Chairman and Commissioners:

On January 23, 2007, the applicant, Universal City Studios, LLLP, L.P. submitted applications to the Department of Regional Planning and the City of Los Angeles for various entitlements to enable a 30-year long-range plan for redevelopment and new construction within the 391-acre Universal City property. Currently 296 acres, or 75% of the project site, is located within County jurisdiction, and 95 acres, or 25% of the project site, is located within City of Los Angeles jurisdiction. Proposed annexation of 76 acres from the County to City jurisdiction, and a 32-acre detachment from City jurisdiction to the County, would reconfigure the site to accommodate the proposed project within consistent jurisdictional boundaries. The site has an extensive history of multiple City and County entitlements over many years of operations, change, and growth.

The applicant submitted land use applications for this project to both the City and the County. The City was deemed the lead agency under CEQA requirements. A Memorandum of Understanding between the City and County provides a mechanism for joint review and evaluation of the Environmental Impact Report and to jointly make recommendations as to appropriate mitigation measures that should be implemented if the project is to be ultimately approved. A copy of the executed MOU is attached for your reference. The MOU makes reference to the option of a joint hearing of the City and County Planning Commissions regarding this project.

The proposal includes approximately 2,900 housing units and mixed-use office and commercial development within the proposed annexation area and existing southerly and easterly properties within the City’s jurisdiction.

New construction and redevelopment proposed on property located within County jurisdiction include the following uses: hotel, childcare facility, studio, office, entertainment, alcohol sales, grading, and new signage development standards. The following planning applications are requested from the County to streamline future development of the site.
Plan Amendments
To authorize a change of land use from Major Industrial and Major Commercial to Specific Plan; to delete from the Master Plan of Highways a proposed east/west highway extension of Forest Lawn Drive/Lakeside Plaza Drive located at the northerly project boundary adjacent to the L.A. River and an extension of Forman Avenue located at a northerly portion of the site; to delete those areas of land annexed from the unincorporated County of Los Angeles to the City of Los Angeles; and to add those areas of land detached from the City of Los Angeles to the unincorporated County of Los Angeles. Additionally, the Urban Form Policy designation for the site would be changed from “Multipurpose Center Level 3” to “Multipurpose Center Level 2”, and the Economic Development and Revitalization Policy map for the designation “Major Industrial Revitalization/Intensification Areas” would be re-aligned to reflect the annexation and detachment adjustments to the jurisdictional boundaries of the site.

Zone Change
To authorize a change of zoning from M-1.5 (Restricted Heavy Manufacturing) and the proposed detachment areas from the City of Los Angeles to Specific Plan.

Specific Plan
A separate Specific Plan is being written for each jurisdiction. The County Plan is named, “Universal Studios Specific Plan”, and the City Plan is named, “Universal City Specific Plan”. The applicant’s request is for the Commission to authorize planning policies and zoning regulations of the Universal Studios Specific Plan for guiding the proposed development within the proposed County jurisdiction.

Tentative Tract Map
To authorize creation of additional fee simple lots excluding annexation of 76 acres to the City of Los Angeles and including detachment of 32 acres to the County of Los Angeles.

Development Agreement
To authorize specific terms for the project.

Environmental Review
A joint EIR is being reviewed by County and City staff. Staff and the applicant’s consultants are concurrently processing the Administrative Draft Environmental Impact Report and Draft Specific Plan over the next several months.

If you have any questions, please contact Kim Szalay at (213) 974-4876 or kszalay@planning.lacounty.gov.

Attachments: City/County MOU; Existing and Proposed jurisdictional and property line maps

SD:KKS