



## M E M O R A N D U M

PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
CITY OF SANTA MONICA  
PLANNING DIVISION

**DATE:** September 25, 2019

**TO:** The Architectural Review Board

**FROM:** Planning Staff

**SUBJECT:** Item 7A. Streamlining Architectural Review Board Process

Since its inception in 1972, the Architectural Review Board (ARB) process has led to substantial improvements in project design. While the ARB Ordinance in the Zoning Code requires that design review be performed by the Board for the majority of projects, certain kinds of projects are permitted to be approved at the staff level. In recent years, the Board has increasingly approved projects on consent or with minimal conditions indicating a confidence in project quality reflective of the substantial staff effort with applicants on project design.

However, staff has very limited ability to review and approve projects administratively. The resolutions governing staff-level/ administrative approval (staff resolutions) are attached. While the ARB process is working well and efficiently, an expansion of the scope of projects staff can review administratively could potentially improve the process in a number of ways:

- Enable the Board to focus on larger more complex projects;
- Shorten review timelines for smaller projects
- Streamline ARB staff effort

Staff has identified a few items that have been identified for possible expansion of the staff resolutions:

1. **Façade remodels** (Promenade and Main Street would go to the Board)- Over the past two years we have seen a number of façade remodels, particularly to multi-unit 1960's era buildings. Often the façade remodels are approved by the Board on consent or with few conditions of approval. Staff level review would help expedite these projects.
2. **Increase area of new or replacement landscape to 1000 square feet**- This would enable staff to review update and replacement of landscape for an area equivalent to the front yard setback. Currently, administrative review is limited to

an area of 150 square feet. Streamlining this review may encourage more landscape replacement with drought tolerant landscaping.

3. **Rear units and additions-** The Board has regularly approved several additional rear units and/or additions on consent or with few conditions of approval. Currently, additions of more than 500 square feet and additional units must be reviewed by the Board. The Board may consider enabling staff to review additional units and/or additions at the rear administratively without a limitation on square footage.

4. **Signage:**

a. Comprehensive Sign Programs that comply with Zoning Code requirements; and

b. All other signage that complies with Zoning Code requirements.

Signage proposals are often placed on the Consent Calendar. The Board may wish to consider allowing staff-level review for all signage that does not require a sign adjustment.

There may be other types of projects that the Board would feel comfortable considering for staff-level/ administrative review. Those listed above appear the most eligible based on recent Board reviews and would make the process more efficient without increasing staff workload. As is already stated in the staff approval resolutions, staff will always have discretion to require Board review if the project appears to substantial or otherwise not appropriate for administrative review.

After discussion and direction from the Board, staff will bring revised staff resolutions to the Board for review and adoption.

Attached:  
ARB Resolution NO.95-001  
ARB sign resolution 04-001