



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

AGENDA DATE: December 19, 2006
TO: Mayor and Councilmembers
FROM: Planning Division, Community Development Department
SUBJECT: Lower Riviera Special Design District Guidelines

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council adopt, by reading of title only, A Resolution of the City of Santa Barbara Adopting the Lower Riviera Special Design District Guidelines Establishing Protection Mechanisms to Assist in the Preservation of Historic Resources and Neighborhood Character.

DISCUSSION:

Background

On October 19, 2004, Council adopted the Demolition Review Ordinance as part of the City's Historic Resources Preservation Work Program and established the Lower Riviera Special Design District (see District Map, Attachment 1). The creation of the Lower Riviera Special Design District is primarily intended to protect the potential Bungalow Haven Historic District that lies at its core, and to guide development in the surrounding neighborhood to be compatible.

The Demolition Review Ordinance created a new review process and expanded Architectural Board of Review (ABR), Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) and Staff's ability to review applications for demolition or alteration of buildings greater than 50 years of age within specific survey areas of the City. The City's desire to protect its historic resources and establish future Special Design and/or Historic Districts was also incorporated into Administrative Regulations to further protect the character of older established neighborhoods while historic resource surveys are being completed. At that time, Council directed Staff to return in six months with Design Guidelines for the newly established Lower Riviera Special Design District. For various reasons, the creation of these guidelines took longer than originally anticipated.

Over the past two years, Staff has worked with Bungalow Haven Neighborhood Association members, who created the initial Draft Guidelines. The Guidelines have

REVIEWED BY: _____ Finance

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evolved in this collaborative dialogue with the intent to achieve a mutual understanding on the framework, scope, and language of guidelines to protect the neighborhood.

Lower Riviera Special Design District Guidelines

The purpose of the Design Guidelines is to assist property owners, developers, architects, and contractors in designing projects that will be compatible with the Special Design District. The neighborhood consists of mainly one-story bungalow houses designed in craftsman and period revival styles. Also, throughout the area some properties have been altered or developed with different architectural styles that may not be viewed as contributing to the historic character of the Bungalow Haven neighborhood. For non-contributing properties, the proposed design guidelines would allow maintenance and minor alterations without changing architectural styles (unless altered significantly).

The Design Guidelines are organized to assist the Design Review Boards by listing basic preservation goals, identification of the District's primary neighborhood characteristics, and providing guidance on the alteration, repair, and rehabilitation of older historic houses. The potential Bungalow Haven Historic District would thereby be afforded additional interim protection with the adoption of these Guidelines until more specific guidelines or options are considered such as designation of a Historic District or Conservation Area.

ABR, Planning Commission and HLC Review

The ABR, HLC, and the Planning Commission have reviewed, commented on and provided input in the drafting of the Design Guidelines. The ABR and HLC held discussions, received public comment, and have recommended that the Guidelines be adopted (see Attachments 2 and 3). The ABR will be primarily charged with reviewing projects proposed within the Lower Riviera Special Design District unless the structures are deemed to have potential historic significance. The Planning Commission would be responsible to ensure that the Guidelines are followed for larger development proposals they review. The HLC would gain purview of historic properties within the Special Design District with the completion of Historic Structures Reports and either, placing properties on the City's Potential Historic Structures List, or through the Structure of Merit or Landmark designation process.

Future Historic Districting Plan, Designations & Historic Resource Design Guidelines

The first phase of the Lower Riviera Survey is nearly complete. More than 300 properties were surveyed and evaluated. The survey results show a potential bungalow Historic District with approximately 80% contributing properties. Ordinance amendments are required to establish Historic Districts, and Staff would return to Council to consider additional architectural guidelines to guide the review of alterations to contributing structures within the proposed Historic Districts.

Given that other possibly historic districts may also be identified as part of survey work, a Citywide Historic Districting Plan is being drafted by Staff to implement previous Historic District recommendations (West Beach), clarify the ways in which Landmark Districts (El Pueblo Viejo and Brinkerhoff) differ from Historic Districts, and to improve the manner in which Historic Properties and Districts are nominated.

In order to implement this approach, Staff will work with the HLC Designations Subcommittee on: the evaluation of historic resource survey results, potential designations, and options for Historic Districts eligible for nomination. Staff expects that proposals for Historic Districts could generate strong objections from some property owners who believe the City would impose too many restrictions on their properties. However, many residents are concerned that incompatible new developments are being proposed within these potential Historic District areas, and regulations are needed to shape the types of development within the City's historic neighborhoods. Staff believes that property owners submitting applications should be made aware of the environmental review/historic related impacts early in the discretionary land development review process. Furthermore, Staff is concerned that without some regulations and guidelines, it is likely that the character and integrity of these potential Historic Districts will continue to be compromised.

Conclusion:

Staff believes the adoption of the Lower Riviera Special Design District Guidelines is a necessary step to assist property owners, developers, architects, and contractors to design projects that will be compatible with the historic character of the Special Design District. As noted above, Staff continues to work towards a comprehensive plan to provide clear design guidelines to identify and protect historic resources throughout the City.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that Council adopt the Lower Riviera Special Design District Guidelines establishing protection mechanisms to assist in the preservation of historic resources and neighborhood character.

- ATTACHMENTS:**
1. Lower Riviera Special Design District Map
 2. ABR Minutes dated April 17, 2006, May 22, 2006 and October 30, 2006
 3. HLC Minutes dated May 3, 2006

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SUBMITTED BY: Paul Casey, Community Development Director PC

APPROVED BY: City Administrator's Office ML