

## Valley Center Design Review Board

**Approved Minutes: Nov. 8th, 2011**

**DRB Members present:** Montgomery, Moore, Herr, Splane.

**Visitors:** Joe Farace and Dixie Switzer, DPLU Staff; Dan Wery, Steve Wragg and Jeff Barfield, RBF Consulting:

4:00 PM Lael Montgomery opened the meeting.  
There were no speakers for Public Forum.

Splane moved to approve the minutes from the last meeting, October 11, 2011, Herr seconded.  
The minutes were unanimously approved.

There are no projects to review.

### **1. Presentation/Discussion of DPLU's New B Designator "Check List"**

DPLU Staff: Joe Farace, and Dixie Switzer

RBF Consulting: Dan Wery, Steve Wragg, Jeff Barfield

As project manager, Dixie Switzer began the presentation by explaining San Diego County's desire to streamline the site plan approval process for B-Designator projects. For commercial, industrial, multi-family and other projects that are subject to Design Review and are relatively simple the County intends to replace the full discretionary process with a pass-fail rating derived from reviewing the project against a "Design Guidelines Checklist". Projects that are not complicated by numerous design variables and/or additional discretionary permits AND are also in full compliance with the Design Guidelines will by-pass the standard site plan approval process. Projects that are complicated with a number of variables OR fail to comply with the Design Guidelines will be subject to the full site plan approval process.

Dixie says that today's meeting is to discuss with Design Review Board members the structure and content of the Design Review "Checklist" for Valley Center. Although all Design Review Boards throughout the County will all be adopting this method, each checklist will reflect Guidelines that are particular to each community. The "Checklist" will be used by the local Design Review Board as a way to check salient design points against each project and to share easily the results and the Board's recommendation with County staff. Dixie then handed over the presentation to RBF Consulting to share a preliminary checklist designed to reflect Valley Center's guidelines.

Dan Wery and his team stated that, out of the nine communities, Valley Center had been chosen for the pilot program and that they were meeting with us to discuss the first draft of the Design Review Checklist for Valley Center. It was proposed that we review the Power Point presentation and then make our comments, but after only a few slides were presented, the presentation devolved into a more free-form series of questions and comments.

Herr suggested the checklist be referred to as a guide-line or reference. Splane commented that it would be dangerous to have the document used as a binary, yes or no, test for approval or dis-approval of a project. He went on to state it was possible for an applicant to have checked off all of the required boxes and yet still have a design which inappropriate for our community. It was suggested that the check lists be prefaced by simple statements which made clear the bigger picture and intent of the guideline requirements which followed.

Lael distributed her written general comments.

## Comments on Design Guidelines “Checklist”

1. The Checklist document must be self-contained.

We must assume that the ‘Checklist’ will be separated from the Design Guidelines, and will be used independently by applicants who know nothing about design and are also unaware of the existence of the Design Guidelines as a guide to preparing their plot plans and elevations. The ‘checklist’ document itself should be titled so that its companion status to the full Design Guidelines is clear.

2. The ‘Checklist’ itself needs to provide, at least, a Vision or an overall intent in every category. This problem runs throughout the Checklist document. For example, in the Site Layout section: the Design Guidelines refer to general principles of site design which allow a reviewer who is educated in design to fill-in critical design details that the Guidelines may not exactly address. The checklist captures from the Guidelines only a few elements of the many that are necessary to create the whole desirable design outcome. The section on Architectural Design Standards is another example.
3. The architecture section MUST include the basic big ideas and principles, such as:
  - a. At the very least a list and perhaps illustrations of the particular architectural genres that are acceptable in Valley Center.
  - b. Authenticity of whichever genre you select-you must NOT mix different styles of architecture in the same building.
  - c. And so forth.
4. Related to #2, there are mis-interpretations throughout the Checklist document that arise as a result, in some cases, from literal interpretations of the Guidelines that are inadequate because circumstances have changed, and in other cases are inadequate because there is no description of the whole Vision that these design elements are meant to create.

The group discussed the need in the “Checklist” for an overall Vision for Valley Center’s B-Designated areas and the first essential requirement that all projects be in accord with this larger Vision. The “Checklist” must also relate particular design standards and guidelines to the array of architectural genres that are presented and detailed in Valley Center’s Design Guidelines. The overall design objective is critical to understanding how elements of the design should appear and fit together. We agreed that the Checklist should include illustrations of architectural genres that are acceptable in Valley Center, and the design features and elements that characterize each genre. Valley Center accepts a diverse number of architectural styles that have been used through history in California farm communities. Architectural styles should be authentic. Hybrid architectures or a mix of styles in the same project are not acceptable.

Dixie presented the results of her ‘Google’ search of architectural genres that are highlighted in VC’s Guidelines. Her search results provide a concrete example of how to present architectural genres and the design elements that create them. The RBF consultants, Dixie and Joe all supported what is essentially a revised approach to the whole project, not only for Valley Center but perhaps for other communities as well.

Steps for moving forward are:

1. RBF will revise the VC Checklist based on this discussion. The VC Center Design Review Checklist will be reorganized. The new edition will begin with the Big Picture, or the Vision for the community so that applicants understand the greater context of design decisions. Individual projects must fit into this larger Vision by following one of the array of architectural genres that are acceptable in Valley Center. Each architectural genre is characterized by particular key design elements. These key design characteristics are listed under each genre creating the “check-list” for that genre (per the example that Dixie shared in the meeting).
2. Lael will send the current draft of the VISION that has been prepared for the new VC Community Plan. The community has been working on the VC Community Plan for the last 10 years and expect the new edition will be finished when we have DPLU Staff support to finish it. Even though the new VC Community Plan is still a work-in-progress, chapters on Vision and Land Use (sent previously) from the draft will help RBF folks understand the Vision that the community has for itself.
3. Jeff Herr will address the signage section.
4. Susan Moore will review the plant palette on the County’s web site and offer any suggestions.
5. Rob Splane will send a description of the ‘big picture’.
6. Lael sent to Dixie before this meeting a portfolio of photographs of existing Valley Center buildings, and of buildings planned for the new North Village, that illustrate the “California Farm Village” Vision for Valley Center.
7. Dixie will ask Howard Blackson if he knows of a source of illustrations of architectures that are listed in Valley Center’s Design Guidelines.
8. These comments and any other suggestions or illustrations should be sent to Dixie/RBF by the end of the year.