



County of Santa Cruz 735

PLANNING COMMISSION

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Fifth District

May 12, 1999

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

County of Santa Cruz
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz CA 95060

Members of the Board:

On April 28, 1999, Planning Department staff conducted a study session before the Planning Commission to review a proposal to allow for waivers of submittal requirements for development projects subject to the County's Design Review ordinance. Your Board directed staff to forward our recommendation and any additional comments that we choose to report to you for your consideration.

It is the Commission's opinion that your Board should reconsider the more stringent design review submittal requirements. Commissioners unanimously felt that the entire design review process is too cumbersome to the public, which we believe is not your Board's intent, and that a more general approach to the issue should be taken. This more general approach would result in more diverse site and architectural design and less monotony.

This Commission and the public, as evidenced by the comments made during the April 28th study session, are in full support of a waiver system. However, because Commissioners are not trained in the field of architecture or site planning, we are concerned that granting waiver authority to the Commission would be inappropriate. As an alternative, we strongly urge your Board to consider funding and staffing the Urban Designer position in the Planning Department and give waiver authority to this person. As your Board my recall, the position was eliminated a few years ago due to budget considerations.

The public also expressed concerns over the waiver process as previously outlined to your Board by Planning staff. As proposed, developers feel that they are faced with preparing complete and final architectural plans early in the process. This causes a significant burden to the applicant if plans are required to be redesigned or, in the case of a land division, proposed lots are deleted

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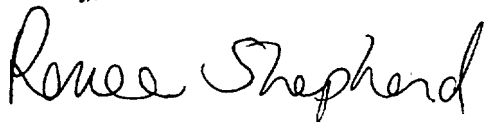
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from the project. Further, this two-step procedure would also extend the processing time for applications subject to the Design Review ordinance. Members of the public requested the Design Review Submittal Requirements be recommendations only and that the waiver of these requirements be considered in conjunction with the full application by the decision-maker(s).

In addition, we are concerned about the requirement that any changes to an approved project, including any changes to the location of windows, be returned to the Commission of review and approval. We feel that this burden is a waste of the Commission's and applicant's time and money.

In conclusion, we recommend that your Board reconsider the expanded design review submittal requirements and consider the addition of the Urban Designer to the Planning Department staff.

Sincerely,



Renee Shepherd, Chairperson
Santa Cruz County Planning Commission

cc: Each Planning Commissioner

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