



DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING
RECOMMENDATION REPORT

City Planning Commission

Date: December 20, 2018
Time: After 8:30 A.M.
14410 Sylvan Street, 2nd Floor
Van Nuys, CA 91401

Place: Van Nuys, Council Chamber,
Plan Area: Citywide

PROJECT: Citywide Design Guidelines

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

No Action Required: Status Update and Presentation

VINCENT P. BERTONI, AICP
Director of Planning

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Bernstein".

Ken Bernstein, AICP
Principal City Planner

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Claire Bowin".

Claire Bowin
Senior City Planner

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Danai Zaire".

Danai Zaire, 213.847.3709
Associate City Planner

Background

On July 12, 2018, the Department's Urban Design Studio presented to the City Planning Commission an overview of its intentions to update the existing Citywide Design Guidelines in order to streamline the development review process and elevate the design quality of our public realm. The Commission concurred with this initiation at the July 12th meeting.

At this juncture, the Department is pleased to report on the status of the update with the intent of returning to the City Planning Commission in April 2019 with the proposed updated Guidelines.

To support the Department in its efforts the Commission, at its meeting on November 8, 2018, established an ad hoc sub-committee on Citywide Design Guidelines. The addition of this sub-committee is particularly welcome as it allows Commissioners to bring into the development of the Guidelines the practical experience developed from making design-related decisions on multiple projects every month. The Department is pleased to note that the committee has met twice, in November and early December, and will be meeting again in early 2019.

In line with the Department's and the Mayor's goals to streamline the development review process and elevate the design quality of our City's public realm, the Urban Design Studio is seeking to update the Citywide Design Guidelines so design quality will become a core value of the City's built environment. The updated Citywide Design Guidelines will draw on and go beyond the principles of local policies, community plans and the re:codeLA, by addressing the ways that architectural, landscape and urban design can meet people's varying needs. Through the conscientious integration of design strategies into projects of all scales, design professionals can realize buildings and neighborhoods that seamlessly integrate more healthy and pedestrian-friendly living with attention to design excellence and climate adaptation.

The Guidelines will present strategies for designing neighborhoods, buildings, outdoor spaces and public realm that meet the goals and objectives of the City's General Plan and work as an extension of adopted City policies, in order to further articulate the goals and objectives upon which those policies were founded. The Guidelines will also complement other Departments' documents, such as the California Building Code, the California Green Building Standards Code, the HCIDLA Architectural Requirements and the Planning and Land Development Handbook for Low Impact Development (LID) by including up-to-date design solutions that the current Guidelines did not consider when they were originally drafted in 2011.

Over the past months, the Studio has been reviewing and analyzing the existing Guidelines with project and policy planners within the Department to better understand which are beneficial and necessary, or obsolete and no longer needed. Staff is also carefully reviewing the proposed new zoning code provisions developed through re:code LA, in order to identify potential topics and guidelines that would likely no longer be applicable once the new code goes into effect.

These discussions have also explored potential new guidelines that address the variety of new topics areas that the Department and Commission are interested in considering in the update. The new potential topics include concerns about freeway adjacency, healthy building design strategies and lessening the effects of climate change. In addition the Department has been in discussion with staff from the Department of Building and Safety, the Bureau of Engineering's Architectural Division, the City's Chief Design Officer and the Mayor's Sustainability and Resiliency teams to better understand what topics should be addressed in the update as a means of contributing to the City's goals of design and sustainability.

Organization of the Guidelines

As a result of these preliminary conversations the Studio is currently proposing to consolidate the updated Guidelines into a single document that is organized around three spatially distinct categories: public right-of-way, site planning and building design. Each one of the three categories will include a variety of topics and a set of guidelines that the proposed development will be encouraged to use to achieve a particular design objective. This organizing structure recognizes the varying roles that each of these spatial categories play and will allow the Guidelines to be tailored accordingly. Some examples of topics to be covered under these spatial categories include:

- Public Right-of-Way: tree placement, sidewalk safety, pedestrian activity, parkway design, minimizing barriers, street furniture and lighting;
- Site Planning: protecting and enhancing the natural resources, providing adequate access and outdoor amenity space design; and for the building design;
- Building Placement: building massing and articulation, building frontages, safety, parking design and internal circulation.

Each guideline will be measured against its contribution towards achieving one or more of the three design approaches; Pedestrian First Design, 360 Degree Design, Climate Adapted Design. The three design approaches are the means by which the Studio organizes its review of development projects. Pedestrian First Design focuses on design strategies that create human-scale spaces that reflect how people actually engage with their surroundings, by prioritizing active street frontages, clear paths of pedestrian travel, legible wayfinding, and enhanced connectivity. 360° Design focuses on design techniques that consider equally all sides of a building's materials, massing, articulation and scale. Finally, Climate-Adapted Design focuses on solutions that respond to Los Angeles' exceptional Mediterranean climate as well as rapidly changing climatic conditions, by reducing the need for imported water, nourishing the local habitat and watershed, and limiting greenhouse gas emissions.

The Department is pleased to include here (see attached exhibit) a draft prototypical page layout for the proposed update. Each of the three spatial areas will be represented by its own chapter and further subdivided by major topic areas pertinent to that chapter. Each page will then contain one to two guidelines that will include illustrative examples to demonstrate the type of improvement that the guideline will enable and encourage. In addition, each guideline will be accompanied by a small table indicating which of the three design approaches the guideline helps achieve. In some instances a guideline may lead to benefits across all three design approaches while other guidelines may focus on bolstering a single design approach.

Next Steps

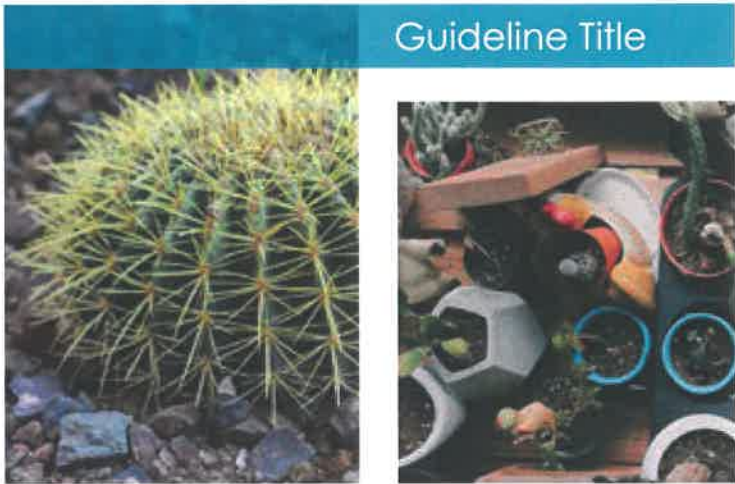
In addition to input from City staff and the Commission's sub-committee, a key component of the process will include engaging with multiple stakeholders, the design community, developers and community organizations. The first two months of 2019 will be dedicated to conversations with a wide array of stakeholders with the intent on releasing a draft to the public by the first week of March.

The Department looks forward to continuing to work with the Commission sub-committee, City staff and the broader public over the next few months to fully develop and refine the Guidelines in advance of returning with a complete draft for the Commission's consideration in April.



Topic

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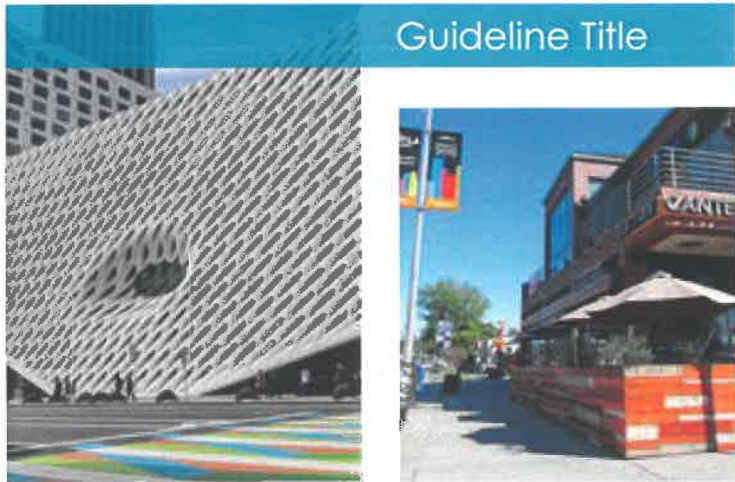


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