



# City of Sunnyvale

## Agenda Item

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15-0676

Agenda Date: 1/29/2016

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### 2016 COUNCIL STUDY ISSUE

#### **NUMBER**

CDD 15-04

**TITLE** Height Regulations to Accommodate Architectural Style

#### **BACKGROUND**

**Lead Department:** Community Development  
Support Department(s): N/A

#### **Sponsor(s):**

Board/Commission: Planning Commission

#### **History:**

1 year ago: Ranked Below the Line  
2 years ago: N/A

#### **SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

##### **What are the key elements of the study?**

Projects with unique design and architecture that exceed the height requirements typically require a variance or exception for approval. Variance findings require something unique about the project site or use to approve the request. The issue can be present in any area of the city, but this study issue request was precipitated by applications in the single-family and R-2 zoning districts.

Options to study include:

- A. Amend the Variance findings in the zoning code to address the concern;
- B. Amend the code to allow a wider set of architectural features that may exceed the allowable height (now limited to towers, spires, chimneys, etc.);
- C. Increase the allowable height for a portion of a building;
- D. Create a height exception process and update the Single-Family Design Techniques to provide guidance on when the exceptions should be considered.

##### **What precipitated this study?**

Planning Commission review of specific projects resulted in denial because of the strict nature of the required findings. The Commission felt it would be useful to have additional options, such as unique architectural design, available to them when they considered the application request.

**Planned Completion Year:** 2016

#### **FISCAL IMPACT**

**Cost to Conduct Study**

Level of staff effort required (opportunity cost): Moderate

Amount of funding above current budget required: 0

Funding Source: N/A

Explanation of Cost: N/A

**Cost to Implement Study Results**

No cost to implement

**EXPECTED PARTICIPATION IN THE PROCESS**

Council-approved work plan: No

Council Study Session: No

Reviewed by Boards/Commissions: Planning Commission

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

**Position:** Defer

**Explanation:** An amendment to the Zoning Code to expand the findings for approval of a height variance or exception could allow for other considerations, such as architectural enhancements, that could improve the design of a project while maintaining the intent of the zoning standard. While this study issue has merit, staff does not consider this zoning code amendment a high priority relative to other proposed study issues that has larger policy implications. Staff can also explore if this item could be incorporated into the Zoning Code Retooling project if it can be addressed through a minor text amendment.

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Reviewed by: Hanson Hom, Director, Community Development

Reviewed By: Kent Steffens, Assistant City Manager

Approved By: Deanna J. Santana, City Manager