Presentation Objectives

- Legal Foundation
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Design Guidelines
- Design Review Approach
- Dos and Don’ts
- Examples
Is Design Review Legal?

  “…this Court has recognized …that States and cities may enact land use restrictions or controls to enhance the quality of life by preserving the character and desirable aesthetics features of a city....”

- California courts: aesthetic regulation permissible if reasonably related to public health, safety and welfare.
Legal Caveats

- Cannot violate general laws
  - First Amendment rights – freedom of speech
  - Constitutional principles of due process
  - Hearing and appeal process

- Must be reasonable and non-discriminatory
  - Consistency
  - Rational basis for decision

- Must not be arbitrary and capricious
  - Reference to design guidelines
  - Clear findings
Roles and Responsibilities
Staff Role

- Explain Design Process
  - Applicant (previous Planning Commission decisions)
  - Public
  - Decision makers

- Implement Design Review
  - In-house/consultant
  - Goal: work with the applicant to achieve a recommendation for approval
Planning Commission Role

- Determine consistency with community’s design guidelines.
- Provide staff, applicant and the public with clear direction on design issues.
- Do not design the project for the applicant!
  - Designing a project in a public hearing generally does not produce good results.
  - Use study session or committee as an alternative to allow early input in an informal setting.
How to Make It Work

- Communicate with your staff
  - For meetings, contact early on to allow for a more thorough response
- Take advantage of additional training opportunities
  - Understand basic design principles and elements of architectural styles
- Allow yourself to reconsider your impressions during the public hearing
Version A: Planning Commission Performs Design Review

- Preliminary Design Review
  - Preliminary discussion of proposed project including size and massing

- Planning Commission
  - General Plan and zoning compliance
  - Entitlement and Use Discussion
  - Development Standards

- Final Design Review
  - The Devil of the Details.
  - Colors, Materials, window treatment, architectural details, etc.
Version B: Separate Design Review Board

- General Plan and zoning compliance
- Entitlement and Use Discussion
- Development Standards

Design Review
- The Devil of the Details
- Colors, Materials, window treatment, architectural details, etc.
- Form and Massing
Role of Planning Commission

- Ensure proposed use is consistent with General Plan and Zoning Ordinance
- Evaluate conformance with zoning standards
  - Setbacks, density, FAR, height, building coverage
- Evaluate conformance with other standards
  - Parking, landscaping, open space
- Evaluate variances and exceptions, if any
Role of Design Review Board

- Evaluate compatibility with existing or desired community character.
- Interpret community expectations, relying on General Plan, Specific Plans and the Design Review Guidelines.
- Oversee public design review process (Preliminary Review).
Optimum Partnership

Area in which the two bodies overlap... and where they can do a lot of good for the community
Design Guidelines

Commercial Design Guidelines
Town of Los Gatos

Downtown Design Guidelines
City of Los Altos

Single and Two Family Residential Design Guidelines
Town of Los Gatos

Draft #5
January 20, 2010
Why Prepare Design Guidelines?

✓ Define and enhance community character.
✓ Strongly express community expectations.
✓ Bring objectivity and consistency to review process.
✓ Convey most important objectives (neighborhood context, sense of place, design principles).
✓ Enhance communications among applicants, staff and the Planning Commission.
✓ Facilitate design review and approval process.
Intent and Implementation

- **Design Standards**
  - Reflect values of community
  - Allow for diversity in community
  - Clear expectations and easy to understand

- **Implementation**
  - Early consistent feedback/direction
  - Clear review process
  - “Transparent” public process
Form-Based Codes
Form-Based Codes

- Detailed **regulations** to implement a community vision for a city or special plan area
- *Not* guidelines or advisory
- Addresses **physical character**:  
  - **Relationship** between building façade and public realm  
  - **Form** and mass of buildings  
  - **Scale** of street and blocks  
  - **Articulation** of buildings

*the public realm*
Form-Based Codes

Key Differences

Traditional Zoning

- USE
- Focused on use

Form Based Codes

- FORM
- More focus on design & form

Operations
Elements of Form-Based Codes

- Administration
- Standards w/ illustrations:
  - Building Form
  - Public Realm/Streetscape
  - Architectural Detailing
  - Landscaping
  - Signage
  - Environmental Resources
- Definitions/Glossary
How zoning defines a one-block parcel

Density, use, FAR (floor-area ratio), setbacks, parking requirements, and maximum building height(s) specified.
How design guidelines define a one-block parcel

Density, use, FAR (floor-area ratio), setbacks, parking requirements, maximum building height(s), frequency of openings, and surface articulation specified.
How form-based codes define a one-block parcel

Street and building types (or mix of types), build-to lines, number of floors, and percentage of built site frontage specified.
Design Review Approach

- Impression
- Analysis
- Conclusions
- Findings
Impression

- Initial thoughts right after you roll out the drawings
- Based on your knowledge and experience in the community
- Allow for “first impression” which may or may not be your final thoughts on the project
Analysis

Critically examine the following:

- Individual building elements
- Overall massing and scale
- Site plan and landscaping
- Compatibility with neighborhood character

Focus on design compatibility

- Building as a whole; relationship of individual elements
- Surrounding environment and neighborhood
- Avoid dwelling on details
Conclusions

- Compare with design policies and guidelines
  - Review the staff report
  - Can you make the necessary findings to support your decision?

- Does the project “fit” into the surroundings?

- Are your conclusions consistent with other decisions made in similar circumstances?
Findings

- Articulate rationale for design decisions:
  - “I can’t put my finger on it, but this is a very unattractive building, it doesn’t fit in, and I can’t see approving it.”

- Cite policies, standards, and guidelines for public record

- Remember legal caveats

**ZONING ADMINISTRATOR FINDINGS:**

1. **CEQA CLEARANCE**

   The project is categorically exempt from environmental guidelines (Class 1 §15301, Existing Facilities) since it represents an addition to a single family dwelling of less than 10,000 square foot of floor area.

2. **SINGLE FAMILY DWELLING DESIGN REVIEW** (Zoning Code Section §27.08.032)

   1. The structures, site plan, and landscaping are consistent with the adopted Single Family Dwelling Design Guidelines in that:
      a. The proposed addition will match the same exterior stucco siding, clay tile roof, and other architectural elements as those found on the existing home.
      b. The detailing, window styles and sizes, roof design, and location of the addition is consistent with that of the original style of the home.
      c. The proposed addition is consistent with other additions to similar style homes in the area, making it compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.
Design Review Issues
Items to Keep An Eye On

- Design may be only one facet of your project review (e.g. use permits, CEQA evaluation, code compliance)
Items to Keep An Eye On

- Single Family Home Design Review: comments on a “dream home” may reflect personal preference or taste.
Items to Keep An Eye On

- Green building techniques may influence design solutions and priorities.
Things to DO

- Understand rationale of architect or designer before reaching decision.
- Consider design techniques to solve land use conflicts.
- Apply context sensitive design guidelines.
- Seek signature architecture, but where appropriate.
Context Sensitive Design?

Guggenheim Museum - Bilbao, Spain
Things to DO

Seek clear plans with sufficient details

- Ask for colors and materials boards
- Be wary of artistic enhancements
- Elevations can be misleading
- Ask for street-level renderings or accurate computer simulations
- Show relationship to adjacent buildings
Things *Not* to Do

- Design by committee
- Dictate a specific architectural style unless strong basis (e.g. historic district)
- Rely on personal biases and preferences
- Let zoning regulations restrict creative design solutions
- Focus on density (*Allow for design solutions*)
Density Can Be Deceiving

- 78 du/ac.
- 44 du/ac.
- 27 du/ac.
- 51 du/ac.
Follow Up
Follow Up

- Are projects coming before the Commission generally meeting the design guidelines?
  - If not, examine the guidelines and implementation for clarity
- Did we make the right choices; did things turn out the way we thought? Are we getting the “right results” for our community?
  - Field trip to examine built projects in the field
Example A: Mixed Use Project
Example A: Design Issues

- Streetscape
- Land use compatibility
- Open space relationship
- Architectural compatibility
- Building mass
- Sense of entry
Example A: Architecture/Building Mass

El Camino Real
Example A: Sense of Entry
Example A: Streetscape/Land Use Compatibility

West Olive Avenue
Example B: Transition Zone Project
Example B: Commercial Interface

Mathilda Avenue
Example B: Residential Interface

Charles Street
Questions and Discussion
Design Guidelines

- Window shading and decorative details
- Varied wall materials
- Wood trim
- Upgraded porch columns
- Upgraded windows and door with coordinated details
- Projection over upgraded garage door
- Brick stairs and side rails
- Masonry materials to enhance entry stoop
- Add a bay window that fits the architectural style of the house
- Add porch roof to enhance home entry

Slides Courtesy of Cannon Design Group
Major Elements of the Document
Introduction/Intent

- Why guidelines developed?
- What is purpose?
  - Information
  - Regulatory
  - Toolkit
Letting the applicant know in advance that the community has its own unique expectations
Sense of Place
Community examples as a foundation for the guidelines
Neighborhood Context

COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS
The review and approval of new homes and of additions to existing homes involves a balancing of the concerns and interests of the applicant with those of surrounding neighbors who have invested in their homes over the years. The review process seeks to accommodate the applicants’ unique needs while ensuring that the special qualities of San Bruno’s neighborhoods are respected.

Increasingly, larger homes are becoming the norm in Bay Area communities. Many are located in older neighborhoods which were developed at a time when smaller homes were common, and styles were more modest in their outward appearance. The city believes that larger homes are a natural transition that can be accommodated, but that they should not be allowed to overwhelm their neighbors.

These design guidelines are intended to assist homeowners and builders in designing their projects with sensitivity to their neighbors, and to communicate the community’s expectations regarding new residential construction. The primary community expectations are encompassed by the Basic Design Principles outlined on the following page.

DEFINITION OF NEIGHBORHOOD
Neighborhoods can be viewed from a variety of perspectives, including social, development history, elementary school attendance, physical character and many others.

With respect to the visual compatibility of any individual house, it is most often the home’s immediate surroundings that determine whether it appears to be a good neighbor or an unwelcome intrusion. When evaluating the appropriateness of a proposal, the city will give the greatest weight to how it fits into its immediate surroundings, generally defined as the block on which it sits (i.e., adjacent homes on the same block face and homes immediately to the rear of the site) and homes across the street from the site. In the case of corner lots, the visual context may be slightly larger.

In some cases where the site is part of a tract of land developed over a relatively short period of time with several homes of similar size and style, that broader context may be viewed for new project compatibility.

However, common sense must prevail. Isolated houses or groups of houses that have changed the essential size, bulk and character of an original housing tract may not be used as examples to justify similar changes elsewhere in the area that would not be viewed in context with the new development.

If in doubt as to the neighborhood context that will be considered, applicants should consult with planning staff early in the design process.
Establishing the important principles for the design guidelines and project approvals

1. **Basic Design Principles**

   The following principles have been used as touchstones for the development of individual design guidelines. When these principles are satisfied, the Basic Design Principles should be satisfied as a whole for the purpose of the project.

   - **Design to reflect the uniqueness of Brentwood and the site.**
   - **Integrate new development into the surrounding city fabric.**
   - **Maintain traffic and pedestrian safety.**
   - **Provide visual variety in multi-unit projects.**
   - **Design buildings with strong architectural integrity.**
   - **Provide concentration for existing development.**
   - **Use quality materials and craftsmanship.**
   - **Respect adjacent neighborhoods.**
   - **Integrate substantial landscaping into all projects.**
   - **Reserve public streetscape and public realm.**
   - **Use public and private open space.**

   These principles are to be satisfied as a whole for the purpose of the project.
REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES
City of San Bruno

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW FRAMEWORK
The current San Bruno Zoning Ordinance and other adopted residential development ordinances are the city’s official framework for single and two-family residential development.

While the Zoning Ordinance establishes firm standards, subject to variances under special conditions, the city’s other adopted ordinances require more discretionary review. These design guidelines are intended to assist both property owners and city decision makers in arriving at reasonable and informed decisions.

The current development framework is summarized in this chapter.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS SUMMARY
Single-family houses are permitted in both the R-1 and R-2 Zoning Districts, while two-family houses are allowed on larger lots in the R-2 Zoning District.

The standards, and regulatory mechanisms which allow for exceptions under special circumstances, governing the review and approval process are summarized immediately below, and covered in detail following the summary.

MAXIMUM PERMITTED FLOOR AREA
The maximum permitted floor area of a new house or existing house plus additions is inversely proportional to the size and slope of a lot. The maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is determined by the formulas and two charts below. Follow these steps to determine the Maximum Permitted Floor Area for your lot (San Bruno Municipal Code Section 12.200.050).

Step 1: Calculate the Gross Lot Size
Establish the gross lot size by multiplying the length of the property by the width. This will give the square footage of the lot. Some lots will not be perfect rectangles, requiring some extra calculations or outside help.

Step 2: Calculate the Adjusted Lot Area
Smaller lots are allowed a higher Floor Area Ratio (FAR) than large lots. Find your lot size in Chart 1 below.

Step 3: Calculate the Permitted Floor Area
The average slope of the lot will determine the maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR). Use the following formulas and Chart 2 below to determine the permitted floor area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gross Lot Area from above</th>
<th>Adj. Factor Chart 1</th>
<th>Adjusted Lot Area</th>
<th>Max. FAR Chart 2</th>
<th>Maximum Permitted Floor Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Draft #4
February 5, 2010
Page 9
Helping the applicant understand the process and where to go for help
District Guidelines

Special guidelines for unique areas if needed

“One size fits all” is often not adequate
Details and Examples

- Examples of the guidelines applied
- Multiple Solutions
- Diagrams to clarify
- Photos to illustrate
Example: Building Design - Garages

3.4 GARAGES

3.4.1 Limit the prominence of garages
- Avoid designs that allow the garage to dominate the street facade.
- Limit the garage width to a maximum of 50 percent of the total facade width.
- Set garages back from the front facade.

Avoid designs that allow the garage to dominate the street facade like this one does.

Limiting the width of garages and setting them back from the front facade can minimize their visual impact.

- Recess garage doors as much as possible from the facade.
- Consider adding trellises with landscaping over garage doors to soften their visual appearance.
- Integrate the garage into the house forms in a manner that de-emphasizes the garage doors.

Avoid garage doors from the facade as much as possible.

Recessed garage doors help to reduce their visual impact to some extent.

3.4.2 Minimize the visual impact of larger garages
These car garages may not be appropriate in most neighborhoods. Where large garages are customary and appropriate, steps should still be taken to minimize their visual impact on the house and streetscape.

Some techniques include:
- Using side loaded or split apart garages where possible.
- Accommodating additional cars in tandem spaces (see diagram on page 19).
- Separating the garage doors.
- Breaking up driveway paving with landscaping and/or special paving.

3.4.3 Integrate garage doors into the design with appropriate details
- Windows in garage doors are encouraged.
- Wood doors are encouraged.
- Use wood trim similar to the house windows.

Utilizing individual doors helps to reduce the visual impact of multi-car garages.

Avoid wide driveways, as shown above. In lieu of adding landscaping as shown below:

Garage door windows and trim in this Los Gatos house are closely related to the rest of the facade.

Residential Design Guidelines
Special Concerns

- Mixed Use
- Pedestrian friendly
- Building Mass/Scale
- Adjacent Land Use
  - Buffers
  - Privacy
  - Shade

City of Los Altos
Downtown Design Guidelines

3.2.7 Design larger structures to be sensitive to the unique scale and character of Downtown Los Altos.

a) Adapt corporate prototype designs to relate both in form and scale to the adjacent downtown fabric.
   - An Apple store prototype example in Walnut Creek and its modification for Downtown Los Altos, shown to the right, illustrates one way in which a corporate prototype design can be modified to fit into a small scale downtown environment.
   - The GAP store in Los Altos, shown below, has been designed to appear as two structures to better fit into the existing downtown fabric.

b) Avoid architectural styles and monumental building elements that do not relate to the small human scale of Downtown Los Altos.
   - The structures shown below and to the right are well designed, but would be out of place in Downtown Los Altos. These are all examples of what should not be done.
Design principles and practices

Prohibited sign types

Standards and guidelines

Reference to Sign Ordinance

Variety of examples
Resources for residential architectural styles and traditional detailing
Submittal Examples