City of Beverly Hills
**Residential Bulk & Mass Study**

# *Central Area Single-Family Dwelling Bulk and Mass Study Issues and Options Paper*

DISCUSSION DRAFT FOR COMMISSION REVIEW

May 15, 2013

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# *Central Area Single-Family Dwelling Bulk and Mass Study Issues and Options Paper*

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May 15, 2013

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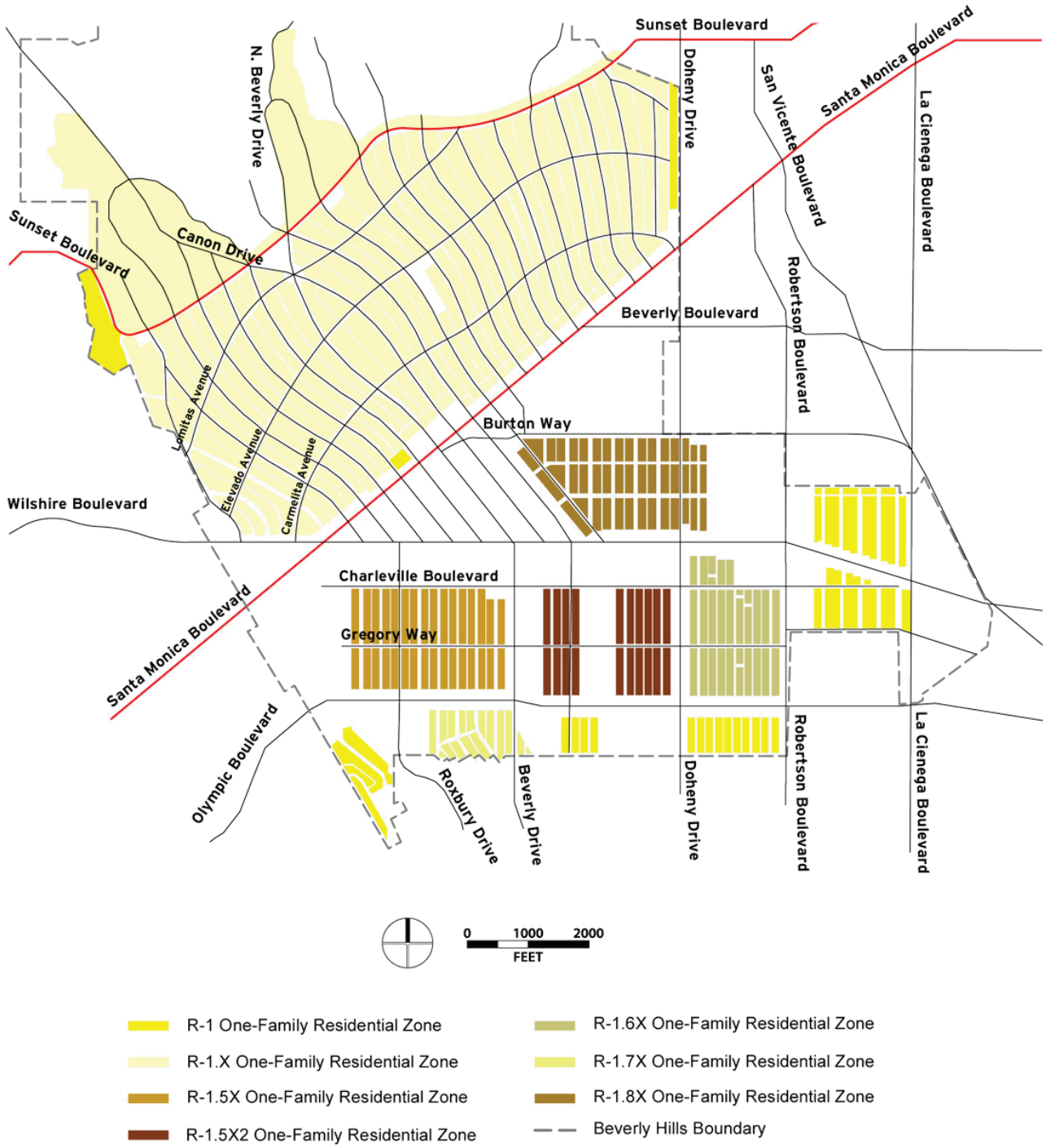
# Introduction

Beverly Hill's Central Area neighborhoods and individual residences have a long and recognized tradition of architectural excellence that builds upon and maintains the City's residential garden character while sustaining property values. As part of the Zoning Code Reorganization, Dyett & Bhatia, Urban and Regional Planners, and John Kaliski Architects were charged with analyzing issues related to single-family bulk and mass in the City's Central Area R-1 districts and recommending options for regulatory controls that could be incorporated in the Code after the basic reorganization is complete. The study area is shown in Figure 1.




## Figure 1: City of Beverly Hills Central Area

*The Central Area Single-family land use designations and neighborhoods establish the unique residential context and architectural and landscape quality of the City of Beverly Hills.*

This analysis was prompted by continuing concern that the massing, bulk, and volumes of new residential architecture in the Central Area are out of proportion, as seen from City streets, with the existing residential settings and do not support the City's unique residential character. Uncomfortable juxtapositions of bulk and mass along block faces diminish the traditional built-form stability of Central Area neighborhoods and lessen the value of traditional homes that have long characterized Beverly Hills' residential single-family streets.

*Many traditional Central Area homes evidence combinations of one- and two-story masses and volumes, contributing to the perception of a varied and intricate streetscape.*

The purpose of this paper is to:

- Identify issues and concerns that contribute to the realization of excessive single-family residential mass and bulk, and
- Suggest options to address these issues for discussion.

Comments on these options by the Planning Commission and the community will shape subsequent work on zoning code standards that could help reduce actual, as well as perceived. residential mass, bulk, and volume, enabling zoning to do a better job in conserving and enhancing Beverly Hills' unique Central Area residential environments.

## 1.1 APPROACH TO STUDY

During February and March of 2013, the consultant team along with City staff observed and documented with photography existing conditions in Central Area single-family residential neighborhoods. The consultants also reviewed recent development plans with City staff and looked at the results during the neighborhood tour. In addition the Consultants reviewed the criteria and parameters of the City's Zoning Code as well as the Residential Design Style Catalogue. In early March 2013, the consultants discussed the proposed study, as well as, the evolving Central Area residential building environment with the R1 Bulk and Mass Task Force of the City Planning Commission (Task Force) and architects who have completed residential projects within the City.

Concerns, issues, and concepts contributing to the perception and fact of incremental increases in bulk and mass, and representing a wide range of topics, were presented to the Consultant during these meetings. The Appendix includes detailed information on these issues and concerns along with the project assumptions and opportunities identified for further analysis.

*Many existing Central Area neighborhoods are still marked by one-story streetscapes. Members of the City's R-1 Bulk and Mass Task Force stated that the massing and bulk of new additions and residences should fit comfortably into these traditional contexts.*

*The combination of a vertically offset front building plane, recessed second story balcony element, and prominent shadow line created by the overhang of a pitched roof, combine to reduce the sense of front building plane mass and bulk at this recently completed residence in the Central Area just south of Burton Way.*

## 1.2 BULK AND MASS IN THE CENTRAL AREA: KEY CONCERNS

While there was acknowledgement that looking forward larger homes will be built within the City, there was also a desire expressed by the Task Force and City staff, as well as many of the architects that work in the City that new construction should honor the existing conditions in Central Area residential neighborhoods. The message was clear: strive for a "light touch" to bulk and mass perceptions and concerns; and do not reduce floor area allowance for single-family homes. While constraints on floor area could lessen the size and bulk of new residential construction, the desire expressed by the City Council liaisons to the Planning Commission was to identify ways of modulating bulk and mass of larger homes while still maintaining the City's existing floor area allowances.

### The Perception of Bulk and Mass as Seen from the Street

Some architects working in the City feel that existing design standards do not encourage adequate modulation of and a sense of massing variety at building facades oriented towards streets. More aggressive modulation standards that reduce the maximum area of flat planes at front building facades are one means to reduce the perception of building mass and bulk.

Task Force members also noted that bulk and mass issues on the larger and wider Central Area lots north of Sunset Boulevard are due, in part, to Code defined FAR allowances for the Central Area that regardless of lot size provide a constant "straight-line" definition of maximum residential floor area.

### Bulk and Mass at Upper Levels

Field observation and review of residential building applications received by the City reveals that many newer homes stack similar floor plate areas on top of each other, i.e. a second floor sits on top of an equivalent first floor. Given the trend towards larger home sizes, equivalently sized first and second floors reduce design opportunities for bulk and mass modulation. At the same time observation of typical blocks within the Central Area suggests that many lots do not fully utilize the available at-grade buildable area, suggesting that standards could encourage the placement of additional floor area at-grade, reduce the floor area placed at upper levels, and still provide for optimization of floor area allowances by applicants.

## Building Stepback Requirements

Many cities seek to minimize bulk and mass through vertical step back requirements at upper levels. Beverly Hills requires this on some smaller lots south of Olympic Boulevard. Architects working in Beverly Hills were queried regarding their attitude towards reducing residential bulk and mass through implementation of additional step back provisions at upper floors. The architects that the Consultants met with pointed out that traditional architecture rarely utilizes step backs at upper levels and that prescriptive standards for setbacks may be in conflict with design of "pure architectural styles" as required by the Track I process of the Catalogue. So, required step backs should generally not be used to address residential bulk and mass.

*The one-story elements projecting from the front of this two-story home south of Olympic Boulevard create a transition between existing one-story residences and newer construction and reduce the overall perception of mass and bulk.*

## Incentives for One-Story Elements

Task Force members and architects working in the City pointed out that the existing residential floor area definition does not include covered spaces as long as more than 50 percent of the exterior wall area of the covered space is open. This provides an incentive for building covered porches, which can function as outdoor rooms. These types of spaces, when one-story in height, can modulate overall bulk and mass. There are many enclosed as well as unenclosed one-story building components seen in the Central Area such as three sided one-story living rooms, one story building entries, and attached and setback porte-cocheres, that when juxtaposed against two-story elements create contrast and massing variety in a home's design and establish a sense of reduced bulk and mass.

*The modulated cubic volumes of this flat-roofed contemporary residence in combination with the setting of the building at a grade level above the street creates a sense of monumental scale, which is both innovative from a pure design point of view and in contrast to the traditional scale of the residences in the adjoining neighborhood.*

## Use of Pitched Roofs

Architects working in the City stated that existing height limits are constraining and do not provide enough design latitude for the use of pitched roofs. They noted that in some cases height limits are exceeded when pitched roofs are placed on top of two story structures. Some felt this created an unintended incentive to design flat roofs set at height limits, contributing to the perception of impactful bulk and mass. Generally, maximum residential height is limited to 28 feet north of Santa Monica Boulevard, or if additional yard depth is provided, the maximum height is 32 feet. The City allows the roof height to be averaged north of Santa Monica Boulevard, so that half of the roof can be above the general height if half of the roof is below the general height. When roof averaging is utilized, the maximum height north of Santa Monica Boulevard is 32

*While both houses provide setback second story mass and bulk, projecting one-story elements, pitched roof forms, and front plane modulation, the small separation between the adjoining porte-cocheres leads to a sense of continuous street-wall that creates a larger than expected sense of scale that is in contrast to the more traditional landscape separation between structures typically seen in the Central Area.*

*The varied roof forms of this house south of Sunset Boulevard are based upon an understanding of traditional use of materials for the given style, which demands use ridgelines, creating consequent planar proportions along the elevations that in turn reduce the sense of mass and bulk.*

feet, or 34 feet with the added side yard depth. Residential height limit south of Santa Monica Boulevard is set at 30 feet for pitched roofs, and 25 feet for flat roofs. Residential height south of Santa Monica Boulevard is also limited by a maximum plate height (ceiling height), which is 22 feet.

## Side Yards Requirements as Buffers

Sometimes, new construction appears to crowd its neighbors alongside yards, particularly where porte-cocheres nest to each other. In other cases, two story walls set at minimum side yard setbacks loom over adjacent structures. To maintain the garden quality of the City, side yard standards could be modified to ensure adequate separation and opportunities for landscaping between adjacent structures.

## Porte-Cocheres at Side Yards

Porte-cocheres are often seen in Beverly Hills as part of the uniqueness. However, sometimes port-cocheres seem to encroach on side yards and create street walls with no sense of separation between structures at adjoining lots, leading to a sense of increased bulk and mass.

## Sloped Roof Forms

Task Force members pointed out that the vast majority of traditional pitched roofs rise to true roof ridgelines. A roof ridge is the horizontal line formed by the juncture of two sloping roof surfaces. Historically the proportions, slopes, and ridgelines of roofs were a consequence of both local climate conditions and use of local materials, i.e. steeper pitches were used in wetter or snowier climates and the span of roofs from one exterior building wall to the opposite exterior building wall was primarily a function of the length and availability of local structural components, for example, the ability to procure spanning wood beams.

In present day architecture use of steel with great spanning capabilities, modern water proofing that lessens the need to shed moisture quickly, and the knowledge of and desire to use design styles from regions near and far, some with no relationship to Southern California's temperate climate, means that the look of a building and its roofs is for many a function of subjective visual preference. Traditional constraints related to the availability of materials and local craft traditions are not limiting design factors. As a consequence stylistic components, including roofs, are applied to building facades with small regard for the defining constraints of traditional materials, forms, and the consequent proportions of spans rooted in vernacular traditions.

In Beverly Hills, as in all contemporary cities, one can observe new construction that applies decorative roof planes with no ridgelines. This type of condition is rarely present in a "pure" architectural style and sometimes leads to the perception of an increased sense of bulk and mass.

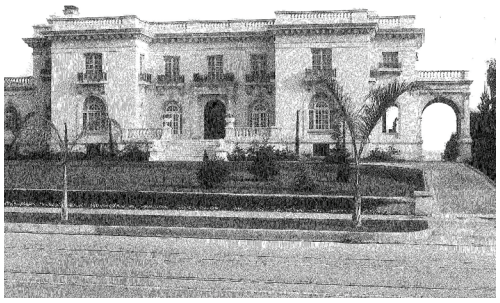
*his structure, located in the southwest sector of the Central Area district, does not clearly fit within any of the styles noted in the Residential Design Style Catalogue, yet given its careful modulation of bulk, mass and detail, sits well within the context of its neighborhood surrounds.*

## Limitations on Roof Overhangs

Architects working in the City pointed out that projecting elements such as roof overhangs create shade and shadow patterns and highlight transitions between building faces and roof pitches, contributing a sense of design expression compared to structures with flat planar expressions and parapets. The existing Code limits how far a roof eave can project into a side yard setback, and some architects working think this limitation on the depth of eave projections contributes to perceptions of increased mass and bulk in comparison to traditional architecture with deeper eaves.

## Architectural Style Catalogue Issues

Providing additional styles in the Catalogue for Central Area Track I projects would allow staff to more efficiently approve a greater range of Track 1 projects. Additional Catalogue styles may result in quicker processing times for applicants, staff, and the Design Review Commission as increased choices will allow for additional Track I projects, lessening the number of projects that are defined as Track II. This work, though, is outside the scope of services for this project.



*This early 20th Century Beaux-Arts style house, built in Los Angeles, requires a wide lot in order to accommodate the monumental appearance typical of the style (from Houses of Los Angeles Volume I, page 250).*

The City could consider incorporating more explicit design objectives for Track II projects into this document, as well as parallel Track I and Track II compliance findings in the Code, to clarify that both "pure" architecture styles as well as innovative residential architecture that fits its surrounds is welcome in Central Area districts, assuming a finding of design compliance and approval by the appropriate decision-maker.

## Beaux-Arts Style Massing is Not Contextual

Task Force members noted that the Beaux-Arts style works best within the expansiveness of larger parcel widths, and that the Central Area lacks such parcels. Beaux-Arts style architecture is "…characterized by; monumental and imposing appearance; symmetrical façade; wall surfaces embellished with floral patterns, garlands, medallions, or the like; exterior walls having quoins, pilasters, and paired columns; flat, low pitched, or mansard roofs; and a variety of stone finishes. The Catalogue notes that, "(f)lat roofs associated with the Beaux-Arts whose cornices, moldings,

dentils, etc… (are) not carried past the front façade are discouraged (see Catalogue page 93).

While not explicitly disallowed as a style by the Catalogue, and certainly not prohibited per the Code, perhaps the combination of monumentality, flat roofs, and generally flat front facades, even when embellished, is seen by some as creating a contrast to the more intricate scales, massing, and typical bulks of other architectural styles that are encouraged by the Catalogue, particularly when placed on narrow-in-width lots.

With this in mind, the City could consider adding additional guideline language to this document to clarify the use of the Beaux-Arts style in Beverly Hills. At the same time, Code recommendations for bulk and mass should ensure that modulation factors mitigate against simplistic and uncreative box-like homes in the Central Area of the City.

# 2

# Options to Address Central Area Mass and Bulk

The options proposed for discussion in this section provide a basis for developing zoning code standards that could establish better relationships between adjoining structures through 1) reduced bulk and mass and 2) increased separation between residential structures. Together these two directions would reinforce the sense of place, garden quality, and consequent value of Central Area neighborhoods. Comments by the Planning Commission and residents will enable these optiosn judged to have merit to be refined by City staff and the consultant team.


*Street trees and generous front yard setbacks create a strong sense of place along Linden Street, just south of Wilshire Boulevard. Residences with a combination of one- and two- story elements establish a sense of human scale and militate any sense of impactful bulk and mass.*

## 2.1 OVERALL APPROACH

In response to the issues and concerns heard, observed, and noted in the Introduction, six ways of addressing bulk and mass in the Central Area were identified. In sum, the big ideas are to:

- Reduce the bulk, mass, and volumes of single-family residences as observed from public streets while maintaining the overall Code-allowed allowances for residential floor area.
- Refine definitions of height that complement reductions to mass and bulk while maintaining the overall Code allowed allowances for residential floor area.
- Encourage reduced second floor areas in relationship to first floor areas while maintaining the overall Code allowed allowances for residential floor area.
- Encourage modulation of front building planes and side yard facades to diminish perceptions of excess mass and bulk.
- Ensure the integrity of side yard and rear yard separations between adjoining residential parcels and increase the quality of landscape observed from public streets to ensure buffering, screening, and privacy between adjacent residential properties.
- Reduce the impact of on-site automobile parking as observed from public streets.

A seventh suggestion relates mainly to the use and processes associated with the Residential Style Catalogue, with the goal of making this essential design document easier and quicker to comply with.

First, the processes and the compliance procedures described in the Catalogue need to be more clearly described and embedded in the Zoning Code, in particular the design guideline compliance findings. This will clarify procedures and schedules for both staff and applicants and lead to more definitive and timely design review of Central Area projects.

Second, and beyond the Consultant scope of work, additional "pure" styles and quantitative qualities that define these styles should be included in the Catalogue. This additional information will allow staff to approve more Track I projects.

Third, language that clarifies the intent, flexibility, and compliance findings associated with Track 2 processes and approvals should be added to the Catalogue to strengthen the quality of the presentations and dialogue associated with projects that introduce innovative residential architectural expressions to the Central Areas. This will expedite Track II design reviews for applicants, staff, and the Design Review Commission.

While a thorough review of all Code requirements is required to address single-family mass and bulk issues comprehensively, the ideas noted above provide a framework for focusing revision efforts in the Central Area of the City. If all six of the main objectives are addressed, the impact of mass and bulk in new residential construction in the Central Area could be substantively mitigated.

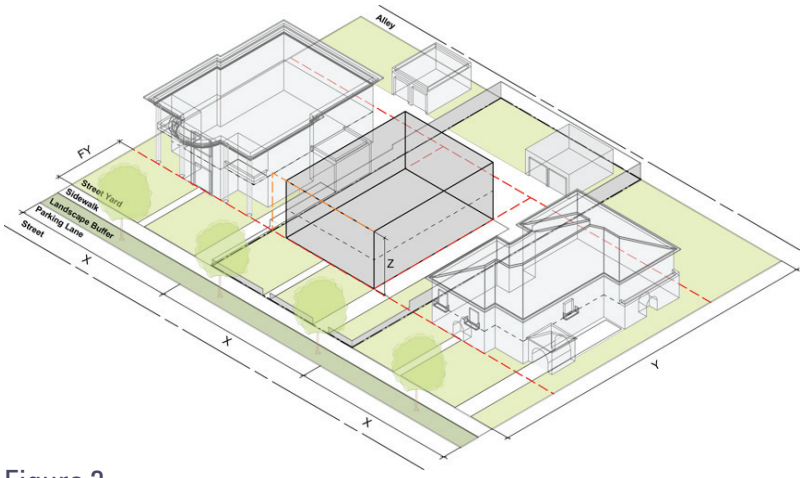



Figure 2

*The existing Zoning Code theoretically permits the construction of an unmodulated building envelope that does not create a sense of fit with the traditions of the Central Area residential context. At present the Residential Design Style Catalogue primarily addresses style characteristics, with minimal qualitative discussion of the scales, masses, and bulks associated with "pure" styles. Additional volumetric standards in the Zoning Code can establish base requirements for more suitable architectural modulation that address bulk and mass concerns and break down the gross quality of the existing allowed zoning envelope as illustrated in this figure.*

## 2.2 MODULATE THE STREET-FACING FRONTS OF SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES

At present, the Code minimally addresses street facing building plane modulation, allowing opportunities for shear two-story walls facing street rights-of-way. In comparison to older homes in the Central Area, too many new homes and additions are realized with unbroken building facades and flat roofs; too many residential designs are completed with "box-like" building envelopes.

Although the Catalogue and its requirement for use of "pure" architectural styles have improved the quality of Central Area residential design, the guidelines in the Catalogue are not sufficient to ensure the scale, massing, and bulk that best relates to prevailing streetscapes. Additional Code modulation standards will provide a means to realize more appropriate massing and bulk relationships as perceived from streets in the Central Area of the City.

Greater modulation of the street-facing walls of single-family homes can be accomplished by adopting into the Code one or more of the following concepts. Standards based upon the ideas that follow could apply to the entire Central Area, or be tailored to individual Central Area zoning designations.

Modulation concepts that merit further exploration and development include, but are not limited to the following.

- Set a maximum allowable length of unbroken front façade plane allowed along the ground level.
- Set a maximum percentage of front façade area allowed to be in one building plane.
- Set a minimum percentage of street-facing façade plane required to be horizontally or vertically offset from the building plane.

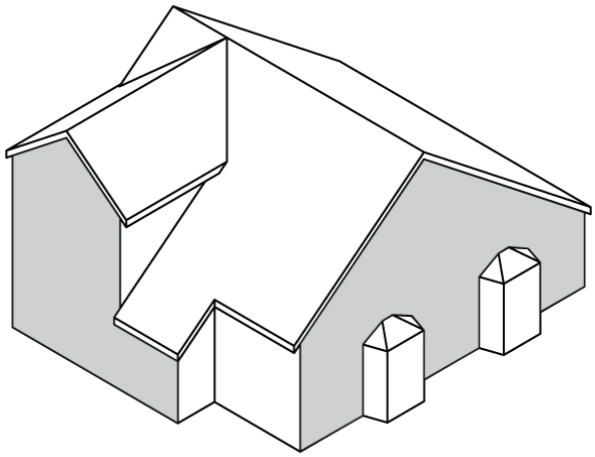


Figure 3

*The street-facing building planes or facades of most residential structures in the Central Area are observed to be composed of a number of building planes, varied footprints that "break the volume of the box", and projections, creating visual offsets and juxtaposed shapes that establish a sense of scale, reduced bulk, and massing variety.*

- Require all projections to be placed behind required yard setback lines. These elements may include but are not limited to a one-story porch, one-story arcade, window and/or building bay(s), second story porch or overhang, one-story architectural projection, and/or other equivalent building component.
- Amend Section 10-3-2403 C of the Code to require a lower maximum height for the first 20 feet of building volume behind the front yard setback for properties south of Olympic Boulevard and east of Doheny Drive to apply to other Central Area residential zones.
- Amend the Code to include other appropriate design standards that provides for modulation of the street-facing building plane as viewed from the street.

*Standards for second story setbacks such as those already required for properties east of Doheny Boulevard and south of Olympic Boulevard could be applied to other Central Area R-1 zones, particularly where lots are narrower.*

## 2.3 REDUCE THE VOLUMETRIC BULK AND MASS OF SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENCES

Many newer R-1 single-family residences and major remodels, even projects that utilize the Catalogue and the Track 1 design review process, have under-differentiated and box-like volumes, perhaps as a consequence of the floor area being maximized. In these cases, where one floor sits directly on top of another floor, a sense of volume and bulk is established that too often overwhelms adjacent structures.

However, ground floors are not always built to the maximum allowed, and the design review process has been successful in requiring a differentiation of mass and bulk between first and second floors to reduce the appearance of bulk and mass in many new homes.

Building on this success, standards could be developed that require or even provide incentives for increased area at ground floors, reduced area at second floors, utilization of sloped roofs, and lower massing towards street-facing yards and the rear of sites. These types of concepts would discourage box-like massing and reduce the bulk oriented to streetscapes and adjoining properties.

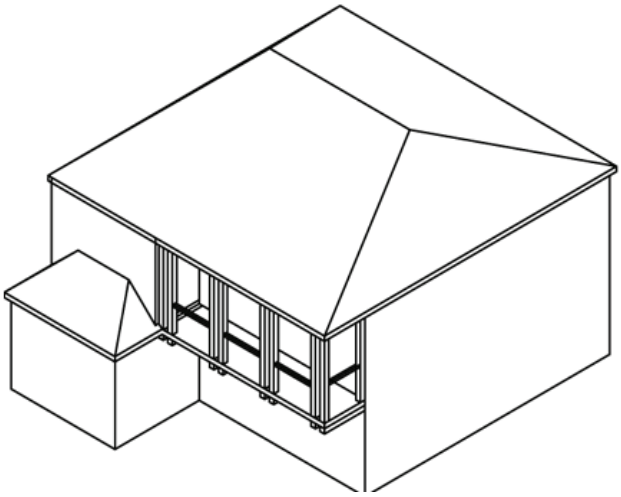


Figure 4

*Assuming the front yard setback is respected for all building elements, one-story projections from front building planes push back two story massing from the front yard setback line and reduce the impact of bulk and mass on adjacent structures.*

Differentiation in mass and volume concepts that reduce the sense of mass and bulk and merit further exploration and development include, but are not limited to, the following.

- Adjust the definition of height within single-family zones in the Central Area of the City from the highest point of ground level to the lowest point of ground level, or, alternatively, to the natural grade adjoining the perimeter of the structure.
- Provide a new standard to define the maximum percentage of second story coverage allowed over the footprint of a first story.
- Provide for a limited and constrained increase in allowed floor area with the use of a one-story transition element, such as a covered porch, arcade, or projecting one-story room adjoining and oriented towards the front yard.
- Introduce an increased setback requirement from the required front yard setback for projecting elements allowed in side yards including but not limited to porte-cocheres.

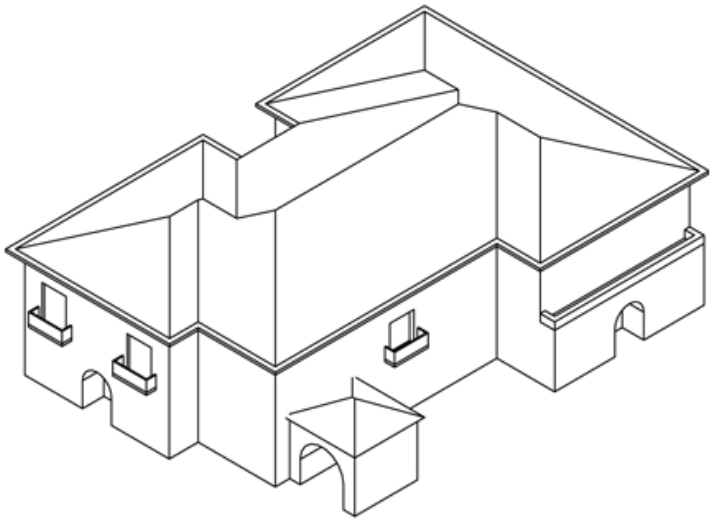


Figure 5

*When porte-cocheres are placed behind the front building plane an increased sense of separation between adjoining structures results. Likewise, when the length of building planes alongside yards is limited in length, perceptions of impactful bulk and mass decrease.*

- Provide for a limited and constrained increase in floor area with use of pitched roof shapes.
- Provide other design standards that reduce the perception and/or fact of volume, mass, and bulk placed at the upper levels of structures.

## 2.4 INCREASE THE SENSE OF OPENNESS, LIGHT, AND AIR BETWEEN ADJOINING RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURES

Unbroken lengths of unmodulated side yard facing building planes, particularly as building volume increases, contribute to a sense of crowding between adjoining structures on adjacent properties. The City could adopt standards that require side yard facing building plane modulation, and/or additional open space along the length of buildings at side yards.

This could be accomplished quite easily by the following.

- Define on zoning district-by-district basis the maximum allowed length of a side yard facing façade plane allowed at ground level without a one- to two- story break in the vertical plane of the side yard facing façade.

- Define on a district basis the maximum percentage of a side yard facing façade area allowed to be in one building plane.
- Define the minimum percentage of side yard facing façade plane that is required in each district to be offset from the main side yard-facing building plane.
- Provide for an increased side yard requirement within a minimum distance of the front yard setback.
- Provide for an additional required increment of open space, with a minimum depth greater than that of the required side yard, which is placed contiguous with the side yard-facing building plane.
- Provide for an equivalent standard or approach that increases the amount of side yard area and/or increases the modulation of building planes adjacent to side yards.

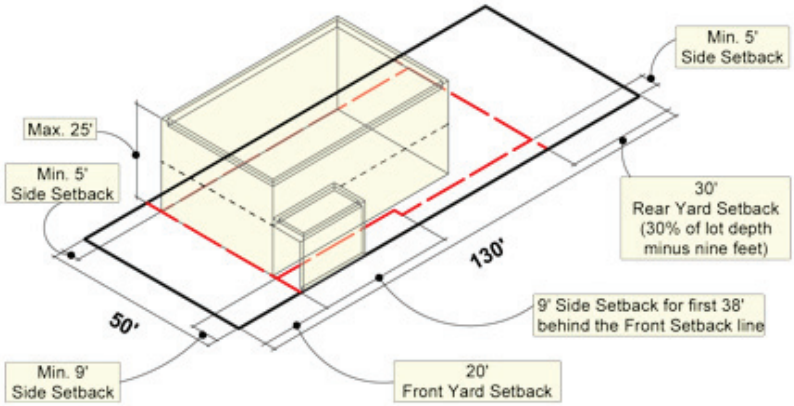



Figure 6

*In this zoning envelope, the maximum building envelope may be placed within 5 feet of the lot line that is opposite the driveway and porte-cochere. Additional increments of open space could be required in these types of circumstances to limit the sense of bulk, mass, and crowding between residential structures on adjoining lots.*

## 2.5 INTRODUCE ADDITIONAL STANDARDS FOR LANDSCAPING

Existing Central R-1 zoning standards for landscape require planted areas but have minimal criteria for trees, use of shrubs for screening at side yards to ensure privacy between adjacent structures, and use of greenscape and hardscape, all of which could enhance the City's garden sensibility.

Standards and guidelines that encourage use of additional landscape materials, contribute to the buffering of adjoining properties from each other, and enhance the City's garden setting that merit further exploration and development include but are not limited to the following.

- Require horizontal and vertical landscape buffer/envelope to provide buffering and visual separation of adjoining lots at side and rear yards.
- Establish front, side, and rear yard tree standards to ensure privacy between adjoining lots and enhance the City's garden setting.
- Establish limits on the amount of hardscape permitted and ensure the use of quality driveway paving materials at front yards.
- Require planted buffers at building components that project into side yards, such as porte-cocheres, to ensure landscaped separation between lots.
- Provision of equivalent requirements or approaches that provide for increased use of plant materials to buffer and screen adjacent residential structures from each other while enhancing the Central Area's sense of open space and garden feel.

*Use of high quality materials in the driveway, and the separation with a tree and planter of the front walk from the driveway help establish a sense of design quality and sense of human-scale at this home in the southwest area of the City.*

## 2.6 INTRODUCE ADDITIONAL STANDARDS FOR ON-SITE PARKING

While parking was generally not raised as a contributing component to bulk and mass concerns during discussions with the Task Force and architects that work in the City, the consultant team, based upon observations, thought this issue should be explored. City parking standards for residences within the Central Area of the City require a minimum of parking spaces for up to four bedrooms, three for five bedroom residences, and four parking spaces for houses that contain more than six bedrooms. Parking is not allowed within front yards or street side yards and all parking is supposed to be screened from the view of adjacent lots. Additionally, the definition of Central Area residential floor area does not include the first 400 square feet of garage area.

Given that many newer homes reach the maximum floor area allowed by Code, the number of cars that end up parked on a lot in the Central Area may be contributing to the perception of increased residential mass and bulk. This occurs in at least four ways.

*On wider lots and sloped lots garage doors facing streets fit within the context of Central Area neighborhoods.*

*Designs that well-integrate garage doors when facing public streets are the exception as opposed to the rule throughout most of the Central Area.*

- Garaging of three, four, five, and more cars increases the volume of built space on a site and contributes to consequent bulk.
- Many residences appear to use front yards for parking above and beyond the area allowed by Code. Placing cars in visible yards may be contributing to a perception that intensity, and therefore bulk and mass, has increased.
- Many Central Area neighborhoods were built with garages and garage doors facing alleys, particularly those neighborhoods south of Santa Monica Boulevard with smaller lots (not including those west of Roxbury and south of Olympic). In newer construction having garage doors face residential streets reduces the frontage devoted to habitable uses and landscape and increases visible bulk.
- On a small number of lots in the Central Area (not including sloped lots in the hillsides) where underground garages face the street and ramped driveways slope down from the elevation of the right-of-way, this arrangement creates a sense of increased building height and consequent mass. While the Code limits the design of garages below natural grade, additional standards could minimize the impact of these types of garages mitted.

To address the vehicular impact issue from a design standpoint, residential parking design standards could be formulated that encourage putting parking in the rear of lots and underground, as well as additional screening of cars with landscape and walls. The idea would be to minimize the relationship of on-site parking to the perception of increased residential bulk and mass.

Standards related to on-site parking of vehicles in the Central Area that could merit further exploration and development include, but are not limited to, the following.

- Limit the placement of garage doors facing public streets, unless setback beyond the front or corner side setback line.
- Increase the 400 square foot allowance for garage area that is not counted towards FAR to 600 square feet or more if all of the garage area including the additional garage space is located immediately adjacent to an alley.
- Eliminate any allowance for garage area that is not counted towards FAR if the garage is placed in the Principal Building Area unless

the garage area within the Principal Building Area is placed underground. In addition, provide a 5 percent or greater floor area bonus to the maximum residential area allowed provided that all required parking is underground with access from an adjacent alley.

- Limit the placement and impact of entries to underground garages from streets.

## 2.7 AMEND THE RESIDENTIAL DESIGN STYLE CATALOGUE

While the Consultant scope of work for the Single Family Mass and Bulk Study does not include revisions to the Style Catalogue, review of the Catalogue as well as comments by the Task Force and architects that work in the City suggest that this document could evolve and even more effectively promote high quality residential architecture in Beverly Hills.

- The existing contemporary categories, "Moderne," "International Style," and "Post Modern Style," each make reference to "character defining features," but do not fully describe how the bulk and mass of new residential structures best relate to adjacent structures on adjoining lots, and best contribute to a varied block face of compatible structures. Incorporation of a revised Contemporary Style with less emphasis on style characteristics and more concentration on meeting form-based objectives that relate the bulk and mass of a new structure or addition to the bulk, mass, and character of the existing block face and neighborhood may allow additional projects to take advantage of the Track I review process.

- The Catalogue could contain additional proportional information on a style-by-style basis that more specifically describes some of the numeric underpinnings of the selected architectural styles available for use in the Track I process. For instance, roofs of Spanish Revival structures invariably utilize 3:1, or less, length to height relationships. In this same regard, most of the residential architectural styles described in the Catalogue utilize a variety of one-story elements juxtaposed against two story elements, roof shapes, and building plan shapes and configurations. In this last regard, a significant percentage of residences in the Central Area are observed to have "L" shaped footprints with a one-story leg juxtaposed against a two-story leg, and the open space between the two building legs oriented towards the street.

All of these patterns and more could be more specifically identified with additional photographs, diagrams, and text on a style-by-style basis. This type of additional information will assist Track I applicants to more quickly design projects that meets requirements for the realization of a "pure" architectural style.

- Additional information on use of plant materials, placement of trees, and opportunities for use of landscape to enhance the City's garden setting and ensure privacy could be introduced to the Catalogue. Historically movements in garden design were associated with each of the Catalogue styles. The principles of style-driven landscape could be more explicitly communicated along with expanded menus of characteristic landscape design expressions and typically used plant materials.

- The Track 2 process is defined as a "Commission-level review … (that) applies to all other single-family residential projects that require design review." Architects that work in the City suggested that the original intent of the Track 2 process was to allow for residential design creativity. They stated that in practice, to avoid lengthy design review, the Track 2 process has too often led to use of traditional styles of architecture, i.e. the "pure" styles noted in the Catalogue. Additional clarity with regard to the intent, goals, and objectives of the Track II process, particularly as regards bulk and mass, may assist in clarifying the design objectives of this alternative approval path and lead to more expeditious outcomes for these projects.

# Appendix: Issues and Concerns Identified and Study Assumptions

The options presented in Section 2 of this paper were informed by the consultant team's analysis of issues and concerns expressed by the Task Force and architects interviewed and information provided by City staff. Assumptions made also are documented.

*The floor areas of a basement under construction in the Central Area district south of Sunset Boulevard.*

## FAR AND DENSITY ISSUES AND CONCERNS

### No Consideration Should be Given to Reducing Floor Area Allowances for Single-Family Homes in the Central Area

Code Section 10-3-2402, Floor Area defines maximum residential floor area in the Central Area as typically a minimum of 1,500 square feet plus 40 percent of the site area. Observation of typical lots in this portion of the City reveals that residences from approximately 3,800 square feet in size on typical R-1.7X sites to approximately 6,800 square feet on typical R-1.X sites are allowed. Given the desirability of the Beverly Hills location and contemporary lifestyles that seek larger floor areas, these square foot allowances are utilized in new construction and additions to realize larger homes that are often in distinct contrast to older and smaller residences built in earlier eras. While constraints on floor area could lessen the size and bulk of new residential construction, there was an expressed desire by the City Council liaisons to the Planning Commission during a special meeting of the liaisons with the Planning Commission Chair and Vice-chair on October 13, 2012 to identify ways of modulating bulk and mass to lessen the impact of larger homes while maintaining the City's existing floor area allowances.

**Project Assumption**: while many cities have limited floor area allowances to reduce the impact on adjoining properties of larger residences, at this time this type of constraint will not be utilized to reduce bulk and mass in the Central Area residential zoning districts.

### Consider Counting a Portion of Basement Area as Residential Floor Area

Basement area, per the Code, does not count towards residential floor area. If desired, the Consultant can study allowance standards that incentivize provision of below grade area by reducing the amount of allowed above-grade floor area, thus potentially reducing above-grade volume and bulk. Nevertheless, changes to the definition of residential floor area that might count some portion of basement area towards total allowed floor area were not encouraged by either the Task Force or architects working in the City.

**Project Assumptions:** Recommendations to incentivize construction of below-grade habitable space and maintain total floor area allowances could be provided for further consideration by decision-makers.

## GENERAL BULK AND MASS CONCERNS

### Address the Perception of Bulk and Mass as Seen from the Street

Some architects working in the City feel that existing design standards do not encourage adequate modulation of and a sense of massing variety at building facades oriented towards streets. More aggressive modulation standards that reduce the maximum area of flat planes at front building facades are one means to reduce the perception of building mass and bulk.

**Project Opportunity**: additional standards that provide more relief from non-modulated front building planes should be considered.

### The Bulk and Mass of New Construction and Additions to Existing Construction Need to be Considered in Central Areas North of Sunset Boulevard as Well as Central Areas South of Sunset Boulevard

Concern was expressed by Task Force members that bulk and mass issues exist on the larger and wider Central Area lots that are observed north of Sunset Boulevard. In part this is due to Code defined FAR allowances for the Central Area that regardless of parcel size provide a constant "straight-line" definition of maximum residential floor area. Observation of those portions of the Central Area north of Sunset Boulevard also reveal the juxtaposition between older residences that do not maximize the floor area allowed and newer construction that optimizes the available zoning envelope.

**Project Opportunity:** Standards that further differentiate between requirements for smaller lots south of Santa Monica Boulevard and requirements for larger lot north of Santa Monica Boulevard and South of Sunset Boulevard, and even larger Central Area lots north of Sunset Boulevard need to be developed to adequately address the differences associated with bulk and mass issues on larger versus smaller lots.

### Reduce Bulk and Mass at Upper Levels

Field observation and review of residential building applications received by the City reveals that many newer homes stack similar floor plate areas on top of each other, i.e. a second floor sits on top of an equivalent first floor. Given the trend towards larger home sizes, equivalently sized first

and second floors reduce design opportunities for bulk and mass modulation. At the same time observation of typical blocks within the Central Area suggests that many lots do not fully utilize the available at-grade buildable area, suggesting that standards could encourage the placement of additional floor area at-grade, reduce the floor area placed at upper levels, and still provide for optimization of floor area allowances by applicants.

**Project Opportunity:** Code standards that limit the floor plate areas at upper levels to a percentage of the level below could introduce some bulk and mass modulation to the overall residential envelope.

## Building Stepback Requirements Should not be Utilized to Reduce the Sense of Bulk and Mass

Many cities seek to minimize bulk and mass through vertical step back requirements at upper levels. Beverly Hills requires this on some smaller lots south of Santa Monica Boulevard. Architects working in Beverly Hills were queried regarding their attitude towards reducing residential bulk and mass through implementation of additional step back provisions at upper floors. The architects that the Consultants met with pointed out that traditional architecture rarely utilizes step backs at upper levels and that prescriptive standards for setbacks may be in conflict with design of "pure architectural styles" as required by the Track I process of the Catalogue.

**Project Assumptions**: required step backs should generally not be utilized to modulate residential bulk and mass concerns but could be further considered on smaller lots where bulk and mass issues are accentuated by the narrower width of parcels.

## More Emphasis Should be Placed on Providing Incentives for One-Story Elements

Task Force members and architects working in the City pointed out that the existing residential floor area definition does not include covered spaces as long as more than 50 percent of the exterior wall area of the covered space is open. This provides an incentive for building covered porches, which can function as outdoor rooms. These types of spaces, when one-story in height, can modulate overall bulk and mass. There are many enclosed as well as unenclosed one-story building components seen in the Central Area such as three sided one-story living rooms, one story building entries, and attached and setback porte-cocheres, that

when juxtaposed against two-story elements create contrast and massing variety in a home's design and establish a sense of reduced bulk and mass.

**Project Opportunity:** Code standards that provide incentives for the realization of one-story elements in contrast to two-story elements could assist in the design and construction of residences with a sense of reduced bulk and mass.

### Incentives Should be Created that Encourage Single-Family Bulk and Mass that Relates to Existing Conditions

Task Force members and architects working in the City communicated a general preference for utilization of incentive-based standards to modulate bulk and mass rather than use of constraints on design dimensions such as reduced floor areas, reduced heights, and increased setbacks.

**Project Opportunity**: Incentive-based standards that provide for increased buffering between residential structures on adjoining lots, additional side yard setbacks, relief planes that increase spacing of structures on adjacent lots, etc., all to reduce the impact of larger residences in relationship to adjacent smaller residences, should be developed, to the extent feasible.

## HEIGHT ALLOWANCE ISSUES AND CONCERNS

### Height Is Typically Measured from the Highest Point of Ground Elevation

Task Force members pointed out that the Code typically defines residential height from the highest adjoining ground elevation (on sloped sites in the City, if more than 50 percent of the perimeter of the building is below the highest point, height is measured from the average ground level at the building perimeter). In contrast, some cities utilize the lowest point of grade or definitions of height that provide for a continuous measurement from the natural or finished grade, resulting in a height limit that is sloped and follows the topography.

**Project Opportunity**: adjusting the definition of height could contribute to a reduction in the perception of mass and bulk.

### Height Limits Discourage Use of Pitched Roofs in the Flat Portions of the Central Area

Architects working in the City stated that existing height limits are constraining and do not provide enough design latitude for the use of pitched roofs. They noted that in some cases height limits are exceeded when pitched roofs are placed on top of two story structures. Some felt this created an unintended incentive to design flat roofs set at height limits, contributing to the perception of impactful bulk and mass. Generally, maximum residential height is limited to 34' north of Santa Monica Boulevard and 30' south of Santa Monica Boulevard. However, these heights require provision of additional yard depths or use of height averaging and the typical limits are 32' to the north and 28' to the south of this respective street. The architects recommended height performance standards that provide additional height flexibility, stating this may encourage pitched roof expressions.

**Project Opportunity:** height performance standards could be used to encourage design of more pitched roofs.

## FRONT, SIDE, AND REAR YARD ISSUES AND CONCERNS

### Front Yard Averaging Requirements Lead to Juxtapositions in Front Building Walls that Do Not Establish Good Built Form Transitions between Adjacent Properties

Architects working in the City suggested that Section 10-3-2404 does not adequately provide for alignment of front facades along residential block faces, leading to interruptions in the uniformity of residential street walls out of character with Central Area settings.

**Project Opportunity:** how to use front plane transition requirements to ensure good alignment relationships between the front planes of new construction and the front planes of adjacent residential structures to maintain a sense of uniform setbacks at residential street walls.

### Side Yards Requirements Do Not Adequately Separate or Buffer Allowed Building Envelopes

The Consultants observed cases in the Central Area where the relationship of new construction to existing construction alongside yards was crowded. In some cases this was a result of the placement of porte-cocheres

nest to each other. In other cases two story walls set at minimum side yard setbacks loomed over adjacent structures. To maintain the garden quality of the City, side yard standards need to ensure adequate separation and opportunities for landscaping between adjacent structures.

**Project Opportunity:** how to use side yard requirements and as appropriate introduce additional standards that ensure appropriate separation and landscape buffering between adjoining residential envelopes.

### Porte-Cocheres at Side Yards Are Not Adequately Regulated. A Sense of Visual Crowding and Diminished Landscape between Adjoining Structures Can Result

Field observation indicates that the ubiquity of porte-cocheres in Beverly Hills is a factor that establishes the uniqueness of this city's residential communities. However, the Consultant observed instances where port-cocheres crowd side yards and create street walls with no sense of separation between structures at adjoining properties, leading to a sense of increased bulk and mass.

**Project Opportunity**: how to use additional standards for porte-cocheres and other side yard projecting elements to ensure appropriate transitions between adjacent residential structures and maintain the City's residential garden character.

## ROOF FORM ISSUES AND CONCERNS

### Sloped Roof Forms that Are Not Resolved at True Roof Ridgelines Allow for Proportions and Consequent Massing and Bulk that Is Not in Keeping with the Existing Context of Central Area Districts

Task Force members pointed out that the vast majority of traditional pitched roofs rise to true roof ridgelines. A roof ridge is the horizontal line formed by the juncture of two sloping roof surfaces. Historically the proportions, slopes, and ridgelines of roofs were a consequence of both local climate conditions and use of local materials, i.e. steeper pitches were used in wetter or snowier climates and the span of roofs from one exterior building wall to the opposite exterior building wall was primarily a function of the length and availability of local structural components, for example, the ability to procure spanning wood beams.

In present day architecture use of steel with great spanning capabilities, modern water proofing that lessens the need to shed moisture quickly, and the knowledge of and desire to use design styles from regions near and far, some with no relationship to Southern California's temperate climate, means that the look of a building and its roofs is for many a function of subjective visual preference. Traditional constraints related to the availability of materials and local craft traditions are not limiting design factors. As a consequence stylistic components, including roofs, are applied to building facades with small regard for the defining constraints of traditional materials, forms, and the consequent proportions of spans rooted in vernacular traditions.

In Beverly Hills, as in all contemporary cities, one can observe new construction that applies decorative roof planes with no ridgelines. This type of condition is rarely present in a "pure" architectural style and sometimes leads to the perception of an increased sense of bulk and mass.

**Project Opportunity:** study additional standards and Catalogue guidelines that encourage use of true ridgelines may reduce the perception of mass and bulk.

## Limitations on Roof Overhangs Contribute to Perceptions of Increased Mass and Bulk

Architects working in the City pointed out that projecting elements such as roof overhangs create shade and shadow patterns and highlight transitions between building faces and roof pitches, contributing a sense of design expression compared to structures with flat planar expressions and parapets. The existing Code, per Section 10-3-2409, limits how far a roof eave can project into a side yard setback to 18". Some of the architects working with the City felt that this limitation on the depth of eave projections contributes to perceptions of increased mass and bulk in comparison to traditional architecture with deeper eaves.

**Project Opportunity**: evaluate how to support architects who may be interested in designing with deeper projections; they could increase side yards depth to accommodate the increased depths needed. Still, side yard and rear yard projection limitations could be analyzed to determine if additional and/or relaxed standards for projections including roof eaves will facilitate reduced perceptions of mass and bulk.

## LANDSCAPE ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Analysis of the existing Code indicates opportunities to more explicitly call out minimum landscape and tree requirements at front, side, and rear yards as well as planting requirements for landscape between structures. Additionally, the consultant team identified an opportunity to further define use of high quality pavement materials at driveways and parking areas.

**Project Opportunity:** how to use additional landscape standards for trees, plantings, and hardscape materials to increase screening and privacy of residential structures, improve the overall quality of hardscape as seen from public streets, and further improve project-by-project the City's garden character.

## CODE FORMAT ISSUES AND CONCERNS

### The Code and Specifically the Central Area Standards Should Incorporate Diagrams and Illustrations

Both the Task Force members and architects working in the City expressed a preference for increased graphic annotation of the Code to facilitate clearer understandings of City objectives to modulate bulk and mass.

**Project Opportunity:** use graphics to illustrate key code concepts that would assist in the understanding and implementation of higher quality architecture.

### Utilize a Simple Code Format

Architects working in the City stated that an applicant should be able to understand the base requirements for residential development and design standards in the Central Area through use of a consolidated and condensed Code format.

**Project Opportunity:** use tables, matrices and illustrations to clarify basic City design objectives regarding bulk and mass.

## STYLE CATALOGUE ISSUES AND CONCERNS

### Non- "Pure" Architectural Styles as Well as Additional Styles Should be Added to the Catalogue to Increase the Efficiency of Design Review Approvals

Providing additional styles in the Catalogue for Central Area Track I projects would allow staff to more efficiently approve a greater range of Track 1 projects. Additional Catalogue styles may result in quicker processing times for applicants, staff, and the Design Review Commission as increased choices will allow for additional Track I projects, lessening the number of projects that are defined as Track II.

**Project Opportunity**: while amending the Catalogue to include additional architectural styles is outside of the approved Consultant scope of work, incorporation into the Catalogue of additional "pure" styles would allow for a greater range of Central Area projects to be efficiently processed by staff and as appropriate the Design Review Committee.

### The Existing Track I And Track II Style Catalogue Process Leads to an Overemphasis on the Use of Traditional Architectural Styles

Architects that work in the City noted that the Track II Central Area approval process does not explicitly encourage innovative architecture, nor does it provide enough guidance regarding appropriate, and Beverly Hills – centric, design principles. As a consequence, some architects that work in the City feel that the design review process is cyclical and takes longer than needed to complete. They stated that projects are defined as Track II projects by staff, referred to the Design Review Commission, who then use the Catalogue and in good faith recommend Track I concepts. Thus Track II projects are seen as being inadvertently directed towards utilization of the "pure" architectural styles noted in the Catalogue, which do not require Commission review. Given anticipation of this design review cycle, these architects feel discouraged from utilizing the contemporary approaches that some of their Clients desire.

**Project Opportunity:** while amending the Catalogue is outside of the Consultant scope of work, the City could consider incorporating more explicit design objectives for Track II projects into this document, as well as parallel Track I and Track II compliance findings in the Code,

to clarify that both "pure" architecture styles as well as innovative residential architecture that fits its surrounds is welcome in Central Area districts, assuming a finding of design compliance and approval by the appropriate decision-maker.

## Design Review Requirements and Use of The Catalogue Should to be Extended to Areas North of Sunset Boulevard Not in the Central Area

Some limited areas north of Sunset Boulevard, generally to the east and west of and adjacent to the Beverly Hills Hotel, are within the boundaries of the Central Area of the City. These areas are presently subject to the provisions of Article 44, R-1 Design Review. All other single-family areas north of Sunset Boulevard are not subject to design review.

**Project Opportunity**: as appropriate, the City could expand the boundaries of the Central Area. Increasing the boundaries of the Central Area to incorporate additional R-1 residential properties would increase the portion of the City subject to Central Area design review requirements.

## Beaux-Arts Style Massing Is Typically Not Contextual with Single Family Residential Settings in Beverly Hills

Task Force members noted that the Beaux-Arts style works best within the expansiveness of larger parcel widths. Beaux-Arts style architecture is "…characterized by; monumental and imposing appearance; symmetrical façade; wall surfaces embellished with floral patterns, garlands, medallions, or the like; exterior walls having quoins, pilasters, and paired columns; flat, low pitched, or mansard roofs; and a variety of stone finishes (see Steven J. Phillips, Old House Dictionary: An Illustrated Guide to American Domestic Architecture 1600 to 1940). The Catalogue notes that, "(f)lat roofs associated with the Beaux-Arts whose cornices, moldings, dentils, etc… (are) not carried past the front façade are discouraged (see Catalogue page 93).

While not explicitly disallowed as a style by the Catalogue, and certainly not prohibited per the Code, perhaps the combination of monumentality, flat roofs, and generally flat front facades, even when embellished, is seen by some as creating a contrast to the more intricate scales, massing, and typical bulks of other architectural styles that are encouraged by the Catalogue, particularly when placed on narrow-in-width lots.

**Project Opportunity**: while amending the Catalogue is outside of the Consultant scope of work, the City could consider adding additional guideline language to this document to clarify the use of the Beaux-Arts style in Beverly Hills. At the same time, Code recommendations for bulk and mass would ensure that modulation factors mitigate against simplistic and uncreative box-like homes in the Central Area of the City.

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