

RESOLUTION NO. 3-09

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF RICHMOND, CALIFORNIA PROVIDING POLICY DIRECTION FOR DESIGN REVIEW AND PLANNING COMMISSION FUNCTIONS

WHEREAS, On February 20, 2007, the Richmond City Council adopted five policy directives related to the review of construction projects in the City of Richmond:

1. Complete Design Review Guidelines for Central Richmond by March 31, 2007, and provide a schedule and budget for completion of Design Review Guidelines for other areas of Richmond.
2. Provide a staff recommendation for Administrative Design Review of small projects and any budget requirements.
3. Merge the Design Review Board and Planning Commission into a nine-member single body by July 1, 2007.
4. Provide a stipend of \$50 per meeting (maximum \$200/month) for members of the merged Design Review/Planning Commission.
5. Include funding for training members of the new Design Review/Planning Commission in the 2007/2008 budget, and

WHEREAS, as of January 20, 2009, only item 4 has been fully completed, and

WHEREAS, it is appropriate to review and revisit the policy direction provided nearly two years ago to assess its implementation and provide updated direction, and,

WHEREAS, the Chevron Community Benefits Agreement required new plans to ensure implementation of recommendations of the Zucker Report.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council adopts the following policy directives:

1. Continue operation of the Planning Commission and Design Review Board as separate bodies, but also continue to study opportunities to achieve efficiencies without sacrificing an effective level of project review and community participation in the process.
2. Consider reducing the DRB to five persons, all with professional qualifications.
3. Consider forming a joint body made up of planning commissioners and DRB members to process projects that require both design review and planning commission approval. Consider operating this as a pilot project for a finite period of time or for a finite number of projects to evaluate its effectiveness.
4. Update RMC Chapter VI for consistency with CBC 2007.
5. Fully implement recommendations of the Zucker Report.
6. Implement operational strategies that can be effective in satisfying the desires of both applicants and the community while providing better staff accountability, including:
 - a) Tighten up the intake process. Ensure that staff uses the Design Review Permit Application Submittal Checklists already posted on the City's website. Require the intake staff person to sign and date the checklist indicating that he or she has reviewed the application and found it complete. Do not accept any incomplete applications under any circumstances. Require that the items on the checklist be provided even to determine if the project requires Design Review.
 - i) [Non-Residential Development Projects](#)
 - ii) [Residential Development Projects](#)
 - iii) [Minor Residential Projects](#)
 - b) Require the intake staff person to check off and sign a form to determine if the project requires Design Review.
 - c) Encourage the mayor to appoint new members to the DRB and Planning Commission, including design professionals, so they are at authorized strength, thus reducing delays due to lack of a quorum and assuring that persons with applicable experience and skills are members.

- d) Encourage the use of a pre-selected list of outside professionals to critique projects while at the same time conducting training sessions for staff to enable them to better evaluate and critique building designs and site plans. To the extent that this has been used by the Planning Department to date, it has been extremely successful.
- e) Consider providing, as a pilot program, a modest fund amount in redevelopment areas, to provide design assistance and permit facilitation for additions and alterations for owners who cannot afford more conventional and comprehensive design services of professional architects.
- f) Continue to develop design guidelines including multi-family housing and the Point Richmond Historic District, with emphasis on sustainability, placemaking and good urban design. Overhaul the city's "Infill Housing Initiative Pattern Book." The designs that are included in the book bear no relation to traditional design in Richmond's neighborhoods (funding for these effort be provided by the Council and can be amortized through planning fees over several years).
- g) Develop a design awards program. Encourage applicants to participate with a simple application form. Create a jury of diverse residents and professionals. Recognize the best in several categories on an annual basis, ranging from small additions to entire residences or buildings, sustainability, urban design, etc.
- h) Develop a list of local designers, architects and engineers (excluding Interactive Resources) to hand out to applicants for information only, not as a recommendation or endorsement, and encourage applicants to take advantage of professional assistance. This will expedite the process for applicants, save staff time and money and result in better projects. In order for these service providers to participate, they would have to attend a workshop where they learn about the process and the design guidelines. Particular encouragement would be to use Richmond service providers.
- i) Ensure that Building Regulations plan checkers and field inspectors enforce the PC and DRB conditions and that what is submitted for plan check is the same thing submitted to planning. Ensure the Planning staff person who reviewed the project signs off on it after it is plan checked, signifying that it still complies. Perform a post-construction evaluation of conformance to discretionary approval conditions, and require a staff member to check off and sign off compliance.
- j) Rigorously enforce a 2-week plan check process.
- k) Raise thresholds for zoning administrator review of minor industrial additions located within large sites.
- l) Require that the Planning Director have discretion to require a DRB/PC study session on large projects rather than require a DRB approval before submittal to the Planning Commission (this has been a major issue with large developers. They don't want to spend money on design without some assurance that the project is approvable.) DRB/PC study sessions seem to effectively address this problem by giving both groups the opportunity to provide direction.
- m) Increase thresholds for administrative design review to include additions within 'Heritage neighborhoods' that conform to design guidelines, but conduct administrative design reviews as public hearings.
- n) Consider making the Historic Preservation Advisory Committee the Design Review Board for historic projects, thus eliminating one layer of review.

I certify that the foregoing resolution was passed and adopted by the Council of the City of Richmond at a regular meeting thereof held on January 20, 2009, by the following vote:

AYES: Councilmembers Butt, Ritterman, Rogers, Viramontes Vice Mayor Lopez, and Mayor McLaughlin.
NOES: None.
ABSTENTIONS: None.
ABSENT: Councilmembers Bates.

DIANE HOLMES
Clerk of the City of Richmond

(SEAL)

Approved:

GAYLE McLAUGHLIN
Mayor

Approved as to form:

RANDY RIDDLE
City Attorney

State of California }
County of Contra Costa : ss.
City of Richmond }

I certify that the foregoing is a true copy of Resolution No. 3-09, finally passed and adopted by the Council of the City of Richmond at a meeting held on January 20, 2009.