



CITY OF SIGNAL HILL

2175 Cherry Avenue • Signal Hill, CA 90755-3799

THE CITY OF SIGNAL HILL
WELCOMES YOU TO A REGULAR
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
June 9, 2015

The City of Signal Hill appreciates your attendance. Citizen interest provides the Planning Commission with valuable information regarding issues of the community. Meetings are held on the 2nd Tuesday of every month.

Meetings commence at 7:00 p.m. There is a public comment period at the beginning of the regular meeting, as well as the opportunity to comment on each agenda item as it arises. Any meeting may be adjourned to a time and place stated in the order of adjournment.

The agenda is posted 72 hours prior to each meeting on the City's website and outside of City Hall and is available at each meeting. The agenda and related reports are available for review online and at the Community Development office and Library on the Friday afternoon prior to the Commission meeting. Agenda and staff reports are also available at our website at www.cityofsignalhill.org.

During the meeting, the Community Development Director presents agenda items for Commission consideration. The public is allowed to address the Commission on all agenda items. The Chair will announce when the period for public comment is open on each agenda item. The public may speak to the Commission on items that are not listed on the agenda. This public comment period will be held at the beginning of the public portion of the meeting. You are encouraged (but not required) to complete a speaker card prior to the item being considered, and give the card to a City staff member. The purpose of the card is to ensure speakers are correctly identified in the minutes. However, completion of a speaker card is voluntary, and is not a requirement to address the Commission. The cards are provided at the rear of the Council Chamber. Please direct your comments or questions to the Chair. Each speaker is allowed three minutes to make their comments.

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

CHAIR BENSON
VICE-CHAIR FALLON
COMMISSIONER AUSTIN
COMMISSIONER MURPHY
COMMISSIONER RICHÁRD

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Chair will lead the audience in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR ON ITEMS NOT LISTED ON THIS AGENDA

OATHS OF OFFICE FOR REAPPOINTED COMMISSIONERS

Commission Secretary Scott Charney will administer the Oath of Office for reappointed Commissioners Jane Fallon and Rose Richárd.

REORGANIZATION

Annually at this time, the Commission selects members to serve one-year terms as Chair and Vice-Chair. The current Chair is Tom Benson, and the Vice-Chair is Jane Fallon. Community Development Director Scott Charney will call for nominations for Chair, and once seated the Chair will call for nominations for Vice-Chair to serve the 2015/16 term of office.

PUBLIC WORKSHOP

1. Revised Plans for a New Single-Family Dwelling at 1995 St. Louis Avenue

Summary: The applicant, Seth Sor for Kimberly Ly, is requesting a second workshop review of preliminary plans for a single-family dwelling at 1995 St. Louis Avenue in the Southeast neighborhood. The dwelling has been reduced in size by 115 square feet, the library and game room have been eliminated and the size of the balcony has been reduced and is uncovered. The proposal now includes:

- Demolition of the existing 800 square foot one-story single-family dwelling and detached garage; and
- Construction of a new 3,072 square foot two-story single-family dwelling with an attached 3-car garage.

Recommendations: 1. Open the public workshop and receive testimony. 2. Direct the applicant to make revisions as deemed appropriate.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR REPORT

2. Study Session for Water Conservation & Options for Turf Replacement

Summary: This is the first in a series of study sessions to consider options for turf replacement in yards and setbacks. For many years, the public has expressed a preference for turf in landscaped setbacks and front yards. Turf consumes large amounts of water and in recognition of current drought conditions and the fact that such conditions are cyclical, water conservation is a priority for the City. There are a variety of options for turf replacement ranging from partial to complete replacement, using hardscape or alternative landscaping, or a combination of these materials. Staff will provide an overview of the current code requirements for landscape and hardscape in yards and setbacks areas and will introduce some examples and best practices for alternative treatments.

Recommendation: Receive and file.

CONSENT CALENDAR

The following Consent Calendar items are expected to be routine and non-controversial. Items will be acted upon by the Commission at one time without discussion. Any item may be removed by a Commissioner or member of the audience for discussion.

3. Minutes of the Following Meeting

Regular Meeting of May 12, 2015

Recommendation: Approve.

4. 2016 Planning Commissioners Academy Program Call for Proposals

Summary: The League of California Cities is encouraging submissions from individuals or groups for speakers and session topics for the 2016 conference.

Recommendation: Receive and file.

5. City Council Follow-up

Summary: Attached for review is a brief summary on the City Council's action from the May 19, 2015 and June 2, 2015 meetings.

Recommendation: Receive and file.

6. Development Status Report

Summary: Attached for review is the monthly Development Status Report which highlights current projects.

Recommendation: Receive and file.

7. In the News

Summary: Articles compiled by staff that may be of interest to the Commission.

Recommendation: Receive and file.

COMMISSION NEW BUSINESS

COMMISSIONER RICHÁRD
COMMISSIONER MURPHY
COMMISSIONER AUSTIN
VICE-CHAIR FALLON
CHAIR BENSON

ADJOURNMENT

Adjourn tonight's meeting to the next regular meeting to be held Tuesday, July 14, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers located at City Hall.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

If you need special assistance beyond what is normally provided to participate in City meetings, the City will attempt to accommodate you in every reasonable manner. Please call the City Clerk's office at (562) 989-7305 at least 48 hours prior to the meeting to inform us of your particular needs and to determine if accommodation is feasible.



CITY OF SIGNAL HILL

2175 Cherry Avenue ♦ Signal Hill, CA 90755-3799

June 9, 2015

AGENDA ITEM

**TO: HONORABLE CHAIR
AND MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION**

**FROM: SCOTT CHARNEY
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR**

SUBJECT: OATHS OF OFFICE FOR REAPPOINTED COMMISSIONERS

Summary:

At its meeting on June 2, 2015, the City Council reappointed Jane Fallon and Rose Richárd to serve on the Planning Commission (terms to expire on 5/31/2019). Accordingly, the two Commissioners will take the Oath of Office and assume their duties.

Recommendation:

Administration of the Oaths of Office will be conducted by the Secretary of the Planning Commission.

OATH OR AFFIRMATION OF ALLEGIANCE FOR PUBLIC OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES

*State of California}
County of Los Angeles} ss.
City of Signal Hill}*

*The Execution of this Oath is required by Article XX, Section 3, of the
Constitution of the State of California.*

I, Jane Fallon, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support, defend, and bear true faith and allegiance to the laws of Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of California, the Charter, ordinances, and other laws of the City of Signal Hill; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties upon which I am about to enter.

*Subscribed and sworn to before me this 9th day of
June, 2015.*

Signature of Person Taking Oath

Community Development Director
Title of Officer Administering Oath

Signature of Person Administering Oath

OATH OR AFFIRMATION OF ALLEGIANCE FOR PUBLIC OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES

*State of California}
County of Los Angeles} ss.
City of Signal Hill}*

*The Execution of this Oath is required by Article XX, Section 3, of the
Constitution of the State of California.*

I, Rose Richard, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support, defend, and bear true faith and allegiance to the laws of Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of California, the Charter, ordinances, and other laws of the City of Signal Hill; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties upon which I am about to enter.

*Subscribed and sworn to before me this 9th day of
June, 2015.*

Signature of Person Taking Oath

Community Development Director _____
Title of Officer Administering Oath

Signature of Person Administering Oath



CITY OF SIGNAL HILL

2175 Cherry Avenue ♦ Signal Hill, CA 90755-3799

June 9, 2015

AGENDA ITEM

**TO: HONORABLE CHAIR
AND MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION**

**FROM: SCOTT CHARNEY
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

SUBJECT: REORGANIZATION

Summary:

Annually at this time, the Commission selects members to serve one-year terms as Chair and Vice-Chair. The current Chair is Tom Benson, and the Vice-Chair is Jane Fallon. Community Development Director Scott Charney will call for nominations for Chair, and once seated the Chair will call for nominations for Vice-Chair to serve the 2015/16 term of office.

Recommendation:

Proceed with the reorganization according to the attached procedures.

The following procedures will be used for Commission reorganization:

1. The Chair turns the meeting over to the Commission Secretary who presides over the nomination of the new Chair.
2. The Commission Secretary indicates that "Nominations are now in order for the Chair of the Planning Commission."
3. Any member of the Commission may nominate any member for Chair; no second is required.
4. The Commission Secretary states, "Commissioner _____ has been nominated. Are there any further nominations for Chair?" The Commission Secretary repeats each nomination in this way until all nominations are made.
5. When it appears no one else wishes to make a nomination, the Commission Secretary again states, "Are there any further nominations for Chair? If there are no further nominations, the nominations are closed." No waiting for a motion to that effect.
6. After completion of the nominations, the Commission Secretary may provide each nominee with an opportunity to speak regarding their qualification for the position.
7. The Commission Secretary shall then conduct a roll call vote for the selection of Chair, asking each member to vote for the nominee of his or her choice. The vote shall be conducted in alphabetical order.
8. The Commission Secretary then declares the result of the election. The nominee receiving a majority vote of the Commission shall be declared the new Chair.
9. After selection of the new Chair, the Commission Secretary turns the meeting over to the newly elected Chair who is given an opportunity to make any remarks, which he or she may wish to make upon entering office.
10. The new Chair then presides over the selection of the Vice-Chair, calling for nominations and conducting the vote as with the selection of the Chair.
11. The new Vice-Chair is also given an opportunity to make any remarks which they may wish to make upon entering office.

JUNE 1



New Single-Family
Dwelling at 1995 St. Louis Ave.

CITY OF SIGNAL HILL

2175 Cherry Avenue ♦ Signal Hill, CA 90755-3799

PROCEDURES RELATIVE TO PUBLIC HEARINGS/WORKSHOPS

1. At the request of the Mayor/Chair, the City Clerk/Secretary reports on the Form of Notice given:
 - a. Notice was published in the *Signal Tribune* newspaper on May 29, 2015.
 - b. Notice was posted in accordance with Signal Hill Municipal Code Section 1.08.010 on May 29, 2015.
 - c. Mailed to property owners and residents within a 500' radius on May 29, 2015.
2. Mayor/Chair asks for a staff report, which shall be included in written materials presented to the City Council/Commission so that they can be received into evidence by formal motion.

In addition, the staff report shall include the following:

- a. Summarize the resolution/ordinance;
- b. The specific location of the property, and/or use, the surrounding properties;
- c. The criteria of the Code which applies to the pending application; and
- d. The recommendation of the Council/Commission and/or other legislative body of the City and staff recommendation.

3. Mayor/Chair declares the public hearing open.
4. Mayor/Chair invites those persons who are in favor of the application to speak.
5. Mayor/Chair invites those persons who are in opposition to the application to speak.
6. Applicant or their representative is provided a brief rebuttal period.
7. Mayor/Chair declares the public hearing closed.
8. Discussion by Council/Commission only.
9. City Attorney reads title of resolutions and/or ordinances.
10. City Clerk/Secretary conducts Roll Call vote.



CITY OF SIGNAL HILL

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June 9, 2015

AGENDA ITEM

TO: HONORABLE CHAIR
AND MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM: SELENA ALANIS
ASSISTANT PLANNER

SUBJECT: WORKSHOP – REVISED PLANS FOR A NEW SINGLE-FAMILY DWELLING AT 1995 ST. LOUIS AVENUE

Summary:

The applicant, Seth Sor for Kimberly Ly, is requesting a second workshop review of preliminary plans for a single-family dwelling at 1995 St. Louis Avenue in the Southeast neighborhood. The dwelling has been reduced in size by 115 square feet, the library and game room have been eliminated and the size of the balcony has been reduced and is uncovered. The proposal now includes:

- Demolition of the existing 800 square foot one-story single-family dwelling and detached garage; and
- Construction of a new 3,072 square foot two-story single-family dwelling with an attached 3-car garage.

Recommendations:

- 1) Open the public workshop and receive testimony.
- 2) Direct the applicant to make revisions as deemed appropriate.

Background:

View Notice for Workshop #1

Per the View Policy, on August 4, 2014, staff mailed a view notice to property owners and occupants within a 500-foot radius of the project site and the applicant posted a copy of the view notice on the property. In addition, story poles were installed to depict the highest point of the house to facilitate the view analysis process. The placement and height of the story poles were certified by a licensed engineer.

Staff received two written responses to the view notice:

- 1) 1986 and 1986½ St. Louis Avenue
The property owner and resident submitted a letter in support of the project.
- 2) 2055 E. 20th Street
The owner of one of the condominiums to the north of the project requested a view analysis. The applicant had additional story poles installed and certified in order to conduct a complete view analysis. Mrs. Ly met with the property owner at his home on September 14, 2014. After reviewing the plans, the property owner withdrew his request.

Workshop #1

On October 14, 2014, the Planning Commission held a workshop and reviewed plans for a new 3,187 square foot single-family dwelling consisting of:

- First floor was 1,960 square feet and included a family room, living room, kitchen, dining room, library, two bedrooms, two bathrooms and an attached 787 square foot 3-car garage with washer and dryer.
- Second floor was 1,227 square feet and consisted of a game room, three bedrooms, two bathrooms and an 814 square foot covered balcony with a second washer and dryer (Attachment A).

At the meeting, seven members of the public commented on the project; some were in support and some were against the proposed design (Attachment B). After considering public comments and reviewing the plans, the Commission closed the workshop and directed the application to revise the plans to address the following:

- Bulk and scale concerns in relation to the neighborhood and box design
- Reduce large covered balcony - in size, bulk and scale
- Easy conversion of accessory rooms to bedrooms
- Integrate a front porch to match other houses in the neighborhood
- Removal of the washer and dryer from the second floor balcony
- Lack of a master bedroom with ensuite bathroom
- Conduct a view analysis for the property owners of 2014 St. Louis

[View Analysis for Workshop #2](#)

Staff has had several meetings with the applicant and reviewed several revised designs. Mrs. Ly struggled with creating a design that addressed the Commission's comments and one that reflected her preferences for the custom home. Once the applicant finalized the plans, they began outreach efforts to the neighbors for the view analysis.

On February 10, 2015, the applicant met with the property owners of 2014 St. Louis to show them the revised the plans. She reported that both owners were pleased by the design and they thought it looked much better than the first design. The applicant indicated that the homeowners still expressed their concern with their view of Downtown Long Beach building towers, but not the Queen Mary or any other specific landmarks.

On March 4, 2015, property owners of 2000 St. Louis, came into the Community Development Department to request a view analysis. Their contact information was provided to the applicant to conduct a view analysis.

On March 31, 2015, staff mailed a view notice to property owners and occupants within a 500-foot radius of the project site and the applicant posted a copy of the view notice on the property. New story poles were installed to depict the revised design and to facilitate the view analysis process. The placement and height of the story poles were certified by a licensed engineer. Staff has not received any additional responses to the view notice.

Analysis:

The table below lists the comments received at workshop #1 in comparison to the revised plans.

Workshop Comments from the Planning Commission:

Concerns with bulk and scale	Partially addressed. Although the library and game room were removed, there has only been a reduction in floor area of 115 s.f. There are still design changes that can reduce the bulk of the project. The dwelling is still large scale, in comparison to other homes in the neighborhood (Previous FAR=.5 and Proposed FAR=.48).
Add articulation and dimensions along 20 th and St. Louis	Partially addressed. The uncovered balcony and the new porch do add some articulation to the side and the front of the dwelling to reduce the box effect.

Workshop Comments from the Planning Commission: (cont.)

Redesign balcony to address concerns about size and enclosing	Addressed. The balcony has been reduced in size by 413 s.f. The balcony is now uncovered and does not have openings that could easily be screened or enclosed.
Reconfigure floor plans with attention to the living room, family room, library and game room	Addressed. The library has been converted to a bedroom and the game room has been redistributed to a hallway and front balcony. There are no longer accessory rooms that can easily be converted to bedrooms.
Integrate a porch along St. Louis to match character of neighborhood	Partially addressed. A 154 s.f. porch has been added to the front of the dwelling. The porch could be larger in size to match the neighborhood. The addition of the balcony above the porch reduces articulation to the front of the house and adds to the bulk of the dwelling.
Remove washer and dryer from balcony	Addressed. The washer and dryer have been removed from the balcony.
Designate a master bedroom/suite	Addressed. Bedroom #4 of the previous design is designated as the master bedroom which has been increased in size and now includes a walk-in-closet and ensuite bathroom.

Additional Comments from the Public:

Maintain rear yard open space	Addressed. The rear yard has been maintained. A 5' rear setback is required and 20' is provided. The balcony has been reduced in size, previous 40' setback to a proposed 53' setback.
Use of turf block for the driveway	Not addressed. The driveway is not turf block. Previously reviewed plans had turf block, but the owner removed it from the final workshop plans.

Floor Plan Revisions

The first floor has been reduced by 141 square feet. The wall between the family room and dining room was removed, the library has been converted to be a bedroom and a porch has been added, reducing the size of the living room.

The second floor has been increased by 26 square feet. The increase in square footage was to the master bedroom/bedroom #5 and addition of a walk-in-closet and ensuite bathroom. The balcony has now been reduced by 413 square feet, is uncovered and the washer and dryer have been removed. The washer and dryer have been relocated to the hallway. The game room area has been redistributed to a hallway and covered balcony in the front of the house. A bedroom was removed and relocated to the first floor.

The total square footage of the first floor is 1,819 square feet and includes a family room, living room, kitchen, dining room, three bedrooms, two bathrooms and an attached 787 square foot 3-car garage with washer and dryer. The total square footage of the second floor is 1,253 square feet and includes two bedrooms, two bathrooms, an indoor washer and dryer, a 456 square feet uncovered balcony and 154 square feet covered balcony.

Bulk and Scale

The floor area ratio has been reduced to 48% (from 50%) with the new design. F.A.R. standards were first introduced to address the community's concerns with new residential structures and additions that were not in character with the existing neighborhood due to their large scale and bulk. The project complies with the standards as follows:

$$\frac{(3,859 \text{ s.f. gross floor area} - 787 \text{ s.f. garage})}{6,375 \text{ s.f. net lot area}} = \frac{.48 \text{ Floor Area}}{\text{Ratio}}$$

Per the Code, the square footage of the balconies, porch and garage are not included in the calculation. The covered balcony has been reduced in size. However, there are still changes that could be made to the plan to reduce the bulk of the project: the vaulted stairway and secondary washer and dryer could be eliminated or moved to the garage, the front porch could be increased in size, etc.

Balcony

The second story balcony has been reduced by 413 square feet and is now uncovered. The elimination of the covered roof reduces concerns about enclosing or screening the balcony, and the balcony now decreases the box effect of the house. A covered balcony has been added to the second story above the new porch.

Parking

The number of required parking stalls is determined by the number of bedrooms in a dwelling unit. Concerns were raised about the possibility that a future property owner or

tenant could easily use or convert accessory rooms into bedrooms which would then require additional parking. The accessory library and game room have been eliminated.

The proposed dwelling includes five bedrooms, a family room and living room. Five bedrooms require a 3-car garage. The project includes an attached 3-car garage with a 20' driveway which provides three additional parking opportunities. One street parking space will be eliminated from the neighborhood for the driveway cut, but the placement of the driveway still allows for several street parking opportunities on both 20th Street and St. Louis Avenue.

Architecture

The colors have been revised to “Aspen” and “Adobe” stucco finishes, with accents of “White” wood fascia, trim, arched windows, columns and doors and travertine split face stone veneer. A colored elevation and a color and materials board will be available at the workshop.

View Analysis

The View Policy requires the following:

To preserve, to the extent possible, all views designated as “primary views,” and “secondary view,” with greater emphasis placed on the preservation of “primary views.” In an effort to preserve views, the applicant may be required to make any or all of the following modifications to the proposed project:

- Reduce square footage;
- Increase setbacks;
- Eliminate bedrooms;
- Revise roofline by decreasing the area of top floor and/or by changing the roof pitch;
- Revise the floor plan; and
- Relocate structure on lot.

The applicant prepared a computer generated analysis and submitted view impact simulations based on the revised plans (Attachment C). The simulation shows the story poles connected at the top with the yellow line. The yellow line represents highest level of the finished roof.

- 1) 2014 St. Louis Avenue - Mr. Morris Forsko and Mrs. Rachel A. Reynolds

No impact. View photos were taken standing on the front porch. The photo simulations (photos #1 and #2) show that the revised design minimizes views of the primary view of Downtown Long Beach from the front porch. The view analysis was shared with the property owners. The property owners thought the overall

design was much better than the previous plan. A copy of the plans were also provided to the property owners (Attachment D).

2) 2000 St. Louis Avenue - Mr. John Currie and Mrs. Lyn Hutchison

Undetermined. One view photo was taken standing on the steps at the front door. The photo simulation is inconclusive and it cannot be determined that there are or are not any view impacts. The view analysis was shared with the property owners. The property owners requested that additional pictures be taken from the property, but was busy and would meet with the applicant another time. The applicant has contacted the property owners, but has not heard from the property owners since then to take additional photos (Attachment E).

Approved:

Scott Charney

Attachments



CITY OF SIGNAL HILL

2175 Cherry Avenue ♦ Signal Hill, CA 90755-3799

October 14, 2014

AGENDA ITEM

**TO: HONORABLE CHAIR
AND MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION**

**FROM: SELENA ALANIS
ASSISTANT PLANNER**

**SUBJECT: WORKSHOP - NEW SINGLE-FAMILY DWELLING AT 1995 ST. LOUIS
AVENUE**

Summary:

The applicant, Seth Sor for Kimberly Ly, is requesting a workshop review of preliminary plans for a single-family dwelling at 1995 St. Louis Avenue. The proposal includes:

- Demolition of the existing 800 square foot one-story single-family dwelling and detached garage; and
- Construction of a new 3,187 square foot two-story single-family dwelling with an attached 3-car garage.

Recommendations:

- 1) Open the public workshop and receive testimony.
- 2) Direct the applicant to make revisions as deemed appropriate.

Background:

The project and subject site have not previously been reviewed by the Planning Commission. According to Assessor's Records, the existing 800 square foot single-family dwelling was constructed in 1920. The subject lot is located on the southwest corner of 20th Street and St. Louis Avenue within the RLM-2, Residential Low/Medium-2, zoning district.

Project Vicinity Map

The project is located in the southeast neighborhood which historically has been a parking impacted neighborhood with older housing stock. The surrounding properties are mostly single-family homes with detached garages in the rear of the property with alley access. Several of the properties have 2nd units or are two-stories. The zoning and existing land use for the project site and the immediately surrounding properties are as follows:

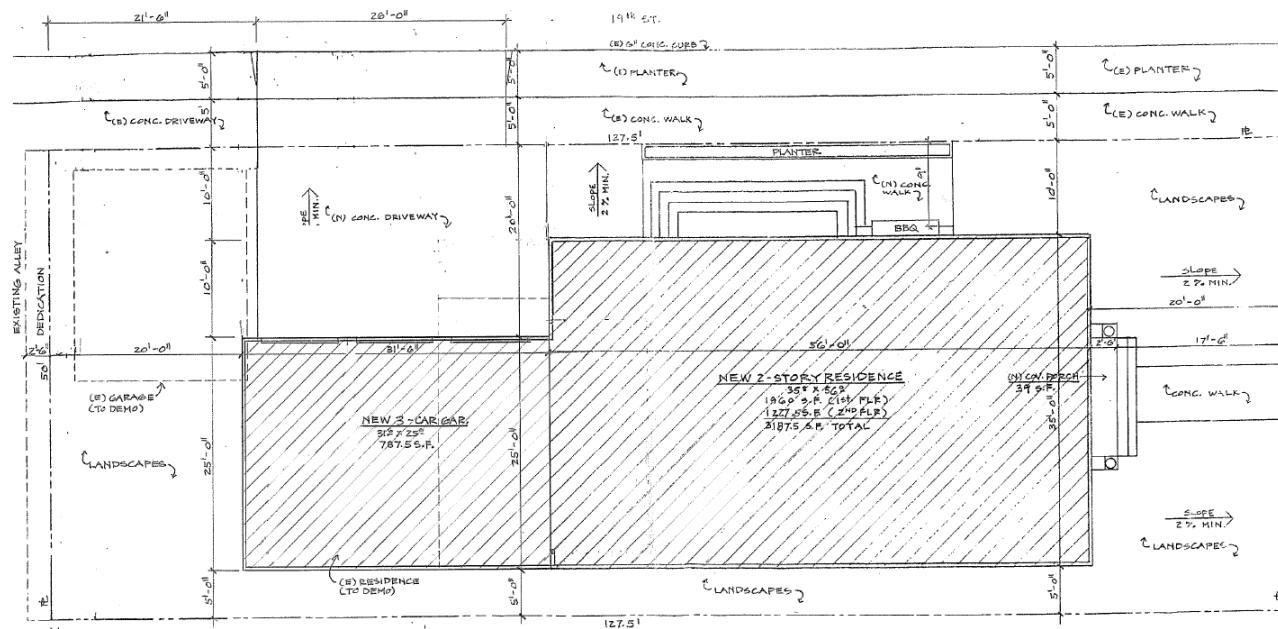
Direction	Zoning Designation	Existing Land Use
Project Site	RLM-2 Residential Low/Medium-2	Existing 800 square foot dwelling and detached garage, one-story
North	RLM-2 Residential Low/Medium-2	Detached condominiums, two-story
South	RLM-2 Residential Low/Medium-2	Single-family dwelling, one-story
East	RLM-2 Residential Low/Medium-2	Single-family dwelling, two-story
West	SP-13, Cherry Avenue Corridor Specific Plan	Detached condominiums, two-story

Analysis:

Development Standards

The project complies with the development standards of the RLM-2, Residential Low/Medium-2 Density, zoning district including:

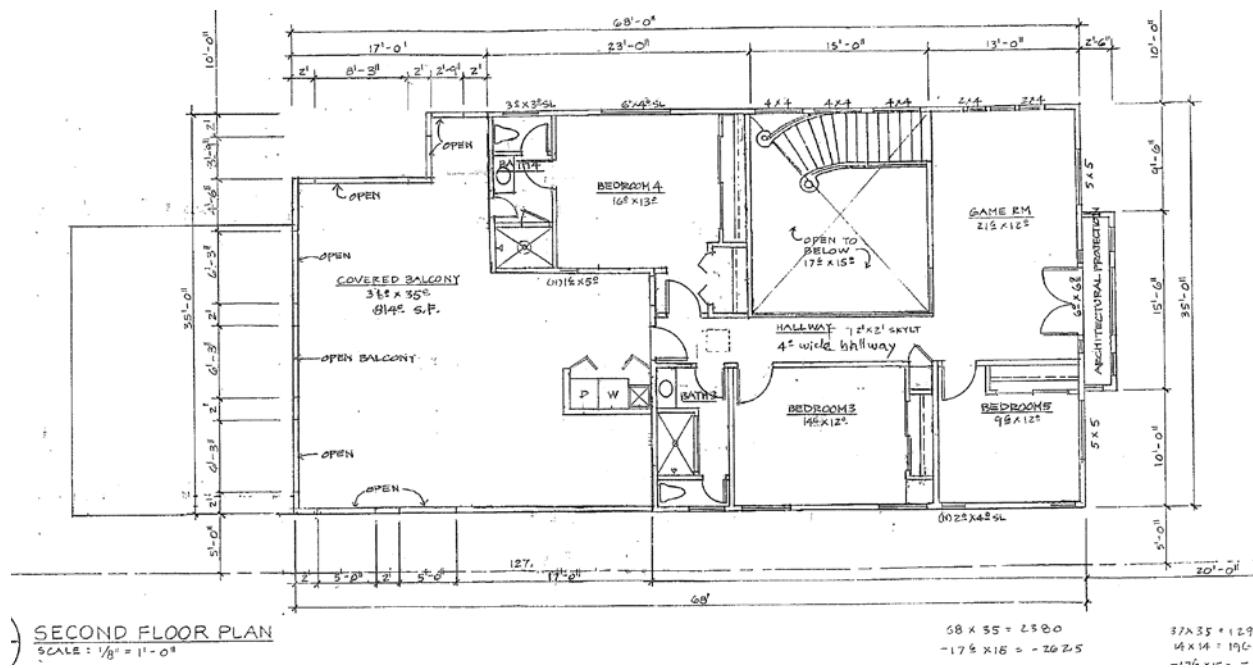
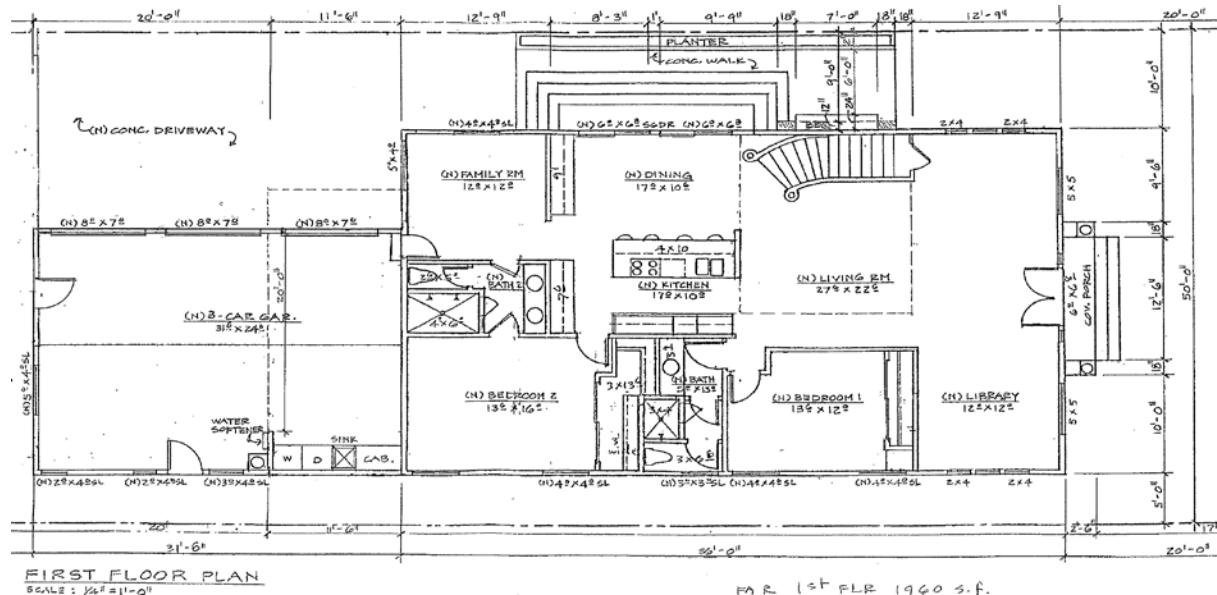
Standard	Required	Proposed
Setbacks		
Front (east)	20' minimum	20'
Side (south)	5' minimum	5'
Side (north)	10' minimum	10'
Rear (west)	5' minimum	20'
Height	25' height limit	24'-8" based on datum line
Off-street parking	3-covered spaces for a 5 bedroom unit	3-car garage
Floor Area Ratio	50% maximum	50% without covered balcony included (62% with covered balcony)
Lot Coverage	50% maximum	43.7%
Open Space	No requirement for a single-family dwelling	Not applicable



Site Plan

The property is a corner lot with street frontage on 20th Street and St. Louis Avenue and alley access at the rear of the property. The current lot size is 6,500 square feet, which allows for two dwelling units on the lot, but only one is proposed. A 2.5-foot alley

dedication on the west property line will be required to widen the alley and develop the property. After the dedications the lot will be 6,357 square feet.



Floor Plans

The first floor is 1,960 square feet and includes a family room, living room, kitchen, dining room, library, two bedrooms, two bathrooms and an attached 787 square foot 3-car garage with washer and dryer. The second floor is 1,227 square feet and consists of a game room, three bedrooms, two bathrooms and an 814 square foot covered balcony with a second washer and dryer.

Architecture

The dwelling has a low profile terra-cotta tile roof, stone veneer on the garage facade, balcony pilasters, and front entry, along with “creamy orange” and “soft pumpkin” stucco finishes, with accents of “blanched pine” wood fascia, trim, arched windows, columns and doors. A colored elevation and a color and materials board will be available at the workshop.

There is a 12" projection on the side yard setback for a covered archway over the barbecue, a 30" projection in the front yard setback for a covered porch and “Juliet balcony” and 18" eaves along the entire roof. Architectural projections can be used to provide diversity in the design and the proposed projections are the maximum allowed under the provisions of the Code.



Parking

The proposed dwelling includes five bedrooms and additional rooms including a family room, living room, library, and game room. The number of required parking stalls is determined by the number of bedrooms in a dwelling unit. Four or five bedrooms require a 3-car garage and six or more bedrooms require a 4-car garage.

The project includes an attached 3-car garage with a 20' driveway which provides three additional parking opportunities. One street parking space will be eliminated from the neighborhood for the driveway cut, but the placement of the driveway still allows for several street parking opportunities on both 20th Street and St. Louis Avenue.

In the past, the Commission has raised concerns about the possibility that a future property owner or tenant could easily use or convert accessory rooms into bedrooms which would then require additional parking. Use of one of the additional rooms as a bedroom would require a 4-car garage. Due to driveway standards a 4th garage space could not be added easily. Staff relayed the Commission concerns to the applicant and they have attempted to minimize concerns by designing the floor plan as follows:

- The family room serves as a path of travel and is the only interior connection to the house from the garage. Conversion to a bedroom would require installation of a door.
- The library is open to the living room and conversion to a bedroom would require a barrier or wall and door to provide privacy between the rooms. It does not have a private restroom nearby.
- The game room is open to the stairway and hallway. A conversion would require extensive improvements to provide for a sense of privacy and the area would still serve as a path of travel to the other bedrooms on the second story.

Balcony

The second story features a large covered balcony that is approximately 814 square feet. There are 6' by 6' openings on two sides (north and west elevations) and the third side is partially open (south elevation). The Zoning Code defines a balcony as “a private outdoor living area attached to a residential unit, open or partially open to light and air permanently on at least two sides.” Previous versions of the plans included screening the openings on the balcony or use of removable windows, but if enclosed the area would classify as living space and would need to be included in the floor area ratio calculations.

The property owner has also proposed a second washer and dryer for the house on the balcony. The property owner indicated that the secondary washer and dryer are for additional washing capabilities and placed outdoors on the covered balcony to avoid indoor noise when the machines are operating.

Bulk and Scale

The Commission has previously expressed concerns about balconies, California rooms and outdoor living areas as they are currently not included in Floor Area Ratio (F.A.R.) standards, but can affect the bulk and scale of a project.

F.A.R. standards were first introduced to address the community's concerns with new residential structures and additions that were not in character with the existing neighborhood due to their large scale and bulk.

Current F.A.R. standards include:

- "A. The maximum permitted F.A.R. shall be 0.5.
- B. Maximum permitted F.A.R. shall be calculated as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Gross floor area} - \text{garage square feet}}{\text{Net lot area}}$$

The term "gross floor area" includes the first story and any additional stories for all structures including garages, greenhouses and accessory buildings on a lot.

The following are not included in the calculation:

- Covered patios, balconies and walkways;
- Eaves and other architectural projections;
- Antennas; and
- Uncovered tennis courts, pools, spas and similar recreational facilities."

The project complies with the standards as follows:

$$\frac{(3,974 \text{ SF} - 787 \text{ SF})}{6,375 \text{ SF}} = .50 \text{ Floor Area Ratio}$$

Per the Code, the square footage for the large covered balcony and garage are not included in the calculation.

Required Findings

Although the project meets the development standards, concerns regarding bulk and scale may be addressed under the Site Plan and Design Review process. There are five findings and twenty-two criteria and two of them are reasonably related to bulk and scale:

1. *The proposed project is in conformance with the General Plan, Zoning Ordinance and other ordinances and regulations of the city.*

Land Use Policy 3.7 - maintain and enhance the quality of residential neighborhoods.

Land Use Policy 3.14 - preserve and enhance the City's special residential character by encouraging the preservation, renovation and relocation of historic structures in low intensity residential development and a harmonious blending of buildings and landscape.

2. *Buildings and related outdoor spaces are designed to avoid abrupt changes in building scale. The height and bulk of buildings are in scale with surrounding sites and do not visually dominate the site or call undue attention to buildings.*

The Commission may find that the proposed design is incompatible with the General Plan due to the bulk and scale of the project in comparison with the surrounding development. If the Commission expects that they would not be able to make the required findings during Site Plan and Design Review approval, they may request changes to the design at the workshop. Design changes can include denying inclusion of a balcony, requiring that the balcony is uncovered, requiring that the balcony cannot be screened, and/or reducing the size of the balcony to make the design compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

[View Analysis](#)

On August 4, 2014, staff mailed a view notice to property owners and occupants within a 500-foot radius of the project site and the applicant posted a copy of the view notice on the property. In addition, story poles were installed to depict the highest point of the house to facilitate the view analysis process. The placement and height of the story poles were certified by a licensed engineer.

Staff received two written responses to the view notice from the property owners/residents of 1986 and 1986 ½ St. Louis Avenue in support of the project.

Mr. Patrick Ball, the owner of one of the condominiums to the north of the site at 2055 E. 20th Street, contacted staff to request a view photo analysis. The applicant had additional story poles installed and certified in order to conduct a complete view analysis. The property owner, Mrs. Ly, met with Mr. Ball at his home on October 14, 2014. Mr. Ball withdrew his request for a view analysis after meeting with Ms. Ly, reviewing the plans and after installation of the extra story poles (Attachment A).

Approved:

Scott Charney

EXCERPT FROM THE OCTOBER 14, 2014 MEETING MINUTES

PUBLIC WORKSHOP

1. New Single-Family Dwelling at 1995 St. Louis Avenue

Community Development Director Scott Charney read the form of notice, and Assistant Planner Selena Alanis gave the staff report.

Chair Benson asked for any questions from the Commission.

Chair Benson asked if the number of parking spaces can be used to restrict the number of bedrooms. Staff confirmed that both parking spaces and bedrooms are combined in the zoning standards.

Chair Benson opened the public workshop.

The following members of the public spoke regarding the project:

- 1) Don Giese, Signal Hill resident. He spoke in favor of the project and stated the current property is an eyesore and that the new project would raise the value of the homes in the neighborhood.
- 2) Pamela Hughes, Signal Hill resident. She stated the project would encourage nearby residents to invest in their property and would add value to the community.
- 3) Rachel Reynolds, Signal Hill resident. She stated her home is nearby. She does not have a complaint about the size of the house but said it would impact the views from her house. She stated one-half to two-thirds of her view would be impacted by the second story of the proposed house, which would reduce her property value.
- 4) Maria Harris, Signal Hill resident. She stated while she welcomed new investment in the neighborhood, she had reservations about the bulk and scale of project. The design is a very large rectangular and is huge in comparison to neighboring homes, which are California bungalow and mission style homes. She was concerned with the number of bedrooms and other rooms that might easily be converted to additional bedrooms, meaning greater occupancy, especially since she thought this was a parking impacted area. She noted the area is currently zoned for Section 8 housing and had concerns about the potential for the dwelling to be used more intensely than a single-family residence. She noted the architectural style includes plain walls on two sides. She thought the large balcony should be included in the floor area ratio calculation and pointed out the design includes a washer/dryer on the second story balcony. She suggested a large porch to fit in with surrounding homes.

- 5) Don Giese reiterated that the neighbors he had talked with were excited about the project. The current home is old and dilapidated, and he stated the new project would be an improvement.
- 6) Carol Churchill, Signal Hill resident. She stated she agreed the design was for a large home and that while the new home would be an improvement to that property, she was concerned about the number of parking spaces and bedrooms. She stated their neighborhood has homes with multiple generations with a substantial number of cars used by the family members. She doubted the 3 spaces on the lot would be sufficient for the new project. She suggested a driveway paving that would include grass, creating an open space area and parklike atmosphere. She suggested a large front porch would keep the character of the neighborhood. She asked if this would be the primary residence of the owner since this is an area for Section 8 housing. She pointed out a nearby property where the yard space is inadequate and residents utilize the alley for their recreation and thought the same might occur at this property.
- 7) Seth Sor, project designer. Mr. Sor thanked the neighbors in support of the project. He stated he believed this home will add value to the neighborhood and the design will meet the needs of the family. He stated the home meets all setback criteria. A larger front porch is not included because of the 20' setback and that the covering over the balcony is intended to protect from weather. Regarding the concern for conversions, he stated the home is very visible and that areas would not be converted to living space. Most of the neighborhood has 2 parking spaces and the proposed home has both a garage and driveway. He also stated there is a 20' yard open space in the back.

Chair Benson noted the design would allow for easy conversion of some of the rooms into bedrooms and asked if this would be a primary residence. Mr. Sor confirmed this would be a primary residence. He stated the owner would not be converting rooms and that the family room is accessible from the garage so it would not offer privacy.

Commissioner Murphy asked about the placement of the washer and dryer on balcony and its proximity to a bedroom. Mr. Sor confirmed the 4th bedroom is the master bedroom and stated the washer/dryer were placed outside out of the living area due to noise. He explained the parents were not able to take the stairs to the second floor and that is the reason for two laundry areas.

There being no further public testimony, Chair Benson closed the public workshop.

Vice-Chair Fallon stated she understood the potential for conversions but hoped that would not happen. She expressed support for the home which would be an improvement to the neighborhood and might encourage others to invest in their properties as well.

Commissioner Austin asked if a larger front porch could be designed. Staff explained the front setback is 20' which is the front of the house. To create a larger front porch would require a reduction in the square footage of the house and a shift to the west. Commissioner Austin recommended a space inside the home be designed for the second floor washer and dryer, and was reluctant to avoid setting a precedent.

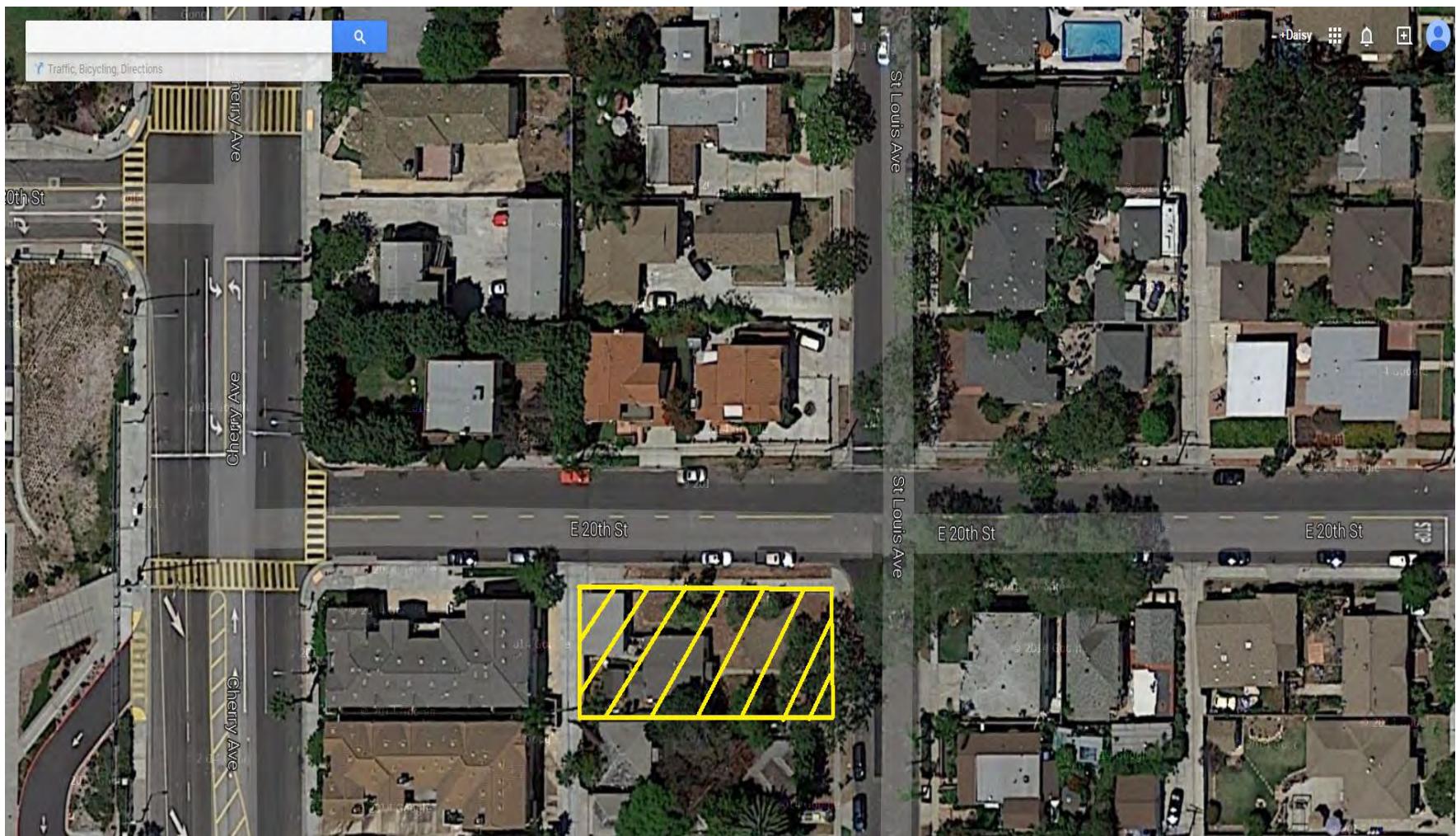
Commissioner Murphy was also concerned about potential conversions to bedrooms. She disapproved the height of the building, the outside washer and dryer, the lack of open space and lack of a front porch or other features that matched the character of the area, and the lack of a master bedroom or suite. She stated she was concerned there might be a high number of residents in the home at some point in the future.

Commissioner Richárd stated her agreement with many issues pointed out by Commissioner Murphy. She was concerned about the covered balcony, the placement of washer and dryer, and the architectural style.

Chair Benson stated he also agreed with many of the concerns. While the design would be an improvement to the current area, the design resembles a big box. The layout includes a lot of potential for conversions to bedrooms. He stated he was concerned about the size of the balcony and asked the applicant for some design changes to be more compatible with the neighborhood such as a front porch.

It was moved by Commissioner Austin and seconded by Vice-Chair Fallon to review the views concerns of Ms. Reynolds, and to close the workshop until an improved project was submitted.

Motion carried 5/0.



PROJECT

Applicant: Kimberly & Phat L Ly

Location: 1995 Saint Louis Ave

Zone: RLM-2

Current Design

1995 Saint Louis Ave
VIEW ANALYSIS
Current Design



2000 Saint Louis Ave

John E. Currie &
Lyn Hutchison
2000 Saint Louis Ave
Signal Hill CA 90755

APN: 7216-008-011

2014 Saint Louis Ave

Morris Forsko &
Rachel Reynolds
2014 Saint Louis Ave
Signal Hill CA 90755

APN: 7216-008-010



2000 St. Louis – Currie & Lyn Hutchison



John E Currie & Lyn Hutchison
2000 Saint Louis Ave
APN: 7216-008-011

Kimberly & Phat L Ly
1995 Saint Louis Ave

Currie & Hutchison – Photo #1



John E Currie & Lyn Hutchison
2000 Saint Louis Ave

April 10, 2015 approximately 4:30PM
Current Design

Kimberly & Phat L Ly
1995 Saint Louis Ave

2014 St. Louis – Forsko & Reynolds



Morris Forsko & Rachel A. Reynolds
2014 Saint Louis Ave

Kimberly & Phat L Ly
1995 Saint Louis Ave

Forsko & Reynolds– Photo #1



Morris Forsko & Rachel A. Reynolds
2014 Saint Louis Ave

April 10, 2015 approximately 4:30PM
Current Design

Kimberly & Phat L Ly
1995 Saint Louis Ave

Forsko & Reynolds – Photo #2



Morris Forsko & Rachel A. Reynolds
2014 Saint Louis Ave

April 10, 2015 approximately 4:30PM
Current Design

Kimberly & Phat L Ly
1995 Saint Louis Ave

Forsko & Reynolds – Photo #3



Morris Forsko & Rachel A. Reynolds
2014 Saint Louis Ave

April 10, 2015 approximately 4:30PM
Current Design

Kimberly & Phat L Ly
1995 Saint Louis Ave

Forsko & Reynolds – Photo #4



Morris Forsko & Rachel A. Reynolds
2014 Saint Louis Ave

April 10, 2015 approximately 4:30PM
Current Design

Kimberly & Phat L Ly
1995 Saint Louis Ave

SETHSOR
DESIGN ASSOCIATES
11328 213 ST. LAKEWOOD, CA 90715
CELL (562) 881-6542 H (562) 402 - 8671
EDELSETH @ YAHOO.COM

May 28, 2015

Ms. Selena Alanis, Project Planner
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
2175 Cherry Ave
Signal Hill CA 90806

RE: View Study Analysis
1995 Saint Louis Ave
Signal Hill CA 90755
APN: 7216-014-014

The proposed 2-story single family dwelling site is located on the southwest corner of Saint Louis Avenue and 20th Street. The relatively flat rectangular shape lot is currently occupied with a 1-story single family dwelling and a detached 2-car garage that will be demolished for the construction of the 2-story single family dwelling with an attached 3-car garage. The lot is surrounded by mainly 1 and 2 story single family dwellings and some townhome style condominium complexes on the west property line.

After the first workshop, on February 10, 2015 at 10:00 a.m., I met with Mr. Morris Forsko and Rachel A. Reynolds. I explained to them that we revised the design – Add front porch, front balcony to open balcony, reduce the second floor rear mass to the front, reduce the floor area, and open the interior floor plan layout at the living room and kitchen. Both Morris and Rachel were pleased on the design and they thought it looks much better than the first design.

The story poles were set up and certified on April 08, 2015. The following property owners have responded with the request for the view study:

- Mr. Morris Forsko and Rachel A. Reynolds, the owners of a story single family dwelling 2014 Saint Louis Avenue, Signal Hill, CA 90755.

I called them to take the pictures on Friday, April 10 at 5:30 p.m. They said, "Just come over and take the pictures." I took several pictures from the front porch. We not meet or discuss anything as it was confirmed during our last meeting.

A Microsoft PowerPoint Presentation was prepared to demonstrate the story poles. The simulation shows the story poles connect at the top with a yellow line. The yellow line marks the highest level of the roof. The views the homeowners are concerned of are Downtown Long Beach building towers and not of the Queen Mary, Long Beach Skyline or other historical landmarks.

Home owners at 2014 St. Louis Photo #1 was taken standing in the front porch. Photo #2, Photo #3 and Photo #4 was taken standing at the front porch behind the screen on April 10, 2015 approximately 4:30 p.m.

On May 22, 2015 I called Rachel's husband on Friday at 11:30 a.m. I met both Rachel and Mort the same day at 12:30 p.m. to discuss the view photos taken, view analysis and house design. I presented the plans to them and explained revised new design to both of them. Mort thought the overall new design looks much better than the previous. He mentioned the new roof line is impressive and interesting. He wondered how Kim is going to finance the big home. I said, "I don't know." Mort wants a copy of the design. I told him, "I will email it to him, and if he has any other concerns he can also email me." I did email him the design on Saturday, May 23, 2015 at 9:25 a.m. I have not heard from them since then.

The fact that the view is not impacted is the result of the applicant effort to preserve as much view as possible. Several mitigation measures were applied by applicant in the preliminary design process in order to present project acceptable to the affected homeowner and to the future new home resident. Some of them are listed below:

- Setting the building finish floor at the lowest elevation that allows storm water site damage
- Design of the building incorporating the partial flat roof

If you need any additional information please do not hesitate to call me at (562) 881-6542.

Sincerely,

Seth Sor

SETHSOR
DESIGN ASSOCIATES
11328 213 ST. LAKEWOOD, CA 90715
CELL (562) 881-6542 H (562) 402 - 8671
EDELSETH @ YAHOO.COM

June 02, 2015

Ms. Selena Alanis, Project Planner
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
2175 Cherry Ave
Signal Hill CA 90806

RE: View Study Analysis
1995 Saint Louis Ave
Signal Hill CA 90755
APN: 7216-014-014

The proposed 2-story single family dwelling site is located on the southwest corner of Saint Louis Avenue and 20th Street. The relatively flat rectangular shape lot is currently occupied with a 1-story single family dwelling and a detached 2-car garage that will be demolished for the construction of the 2-story single family dwelling with an attached 3-car garage. The lot is surrounded by mainly 1 and 2 story single family dwellings and some townhome style condominium complexes on the west property line.

The story poles were set up and certified on April 08, 2015. The following property owners have responded with the request for the view study:

- John Currie and Lynn Hutchison the owners of a 1-story single family dwelling located at 2000 Saint Louis Avenue, Signal Hill, CA 90755.

I met Lyn Hutchison on April 10, 2015 at 4:30 p.m. the corner neighbor located at 2000 Saint Louis Avenue and explained the new house design to her as well. She did not say anything about the house; she said, "She was concerned about the noise and activity from the house on some occasions." She was also asked me when is the next meeting. I stood on the red steps in the front entrance's door and took some pictures for view analysis.

A Microsoft PowerPoint Presentation was prepared to demonstrate the story poles. The simulation shows the story poles connect at the top with a yellow line. The yellow line marks the highest level of the roof. The views the homeowners are concerned of are Downtown Long Beach building towers and not of the Queen Mary, Long Beach Skyline or other historical landmarks.

The view study was conducted by Seth Sor Design Associates. As requested by the affected home owners at 2000 Saint Louis Avenue Photo #1 was taken approximately at 4:30 p.m. standing on the step in the front entrance's door on April 10, 2015.

On May 22, 2015 at 11:30 a.m., I called Lynn to discuss the view photos, view analysis and house design. No one answered, I left a voicemail and a copy of the letter and pictures in their mail box on 2000 St. Louis Avenue, Signal Hill, CA 90755, and asked them to call me to discuss.

I spoke with Lyn on the phone Saturday, May 24, 2015 at 12:30pm. I told her "I had the revised plans, view analysis and letter done." We decided that I email her all the information for review. Lyn had some questions on Monday. I was able to explain to her over the phone the power point diagram on Monday at 1 p.m. She also mentioned how long the construction process will take. She said, "She is busy on Memorial Day and wanted me to take another picture when we meet the following week."

I left a message for Lyn on Thursday, May 28, 2015 at 10 a.m. to meet but no response yet.

The fact that the view is not impacted is the result of the applicant effort to preserve as much view as possible. Several mitigation measures were applied by applicant in the preliminary design process in order to present project acceptable to the affected homeowner and to the future new home resident. Some of them are listed below:

- Setting the building finish floor at the lowest elevation that allows storm water site damage
- Design of the building incorporating the partial flat roof

If you need any additional information please do not hesitate to call me at (562) 881-6542.

Sincerely,

Seth Sor

JUNE 2



CITY OF SIGNAL HILL

2175 Cherry Avenue ♦ Signal Hill, CA 90755-3799

June 9, 2015

AGENDA ITEM

**TO: HONORABLE CHAIR
AND MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION**

**FROM: COLLEEN DOAN
ASSOCIATE PLANNER**

**SUBJECT: DIRECTOR'S REPORT – STUDY SESSION FOR WATER
CONSERVATION & OPTIONS FOR TURF REPLACEMENT**

Summary:

This is the first in a series of study sessions to consider options for turf replacement in yards and setbacks. For many years, the public has expressed a preference for turf in landscaped setbacks and front yards. Turf consumes large amounts of water and in recognition of current drought conditions and the fact that such conditions are cyclical, water conservation is a priority for the City. There are a variety of options for turf replacement ranging from partial to complete replacement, using hardscape or alternative landscaping, or a combination of these materials. Staff will provide an overview of the current code requirements for landscape and hardscape in yards and setbacks areas and will introduce some examples and best practices for alternative treatments.

Recommendation:

Receive and file.

Background:

The Typical Scenario - Turf

The public's preference for large front yards with turf holds true in both residential and commercial development:



Typical Residential



Typical Commercial

Landscape and Hardscape Regulations

The City's development regulations require large, fully landscaped front yards. The regulations do not specifically mention turf – it is neither required nor prohibited. Given that the preference for turf is so deeply engrained, however, it is typical.

Residential Regulations (including specific plans) – Turf not required

- 20 foot setbacks
- Shall be fully landscaped and irrigated
- No hardscape standards

Commercial Regulations (including specific plans) – Turf not required

- 10 – 20 foot setbacks
- All required yards shall be fully landscaped and irrigated, except for required driveways
- No hardscape standards

Driveways (Residential and Commercial) - Allowed in setbacks and yards

- Yards shall extend the full depth and width of the lot and shall be open from ground to sky, however driveways and walkways are an exception
- No standards for driveway length or width
- No standards for permeable versus non-permeable materials

Water Conservation Regulations

In 2009, the City adopted the Water Conservation in Landscaping Ordinance (Chapter 13.10) acknowledging the following:

- The waters of the state are of limited supply and are subject to ever increasing demands;

- The continuation of California's economic prosperity is dependent on the availability of adequate supplies of water for future uses;
- It is the policy of the state to promote the conservation and efficient use of water and to prevent the waste of this valuable resource;
- Landscapes are essential to the quality of life in California, by providing areas for active and passive recreation, and as an enhancement to the environment by cleaning air and water, preventing erosion, offering fire protection, and replacing ecosystems lost to development; and
- Landscape design, installation, maintenance and management can and should be water efficient; and
- The right to use water is limited to the amount reasonably required for the beneficial use to be served and the right does not and shall not extend to waste or unreasonable method of use.

Limited Reach

For new development and when landscape areas of 2500 sf or larger are being replaced, the code requires that a detailed landscape package be submitted. The package includes a water efficient landscape worksheet and documentation package for water efficient plants, water use, irrigation design, drainage and runoff.

It is important to highlight a few points about the requirements:

- Do not apply to existing development or small area landscape replacement
- They require use of more drought tolerant materials
- Turf is not necessarily prohibited but the area dedicated to turf is limited
- Use of artificial turf is neither required nor prohibited
- Compliance has generated no significant public interest



Commercial – No turf



Commercial – Limited turf



Residential – Artificial turf



Residential – Limited turf
(parkway)

Current Water Restrictions

Level 2 Water Supply Shortage

The State of California is in the fourth year of a serious drought and water conservation is both recommended and mandated. The City recently declared a level 2 water supply shortage in accordance with the water conservation section of the City code (Section 13.03) and is restricting watering outdoor landscape areas to two days per week for limited amounts of time. Excessive runoff and washing down hard surfaces is also restricted.

Parkway Design Guide

In May 2014, the City adopted guidelines for alternative parkway landscaping that incorporate water efficient landscape and permeable hardscape alternatives in parkways. This was an initial step to provide guidance and encourage replacement of water hungry turf. Some of these guidelines may be applicable for front yards and setback areas (Attachment A).

Early Adopters

Many property owners have realized that turf requires a great deal of water to keep green and the alternative of not watering creates an aesthetically displeasing street frontage and contributes to dust and erosion. Many of these “early adopters” have replaced their parkways and some have replaced their front yards with water efficient alternative landscape and hardscape.

It is important to note that without standards or guidelines from the City, the results are varied. The most successful results achieve water conservation, are aesthetically pleasing and comply with stormwater run-off regulations. These often incorporate a combination of permeable hardscape and drought tolerant/native plant materials. The least successful have replaced large areas of turf with non-permeable hardscape such as cement or asphalt which is less aesthetically pleasing and increases runoff conditions that do not comply with low impact development and stormwater regulations.



Non-permeable



Permeable

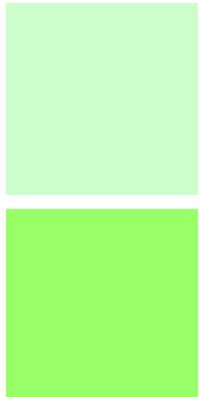
Analysis:

Staff will present standards and guidelines for alternative and drought tolerant landscape and hardscape treatments developed by other municipalities and review elements of the City Parkway Design Guide to begin a discussion to develop turf replacement policies or standards appropriate for the City.

Approved:

Scott Charney

Attachment



PARKWAY DESIGN GUIDE

City of Signal Hill

March 2014



JUNE 3



CITY OF SIGNAL HILL

2175 Cherry Avenue • Signal Hill, CA 90755-3799

June 9, 2015

AGENDA ITEM

TO: HONORABLE CHAIR
AND MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM: SCOTT CHARNEY *SC*
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: MINUTES

Summary:

Attached for your review and approval are the minutes of last month's regular meeting.

Recommendation:

Approve.

**A REGULAR MEETING OF THE CITY OF SIGNAL HILL
PLANNING COMMISSION**
May 12, 2015
7:00 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Benson called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

ROLL CALL

The Commission Secretary conducted roll call.

Present: Chair Tom Benson
 Commissioner Devon Austin
 Commissioner Shannon Murphy
 Commissioner Rose Richárd

Excused Absence: Vice-Chair Jane Fallon

Staff present:

- 1) Community Development Director Scott Charney
- 2) Associate Planner Colleen Doan
- 3) Assistant Planner Selena Alanis
- 4) Assistant City Attorney David Kwon
- 5) Sr. Engineering Technician II Anthony Caraveo

In addition, there were 14 people in attendance.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Benson led the audience in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

Stephanie Gillett, Signal Hill Petroleum, spoke to the Commission to follow up on comments made regarding parking at the Gateway Center. Overflow parking signs have been installed in two different areas in the parking lot.

PRESENTATION

The Planning Commission presented the quarterly Beautification Award to Nicholas and Mary De Los Reyes, the owners of the residence at 2001 Obispo Avenue, for improvements to their property including low maintenance landscaping and the hand crafted rock designs on the garden walls and mailbox stand. Ms. De Los Reyes thanked the Commission for the recognition and explained their goal of creating attractive areas for the community to enjoy.

PUBLIC HEARING

1. A Revised Amendment to Title 16 Entitled “Oil Code” and Chapter 20.52 Entitled “Site Plan And Design Review” Establishing Regulations to Allow Development On Top Of and In Close Proximity To Abandoned Wells and Revising Methane Assessment and Mitigation Procedures

Community Development Director Scott Charney read the form of notice and gave an introduction, and Associate Planner Colleen Doan gave the staff report.

Chair Benson paused to ask if there were any questions from the Commission before proceeding with the Well Abandonment Report from Tom Walker, Evans & Walker.

Commissioner Murphy asked who fills the role of Oil Services Coordinator indicated in the staff report. Staff clarified that this position is filled by a contract City employee. She also asked for clarification on the suspension of leak tests, and staff advised that this was due to a change in policy by the Division of Oil Gas and Geothermal Resources (DOGGR). Commissioner Murphy asked if there was a specific depth or level at which the water study was conducted. Staff advised that the study had included multiple levels and that the focus was on drinking water sources.

Commissioner Austin asked if the water quality study included reclaimed water. Staff clarified that the study focused on drinking water.

Chair Benson asked about details of the binders for the Well Abandonment Reports. Staff described the contents of the binders.

Chair Benson asked if methane mitigation has historically been performed in the City. Staff advised that it has been done on a regular basis as needed. He also asked if there was a definition of idle wells and who had generated the definition. Staff advised the definition was created by DOGGR.

Tom Walker of Evans & Walker presented on the abandoned well equivalency standard and the Well Abandonment Report.

Chair Benson stated the Oil Code Amendment has been a team effort from several consultants, staff and Signal Hill Petroleum.

Chair Benson opened the public hearing and requested Sean McDaniel from Signal Hill Petroleum to comment on the new gas facility being installed at Drill Site #2.

The following member of the public spoke regarding the project:

- 1) Sean McDaniel, Signal Hill Petroleum, spoke in favor of the amendment and stated that gas plant construction materials will improve vapor recovery to

Signal Hill Petroleum. Mr. McDaniel clarified that Signal Hill Petroleum does not use fracking methods.

There being no additional questions, Chair Benson closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Austin stated that having a visual of the equivalency standard was helpful in understanding the requirement.

Commissioner Richárd thanked staff for their effort on the Oil and Gas Code Amendment.

Commissioner Murphy thanked staff for updating the Amendment with clarifications and returning it to the Planning Commission to review. She stated the Amendment was thorough and comprehensive.

Chair Benson stated his appreciation for the coordination between the various consultants and staff and noted the Amendment is readily understandable.

It was moved by Commissioner Murphy and seconded by Commissioner Richárd to rescind Resolution 769-04-15 (April 14, 2015 Planning Commission meeting), and to waive further reading and adopt the following resolution:

Resolution No. 770-05-15 entitled:

A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF SIGNAL HILL, RECOMMENDING CITY COUNCIL APPROVAL OF ORDINANCE AMENDMENT 15-01, AMENDING TITLE 16 ENTITLED "OIL CODE" AND CHAPTER 20.52 ENTITLED "SITE PLAN AND DESIGN REVIEW" ESTABLISHING REGULATIONS TO ALLOW DEVELOPMENT ON TOP OF AND IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO ABANDONED WELLS AND REVISING METHANE ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION PROCEDURES AND SITE RESTORATION STANDARDS

The following vote resulted:

AYES: CHAIR BENSON; COMMISSIONERS AUSTIN, MURPHY AND RICHÁRD

NOES: NONE

ABSENT: VICE-CHAIR FALLOON

ABSTAIN: NONE

The motion carried 4/0.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

2. "Non-Traditional Uses" - "Athletic Training Facilities" and "Wholesale Automobile Sales"

Assistant Planner Selena Alanis gave the staff report.

Chair Benson asked for any questions from the Commission.

Commissioner Murphy asked about the status of the indoor soccer business that is trying to operate on Obispo Avenue. Staff advised that a Conditional Use Permit would be required. Commissioner Murphy stated she would like to look at using a performance standard model similar to tattoo parlors and trucking yards for athletic training facilities.

Chair Benson requested staff examine the definition of athletic training facilities and research what other regulatory agencies have done.

Commissioner Austin supported establishing operation standards for zoning.

Commissioner Murphy said the City should set standards to avoid the necessity of performing code enforcement for these types of businesses.

Staff advised there is no one "box" answer and they will return with a workshop.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Commissioner Murphy requested that Item No. 3, meeting minutes for April 14, 2015, be pulled for discussion as she was not at the April meeting.

Commission Received and Filed Consent Calendar Items No. 4, 5 and 6.

It was moved by Chair Murphy and seconded by Commissioner Austin to receive and file Consent Calendar Item Nos. 4, 5 and 6.

The motion carried 4/0.

Commission Receives and Files Consent Calendar Item No. 3.

It was moved by Commissioner Richárd and seconded by Commissioner Austin to receive and file Consent Calendar Item No. 3.

The motion carried 3/0/1 (Commissioner Murphy abstained).

COMMISSION NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Austin stated she was pleased with the new signs installed by Signal Hill Petroleum at the Gateway Center.

Chair Benson noted the Signal Hill Chamber of Commerce was holding a luncheon on May 14, 2015 at the Delightful Crepes Café.

Chair Benson stressed the importance of water conservation.

Chair Benson noted that the parkway/work on the sidewalk at 2799 E. 21st Street looks good. However, he was concerned the flashing will rust and fade over time.

Chair Richárd reminded the Commission that there is an open house at the Police Department on Saturday, May 16th from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Commissioner Murphy stated that the new signs at the Costco Gas Station seemed to be working to help direct the flow of traffic.

Commissioner Murphy reported the 99 Cent store had been closed for a short period of time by the Health Department.

Commissioner Murphy stated that CalTrans had opened the exit at Spring Street and the 405 Freeway.

It was moved by Commissioner Murphy and seconded by Commissioner Richárd to adjourn to the next regular meeting of the Planning Commission to be held on Tuesday, June 9, 2015.

Chair Benson stated he would not be able to attend the June 9, 2015 Planning Commission meeting.

The motion carried 4/0.

Chair Benson adjourned the meeting at 9:35 p.m.

TOM BENSON
CHAIR

ATTEST:

SCOTT CHARNEY
COMMISSION SECRETARY

JUNE 4



CITY OF SIGNAL HILL

2175 Cherry Avenue ♦ Signal Hill, CA 90755-3799

June 9, 2015

AGENDA ITEM

TO: HONORABLE CHAIR
AND MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM: SCOTT CHARNEY
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: 2016 PLANNING COMMISSIONERS ACADEMY CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Summary:

The League of California Cities is encouraging submissions from individuals or groups for speakers and session topics for the 2016 conference. To review some of the criteria and guidelines, you can visit their website at:

<http://www.cacities.org/Education-Events/Planning-Commissioners-Academy/Call-for-Proposals>

You'll find information about types of proposals, submission requirements, and discussion forums. If you are interested in making a suggestion, please discuss with the Community Development Director. The deadline for submittal of ideas is Wednesday, July 15, 2015.

Recommendation:

Receive and file.

JUNE 5



CITY OF SIGNAL HILL

2175 Cherry Avenue ♦ Signal Hill, CA 90755-3799

June 9, 2015

AGENDA ITEM

**TO: HONORABLE CHAIR
AND MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION**

**FROM: SELENA ALANIS
ASSISTANT PLANNER**

SUBJECT: CITY COUNCIL FOLLOW-UP

Summary:

Below for your review is a brief summary on the City Council's action from the previous month.

Recommendation:

Receive and file.

Background and Analysis:

1) At the May 19, 2015 City Council meeting, the following items related to the Community Development Department were discussed:

- The second reading of Ordinance Amendment 15-02 amending Title 15 of the Signal Hill Municipal Code entitled "Buildings and Construction" was approved by a vote of 5/0. The ordinance will be in effect on June 18, 2015.
- The City Council adopted Negative Declaration 04/03/15(1), relative to Ordinance Amendment 15-01, amending the oil code, by a vote of 5/0.
- The City Council introduced Ordinance Amendment 15-01, amending Title 16 entitled "Oil Code" and Chapter 20.52 entitled "Site Plan and Design Review" establishing regulations for development on properties with abandoned wells, adding site restoration requirements for well abandonments, revising methane assessment and mitigation procedures for all development and updating the standards and procedures for well surveys, leak testing and venting. The Ordinance was approved by a vote of 5/0.

2) At the June 2, 2015 City Council meeting, the following items related to the Community Development Department were discussed:

- The second reading of Ordinance Amendment 15-02 amending Title 16 entitled "Oil Code" and Chapter 20.52 was approved by a vote of 5/0. The ordinance will become effective on July 2, 2015.
- A Historic Preservation Easement and Lien Release was approved for 2477 Gaviota Avenue in the Crescent Heights Historic District. Should the property default in maintenance, the City may reinstate the lien. The Director of Community Development has reviewed plans for the rehabilitation of the dwelling. The Easement was approved by a vote of 4/1.

Approved by:

Scott Charney

JUNE 6



CITY OF SIGNAL HILL

2175 Cherry Avenue ♦ Signal Hill, CA 90755-3799

June 9, 2015

AGENDA ITEM

**TO: HONORABLE CHAIR
AND MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION**

**FROM: SCOTT CHARNEY
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR**

SUBJECT: DEVELOPMENT STATUS REPORT

Summary:

Attached for your review is the monthly Development Status Report which highlights current projects.

Recommendation:

Receive and file.

City of Signal Hill
Community Development Department
Development Status Report
June 9, 2015

Residential

Address	Project Description	Application	REVIEW			SPDR			CTL			Status
			<u>Director</u> <u>approval</u>	<u>PC</u> <u>approval</u>	<u>CC</u> <u>approval</u>	Expires	1 st Ext.	2 nd Ext.	Expires	1 st Ext.	2 nd Ext.	
2357 Lewis Avenue	Repairs to a fire damaged single-family dwelling Applicant: California Construction	Administrative Review	✓	N/A	N/A	Permit Issued 2/13/15	N/A	N/A	2/8/16			Demolition in process (4/15). Home rebuild begun, rough plumbing and electrical complete (5/15). Drywall and stucco in process (6/15). SA/JH
1790 E. Burnett St.	Renovation of existing house and construction of new 4-car garage with roof deck, workshop and parking court Applicant: Gary Severns	Administrative Review	✓	N/A	N/A	Permit Issued 02/13/14	N/A	N/A	N/A			Approved change from cedar shingles to a composite for reduced maintenance and requested revised color scheme. New color board and rock samples submitted. Installation of rock band is underway. Revised window design for both sides of front door pending (9/14). Rear grade was too steep – Grade reworked and garage foundation poured. Garage framing begun (1/15). Rough plumbing, electrical and HVAC complete (3/15). Garage roof and interior underway (5/15). Built wall on City property w/o permit. Public Works requires removal of wall and any landscaping in ROW (6/15). JH/CTD

City of Signal Hill
Community Development Department
Development Status Report
June 9, 2015

Residential

<u>Address</u>	<u>Project Description</u>	<u>Application</u>	REVIEW			SPDR			CTL			<u>Status</u>
			Director approval	PC approval	CC approval	Expires	1st Ext.	2nd Ext.	Expires	1st Ext.	2nd Ext.	
3240 Cerritos Ave.	New permit issued for interior drywall, plumbing and electrical for remainder of interior of existing house Applicant: Jim Trevillyan	Administrative Review	✓	N/A	N/A	Permit Issued 03/3/15	N/A	N/A	02/26/16			Permit issued but no progress (4/15). JH
2477 Gaviota Ave.	Rehabilitation of the existing single-family dwelling Applicant: Rama Singhal	Administrative Review	In progress	N/A	N/A							Preliminary plans have been submitted for staff review to rehab the exterior of the single-family dwelling. A Historic Preservation Easement and Lien Release were approved by City Council on 6/2/15. SA
2132 Ohio	New drywall, repipe kitchen and bathroom and upgrade electrical panel Applicant: Nicholas Hrebien	Administrative Review	✓	N/A	N/A	Permit Issued 3/12/15						Permit issued (3/15). Inspections have been made to ensure improvements are per the permit (6/15). JH
2311 Ocean View	Add/expand second story decks and "trainhouse" in side and rear yard of existing single-family home Applicant: M/M Hughes	SPDR 08-05	N/A	07/14/09	N/A	Permit Issued 08/16/13	N/A	N/A	08/11/14	9/30/14	03/03/15 	The first extension granted by Director until 9/30/14 (50 days). A second extension granted until 3/03/15. The project is an active Code Enforcement case (6/15). SA/JH

City of Signal Hill
Community Development Department
Development Status Report
June 9, 2015

Residential

Address	Project Description	Application	REVIEW			SPDR			CTL			Status
			Director approval	PC approval	CC approval	Expires	1 st Ext.	2 nd Ext.	Expires	1 st Ext.	2 nd Ext.	
2799 21 st St.	A two-story 3,629 sf SFD and 3 car garage Applicant: Vivir Properties/ Silva Family	SPDR 13-05	N/A	01/14/14	N/A	Permit Issued 7/21/14	N/A	N/A	01/12/16			Rock façade nearly complete. Driveway complete (5/15). Applicant expressed they expect to request the C of O in June (6/15). JH
924 E Vernon St.	Demolition of existing dwelling and detached garage for construction of a new two story 3,230 sf duplex and 4-car garage Applicant: LLG Construction	SPDR 14-02	N/A	06/10/14	N/A	06/10/15	12/10/15					Applicant working with SCE and Public Works on alley improvements (10/14). Plan submitted for 2 nd building plan check (3/15). Letter sent on 5/1/15 to property owner to request 1 st extension. Owner requested 6 month extension. SPDR extended to 12/10/15. SA
3360 Lemon Ave.	A 1,207 sf 2 nd unit over a four-car garage at the rear of a property with a SFD Applicant: Jason Shorrow	SPDR 14-03	N/A	07/08/14	N/A	07/08/15						SPDR approved, signed conditions received. Plan check is complete. Applicant is preparing grading plans for submittal to Public Works and submittals for LA County Fire (6/15). CTD

City of Signal Hill
Community Development Department
Development Status Report
June 9, 2015

Residential

Address	Project Description	Application	REVIEW			SPDR			CTL			Status
			<u>Director</u> <u>approval</u>	<u>PC</u> <u>approval</u>	<u>CC</u> <u>approval</u>	Expires	1 st Ext.	2 nd Ext.	Expires	1 st Ext.	2 nd Ext.	
3347 Brayton Ave.	Revised plans for the remodel of the front SFD to include a 271 sf addition and new 1-car garage on the first floor and a 731 sf second story addition Applicant: Reginald McNulty	SPDR 15-02	N/A	4/14/15	N/A	4/14/16						Site Plan & Design Review approved at the 4/14/15 PC meeting. SA
1995 St. Louis Ave.	A proposal to demolish existing dwelling and detached garage for a new two story 3,187 sf SFD with attached 3-car garage Applicant: Seth Sor	SPDR	N/A	Required	N/A							View Notice sent on 8/4/14. Story poles installed on 8/5/14. PC Workshop #1 on 10/14/14. Applicant revised plans (3/15). View notice sent on 3/31/15. New story poles installed on 4/1/15. PC workshop #2 on 6/9/15. SA

City of Signal Hill
Community Development Department
Development Status Report
June 9, 2015

Residential

Address	Project Description	Application	REVIEW			SPDR			CTL			Status
			<u>Director</u> <u>approval</u>	<u>PC</u> <u>approval</u>	<u>CC</u> <u>approval</u>	Expires	1 st Ext.	2 nd Ext.	Expires	1 st Ext.	2 nd Ext.	
2260 Walnut Ave.	A proposal for a new two story 1,894 sf SFD with attached 2-car garage on a vacant lot Applicant: Santana Investors	SPDR	N/A	Required	N/A							Leak test passed, vent cone was not installed (2/15). Staff has reviewed preliminary plans. The applicant is working on well survey and plans (6/15). SA
2085 Freeman Ave.	A proposal for a new two story 3,746 sf SFD with attached 3-car garage on a vacant lot Applicant: RPP Architects	SPDR	N/A	Required	N/A							Leak test passed and vent cone installed (2/15). The applicant has submitted plans for Planning review and preliminary comments (3/15). Applicant is working on preparation of the Well Assessment Report (6/15). SA/CD
2101 Stanley Avenue	Vacant lot in Hilltop Specific Plan Applicant: Jonathan Spano	Leak Test of Abandoned Oil Well										Leak test passed and vent cone installed (2/15). JH

City of Signal Hill
Community Development Department
Development Status Report
June 9, 2015

Residential

Address	Project Description	Application	REVIEW			SPDR			CTL			Status
			<u>Director</u> approval	<u>PC</u> approval	<u>CC</u> approval	Expires	1 st Ext.	2 nd Ext.	Expires	1 st Ext.	2 nd Ext.	
<u>Large Subdivisions (5 or more lots) and Multi-family Developments</u>												
Crescent Square	25 three-story detached single-family dwellings at the N/E corner of Walnut and Crescent Heights Street	SPDR 14-04 ZOA 14-03 VTTM 72594	N/A	8/12/14	9/2/14	9/02/15						SPDR approved on 8/12/14. Construction is pending plan check submittal and completion of the Oil Code Amendment (2/15). Grading plan has been submitted for plan check (3/15). CC&Rs submitted for review (4/15). Applicant is working on preparation of the Well Assessment Report required under the pending Oil Code Amendment (6/15). SC/SA
Walnut/ Crescent Heights St.	Applicant: SummerHill Homes/Signal Hill Petroleum											
Gundry Hill	Development of 72 multiple-family, affordable units, three and four stories in height and a community building, community garden, tot lot and courtyard with on-site management	SPDR for Administrative Review and approval by the Director of Community Development	Approved 2/18/15	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A				Disposition and Development Agreement approved by the Housing Authority on 2/17/15. California Tax Credit Allocation application submitted to the State by the applicant 3/4/15. Pre-plan check meeting with architect and applicant (6/15). SC/SA
1500 E Hill St.	Applicant: Meta Housing											

City of Signal Hill
Community Development Department
Development Status Report
June 9, 2015

Residential

Address	Project Description	Application	REVIEW			SPDR			CTL			Status
			<u>Director</u> <u>approval</u>	<u>PC</u> <u>approval</u>	<u>CC</u> <u>approval</u>	Expires	1 st Ext.	2 nd Ext.	Expires	1 st Ext.	2 nd Ext.	
2599 Pacific Coast Highway	Residential SP-10 1 st concept plan had 14 attached units 2 nd concept plan had 12 attached units 3 rd concept plan had 10 detached units 4 th concept plan has 9 units	Preliminary review PC Workshop 8/14/12 PC Workshop 9/9/14 SPDR	N/A	Required	Required							Staff met w/owner who reported unsuccessful lot consolidation out-reach effort (9/12). Staff met w/applicant to review a new concept plan on 9/13. Revised design (10 detached units) more closely met the intent of SP-10. Access and guest parking revised (6/14). Commission requested design changes. Applicant's revised conceptual plans (9 units) were previewed and met most of the development standards. Due to proposed height / view policy, applicant to proceed with view analysis outreach (9/14). Revised plans submitted for conceptual review. Proposal has one less unit, setbacks now meet the code, but some buildings still exceed height limit and view policy outreach is pending. Rough grading to be submitted to review options to reduce heights (5/15). Staff met with applicant and agent to review revised plans and will prepare a timeline for submittal (6/15). CTD
	Applicant: Mike Afiuny											

City of Signal Hill
Community Development Department
Development Status Report
June 9, 2015

Residential

Address	Project Description	Application	REVIEW			SPDR			CTL			Status
			<u>Director</u> <u>approval</u>	<u>PC</u> <u>approval</u>	<u>CC</u> <u>approval</u>	Expires	1 st Ext.	2 nd Ext.	Expires	1 st Ext.	2 nd Ext.	
1939 Temple Avenue	Potential sale of the property for development of residential homes (existing non-conforming industrial buildings on site)	Leak Test of Abandoned Oil Wells										DOGGR maps indicate 2 wells in the vicinity of the property. Applicant is trying to locate wells, but have been unsuccessful to date. The wells are expected to be under the existing buildings. Applicant is preparing to demolish the existing buildings to leak test the wells (3/15). Applicant is still working to locate the wells and come up with a plan to leak test the wells (5/15). No update (6/15). JH

City of Signal Hill
Community Development Department
Development Status Report
June 9, 2015

Commercial-Industrial

Address	Project Description	Application	REVIEW			SPDR/CUP			CTL			Status
			Director approval	PC approval	CC approval	Expires	1st Ext.	2nd Ext.	Expires	1st Ext.	2nd Ext.	
2653 Walnut Ave. 2H Construction	An approximate 8,000 sf warehouse/office building Applicant: 2H Construction	Administrative Review	✓	N/A	N/A	Permit Issued 04/13/11	N/A	N/A	Prior to CTL			Exterior complete. Still awaiting revised TI plan and working on Public Works conditions of approval (4/15). TI plans submitted on 6/1/15. JH
1680 E. Hill St. AUHS	31,739 sf TI for additional classrooms Applicant: American Univ. of Health Sciences	Administrative Review	✓	N/A	N/A	Permit issued 04/17/14	N/A	N/A	01/12/15  Inspection Needed			Still no progress. Staff will follow up with applicant to verify interest in pursuing with tenant improvement (3/15). AUHS contacted staff to advise they will begin project very soon (4/15). JH
2701 Cherry Avenue	ADA parking lot improvements Applicant: Best Buy	Administrative Review	✓	N/A	N/A	Permit Ready	N/A	N/A				Permit ready for issuance (3/15). Building permit issued 6/1/15. JH

City of Signal Hill
Community Development Department
Development Status Report
June 9, 2015

Commercial-Industrial

Address	Project Description	Application	REVIEW			SPDR/CUP			CTL			Status
			Director approval	PC approval	CC approval	Expires	1st Ext.	2nd Ext.	Expires	1st Ext.	2nd Ext.	
2162 E. Willow St.	1,106 sf TI for new restaurant	Administrative Review	✓	N/A	N/A	Permit issued 4/28/15	N/A	N/A	10/19/16			Permit issued 4/28/15. Underground plumbing begun (5/15). Sign permit issued 6/3/15. Framing and drywall in process (6/15). CTD/JH
	Applicant: WaBa Grill											
3355 Olive Avenue	Proposal for new 5,000 sf warehouse and office building	Administrative Review	✓	N/A	N/A							Staff reviewed preliminary plans. 2 nd building plan check comments returned to applicant. Methane Mitigation Plans submitted for review (6/15). SA
	Applicant: Roger Vititow											
3201-3225 Pacific Coast Highway	Tentative Parcel Map to subdivide an existing 1.8-acre lot into two lots	71592, extension granted	N/A	11/08/11	N/A	11/8/13	11/8/14	11/8/15	N/A	N/A	N/A	3 rd TPM ext granted per State law. TPM valid until 11/8/15. Property has new owner. Staff has prepared a letter to inquire about future intent for subdivision from new property owner (2/15). CTD
Quality Inn	Applicant: William Suh											

City of Signal Hill
Community Development Department
Development Status Report
June 9, 2015

Commercial-Industrial

Address	Project Description	Application	REVIEW			SPDR/CUP			CTL			Status
			Director approval	PC approval	CC approval	Expires	1st Ext.	2nd Ext.	Expires	1st Ext.	2nd Ext.	
845 E. Willow St.	A 18,994 sf medical/office building	SPDR 13-02	N/A	07/09/13	N/A	Permit Issued 02/25/14	N/A	N/A	2/15/16			Conformity Report went to the Planning Commission on 12/09/14. Parking lot asphalt complete (1/15). Exterior steel complete and exterior finish started (2/15). Plans approved for redesign of front/glass curtain wall. Review of stairway plan in process. Rough plumbing and electrical complete. Stucco has begun (4/15). Finish stucco and windows in process. Stairway and greenscreen fencing approved (5/15). Windows and façade in process.(6/15) JH
2H Construction	Applicant: 2H Construction											

City of Signal Hill
Community Development Department
Development Status Report
June 9, 2015

Commercial-Industrial

Address	Project Description	Application	REVIEW			SPDR/CUP			CTL			Status	
			Director approval	PC approval	CC approval	Expires	1st Ext.	2nd Ext.	Expires	1st Ext.	2nd Ext.		
995 E. 27 th St.	A 2,205 sf religious center at the NW corner of California and 27th Street	SPDR 13-04 CUP 13-02	N/A	10/08/13	10/15/13	Permit Issued 10/31/13	N/A	N/A	4/30/15	7/20/15  43			<p>At Jan. 2015 meeting, PC recommended finishing the project as approved (no additional parking is provided to accommodate added floor area). Applicant is considering options, any changes will be reviewed by the PC. Rough plumbing and electrical is complete (1/15).</p> <p>Methane venting, drainage filtration systems installed. 60 day CTL exp ltr sent (3/15). Dry wall complete, parking lot partially paved, façade in process (4/15). Electrical conduit to building complete. Ext stucco/scratchcoat done (5/15).</p> <p>Applicant indicated they wish to complete the project within 40 days in time for the religious holiday, however, they continue to request interior and exterior design revisions, none of which meet the parking code and all would require Commission review (5/15).</p> <p>Stucco, windows, and doors complete. AC installed (6/15).</p> <p>CTD/JH</p>
LBIC Center	Project Manager: Tarak Mohamed	Applicant: Abdel Alomar											

City of Signal Hill
Community Development Department
Development Status Report
June 9, 2015

Commercial-Industrial

Address	Project Description	Application	REVIEW			SPDR/CUP			CTL			Status
			Director approval	PC approval	CC approval	Expires	1st Ext.	2nd Ext.	Expires	1st Ext.	2nd Ext.	
1660 E. Spring St. BMW Dealership	A 77,810 sf showroom, sales, and service facility and display area for automobile sales Applicant: Sonic/BMW	SPDR 14-01	N/A	4/8/14	N/A	Permit Issued 9/16/14	N/A	N/A	09/5/16			Foundation and retention basin started (10/14). Street improvements and utilities underway (11/14). Methane barrier complete (12/14). Masonry complete (2/15). Slab and roof on garage completed. Show-room steel, slab poured (3/15). Street improvements completed on Spring (4/15). Sidewalks on Walnut and 29 th completed (5/15). Framing almost complete. MEPs in process. Applicant projects that construction will be completed at the end of July (6/15). JH/SA

City of Signal Hill
Community Development Department
Development Status Report
June 9, 2015

Commercial-Industrial

Address	Project Description	Application	REVIEW			SPDR/CUP			CTL			Status
			Director approval	PC approval	CC approval	Expires	1st Ext.	2nd Ext.	Expires	1st Ext.	2nd Ext.	
2953 Obispo Ave.	A request to allow indoor soccer as a conditionally permitted use in the City.	ZOA CUP	N/A	Required	Required							Deposit submitted to begin coordination of workshops w/HOAs (7/14). Applicant has requested to temporarily postpone request (12/14). Applicant intends to proceed w/CUP request but no application has been submitted to date (5/15). CTD
Futsal Indoor Soccer	Applicant: Mike Biddle											
2750 Signal Parkway	New freestanding carport mounted PV system Applicant: Har-Bro Construction	Administrative Review	✓	N/A	N/A	Permit issued 2/9/15			8/2/16			Roughs and structural approved (4/15). So Cal Edison reviewing solar connection (5/15). Project finalized (6/15). JH

City of Signal Hill
Community Development Department
Development Status Report
June 9, 2015

Commercial-Industrial

Planning Commissioner Terms

- Terms for Commissioners Richárd and Fallon will expire on May 31, 2015. Reappointment for both Commissioners was confirmed at the City Council meeting on 6/2/15.

Business Licenses and Permit Summary

- Planning Department staff reviewed and approved 6 business licenses.
- Building Department staff issued 18 permits including 1 residential solar permit. The valuation of the projects is approximately \$157,000 with permit revenues at \$2,700.

Training/Forums

- Colleen Doan and Selena Alanis attended the 7th (final) session of Signal Hill's Leadership and Management Academy.

Current Projects

- 2013 Building Code Ordinance submitted to City Council on 5/5/15; the second reading was held on 5/19/15 and the Ordinance was adopted.
- The Oil Code Amendment was submitted to City Council on 5/19/15 and the Notice of Determination for the Oil Code Amendment was posted on 5/21/15. The second reading was held on 6/2/15 and the Ordinance was adopted.
- The 2015/16 Budget Workshop was presented on 5/26/15 and no substantial changes were requested. Commissioners Benson, Murphy and Richárd attended.
- Solar Permitting Ordinance is in process and will be provided to Sustainable City Committee on 7/28/15.

Ongoing / Upcoming Projects

- Vacant Parcel Ordinance.
- Oil Well Inspections.
- Meeting with Mercedes Benz regarding expansion opportunities.
- Smoking and E-cigarette regulations.

City of Signal Hill
Community Development Department
Development Status Report
June 9, 2015

Wireless Telecommunications Facilities

Address	Project Description	Application	REVIEW			SPDR			CTL			Status
			Director approval	PC approval	CC approval	Expires	1st Ext.	2nd Ext.	Expires	1st Ext.	2nd Ext.	
2411 Skyline Dr.	A request to add 1 new Tower Dish to the Cell Tower as allowed by CUP 99-05 Applicant: Crown Castle	Administrative to modify CUP 99-05	✓	N/A	N/A	Permit Issued 10/2/14	N/A	N/A				Crown Castle has new management and is working to resolve interference issues w/ 2 residents. Plans approved and permit issued for 1 new dish for Clearwire 10/2/14. An interference study has been completed and staff met with Crown Castle to facilitate installation of interference devices and review CUP conditions of approval (12/14). Interference resolution and compliance with 1 CUP condition is pending (2/15). The interference problem has been corrected and current tenants have current business licenses. An updated audit of equipment and tenants is ongoing (5/15). CTD
1855 Coronado rooftop facility	Replacing 56" panel with 72" panel antennas, screen box in sector A & B will be increased by 3' Applicant: Core Dev.	Administrative to modify CUP 08-03	✓	N/A	N/A		N/A	N/A				Plans ready for permit issuance (4/15). Reminder sent to applicant (6/15). SA

City of Signal Hill
Community Development Department
Development Status Report
June 9, 2015

Wireless Telecommunications Facilities

Address	Project Description	Application	REVIEW			SPDR			CTL			Status
			Director approval	PC approval	CC approval	Expires	1st Ext.	2nd Ext.	Expires	1st Ext.	2nd Ext.	
2201 Orange Ave. T-Mobile on Crown Castle Monopalm	A request to add 3 new 8' panel antennas and relocate 3 existing antennas on 3 arms of the existing monopalm	Administrative to modify CUP 07-04	✓	N/A	N/A		N/A	N/A				Staff provided comments for the applicant (2/15). CTD/JH
2652 Gundry Avenue T-Mobile	Adding (1) 2' microwave dish to an existing wireless communication monopalm	Administrative to modify CUP 10-01	Under Review									Planning Department approved change 4/29/15. Permit ready to issue (5/15). Permit issued 5/28/15. SA
2525 Cherry Avenue Sprint	Removing and replacing the 3 existing antennas	Administrative to modify CUP 02-01	Under Review									Planning Department approved plans to go into building plan check (6/15). SA
2633 Cherry Avenue AT&T	Rooftop Wireless Telecommunication Facility for AT&T Applicant: Core Dev.	CUP	N/A	Required	Required							Staff met with the applicant to review preliminary plans for the rooftop facility and suggested revisions to elevations and plans for aesthetics (5/14 and 7/14). Applicant preparing plans and expects to resubmit (5/15). SA

JUNE 7



CITY OF SIGNAL HILL

2175 Cherry Avenue ♦ Signal Hill, CA 90755-3799

June 9, 2015

AGENDA ITEM

**TO: HONORABLE CHAIR
AND MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION**

**FROM: SCOTT CHARNEY
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR**

SUBJECT: IN THE NEWS

Summary:

Articles compiled by staff that may be of interest to the Commission include:

- Releasing the Parking Brake on Economic Development
- Merger Wave Lands in U.S. Auto Retailing
- Neighbors of Cross Fit Gyms Strain for the Sound of Silence
- Small Goes Big in Hong Kong
- In California, the Grass is Always Greener with Paint

Recommendation:

Receive and file.

Releasing the Parking Brake on Economic Development

Cities flourish with reduced parking requirements.

By **BRIAN CANEPA** and **JOSHUA KARLIN-RESNICK**



THE COST IS INVISIBLE TO CONSUMERS AND POLICY MAKERS, but every developer knows just how much parking requirements figure into any pro forma. ↴ The minimum requirements in place in most municipalities—one to two spaces per residential unit—add an estimated six to 16 percent to per-unit costs through a combination of construction expenses and the opportunity costs of using a limited development envelope on car storage rather than revenue-generating living space. ↴ Requirements for retail uses are often much higher. A recent study by the Transportation Research Board found that parking was oversupplied in mixed use districts by an

average of 65 percent, meaning that between four and 10 percent of the added costs—likely much more for nonresidential uses—are pure waste. ↴ Developers and planners in Petaluma, California, can attest to the power of eliminating this form of forced waste. Fifteen years ago, Petaluma's Theatre District was marked by surface parking, vacant lots, and derelict industrial buildings. Planners considered it a prime opportunity to extend and reinvigorate its downtown with a mixed use district anchored by a multiscreen cinema. In the end, easing parking requirements in the area became crucial to making that vision a reality. ↴ Instead of forcing the developer, Basin Street Properties, to provide as much as one space per 50 or 100 square feet of bar or restaurant, the city allowed the company to determine how much parking was reasonable. Considering the on-street parking supply in the area and how the project's different uses might have different periods of peak parking demand, the developer settled on one space per 300 square feet across the project.

Getting parking right might be a more dependable and longer lasting form of economic development.

Vin Smith, a planning consultant who represented Basin Street in the planning and entitlement process, says the project would “absolutely not” have penciled out without the city’s flexibility on parking. “We easily saved a floor or two of parking garage construction,” Smith says. At a price tag of roughly \$20,000 per space, that means the reduced parking requirements saved as much as \$3 million.

Little more than a decade later, it’s obvious that the now built-out Theatre District provides a compelling argument for that kind of flexibility. The area is alive on Friday night: Residents are arriving home from work, office workers are heading to happy hour, and people are walking to catch a movie at the 12-screen Boulevard Cinemas, a meal at Bistro 100, or to find something sweet at MoYo’s Frozen Yogurt Lounge. Smith, who lives in the area, says the parking supply is well used but not overloaded.

A critical time

For the last century or so, cities have been struggling with the paradox of parking: Cars need large amounts of space, but making room for them comes at a direct cost to the vibrancy that makes the people in the cars want to come in the first place.

A 2013 study called “The Effects of Urban Fabric Changes on Real Estate Property Tax,” by researchers at the University of Connecticut, estimated that Hartford dedicates 15 percent of CBD land area—more than 7.5 million square feet—to parking. If each office worker needs 250 square feet of building space (a conservative estimate), that means the city could accommodate 30,000 additional sorely needed jobs if that land were dedicated to one-story office buildings rather than car-storage space.

The same study estimated that if the amount of land dedicated to surface parking had stayed the same as it was in 1950, the annual loss to government coffers would equal nearly \$22 million in Hartford, \$6.5 million in nearby New Haven, and \$3 million in Arlington, Virginia.

The story is doubtless the same in many cities across the country, and the lost economic activity is all the more damaging in an era of tight municipal budgets. Even as the economy recovers from the 2008 financial crisis, every underused parcel in a city’s downtown represents a costly missed opportunity.

Economic development is a central charge of local elected officials and their appointees, and their strategies often take the form of tax breaks for companies that promise a short-term infusion of jobs. Getting parking right might be a more dependable and longer lasting form of economic development.

Consider the examples of Ann Arbor, Michigan; Columbus, Indiana; and Sacramento, California. These three cities—of different sizes, with different development contexts, and in different parts of the country—have each reduced or eliminated off-street parking requirements downtown and in mixed use areas, yielding a range of benefits.

In some places, lifting onerous parking requirements has made infill development more financially viable, opening the door to projects that renew derelict buildings or activate what were previously inactive hardscapes or garbage-strewn lots. For others, it has simplified the development process, speeding the pace of revitalization.

In no cases have the reduced requirements led to the parking shortages or economic losses that are frequently feared.

Sacramento's sea change

Developer Michael Heller says that for years, Sacramento was a large central city with lofty, progressive ideals but conservative parking practices that more or less matched those in the suburbs, where land was plentiful enough to make it easy to surround a building with a sea of parking at a reasonable cost. Where land was much scarcer, the requirements led to either scaled down ambitions or time-consuming, costly, and highly political efforts to waive parking requirements and make projects viable.

"On one side of their mouths, everyone at the city was espousing green principles and encouraging transit-oriented development, but on the development-application processing side, you had to deal with this antiquated code," Heller says. "You got pulled in two directions."

All that changed in 2012. The city eliminated parking minimums in its Central Business and Arts and Entertainment districts, reduced minimums in some other parts of the city, and allowed developers to reduce those already lower requirements with programs and facilities that encouraged access by non-auto modes. The changes were rooted in a study that found that even at peak times, between 40 and 65 percent of spaces were unoccupied in five focus areas in central Sacramento.

The reforms have led to a sea change in the development process. Under the old regime, most developers found they simply did not have the land to build all the required parking and would instead apply for a waiver. Processing it would take anywhere from four to eight months and often ended up being a "lose-lose situation," says Greg Sandlund, an associate planner for the city who played a key role in the city's parking-requirement overhaul.

The planning commission and city council denied just one parking ratio waiver between 2000 and 2010, which meant that "the community got worked up and the development was delayed," even though the parking that was ultimately provided was far lower than the code required. "It became a game that only the sophisticated knew how to play," Heller says. "It wasn't a genuine process and it took a lot of time and money."

Today, the city's parking code aligns with the visions espoused in the general plan, allowing planners to simply enter "no planning issues" (that is, no planning problems) on applications for projects that are looking to build the amount of parking developers think is needed to compete in the marketplace. Heller points to two developments to explain how the code update changed his business.

In the mid-2000s, his company built the Midtown Art Retail Restaurant Scene, a block-long, mixed use, adaptive-reuse development in a thriving neighborhood just a few blocks east of the Califor-

Today, Sacramento's parking code aligns with the visions espoused in the general plan, allowing planners to simply enter "no planning issues" (that is, no planning problems) on applications for projects that are looking to build the amount of parking developers think is needed to compete in the marketplace.

nia state capitol. Heller says it has 55,000 square feet of retail and office space, which means the parking regulations required roughly 150 dedicated parking spaces on a parcel that was already built lot line to lot line, with no room to add vehicle storage.

Heller cobbled together agreements with five small lots near the building to account for some of that parking and had to go to the planning commission to waive the rest of the requirement. The process was "a lot of work" and ultimately delayed the project by several months, he says.

Today, Heller is moving forward on another adaptive reuse project about a mile to the southwest, next to a light-rail station, called the Ice Blocks. With 60,000 square feet of office space, 50,000 square feet of retail, and 150 housing units, the project would have required more than 500 parking spaces under the old regulations. Instead, Heller is providing two spots for every three residential units and minimal parking for the office and retail space, and he will be implementing a robust transportation demand management program to encourage people to come to the site by other modes. The project is moving forward quickly, spared the expense and delays that had been a part of the previous process.

"The city really listened to us on this topic and took bold measures to embrace true green principles in the new parking code," Heller says. "I tip my hat to staff on this because the city is now teed up for real growth with a framework for progressive, thoughtful infill projects."

Sacramento's development market is still stuck in a post-economic-crisis slump, having built just 200 housing units last year, but Sandlund says that sparing developers from building millions of dollars' worth of unneeded parking has helped move more projects into the pipeline. "I don't think there's been an explosion of development, but if anything, at least the parking code isn't getting in the way of development," Sandlund adds.

There is evidence that larger economic impacts are right around the corner. One proposal that entered the pipeline last year was the i15 project, a proposed eight-story mixed use development with 96 residential units, more than 5,000 square feet of ground-floor retail, and zero on-site parking. The regulatory changes have also had a major impact on things like tenant improvements. Whereas transforming a retail space into one suitable for a restaurant, with higher parking requirements, would have required a lengthy trip through the waiver process, such improvements can be made by right today.

Columbus kicks the rules to the curb

Those unfamiliar with Columbus, Indiana (pop. 45,000), have no reason to suspect this small city would be on the cutting edge of parking policy. But

→ The i15 multifamily project, now in Sacramento, California's development pipeline, would never have been proposed for a small infill site if on-site parking had been required. Instead, residents with cars will use an adjacent existing public lot; those without cars will have access to Zipcars two blocks away and public transit just a block away.

in 2008, it eliminated parking requirements in its downtown district. The change was part of a larger effort to revitalize the area, and its implementation amounted to a “non-event,” rooted in a “shared understanding of where downtown was going,” says planning director Jeff Bergman, AICP.

“There was a feeling at the time that the local government, through the zoning ordinance, didn’t have nor really could have enough information to accurately regulate parking downtown, not without potentially causing some sort of negative consequence,” he says. Without reliable metrics, the city decided to leave these decisions to the market.

Bergman notes that the change has allowed developers and planners to focus on other aspects of projects, instead of getting hung up on whether a project was going to meet its parking requirements. This has led to better developments that reflect the true vision of developers and the needs of their tenants.

As an example, Bergman points to a regional headquarters for the First Financial Bank, in the southwest corner of downtown. The combined bank branch and office building development opened in 2014 with 62 surface parking spaces, built to accommodate the anticipated needs of employees traveling to the office for regular meetings.

Parking was a non-issue during the development approval process. And the limited parking approach has been successful from the developer’s perspective.

The Cole, a four-story mixed use residential building across the street, is another development that has gone up since the regulatory change. The project wrapped around a redevelopment authority-sponsored parking garage that was already going up on the same block, and the developer was able to negotiate with the authority to reserve 200 spaces for use by the 146 residential units in the new building.

Developer Matt Griffin, who led the effort for the Buckingham Companies, says the Cole shows that eliminating parking requirements does not mean developers will stint on parking. In the case of the Cole and infill projects in other places, it has simply meant he has had the flexibility to provide only the amount of parking that his company thought was truly needed for the developments to succeed.

“Most jurisdictions are coming around to the point that at least for multifamily projects, it’s our business, and if we underpark ourselves, we’re going to destroy our primary cash flow,” Griffin says.



Ann Arbor at the forefront

Although it is near the epicenter of the auto industry, Ann Arbor was an early trendsetter in minimizing the role of parking in the development equation; it eliminated most of its downtown parking requirements in the 1960s. Coupled with a long-standing commitment to building publicly owned and managed structured parking and pricing it at market rates, the lack of requirements laid the groundwork for what is one of Michigan’s most vibrant downtowns. Ann Arbor boasts retail occupancy rates that are among the highest in the state and a mere three percent residential vacancy rate.

According to the city’s zoning code, downtown projects that adhere to the letter of the code are not required to provide any parking, and those that exceed floor-area limits are required to provide just one space per 1,000 square feet of additional floor area, far lower than typical requirements.

Susan Pollay, executive director of the city’s Downtown Development Authority, says the low requirements have had a direct impact on the city’s development environment. “There has been a strategy that from the beginning [eliminated] parking at the heart of our zoning, so we’ve been able to build a strong downtown core,” she says.

Over the years, developers have steadily gobbled up surface parking lots for projects. Of late, the focus has been in the area around East Washington and South Division streets. On that corner, Pollay says, a small building surrounded by surface parking was recently replaced by a 10-story residential building with a grocery store and fast-food restaurant on the ground floor and far less parking than zoning codes typically require.

BUFFALO, NEW YORK

“People walked around downtown and saw all this surface parking that is ample and underpriced and said, ‘We want development here, we want buildings here.’”

DANIEL HESS
associate professor
of urban and regional
planning, University of
Buffalo

Next door, another residential high rise went up on a lot with a low building and surface parking lot. Across Washington, the McKinley Towne Center filled in its driveway with a new retail building to create a steady, active street front along East Liberty Street.

Across downtown, at the corner of Huron and Ashley streets, a recently built mixed use residential high rise with minimal parking will soon be joined by a new hotel that will provide no parking, replacing another low-density development surrounded by a sea of asphalt. There is plenty of parking in a city-owned parking garage down the block.

The University of Michigan's tens of thousands of students, faculty, staff, and supporters provide a sizable and steady market for Ann Arbor businesses, which are located close to the campus. But the city shows that the fears that drive policy makers to err on the side of oversupplying parking are largely unfounded. If a tight parking supply really limited an area's economic potential, Ann Arbor businesses would be struggling, university or not. Instead, despite high parking prices and long wait lists for garage permits, the development market could scarcely be hotter.

“Apartments are filled to the brim,” Pollay says. “If parking was the driving factor, that wouldn't be the case because none of them are providing parking at the rates that would typically be required.”

An idea spreads

Buffalo, New York, may soon become the next example—and the biggest to date—of what can happen when a city takes parking out of the development-review process. At press time, the city was about to become the first in the country to eliminate parking re-

quirements citywide, in hopes of spurring development on some of its many surface parking lots.

The change was part of a zoning code update that was focused on revitalizing the city's downtown, which today contains two parking spaces for every job. City officials saw those parking spaces as a massive opportunity.

“People walked around downtown and saw all this surface parking that is ample and underpriced and said, ‘We want development here, we want buildings here,’” says Daniel Hess, an associate professor of urban and regional planning at the University of Buffalo who has studied the city's zoning code reform process.

That a Rust Belt city like Buffalo has eliminated parking minimums is evidence that we have come a long way in how we think about downtown development. The idea that providing ample parking was the key to economic success has begun to give way to the realization that too much parking can cause economic stagnation. Sacramento, Columbus, Ann Arbor, and, soon, Buffalo are leading examples of how much economic development potential is sitting right under many cities' tires. ■

Brian Canepa is a principal and chief growth officer at Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates. Joshua Karlin-Resnick is an associate there. They worked on the Sacramento zoning code update and on Petaluma's Theatre District development.

Parking Requirement Impacts on Housing Affordability, by the Victoria Transportation Policy Institute: vtpi.org/park-hou.pdf.

Parking in Mixed-Use Districts, by Rachel Weinberger and Joshua Karlin-Resnick, presented at the 94th annual Transportation Research Board meeting in 2015.

Putting a Cap on Parking Requirements

A way to make cities function better. By **DONALD SHOUP, FAICP**

Suppose the automobile and oil industries have asked you to devise planning policies that will increase the demand for cars and fuel. Consider three policies that will make cars essential for most trips. First, segregating land uses (housing here, jobs there, shopping somewhere else) will increase travel demand. Second, limiting density will spread the city and increase travel demand. Third, minimum parking requirements will ensure ample free parking almost everywhere, making cars the default way to travel.

American cities have unwisely embraced each of these car-friendly policies, luring people into cars for 87 percent of all their daily trips. Zoning ordinances that segregate land uses, limit density, and require lots of parking create drivable cities but prohibit walkable neighborhoods. Urban historians often say that cars have changed the city, but public policies have also changed the city to favor cars.

Minimum parking requirements are particularly ill-advised. In my book *The High Cost of Free Parking*, I argued that parking requirements subsidize cars, increase traffic congestion and carbon emissions, pollute the air and water, encourage sprawl, raise housing costs, degrade urban design, reduce walkability, exclude poor people, and damage the economy. To my knowledge, no one has argued that parking requirements do not have these harmful effects. Instead, a flood of recent research has shown that parking requirements do have these effects.

The high cost

Planners are put in a difficult position when asked to set parking requirements in zoning ordinances, largely because they do not know the parking demand at every site, or how much the parking spaces cost, or how the requirements increase the cost of development. Nevertheless, cities have managed to set parking requirements for hundreds of land uses in thousands of cities—the Ten Thousand Commandments for off-street parking.

Not knowing how much required parking spaces cost, planners cannot know how much the parking requirements increase the cost of housing. Small, spartan apartments cost much less to build than large, luxury apartments, but their parking spaces cost the same. Because many cities require the same number of spaces for all housing, the cost of required parking can consume the entire

subsidy intended for affordable housing.

Minimum parking requirements resemble an Affordable Parking Act. They make parking more affordable by raising the cost of housing and everything else. Using data on the cost of constructing parking spaces and shopping centers, I estimated that the parking requirement of four spaces per 1,000 square feet for a shopping center in Los Angeles increases the cost of building a shopping center by 93 percent if the parking is underground and by 67 percent if the parking is in an aboveground structure.

This cost increase is passed on to all shoppers. Parking requirements raise the price of food for people who are too poor to own a car to ensure that richer people can park free when they drive to a grocery store.

The median is the message

A single parking space can cost far more than the entire net worth of many American families. In recent research, I estimated that the average cost per space for parking structures in the U.S. is about \$24,000 for aboveground parking and \$34,000 for underground parking. We can compare the cost of a parking space with the net worth of U.S. households (the value of all assets minus all debts). In 2011, this median net worth was \$68,828 for all U.S. households, \$7,683 for Hispanic households and \$6,314 for black households.

Thus one underground parking space can cost five times more than the median net worth for all black households in the country. Nevertheless, cities require several parking spaces (at home, work, shopping, recreation, churches, schools, and many other places) for every household.

Many families have a negative net worth because their debts exceed their assets. Eighteen percent of all households, 29 percent of Hispanic households, and 33 percent of black households had zero or negative net worth in 2011. The only way these families can take advantage of all the parking cities require is to go further into debt to buy a car, which they must then support, often by financing it at a high subprime interest rate on a car loan.

In other words, cities require parking for every building without noticing the high cost of the required spaces or the burden placed on families who have little or no wealth.

Time for reform

Perhaps because of the growing doubts about minimum parking requirements, a few cities have begun to backpedal, at least in their downtowns. They recognize that parking requirements prevent infill redevelopment on small lots, where it is difficult and costly to fit both a new building and the required parking. And they see that parking requirements prevent new uses when older buildings lack the parking spaces required for those new uses.

'A city can be friendly to people or it can be friendly to cars, but it can't be both.'

—ENRIQUE PEÑALOSA, FORMER MAYOR OF BOGOTA, COLOMBIA

According to recent newspaper articles, many cities have reduced or removed their parking requirements. Some of the reasons: "to promote the creation of downtown apartments" (Greenfield, Massachusetts), "to see more affordable housing" (Miami), "to meet the needs of smaller businesses" (Muskegon, Michigan), "to give business owners more flexibility while creating a vibrant downtown" (Sandpoint, Idaho), and "to prevent ugly, auto-oriented townhouses" (Seattle).

Given this policy momentum, I thought the time to reform parking requirements in California had arrived when the legislature considered Assembly Bill 904 (the Sustainable Minimum Parking Requirements Act of 2012). AB 904 would have set an upper limit on how much parking cities can require in transit-rich districts: no more than one space per dwelling unit or two spaces per 1,000 square feet of commercial space. The bill defined these districts as areas within a quarter-mile of transit lines that run every 15 minutes or better.

AB 904 would limit how much parking cities can require, but it would not limit the parking supply. Developers could provide more than the required parking if they thought the demand justified the cost.

Why would a state want to adopt this policy? Federal and state governments give cities billions of dollars every year to build and operate mass transit systems, yet most cities require ample parking on the assumption that almost everyone will drive almost everywhere, even where public transit is available.

Twenty public transit lines serve the UCLA campus in Westwood, with 119 buses per hour arriving during the morning peak (7 to 9 a.m.). Nevertheless, across the street from campus, Los Angeles requires 3.5 parking spaces for every apartment that contains more than four rooms.

Los Angeles is building its Subway to the Sea under Wilshire Boulevard, which already boasts the city's most frequent bus service. Nevertheless, along parts of Wilshire the city requires at least 2.5 parking spaces for each dwelling unit, regardless of the number of rooms.

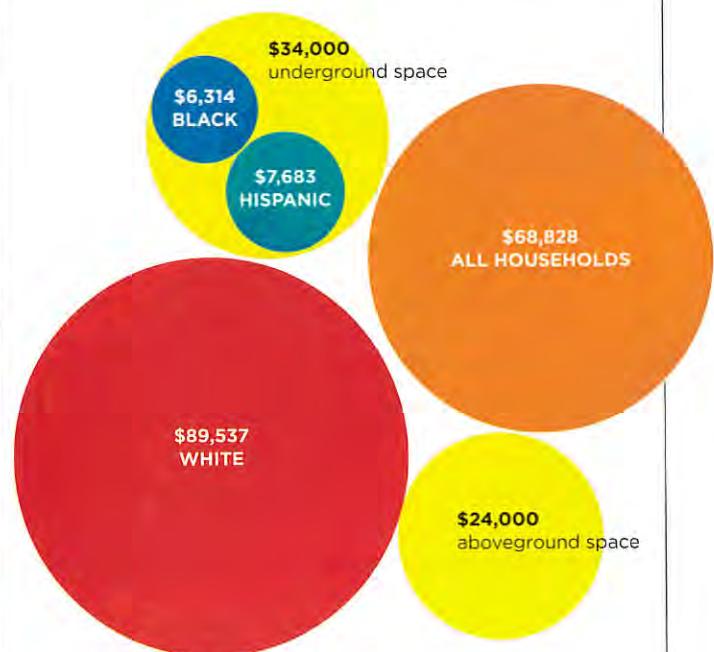
Also on Wilshire Boulevard, Beverly Hills requires 22 parking spaces per 1,000 square feet for restaurants, which means the parking lot is seven times larger than the restaurant. Public transit in this parking environment resembles a rowboat in the desert.

Why limit parking requirements?

The rationale for a limit on parking requirements in transit-rich districts is the same as the rationale for most city planning: The uncoordinated actions of many individuals can add up to a collective result that most people dislike. In this case, minimum parking requirements create an asphalt wasteland that blights the environ-

Parking inequity

The cost of one structured parking space far exceeds the median net worth of minority households.



SOURCES: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, NET WORTH AND ASSET OWNERSHIP, 2011; DONALD SHOUP, IN PARKING: ISSUES AND POLICIES, 2014; GRAPHIC BY JOAN CAIRNEY

ment and compels people to drive. Limits on the parking requirements in transit-rich neighborhoods can reduce this blight by making redevelopment more feasible near transit stations.

How will reducing off-street parking requirements affect development? Zhan Guo and Shuai Ren at New York University studied the results when in 2004 London shifted from minimum parking requirements with no maximum to maximum parking limits with no minimum. Comparing developments completed before and after the reform, they found that the parking supplied after the reform was only 68 percent of the maximum allowed and only 52 percent of the previous minimum required.

This result implies that the previous parking minimum was almost *double* the number of parking spaces that developers would have voluntarily provided. The researchers concluded that removing the parking minimum caused 98 percent of the reduction in parking spaces, while imposing the maximum caused only two percent of the reduction. Removing the minimum was far more important than imposing a maximum.

Cities usually require or restrict parking without considering the middle ground of neither a minimum nor a maximum. This

behavior recalls a Soviet maxim: "What is not required must be prohibited." AB 904, however, was something new. It did not restrict parking but simply imposed a cap on minimum parking requirements, a far milder reform.

Aided by lobbying from the California Chapter of APA, opponents succeeded in defeating AB 904 in the legislature, but it has since been resurrected and revised, and will be reintroduced as a new bill in the next session.

There have been precedents for statewide limits on parking requirements. Oregon's *Transportation Systems Plan* requires local governments to amend their land-use and subdivision regulations to achieve a 10 percent reduction in the number of parking spaces per capita. The United Kingdom's transport policy guidelines for local planning specify that "plans should state maximum levels of parking for broad classes of development. . . . There should be no minimum standards for development, other than parking for disabled people."

These attempts to take state and national concerns into account suggest that, when left to their own devices, local governments require too much parking.

An arranged marriage

Many people believe that America freely chose its love affair with the car, but I think there was an arranged marriage. By recommending minimum parking requirements in zoning ordinances, the planning profession was both a matchmaker and a leading member of the wedding party.

Unfortunately, no one provided a good prenuptial agreement. Planners can now become marriage counselors or divorce lawyers where the relationship between people and cars no longer works well. Putting a cap on parking requirements is a good place to start.

Donald Shoup is a distinguished professor of urban planning at the University of California, Los Angeles, and the author of *The High Cost of Free Parking*, published in paperback by APA's Planners Press in 2011. He will retire later this year, and UCLA is launching a scholarship in his name. Details are at shoupista.com.

RESOURCES

FROM APA

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MORE

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ILLUSTRATION BY
JOAN CAIRNEY

BUSINESS NEWS

Merger Wave Lands in U.S. Auto Retailing

Booming car sales lift profits, spurring smaller dealerships to consider a sale to bigger rivals

By CHRISTINA ROGERS

In 2007, as the U.S. auto industry was about to hit the skids, Georgia dealers Brian Logun and Frank Jackson made a gamble on an Atlanta Ford dealership that would pay off big.

Mr. Logun said the duo essentially snapped up the dealer by investing operating capital in it. In December, Messrs. Logun and Jackson sold the dealership then generating \$110 million in annual sales for about \$40 million to **Asbury Automotive Group**, a publicly traded Georgia-based chain with 83 stores.

Their sale is one of many by small independent dealers looking to cash out amid the recent boom in U.S. auto sales. Last year, 324 stores changed hands in the U.S., up 60% compared with 2013, said Cliff Banks, founder of dealership news provider The Banks Report.

Mr. Banks estimates more than 130 stores changed hands in the first quarter of 2015, most of which were part of **Berkshire Hathaway Inc.**'s March purchase of the 81-store Van Tuyl Group.

With interest rates low, dealer profits at record highs and the pool of deep-pocketed buyers widening, the flow of deals is expected to continue this year and further consolidate the highly fragmented car-retailing business.

The current seller-friendly environment contrasts with the situation just a few years ago, when many dealers faced a tightening credit market and an economic crisis that weighed on consumer confidence, bringing acquisition activity to a grinding halt. As part of its 2009 bankruptcy, General Motors paid \$587 million to shutter 1,303 dealerships, or \$451,000 a store.

As the industry roared back, dealer margins quickly rebounded and consolidation marched on. Since 2009, the number of retail outlets in the U.S. has fallen 13% to 17,875.

"When the market turned



JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES

Toyota of Deerfield Beach, Fla., was acquired by Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway last month as part of its purchase of Van Tuyl Group.

back on, it really turned on for the surviving dealers," said Erin Kerrigan, founder of Kerrigan Advisors, an advisory firm for dealers. "Auto retailers have had an incredible resurgence in success and that is the biggest contributor to the buy-sell party we see today."

The last wave of consolidation among car retailers was in the 1990s when many of the publicly traded dealership groups formed. Even with the rise in dealership mergers and acquisitions, the industry remains highly fragmented with the public groups controlling only about 8% of total revenue.

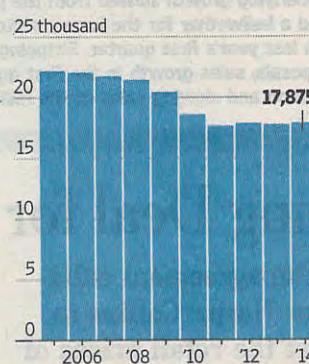
Car makers have also been known to hold up deals. As part of their dealer contracts, they have the right to refuse a sale and instead offer the franchise to their own buyer, experts said.

Automotive News, an industry trade paper, estimates the combination of dealer property values and so-called blue-sky multiples has increased 82% since

Let's Make a Deal

Retail outlets are more profitable after recession pared ranks.

Number of U.S. car dealerships



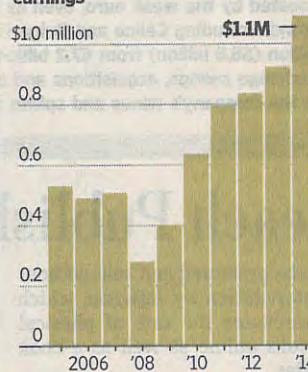
Source: Automotive News (dealerships); NADA/Kerrigan Advisors (earnings)

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

2006—the last time industry sales were as high as they are now. Blue-sky multiples include goodwill and other intangible assets, such as customer lists.

Dealership values also have

Average car dealership pre-tax earnings



nearly doubled in the last decade, climbing to \$36 million a store last year, according to Kerrigan Advisors.

"It's an easy business right now," said Mr. Logun, 51 years

old, who no longer owns any stores. "But as good as it is now, it's going to be just as bad in three or four years. The thought of being able to walk away with enough money to live the rest of my life was very appealing."

The rich prices also appeal to owners who have had their businesses for decades.

John Schenden last spring decided it was time to sell his Denver-area Fiat Chrysler store after 21 years in car retailing. "I'd just turned 71 and I realized I didn't have the stamina I had 10 years earlier."

He immediately attracted four potential buyers, and sold the store for an undisclosed sum to Larry H. Miller Dealerships, which has 55 stores in seven states and is in the top 10 in the U.S. by number of stores.

Many independent retailers are looking to sell to larger chains because the business is changing, requiring them to revamp their stores and invest in technology to aid Internet sales.

The shift is spurring a new and accelerated wave of consolidation in an industry long ruled by a patchwork of family-run businesses, many with deep ties to their communities.

"There are dealers who have been doing business one way for a long time," said Steve Starks, vice president for mergers and acquisitions at Larry H. Miller. "They're looking at how people

324

The number of U.S. auto dealerships whose ownership changed hands last year.

buy cars today, and rather than making wholesale changes, they decide to move on." His company has been averaging about three to seven acquisitions a year, a pace it hopes to continue.

Among last year's bigger acquisitions was Lithia Motors Inc.'s \$600 million purchase of the DCH Auto Group, one of the largest in recent history. Lithia now owns 129 stores nationwide with plans to further expand.

The car-retailing business is drawing interest from outside investors, too. Billionaire Warren Buffett last year agreed to buy the Van Tuyl Group, the nation's largest privately owned dealership chain. His Berkshire Hathaway Automotive is pursuing more deals, and bought a Honda store in March from the store-founder's grandchildren.

Investor George Soros also has representatives chasing potential deals, looking to either buy a large dealership group or take a minority position in one, people familiar with the situation have said.

"If [potential buyers] can meet the [car maker's] requirements, they provide an exit strategy to some of these large groups looking to sell," said Alan Haig, president of Haig Partners, another dealership advisory firm that worked on Mr. Logun's sale of the Atlanta dealership.

Mr. Haig doesn't expect acquisition activity to slow soon. "This year is going to be every bit as good as last year in terms of the value and volume done," he said.



REVIEW

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DOW JONES | News Corp

WEEKEND

SATURDAY/SUNDAY, MAY 16 - 17, 2015

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The
Grown-Ups'
Guide

Neighbors of CrossFit Gyms Strain for the Sound of Silence

* * *

Crashes, thumps and bangs draw complaints;
'Nickelback playing and guys screaming'

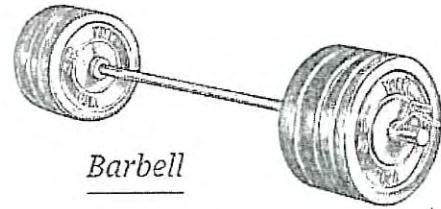
By JOSH MITCHELL

CHICAGO—Early one morning last spring, shortly after moving into her apartment, Kristen Caston was jolted awake by a thud so powerful it nearly knocked the artwork from her walls.

"I thought it was an earthquake," she said. "It literally sounded like somebody was taking a huge drill to the floor."

Alas, it was her neighbor: a CrossFit gym, where men and women routinely hoist barbells weighing hundreds of pounds above their heads, then let them crash to the floor.

CrossFit, a fitness regimen that grew out of a suburban garage in California nearly two decades ago, is now an urban fixture with more than 6,000 locations across the U.S., and many other clubs that



have adopted the style. Gyms squeeze into apartment and office buildings, catering to millennials looking to get fit with Olympic movements like the "snatch" and the "clean and jerk."

But appeasing neighbors is proving to be a heavy lift. Residents have formed a not-in-my-backyard counter movement, complaining of vibrating condos, noise from loud music and the need to dodge herds of sprinting runners on city sidewalks. (Running is often a part of CrossFit "wods," or workouts of the day.)

Over the past year, CrossFit
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FIT

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gyms and their neighbors have clashed in courts in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Chicago. In January, a New York City judge ordered the eviction of a CrossFit gym from a Chelsea condo building, where owners of the multimillion-dollar units above complained of the vibrations from dropped weights.

The city council in Austin, Texas, recently passed a measure to crack down on noise from CrossFit gyms.

And in Manhattan Beach, Calif., a married couple spent 20 days in jail this year after they violated a restraining order filed by the owner of the gym next to their beachfront home.

The dispute began after the couple awoke at 6 a.m. to the vibrations of a gym client repeatedly slamming a medicine ball on the ground. Cursing bouts ensued, with the owner of the gym—which isn't a CrossFit affiliate but used many of the same exercises—accusing the couple of at one point banging a sledgehammer against the side of the building and harassing clients.

Russell Berger, a CrossFit trainer and a spokesman for CrossFit Inc. in Santa Cruz, Calif., said individual affiliates operate largely autonomously. Many target



JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES

Exercisers at a CrossFit gym in San Anselmo, Calif., hoist barbells and do box jumps.

industrial areas and are careful to avoid moving into residential buildings, and have invested in padding to muffle noise, he said. But he acknowledged that CrossFit's unique style represents a cultural shift from typical gyms.

In a typical gym "it's awkward and it's quiet," said Mr. Berger, who recalls being kicked out of one after making too much noise with the weights. "Everybody's got their own headphones in and looking in the mirror, and it's this weird posturing—sort of a bizarre environment where not a lot of

work is actually getting done."

CrossFit's main weight movements are the "snatch" and the "clean and jerk." Each exercise involves the athlete lifting a barbell from the ground and hoisting it over his or her head. Veterans can lift 200 to 300 pounds, and many drop the barbell from midair after the lift, rather than crashing it on their shoulders or allowing other risky maneuvers.

"If you go in there with the expectation that everything's going to be quiet, you're in the wrong place," Mr. Berger said. "The pro-

cess of training in a way that gets results requires some noise and some sweat."

But some businesses say operating next to a CrossFit is akin to living next to a perpetual construction site. "There are hundreds of bangs a day," said Jay Baumgardner, owner of NRG Recording Studios, in North Hollywood, Calif. "It's a really, really low frequency. It's almost like an earthquake or an explosion."

Mr. Baumgardner's clients have included Kanye West and Linkin Park, and his studio has been

around since the 1980s. Last year, a CrossFit gym moved next door and, he said, it started to disrupt his recordings. He is now trying to get the gym evicted.

The owners of the gym, CrossFit Synapse, say they chose the location because it is a stand-alone building in an industrial area. Their building is several feet from Mr. Baumgardner's. "They require very pristine sound conditions," said Synapse co-owner Jimmy Lujan. "An average person wouldn't find the noise a nuisance."

Mr. Baumgardner said: "The crazy thing is, we walk out and hear the music that's been recorded at the studio coming from the gym—songs I've produced."

In Chicago, a city ordinance forbids loud noise overnight, but neighbors say they have been told it doesn't preclude CrossFit gyms from operating during the day. Residents of a 12-story, 165-unit building in the city's north side have called the police numerous times to report noise at River North CrossFit, located on the first floor of their building.

On a recent afternoon, more than a dozen athletes practiced the "snatch" with a coach. The rapper Chingy's "Holidae In" blared in the background as athletes hoisted barbells, then dropped them, causing a loud thwack.

John Lee, one of three co-owners, says the gym has taken steps to alleviate noise, including laying down padding for heavy lifts and

moving workouts away from the walls to avoid vibrations.

"We're trying to be good neighbors," Mr. Lee said. He pointed out that a two-floor garage separates the gym from the condo units in the building.

A couple of miles away, Ms. Caston, the Chicago resident, moved into a building last year that shared a wall with a CrossFit gym. The 31-year-old graphic designer said she would wake up repeatedly at 5:30 a.m. to vibrations.

One day, she came home and found a shattered wine glass on the floor. "You know like 'Jurassic Park,' and they're looking at the water glass and it was like ripples because the dinosaurs are walking around you? It was like that," she said.

Even when she went outside, she couldn't find peace. "I would go out back and read a book," she said. "It was Nickelback playing and guys screaming."

She called the police several times, and one officer showed up once and told her there was nothing they could do because the gym wasn't in violation of the city's regulations. The owner of the gym declined to comment.

Ms. Caston said her landlord, who works out at the CrossFit gym, allowed her out of her lease. She moved directly across the street into an apartment with much more expensive rent. But she says she now gets a good night's sleep.

MONEY & INVESTING

Coal Miners Pull Back

Slowing Chinese demand dents prices **COMMODITIES | C4**



Private Fears in
Public Markets

HEARD ON
THE STREET | C14

KAI PFAFFENBACH/REUTERS

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Wednesday, June 3, 2015 | C1

Small Goes Big In Hong Kong

BY ISABELLA STEGER

HONG KONG—In showing an apartment of 180 square feet, a real-estate agent explained that all furniture essentially has to be made to order and described the window sill as a potential area for "entertainment."

The apartment, in a development called High Place, isn't much bigger than the standard U.S. parking space. It went into contract in May for almost four million Hong Kong dollars (\$516,000.)

Even by Hong Kong's cramped standards, apartments here are getting tinier and tinier.

So small are some of the new developments in Hong Kong that they have been given the moniker "mosquito-sized units."

The incredible shrinking apartment in Hong Kong is part of a broader trend of rising values of residential real estate in major cities around the world, as investors see property as a better investment than low-yielding bonds.

Hong Kong, much like London and New York, also is seeing strong demand from wealthy investors from other countries looking for safe places to park their money, with much of that investment coming from mainland Chinese buyers.

While these investors go after higher-end Hong Kong property, they are helping boost prices in general, making it tougher for people simply looking for a place to live.

Please see SMALL page C6

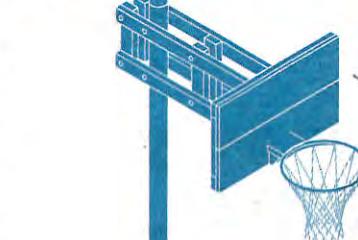
Tiny apartments, so small they are called 'mosquito' units, are finding eager buyers in Hong Kong.

'Mosquito'
apartment in
Hong Kong

180
sq. feet

Kitchen in
average U.S.
new small home

195
sq. feet



Typical New
York State
parking space

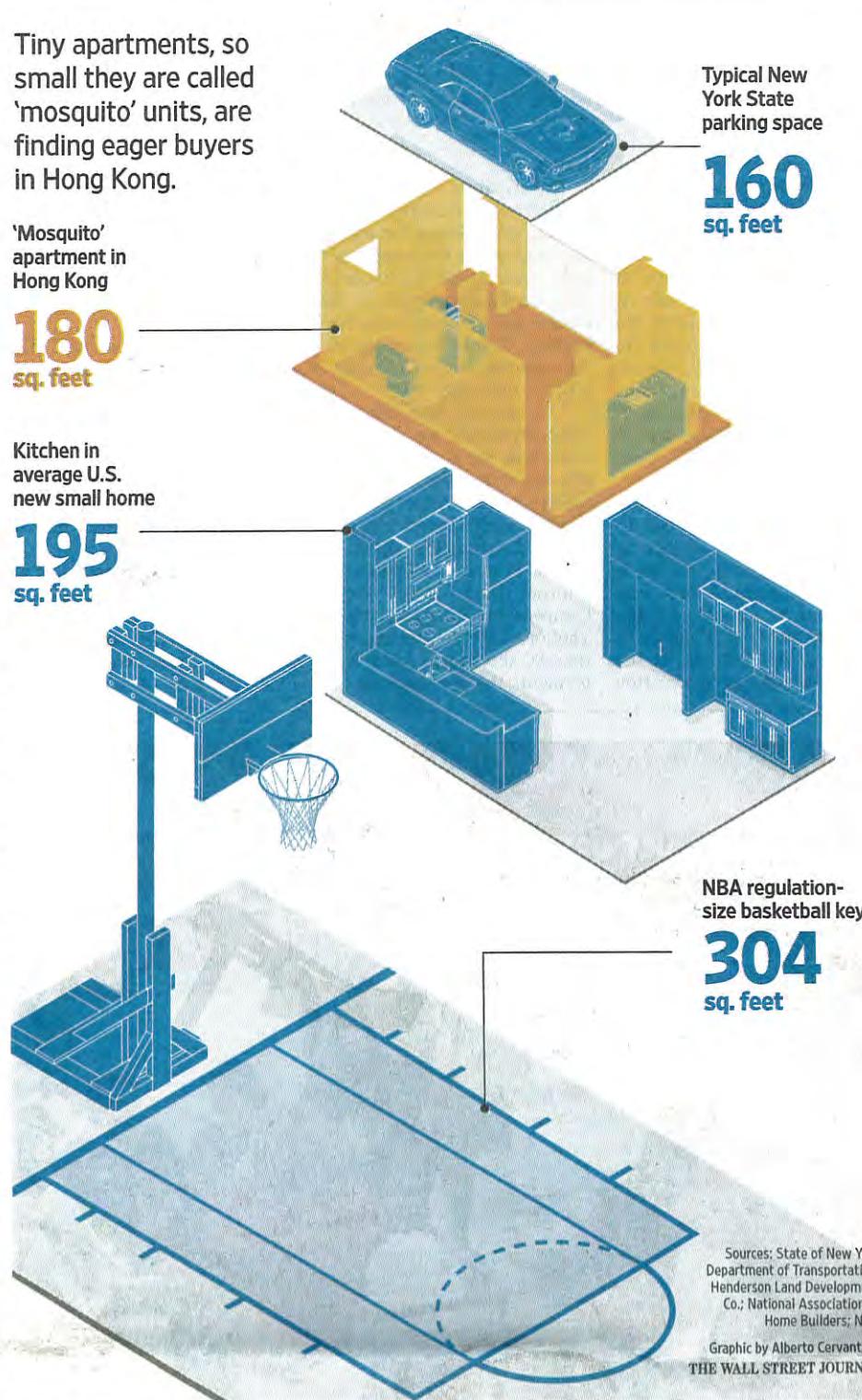
160
sq. feet

NBA regulation-
size basketball key

304
sq. feet

Sources: State of New York
Department of Transportation;
Henderson Land Development
Co.; National Association of
Home Builders; NBA

Graphic by Alberto Cervantes/
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



SMALL

Continued from page C1

Prices of Hong Kong property have continued to increase despite repeated attempts by the government to keep them in check.

The average price of private residential property, according to government data, has been on an upward trend since 2009, save for dips during three quarters in 2011 and a very mild correction during 2013 after the government stepped up measures to cool property prices.

Such price increases have put strains on buyers in many major cities, but nowhere is the squeeze greater than in Hong Kong.

Demographia, a U.S. think tank, in a recent study comparing median incomes with median housing prices, ranked Hong Kong property as the least affordable in the world, with home prices on average 17 times annual income, well above the 10.6 for second-place Vancouver. New York ranked seventh at 6.1 times income.

Since 2007, incomes have risen about 42%, but home prices have soared 154%, according to a calculation of data provided by the Hong Kong government.

"People have to sacrifice and crowd into smaller apartments," said Joanne Lee, of real-estate

broker and consultancy Colliers International in Hong Kong.

Frustration over the increasing unaffordability of property in Hong Kong was one of the factors that drew tens of thousands of young people into the streets when students staged months of pro-democracy protests last year in the so-called Umbrella Movement.

"Consumers have no bargaining power," said Barbara Leung, who teaches real-estate economics at Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

In a development called Mont Vert by Cheung Kong (Holdings) Ltd., controlled by the city's richest man, Li Ka-shing, apartments even smaller than 180 square feet last year prompted a flood of YouTube videos showing people using arm spans to measure the living area.

The apartments were priced from about HK\$2 million, about the cheapest way to get on the Hong Kong property ladder.

At a development targeting first-time buyers, called My Place, China Overseas Land & Investment Ltd. and the Urban Renewal Authority offer 229-square-foot studios priced around HK\$4 million. Studios smaller than 200 square feet at Baker Residences, a joint development by Sino Land Co. and the URA, now fetch close to HK\$3 million, despite the building's location across from two funeral parlors.

At a complex called Axis by

the same developer as High Place, Henderson Land Development Co., 242-square-foot apartments are on offer from HK\$5.5 million to HK\$6 million.

For investors, the rising values have paid off. Since the start of 2009, the Hang Seng Properties Index, which tracks nine property stocks, has risen more than 100%, while the benchmark Hang Seng Index has increased 94% in the same period.

But young Hong Kongers have to downsize their dreams of home ownership.

Jai Shum, a 23-year-old interior-design draftsman, is looking for a place to rent with his girlfriend while they save money to buy an apartment. They considered renting a studio in Mont Vert, but decided it was too expensive.

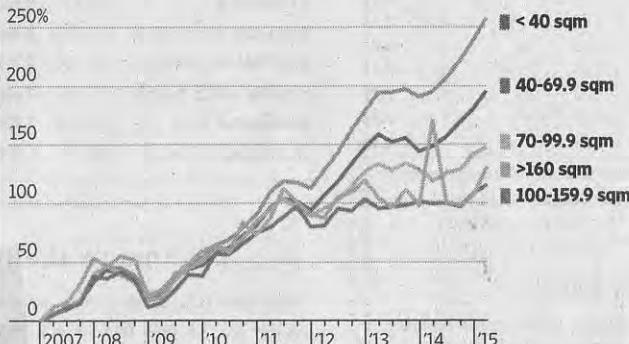
By his calculations, if they save between HK\$8,000 and HK\$10,000 a month, it would be more than a decade before they could afford a down payment on a HK\$4 million apartment. That is because the Hong Kong Monetary Authority dictates that banks can now lend first-time buyers only 60% of the value of smaller apartments.

In the meantime, Mr. Shum said he would try his luck in the lottery for housing subsidized by the government. About 46% of Hong Kong's population live in such housing, which is highly competitive and open only to those below a set level of income.

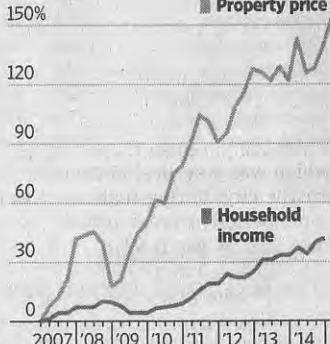
Flat Out of Reach

Prices of Hong Kong property, particularly small apartments, have risen much faster than incomes.

Growth in average price of five sizes of apartments in Hong Kong



Growth in median household income and average price of Hong Kong property



Sources: Ratings and Valuation Department (average price, property price); Census and Statistics Department (income) THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

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Secret Service

Stores repair men's clothing, even after decades

PERSONAL JOURNAL | D1

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DJIA 18076.27 ▲ 64.33 0.4% NASDAQ 5099.23 ▲ 0.45% NIKKEI 20473.51 ▼ 0.3% STOXX 600 395.93 ▼ 0.1% 10-YR. TREAS. ▼ 28/32, yield 2.366% OIL \$59.64 ▼ \$1.62 GOLD \$1,184.70 ▼ \$9.40 EURO \$1.1276 YEN 124.24



Daniel Henninger
**Barack Obama,
Re-Founding Father**

OPINION | A13

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In California, the Grass Is Always Greener With Paint

Drought inspires crop of landscaping ideas; 'Ugliest Yard' competition

By MIRIAM JORDAN
AND JIM CARLTON

LOS ANGELES—Standing over her kitchen sink, Margarita Odelberg carefully prepared a green potion and poured it into a jug. "This is magic," she said.

Minutes later, a sprayer affixed to the jug, she began treating the browning, sun-scorched lawn in her backyard. Soon, she had transformed it into a verdant esplanade. "I got sick and tired of looking at what looked

like a pile of hay," said Ms. Odelberg. "Now when I look at it, I'm thrilled."

California's relentless drought, and the restrictions on water use it has spurred, has forced homeowners like Ms. Odelberg to face tough questions about maintaining the landscapes they once took for granted. Artificial turf, perhaps? "Cheesy," she says. Rock-and-cactus garden? "Our daughter couldn't roll in it," her husband, Zevon, says. Letting the lawn go

a natural brown? "Depressing," both say.

So, desperate to revive the look of a healthy lawn, Ms. Odelberg sought out North Hollywood Hardware that sells a non-toxic grass-paint concentrate she applied to her yard. "A dead lawn looks alive—without wasting all that water!" she said.

Going faux-green is just one strategy being employed by Golden State homeowners trying to balance the need to save wa-

Please see GRASS page A12

GRASS

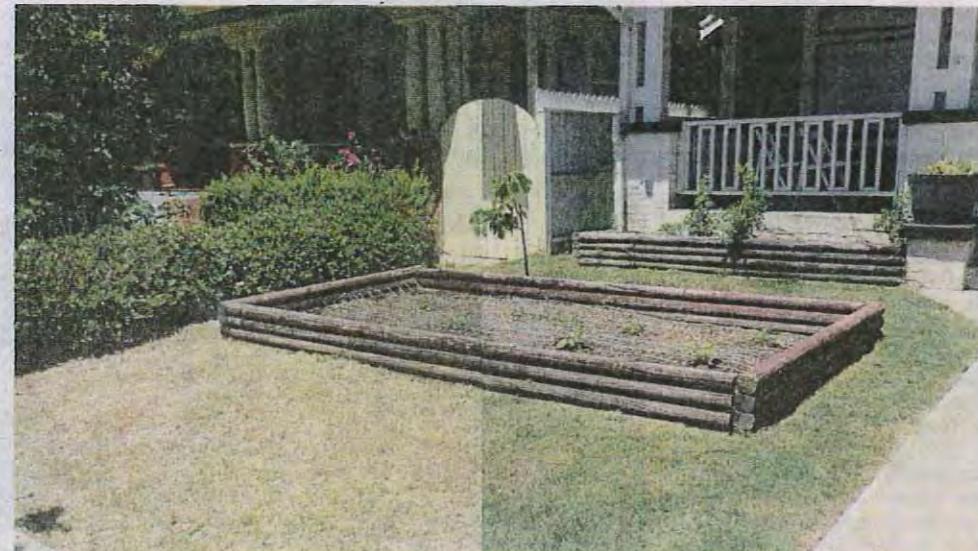
Continued from Page One
ter with the desire for continued curb appeal.

In Southern California, yard-lovers tend to fall into three camps, all determined to keep up appearances: replacing lawns with drought-resistant plants, putting down artificial turf, or dyeing lawns green.

Letting the grass go brown is popular in some spots. San Francisco's Department of the Environment recently staged an "Ugliest Yard" competition to encourage more water saving. "It's in our value system to do the right thing," said Peter Brastow, senior biodiversity coordinator for the environment department.

For decades, Kerri McCoy has made a living servicing pools that dot many backyards in the L.A. area. In 2007, real-estate agents eager to unload foreclosed homes needing TLC approached her about giving the properties better "curb appeal" by adding a splash of green to the grass. Spraying paint on neglected lawns became a "little side business," she said.

But since Gov. Jerry Brown announced unprecedented water cutbacks across the state in April, Ms. McCoy says she is struggling to keep up with demand for lawn-painting jobs. "Here in Southern California, we like everything looking nice and green," she said.



Margarita Odelberg's lawn is shown before and after being sprayed with lawn paint to make it greener.

In the land of movie stars and cosmetic surgery, it is perhaps not surprising grass-painting is proliferating. LawnLift, a Southern California-based company, advertises its paint is "like a face-lift for your lawn."

"It's the perfect mix of everything," says owner Jim Power of his concoction, which can result in hues of sage, emerald or forest green and lasts an average of three months per application. "Same stuff cosmetics are made of."

Carol Chait, of Lake Balboa, was convinced to give the pigment a try. "If you would put it on

your face, you'd put it on your lawn," she figured. That same logic dictated where she had the paint applied: on her front lawn only, letting the backyard brown. "The front lawn—it's your face to your neighbors and people driving down the street."

Across the street, Laura Davis said that drought anxiety is giving her ugly-yard nightmares. "I dreamed they were putting rocks on my lawn," she said.

Some are opting for artificial grass. A once-unseemly solution, the shocking-green plastic carpet of old has been replaced by turf types and hues that businesses

like L.A. Faux Grass pledge will pass for the real thing.

That may be why even homes on exclusive Adelaide Drive, situated along a rim overlooking Santa Monica Canyon, and the Pacific Ocean, have installed it.

Resident John Ketcham says he was dazzled to discover more than a dozen types of synthetic grass, in varieties like "spring rye" and "vista natural." "I went over to see and touch them" in person, he said, before settling on a variety with "plush" in the name.

However authentic the blades feel, though, "there is nothing

wrong with calling it fake grass," Mr. Ketcham said. "We are in Hollywood, the land of fakeness."

In San Francisco, it's trendy to go au naturel. In April, the city launched a "Brown Is the New Green" campaign to encourage residents to let lawns go dry. Francesca Vietor, vice president of the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, has urged homeowners to display signs with the slogan "as a badge of honor."

The city's "Ugliest Yard" competition, meanwhile, let residents enter photos of their drought-ravaged landscapes for a chance to win a free makeover—featuring drought-tolerant plants.

Santa Cruz, a coastal city 75 miles south of San Francisco, has mandatory water rationing, in addition to the state cutbacks. Excess use can bring penalty fees that could boost a monthly bill to \$4,000.

Though a longtime hub for those living a laid-back lifestyle, Santa Cruz has seen some get a bit belligerent about water saving.

"This is a war," said artist Barbara Benish, who stripped out her grassy front lawn and filled it with mulch. She sprinkles used bath- and washing-machine water on her vegetable garden.

For resident Peggy Croghan, saving water is an equalizer: Everyone should live with dead grass. "If we are in a water crisis, we should all be the same," said the dental-office worker.

On a recent "drought patrol," city Water Conservation Representative Kyle Smith was satisfied to find most curbsides free of telltale sprinkler runoff, a violation. "People are doing their best," he said.

For any scofflaws, Santa Cruz has Water School. Akin to traffic school, attendance brings a one-time forgiveness of penalty surcharges. The two-hour course inundates participants with statistics on water supply and drought etiquette, such as when to flush a toilet ("only when necessary"). Graduates will know to distinguish gray water (such as untreated wastewater from bathtubs and sinks) from other kinds ("No diaper water!" the curriculum warns).

For some Los Angeles homeowners like Tom Gabor, there's been another kind of lesson: Even in drought, the weather can be fickle.

Mr. Gabor had arranged weeks in advance for Ms. McCoy to come and paint the browning lawn behind his luxurious Topanga Canyon home. But as he waited, she called to cancel the job. The forecast, she told him, called for rain.

VIDEO

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Watch a video
about painting
lawns green in
California at
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