Purpose

To establish policy and procedures to ensure adequate community support and citizen involvement in the preparation of community design guidelines.

Background

Various community groups have expressed concern for retention, or enhancement, of a specific community identity and character. The County has responded with a Community Design Review Process as expressed in Section 396.10 of the County Administrative Code and Section 5750 et seq. of the County Zoning Ordinance, and which is available to any community within which there is a desire and support for design review of development projects within specified portions of the community.

An essential element of the design review process is a set of design guidelines specific to, and widely supported by, the community. Preparation of design guidelines is a critical first step in establishing the design review process. This policy establishes procedures to be followed in the preparation of community design guidelines in order to ensure that the guidelines are supported by the community at large.

Policy

It is the policy of the Board of Supervisors that the preparation of community design guidelines shall conform to the following procedures:

Procedures

1. Authorization

    a. Maximum public participation is normally evident during initial preparation or major update of community and subregional plans; therefore, the inclusion of policy in a community or subregional plan which calls for community design review will be considered as evidence of local support for such a program, and the County will provide assistance in preparation of design guidelines as part of the plan implementation program. The community or subregional plan should consider:

        i. The geographic area to be covered by a design review process, and

        ii. The objectives to be achieved by a design review process.

b. The Board of Supervisors may authorize assistance in preparation of design guidelines not directly related to implementation of the community or subregional plan, when a request is made by a recognized community group such as the community planning or sponsor group or chamber of commerce. Such request shall be supported by evidence of significant public interest in community design review, particularly that of property owners who would be affected.

2. Responsible Group

a. The community planning or sponsor group shall be responsible for overseeing the preparation of the community design guidelines in conformance with this policy.

b. The community planning or sponsor group shall appoint a subcommittee to participate in preparation of an initial set of guideline proposals for review by the community planning or sponsor group and the general community. The subcommittee shall include interested citizens representing the geographic areas to be affected by the guidelines and who may not necessarily be members of the community planning or sponsor group.

3. Community Involvement

a. The community planning or sponsor group shall ensure that adequate notice is given to the general community that a community design review process is being considered and that all interested citizens are invited to participate in all meetings where the design guidelines are developed and discussed.

b. At any meeting of the community planning or sponsor group where this item may be discussed, the legal ad noticing the meeting shall clearly identify the community design guidelines as an agenda item.

c. Prior to preparation of initial design guideline proposals, a widely noticed community workshop shall be held at a convenient time and place. Broad community participation shall be encouraged. The workshop shall be used as a forum to generate discussion and opinion on:

i. Goals and objectives of the design review program.

ii. Factors which contribute to the community's specific identity and character.

iii. The community's design assets and liabilities.

iv. Proposals for project application boundaries.

d. After the initial set of guideline proposals, including the proposed areas of application have been prepared, the following shall occur:

i. A community workshop shall be scheduled at a convenient time and place. Adequate time shall be allowed for the general community to familiarize themselves with the proposals before the date of the workshop.

ii. Notices inviting participation in the workshop shall be widely distributed within the community. The notices shall state the date, time and place of the workshop and where copies of the proposed guidelines can be obtained or are available to review.

iii. Copies of the proposed guidelines shall be widely available in the community.

iv. Special effort shall be made to notify owners of property within the areas being considered for design review.

e. At the workshop, there shall be full discussion of the proposals, including design objectives, concepts, scope, detail and areas of application. Areas of consensus and areas of conflict shall be duly noted in the minutes of the meeting/workshop.

f. A draft community design guidelines manual shall be prepared which is responsive to the ideas, concerns, and recommendations of the workshop. As appropriate, additional workshops or other means of community input shall be used to help develop a design guidelines manual which is supported by both the community at large and the affected property owners.

g. After the draft community design guidelines manual has been prepared, the following shall occur:

i. The community planning or sponsor group shall schedule a special meeting to present the draft community design guidelines manual, hear comments from the community, and vote on recommendations to be forwarded to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors for approval.

ii. The same community involvement procedure used for the workshop (3.d) shall be followed for the special meeting.

4. Public Hearing

   a. When the community planning or sponsor group and County staff are satisfied that there is wide public and property owner support for a set of proposed design guidelines, Planning & Development Services shall cause public hearings to be scheduled before the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. At the public hearings, zone reclassifications to apply the Community Design Review special area designator to properties within the proposed design review area shall be considered, as well as the design guidelines.

   b. The public hearings shall be noticed in the manner prescribed by Section 7605a of the Zoning Ordinance for amendment of the Zoning Ordinance.

Sunset Date

This policy will be reviewed for continuance by 12-31-26.

Board Action

5-7-86 (32)
7-26-88 (43)
12-12-89 (49)
6-5-90 (43)
9-25-90 (41)
4-14-99 (11)
06-23-04 (12)
12-09-08 (33)
10-31-12 (4)
11-20-19 (10)

CAO Reference

1. Department of Planning & Development Services