



May 23, 2018

Martin Potter and Members of the Planning Commission
City of Pasadena
100 North Garfield Avenue
Pasadena, California 91101

RE: Mansionization—Citywide Single-Family Residential Discussion

Dear Mr. Potter and Members of the Planning Commission:

Pasadena Heritage appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Pasadena Single-Family Dwelling Design Guidelines prepared by John Kaliski Architects in December 2017, which we have reviewed along with the staff report. We are very pleased to see citywide Mansionization being addressed, and hope that this effort will move forward with all haste. We have met with staff several times over the last few months to discuss this important topic and provided examples of both appropriate and inappropriate residential remodels and new construction for their consideration. We also addressed Mansionization at our Participate Pasadena meeting back in March, soliciting feedback from the public and raising the same kinds of questions reflected in the staff report.

Our overall response to the guidelines is favorable, and we find them to be generally appropriate, well thought out, and readable. Our general comment is that the guidelines should avoid a “one size fits all” approach and be worded as clearly and unambiguously as possible, as this will help in guiding projects and in future review processes. Moreover, we believe the guidelines could be stronger with the incorporation of illustrative diagrams and figure references (it is sometimes difficult to understand which figure corresponds to a guideline). We have additional, more specific questions and comments, which are itemized in the table below based on the order in which they appear in the guidelines.

| Guideline | Comments and Questions |
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| <i>1. Conserve Prevailing First and Second Story Front Yard Setbacks</i> | Please clarify how measurements are done, and consider front patios and porches, as well as dimensions from the sidewalk or street. We agree that the “prevailing first and second story front yard setback” is the best measure, but is this clear enough? If all adjacent houses have porches or front patios, should new homes also have that feature, and should setbacks to those features be consistent too? |
| <i>3. Utilize Pitched Roofs</i> | This seems to be a “one size fits all” approach. Would it be better to consider the “prevailing roof type,” instead? Pitched roofs are certainly predominant in Pasadena, but some Mediterranean Revival and Modern homes feature flat roofs or a combination of flat and pitched roofs. We suggest |

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| | modifying this headline to “Utilize Pitched Roofs or “Prevailing Roof Type.” |
| <i>4. Respect a Front Encroachment Plane at Second Stories</i> | This guideline states, “a proposed second story should not project beyond an encroachment plane sloping upward and inward at a 3:1 slope (18-degree angle) measured from the horizontal, commencing 6’ above the existing grade at the front property line.” This is the right concept but an illustrative diagram would be extremely helpful. |
| <i>5. Provide Height Transitions Where Upper Levels Abut Existing One-Story Dwellings</i> | This guidelines appears to be appropriate, its wording is a bit complicated and difficult to understand. Consider rewording it and providing an illustrative diagram. |
| <i>6. Consider Maximum First and Second Story Floor-to-Plate Heights</i> | This guideline states, “The floor-to-plate height of the first story of a new construction project or residential addition oriented towards a front yard should be like the floor-to-plate heights seen along the same blockface and should generally not exceed 13 feet in height.” This is the right concept, but we recommend changing “should be like” to “should conform to” or “match” for more clarity. |
| <i>10. Modulate Front Yard and Street-Facing Architecture</i> | It would be helpful to include a discussion of porches and their significance in this guideline. If porches are a prevailing feature of existing homes along the blockface, they should be incorporated into the new design. |
| <i>11. Modulate Side Yard-Facing Architecture</i> | Consider combining this guideline with nos. 7 and 8, as they all address side-yards, or re-order the guidelines to group all side-yard ones together. |
| <i>13. Limit the Height of Front Facing Entries and Porches</i> | As in the case of no. 10, we recommend including more discussion about porches and their significance. |
| <i>14. Constrain Use of Double-Height Spaces</i> | This guideline states, “Expression of double-high spaces that are visible at street-facing exteriors is discouraged.” We believe a firmer stance should be taken and the word “discouraged” should be replaced with “prohibited.” |
| <i>17. Use Architectural Styles, Characters, Expressions, Proportions, and Materials That are Observed in the Surrounding Neighborhood</i> | This guideline states, “Pasadena has a rich history of Arts and Crafts, eclectic revival, Gabled Contemporary, Ranch, Post and Beam, Shed, and other 20 th Century modern residences.” Victorian should be added to this list of housing types Additionally, the guideline states, “Regarding use of materials, corrugated metal, unfinished concrete, and stucco over existing wood clad Craftsman style residences are discouraged.” Again, the word “discouraged” should be replaced with “prohibited.” |

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| <p>21. <i>Provide Landscape at the Interior Side and Rear Yards</i></p> | <p>Perhaps it would be appropriate to combine or re-order this guideline with nos. 7, 8, and 11, as they all address side-yards?</p> <p>Additionally, this guideline states, "Hedges should be considered as the equivalent of walls, meet City requirements regarding height, and be maintained at the limiting height." How will this be enforced?</p> |
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Finally, we understand that the Single-Family Residential Neighborhood Compatibility Design Review Process will be developed based upon comments from staff and the Planning Commission. When this effort moves forward, we hope that inspection protocols, especially for residential remodels, will be provided as, in our experience, deviations from approved scopes of work do occur. Thought should be given to how often, and at what points in the process, inspections should occur to address this ongoing and serious problem.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely yours,



Susan N. Mossman
Executive Director



Adam F. Rajper
Preservation Director