

M E M O R A N D U M

PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
CITY OF SANTA MONICA
PLANNING DIVISION

DATE: January 19, 2020
TO: The Architectural Review Board
FROM: Planning Staff
SUBJECT: **Item 9-A Options to Consider for Additional Streamlining of Architectural Review Board Procedures- Follow-Up from November 16, 2020 Discussion**

Guiding Principles

- ARB remains in place as a 7-member Board
- ARB remains a decision-making body, with primary focus on larger, new construction projects

Staffing and Process

- Staffing
 - Design and Historic Preservation Planner serves the Board
- Process
 - Design and Historic Preservation Planner meets with applicants beforehand to discuss design.
- Reports
 - Concise yet thorough Design Analysis memos provided in lieu of staff reports, providing brief project description and design analysis, no charts, tables etc. Less detailed and redundant information.

Feedback from November 16, 2020 Discussion

1. Staff reports can be reduced to memo format with less repetition. Findings and conditions will remain in the staff report

Additional considerations?

Thresholds for Board Review

- **Existing Thresholds:**
 - All new construction regardless of size requires ARB approval
- **Consideration of Revised Thresholds for New Construction and Renovations/Alterations Visible from the Street**

Feedback from November 16, 2020 Discussion

- On November 16, 2020, the Board considered both 15,000 square feet (sf) and 10,000 sf as revised thresholds for Board review. The Board recommended a 7,500 sf threshold.

Questions for the Board to Consider

1. Is the Board supportive of a 7,500 sf threshold for Board Review?
2. What should be the threshold on Main Street and the Promenade for a greater level of review?
 - a. Should there be higher threshold for review on non-HRI properties to facilitate economic recovery and address high vacancy rate due to COVID-19

3. Should additions or alterations of HRI properties, regardless of size, continue to be reviewed by the Board?
4. To incentivize housing projects, should there be a higher threshold for ARB review for housing projects?
 - a. Should there be an even higher threshold for affordable housing projects?
5. Should commercial projects have a lower threshold for ARB review?

Timing and Structure of Review for Projects that Require Board Review

- **Existing Timing of Board Review:**
 - Board review occurs after entitlements are approved
- **Proposal for Timing of Board Review:**
 - Board review occurs prior to entitlement approval for all projects.
 - Board will have the ability to add conditions/considerations to be approved by staff.
 - Important modification for all projects as it will represent significant reduction in processing time for applicants and staff.

Feedback from November 16, 2020 Discussion

1. There was agreement o at the November 16, 2020 meeting on the approach reflected in these proposals for timing and structure of Board review

Additional Considerations?

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Number of Reviews

- **Existing Structure**
 - No limit to number of Board reviews
 - Majority of projects are approved at first meeting, approximately 25% go to a second meeting
- **Proposal for Two Meeting Limit**
 - Currently, almost all projects are approved in one or two meetings
 - Two meeting limit will provide certainty for applicants
 - If Board cannot agree to approve a project at the second meeting, the applicant can agree to a waiver of the limit and continue the item to a third meeting.

Staff Level Approvals

- **Existing Process**
 - Routine approvals, as allowed by ARB Resolution, occur over the counter
- **Expanded Staff Approval Process Effective November 13, 2020 (Approved by Council September 8, 2020)**
 - Projects that would previously go to the Board, such as façade and landscape remodels, additions and smaller building additions will be reviewed by staff.
 - Staff will meet with applicants, review projects, make recommendations and provide ARB approval prior to building plan check or building permit issuance.
 - Written findings required only for denial.
- **Proposal for Changes to Staff Approval Process**
 - Staff approval authority increases with options for review thresholds
 - Refinements to procedures to allow avenue for appeal by applicant: If Staff cannot approve, or the applicant rejects conditions required by staff for an approval, the project would be denied. Applicant can appeal decision to the Board.

Questions for the Board to Consider

1. Any comments or concerns regarding staff approval recommendations?
2. Recommendations for additional streamlining?