
DATE: June 15, 2023

STAFF REPORT

AGENDA ITEM NO. 9.2

TO: FOSTER CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

PREPARED BY: SOFIA MANGALAM, CDD DIRECTOR
THAI-CHAU LE, PLANNER MANAGER

CASE NO.: N/A

PROJECT LOCATION: CITYWIDE (SINGLE FAMILY NEIGHBORHOODS)

REQUESTED ACTION/PURPOSE

The purpose of this Study Session is to initiate a discussion and obtain direction from the Planning Commission regarding revisions to the Planning Commission Roof Material Policy P-2-2000 ("Policy") to allow staff-level review of standing seam metal roofing materials, rather than review by the Planning Commission.

KEY PLANNING OR DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- Reviewing authority of standing seam metal roofing materials.

NOTICING/PUBLIC OUTREACH

The public was advised of this Study Session in the following ways:

- Ad in the Foster City Islander – May 31, 2023
- Foster City Website: www.fostercity.org – May 30, 2023
- Foster City TV Channel 27 – June 1, 2023 through June 15, 2023
- Electronic Marquee Sign in Leo Ryan Park – June 1, 2023 through June 15, 2023
- Public Posting Places – May 31, 2023

BACKGROUND

On March 7, 2000, the Planning Commission adopted Reroofing Policy P-2-2000 ("Policy"), Reroofing for Single-Family Dwellings (see Attachment 1). The Policy includes a list of materials, and colors for different types of roofs, including pitched, low-pitch and flat roofs for single-family dwelling units within Single-Family (R-1) and Single Family/Planned Development (R-1/PD) zoning districts. The Policy was originally adopted to regulate the color, material, style and thickness of replacement roofing in order to preserve and maintain the original architectural character of single-family homes in the R-1 district.

Under the Policy, reroofing permits shall be reviewed and initialed by a planner to ensure that the material and color is acceptable for the subject house per the adopted reroofing policy with the exception of the standing seam metal (with or without solar collector film,) which is required to be reviewed by the Planning Commission (see Figure 1).

Over the years, in response to consumer demand and improvements to manufacturing technology, roofing materials have evolved from clay, slate, and wood to asphalt, cement, fiber cement tile, concrete, metal, Architectural or High Definition Shingles and Shakes.

Seam metal roof material has become a popular type of material due to stability, installation cost, and overall lifetime maintenance costs. Staff have received many informal requests and inquiries for this roof material from homeowners. However, the cost and time it takes for approval at Planning Commission stage have been a common deterrent to homeowners. Thus, staff would like to discuss with the Planning Commission the provision of the review of standing seam metal roof by the Commission as included in the current Reroofing Policy P-2-2000 (Attachment 4).

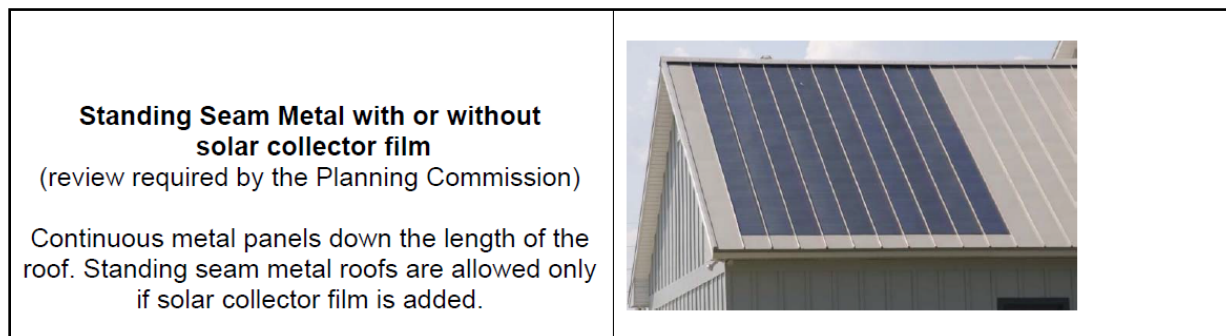


Figure 1. Standing Seam Metal Allowability (Source: Planning Commission Policy P-2-2000)

ANALYSIS

On [August 4, 2022](#), a Planning Commission Session was held to discuss updating the City's Architectural & Solar Guidelines due to the growing demand staff has received over the past few years from residents within the City who want to incorporate more modern architectural elements and materials into their home designs as a part of an addition, remodel, or new construction. At this meeting, there was interest in up taking a full revision to the Guidelines and staff mentioned that the efforts to undertake a comprehensive update to the Guidelines and various associated policies (some of which would require City Council approval) would take a considerable amount of time. While it was not specifically discussed, one area of concern for examples brought forth to the Planning Commission at this meeting was an example of a single-family home addition with standing seam metal roof. Therefore, at this time, one area that staff has identified that could be considered for updating is the Reroofing Policy P-2-2000 (Attachment 3).

Since the adoption in 2000 (Attachment 1), the Policy has been amended on three occasions: September 4, 2003 (Attachment 2), January 21, 2016 (Attachment 3), and December 5, 2019 (Attachment 4). These amendments occurred for various reasons, including to guide design and development within single-family home areas (not within Planned Development areas).

The Policy was originally adopted to regulate the color, material, style and thickness of replacement roofing in order to preserve and maintain the original architectural character of single-family homes in the R-1 district. As a result of the 2003 amendments, metal tiles, shakes, and shingles are considered allowable materials in the Policy as Planning Commission deems that these were identified as acceptable substitutes for wood shake/shingle roofs. Specifically, prior to 2016, standing seam metal roofs were only allowed **without** Planning Commission review if it incorporated solar collector films.

On [January 21, 2016](#), the Planning Commission amended the Foster City Reroof Policy P-2-2000 to modify the approvable list of roof colors and materials for homes in the R-1 Districts. As part of this meeting, staff also requested the Planning Commission's direction on whether to allow

the standing seam metal roofs only when accompanied with solar collector films or if standing seam metal roofs without solar collector films should be a permitted material altogether, not requiring Planning Commission review. While Planning Commission had mixed comments pertaining to the aesthetic aspects of standing seam metal roofs, most Commissioners agreed that as the current Policy already allowed standing seam metal roofs with the solar collector films, not allowing that materials on portion of a project may lead to non-continuous use of rooftop materials. The Planning Commission directed staff to allow discretion and to require Planning Commission review. Therefore, the current Policy P-2-2000 states, "Standing Seam Metal Roof (With or Without Solar Collector Film)" as a potential allowable material, but only with Planning Commission's approval (Attachment 3).

As discussed earlier, this material has become a more popular type of material due to stability, installation cost, and overall lifetime maintenance costs. Staff have received informal requests and inquiries for this material from homeowners. However, the cost and time it takes for approval at Planning Commission stage have been a common deterrent to homeowners who may be interested in this type of materials. Currently, the cost for Planning Commission review for this type of permit is an initial \$3,000.00 deposit fee. Staff hourly rate is charged against the deposit and additional hourly rate will be charged if deposit is exceeded. Typically, a project would require at least one round of review (estimated 5 hours), preparation for a Planning Commission meeting package (estimated 10-15 hours of hour for multiple level staff reviews and noticing), and administrative work for after the hearing (estimated 2 hours) for a project. At an [Assistant Planner's hourly rate](#), the total cost of the project would, often times, still exceed the \$3,000 deposit.

If a project is to be reviewed only at a Building Permit stage, building permit fees are charged based on the project's valuation and no additional Planning review fees are required.

As the materials of standing seam metal roofs are deemed acceptable, staff would like to explore revisions to the Policy to allow the materials to be approved at staff-level in order to shorten the process and reduce the cost for the homeowners. It shall be noted that the Policy and Municipal Code allows for Director of Community Development to elevate any reviews to Planning Commission stage should there be ambiguity.

SUMMARY

Staff is seeking direction from the Planning Commission. Should the Policy be revised to remove the review required by the Planning Commission under "Standing Seam Metal with or without solar collector film" (page 6 of the Policy)?

NEXT STEPS

If the Planning Commission provides direction to remove the wording, review required by the Planning Commission under "Standing Seam Metal with or without solar collector film" (page 6 of the Policy), staff will schedule a future public hearing to further consider that revision to the Policy.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. 2000 Resolution and Policy, Resolution No. P-13-00
2. 2003 Resolution and Policy, Resolution No. P-28-03
3. 2016 Resolution and Policy, Resolution No. P-01-16
4. 2019 Resolution and Policy (Latest), Resolution No. P-18-19