

# City of Calistoga

## Staff Report

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council  
**FROM:** Lynn Goldberg, Planning and Building Director  
**DATE:** June 20, 2017  
**SUBJECT:** Report on Residential Design Review Process

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APPROVED FOR FORWARDING



Dylan Feik, City Manager

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1 **ISSUE:** Consideration of residential design review process

2 **RECOMMENDATION:** Provide direction to staff if appropriate

3 **BACKGROUND:** At the February 21, 2017 City Council meeting, Mayor Canning asked  
4 staff to provide information on the residential design review process and options for  
5 addressing concerns such as those that have been raised about two recent projects  
6 (i.e., a two-story addition to the single-family dwelling at 1900 Cedar and the new single-  
7 family dwelling at 1706 Foothill).

8 Regulatory Background

9 Prior to May 2014, the Calistoga Zoning Code required a Planning Commission public  
10 hearing for the following types of residential development:

- 11 • Proposals that require a conditional use permit
- 12 • New construction or substantial alterations on land designated with a hillside  
13 overlay
- 14 • Multi-family developments
- 15 • Single-family residences with more than 4,000 square feet of floor area
- 16 • Tentative subdivision maps (five or more lots)
- 17 • Planned developments (e.g., Silver Rose, Calistoga Hills)

18 Residential proposals were subject to general design guidelines that applied to all types  
19 of design review applications. There were also a number of design standards primarily  
20 directed at ensuring the compatibility of mobile and manufactured homes with  
21 conventionally-constructed housing. The Housing Element of the Calistoga General

22 Plan called for a review of these standards to ensure that they were consistent with  
23 current state law and did not hinder the development of this housing type.

24 In March 2014, the Planning Commission recommended to the City Council adoption of  
25 Single-Family Design Guidelines (attached) after considering various drafts at four  
26 public hearings. One of the Commission's primary concerns in formulating the  
27 Guidelines was that they be *permissive*, rather than *prescriptive* (reflected in the use of  
28 "should" rather than "shall" in most of the guidelines). The Commission also sought to  
29 allow creative design in keeping with the eclectic nature of residential development in  
30 Calistoga. The Guidelines were adopted by the Council in April 2014.

31 Following adoption of the Guidelines, the Zoning Code was amended to:

- 32 • Require consideration of the Guidelines in reviewing residential design review  
33 applications
- 34 • Expand the design review requirement to apply to all new residences (regardless of  
35 size) and additions thereto
- 36 • Delegate review authority to the Planning and Building Director for the construction  
37 of a single-family dwelling and additions and alterations to those dwellings in the RR,  
38 R-1 and R-2 Zoning Districts. The Director may refer any staff-level application to the  
39 Commission for review.

#### 40 Design Review Approvals since May 2014

41 Twelve single-family residences and a 30-unit apartment project have received design  
42 review approval since the adoption of the Residential Design Guidelines.

- 43 • Planning Commission design review projects

44 In addition to the Calistoga Senior Apartments project, the following five single-family  
45 residences were subject to review by the Planning Commission due to conditions of  
46 their subdivision approvals.

47 1711 Emerald  
48 1749 Emerald  
49 1801 Michael  
50 1805 Michael  
51 933 Petrified Forest

- 52 • Staff-level design review projects

53 The following seven single-family residences were approved by Planning Department  
54 staff.

55 2095 Mora                      1706 Foothill  
56 1001 Cedar                     1820 Money  
57 1717 Cedar                     3000 West Money  
58 3005 West Money

59 Staff also approved significant single-family additions at 1900 Cedar and 2886 Foothill.

60 Details of two of these approvals follow.

61 1900 Cedar Street SFD addition

62 Despite the absence of a public notice  
63 requirement, staff consulted informally  
64 with neighbors and one of the Planning  
65 Commission's architects in the case of  
66 the 1900 Cedar design review  
67 application, which involved a second-  
68 story addition. This input resulted in a  
69 change of the project's proposed colors  
70 to more-muted tones and a different  
71 garage door.



72 Staff felt that the addition's location  
73 adjacent to a street, its screening by a  
74 row of trees and the modest size of the  
75 master bedroom balcony would  
76 minimize potential visual and privacy  
77 impacts to the neighborhood.



78 The addition also complies with all  
79 Zoning Code setback and height  
80 standards.



81 1706 Foothill Boulevard SFD

82 In the case of the single-family  
83 dwelling at 1706 Foothill  
84 Boulevard, the applicant  
85 select-ed an upgraded  
86 manufactured home model that  
87 includes enhancements such  
88 as window shutters and  
89 textured shingles, and an  
90 earth-tone color palette. A free-  
91 standing garage is being  
92 constructed behind the home.  
93 A six-foot high privacy fence  
94 will be constructed at the front  
95 property line along Foothill,  
96 limiting the public's view to  
97 only the top portion of the  
98 home. The residence complies  
99 with all Zoning Code  
100 development standards.



101 Staff felt that the proposed design is in keeping with the modest home designs along  
102 this side of Foothill and would have a more-attractive street view than some of the  
103 existing homes by avoiding a garage at the front of the property. Furthermore, the  
104 California Department of Housing & Community Development limits the ability of the  
105 City to require design enhancements that are not otherwise required of other single-  
106 family dwellings in order to promote this more-affordable housing type.

107 **DISCUSSION:** Design review is a subjective process that is challenging to approach  
108 objectively. The City's general philosophy, in recent years, has been to respect the  
109 design preferred by the applicant and their design professional. Staff often meets with  
110 applicants before a project is submitted to identify and discuss design elements that  
111 may be of concern based on individual circumstances (such as a prevailing  
112 neighborhood character).

113 The City is fortunate to have had one or two architects on its Planning Commission over  
114 the last few years to provide suggestions on how to improve a project's design.  
115 However, the Commission did not offer substantive design recommendations during its  
116 review of any of the above-listed single-family dwellings, leaving the originally-proposed  
117 designs essentially intact. Neither was there significant input from neighboring property  
118 owners on proposed designs.

119 In St. Helena and Yountville, the Planning Commission/Zoning and Design Review  
120 Board review all residential design review applications, except for minor additions and  
121 alterations.

122 **ALTERNATIVES:** Possible changes to the residential design review process include  
123 the following.

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- The Zoning Code does not require public notice prior to staff approval of residences or additions. Adding a requirement for public notice of staff-level, single-family residential design review applications would advise neighboring property owners of pending development and allow them to provide input on a proposed design. Doing so would increase the processing time of the applications by approximately two weeks and increase their cost by approximately \$125. The review process could also be further extended if staff's action is appealed to the Planning Commission.
  - Amend the Zoning Code to delegate residential design review approval to the Planning Commission. Such review would require a processing deposit of \$2,500 and an approximate four-week review process due to the public hearing requirement. Staff review requires a processing deposit of \$725 and applications are typically processed within two weeks.

## ATTACHMENT

1. City of Calistoga Single-Family Residential Design Guidelines