

“Placerville, a Unique Historical Past Forging into a Golden Future “

City Manager’s Report
April 26, 2016 City Council Meeting
Prepared By: Andrew Painter, City Planner
Item#: 12.4



Subject: Continued from April 12, 2016 City Council Regulation Meeting:

Adopt a resolution approving the Update to the *City of Placerville Development Guide*.

Background: On April 12, 2016 the City Council continued staff’s request to adopt a resolution approving the Update to the City of Placerville Development Guide since two of the Council members were absent.

The City’s Final Draft was released to the public via links from the Development Services Department and City webpages and a post to the City’s Facebook account on March 22, 2016. The Final Draft was distributed to Council Members on March 22, 2016

At Council’s April 12, 2016 meeting, written comments were received and placed into the record from Councilmember Thomas and Councilmember Acuna. These comments are provided as Attachment B.

Options:

1. Adopt a resolution approving the Update to the City of Placerville Development Guide. The resolution is provided as Attachment A.
2. Revise the Development Guide Update and adopt the Update by resolution.
3. Do not adopt the resolution, direct staff to revise the Update accordingly, and then return to the City Council for adoption.
4. Do not adopt the resolution.

Fiscal Impact: There is no direct fiscal impact to the City. The Development Guide Update will be available electronically and in hardcopy form. There will be no costs associated with the electronic form. Direct costs to create a hardcopy version for distribution will be recouped through the charge to duplicate the document.

Recommendation: Adopt a resolution approving the Update to the *City of Placerville Development Guide*.



M. Cleve Morris, City Manager



Pierre Rivas, Director
Development Services



Andrew Painter, City Planner

Attachments:

- A. Resolution of the City Council of the City of Placerville Approving the Update to the City of Placerville Development Guide
- B. Comments Received

RESOLUTION NO. _____**RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF
PLACERVILLE APPROVING THE UPDATE TO THE CITY OF
PLACERVILLE DEVELOPMENT GUIDE**

WHEREAS, on August 25, 1992, the City Council adopted Resolution 5549 that approved the *City of Placerville Development Guide*; and

WHEREAS, the preparation of a Development Guide is an implementation program contained within the City's General Plan; and

WHEREAS, On October 30, 2012, the City Council directed that staff integrate an update of the Development Guide into a Development Services Department work plan; and

WHEREAS, the City Council on April 12, 2016, considered the recommendation of the Planning Commission to make the finding that the Update of the Development Guide project is exempt from environmental review under the General Rule (Section 15061(b)(3)) of the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines, and approve the Update of the City of Placerville Development Guide.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council of the City of Placerville does hereby:

1. Find that the Update to the City of Placerville Development Guide project is exempt from environmental review per California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines under the General Rule (Section 15061 (b)(3)), in that the project involves updates and revisions to existing guidelines for the planning, design and processing of development activities within the City, and it can be seen with certainty that the proposed amendments to the City of Placerville Development Guide will have no significant negative effect on the environment.

2. Approve the Update of the City of Placerville Development Guide, a copy of which is on file in the City Clerk's office, and by reference incorporated herein.

The foregoing Resolution was introduced at a regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Placerville held on April 26, 2016 by Councilmember _____ who moved its adoption. The motion was seconded by Councilmember _____. The motion was passed by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

Mayor Trisha Wilkins

ATTEST:

Kelly Witt, City Clerk

DEVELOPMENT GUIDE DISCUSSION:

First and foremost, many thanks for ALL the thought and effort that has gone into the creation and update of this document. I recognize it is no small feat, and the work of City Staff as well as the Planning Commission is much appreciated.

The following 5 items are topics that I consider to be most important. Items 6 - 10 are ideas and suggestions that are designed to serve as catalysts for discussion. Items 14-16 are fairly simple changes I am requesting:

IMPORTANT CHANGES: *(from my perspective)*

1) PAGE I-1 Suggested new wording

This document is designed to be an interface between the public and city code to better clarify it and help people navigate the confusing waters of development regulations. Therefore, **I would like to see a more friendly opening statement...more welcoming, less regulatory to start things off.**

SUGGESTED WORDING -----

“Thank you for your interest in developing the City of Placerville. Projects are important to us, regardless of size, and we consider ourselves a partner in your success. We also recognize that the activity of permitting and development can be daunting, and it is our pleasure to help you through the City’s process.

This Development Guide will be an important tool in providing clear guidelines for planning and design as well as summarizing the development process in a logical format. This document is not intended to limit design innovation but rather to aid the facilitation of quality developments that fit well within the context of our community and which lend unity and consistency to the fabric of our city. It is intended to fully incorporate the goals and objectives of the General Plan as they relate to community design. It will also serve as the standard for the development community, City staff, the Planning Commission and the City Council, enabling them to comply easily with the policies and programs adopted in the General Plan, thus contributing to the preservation and enhancement of the city’s image and sense of place.

This document will...

- Outline the city’s permit application and review procedures
- Describe the city’s development policies, standards and guidelines, and
- Suggest site and landscape design approaches

So thank you for investing in Placerville, and we look forward to working with you on a successful project.” -----

2) PAGE V-3, ITEM A. 1n:

“All parking lot planters and landscape areas shall be planted with live landscape materials that will ultimately achieve 100% coverage of the planter area....Cobbles, gravel, bark or other mulches are not acceptable substitutes for living plant materials.”

I am concerned this is not realistic. Very few of our landscape areas have “100% coverage” (*including our City lots!*) and gravel, bark and cobble can be effective when incorporated in a landscape design. Our City is not well-served by impractical guidelines.

SUGGESTION: Offer a realistic range of coverage?

3) PAGE V-8, ITEM 2. B:

“Landscaped medians which separate lands of ingress and egress...should be incorporated at entries and other nodes to define these areas.”

Once again, not practical. Our city is almost built out in terms of commercial development and parking ratios are tight. This standard would take up valuable space with no real benefit. The goals of improving aesthetics and visual character could be achieved in other landscaped areas without placing this costly burden on property owners.

SUGGESTION: Take out this altogether.

4) PAGE XI-1: LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE

Here we dictate that **“All plant materials should be maintained in a healthy and growing condition and in a neat and attractive appearance throughout the year”** and that **“Annual color beds shall be re-planted a minimum of four times per year with seasonally available varieties.”**

My concern is, are we willing to enforce this? There is a procedure of enforcement laid out in the Appendix, but to my knowledge, we don't utilize it. There are a number of properties, including City owned properties, that don't adhere to these guidelines.

QUESTION: How can we rectify this while achieving the objective of a well-maintained community?

QUESTION: Does a “refresh” of landscaping require a Landscape Plan? Do you only need Landscaping Plans when doing a new project? This isn't clear in the DG.

5) PAGE XIV-2 and 3: PROJECT REVIEW PROCESS

This is probably my most critical correction.

QUESTION. Does *any* change to a building trigger a full site plan review?

It appears it does in the Guide. Furthermore, **does every Site Plan Review require ALL the submissions listed in the DG?**

For example, if a property owner wants to put up some exterior lighting, lighting that meets City code, do they have to submit ALL the items listed for review?

Does such a minor addition then trigger other improvements?

How would a person know this looking in the DG?

(Appendix E is actually clearer than the verbiage in XIV)

SUGGESTED WORDING CHANGE:

Perhaps we need to open that chapter with something user friendly: -----

“It is best to begin any project with a visit to City Hall. Development Services Staff will be a collaborative partner, walking you through the development process and helping ensure a successful project for you and for the community.

A Site Plan Review may be an important step in maintaining the orderly and harmonious development of the City of Placerville. This process also helps sustain and improve values throughout the City while making certain that any development preserves and enhances the City’s natural, rural beauty, charm and character while ensuring public health, safety and welfare.”

Also, I am gravely concerned that C-1 discourages improvements to the exterior of our commercial buildings. It states: **“Any proposed...development or alterations including attempts tootherwise enhance existing buildings must be approved by the City of Placerville’s Planning Commission.”** It then goes on to list all the requirements for submittal to the PC. *(A lot and expensive)*

The Development Guide states that there are 2 categories for changes to a Site Plan... *Minor and Major*. However, it states that “Minor” changes “shall not in any way change the appearance, character or intent of the approved site plan.” I understand the intent of this, however, we want to *encourage* improvements to the look of a building. We want minor changes that are visible!

I think we need to create a pathway and process to encourage MINOR improvements, especially cosmetic, exterior improvements that aren’t structural, and allow staff to give approval over the counter. This will help a property owner make improvements to their building and reduce the time and money involved in this process. If we keep this guideline as it is currently stated, building owners

won't be encouraged to make improvements where they can, and as a city, we will continue to get what we have! Dressing up an exterior shouldn't be so onerous!

SUGGESTION:

Define what materials are appropriate and what a property owner CAN do with staff approval without going through the time and expense of a Planning Commission review.

Also, for improvements that should be reviewed by the Planning Commission but are not "Major" in nature, maybe have a third category that is classified as "MODERATE" ...where there are not such stringent submittal requirements for a simple fix.

I realize this may involve changes to City Code, but I truly believe that if we make it easier for property owners to fix up their properties incrementally, our city will increase in charm and character. Conversely, if ANY fix triggers a full Site Plan review, we actually discourage improvements. We don't want to do that!

QUESTIONS/ CONCERNS / DISCUSSION POINTS:

6) PAGE V-1:

1d: I wouldn't want our commercial properties to have to put in bike lockers. It might be cost prohibitive and there are security concerns. *Perhaps take that reference out.*

1f: "Landscaping in all buffer areas between property lines and off street parking areas"... What does that mean? I'm thinking about the about the properties on Placerville Drive and Broadway. We have been wanting to increase connectivity and this might discourage it.

7) PAGE V-11:

"All storage, loading and utility areas as well as meters, transformers, backflow prevention devices and other equipment shall be screened from view of all public rights of way....In commercial areas, transformers, backflow prevention devices and propane tanks should be accommodated underground wherever possible"

Once again, this seems impossible. If you drive around our town, there are dozens of these items in view, some are butted right against the road with very little chance of disguise. **How could we make this guidelines a bit more practical?** I am also concerned about the outrageous costs of development if we condition these devices to go underground. Screening is good, when it can be accomplished.

8) PAGE IX-1: EXISTING TREES AND NATIVE PLANT MATERIAL

I appreciate the opening paragraph that recognizes existing trees as a community asset. It might be even more effective to take it a step further and highlight the connection with economic benefit. I think it's always helpful for folks to abide by the established guidelines if they understand "why" ...especially if that "why" makes sense!

SUGGESTED WORDING:-----

“Placerville is primarily a rural, historic community where the economic value of property is closely tied to the character and aesthetics of the city, much of which is attributable its lush, natural beauty including its abundance of trees. The intent of the City’s Tree Regulations is to provide a sustainable urban forest and to balance the rights of property owners with basic standards for the maintenance, removal and replacement of trees. All existing trees within the area...”

9) PAGE X-1: IRRIGATION SYSTEM DESIGN

I assume this chapter is referring to Commercial Landscape Irrigation? However, it might be helpful to clarify that at the top of the page. It talks about **“All landscape irrigation systems shall be designed by a California Registered Landscape Architect...”** and makes it seem that the average homeowner can't go to Home Depot and do his own project on the weekend. Can they? Need to clarify.

10) PAGE XIII-1: SIGNAGE ON HISTORIC MAIN STREET

“...all signs require a permit and are subject to approval by the City of Placerville’s Planning Commission.” Is this necessary? Couldn't some be done through a Counter Review by Staff?

Also, on **Item A. 5a:** The Guide defines what signs are **“inappropriate”** in our Historic Main Street area and lists **“Billboards or similar advertisements that will change on a regular basis.”** We need to grapple with the A-frame signs. I can see them as a useful tool for restaurants. They are compelling with Daily Specials and they encourage business.

How could we have a process to allow them, even if only for restaurants? Require a permit along with a reasonable fee? Establish visual guidelines that require them to fit the character of Downtown...no plastic signs... maybe only wood or chalkboard? Perhaps create a unified chalkboard design that all restaurants use? We need to be business friendly while protecting the character of our community. Of course, we need to ensure that signs do not interfere with the public right-of-way. Having a permit process would allow us to revoke permission if the privilege is abused.

ADDITIONAL REQUESTED CHANGES TO THE DEVELOPMENT GUIDE:

11. **CHANGE: Outlaw astro-turf in commercial districts.** (The DG currently says it's "discouraged". We need to keep the "not allowed" designation. In doing so, we encourage more creative ways to be drought tolerant but beautiful which are more appropriate for our City).

12. **CHANGE: Clarify a homeowner's ability to landscape their own yard.**

13. On Page XIV-10, Talk about the BENEFIT of a PPR to a project applicant. Describe **Why** is this a good idea, in clear friendly terms. The current language makes it seem onerous.

SUGGESTED WORDING CHANGE: -----

"A PPR gives you the opportunity to explore your project with staff and to help you clarify what the process and requirements will be before you even get started! Staff can work with you to delve into options and opportunities which may help you avoid delays and pitfalls that might occur without such preliminary investigation."

14. Page IV-15. Item 4d. **Talks about imitation masonry.** We have approved it on Home Depot, Eskaton, and probably Hampton Inn.

CHANGE: Break out Historic Main Street and don't allow it there. However, it should be an option on Broadway/Placerville Drive/Smith Flat area for new development.

These ideas, changes and suggestions are submitted with the utmost respect and gratitude for the diligent, thoughtful and concerted work that has gone into the creation of this helpful document.

With appreciation,

*Wendy Thomas
Councilmember*

City of Placerville Development Guideline

Final Draft, April 12, 2016

Comments to Staff, submitted by Mark Acuna:

II A.1.3- Soils: add expansive clay to description.

III 2.a. Main Street: Add wording using the 2016 Main Street improvements as a community standard regarding streetscape, crosswalks, sidewalks, etc.

III 3.a. Smith Flat Road: revise wording to include Jaquier Way and Upper Broadway as an area with planned projects, containing sites for future growth and improvements to the City.

IV A. Development in Placerville's Historic Districts: Highlight or bold Restore, Remodel, and Rehabilitate to distinguish the well written definitions.

IV B 3. Smith Flat Road: Broaden to include Jaquier Way and Upper Broadway as noted above.

IV C.3. c-f. Façade Treatments: Replace "shall" or "should" with "will" to better protect our historic structures and historic areas.

V A.3. Sidewalk and Pedestrian Circ.: replace "should" with "shall"...provide walks and amenities..."

V B.3. Residential Site Design Guidelines: Replace "should" with "will" ...demonstrate continuity with existing structures."

VI A. General Requirements: Add wording to address fencing requirements in a site plan review. Begin review of code to address placement of fences over 4' tall parallel to streets in all districts.

VI E. Smith Flat Road: revise wording to include Jaquier Way and Upper Broadway as above.

VI.K. Post Construction Storm Water Management: Add information describing what actions are required by an applicant and the City.

X.13. Automatic Controllers: Remove reference to manual shut off, require automatic rain sensors on all new installations.

XIII B.1. Main Street Historic Area: Replace "should" with "shall"...respect the character of the..."

XIV.B.2. Encourage staff to review the 1000 sq. ft. threshold to confirm it fits our future project reviews and allows for proper application of our community standards.

XIV.G. Preliminary Plan Review: current language correctly outlines process. Consider language that highlights the benefits of this process for our applicants in layman terms. Require inclusion of all utilities locations and facilities on site plans for early review and potential screening solutions.

Final Comments:

I would encourage staff to work on changes to our code regarding fencing and signage. They should continue their efforts, and remain alert for new State mandates related to water shortages and storm water discharge regulations.

I would like to extend my thanks to City staff and all the various groups, committees and commissions that have offered their assistance in updating this document. It is my hope that the finished document reflects the goals and values of our community, and will provide clear assistance to all future projects in Placerville. The adopted changes should also recognize the ongoing need to identify and protect all aspects of our gold rush history.

With Sincere thanks,

Mark Acuna, Councilmember

City of Placerville