



Los Angeles County
Department of Regional Planning

Planning for the Challenges Ahead



Richard J. Bruckner
Director

July 14, 2011

TO: Pat Modugno, Chair
Esther L. Valadez, Vice Chair
David W. Louie, Commissioner
Harold V. Helsley, Commissioner
Curt Pedersen, Commissioner

FROM: Susan Tae, AICP, Supervising Regional Planner 
Zoning Permits North Section

SUBJECT: **PROJECT NO. R2010-01627-(1-5)**
ADVANCE PLANNING CASE NO. 201000014
"HEALTHY DESIGN ORDINANCE" ("HDO")
DISCUSSION AGENDA ITEM NO. 9; JULY 27, 2011

BACKGROUND

On March 19, 2010, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health ("Public Health") announced the award of a two-year Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) grant totaling \$32 million, with half of those funds for programs addressing obesity and physical activity. In May 2010, as part of Public Health's grant, Regional Planning was allocated funds to develop a Healthy Design Ordinance ("HDO"), with stipulation that the HDO be adopted and in effect by March 18, 2012.

Healthy Design, for the purposes of this project, has been defined as features of the built environment that promote physical activity in the form of walking, bicycling and exercise. Healthy design guidelines that go on to set basic principles and identify several design areas for implementation, were drafted and presented to your Commission to provide a framework for the development of the ordinance, given the broad scope and grant's time constraints. Since efforts related to healthy design are expected to continue after adoption of the HDO, these guidelines were also intended to assist future efforts by informing future policy, procedure and regulation changes related to healthy design.

HEALTHY DESIGN RESEARCH

Since last before your Commission on January 26, 2011, the project consultant, *Alta Planning + Design* ("Alta") has completed several reports regarding healthy design.

- Case Study: In February 2011, Alta completed a case study report which summarizes healthy design-related practices and regulations in three jurisdictions: City of San Antonio, Texas; City of Richmond, California; and San Joaquin Valley region of California. These three jurisdictions were selected to represent urban, suburban and rural contexts for healthy design. San Antonio in particular resembles Los Angeles County with respect to land area, population, cultural diversity and range of land

development patterns. The study concludes with examples from each jurisdiction that could be developed into opportunities for HDO.

- Healthy Design Best Practices (Technical Memo 2): In February 2011, Alta outlined best practices framed within the features discussed in the Healthy Design Guidelines, such as land use, street design, lighting, landscaping and signage. Within these categories, Alta presents examples of best practices from such jurisdictions including California cities of Pasadena, Davis and Santa Cruz as well as Boulder, Colorado; Portland, Oregon; and Charlotte, North Carolina. Also included were complementary best practices which address climate change, access to healthy foods, and green infrastructure.
- Costs and Benefits of Healthy Design (Technical Memo 3): In March 2011, Alta completed a study of the associated costs and benefits of healthy design. The memo discusses the benefits of healthy design, including health, public safety, environmental, economic, and quality-of-life benefits. The memo also discusses costs, including capital, construction and maintenance costs as well as anticipated impacts on the development community. A brief discussion of the anticipated impacts on the Los Angeles County Departments of Regional Planning, Public Works, Fire, Parks and Recreation, and Public Health, are also included.
- Draft Healthy Communities Report (Background Report): In July 2011, Alta completed its comprehensive background report on healthy design. This report summarizes all of the previous research completed by Alta, and includes final recommendations for the HDO. **This report is included as Attachment A.**

In addition, Alta also completed an Environmental Assessment Information Form for the HDO, which preliminarily discusses potential environmental impacts. Staff is using this information to evaluate potential impacts and prepare the environmental document associated with the proposed ordinance.

PRELIMINARY DRAFT ORDINANCE

Through review of Alta's research as well as consultation with other Regional Planning staff, County Departments and stakeholders, staff has prepared a preliminary draft ordinance (**Attachment B**). The ordinance, which proposes to amend Title 21 (Subdivision Ordinance) and Title 22 (Planning and Zoning Ordinance) of the Los Angeles County Code, is more focused than the comprehensive features described in the Healthy Design Guidelines and includes the following:

TITLE 21

- Better, wider sidewalks: Increase sidewalk width from four feet to five feet. Limit use of the alternate cross-section (i.e. sidewalk adjacent to travel lanes) to existing improved streets.
- Transparent proposed bicycle and pedestrian facilities: Depict detailed cross-sections of proposed streets with healthy design features, including pedestrian features and bicycle parking locations, on tentative and exhibit maps.
- Priority on pedestrian and bicycle facilities: Require higher justification and consideration of bicyclists and pedestrians when street standards are requested to be modified or waived, including sidewalks and use of the alternate cross-section.

- Bicycle and pedestrian connectivity: Require landscape strips and walkways along private driveway and fire lanes within private development (i.e. condominium development). Require a through-access pathway from cul-de-sacs to adjoining streets, trails, or recreational facilities where feasible. Require a wider mid-block crossing for blocks longer than 700 feet.

TITLE 22

- Bicycle parking: Require short-term and long-term bicycle parking for new construction and larger additions with standards for number and siting
- Transparent proposed bicycle and pedestrian facilities: Depict detailed cross-sections of proposed streets with healthy design features, including pedestrian features and bicycle parking locations on site plans and exhibit maps.
- Priority on pedestrian and bicycle facilities: Require higher justification and consideration for bicyclists and pedestrians when sidewalks and bicycle facilities are requested to be modified or waived. Allow shade landscaping around pedestrian and bicycle facilities (e.g. sidewalks, trails, and bicycle parking) to be exempt from drought-tolerant landscaping requirements when appropriate.
- Farmers' markets: Establish farmers' markets as an extended term use subject to a temporary use permit.
- Community gardens: Establish community gardens with development standards as an accessory use within residential, agricultural, and open space zones.

PROJECT SCHEDULE AND OUTREACH

During the development and discussion of the preliminary draft HDO, staff consulted with several groups established within the Department and County. These groups included:

- Policy and Implementation Review Committee (Regional Planning): representatives from all four Divisions of Regional Planning
- Development Review Committee (Regional Planning chair): representatives from County Public Works, Fire, Parks and Recreation, and Public Health
- Development Advisory Group (Regional Planning chair): representatives from the entitlement and engineering community
- Land Development Advisory Committee (Public Works chair): representatives from the engineering, development and construction community

Future community meetings with the public are also scheduled for early to mid September 2011. These community meetings will provide the public with an opportunity to learn about healthy design concepts, hear of the specific amendments proposed in the HDO, and allow for questions and comments. A briefing with the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors ("Board") planning deputies, whose Board motion supported Public Health's pursuit of this grant, will also be held.

As the grant stipulates that the HDO be adopted and in effect by March 2012, staff is moving forward with the goal of a November public hearing before your Commission, and an anticipated early 2012 public hearing before the Board.

PRELIMINARY FEEDBACK

While the preliminary draft has been circulated for review and comments for a short period as of time of writing, the feedback so far has been overall positive. There are however, several areas staff would like to further discuss with your Commission. A supplemental memo will be prepared and distributed before the July 27 meeting, outlining these areas in further detail.

SMT:st
7/14/11

Attachments: (A) Draft Healthy Communities Report
(B) Preliminary Draft Healthy Design Ordinance
Electronic only: Case Study, Technical Memo 2, Technical Memo 3