

September 10, 2008

Meeting Minutes
Ingleside Terrace Homes Association
Design Review Subcommittee
Community Outreach Meeting
June 21, 2008

Ingleside Terraces Homes Association Design Review Subcommittee
Suzanne McDonnell, DR Subcommittee, gave a brief summary of the Design Review Objectives and Goals.

- ITHA Design Review Subcommittee is working on determining if Design Review Guidelines for would be appropriate given the amount of concern that has been expressed by homeowners in our neighborhood over remodeling and growth.
- This outreach meeting is about permit and planning processes for remodeling in the neighborhood.
- Joined by Planning and Building Department members to discuss permit processes.

Sean Elsbernd, our neighborhood representative, gave a brief summary of his experience with other neighborhoods that have Design Review Guidelines. He made the following points:

- St. Francis Woods and Westwood Park are two neighborhoods that have gone through this process, to enact guidelines and it helps to keep neighbor complaints to a minimum because all participated in formation and adoption of the guidelines and this can be beneficial to the community.
- The community near SF State tried to implement Design Review Guidelines and it split the neighborhood in two because neighbors could not agree on implementation or not. This is a possible negative outcome of pursuing guidelines.

Department of Building Inspection

Jaime Valle, Building Inspector, Plan Review Services, presented the following points about the benefits of getting a permit, using the “over-the-counter” permit process vs. the “intake” process. He started by letting everyone know that the following materials were available to the attendees: Booklets: Getting a City Permit and Electrical Permits.

Benefits of Getting a Permit:

- The building department requires minimum standards for fire safety, energy conservation, construction standards of care and seismic or structural work. Getting a permit ensures that these minimum standards are being met on your project.
- Anyone can apply for a building permit for their home, the process can be started by visiting the Department of Building Inspection, 1660 Mission Street, San Francisco.

Over the Counter Permits:

- An “over-the-counter” or OTC permit means that a permit can be obtained in as little as one day. This process is allowed for many types of projects with or without plans.
- OTC without plans can be for: window replacement “in kind”, skylight replacement “in kind”, repair of stairs or decks (up to 50% of structure), electrical and plumbing work, cosmetic remodeling of kitchens and baths, dryrot or termite repair and re-roofing. “In kind” means that the replacement will look the same as the original item.
- OTC permits with plans are for: kitchen and bath remodels with structural modifications, replacements “in kind” of more than 50% of an item in the same location, addition of rooms adjacent to garages with no envelope expansion, the addition of skylights, foundation repairs and upgrades, typical retaining walls under 10 feet in height but with structural engineering drawings, and some minor structural improvements.
- Permits require Intake are for: horizontal and vertical additions, new buildings and any project with a construction value greater than \$100,000.00. These types of permits will need to be routed to several departments and the review of the plans will take longer than time allotted to check OTC permits.
- Forms: Application form 3/8 (pink color) is used for most permits, both OTC and Intake. Application form 1/2 (white color) is used for all new building permits. Forms should be filled out with the address of the project, estimated cost, block and lot numbers, contact information and a brief description of what you would like to do with your project.

Joe Duffy, Senior Building Inspector, Department of Building Inspection has been with the building department as an inspector for the last 10 years and has a carpentry background. He supervised 6 field inspectors and their office is located on the third floor of 1660 Mission Street. He reviewed the following points:

- Compliance: After projects have started construction there are inspections of all the construction processes for trade and code compliance.
- Complaints: When a complaint is made it is assigned to a district inspector who investigates the complaint and keeps all parties notified about the items being addressed.
- Citizens can call (415)558-6096 or (415)558-6037 to reach inspection services or to lodge a complaint. 90% of inspections will occur within 48 hours of the request. To speak to a specific inspector, please call between the hours of 7:30-8:30 am and 3:00-4:00 pm, daily, as this is when they are not in the field performing inspections.
- Your permit or job card will tell you how to book inspection services.

Building Department: Questions and Answers

If one wants to remodel a kitchen including replacing the cabinets and the flooring, which form should be used and which permit process?

Use the pink 3/8 form and apply for an OTC permit.

Does horizontal expansion include depth? Is it related to the footprint of the house?

A horizontal expansion means that the footprint grows horizontally in any direction, this expansion will usually include height.

Do you need a permit to redo a concrete driveway?

If the driveway is entirely on your property you may pull an OTC permit to repave it. If it is not entirely on your property or is an adjacent alleyway, it may be a Department of Public works alleyway.

What kind of permit do you need to make a garage larger?

A garage can be extended or enlarged but if it is located in your rear or side yard a variance may be required. This is a separate approval that allows for building in setback lines that were established after existing structures were built.

Delvin Washington, Senior Planner and with the SF Planning Department for 11 years, has a team of 9 to 11 planners and is the Southwest Quadrant Team Leader. Ingleside Terraces falls in the Southwest Quadrant of San Francisco. The Planning Department works closely with the building department on typical projects to review, set back requirements, parking requirements, height limits, bulk limits and general characteristics of the building or addition. The Planning Department is not involved if all remodeling happens within an existing structure's exterior envelope.

Delvin reviewed the Planning approvals process that includes the following:

- The Department of Building Inspection is the first place that a project will go and is the primary agency that governs the permit process. They will determine if the project needs to be reviewed by the Planning Department.
- Neighborhood outreach is required of the design or client team prior to submittal of a project to the Planning Department. This includes community meetings about the projects, plans to be sent via mail and review with adjacent neighbors.
- In addition to neighbors being notified within a 150'-0" radius, all established organizations that request notification in a neighborhood will also be notified.
- Notification periods last 30 days and include materials that describe the project. The project sponsor, assigned planner and contact information is provided so that those notified can communicate questions or concerns.
- Zoning and Residential Design Guidelines are reviewed for compliance to basic standards and contextualism.
- Objections or concerns about a project may result in a request for a Discretionary Review. Anyone can file for DR while the project is in the notification period. The review board may call for modifications to the project in order to satisfy the DR request. A request may also be withdrawn when concerns have been addressed by project sponsors.
- Other Planning Permits are the Conditional Use and Variance Permit. These permit processes require a 300'-0" radius notification and a hearing.

Delvin talked about neighborhood specific Design Review Guidelines:

- The Planning Department has general guidelines that should cover concerns of most neighborhoods. Adopting the Planning Department Guidelines and making it more specific is what most neighborhood guidelines do. This process is costly and this responsibility will fall on the neighborhood group. The Planning Department will spend time drafting the information and our group would be billed accordingly.

- Residential Character Districts might be more appropriate for us to consider, as it would be important to help educate our neighbors in working with the City. These rules are not codified but makes sure that the general population is aware of the characteristics that help define a neighborhood.
- St. Francis Woods' approved residential Design Review Guidelines weighs the needs of the city and the general interpretation of the Planning Code in addition to making specific references that are related to their neighborhood.

Planning Department: Questions and Answers

Can front or rear porches be used for other purposes if they are enclosed?

Yes, they can be used for other purposes if they are enclosed. They are added habitable space to the structure and may require compliance to mechanical codes.

What are the rules for making a basement habitable? Is that like adding another floor?

If the basement already sits beneath the existing footprint of a house it is not the same as adding a floor. It will add habitable space so the building department will be involved in checking the permit. If this does not add height to the existing structure or affect it visually from the exterior, it would be allowed by Planning.

How are Covenants and Restrictions applied to Design Guidelines?

Covenants and Restrictions are not always consistent with the city's Planning Code and this is why Design Review Guidelines are established. DR Guidelines can help to define what covenants and restrictions can be applied and to help make them more specific to a neighborhood where needed.

How are people discouraged, stopped or penalized by using the system illegally to do construction projects that are more than their permits allow?

Fines are up to 9x for working without a permit and up to 2x for exceeding permit limits.