



# ***PLANNING DIVISION***

## **STAFF REPORT**

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**TO:** PLANNING & TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

**FROM:** Amy French, Manager of Current Planning                      **DEPARTMENT:** Planning and Community Environment

**AGENDA DATE:** May 25, 2005

**SUBJECT:** Planning and Transportation Commission review of revisions to the Single Family Individual Review (IR) Guidelines

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends the Planning and Transportation Commission (Commission) review and comment on the Draft 2005 IR Guidelines (Attachment A) that would replace the existing IR Guidelines, last revised in 2004.

### **BACKGROUND**

At the February 23, 2005 meeting, the Commission reviewed and commented on the draft IR program annual report and background information. The revised IR guidelines are now ready to be reviewed.

### **SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES**

#### **2005 IR Guidelines Review Process**

Pursuant to the Palo Alto Municipal Code section 18.12.110 (c), "Guidelines establishing substantive review standards for second story development shall be presented to the Planning and Transportation Commission for their comment prior to adoption or amendment by the Director." It is anticipated that the Director of Planning and Community Environment will adopt the 2005 IR Guidelines in early June, after which the City Council will receive them as an information item. The Single Family Advisory Group Co-chairs have been included in this revision process. Staff shared and discussed an earlier draft of the 2005 IR Guidelines with these Co-Chairs in early May, and subsequent changes were made.

#### **Purpose of Revisions**

As discussed with the Commission in 2004, the purpose of amending the existing Individual Review Guidelines is to eliminate redundancies, to provide better illustrations that include

contemporary designs and some photos, and to make these guidelines as clear and concise as possible, with as little overlap between the guidelines as possible. In addition, the Guidelines needed to be updated to include a reference to the revised IR Zoning Code section and its applicability to revisions proposed for approved IR homes. The IR ordinance amendments adopted by Council will become effective on May 26, 2005.

### **Summary of Revisions**

The 2005 IR Guidelines include format changes and eliminate much of the rarely read introduction that was contained in the former guidelines. The simple introduction was designed to help the reader understand the IR program's applicability and goals, and how to navigate the IR Guidelines. Some key phrases taken from the SOFA II compatibility description were incorporated into the list of Goals of the introduction, as had been suggested by a Commissioner. All of the elements of the previous nine IR Guidelines have been preserved but they have been combined into five guidelines and re-ordered in a more logical way, beginning at the same point that the architect or designer would approach the project – starting with site planning and working from the ground up.

The 2005 IR Guidelines include five “Approval Criteria” that can be used and quoted in approval letters, much like “Findings for Approval” found in the Zoning Code and used in this manner for other planning entitlements. These Approval Criteria will give specific guidance to help applicants understand what is needed to comply with the guidelines. Four to six “Key Points” for each Guideline offer even more specific information and examples for understanding the intent and purpose of the guidelines. The new illustrations present successful and unsuccessful versions of a project within a neighborhood context, and include a few Eichler neighborhoods as context examples. Bulleted notes located below or to the side of each illustration clarify why the proposed house in the example is either an appropriate or an inappropriate response to the guidelines. Finally, photographs of successful examples of constructed IR homes in Palo Alto are included in the 2005 IR Guidelines.

The revised guidelines do not change the direction or policies that created the guidelines. For instance, the original guidelines stated that garages must be subordinate to the house. The new guidelines also state this and provide ways to achieve subordination.

One Commissioner also suggested that the IR Guidelines include paragraphs from the old Single Family Residential handbook regarding the context of specific neighborhoods in Palo Alto. Staff and the co-chairs considered this suggestion, and reviewed the nine pages that included typical architectural styles. It was decided that including these pages would add unnecessary complexity to the IR Program and would be contrary to its intent and original policy direction. While the descriptions of neighborhoods and styles are interesting, it may be more appropriate to include them on the City's website as background information.

### **RESOURCE IMPACT**

Staff and consultant time have been spent revising the IR Guidelines, including creating illustrations, revising text and format, holding meetings and taking photographs of successful IR program homes. The cost of consultant time for the IR Guidelines update was \$22,416.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

This project is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), per section 15061 (b)(3) of CEQA Guidelines, because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the project will have a significant effect on the environment.

**ATTACHMENTS**

[Draft 2005 IR Guidelines](#)

PREPARED BY: Amy French, Current Planning Manager

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