at different levels. It's not as intrusive. It blends in. If the roofline was brought all the way to the setback, it would be a different story." Another resident commented on a different second-story addition, "I give them credit for trying to update the house. They matched the roofline. It's attractive. It towers over the house next door. On one hand, you tried. On the other hand, you didn't try hard enough."

## Community Comments Findings

**3. Residents value neighborhood consistency and neighborliness.**

Residents are concerned that the existing neighborhood character of Culver West will be lost to new development. One resident commented, "I have a 1924 Craftsman that I have redone extensively in the 17 years I've been here. And I'm adhering very closely to the requirements, four-foot setback, trying to maximize it and thinking about space in my 1,100 square foot home. Given that diligence, it's insulting what's happening with developers who are being paid by people who won't be residents of our community." Another resident noted, "It's becoming Pacific Palisades here." A resident noted the disparity between the allowable building area and the existing neighborhood character, "Is there no awareness of maintaining the character of the neighborhood? I'm not talking about people adding second stories in the back and doing it tastefully so it looks good. There needs to be concern for preexisting residents. Not that we deserve extra consideration but a neighborly concern for our lifestyle. Allowing a 30-foot house so some guy can sell it and move it: it's inconsiderate."

**4. Residents noted areas of concern related to air conditioning units, street facing downspouts, and street facing fire alarms on construction sites.**

A resident living in an original tract development commented, "Everything being built now has one or sometimes two huge HVAC units. My neighbor has a huge unit. No more quiet summer nights for us ever. We have to have our windows open so we can breathe. It has changed the whole character of summers." Per City of Culver City standards, air conditioners are allowed to project into the front and rear yard setbacks by 24-inches and must be screened from public view. Another resident noted the placement of street-facing fire alarms on new construction sites as well as placement of downspouts on the front elevation of new buildings. Current City of Culver City standards allow downspouts to project 12-inches into the front, side, and rear yard setbacks.

**5. Reduce the FAR.**

One resident commented, "The ratio of 0.60 seems like it's out of line with all of the surrounding areas. Only Beverly Hills was larger. It seems like Culver City is out of step. That, to me, would be the most logical thing to go after."