

Overall, thoughts:

1. **Honor the Original Intent of Eichler Homes While Allowing Change.** It is important to honor the original intention of Eichler Homes, which were designed to allow middle-class buyers to own modern, well-designed houses, whose design provided for both privacy and a sense of being outdoors, even while indoors. The Eichler ODS should allow changes that are consistent with this intention and not require owners to sacrifice either privacy or a sense of being outdoors even while indoors. Likewise, the Eichler ODS should encourage and make it easy for owners to preserve certain features unique to Eichler homes, including (but not limited to) atriums, courtyards, floor-to-ceiling windows and glass doors, post and beam construction features.

2. **Encourage Compliance by Practical, Middle Class Owners While Retaining the Overall Character of Eichler Design.** It is important to make the Eichler ODS practical so homeowners will want to comply with them, not want to find loopholes in them or want to do work on their homes without seeking the required permits. One way to encourage voluntary compliance is to allow repairs to be made with cost-effective materials, whether or not those materials are the same as the original materials used to construct the house, *provided that*, when the

repair or replacement is complete, it has substantially the same appearance in size, shape, texture, and finish, as the original. Also, where replacement would be more cost-effective than repair, that should be allowed, at the owner's discretion.

**3. Protect Signature Eichler Features While Allowing Homes to Meet Owners' Changing Needs.** Even though the Eichler ODS are said to apply only to changes visible from the “public realm” and not to changes entirely inside the home, it is important that they do not *indirectly* force an owner to sacrifice a signature feature of the home, such as an atrium or courtyard in order to expand the living area to meet the owner's needs. In other words, the Eichler ODS should allow owners to protect unique elements of Eichler homes, regardless of whether those elements themselves are covered by particular provisions of the Eichler ODS. For example, in Eichler homes the two front bedrooms are very small and closet space throughout the house is quite limited. Although it would be possible to enclose an atrium or courtyard (for those homes that have that feature) and convert it into bedroom or closet space, doing so would cause the loss of a signature Eichler feature – the atrium or courtyard—of an Eichler house—and should not be the only feasible means of modifying the home. As an alternative, “bumping

out“ the front wall along those two bedrooms, provided that the new (bumped out) wall has the same exterior cladding, finish, texture, and general appearance as the old wall, would retain that important feature (the atrium or courtyard) of the Eichler house and should not be prohibited. The only difference would be that the house’s front wall would be two or three feet closer to the front property line than it had previously been, which would hardly be noticeable to an observer and would not diminish the character of the historic district. (The same change could be made to the front wall of the garage or carport if keeping a uniform “front plane” is considered essential, with the added advantage of allowing an owner to house a larger vehicles and thereby improving the appearance of the front of the house by removing vehicle(s) from the driveway.) The Eichler ODS should allow for protection of the signature features of the Eichler design such as an atrium or courtyard and not require homeowners to sacrifice them when more living space is needed.

4. **Protect Ability to Bring the Outdoors in While Maintaining Privacy.** Several features of Eichler design allow the outdoors to be brought into the home, including beams that are exposed and extend into and through the atrium, interior walls that appear to continue out into the atrium or courtyard, a complete wall of glass at the back of the house, large floor-to-ceiling panels of glass, tongue and groove wood ceilings inside the house that

extend to outside underside of the eaves, and other features. Obviously, to experience this effect, windows must be uncovered and, as a consequence *not only is the outdoors brought inside, but also a view of the inside can be brought outside to anyone in the line of sight*—typically only those persons in the back yard, atrium, or courtyard of that particular house given that the houses are separated by privacy fences on property lines and none were originally built with second stories. *Second story additions should be prohibited because they are both visible from inside other properties and invade the privacy of those other properties.* If for some reason the City determines that it is legally required to allow second-story additions to be built, then, in fairness to existing Eichler homeowners, it should prohibit windows facing neighboring homes or require any windows facing a neighbor's property to be glazed with frosted glass and opened only in case of an emergency. The burden should be on the person seeking to add to his property to ensure that doing so does not cause a loss of important Eichler features to other homeowners who are not seeking to make changes to theirs. The City should protect Eichler owners from having to sacrifice the important Eichler design elements that allow *both* privacy and the ability to bring the outside into the home.

5. **Landscape Design Should Be the Owner's Decision.** The chapter on landscaping should be reworked as suggestions, not requirements or prohibitions. In addition, if descriptions are given of “typical” landscape designs for Eichler homes, those descriptions should reflect the wide *variety* of landscape designs currently existing in the neighborhood. Many streets have very few houses with lawns, for example. As I walk through the neighborhood, I see many front yard fences between properties, grade changes, screens built in front of trash and recycling bins that are stored in front yards and therefore break the “front plane”, trellises with espaliered fruit trees, and many interesting landscape features that reflect the creativity of Eichler homeowners. Some streets have very few houses with lawns. Far more flexibility is needed to allow for landscaping reflecting homeowners’ preferences, including but not limited to drought-tolerant landscaping, edible landscaping, rain gardens, dry, river bed landscape designs, and the like. While it may be appropriate to mention that landscape elements with simple, clean lines are compatible with the Eichler design, those types of elements should not be the only types allowed. The Eichler ODS should allow for such individual preferences and creativity.

9. **If Particular Models Are to Be Preserved, More Information Is Needed.** It is unclear whether the goal is to preserve *a type of housing* (mid century modern designed for middle class buyers) or *specific models of that housing sold by a particular builder*, namely, the various models offered by Eichler homes. Many, if not most, owners of Eichler homes don't even know which model their house was originally or what its original features were. For owners to know what they are being charged with preserving, a list of the particular models and its features to be preserved should be provided.

10. **Garage Conversions, If Not Detectible from the Outside, Might Be OK.** Allowing an owner to expand living space into a garage area (which nobody would see from the street as long as the garage door façade remains the same) seems preferable to allowing expansion via the addition of a second story, which everyone would see and which would become part of the interior reality of surrounding neighbors' homes, sacrificing their privacy.

11. **Exposed Beam Ends Are a Real Problem.** The exposed beam ends are a very difficult feature of an Eichler to keep maintained--and to repair once damaged, particularly when they are not protected by eaves. Sometimes

rotted sections are replaced with fillers or pieces of wood, and sometimes they have to be repaired multiple times as the years go by. No repair is perfect and none seems to last forever. Homeowners should be allowed to extend the roof over exposed beam ends as a means of protecting those beams from damage. For beams that do become damaged, I understand the desire to have the end result of the repair look like the original beams, but if someone comes up with a paintable material that looks like wood, why not allow its use in repair, rather than requiring wood, which will be damaged again and need further repair or replacement? Also, please bear in mind that oil-based paints and stains, which were commonly used when these homes were built and which are more durable, are no longer available in California, adding to the difficulty of protecting this important feature.

13. **Product Selection Should Be Made by Homeowner.** When *requiring* (rather than just *suggesting* or even *recommending*) non-standard, as opposed to commonly-available, products for cladding, please take into consideration the real possibility that contractors or product manufacturers or suppliers will charge a premium for such materials if they know they *must* be used. Also, please remember that products available today may no

longer be available in the future. For these reasons, the Eichler ODS should leave the product selection decision to the best judgment of the homeowner, who can make that decision considering current conditions and prices.

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14. **Comments on Specific Language of the Five Guiding Principles of the Eichler ODS.** Because they form the basis for the ODS, I'd like to state each of the five Guiding Principles of the Design Standards, followed by my reaction to each of them.

(a) **“Standard 1: Neighborhood Character:** Changes may occur at individual properties so long as the cumulative changes do not alter the tract to the extent that, as a whole, the historic district’s character diminishes.”

**Reaction:** For this Guiding Principle to be implemented, it is necessary to clearly define what “the district’s historic character” means so that a proposed change to a property can be evaluated as to its effect on the district’s historic character. It might be worth noting that Eichler homes have several distinctive features not commonly found in other types of houses, including post and beam, single story construction, with the beams and many of the posts exposed, tongue and groove wood ceilings, simple lines without fussy details or elaborate

mouldings, large expanses of glass (not facing or visible from the street) that both let in a lot of natural light and “bring the outdoors into the house”, atriums (in some models), courtyards (in some models), flat roofs (in some models), clerestory windows over the garage doors, carports (in some models), wood clad exteriors, a sense of privacy partly generated by there being few street-facing windows and all surrounding houses being single-story structures, placement of garages and/or carports at the front, slab foundations, and a lack of attics and “crawl spaces”. Perhaps it should be noted what sense these features collectively provide someone who is passing through an Eichler neighborhood?

(b) **“Standard 2: Roof Forms:** Roof forms and roof lines of the Eichler homes shall [sic] be significantly altered. (Presumably the word “not” was inadvertently omitted from this sentence.) While minor alterations to improve drainage or to add insulation may be acceptable, the roof shape must generally appear as it did originally for that model. Modifications affecting the roof, including atrium covers, mechanical equipment, or HVAC ductwork must follow the roof form and be kept as low and tight to the roof as possible.”

**Reaction:** It would be helpful to include a statement that the roof forms of Eichler homes are one of the unique features that define the style of house and therefore should not be significantly changed. Also, to avoid ambiguity, please change “may be acceptable” in the second sentence to “are generally acceptable”.

(c) **“Standard 3: Unique Models:** Each Eichler model is authentic unto itself. Changes that are considered appropriate may vary between models. A unique feature or material that is original to one model may not be appropriate to another.”

**Reaction:** Please specify what the models are and what the unique features of each model are, and provide a means for individual owners to know which model they own. Many owners very likely are unaware of these facts. Also, given the decades that have passed since the houses were built and the numerous owners most of the houses have had, it may be difficult for an owner to know which current features were original and which have been added since original construction.

(d) **“Standard 4: Original Features:** Original features and materials shall [sic] retained and preserved. If an original feature or material exists, the preferred option is to retain it in place and repair as needed. In-kind

replacement of the feature is considered when repair is not possible. The replacement shall match the original in design, material, proportion, texture, detail, and finish.”

**Reaction:**

Please refer to comment \_\_\_\_ above regarding feasibility and cost-effectiveness when selecting materials and deciding whether to repair or replace and comment \_\_\_\_ regarding making the standards things homeowners will want to comply with.

Please specify exactly which features this is intended to apply to. For example, this might be intended to apply to exterior siding but not hose bibbs. It might be intended to apply to exposed beams visible from the street.

Homeowners need to know specifically what is expected of them.

Also, please see suggested edits on page 12 of the markup, adding the word “be” in the first sentence and the words “or reasonably feasible” at the end of the third sentence.

**(e) Standard 5: Compatibility:** When changes are considered, such as replacing an altered feature, adding a new element, altering the landscaping, or changing an original feature, they must [sic] compatible with the aesthetics of the Eichler tracts. Compatibility shall consider the scale, proportions, rhythms, patterns, spatial

relationships, solid-to-void relationships, limited materials palette, and overall philosophy of the original Eichler houses, which emphasized simple, affordable, well-designed, mass-produced homes that connected the interior to the exterior while offering privacy from the public sphere.”

**Reactions:**

Please refer to comment \_\_\_\_ above regarding changes to align with a homeowner’s need for more living space and second story additions.

Please specify exactly which features this is intended to apply to.

Also, please refer to the suggested edits on page 12 of the markup, deleting the word “landscaping” and adding the word “be” in the first sentence and adding “and other properties” to the end of the final sentence.

15. **Other.** Requirements that are too rigid negatively affect property values and should be avoided. Please try to incorporate as often as possible language along the lines of that on page 36 referring to replacements that reflect homeowners preferences yet maintain the simple, clean character of the Eichler home being acceptable.