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Summary of Blanco Park / Sunkist Park Listening Workshop Comments

Date: September 25, 2018
 Re: Blanco Park / Sunkist Park Listening Workshop Summary
 Location: El Marino Park, Recreation Center, 5301 Berryman Avenue, Culver City, California, 90232

On August 14, 2018, from 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM, a community meeting was held at the El Marino Park to discuss single family development in the Blanco Park and Sunkist Park neighborhoods. John Kaliski Architects (JKA), with City staff input, heard feedback from residents about their vision and concern for future development in these neighborhoods.

Community members who attended included:

- Karen Amorelli
- Michael Amorelli
- Alice Balliciello
- Bernice Barton
- Susana Benton
- McNeill Bishop
- Arlene Goodwich
- Leann Hennig
- Ann Hook
- Peter Jacobs
- Kristin McCathey
- Stephen Paull
- Jennifer Ryba
- Howard Shabsis
- Marcy Shah
- Natalie Stanger
- Dave Twichell
- Patty Winder

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: Tracy Bromwich
- 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 both Blanco Park and Sunkist Park. 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. Second-story additions set behind the ridgeline and that match the architectural style, materials, and roof forms of the main building are preferred.

Residents preferred additions that did not fill the first-floor footprint and had matching roof pitches, materials, and windows. “I like when there are different shapes in the front than an addition that is just one big rectangular box. It’s nice and visually appealing.” One resident noted the context, “It’s not hovering over the next door house. It fits the space.” Another resident commented, “I’m not against second stories but do it thoughtfully. Give it character.”

2. Residents dislike unmodulated two-story homes built to maximize the zoning envelope.

Several two-story homes were shown to residents that ranged in architectural styles (minimal traditional, spanish, farmhouse, modern) and construction type (new construction, second-story additions). Residents consistently disliked houses that lacked modulation at all façade elevations, including the lack of second-story setbacks along the front and side yards. Residents did vote against architectural styles they felt were out of place for Culver City, but residents did not want to regulate the types of styles allowed in Culver City.

3. Young families have lifestyles needs that are different than the original tract development was designed to provide.

One resident with a young family commented, “I have kids and I’m a different generation and I need more than the 1,000 square feet they needed in the 1950s.” The original tract developments of Culver City followed the nationwide development pattern of modestly-sized minimal traditional and ranch houses built between the 1930s-1950s. The original tract homes in Blanco Park and Sunkist Park averaged roughly 1,650 square feet. The current average house size in America is 2,687 square feet¹, an increase of over 1,000 square feet than the tract homes of Blanco Park and Sunkist Park.

4. Several residents took into consideration the landscaping surrounding a house when voting.

Houses, including typical tract homes, were voted for negatively if they lacked a combination of ground cover, shrubbery, and trees that were well trimmed and maintained. Conversely, houses that lacked architectural character or modulation were voted for positively if the landscaping had character, “A year ago it had no landscaping and it was the ugliest house in the whole wide world. It looks tons better than what it used to.”

Community Comments Findings

5. Residents want to find a balance between community interests and individual rights.

Residents had several ideas for how community interests and individual rights could be balanced. One resident emphasized privacy and constancy for their individual lot, “I don’t care what other people want to do. I don’t want them staring into my bedroom window. As long as they leave me alone and the way I want to live in my 1950s house: me and my cat. As long as we can live and not to someone else’s whims and pocketbook, I’m fine.” Another resident emphasized constancy for the neighborhood, “I agree that not too much interference with people being individual. But there should be some consideration for the neighbor and not just the self. We’re in a society now where we’re not interested in the neighbor. In the context of this, if the neighborhood is saying, “We don’t want McMansions” then don’t buy into it. If you want to spend all the money you have, by all means, move to Beverly Hills. Pick the right neighborhood. Don’t just move here and change it.” Residents who have lived in Culver City for several decades remember a form of neighborliness that worked, “I moved in 56 years ago. We had to get permission from our neighbors so we didn’t encroach into their yards. I don’t know why we don’t do that anymore.” Another resident emphasized the street appearance of homes, “The thing that we should maintain is the openness and friendliness that creates the neighborhoods. I see so many houses putting up fences and shrubbery that blocks the house. Gives too much opportunity to let the house run down.”

6. No change.

A couple of residents voiced their approval of the existing development standards and would like to see no change made to them. One resident noted the need for larger homes, “Make sure people are allowed to do what they want to do. This is not a cheap neighborhood. We decided not to leave Culver City and the only choice was to build up.” Another resident chose to move to Culver City because of the lack of an HOA

¹ 2015 United States Census Bureau.

(homeowners' association), "I think that house looks ugly but I like it because that's why I moved to Culver City. I didn't move here because there are CC&Rs [covenants, conditions, and restrictions], so the City can tell me what I can or can't do. I would like things to stay exactly as they are."