



**HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
2ND FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM
NOVEMBER 7, 2011
4:00 P.M.**

The El Paso Historic Landmark Commission held a Special Meeting in the 2nd Floor Conference Room, City Hall Building, November 7, 2011, 4:00 p.m.

Chair Riccillo called the meeting to order at approximately 4:12 p.m.

The following Commissioners were present:

Mr. Joe Riccillo, Chair
Ms. Stephanie Fernandez
Mr. Ricardo Gonzalez
Mr. Jim Booher
Mr. David Berchermann

The following City Staff were present:

Mr. Robert Almonte, City Attorney's Office, Assistant City Attorney
Ms. Providencia Velázquez, Planning, Historic Preservation Officer

Members of the public present:

Mr. Omar Macias, UTEP Student
Ms. Aishia Al-Narem, UTEP Student

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AGENDA

I. Discussion and action regarding Administrative Review Guidelines.

Via a PowerPoint presentation, Ms. Velázquez explained Staff has been working on revising the Administrative Review Design Guidelines since April, 2011.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW GUIDELINES

Chair Riccillo explained, when necessary, Commissioners will take action on specific changes; otherwise, Commissioners will vote cumulatively.

PURPOSE

Ms. Velázquez stated Staff revised the Guideline language to reflect the current city Department, where necessary.

APPROVAL PROCESS FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION (chart)

Under the *City Council Hearing, Final Action* heading, Ms. Velázquez explained Staff revised the language from "**Approved**" and "**Denied**" to "**Overtured**" and "**Upheld**".

1. DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

- A. Fill out an application form from the Historic Preservation section of the Department of Planning and Economic Development, 5th Floor, City Hall.

Ms. Velázquez explained Staff revised the language to reflect the current city Department.



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APPEAL PROCESS

For clarification, Ms. Velázquez explained, Staff revised the sentence language to read ... “within 15 **calendar** days” ...

MOTION:

Motion made by Chair Riccillo, seconded by Commissioner Berchelmann and **UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO APPROVE THE CHANGES ON THE INTRODUCTION TO THE GUIDELINES FOR THE PURPOSE OF ENABLING LEGISLATION.**

LANDSCAPING

Ms. Velázquez and a Landscape Architect discussed the 50% landscaping in front yards and parkways requirement. In her opinion, the Landscape Architect felt the 50% requirement was very high for El Paso and recommended that it be reduced. Additionally, Ms. Velázquez and the Landscape Architect discussed how much space a tree utilizes in a yard and calculating the amount of tree(s) necessary to meet the 50% landscape requirement. The Landscape Architect explained the root ball must be measured to calculate the amount of necessary landscape.

Chair Riccillo and Commissioner Booher questioned the calculating methodology.

Ms. Velázquez will clarify the calculating methodology with the Landscape Architect.

Mr. Almonte requested Staff ensure the Historic Landmark Commission Landscaping requirements are in compliance with the current City code.

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Commissioner Gonzalez stated historic properties are not the same as non-H-Overlay properties and stated the 50% requirement should not be changed.

Ms. Velázquez suggested the first sentence from the following paragraph be deleted:

"Manhattan Heights, Sunset Heights, and Old San Francisco historic districts are also on the National Register of Historic Places. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties recommend preserving streetscape and landscape features which are important in defining the overall historic character of the neighborhood. Such features can include streets, alleys, paving, walkways, street lights, signs, benches, parks, gardens, and trees."

Commissioners voted **UNANIMOUSLY IN FAVOR OF DELETING THE FIRST SENTENCE OF THE PARAGRAPH.**

Ms. Velázquez read the following sentence into the record and explained the *third category* language is very confusing. She suggested Commissioners delete the sentence.

"Plants must be planted while at mature growth; they must meet EPA calculations based on plant size and quantity; and they must be third category (decorative) plants."

Commissioners commented dividing the country into zones, by plant type; additionally, Commissioners discussed and/or commented on USDA reference zones, EPA calculations and what the definition of "mature growth" is.

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Mr. Omar Macias, UTEP student, remembered a chart that the El Paso Water Utilities Public Service Board had created distinguishing *third category* plant type and specific watering schedule.

Commissioners discussed incorporating an Appendix within the Guidelines.

Chair Riccillo concurred with Ms. Velázquez in deleting the sentence from the Guidelines; for now; however, Commissioners could insert the pieces in their appropriate place(s) at a later date.

SOLAR RADIATION

Ms. Velázquez asked Commissioners if the solar radiation graphics should be removed.

Chair Riccillo stated if Staff can find new graphics that would be good.

INORGANIC MATERIALS.

Ms. Velázquez read the following sentence into the record and noted the 50% calculation is rather high considering the amount of water needed to maintain the vegetation.

"Grass and sod may be removed from front yards, side yards on a corner and parkways provided not more than 50% of the area is covered with gravel or other masonry."

MOTION:

Motion made by Chair Riccillo, seconded by Commissioner Berchelmann and **UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO LEAVE THE SENTENCE WORDING AS IS.**



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SUGGESTED LIST

Previously, Ms. Velázquez explained, there were several different tree and plant lists; however, it was suggested that the following entities be used as a guide: the El Paso Water Utility, El Paso County Exterior Service, El Paso Native Plant Society, the West Texas Urban Forest Council, and UTEP's Chihuahuan Desert Gardens.

Commissioners suggested adding "and plants" after "Tree(s)." Ms. Velázquez read the revised sentence as follows:

"Tree(s) and plants installed as replacements should be of native species and should be planted at grade or ground level. Please refer to the following lists for recommended species: El Paso Water Utility, El Paso County Exterior Service, El Paso Native Plant Society, the West Texas Urban Forest Council, and UTEP's Chihuahuan Desert Gardens."

Commissioners voted **UNANIMOUSLY IN FAVOR OF THE REVISED SENTENCE LANGUAGE.**

FENCING

Ms. Velázquez read the following sentence into the record. She remembered there being an issue with "concrete masonry units" and "cinder block."

"Brick, stucco, cinder block and/or concrete masonry units covered with stucco, stone and wrought iron, are generally acceptable materials but each case will be reviewed individually."

Commissioners discussed replacing "are generally" with "may be."



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*"Brick, stucco, cinder block and/or concrete masonry units covered with stucco, stone and wrought iron **may be** acceptable materials but each case will be reviewed individually."*

MOTION:

Motion made by Chair Riccillo, seconded by Commissioner Gonzalez and **UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO REPLACE "ARE GENERALLY" WITH "MAY BE."**

Ms. Velázquez read the following into the record and explained Staff would like to clarify the language.

"Uncovered cinder block or concrete masonry units and chain link are not historic materials ..."

Commissioner Booher asked what the difference is between cinder block and concrete masonry units. He felt using cinder block and concrete masonry units in the same sentence was redundant.

Ms. Velázquez will revise the sentence deleting the words *"cinder block."*

"Uncovered concrete masonry units and chain link are not historic materials ..."

Ms. Velázquez read the following into the record and explained the language allows some leeway for Commissioners.

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"PVC, aluminum and other contemporary alternative wall or fence materials are generally not allowed in the historic districts. However, an applicant may provide a drawing, photographs and samples of proposed materials for review by the HLC under the standard HLC review procedures."

Ms. Velázquez read the following into the record and explained Staff deleted the word "height" and replaced it with the word *design*. Additionally, the language was taken from the current code. No changes were made.

*"The **design** of the proposed fence should complement the structure and should not obstruct the street's view of the building. "No person shall construct or reconstruct, or cause to be constructed, any fence or wall on a corner lot if the top of such fence or wall is more than three feet above the level of the centerline of the nearest abutting street, and such fence or wall is within a triangle formed by the intersecting property lines and a line joining the property lines at points twenty feet from their point of intersection. Provided, this subsection shall not apply to a retaining wall necessary for the support of the lot, nor to a wall of a building when the building legally extends into such triangle." (Chapter 12.68.020 City Ordinance) get new code****

Ms. Velázquez read the following two paragraphs into the record. No changes were made.

Any proposed fence higher than 32" solid or 48" open, measured from ground level, at the front property line or side yard property line on a corner lot, shall be reviewed by the HLC.

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Any proposed fence higher than 8 ft., between buildings on an interior property line or across the rear property line, shall be reviewed by the HLC. Current code allows an interior or rear property line fence up to 10 ft. as long as 75% of it remains open.

RECOMMENDED FENCING BY DISTRICT (chart)

Ms. Velázquez stated the chart was outdated and asked if Commissioners wanted to keep the chart in the Guidelines.

MOTION:

Motion made by Chair Riccillo, seconded by Commissioner Berchelmann and **UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO OMIT THE RECOMMENDED FENCING BY DISTRICT CHART.**

SECURITY GRILLS

Ms. Velázquez read the following paragraph into the record.

A permit for security installation must be obtained from the *Department of Construction Management*. The city will approve only those grill designs, in which the grills over the bedroom windows can easily be pushed open from the inside. This is a precautionary measure in case of fire *so that a firefighter can gain access to the interior of a building.*

Commissioner Booher suggested revising *Department of Construction Management* to *"the appropriate City Department."*

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Additionally, Commissioner Booher suggested revising "firefighter" to "first responder."

Commissioners concurred with the above changes.

Regarding commercial properties, Ms. Velázquez explained roll-down security grills would have to be rolled up and hidden from view during the day.

Metal roll-down security grills are permitted on commercial properties.

- Security grills are limited to roll-up screens, doors, and grills and shall be incorporated and concealed by a storefront awning or otherwise integrated into the design of the building facades. *If the roll up screens cannot be concealed by an awning, the proposed design shall be reviewed by the HLC under the standard COA procedures.*

ACCESSIBILITY

FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES/PERSONS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Commissioners had no objections to "FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES/PERSONS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS" language.

The ideal would be to preserve historic structures without restricting access to them. *It is recommended that ramps be designed and placed where they will do the least amount of change to the historic fabric, especially the street elevation.* For example, in the case of a bungalow, the ramp might be constructed inside the front porch, leading from the side driveway to the front door. Every historic residence is different and a full range of alternatives should be considered in removing architectural barriers.



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MOTION:

Motion made by Chair Riccillo, seconded by Commissioner Gonzalez and **UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO LEAVE** *It is recommended that ramps be designed and placed where they will do the least amount of change to the historic fabric, especially the street elevation* **LANGUAGE AS IS.**

Ramps shall be installed parallel to the façade and screened from view with landscaping. *Temporary ramps (portable) may be used for 6 months (REMOVE).* Installations which differ from these guidelines may be granted by the Historic Landmark Commission. The goal should be a responsible balance between accessibility and preservation and to reconcile these challenges with care and sensitivity.

Commissioners agreed to **remove** *Temporary ramps (portable) may be used for 6 months* from the Guidelines.

All applications must also be reviewed and approved for compliance with the accessibility standards by the Department of Public Inspection (REMOVE).

Commissioners agreed to **remove** *All applications must also be reviewed and approved for compliance with the accessibility standards by the Department of Public Inspection* from the Guidelines.

No objections from Commissioners regarding the following:



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SKYLIGHTS

Small skylights up to 24" x 24" may be installed on sloping roofs (not mansards) *on the rear portion of the roof*. In addition, larger sizes may also be considered for flat roofs or other roof conditions. Please note that cutting rafters for larger skylights may weaken the roof structure. *Skylights shall not be visible from the public right-of-way.*

Skylights visible from the street shall be reviewed by the Historic Landmark Commission.

Ms. Velázquez explained the following language reflects recent changes to the City's Sign Ordinance.

SIGNS

"Sign" means any outdoor display surface, structure, search light, banner, pennant, balloon or other device visible to vehicular or pedestrian traffic on a public right-of-way *or building facade* and used to direct attention to any business, product, commodity, entertainment or service, whether by means of words, letters, numerals, trademarks, pictures, designs, objects or by any other means. (20.02.692, General Provisions and Definitions) Chapter 20.66 of the El Paso Municipal Code specifically regulates design, color, material, height, location and size of signs within the city. There are two types of signs: on-premise (those signs advertising the actual business) and off-premise (billboards).

No objections from Commissioners.



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Signs shall not hide, remove, alter, destroy or cover any significant detailing and/or architectural features of the building. On-premise signage should not cover windows, doors, or air vents. On-premise signs should be located in close proximity to the activity it is identifying. In most cases, the best location is usually above, on and/or near the front door.

No objections from Commissioners.

SIZE – Signs shall not exceed thirty square feet in all commercial and manufacturing districts, and should not exceed six feet in height *in relation to the size of the building or proportionate to the size of the building.*

No objections from Commissioners.

ILLUMINATION/MOTION – Neon is permissible if implemented appropriately. Flashing, backlit, intermittent or moving lights or lights are prohibited. Twirling and/or revolving signs are prohibited. *LED (Light Emitting Diode) signs require HLC review and approval.*

Commissioners revised the sentence to read *"ILLUMINATION/MOTION – Neon and LEDs are permissible if implemented in a historically appropriate manner."*

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW – All *signs on* buildings rated as contributing or non-contributing in Historic Districts.

No objections from Commissioners.

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HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION REVIEW – All signs on buildings listed as Landmarks on Historic Preservation maps. Signs for contributing or non-contributing buildings that do not meet the requirements of this section.

Commissioners replaced the “—” with a “:”.

PROJECTING SIGNS – Double-faced projecting wall signs must have a minimum nine foot clearance between the bottom of the sign and the ground level.

Signs encroaching into or over City right-of-way, such as the sidewalk, require approval of a Special Privilege.

Commissioners revised “a Special Privilege” to “the appropriate City Department.”

AWNINGS – The installation of awnings cannot obscure, remove, damage, destroy, alter, or hide architectural decorative or historic fabric. Awnings made of fabric are more appropriate. Colors should coordinate and compliment the building, adjacent buildings and the general vicinity. Signage should be limited to the drop flaps of the awning. Signs encroaching into or over the City right-of-way, such as the sidewalk, require approval of a Special Privilege. Awnings must be maintained properly so they don’t fall into disrepair.

Commissioners revised “a Special Privilege” to “the appropriate City Department.”

BANNERS – Permanent banners are prohibited and are not allowed by Chapter 20.18. Provisional banners may be used for a period not to exceed 10 days for grand openings and charitable functions only (REMOVE). Banners must follow the current city code.

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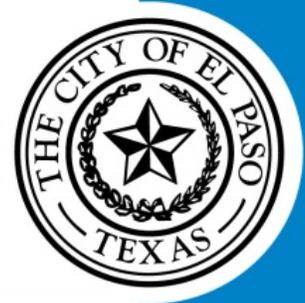
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Commissioners deleted *"Provisional banners may be used for a period not to exceed 10 days for grand openings and charitable functions only (REMOVE)."*

DOORS

GARAGE DOORS – Garages were uncommon in the oldest historic districts and usually were found only in the largest homes as carriage houses. Even in the districts developed in the 20s and 30s, garages were detached and placed at the rear of the lot. Original garage doors were solid heavy wood doors that were either of a bi-fold design or rolled out on a rail.

These doors may be replaced with modern overhead doors provided:

- Garage doors facing the alley may be replaced without modification.
- Garage doors facing the front or side street may be replaced with overhead doors that are modified with dimensional trim to simulate the original door components.
- Contemporary garage doors are also available that simulate traditional or historic garage door patterns and configurations.

Commissioners added the following bullet point:

- *"Doors must fall in line with the historic character of the neighborhood."*

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EXTERIOR DOORS

All exterior doors, especially entrance doors, are important elements contributing to the character of facades. Proportion, composition in elevation, detail and trim are all essential to the overall scheme.

~~Where~~ **If** possible, original doors should be retained. This includes glass lights, original hardware, such as doorknobs, hinges and pulls. ~~Do not~~ **It is not historically appropriate to** widen doors and door openings or attempt to create new openings or install new doors on the exterior walls of the original structure.

Commissioners revised ~~"Where"~~ to **"If"** and deleted ~~"Do not"~~ and replaced with **"It is not historically appropriate to"**

~~Wherever~~ **Whenever** existing doors are beyond repair, new ones ~~should~~ **may** be installed. New doors **must reflect the period and construction of the building.** ~~should match original materials and should also be similar in design.~~ ~~Doors must reflect the period of construction of the building, and materials, as long as they match in look and construction.~~ *Slab doors are not recommended.* **Doors must be historically appropriate to the building.**

Commissioners revised the paragraph in its entirety. See above for re-write.

Additionally, Commissioners requested Staff remove the ~~Not acceptable door graphics.~~



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DRIVEWAYS AND WALKWAYS

Driveways and walks may be widened or added as part of a landscaping plan. Under the criteria of Administrative Review, the maximum width of a driveway shall be 12 ft.: walkways a maximum of 5 ft. All driveways and walkways must comply with existing City building and safety codes. These additions should be carefully considered in relation to the size of the lot and the general streetscape. ~~For instance, a circular driveway may be appropriate for a large lot or one several feet above the street level.~~

Commissioners deleted the last sentence of the above paragraph.

PARKWAYS

Parkways may be covered with gravel, tile, brick pavers, or stamped or imprinted concrete, as well as, plant material.

Landscaping proposed for parkways, right-of-ways, and other areas where vegetation might obscure traffic sight distances, must get approval from the *Department of Transportation and must comply with City Ordinance, Section 12.68.010.*

No objections from Commissioners.



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Not more than 50% shall be impervious surfaces; the rest shall be **vegetative cover**. Parkways are *not* intended for parking. Landscaping design will be at the discretion of the property owner if the parkway is 4 ft. or less in width. If landscaping would create a grave maintenance hardship, a request for consideration of an exception, allowing 100% impervious surface, may be presented to the Historic Landmark Commission.

Per the graphics, Chair Riccillo noted, the bottom right graphic does not accurately depict 50% vegetative cover.

Ms. Velázquez replied Staff will revise the bottom two graphics to accurately depict 50% vegetative cover.

Chair Riccillo suggested Commissioners leave the discussion regarding "Windows" for the next HLC meeting.

Commissioner Booher suggested changing the name from "**WINDOWS**" to "**FENESTRATION**."

Ms. Velázquez explained Commissioners had requested Staff research paint colors. She directed Commissioners' attention to the last paragraph and explained Staff will usually select neutral, pale colors. However, should an applicant specifically request a color, Staff will request the applicant come before the HLC for a determination.



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COLOR

El Paso's historic neighborhoods (with the exception of the Lower Valley) were created between 1880 and 1930. At this time there were limited choices of colors available. For the most part surviving historic buildings were constructed of masonry materials: brick, stone, stucco, and adobe. Wood was used on the exterior for eaves, fascia, columns, windows, and doors and trim. Wood and metal were the materials that were painted.

Today, almost any tint, shade or hue is possible. Indiscriminate choice of color can create a false historic appearance and can have a negative impact **on** the other buildings on the street. For this reason it is recommended that the original colors be used, and that brick and stone *not* be painted. **Once brick or stone is painted, the painted surface becomes a maintenance requirement. Any request for painting previously unpainted brick, stone, or masonry shall be reviewed by the HLC.**

Because of the great diversity of the city's historic districts, colors appropriate to one neighborhood might not be suitable for another. Magoffin, Downtown, Old San Francisco, and Sunset Heights, share a common time frame and architectural vocabulary. Manhattan Heights and Austin Terrace are also related in the same way.

Because of the diversity of styles, periods and materials, it is not possible to recommend colors for all historic buildings. Each request will be reviewed individually and on its own merits.



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The following reference has been recommended as a guide to appropriate color selection for buildings within various historic districts: Century of Color, Exterior Decoration for American Buildings 1820-1920, Roger W. Moss. The American Life Foundation, Watkins Glen, New York, 219 S. Sixth Street, Philadelphia Pennsylvania. 1981. 108 pp.

*Most paint colors can be approved administratively. The applicant must supply an application with paint chip samples to staff. The paint samples are then compared to the color brick in the Planning Department. If the desired paint color ~~matches one of the top three colors on each strip~~ **is in the range** these can usually be approved as the main color of the house (with the exception of some blues, greens, pinks, reds, fuschias, oranges, and yellows). Trim color may be a darker or contrasting color than the body of the building. The Historic Preservation Office has the right to defer any color request to the HLC.*

Chair Riccillo suggested removing the words "~~matches one of the top three colors on each strip~~" to "**is in the range.**"

Ms. Velázquez will email the color range website addresses to Commissioners.

MOTION:

Motion made by Chair Riccillo **AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO LEAVE COLOR AND WINDOWS FOR THE NEXT HLC MEETING.**



2 Civic Center Plaza
El Paso, TX 79901
(915) 541-4027

Mayor

John F. Cook

City Council

District 1

Ann Morgan Lilly

District 2

Susie Byrd

District 3

Emma Acosta

District 4

Carl L. Robinson

District 5

Dr. Michiel R. Noe

District 6

Eddie Holguin Jr.

District 7

Steve Ortega

District 8

Cortney Carlisle Niland

City Manager

Joyce A. Wilson



MOTION:

Motion made by Chair Riccillo, seconded by Commissioner Booher and
**UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO ADJOURN THE HISTORIC LANDMARK
SPECIAL MEETING AT 6:06 P.M.**

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