



Planning Commission Staff Report

January 7, 2010

- Project:** Elk Grove Old Town Special Planning Area Design Standards and Guidelines Triennial Review Amendments
- Request:** Amend various sections of the Elk Grove Old Town Special Planning Area Design Standards and Guidelines
- Location:** Along Elk Grove Boulevard, bounded on the west by Elk Grove-Florin Road, and on the east by Waterman Road, with Locust Street and Grove Street generally forming the boundary on the north and south, respectively.
- Planner:** Gerald Park, Senior Planner

Applicant/Agent

City of Elk Grove
Planning Department
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Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission review the proposed amendments to the Elk Grove Old Town Special Planning Area Design Standards and Guidelines (SPA) and adopt a Resolution recommending the City Council amend the SPA by ordinance.

Background

On August 10, 2005, the City Council adopted the Old Town SPA planning document, which provided a significant update to the previous Old Town SPA version established by Sacramento County in 1985. As part of the updated SPA, Section I(L) requires a triennial report to the City Council that summarizes development activity in the SPA, and identifies possible updates to the SPA in response to changing conditions. The intent of the triennial review is to sustain a current and effective SPA.

In July 2008, staff began the triennial review process in collaboration with the Old Town Foundation and the general public to identify possible areas in which the SPA could be amended in order to be a more effective planning document. Several areas of possible revisions were identified, such as providing additional clarity for the *Application Processing* and *Site Design* sections, as well as possible amendments to the standards and guidelines for parking, signs, and architectural design. Furthermore, the establishment and inclusion of vision statements into the SPA were also proposed to serve as a guide for future growth.

On March 25, 2009, the City Council received staff's presentation of the scope for the triennial review, and directed staff to conduct a series of workshops to 1) create vision statements for major components of the SPA that will establish the framework for strategic planning in Old Town for the future, and 2) review each section of the SPA to identify possible amendments that would assist in meeting the goals of the draft vision statements.

Analysis

A total of ten public workshops were conducted in Old Town at the Grange Hall from the months of May through September in 2009. The first three workshops were dedicated to the establishment of the vision statements, and the remaining seven workshops were for reviewing and drafting amendments to the SPA. As the meetings progressed, a core group of about ten stakeholders emerged who provided the bulk of the public input. That group represented a fairly broad cross-section of Old Town business and property owners, residents, and professionals. Upon completion of the workshops, all proposed amendments were consolidated and the draft SPA document containing the proposed vision statements and all amendments were posted on the Planning Department's Old Town webpage for public review and comment.

Vision Statements

The establishment of the vision statements was created by having workshop participants first identify subject areas that would be significant to the evolution of Old Town Elk Grove. Upon defining the subject areas, the participants were divided into focus groups for each of the defined subject areas with the goal of providing key elements for the formation of the vision statements. Thus, vision statements were created for Land Use, Site Design, Signs, and Architecture. The introductory and vision statements are provided below, which is proposed to be inserted between the Tables of Contents and Section I.

"These vision statements for the Old Town Elk Grove Special Planning Area are intended to serve as a guide for future growth while preserving the historical character and ambiance of Old Town. The visions reflect the community's aspirations for the future and establish a set of guiding principles against which any future action can be evaluated. The vision statements were generated from input from the community through three "Visioning Workshops" held in June/July 2009 as part of the first triennial review of the SPA. Community members identified issues that were important to them and then developed vision statements for Land Use, Site Design, Signs, and Architecture to address these issues. The vision statements below are only meant as a total vision for the Old Town Special Planning Area and have no legal force or effect. Please see the standards and guidelines within the SPA for specific legal requirements.

Land Use

The land uses permitted in Old Town reflect a commitment by the community for a diverse, active, and attractive town center that encourages walking, shopping, dining and the staging of community events and celebrations. The land use plan encourages retail and commercial uses to locate in proximity to similar enterprises in Old Town, and this synergy of use and activity help to promote Old Town as a regional destination. Surrounding housing provides a harmonious mixed-use balance and support to local businesses.

Old Town is a recreational and cultural center of the community that has recognized its central location to the greater Elk Grove community, has enhanced its opportunities and overcome the challenges typical to historic old towns. The land use plan recognizes the challenge of circulation and parking and has seized on creative solutions to change parking and traffic from a liability to an asset for merchants and patrons.

Site Design

Site Design in Old Town, first and foremost, recognizes the original character, form and fabric of the historic core. Because Old Town has developed over time with a variety of building types and lot configurations, buildings are sited with a variety of set-backs depending on the location on Elk Grove Boulevard. The core area of historic Old Town has buildings placed close to the sidewalks to promote a retail street front.

Buildings built in the historic core become more "background" buildings blending with the existing context as opposed to "iconic", stand-alone structures. Building designers and architects are encouraged to see individual buildings as playing a role in a composition with the street as part of the urban design ensemble.

The height of buildings varies, but are of a character and scale that no single building dominates or overwhelms the street or its neighbor. Sidewalks in the core are wide enough to be pedestrian-friendly (also conforming to Americans with Disabilities Act), and to promote outdoor seating for restaurants and outdoor display of merchandise. The streets and design elements of the street fit the over-all character of the Old Town architecture and help to give Old Town its recognizable image and identity.

Old Town is a pedestrian friendly place with buildings close to the sidewalks; a place with well distributed parking with multi-story facilities that blend in with the Old Town architecture and that have well marked visible access. The entry arch, the broad tree canopy and the colorful flowers in sidewalk planters that provide public seating announce a visitor's arrival in Old Town.

Signs

Advertising in Old Town is a creative endeavor that adds to the character and charm of the historic core of Elk Grove. Given clearly written, communicated and enforceable guidelines, merchants and businesses up and down Elk Grove Boulevard share in presenting a quality in design for their individual signs that correspond to the "feel" and appearance of Old Town. The signs are appropriate in scale to the store-front and are visible to both pedestrians and auto traffic on the street.

Directional signs are of the same quality adding to the visual environment and the architectural backdrop. They are clear and are part of a well designed circulation and parking plan helping visitors find Old Town from surrounding freeways and arterial streets. They assist pedestrians in finding their way around town once they leave their cars and identify the many diverse services in Old Town.

Architecture

Old Town, as the heart of the original Elk Grove community, is the focal point for recurring community activities such as parades, farmer's markets and significant community events and this importance is enhanced by a major civic gathering space. The entrances to Old Town are clearly defined by buildings or architectural monuments announcing arrival into the heart of the community. The quality of the design of the street and the buildings lining Elk Grove Boulevard and the character of development in Old Town reflect the heritage and history of the place without creating a thematic statement.

The Architecture of Old Town Elk Grove possesses a charm in its eclecticism. Architectural design is executed with an eye toward context-sensitive design using durable materials such as brick and stone that give the buildings a sense of permanence. The street level of the new mixed-use buildings is a rich mixture of retail, with housing and commercial offices in the stories above. Buildings on Elk Grove Boulevard retain a scale appropriate to the "main street". Some buildings rise to 4 stories with step-backs above 2 stories giving a good sense of rhythm and articulation to the building fronts."

SPA Revisions

All proposed revisions to the SPA are provided in Attachment B in a redline/strikeout format. The proposed revisions are the outcome of seven SPA amendment workshop meetings. Each section of the SPA was comprehensively reviewed in an open forum, and all proposed revisions were openly discussed at varying lengths. Most of the revisions received total support, while a few revisions were added as a result of a majority consensus (i.e. sidewalk signs). Table 1 below provides a summary of the proposed revisions to the SPA that staff believes are substantive and contribute to refining the SPA. Revisions that entail clarifications, including the deletion/addition of certain text that do not change the substance of a goal, standard, or guideline are not included as part of Table 1, but may be reviewed in Attachment 2. Non-substantive revisions for such items as misspelling, grammatical corrections, renumbering, picture deletions/additions, etc. can also be reviewed in Attachment 2.

Table 1 – Summarization of SPA Amendments

| Topic | | Page(s) | Additions/Revisions |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------|--|
| Section I – Processing | | | |
| 1. | Title | | Revised name throughout document from "Elk Grove Old Town" to "Old Town Elk Grove". |
| 2. | Vision Statements | iii | Added Vision Statements to the SPA for: <i>Land Use, Site Design, Signs, and Architecture</i> |
| 3. | Purpose and Intent | 1 | Expanded description regarding the purpose of the SPA. (Section I(B)) |
| 4. | Restricted Commercial (RC) | 4 | a. Extended RC vacancy time period from 6 months to 1 year. b. Added provision to allow Planning Commission to grant an additional 1 year extension to retain RC designation with approval of Type 4 Design Review application. (Section I(F)) |
| 5. | Development Application in Process | 5 | Revised <i>Development Applications in Process</i> section for clarity. |
| 6. | Design Review Process | 6 | Updated <i>Design Review Process</i> section to correspond with current review process procedures. (Section I(J)(2)) |

| | Topic | Page(s) | Additions/Revisions |
|--|--|---------|---|
| 7. | Notice Requirements (Type 1 and 2 Design Review) | 6 | Revised notice requirements for Type 1 and 2 Design Review applications to eliminate notification to surrounding properties. (Section I.J.4) |
| Section III – Land Use | | | |
| 8. | Permitted Uses (Table 2) | 12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Added "Religious Institutions" land use category to Table 2 as a conditionally permitted use. b. Added footnote (Footnote 2) to allow mixed-use development to be permitted in Multi-Family Residential zones along Elk Grove Blvd. c. Separated the land use category "Commercial-Entertainment/Cultural" into two individual land use categories and require "Commercial – Entertainment" to be a conditionally permitted use. d. Added "Commercial-Personal Services Restricted" land use category as a conditionally permitted use (see Land Use analysis below). |
| Section IV – Site Design Standards & Guidelines | | | |
| 9. | Setbacks | 15 | <p>Goal Expanded goal statement for achieving a "street wall" appearance. (Section IV(A)(1))</p> <p>Standard Revised the access width for pedestrian corridors from a specified maximum width of 12 feet to a performance standard of conforming to the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) and California Building Code (CBC) standards. (Section IV(A)(2))</p> |
| 10. | Landscaping | 17 | Added a new standard provision for hanging landscape ornaments. (Section IV(B)(2)(d)) |
| 11. | Hardscaping | 21-22 | <p>Standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Expanded standard to require new development on corner lots on Elk Grove Blvd. to continue the hardscaping and landscaping design as provided for Elk Grove Blvd. for a minimum of 25 ft. along the side street. (Section IV(C)(2)(a)) b. Revised length requirement for installation of pedestrian amenities along side streets intersecting with Elk Grove Blvd. from property line or alley/property line to the first 25 feet from the intersection. (Section IV(C)(2)(c)) |

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| | | | <p>c. Deleted Section IV(C)(2)(j) "No signs are allowed on, or as a part of, any outdoor furniture."</p> <p>Guidelines Replaced "varying materials" with "special paving" for utilization in sidewalks, patios, crosswalks, curb ramps, and vehicular turn aisles. (Section IV(C)(3))</p> |
| 12. | Parking | 23 | <p>Standards</p> <p>a. Updated parking reduction provision that allows a reduction through a shared parking arrangement. (Section IV(D)(2)(a))</p> <p>b. Eliminated the offsite parking facility distance requirement of 800 feet. (Section IV(D)(2)(c))</p> <p>c. Added new parking standard provision for existing commercial buildings that provide the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require no additional parking spaces for a change of use that has a same or lesser parking requirement than the previous use. • A new use with a higher parking requirement will only be required to provide the difference in required parking spaces between the new and previous use. (Section IV(D)(2)(d)) <p>Guidelines Added definition of "shared parking". (Section IV(D)(3))</p> |
| 13. | Signs | 24-32 | <p>Standards</p> <p>a. Added mobile and mobile billboard signage as prohibited signs. (Section IV(E)(2)(c) &(h))</p> <p>b. Added neon "Open" signs as a permitted sign with a maximum dimension of 20" X 36". (Section IV(E)(2)(c))</p> <p>c. Added barber poles and clock faces as exception to moving signs. (Section IV(E)(2)(e))</p> <p>d. Added new standard provision for sidewalk signs (i.e. A-Frame). (Section IV(E)(2)(i))</p> <p>Guidelines Added new provision to encourage figurative signs that advertise the occupant's business through the use of graphic or crafted symbols. (Section IV(E)(3)(b))</p> |

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| | | | <p>Table 6 – Maximum Sign Size</p> <p><u>Monument Sign</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Added new provision that allows corner lots to have 2 monument signs per street frontage upon Planning Director's approval. b. Increased maximum height from 4' to 5'. c. Added requirement for 8" clearance at bottom of monument sign. <p><u>Temporary Signs</u></p> <p>Increased maximum area from 6 sq. ft. to 18 sq. ft.</p> <p><u>Building Signs</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Eliminated wall sign height standard of 3 ft. and established performance standards. b. Increased overall aggregate building sign area ratio from 1 sq. ft. to 1.5 sq. ft. per foot of building frontage. c. Added provision to exclude window signs from aggregate building sign area and increased maximum area from 10% to 25% of glazing. |
| 14. | Access | 33-34 | <p>Standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Added language to encourage the utilization of special paving for projects located adjacent to alleyways. (Section IV(F)(2)(a)(3)) b. Revised the access width for pedestrian corridors from a specified maximum width of 12 feet to a performance standard of conforming to the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) and California Building Code (CBC) standards. (Section IV(F)(2)(a)(6)) <p>Guidelines</p> <p>Added provision that encourages shared access drive and reciprocal parking between non-residential developments. (Section IV(F)(3)(b)(7))</p> |
| 15. | Compatibility | 35 | <p>Standards</p> <p>Revised standard to eliminate the location requirement for the masonry wall to be located on the residential side of the alley. (Section (IV(G)(2)(a))</p> |
| 16. | Outdoor Café Seating | 36 | <p>Standards</p> <p>Deleted standard regarding permanently affixed items. (Section IV(H)(2)(a)(2))</p> |

| | Topic | Page(s) | Additions/Revisions |
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| 17. | Outdoor Retail Sales | 39 | <p>Standards</p> <p>a. Revised permit requirement from Condition Use Permit to Temporary Use Permit (Section IV(I)(2)(a)(1) & (b)(2))</p> <p>b. Deleted standard regarding permanently affixed items. (Section IV(I)(2)(a)(2))</p> |
| 18. | Outdoor Performance Venues | 40 | <p>Standards</p> <p>Revised permit requirement from Conditional Use Permit to Temporary Use Permit (Section IV(J)(2)(a)(1) & (2))</p> |
| Section V – Architectural Design Guidelines | | | |
| 19. | Single-Family Residential | 42 | Added new clause for new single-family residential to encourage the maintenance of the historical character of existing homes (Section V) |
| 20. | Building & Landmark Design Element Heights | 42 | <p>Standards</p> <p>a. Revised building height standard that would allow an increase in maximum height upon a Type 4 Design Review approval by the Planning Commission. (Section V(A)(2)(a))</p> <p>b. Revised design element height standard that would allow an increase in maximum height upon a Type 4 Design Review approval by the Planning Commission. (Section V(A)(2)(d))</p> |
| 21. | Materials | 43 | Added "painted metal" and "wood "as acceptable exterior building materials. (Section V(B)(2)(b)) |
| 22. | Architectural Details | 57 | <p>Standards</p> <p>Revised standard to require at least 2 architectural details for new projects in Old Town. (Section V(I)(2)(a)(2))</p> <p>Guidelines</p> <p>The standard requiring walkway covering has been moved from Standards to Guidelines, and revised the provision to be applicable to both sides of Elk Grove Blvd. (Section V(I)(3)(d))</p> |

In addition to the summarization of the proposed revisions provided in Table 1, further analysis is provided below for the following section areas: Land Uses, Parking, and Signs.

