

CITY OF LONG BEACH

DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

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Long Beach, CA 90802

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March 21, 2019

CHAIR AND PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

City of Long Beach
California

RECOMMENDATION:

Recommend that the City Council:

Accept Negative Declaration ND 04-19 and approve Zoning Code Amendment (ZCA19-002) and to amend Title 21 of the Long Beach Municipal Code (Zoning Ordinance) to: 1) update the definition for townhomes and eliminate zoning restrictions on side-by-side units; 2) update the commercial zones sections of the code to strike out references to commercial districts no longer in use; 3) eliminate size restrictions for single-family garages and update lot coverage and floor area calculations in single-family districts; 4) update roofing material requirements for residential districts; 5) revise screening requirements for mechanical equipment in low-density residential districts; 6) provide guidelines to determine curb cut closures and require underground utilities in new projects; 7) Define the standing required and timeline for land use decision appeals; 8) update school siting requirements to reflect the City's adopted Mobility Element; 9) eliminate zoning code restriction on maximum number of zoning regulation amendments per year. (Citywide)

APPLICANT: City of Long Beach, Development Services Department
333 West Ocean Boulevard, 5th Floor
Long Beach, CA 90802
(Application No. 1902-10)

BACKGROUND

The City's zoning code has not been comprehensively updated in more than 30 years, and as a result there are extensive internal conflicts and outdated provisions throughout the code. In response to issues raised by both staff and community stakeholders, staff has been directed to compile a limited yet comprehensive series of code updates to address the aforementioned issues and update the City's regulations to reflect community feedback and current development standards.

New development standards and policies will enable the City to assist developers, architects, landscape architects, urban designers and professional planners in making informed decisions when developing site plans. Additionally, by eliminating incongruencies, vagaries, and outdated code elements, City staff can provide consistent review and allow for greater code flexibility and more modern standards in the City. The

goal is to ensure the zoning regulations in the City remain relevant and appropriate for both the present and future of Long Beach.

Recent development applications and proposed projects at varying scales and levels have brought to light the need to streamline and modernize the zoning code. Small-scale improvements can be made to zoning code provisions regarding residential aesthetics and parking, the Planning Commission decision process, overall Code legibility, infrastructure and climate appropriate building materials, and school siting within the City. This proposed set of code updates are the first of what staff expects to bring to the commission in tranches approximately quarterly over the coming two or more years.

DISCUSSION

This omnibus set of code updates addresses a variety of longstanding issues with the current zoning code. These include how we define and allow for townhomes, the appeal process for PC decisions, deleting zoning districts no longer in use, updating the maximum allowed garage size and roof materials for single-family homes, requirements for screening mechanical equipment, undergrounding utilities in new projects, changes to close unused or unwanted curb cuts, and siting requirements for new schools. The proposed Zoning Code Amendments would apply Citywide except where otherwise specified. The following provides a brief discussion of each standard and the proposed change:

Townhomes

The proposed code amendment would update the definition for townhomes and eliminate zoning restrictions on side-by-side units. Under the expanded definition, townhomes will include side-by-side units, and eliminating the side-by-side restriction will give small-scale home developers more flexibility and design/layout options when building or redeveloping on R-2-N zones, without any impact on neighborhood character or scale.

Outdated Zoning Districts

The proposed code amendment will update the commercial zones sections of the code to strike out references to commercial districts no longer in use. Eliminating all references to commercial zones no longer in use will make the code more legible and user-friendly for both staff and the general public.

Garage Size

The proposed code amendment will eliminate size restrictions for single-family garages and update lot coverage and floor area calculations in single-family districts. Removing the restriction on single-family garage sizes will allow for flexibility in parking areas and address the residential demand for vehicle and item storage.

Residential Roofs

The proposed code amendment will update roofing material requirements for residential districts to allow metallic roofs. Allowing metallic roofs that are appropriately designed will improve sustainability and allow new materials such as solar panel shingles, while also protecting against glare-producing surfaces.

Mechanical Equipment Screening

The proposed code amendment will revise screening requirements for mechanical equipment in low-density residential districts. The existing Zoning code does not regulate mechanical equipment in low-density residential setback area. The new screening requirements for mechanical equipment in residential areas will improve the visual environment within neighborhoods without significantly impacting development or rehabilitation costs.

Physical Infrastructure

The proposed code amendment will provide guidelines to determine curb cut closures and require underground utilities in new projects. These additional regulations will improve public infrastructure, the visual environment, sustainability in new projects, and provide additional parking opportunities throughout the City by maximizing curb parking and improve utility reliability in future projects.

Appeals Process

The proposed code amendment would define the standing required and timeline for land use decision appeals. Henceforth for all appeals including those to the Planning Commission, the update will define “aggrieved person” to be consistent with the existing law and planning practice as well as specify that Planning Commission recommendations—as opposed to decisions—are not subject to appeal. Additionally, the Director of Development Services will be allowed to provide an extension of the period to act on appeals up to ninety days. This extended period to hear appeals will allow disputes to be resolved without a formal hearing and resolve scheduling conflicts that sometimes occur when scheduling matters for City Council adjudication. Together, these changes will result in a clear and expedited development process for major projects.

School Siting

The proposed code amendment will update school siting requirements to reflect the City’s adopted Mobility Element. This change will allow for school locations on major streets, which is common among charter school as well as set-up a process for small local-schools on minor streets. The increased flexibility in school siting regulations will also reflect the siting characteristics of contemporary charter and private schools and allow for educational institutions to be appropriately located within the City.

Annual Code Updates

The proposed code amendment will eliminate the current restriction on the number of zoning code amendments that can be processed per year. The elimination of a maximum number of zoning regulations per year will allow City staff to more efficiently address the need for substantial changes to the Zoning code.

Because these proposed changes are within the Zoning Ordinance, the Planning Commission must review and act upon this matter. The Planning Commission’s role is advisory and the recommendation will be forwarded to the City Council. A complete set of the proposed changes to the Zoning Code are included in a “red-lined” format as Exhibit A to this report.

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Notice of this public hearing was published in the Long Beach Press-Telegram on March 7, 2019, in accordance with provisions of the Zoning Ordinance. Additionally, the proposed code amendment and environmental report were posted on the City website on February 26, 2019, distributed through the City's linkLB e-mail blast system and written notices were sent to the California Coastal Commission and all City libraries except for the Main Library, which is currently closed for construction, and three public hearing notices were posted in public places throughout the City.


ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), a Negative Declaration was prepared for the Zoning Code Amendment for Drive-Through Use Regulations. The Negative Declaration was posted on the City's website and has been circulated for a 30-day review period, between February 19 and March 21, 2019. As of the date of preparation of this report, no comments have been received. The Negative Declaration is available as an attachment to this report (Exhibit B – Negative Declaration ND 04-19).

Respectfully submitted,


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PROJECT PLANNER


ALEXIS OROPEZA
CURRENT PLANNING OFFICER


CHRISTOPHER KOONTZ, AICP
PLANNING BUREAU MANAGER


LINDA F. TATUM, FAICP
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

LFT:CK:AO:ASL

Attachments: Exhibit A – Draft Code Amendment with Redlines
 Exhibit B – Negative Declaration ND 04-19