



# ***PLANNING DIVISION***

## ***STAFF REPORT***

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**To:** Planning and Transportation Commission

**From:** Joan D. Taylor, Planning Manager      **Department:** Planning

**Agenda Date:** March 21, 2001

**Subject:** Study Session to Review Recommendations for changes to the Single Family (R-1) Zone District Regulations and Adoption of an Individual Review (Design Process)

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### **BACKGROUND**

In April 1999, staff began to address proactively the issue of single family residential design to promote compatibility with an existing neighborhood character. In an informational memorandum to the City Council, staff proposed a Work Plan that would initially include a Voluntary Design Assistance program (VDA), review of Title 18 of the Palo Alto Municipal Code (Zoning Ordinance), and a longer term program focusing on other methods and opportunities to achieve neighborhood compatibility.

The VDA program has, since April 1999, offered site and architectural design assistance to any person proposing to substantially remodel or construct a new or replacement single family house. The assistance is intended to promote new construction that is sensitive to existing neighborhoods. Because Palo Alto is essentially a built-out city, the majority of new house construction occurs in established neighborhoods. As an incentive, projects completing the VDA program receive priority for building permit review and an expedited Home Improvement Exception (HIE) process. Participation is voluntary and there is no fee. The program has achieved some success. Since its inception, the VDA program has assisted 123 applicants<sup>1</sup>. However, this is less than half of the building permits for new and major remodels each year building permits for

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<sup>1</sup> Sixty-seven applications last year, and 56 to-date.

new and major remodels each year.<sup>2</sup>

### Single Family (R-1) Zone District Code Review

The compatibility of new and remodeled single family residences within existing neighborhoods is based on a number of elements that individually and collectively affect neighborhood fit. The Single-Family (R-1) Zone District ordinances regulate specific elements of single family design.

The last major changes to the single-family regulations occurred in 1990. In response to concerns about the appearance of overly large houses, the zoning ordinance regulations were modified to adopt a floor area ratio (FAR), a "tightening" of the daylight plane provisions and allowance for limited daylight plane architectural intrusions, and adoption of a Home Improvement Exception (HIE) process. These new regulations were honored with an award from the California Planning Association Northern California Section. Several cities have followed Palo Alto's lead in adopting FAR's and daylight plane requirements. The "Zoning Guidebook for the R-1 Property Owner" (Guidebook) is a clearly written outline and explanation of the regulations. Copies are included in the Commissions' binders.

During the initial consideration of the Single Family Zone District ordinance changes, there was a realization many elements could not be easily addressed by regulations, but were critical to preserving and improving Palo Alto's residential neighborhoods. In response, the City prepared "Single Family Residential Guidelines for Palo Alto" (Guidelines). Copies are included in the Commissions' binders. The guidelines are voluntary, not regulations; but, as noted in the introduction, "[these] guidelines are intended to preserve and enhance the desirable qualities of each individual neighborhood...[This] booklet suggest how to retain the very qualities which make Palo Alto neighborhoods appealing while making necessary changes in individual buildings. If the Guidelines are followed, change can occur positively, and each home project will contribute to the strengths of the neighborhood."

The Guidelines are used in the VDA program review but cannot be required for building permits. Single-family residence permits are usually ministerial, rather than discretionary in Palo Alto. Currently, discretionary review of single family residences is only required for the following: 1) request for concurrent construction of two or more adjacent single family residences, 2) request for a Home Improvement Exception or Variance.

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<sup>2</sup> See Single Family Permit Activity 1995-2000 map and summary statistics - binder Background section.

### Future of Single Family Neighborhoods Advisory Group

As part of its Work Plan, staff proposed the establishment of an Advisory Group. The purpose of the Advisory Group is to provide input to the Director of Planning and Community Environment (Director) on final recommendations to the Planning and Transportation Commission (Commission) and City Council (Council) to comprehensively address concerns related to the compatibility of new and remodeled single family residences within neighborhoods. The Advisory Group process was intended to be open and inclusive with no preconceived solution and is currently comprised of 16 individuals representing the major geographic regions of Palo Alto and a cross-section of interests including real estate, developers and builders, designers, and neighborhoods (copy of following Advisory Group CMR info memo identifies the members). The members later named the group the Future of Single Family Neighborhoods Advisory Group.

The Advisory Group began its deliberations in January 2000. To ensure a shared understanding of the existing City regulations and develop a shared vocabulary, the Advisory Group spent some time reviewing the R-1 zone district regulations and attended a presentation on "Architecture 1 - An Architectural Vocabulary", developed under the auspices of the Santa Clara Valley Chapter, American Institute of Architects.<sup>4</sup> Advisory Group members also participated in a citywide tour to see and have the opportunity to discuss examples of new and remodeled houses (Attachment X- copy of map and tour route). The City Attorney's Office staff also made a presentation on legal aspects of zoning administration.

The concern with the scale and compatibility of new housing is not limited to Palo Alto; many communities are discussing these same issues as evidenced by numerous newspaper and magazine articles. The Advisory Group was particularly concerned that the community's problem(s) be clearly defined, that they identify the major concerns of the community, what aspects of the new housing caused the greatest concern, and how these concerns could be addressed in an efficient and equitable manner.

As part of the problem identification process, the Advisory Group and City co-sponsored a Community Forum in April 2000 to seek input from the community-at-large. Approximately 55 people attended this evening workshop, characterized by small group discussions with Advisory Group members acting as group facilitators, to discuss scale, size and mass, architectural style, landscaping, views, sunlight, light, and air, relationship to surroundings, building materials, and privacy. With this additional input

from the Community Forum, the Advisory Group members adopted a prioritized (identified as either high or medium priority) list of problems/issues. Several issues were identified as not high or medium priority for this review as they would detract from the main goal of the group, but the Advisory Group felt the City should address them in another forum or as follow-up items. These issues are briefly discussed in the "Other Issues" section of the Commissions' binder.

A second Community Forum, again co-sponsored by the City and Advisory Group with small group discussions led by Advisory Group members, was held in late August 2000 to discuss potential solutions and introduced the central policy issue of discretionary review. Over 70 community members attended this second forum. To set the context of the discussion, each group was asked to focus on three topics and offer other suggestions. These topics were: "stand-alone" code changes, Individual Review Process (discretionary review), and "changes addressed as either code changes or guidelines/standards (criteria for discretionary review). Workshop participants identified several broad themes: neighborhood context is a central issue; standards should be clear, simple, understandable, and streamlined; respect for neighbors is essential; individual (discretionary) review should function to promote architectural diversity; communication is key; and informational seminars should be conducted on the fundamentals of building a single-family house.

Based on the prioritized list of issues, a matrix was prepared identifying potential methods to address the identified problem. The Advisory Group then developed a set of over-riding principles (see following) for developing and prioritizing recommendations and solutions and discussed an initial list of general recommendations. (power point presentation will include a slide categorizing the priorities and recommendations by privacy, bulk etc.)

After the second Community Forum, and with direction from the Advisory Group, staff prepared a more fully developed set of recommendations including conceptual proposals for discretionary review criteria/guidelines with the architectural firm Origins Design Network. During its most recent two meetings (February 15 and 22, 2001) the Advisory Group came to consensus on the majority of the proposed code changes and the discretionary review process, discussed in detail later in this report, but not the discretionary review standards/guidelines. Instead, the Advisory Group proposed a sub-committee to work with staff to complete a final draft of the guidelines and proceed with Commission review and City Council direction on the major policy issue of discretionary review prior to finalizing the guidelines. Staff anticipates the Advisory Group will continue to meet to review the Commission's comments and the final

guidelines.

The Advisor Group believes strongly that a critical factor in the success of the proposed program is a community and staff awareness plan to implement and complement the single-family proposals. A smaller sub-committee of the Advisory Group has been meeting to discuss such a program and a separate memorandum describing this effort is included in the Commission packet. As well, the Advisory Group as a whole, and the sub-committee in particular are very interested in ensuring, and perhaps some participatory role, in a semi-annual or annual review, as appropriate, for any adopted program.

### **DISCUSSION**

The material and presentation for the Commission Special Session on Single Family review is divided into four major parts: 1) Staff Report - Overview, 2) Individual (Discretionary) Review Process, 3) Proposed Code Changes, and 4) Other Issues. As well, staff has included an additional section in the Commissions' binder for background material not included in the body of the report. As an example, an analysis of lot size, lot coverage, and FAR for varying lot sizes would be referenced in the report by a background report number, B-1, and found in the background section of the binder).

The major problems and issues identified by the Advisory Group and staff can be characterized as those affecting privacy, massing and bulk, and streetscape/neighborhood compatibility issues. With some exceptions, each of the priority items identified by the Advisory Group affects one of these areas either functionally or aesthetically. Changes to address these issues can be either primarily quantitative (ministerial) or more qualitative standards that require an exercise of discretion. The quantitative regulations would be included in a series of changes to the Zoning Ordinance. The discretionary review would be implemented by adoption of an Individual (design) Review Process with a threshold for review. The Individual Review Process proposal would require enabling legislation codified in the Zoning Ordinance. As part of its discussion, the Advisory Group reviewed the following range of options and discussed the advantages and disadvantages of each approach:

Option 1: No Change

Does not mitigate defined problems

Option 2: Minimum Code Changes

Mitigates specific defined problems with current ordinance provisions per Advisory Group discussion, but not comprehensive in scope and effect.

#### Option 3: Voluntary Design Assistance

Encourages compliance and provides “safe harbor” incentives, a successful and positive program for those participating, however, participation is not required and identified problems may not be mitigated.

#### Option 4: Extensive Code Changes

Objective, predictable, generally readily understood; however, over-regulation can be a result and there is a lack of flexibility in ordinance provisions, difficult to address all defined problems.

#### Option 5: Design Review for Projects Meeting a Specific Threshold

The use of guidelines provides more flexibility, can address the majority of defined problems; however, there is increased uncertainty, associated costs and the potential for a perception of over-regulation and inequity.

#### Option 6: Review of all New Single Family Homes and additions more than 150 Square Feet

The use of guidelines provides flexibility, addresses all defined problems; however, such a choice would substantially over-regulate beyond the scope of the identified problems.

As well, staff and the Advisory Group discussed the advantages and disadvantages of a ministerial or discretionary approach. Staff and the Advisory Group are proposing a combination of quantitative, ministerial regulations and discretionary review (Option 5).

The proposed changes would be applicable citywide.

#### Individual Review Process

The most significant policy issue is the proposed adoption of a single-family review process. As noted in the background section of this report, the current Guidelines were adopted in recognition of the difficulty of addressing the varied elements that contribute to the City's residential neighborhoods including the streetscape, neighborhood characteristics, and sensitive remodels and additions. The Individual Review Process is intended to address the three identified primary areas of concern: privacy, bulk and massing, and streetscape. It is not intended to preclude two-story homes, dictate a specific style, preference, or choice or guarantee great design. The Individual Review Process is

composed of three primary components: 1) threshold or "trigger" for review, 2) the review process and procedures, and 3) associated guidelines or standards.

## 1. Threshold for Review

Some cities have addressed specific problems with the adoption of regulations. As an example, the City of Mountain View regulates the size and location of second story windows to ensure the privacy of adjacent homes. Other cities require an increased setback for second stories to address privacy, massing and bulk issues. The most significant disadvantage to the regulatory approach is the inflexibility and potential for unanticipated consequences. As an example, regulated setbacks can result in what has been described as a "wedding cake" effect; a precisely regulated second story stacked massing. Some flexibility can be incorporated through the use of exceptions or exemptions (e.g., a daylight plane exemption adjacent to a non-residential use). However, it is difficult to anticipate all such situations. As well, numerous exemptions and exceptions create a difficult, overly complex code. It is the opinion of the Advisory Group and staff that a focused design review is the preferable alternative.

The threshold for individual review would be construction of a new two-story house, new second-story addition, or addition to an existing second story greater than 150 square feet. The threshold is based on the premise that two-story houses have a greater effect on privacy, bulk and massing, and to a lesser extent streetscape, than do one-story houses. The threshold is simple, clear, and understandable. The 150 square foot trigger was based on the potential for additional significant living area (e.g., bedroom) while allowing small improvements to the existing living area without individual review.

Other options were discussed for thresholds or "triggers"; examples include a threshold based on a percentage of FAR or a request for exemption from certain regulations or standards. The percentage FAR option would trigger review if the house exceeded a certain percentage of the allowable FAR (e.g., 85% or 90%). There is an intuitive logic to requiring review when the project is "pushing the envelop" and an assumption that a smaller house would have fewer impacts. However, this option would still allow a second story to be built without a review for privacy issues (e.g., windows and decks). The exemption option would trigger review when an exemption is requested from a regulation or standard (e.g., an entry feature greater than 12 feet). Neither option would provide certainty for neighbors. That is, it would be difficult to know, in advance, when a proposed new house would trigger review. It was felt both options would result in a much more complex and difficult to administer code.

## 2. Process and Procedures

The Individual Review Process emphasizes input from the neighbors, early identification of issues, and a problem-solving approach. The process includes several new ideas including posting on site to inform neighbors of the proposed project, use of a checklist as part of the application, the availability of a mediator and a "call-up" City Council appeal process. An outline of the process, an example of draft posting notices and a checklist example is included in the Individual Review Process section of the binder.

The Advisory Group was particularly concerned, as was the community, with notification of neighbors. A sentiment expressed at the Community Forums and by the Advisory Group was the sense of unexpected change with little or no opportunity for neighborhood input. Many developers and homeowners do contact their neighbors prior to beginning a project, however, many do not. By the time the project has been submitted for plan check, there is an inherent resistance to change due, in part, to cost considerations. At this point, there has been a significant investment in both time and money in the proposed project. The Individual Review Process would require notice to the adjacent neighbors and "posting" of the project. Posting would require the applicant to place a sign on the property notifying the neighbors a project is on file, directions on obtaining further information and where to direct comments. Elevations would not be posted. There was a concern expressed at the second Community Forum about posting elevations or floor plans. Elevations can change and lead to confusion and many believe posting floor plans invades privacy. Planning and Library staffs are discussing the potential for, at a minimum, the front elevation and site plan to be available at the main library for the convenience of neighbors unable to come to the Development Center during regular business hours.

There was strong feeling that an applicant should be required to meet with neighbors before filing an application. The City cannot deny applicants the right to file an application if they have not met with the neighbors, however, the application would encourage the applicant/property owner to meet with neighbors as early in the process as possible and will request information as to what attempts have been made to do so. As well, the application would include a checklist to be filled out by the applicant/property owner. An excellent example from the City of Pacific Grove is included in the binder. The anticipated checklist for Palo Alto will emphasize how the project will address privacy, mass and bulk, and the neighborhood streetscape. This approach ensures the project is sensitive to these critical issues, provides directly relevant and understandable information to the neighbors, and a framework for review. A checklist would be completed in conjunction with the guidelines.

Staff and a consulting architectural firm(s) would conduct the initial review of the project based on the Zoning Ordinance, adopted Guidelines, and input from the neighbors. A tentative decision will be mailed to the applicant, adjacent property owners, and any requesting party. To ensure due process, an optional Director's Hearing (similar to the HIE process) may be requested. If the optional hearing were requested, a voluntary mediation would also be available. The intent of this innovative approach is to provide an opportunity for issues to be discussed with a neutral party and reach a mutually acceptable alternative or understanding that is consistent with City zoning and Guidelines. Recently staff has begun discussions with a local mediator who is supportive and interested in working with the City to implement the concept and develop a mediation team. If both mediation and discussion at the hearing is unsuccessful, the final Director's decision (following the hearing) could be appealed to the City Council. Staff is proposing a "call-up" procedure. That is, there is not an automatic hearing by the Council. The Council must first choose to hear the appeal by a vote of a specified number of Council members (four Council members are suggested). If four members agree, then the appeal would be heard by the Council, otherwise, the Director's decision would be final.

The Planning and Community Environment Department will be requesting Council approval for one additional Planner position to implement this program. A Senior Planner would be assigned to the program, as well. The Planner or Senior Planner would be available to meet with applicants and neighbors, conduct site visits, and participate in mediation. The process is designed to be as informal and efficient as possible while ensuring adequate time for review and due process. Staff recognizes the concern with any additional time added to the review process. A draft timeline (calendar) is included to provide an example of processing time to the final Director's decision, assuming applications are submitted on a Monday. Holidays, application revisions, and Council appeal would, of course, extend this timeline. A key element of an efficient review will be clear, understandable guidelines.

## 2. Individual Review Guidelines

As noted earlier, the Advisory Group is not yet satisfied with the initial conceptual proposals for the guidelines and concerned with a large group reviewing such a specialized document. The Advisory Group unanimously approved the formation of a subcommittee composed of one architect (John Northway), one developer (Steve Pierce), and one neighborhood representative (Annette Ashton) to work with planning staff and designers on a final draft of the new Guidelines. Staff is requesting that implementation of the Single Family Review occur a maximum of 45 days after Council

adoption of the program so that Commission can review and adopt the final Guidelines. To avoid unnecessary delay, the Sub-Committee and staff are proceeding with the intent of reviewing the existing Guidelines and the initial concepts prepared by Origins Design Network. The effort will focus on the major issues of privacy, bulk and massing, and streetscape. Finally, it should be noted that the application of the Guidelines would be commensurate with the level of proposed development. That is, an addition to an existing second-story would be subject only to those Guidelines dealing with privacy, such as the placement of windows and decks, while an entirely new two-story house would be subject to all Guideline standards.

As part of the discussion, staff has proposed moving the daylight plane as it effects second stories from the regulations to the guidelines. This is a significant proposal that should be addressed by the Commission, as the daylight plane architectural projection exemptions, in particular, have been a major concern of several Advisory Group members. Currently, the code provides that architectural features such as dormers and gables may extend into the daylight plane no more than 15 feet in length and can be no more than 24 feet in height. This intrusion may extend into the front, rear, and side daylight planes (see Guidebook, pg. 15, Zoning Ordinance Section 18.12.050(j)(2)). There is a strong feeling that the architectural projection exemptions have been abused and result in large building elements that add substantially to the mass of the building and violate the intent of the daylight plane architectural protrusions

The intent is allow flexibility by eliminating the currently mandatory front facing and corner street facing daylight plane and allowing appropriate architectural intrusions in a daylight plane when such intrusion is 1) appropriate for a specific architectural style, and 2) the proposed architectural intrusion is adjacent to a non-single-family residential use, or does not negatively affect an adjacent single-family home. The proposal would not change the existing daylight plane requirements for single story homes. The Advisory Group had significant concerns with this proposal for the reasons stated above.

An alternative would be to leave the current daylight plane regulations in the Zoning Ordinance without change, or to delete the front and/or corner street facing side daylight plane requirement. The current architectural projections could be restricted (e.g., dormers could be no more than a seven and one-half feet in width and must be separated by five feet) and the size of gables could be restricted.

#### Changes to the Single-Family (R-1) Zone District Regulations

The proposed changes to the Single-Family (R-1) Zone District regulations would be mandatory for all new single-family construction (both one and two-story). If regulations

are not addressed in this report, then no change is proposed. The following briefly outlines the proposed changes, the R-1 Zone District changes section of the binder provides a more comprehensive review including: a brief description of the existing regulations(s), a brief discussion of the purpose of the regulation, an outline of the proposed regulatory change(s), and, in some cases, a staff addendum. The staff addendum typically speaks to an alternate approach or a clarification.

The proposed changes generally relate to a lack of clarity, particularly definitions, or perceived "loopholes" in the existing regulations, streetscape issues, and concerns with privacy and bulk and massing issues with the current side setbacks. The background material is most germane to this section of the report and this information is noted. As well, there were several changes proposed that staff recommends either be referred to the Zoning Ordinance Update program or follow implementation of the Single Family program.

#### 1. Floor Area Ratio and Lot Coverage

The recommendations do not propose a change to the current Floor Area Ratio (FAR); that is, the proposed changes do not significantly affect the potential size of a single-family house. Intuitively, a decrease in the FAR would result in smaller houses and thus reduce the effect of bulk and massing. However, the review of the architectural concepts of context, massing, scale, and proportion and the tour led staff and the Advisory Group to conclude size alone is not the only determinate of the "fit" of a new house or new second story within an existing neighborhood. Note: FAR is indexed to the size of the lot. The proposed definition change will clarify FAR is measured to the stud wall, standard industry practice. This change will not effect the calculation of setbacks, which are measured to the outside surface of the wall. The only proposed decrease in size is the inclusion in the FAR of covered porches, even if not 50% enclosed, in excess of 12 feet in height (will be counted twice). This change is in response to the overwhelmingly negative perception of overscaled entry features.

The FAR calculation would also be modified to take-out several disincentives. No "third floor" equivalency will be granted if the roof slope is less than 4:12. The existing 200 square foot exemption for third-floor equivalency results in a flattening of roofs to obtain the exemption at the expense of appropriate design. A second proposed change is for recessed porches to be excluded from the calculation of FAR. Certain styles, such as Spanish Revival or Eclectic, often have recessed entries that meet the FAR definition of 50% enclosed and covered as do classic ranches. Exclusion of recessed porches will eliminate the disincentive to for appropriate design of new houses and remodels developed in these styles. However, it would permit the construction of buildings with

a larger overall footprint and roof.

Another disincentive is the current 35% limitation on lot coverage. Full FAR is not possible for a one-story house with the 35% maximum lot coverage. The proposal is to allow full FAR for one-story houses even if the lot coverage exceeds the current maximum provided minimum setbacks can be met. If a property owner were to apply for a second-story at a future date, the lot coverage must be reduced to 35%. This change corresponds to the current provision of allowing 40% lot coverage in the single-story combining district, although the percentage could exceed 40% for some sites under this proposal. An analysis of the potential maximum lot coverage is included in the background section of the binder.

## 2. Height and Grade

The discussion of maximum height (30 feet) and calculation of grade is both a streetscape and definition issue. Currently, height is measured from either finished or existing grade. This has the effect of increasing the actual height as viewed from the street and may be an incentive to "pad up" a building site. Height will be measured from existing grade. Very recently, an Advisory Group member brought to staff's attention the height and daylight plane constraints of single story homes located in a flood plain and a single-story combining district (typically an Eichler district). Staff has completed some initial calculations and review with Public Works and while not included in this staff report, staff will have an analysis prepared for the Commission Special Session.

## 3. Streetscape Issues

There are several regulation changes intended to address streetscape issues. These include a requirement for a contextual front setback and garage placement. The intent of both regulations is to respect existing neighborhood patterns. Staff's initial proposal was for an average setback based on a block average that could be either closer (to a minimum of 10 feet) or further back than the current 20 foot required front setback. The Advisory Group was concerned the provision could lead to front setback "creep", that is, for houses to locate increasingly closer to the street over time. The Advisory Group supports a regulation that retains the 20 feet front setback or an average whichever is greater.

Two other proposed regulations are related to the front setback. Although the Advisory Group felt landscaping was an important element of streetscape, there was a general opinion shared by staff that requirements for a landscape plan would be over-regulation, such requirements are difficult to regulate and enforce, and would be an

intrusion on personal taste. However, the Advisory Group is concerned the ordinance support, whenever possible, sustainable community concepts. For this reason, 60% of the front yard setback area for any new house must be comprised of permeable surfaces. As well, the current requirement for parking and driveway surfaces to be impervious surfaces is proposed to be amended to allow pervious, impervious, or a combination of surfaces.

A new regulation is also proposed to direct light from outdoor fixtures away from neighboring properties and the street through the use of lens covers that diffuse light or reflectors. Members of the Advisory Group and a number of the Community Forum participants commented on the proliferation of lighting that shines directly into neighboring properties or oncoming traffic.

#### 4. Side Setback Issues

There was a good deal of discussion by the Advisory Group members about the current side setback provisions. Proposals included an increase in the side setbacks and a calculation of side setback based on lot width. Current side setback regulations are not considered a significant issue for one-story houses but unrelieved two-story wall masses on the side setback can restrict light and air and significantly affect privacy. As mentioned earlier, a simple increase in second story setbacks can address this situation but can have unintended consequences. Because the proposed second-story review can and will address these issues the recommendation is to eliminate intrusions in the side yard setback by allowing only greenhouse and small oriel windows and restricting the size of fireplace intrusions in the side setback to a maximum of five feet in width and two feet in depth (see the R-1 Development Regulations binder section for a definition and graphic for an oriel window).

#### 5. Other Regulatory Issues

There was an interest by some Advisory Group members in lifting the City's current restriction on underground garages in the single-family residential district. Staff prepared a proposed regulation that was considered too restrictive by the Advisory Group. The Advisory Group was generally supportive of permitting underground garages and allowing the basement area to extend beyond the building footprint, there was also an agreement that underground garages should be included in the FAR. Staff has significant concerns with a change to the regulations particularly the expansion of basements beyond the building footprints. There should be significantly more study of issues such as potential additional run-off, the effect on potential planting of on-site trees, and a continued discussion of an appropriate setback for the drop-off and slope of driveway access.

Two other proposals should be considered either in the context of the Zoning Ordinance Update or as part of a follow-up to the Single Family Review. Currently, light wells, which also provide emergency access from basements, cannot be covered. The result is an expensive and difficult drainage problem. Staff believes it is appropriate to review this requirement keeping in mind the significant safety aspects. As well, there is a request to review the current maximum two hundred square foot maximum for below grade patios. The result of the restricted size is generally either a dark or very hot, difficult to design area. Staff is supportive of increasing the size. However, the issue is not directly germane to the single-family issues under review and will require additional analysis of appropriate size and slope.

### **ANNUAL REVIEW**

As previously mentioned, the Advisory Group and staff believe a regular review will be very important following adoption of the program. Staff will be reviewing the affect of the proposed ordinance revisions and monitoring both the Individual Review Process and the Guidelines for necessary changes. The review could include a questionnaire to applicants and neighbors requesting their input on the process, a review of completed projects, and focus groups with neighborhood associations and designers. As mentioned, the Advisory Group is also interested in this process which might be combined in some way with the Community and Staff Awareness Program.

### **SUPPLEMENTAL WORK PROGRAM**

There has been community interest in two other related Zoning Ordinance changes not reviewed by the Advisory Group. The first is an ordinance change to allow each neighborhood applying for a Single-Story Combining Zone District to regulate the height up to a maximum of 17 feet (the current standard). That is, a neighborhood could choose to have a lower height restriction. The second proposed change would allow a neighborhood to propose different regulations or guidelines for their neighborhood or a specified geographical area. Staff will be seeking Council direction regarding these proposals with a recommendation that they be deferred to the Zoning Ordinance Update program.

### **TIMELINE**

The Planning and Transportation Commission Public Hearing on the Single Family review program is scheduled for April 11, 2001. The City Council review has not yet been scheduled.

**COURTESY COPIES**

The Future of Single Family Neighborhoods Advisory Group

**ATTACHMENTS**

Planning and Transportation Commission Single Family Review Binder (Commission members only)

Prepared By: Joan Taylor, Planning Manager

Reviewed By: Lisa Grote, Chief Planning Official

DEPARTMENT/DIVISION HEAD APPROVAL: \_\_\_\_\_  
Lisa Grote, Chief Planning Official