

HLC Recommended Infill Design Guidelines

PURPOSE/GOALS

Purpose:

The primary purpose of these design guidelines is to ensure that infill development complements existing buildings and preserves neighborhood character. Compatible designs respect the existing neighborhood context, character and adjacent structures through compatible building massing (height, scale and location), and incorporate building design principles and streetscape elements that are attractive. In addition, good open space designs incorporate features that increase livability and safety of occupants.

Goals:

- To encourage and protect the integrity and character of El Pueblo Viejo (EPV).
- To ensure that development is compatible with EPV and is sensitive to neighboring historic resources.*
- To encourage the livability and safety of projects and residents

*The Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) prepared for the 2011 General Plan Update identifies a potentially significant impact to historic resources from gradual development through the year 2030. To reduce the potential Class 2 impact to less than significant, policies are included in the Historic Resources Element to protect historic resources, including additional protections during construction.

The Historic Resources Element of the General Plan contains Policy HR2 – Ensure Respectful and Compatible Development, which directs that all development respect historic resources and the overall historic character of the City. Implementation Actions HR2.1 thru HR2.5 specifically address construction in proximity to historic resources, and that development shall be designed, sited and scaled to be compatible with their historic neighbors and with public enjoyment of the historic site.

Excerpts from City Council Resolution No. 11-079 referencing environmental finding #5 related to historic resources and Historic Resources Element Policy HR-2 and Implementation Actions HR2.1 through HR2.5 are included with these guidelines.

DEFINITIONS

Compatibility: A project’s ability to demonstrate consistency with the desirable architectural qualities and characteristics which are distinctive of Santa Barbara and the immediate neighborhood. The following design elements should be considered in achieving compatibility:

- a. Contextual setting
- b. Setbacks similar to adjacent development
- c. Architectural style

- d. Size, bulk, and scale
- e. Proximity to adjacent nearby historic resources, sites, or natural features

General Plan Neighborhood: Neighborhoods delineated in the Land Use Element of the City's General Plan.

Immediate Neighborhood: These neighborhoods generally encompass a smaller area than a General Plan Neighborhood and are characterized by a combination of the following:

- Similar zoning
- Similar architecture styles and landscaping patterns
- Common access routes

Neighborhood Study Area. The ten (10) closest properties, including across the street and behind the proposed project. Additional properties may be considered to help make a compatibility determination.

RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES

Building Height:

- Buildings should be within the range of heights seen traditionally in the neighborhood. Three (3) or four (4) stories may not be appropriate in all neighborhoods. Designs with four (4) stories should not overwhelm other buildings in El Pueblo Viejo (EPV). Four story elements, if approved, should be small.
- Consider limiting plate heights to eight (8) feet for residential floors to reduce overall building height and massing.
- Larger buildings should be stepped down in height as they approach smaller adjacent buildings, especially if adjacent buildings are historically significant.
- Facades of one (1) and two (2) stories are generally preferred along the street in residential neighborhoods or within areas that have existing low-rise streetscape development patterns.

Unit Configuration:

- In some cases, the size of a project may be too large for a neighborhood. Larger unit configuration may increase the demand for parking. Projects with fewer bedrooms and bathrooms may be necessary to help reduce parking demand impacts.
- Designs should consider open stairs when leading up to upper floors or the roof top.

Parking:

- Provide underground parking, where feasible, to allow for more ground level open space and landscaping.
- Tandem parking configurations may be acceptable.
- Hydraulic stack parking systems that contribute to the massing of the building may not be acceptable.

- Parking designs should avoid conflict with living areas, but still be conveniently located and easily accessible to residential units.

Open Space:

- Designs should provide open space on ground floor with room to plant natural vegetation and larger canopy trees.
- Designs should provide landscaped buffers between surface parking and living areas.
- Private outdoor living space should be provided for each unit.
- Designs should provide on-site open space amenities, such as play areas for children, recreational facilities, and landscaped seating areas for residential uses.
- Roof decks may not be an appropriate open space amenity for all project designs. Ground level areas are the preferred method for providing common outdoor living space because on-grade spaces have less privacy related impacts and do not contribute to the size, bulk, and scale of a building.

Setbacks:

- New construction should respect the existing setback patterns along street frontage by matching the range of building setbacks on the block.
- If a block has a uniform setback pattern, a building setback should be placed in general alignment with neighboring properties.
- If setbacks are varied, a building should be located with the average setback on the block.
- Designs should provide five (5) foot setbacks along interior property lines in zones where they are not currently required to allow for adequate light and air, as well as privacy to existing adjacent structures.
- Balconies and windows should not be placed on property lines in regard to existing adjacent building(s), or possible future adjacent building(s) so as not to effect light and air in the rooms.

Livability:

- Encourage designs that provide pedestrian connectivity to adjacent properties and the neighborhood.
- Designs should provide quality on-grade open space and landscaping, including larger canopy trees and not just landscaping in pots.
- Designs should provide useable open space that accommodates gathering, playing, and seating areas for residents.
- Project locations should have access to neighborhood support services, such as transit, employment, shopping and parks and other recreational facilities.
- Designs should provide appropriate pathway design to help create a safe and efficient connection to on-site buildings, adjacent buildings and exterior sidewalks.

- Design residential entrances, lobbies, and gates to be visible from public sidewalks and streets with clearly demarcated, accessible, and lighted pathways between sidewalks and building access points to establish a sense of presence and safety.
- Encourage the use of courtyards, paseos, and traditional building materials compatible with neighborhood styles.
- Projects must be designed to comply with the City's Outdoor Lighting Ordinance and Guidelines.

ADDITIONAL HLC CONCERNS

Redraw AUD Map: To help protect historic resources, the HLC strongly recommends that the AUD Map be redrawn to remove certain properties from the map. Recognizing that revisions to the map will take time to process and requires amendments to the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance, the HLC is focused on formulating specific multi-unit infill design guidelines to protect historic resources. A proposal by the HLC identifying specific changes to the AUD Map will be forwarded to the City Council in the near future for consideration.

Parking: The HLC has identified parking as a key concern of the AUD Program. A design guideline to address the need of additional parking for projects proposing units with three (3) or more bedrooms as well as limiting the number of bathrooms to two (2) per unit is recommended. The HLC is aware that mandating more parking than is required by the AUD ordinance or restricting the number of bathrooms per unit requires amendments to the Municipal Code.

Open Space: The HLC prefers that roof decks not be substituted for useable ground-level open space and may not always be an appropriate common open space amenity, especially if a roof deck adds to the size, bulk and scale of the building. Several design guidelines related to open space and livability are included to encourage on-grade useable open space. Because the AUD Program allows the common outdoor living space to be located on either the ground or any level of the building, these design guidelines are potentially inconsistent with AUD open space standards.