



DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

AGENDA ITEM

AGENDA DATE: FEBRUARY 3, 2016
TO: Chair McCormack and Members of the Design Review Committee
THRU: Leslie Aranda Roseberry, Planning Manager
FROM: Marissa Moshier, Associate Planner – Historic Preservation
SUBJECT: **South Grand Street Study Session**

SUMMARY

A study session to review and discuss the recommendations of the South Grand Street Study, which was received by City Council in 2004. The South Grand Street Study involved study of the development patterns and zoning and General Plan designations of the 300 and 400 blocks of South Grand Street in the Old Towne Historic District. The study made recommendations for updates to the Old Towne Design Standards to better protect the character of the Old Towne's residential neighborhoods and to provide clearer direction to applicants proposing projects in the Historic District.

RECOMMENDED ACTION – NO ACTION

Staff requests the Design Review Committee (DRC) provide comments on the recommendations of the South Grand Street Study for potential changes to be incorporated into revised Old Towne Design Standards.

PUBLIC NOTICE

No Public Notice is required for this study session.

SOUTH GRAND STREET STUDY BACKGROUND

In 2000, the City Council directed Planning staff to conduct a study of the General Plan and zoning designations for the 300 and 400 blocks of South Grand Street in response to community concerns about new development in that area of the Old Towne Historic District. In 2001, staff documented the existing condition of these blocks and held community workshops and study sessions with the Planning Commission to discuss issues related to density, development standards, and compatibility of new construction with the Historic District. 43 parcels were included in the South Grand Street Study area. All of the parcels within the study area were zoned R-2-6 at the time of the study and had a Low Density Residential designation (allowing 2 to 6 dwelling units per acre) under the General Plan.

The study area included:

- 11 parcels with two units on the lot

- 1 parcel with three units on the lot
- 32 parcels with single family residences

41 buildings within the study area were contributors to the Historic District. Building permit records were researched to determine development trends for new construction in the study area:

- The majority of permitted additional units (8 out of 13 total permits) occurred between 1978 and 1990.
- Only one permit for a new unit was been issued in the study area between 1990 and 2004.
- Where additional units were developed on the lots, the new construction was located behind the historic building.
- Three of the four blocks within the study area have access from an alley at the rear of the lot. In some cases, the units developed in the 1970s and 1980s, before the Historic District was designated, cantilever over the alley. The west side of the 300 block of South Grand has no alley, requiring additional units to take access off a driveway to the street.

In 2001, the City Council adopted an urgency ordinance precluding approval of additional units in the study area to provide staff with additional time to study the development standards and historic neighborhood building patterns. The urgency ordinance was extended until April 2002. Additional study sessions and workshops were conducted in 2002 and 2003.

In June 2004, the City Council reviewed the South Grand Street Study and directed staff to proceed first with rezoning the study area and to amend the Old Towne Design Standards based on the recommendations of the study. The recommendations of the study addressed ways to improve project review and compatibility of new construction in the Historic District. In October 2004, the City Council adopted an Ordinance approving the Zone Change from R-2-6 to R-1-6 for the 300 and 400 blocks of South Grand. This study session seeks feedback on the options for incorporating the study's recommendations into revised Design Standards.

STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are recommendations from the South Grand Street Study, which have been condensed from the original study. Staff is seeking the DRC's comments on the best format to incorporate the intent of these recommendations into the updated Design Standards.

Issue 1: Old Towne Site and Context Assessment Form / Historic District Project Database

The South Grand Street Study identified issues for both applicants and decision-makers in reviewing proposed new construction for compatibility with the historic streetscape in Old Towne. The study recommended gathering contextual information from applicants to encourage them to consider the surrounding areas when designing their projects and to provide the DRC and Planning Commission with additional information on the project's context during review. To facilitate this, staff developed an Old Towne Site and Context Assessment form to collect data on proposed projects to help determine if the proposal is compatible with the surrounding area. The form provides a framework for collecting information on the proposed project and existing development

on surrounding properties. The form is included as Attachment 3 and is regularly provided to applicants proposing substantial new construction in the Historic District.

The study also recommended development of a database to track approved and constructed projects, as a way to analyze potential cumulative impacts in the Historic District. Staff developed an internal database of projects from 1994 to present, tracking DRC approval, project type, date of approval and building permit issuance. The following data is compiled from the historic district project database for projects approved since 1994:

- 322 parcels have had projects reviewed and approved by the Design Review Committee.
- Of those approved projects, 213 projects have been issued building permits and have been constructed.
- The following types of permits have been issued for DRC approved projects:
 - 49 permits for new construction
 - 27 permits for demolition of an existing structure and replacement with a new structure
 - 6 permits for demolition with no replacement structure
 - 105 permits for additions to existing structures
 - 93 permits for alterations to existing structures
- The 33 total demolitions in the Historic District are broken down by the following types of structures.
 - 2 were demolitions of contributing primary structures:
 - Single-family residence at 151 S. Harwood which was demolished and replaced with a historic building relocated from W. Chapman Avenue
 - The majority of the Orange Intermediate School, except for the façade which was retained as part of the Chapman University Law School.
 - 11 were contributing accessory structures/garages.
 - 20 were non-contributing buildings.
 - All of the demolitions of contributing structures were approved in or prior to 2000.

There are 2,422 total parcels in the Historic District. Given the total number of parcels in Old Towne, less than nine percent have been altered through DRC approved projects since the Design Standards were adopted.

Attachment 4 shows a summary of the approved and constructed DRC projects in the Old Towne Historic District since 1994. As part of the South Grand Street Study recommendations, staff will continue to update the project database to track changes in the Historic District.

Staff uses the assessment forms for internal project review; however, the assessment forms themselves could be incorporated as attachments to the DRC staff reports, if the Committee believes that information would be useful. Staff could also provide the DRC with information on previously approved and constructed projects within the surrounding area as part of the staff report.

Staff is seeking the DRC’s comments on these types of potential uses for the historic district project database and assessment forms.

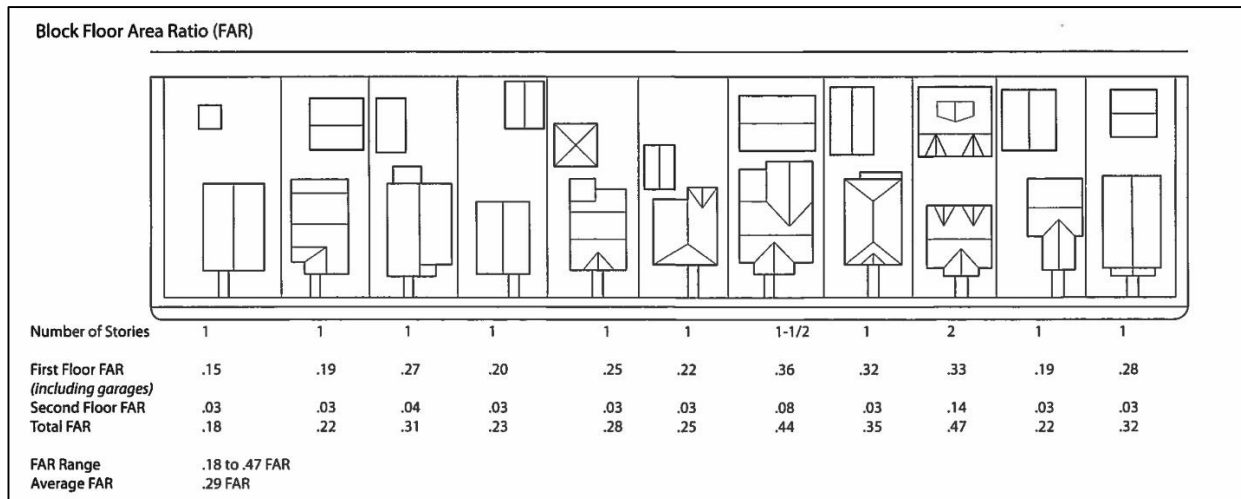
Issue 2: Floor Area Ratio and Compatible New Development

In order to reduce the potential impacts of new development on the streetscape, the study recommended adding a new Floor Area Ratio (FAR) development standard for the Historic District. Typically, FAR is calculated using the total floor area of all development on the property, including first and second floors. By comparison, lot coverage is a calculation of the ground floor area only. The study recommended restricting first floor development to 0.35 FAR (or 35% lot coverage). The study did not recommend a restriction on the total FAR for the property. Changes to this development standard would require a zoning overlay, approved by City Council, specifically for the Historic District and separate from the adoption of updated Design Standards.

The existing FAR or lot coverage restrictions on property in Old Towne are based on the property’s zoning designation:

- R-1-6 properties may have a maximum of 0.60 total FAR for properties less than 10,000 square feet in size
- R-2-6 properties may have a maximum 0.70 total FAR
- R-3 properties may have a maximum 45% lot coverage for two-story structures or 55% for one-story structures
- R-4 properties may have a maximum 60% lot coverage

The following illustration shows a typical block in the Historic District that has been developed with some additional units behind the historic buildings.



The proposed change to a 35% lot coverage maximum would likely have the greatest impact on development of multi-family residential properties. Historically, the majority of residential properties in Old Towne contained modestly sized, single family houses with small detached

accessory structures at the rear. The study concluded that the majority of properties on South Grand Street had lot coverages ranging from 18% to 21%. On a standard lot in Old Towne with existing 20% lot coverage, approximately 1,000 square feet of new construction could be added under a 35% lot coverage restriction. The study concluded that a 35% lot coverage maximum provided adequate development potential for all of the R-1 and R-2 zones in the Historic District by extrapolating from the study of two blocks of South Grand Street. The majority of single family residential projects that involve construction of a modestly sized addition to the existing house or construction of an accessory second unit between 450 and 640 square feet behind a historic building would be unaffected by the change. Construction of a second unit in the R-2 zone behind a historic house would also likely be unaffected.

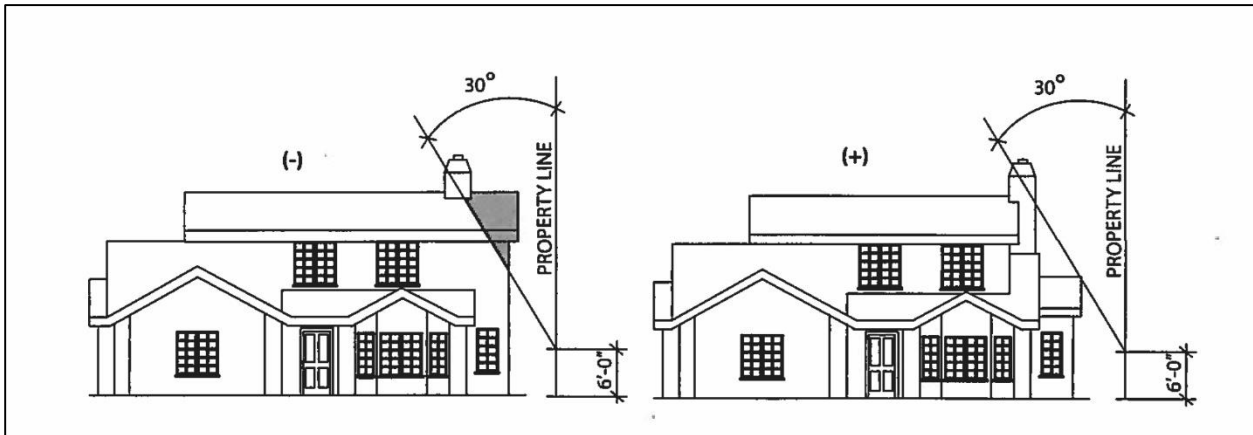
However, the South Grand Street Study did not analyze the potential effects of the lot coverage restriction on R-3 and R-4 properties. The lot coverage restriction does not distinguish between different densities for single and multi-family properties. If applied equally to all zoning districts in Old Towne, the restriction may preserve open space on lots that are zoned for multi-family development (R-2-6, R-3 and R-4). However, because the restriction functions as a lot coverage development standard and does not restrict development above the ground floor, the 35% lot coverage may encourage development of half or full second stories, particularly at the rear of existing historic houses.

Other restrictions that may reduce lot coverages in the Historic District include clear design standards that require maintaining existing front and side yard setback patterns or prohibiting construction of full second stories (rather than allowing them through a Conditional Use Permit). The proposed 35% lot coverage could also be incorporated into the Design Standards as a recommended maximum, rather than a required development standard.

Staff is seeking the DRC's comments on the potential effectiveness of the 35% lot coverage restriction and alternate means to reduce the mass and scale of proposed development in Old Towne through design standards.

Issue 3: Bulk Angle

To improve project review, the study recommended developing tools and design standards that emphasize understanding height, bulk/mass, context and streetscape patterns as part of developing a project in the Historic District. Under the Orange Municipal Code, the maximum height of new development in residential zones is 32 feet. The Old Towne Design Standards also require that the mass and scale of new development be compatible with the surrounding streetscape. In addition to lot coverage, the study recommended adoption of a bulk angle standard to restrict the height and mass of new development in the Historic District. The bulk angle standard is frequently used in communities concerned with "mansionization" to limit the height and mass of new development in relation to the surrounding neighborhood. The bulk angle standard creates a three dimensional maximum building envelope for all new development. The South Grand Street Study recommended using a 35 degree angle taken from 10 feet above the front, side and rear property lines to create a maximum building envelope that is potentially compatible with the Historic District. See the illustration below for an example of the bulk angle standard.



This restriction, coupled with the 35% lot coverage restriction, may reduce the quantity and size of second story development in the Historic District, particularly in the multi-family residential zones. However, the bulk angle standard creates a maximum building envelope that may not always be compatible with individual blocks in the Historic District. Depending on the particular streetscape in which it is located, the bulk and mass allowed under the bulk angle standard may not actually be compatible with the historic property. In such cases, staff and the decision-making bodies will continue to rely on clear language related to other aspects of compatibility in the Design Standards, rather than volume calculation from the bulk angle standard.

Staff is seeking the DRC's recommendations on the use of the bulk angle standard to potentially reduce the size of new development in the Historic District and alternative means to design compatible new construction, including prohibiting new two story construction.

Issue 5: Parking

The study identified the potential for required parking areas for new development to negatively impact the character of the historic streetscape. To prevent the parking areas from impacting the streetscape, the study recommended the following provisions related to parking in the Historic District:

- Prohibit widening existing driveways to create a new parking pad next to the approach to the garage.
- Require that all parking areas be screened from public view.
- Prohibit carports in the R-1 and R-2 zones.

Staff has incorporated the first two recommendations into the updated design standards. However, staff recommends revising the prohibition on carports to allow covered parking areas in rear yards, if they are minimally visible from the street. Staff recommends that allowing carports in rear yards, in areas minimally visible from the street, allows property owners to increase off-street parking while retaining the historic streetscape, provided that the design and materials of the carport are compatible with the historic property.

Staff is seeking the DRC's input on the following modification to the carport recommendation:

- Carports over driveway approaches to garages are prohibited. Carports in rear yards that are minimally visible from the street may be permitted, subject to design review.

Issue 6: Building Separation

The study identified the distance separations between buildings required by the zoning code to be insufficient for the Historic District. Under the zoning code, the following distance separation requirements apply to residential properties:

- The minimum distance between a principal building and a non-habitable accessory structure is 6 feet
- The minimum wall-to-wall distance between two habitable structures is 15 feet for the front of a building and any other wall or 8 feet between other configurations.

The study concluded that with typical eave overhangs of 18 or 24 inches in the Historic District, the distance separating the eaves of buildings could be reduced to as little as two or three feet. The study recommended addressing this issue by amending the development standards for the Historic District to require a minimum separation of 10 feet between building walls and 6 feet between eaves. This would require approval by the City Council through a zoning overlay specifically for the Historic District.

For some projects, the change in distance separation may affect the site plan and size of the new development. For single family properties with historic accessory garages, this may result in requests to relocate the garage to meet the minimum distance separation between a new addition and the garage. Staff is seeking the DRC's recommendations on the necessity of increasing the distance separation between buildings through a zoning overlay.

Issue 4: Design Standards Related to New Residential Construction

As a supplement or alternate to the FAR/bulk angle recommendations of the South Grand Street Study, staff has developed the following text related to additions and infill construction on residential properties for the updated Design Standards. This text is intended to replace the sections related to new construction in the existing Design Standards. Staff is seeking the DRC's comments on potential changes to be incorporated into the final draft of the Design Standards and recommendations on the effectiveness of incorporating the South Grand Street Study, particularly the 0.35 FAR restriction and bulk angle standard, into these Design Standards.

Additions

A well designed addition may be an appropriate way to encourage contemporary uses of a historic building. A thoughtfully conceived addition will have limited impacts to the streetscape of the historic district and the materials of the historic building. The compatibility of an addition is based on a number of elements related to mass, scale, design, materials and detailing. If you are considering an addition to your historic building, please

contact Planning Division staff early in the design process to discuss options for new construction in the historic district.

1. Compatible additions are generally smaller in mass, scale and volume than the historic building.
 - a. Second story additions to one story buildings are inappropriate.
2. An addition should be located at the rear of the building whenever possible, away from street facing elevations.
3. The addition should be consistent with the historic pattern of side yard setbacks.
4. After the addition is constructed, it should be clear which part of the building is historic and which part is new.
5. Roof forms should be compatible with the existing building.
 - a. The roof form of the historic building should be retained on elevations visible from the street and should not be substantially altered by the new construction.
 - b. New dormers are appropriate only on side and rear elevations and must not substantially change the historic roof form.
 - c. An addition should not be taller than the existing ridge height.
6. An addition should be designed so that there is minimal loss of historic materials and character-defining features of the historic building are not obscured, damaged or destroyed.
 - a. If the addition were removed in the future, the form of the historic building should be unchanged.
7. Parking areas should be located at the rear of the site and should be screened from public view by appropriate fencing or planting strips.
8. Driveways should not be widened to accommodate additional parking.

Infill Construction

Infill in historic districts may consist of constructing a new building on a vacant lot (a primary building) or constructing additional buildings (secondary buildings) on a lot containing an existing building. Successful infill construction takes cues from the surrounding historic neighborhood and its buildings without creating an exact replica of a historic architectural style. New construction should be consistent with the mass, scale, materials, height, roof form, setbacks, pattern of windows and doors, and landscaping of existing buildings on the street. The site design of an historic property is a key part of its character. The spacing and location of buildings on each lot within an historic neighborhood establishes a rhythm that is essential to the character of the historic district. The grouping of buildings, with uniform setbacks and street facing features, gives each neighborhood a strong sense of place. One of the first steps to designing an infill building

is to look at other properties on the block and determine what are the common design elements that create a consistent streetscape and neighborhood character. Thoughtfully designed contemporary buildings are allowable but the primary goal of infill construction should be to create a building that responds to its context within a historic neighborhood.

1. The location of new primary and secondary structures on a lot should be consistent with the historic pattern of front and side yard setbacks.
2. New buildings should be similar in mass and scale to surrounding historic buildings.
 - a. If a new building is larger than its neighbors, it should be modulated so that the mass is located back from the street and is less visible.
3. Finished floor heights above natural grade should be consistent with neighboring buildings.
4. The height and roof form of a new building should be similar to surrounding historic buildings.
 - a. Dormers should be similar in size and placement to historic properties.
5. The main entrance and façade of a new primary building should be parallel to and facing the street.
6. The progression of public to private spaces from the street should be maintained.
 - a. A recessed building entrance or front porch may be appropriate to create a transitional space from the street to the interior of the building.
7. New construction should have a similar pattern and style of window and doors on elevations visible from the street to those found in surrounding historic buildings.
8. Parking areas should be located at the rear of the site and should be screened from public view by appropriate fencing or planting strips.
9. Driveways should not be widened to accommodate additional parking.
10. The height, mass and scale of new secondary buildings, such as accessory second units, garages, or workshops, should be minimized as much as possible.
 - a. Secondary buildings should be located at the rear of the property.
 - b. In general, secondary buildings should be no taller than the primary building. In limited areas, secondary buildings may be taller than primary buildings, if this condition is already typical of the streetscape of the surrounding blocks.
 - c. The design of secondary buildings should be subordinate to the primary building on the lot.

DISCUSSION

Staff is seeking comments from the DRC on the potential usefulness of the recommendations of the South Grand Street Study in encouraging compatible design in the Historic District. DRC may consider the options of incorporating the FAR and bulk angle standards into the Design Standards as either restrictions or recommended targets for new projects. The DRC may also discuss the options for guiding compatible new construction in the Historic District through changes to the design standards for additions and new construction.

ATTACHMENTS

1. City Council Staff Report on the South Grand Street Study from June 22, 2004
2. City Council Minutes on the South Grand Street Study from June 22, 2004
3. Old Towne Site and Context Assessment Form
4. Design Review Committee Approved Development in Old Towne Map
5. Project Floor Area Ratio Examples
6. Sample Bulk Angle Standard