

CITY OF ESCONDIDO**MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
ESCONDIDO HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION****March 8, 2017****WEBINAR:**

“Teardowns to Mansionization – Preserving Community Character,” presented by the California Preservation Foundation (CPF), 12:00 P.M.

Commissioners present: Chair Rea, Vice-Chair Spann, Commissioner Breitenfeld, Commissioner Danskin, Commissioner Hanwit and Commissioner Lee

Commissioners absent: Commissioner Correll

Staff present: Rozanne Cherry, Principal Planner; Adam Finestone, Principal Planner, and Paul Bingham, Assistant Planner II.

Adjourned to Special meeting at 1:30 P.M.

SPECIAL MEETING:

The special meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission was called to order at 1:47 p.m. by Chair Rea in the Mitchell Room, 201 North Broadway, Escondido, California.

Commissioners present: Chair Rea, Vice-Chair Spann, Commissioner Breitenfeld, Commissioner Danskin, Commissioner Hanwit, and Commissioner Lee.

Commissioners absent: Commissioner Correll.

Staff present: Rozanne Cherry, Principal Planner; Adam Finestone, Principal Planner, and Paul Bingham, Assistant Planner II. Mike Strong, Assistant Planning Director arrived at 2:00 p.m. to present Item J.5.

MINUTES:

Chair Rea asked that the minutes of the January 19th, 2017 meeting be revised to substitute the word “Explore” for the word “Tour” in the walking tour App. referred to in Current Business Item 8. Staff agreed to make that alteration. Moved by Vice-Chair

Spann, seconded by Commissioner Hanwit, to approve the minutes of the January 19th, 2017 meeting as corrected. Motion carried unanimously.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS: none.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS: None.

PUBLIC HEARINGS: None.

Note: Commissioner Hanwit recused herself from the next item due to the proximity of her home to that of the subject property.

CURRENT BUSINESS:

1. DESIGN REVIEW - Case No. ADM 17-0035:

REQUEST: To build a new garage off the alley behind an existing historic house.

Location: 231 East 5th Avenue (in the OEN).

Paul Bingham, Assistant Planner II, provided a brief overview of the subject property and its single-story Post War house built in 1949. Though within the historic district, the property is not on the Local Register and is not listed in the City's historic surveys. City records do show the original attached single-bay garage was legally converted to living space in 1955. The new owner is proposing that Tuff Shed build a standard double garage in the rear of the property. It would be a single-story, side-loading garage with a small shop area. A large concrete pad next to the garage would allow vehicle access through a gate from the alley. He noted that the proposed structure meets the setback requirements and that most of the surrounding properties currently have non-historic alley garages. Staff recommended approval with the conditions that the colors match the existing main house and that the applicant avoid losing the mature backyard California Pepper tree by working with staff in locating the proposed garage and driveway pad.

Commissioner Breitenfeld asked if the original driveway in front should be removed. Vice-Chair Spann said it provided valuable off-street parking, was part of the original house and should stay. Chair Rea agreed and asked about the condition of the existing pepper tree. Staff was not sure, but noted there were overhead utilities that necessitated periodic topping of the tree.

Vice-Chair Spann believed if the tree must be removed that the owner should be made to plant a replacement. He also felt the design of the garage should include



a hip roof to match the design of the main house. Commissioner Danskin agreed. He also confirmed the property's R-1-6 zoning and the required setbacks adjacent to an alley. He was concerned about the lack of garage elevations provided in the applicant's exhibits and questioned proposed door and window locations. He felt that in addition to the roof design, the roofing materials and paint colors, including the trim, should match the main house. Additional discussion ensued exploring possible alternative locations for the garage in order to save the tree. Chair Rea acknowledged that the new owner had expressed an interest in pursuing Local Register status and a Mills Act on the property. She felt this was an opportunity to raise the bar on a better match of garage and historic house.

ACTION:

Moved by Vice-Chair Spann, seconded by Commissioner Lee, to approve staff's recommendation including the condition that the colors and roofing material used on the garage match the main house and that if tree removal occurs, the replacement be with a staff-approved variety in 24" box planted elsewhere in the yard. Motion passed 5-0-1. (Commissioner Hanwit abstaining)

2. REVIEW OF DRAFT ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT (ADU) LANGUAGE FOR UPCOMING ZONING CODE UPDATE



Mike Strong, Assistant Planning Director, provided a presentation of the City's effort to revise its current Second Dwelling Unit (SDU) zoning code language to align with the State's adopted legislation (AB 2299 and SB 1069) which encourages Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's) in single-family zones. He stated that the Planning Commission had reviewed the draft on February 14, 2017 and had continued the item until March 14, 2017 to allow Planning staff time to explore possible additional provisions to insure heightened residential appearance, ADU design quality and give the City more approval discretion. It was suggested that text from Article 40 be added requiring that all improvements to historic resources must retain existing historic elements. He said the final amended code version is scheduled to go to City Council on April 26, 2017.

Assistant Director Strong reviewed the City's previous process and standards regarding second units. He explained that the State is now making approval of ADU's a ministerial process via simple building plan check and without findings. He added that building permits thus issued are appealable. The HPC's roll will be to comment on ADU's. He invited the commissioners to voice their concerns and these would be passed on in future hearings.



Commissioner Danskin asked what the Planning Commission's biggest concerns were. Assistant Director Strong stated that they had concerns with parking, noting

that under new State law, garage conversions don't need to provide equivalent covered parking and would allow parking in any configuration on the lot. He added that staff is currently investigating ways to minimize these impacts, including requiring additional storage space be added when a garage is lost to conversion.

Chair Rea did not believe adding more storage structures on a lot should be a requirement. Commissioner Breitenfeld believed the State's language eliminating parking could not have been written by someone who commutes using public transportation. For most, a vehicle is needed to travel to a transportation node. She also clarified that only one ADU per lot would be allowed under new State law.

Vice-Chair Spann said he had significant concerns regarding garage conversions. He believed the State law as written was ill-advised and would only lead to the creation of future slums. He felt the City needs to discourage conversion of garages into living space. Assistant Director Strong stated that staff is not taking a position, but that there would be more discussion at Planning Commission.

Commissioner Danskin related his recent experience in San Diego with what they call "companion units." They are limited as to size, must be within a set building envelope and the approval process is administrative. He believed the requirements we likewise include in our code update need to be specific. For example, when related to historic resources, he warned that the term "compatible" does not mean "match." He believed we should always consider the character of the adjacent street, alley and landscape. Assistant Planner Bingham suggested including language from Article 40 where it specifies that staff insure the proposed changes to a historic resource won't preclude it from being placed on the Local Register.

Chair Rea stated that garages converted to units or the location of new ADU's off some substandard alleys in the Old Escondido Neighborhood may preclude proper fire and emergency vehicle access. She advised adding alley improvements as a condition of approval. Commissioner Danskin suggested staff require Fire Department and Stormwater Management review of such projects early on, adding that the conditions these departments impose often necessitate extensive project redesign. Assistant Planner Bingham suggested considering an alley's condition as a health and safety issue to deny ADU's if emergency vehicles can't gain proper access. Commissioner Danskin also discussed substandard utilities in many OEN alley locations. He clarified with staff that the new State law specifically precludes ADU's from many infrastructure upgrade requirements and he stated that regardless, if a sewer lacks capacity or there is not enough water flow, a viable additional unit cannot be built. Commissioner Hanwit suggested providing a fact sheet with our ADU application encouraging applicants to talk with Fire and Utilities regarding access and improvement needs before preparing building plans.



Assistant Director Strong thanked the Commission for their comments

3. DISCUSSION & COMMENTS ON TODAY'S EARLIER CPF WEBINAR

Rozanne Cherry, Principal Planner, asked commissioners to share thoughts about the California Preservation Foundation's webinar they had seen earlier in the day entitled "Teardowns to Mansionization: Preserving Community Character."

Commissioner Danskin questioned their argument that so-called "McMansions" devalue the existing homes around them, seeing they offered no financial evidence to back up their claim. He also felt the concept of "too much" is geographically subjective. What is unacceptable here may be readily acceptable elsewhere. To understand the character of a neighborhood, all of its contributing elements need to be evaluated, including: streetscape, street width, sidewalk, plantings, setbacks to building facades, shapes, structural materials and the number and appearance of structures on both sides of the street. Identifying and being clear on just what our concerns are is important: Are we only worried about street appearance?



He then commented on the presentation. He said that in our Historic Guidelines update, example photos of what is good and what is bad will be easier to understand than sketches. We should therefore find local photographic examples of McMansioning or architectural muddling to include. When someone buys a historic property, they also purchase a responsibility. He questioned whether there can be sufficient incentives to really encourage preservation, saying how we deal with vehicles drives much of the design. A short distance to transit may truly be an incentive.

Commissioner Lee found the webinar informative, adding that towns like Rancho Santa Fe could have used this 20 years ago. Commissioner Hanwit felt a lot of what happens to a property depends on the purchaser, our challenge being to reach the "flippers" before they ruin a historic property.

Chair Rea stated that there are certainly some oversized houses in the OEN. She disagrees with the notion that you can't do something smaller because "it doesn't pencil out." Commissioner Danskin suggested that this is where incentives come into play, adding that storm water, fire and utility upsizing kills small projects. If the City wants more communities like OEN, they must make infrastructure upgrades.

Chair Rea asked if the City had incentives to relocate historic homes into the City. Staff said that no monetary incentive existed, per se, but that the Code had been changed to lessen barriers to creating receptor sites.



Chair Rea stated that she was concerned with the new South Centre City Area Plan (SCCAP) proposing 3-story buildings along South Escondido Blvd., separating the OEN and imposing overlooking into the OEN. She stated that Assistant City Manager Jay Petrek will be presenting the new SCCAP at the OEN's next quarterly meeting to be held April 2, 2017.

4. DISCUSSION OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARDS

Rozanne Cherry, Principal Planner, informed the commissioners that the City Manager's Office agreed this year's awards should honor the 20th anniversary of the City's Mother's Day Tour as well as the 25th anniversary of City Council's creation of the Old Escondido Neighborhood historic district. She added that generally the annual award presentations include a PowerPoint and certificates to be given out to recipients, and noted that the presentation will be at the May 10, 2017 City Council meeting.

Chair Rea reported that she was currently compiling histories and photos for use in the annual Mother's Day home tour and offered to put something together for this as well. She stated that some individuals instrumental in the establishment of the district like Lucy Berk, Dick Althouse, Margaret Moir and others were still around. Adam Finestone, Principal Planner, added that having names and other information would be important to drafting the proclamation the Mayor would read.

5. AD HOC WORK GROUP REPORT ON MILLS ACT PROPERTIES

Chair Rea noted that the work group had visited five Mills Act homes since January's HPC meeting, exceeding its goal of two visits per month. She presented staff with five completed visit reports and noted that we needed to change the word "inspection" on the form to "Report" in an effort to make the periodic visit process less intimidating for new owners. She reported that of the ten visit letters mailed out, the group visited five and that two more had responded and would hopefully be visited soon. She asked staff to send second letters to the three property owners who had not responded.

She then handed out copies of a sample draft follow-up letter to summarize visit comments for the property owner and asked the commissioners for their thoughts.

Commissioner Danskin agreed the follow-up letter was a positive idea and suggested the City's website link be included. Chair Rea suggested the follow-up letters should also be printed on City letterhead. It was the Commission's consensus that these follow-up letters were a good idea.

Chair Rea related some experiences from past visits and believed we should consider requiring Mills Act owners to produce receipts demonstrating home improvements are being done. She felt more owner accountability was needed. Commissioner Hanwit suggested such owners were saving a lot of money on the Mills Act and so it would be justified. Assistant Planner Bingham acknowledged that some other jurisdictions require owners to produce annual receipts, but that the time to audit the volume of additional paperwork was handled by special city staff dedicated to that purpose. He felt that because the cases of abuse were few and Planning staff hasn't time to manage this added responsibility, requiring this at this time was not warranted.

6. AD HOC WORK GROUP REPORT ON UPDATING THE CITY'S HISTORIC GUIDELINES

Chair Rea reported that the ad hoc work group is meeting every other month and everyone has assignments they are working on. The group is writing material and will be editing it shortly. They will likely have more to report on at the next meeting.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – Assistant Planner Bingham reminded the commissioners they had agreed last meeting to watch the archived CHRIS webinar on YouTube which can be counted toward their annual CLG training. He then provided a brief overview of what they could expect when they viewed the video. Commissioner Danskin stated that he had watched it and questioned how the database could aid the City. Mr. Bingham referred to the discussion at the end of the webinar regarding CHRID. San Diego and Ontario are using it to keep new historic survey data. At some point the CHRIS and CHRID systems will be linked.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Chair Rea provided an overview of the upcoming annual 20th Mother's Day tour with five homes ranging in construction dates from 1909 to 1952. She added that the annual Adobe Home Tour this year would feature six homes and that more information and tickets were available from the History Center.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 4:06 pm. The next regular meeting was scheduled for May 18, 2017 at 3:00 p.m.



Rozanne Cherry, Principal Planner



Paul Bingham, Acting Minutes Clerk