



**MINUTES
ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD
SPECIAL MEETING**

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2019
7:00 PM**

**SANTA MONICA INSTITUTE (SMI)
TRAINING ROOM, 2ND FLOOR
330 OLYMPIC DRIVE**

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Kelly called the meeting to order at 7:08 PM.

2. ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

Joshua Rosen, Board Member
Therese Kelly, Chair
Barbara Coffman, Board Member
Barbara Kaplan, Board Member
Craig Hamilton, Board Member

ALSO PRESENT:

Stephanie Reich, AIA LEED® AP, Design & Historic Preservation Planner
Russell Bunim, Liaison to the Board, Associate Planner
James Combs, Liaison to the Board, Associate Planner
Melissa Zak, Staff Assistant III

ABSENT:

Kevin Daly, Board Member
Patrick Tighe, Vice-Chair

3. SECRETARY'S REPORT

James Combs, Liaison to the Board, announced that on October 2, 2019, the Planning Commission will continue their discussion of Promenade 3.0.

4. DISCUSSION

Motion by Chair Kelly, second by Board Member Kaplan to hear item 4B ahead of item 4A. The motion was approved by the following vote:

Ayes: Coffman, Hamilton, Rosen, Kaplan, Kelly

Noes: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Daly, Tighe

- A. **Streamlining the Architectural Review Board Process:** a discussion on potentially expanding the scope of projects staff can review administratively.

7:54 PM

Stephanie Reich, Design & Historic Preservation Planner, presented the staff report reviewing the memo provided and items staff is bringing forward to the Board for consideration.

Board members inquired about the impact to approval timelines if staff were to begin reviewing more projects. Staff responded that timelines would be greatly reduced as the need for written staff reports for these items would be eliminated. Staff suggested that, if the Board would be interested, a two-year trial period could be implemented to measure the effectiveness of the expanded staff approvals. Board members also discussed a desire to see a regular report from staff listing projects that are to be approved at the staff level.

On the topic of **façade remodel** approvals, staff presented a proposal to expand administrative review authority (not including Third Street Promenade and Main Street). Board members expressed concern over staff review of changes such as balcony design and material changes. The Board suggested that they should continue to review modifications to buildings on the Historic Resources Inventory (HRI), and review projects that propose significant changes to unique buildings. Staff suggested changing item number 5 of Resolution No. 95-001 to drop the 25% limitation and concentrate instead on the improvement of the design. The Board requested staff to return with a ~~strikeout~~/underline proposal for adjusting language in the existing resolution.

The Board discussed staff's proposal to administratively approve **landscape** up to 1,000 square feet. Staff stated that this increase would encourage compliance from applicants, noting that a surprising number of landscape improvement projects have been abandoned when applicants were told that they could not obtain a staff approval. Some Board members expressed concern about staff's level of landscape design expertise and

suggested that additional resources be made available for training. The Board showed interest in continuing to review front yard setbacks and multi-family front yards as these areas tend to be more visible, and they suggested that Board review could depend on the zoning of the project. Much concern was expressed for maintaining landscaping with mature trees, and the Board suggested that the maintenance of mature trees should be incentivized. Staff suggested a written provision stating that mature trees be maintained unless they have been demonstrated to be at the end of their life. Staff stated that landscape plans would still be reviewed by the Board if the landscaping is part of a project that is under the Board's review. The Board expressed concern that 1,000 square feet was too large of an area for staff review and requested staff to return with specific examples.

The Board discussed expanding administrative review of rear units and additions without a limitation on square footage. The Board stated that they do not feel a need to be involved if the units are not visible to the public realm. Board members, however, noted that some hillside residences do not have alleys and units on those properties may impact the neighbors. The Board stated that they would like to continue to publicly review projects on hillsides in order to give neighbors an opportunity to be informed and comment.

Chair Kelly read aloud the resolution for **signage**. Overall, the Board agreed that the zoning code is very well developed and that they would be willing to allow staff level review for most signage. They noted that most of their sign feedback centers around non-compliant applications, and as long as the sign complies with code, the Board can do little to change it. Some Board members discussed a desire to review signage if the property is historic, although there was not agreement on this point. There was agreement that staff would continue the current review practice as pertaining to Third Street Promenade, Main Street, and properties on the HRI.

- B. **Design Review for Third Street Promenade:** a discussion on maintaining the unique identity of the Third Street Promenade while allowing architects, designers, and business owners flexibility for innovative designs.

7:11 PM

Ms. Reich presented the staff report identifying areas of review on which staff would like feedback from the Board.

Kathleen Rawson, representing Downtown Santa Monica, provided public comment and stated a desire to keep Third Street Promenade a vibrant commercial environment. She encouraged a quick review process to help small business owners.

Discussion began with a history of the Skechers building. Board members noted that if the historic character of a building such as this one is valued, it should not be allowed to be covered up—even if it is compliant with the Secretary of Interior’s Standards. The Board opened a discussion on how to allow contemporary updates while maintaining an authentic sense of place. Board members discussed the following:

- Tenants and business should be made aware of design review expectations, perhaps with a set of written priorities.
- Character-defining features should remain visible. There is a concern that the public will forget the character-defining elements of a building if covered. When the authenticity of a buildings is lost, the sense of place is diminished.
- The Promenade is as popular as it is because of the history of the site and place. If a sense of place is not maintained, the Promenade may lose its distinctive qualities that set it apart from other commercial venues.
- Historic preservation must be balanced with commercial expansion and success. Bold new designs should be encouraged, not just the preservation of the past.
- Allowing more administrative approvals to incentivize the preservation of historic elements will move projects more quickly and encourage less potential impact to the buildings. However, administrative approvals remove historic professionals and the public from the process, giving them no chance for input.

5. ADJOURNMENT

On order of Chair Kelly, the meeting was adjourned at 9:20.