

December 13, 2004

The Honorable Board of Supervisors  
County of Los Angeles  
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Supervisors:

**HEARING ON AMENDMENTS TO COUNTY CODE TITLE 22 (PLANNING AND ZONING) TO ESTABLISH THE GREEN LINE TRANSIT ORIENTED DISTRICTS (TOD's) AND ZONE CHANGE CASE NO. ZC 00-22 (2), AND TO APPROVE THE GREEN LINE TRANSIT ORIENTED DISTRICTS LAND USE, HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY REPORT (SECOND SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT) (3-VOTES)**

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE BOARD AFTER THE PUBLIC HEARING:

1. Consider the attached Negative Declaration together with any comments received during the public review process, find on the basis of the entire record before the Board that there is no substantial evidence the project will have a significant effect on the environment, find that the Negative Declaration reflects the independent judgment and analysis of the Board, and adopt the Negative Declaration.
2. Approve the recommendations by the Regional Planning Commission to adopt amendments to Title 22 (Zoning Ordinance) establishing the Green Line Transit Oriented Districts, adopt the related zone changes, and approve the Green Line Transit Oriented Districts Land Use, Housing and Economic Development Strategy Report (Green Line Strategy Report).
3. Find that the adoption of the proposed amendments to Title 22 of the Los Angeles County Code and related zone changes, and approval of the Green Line Strategy Report are *de minimus* in their effect on fish and wildlife resources; and authorize the Director of Planning to complete and file a Certificate of Fee Exemption for the project.

**PURPOSE/JUSTIFICATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTION**

Your Board of Supervisors directed staff and the Regional Planning Commission to study the land use conditions in unincorporated areas surrounding the Vermont Avenue and Hawthorne Boulevard Green Line light rail stations in the West Athens

and Lennox communities, respectively. You asked that we suggest new zoning regulations for these neighborhoods that would leverage on the presence of these transit stations to help revitalize related local neighborhoods and promote transit use.

Staff's research revealed that the presence of these stations creates unique opportunities to promote neighborhood revitalization and transit use by fostering a pedestrian-oriented physical environment within these neighborhoods. Accordingly, the proposed Green Line Transit Oriented Districts Ordinance, related zone changes and related Green Line Strategy Report would establish regulations and policies for the unincorporated areas within approximately one-quarter mile of the Vermont and Hawthorne Green Line transit stations. Within these geographic areas, the proposed ordinance, zone changes and Strategy Report would provide for special development standards, case processing procedures and development incentives aimed at promoting a pedestrian-oriented environment.

Given that your Board has previously adopted similar transit oriented district regulations for the unincorporated areas surrounding four Blue Line light rail stations, staff has consolidated those Blue Line T.O.D. regulations with the new Green Line T.O.D. regulations to create a new comprehensive and well-organized body of T.O.D. regulations. If adopted, these regulations would constitute Part 8 of Chapter 22.44 of the Zoning Ordinance. In undertaking this reorganization, no substantive changes were made to the previously adopted Blue Line T.O.D. regulations.

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF COUNTY-WIDE STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS**

This proposed ordinance promotes the County's Strategic Plan goals of improving the quality of life for residents of Los Angeles County's unincorporated communities. The ordinance, related zone changes and Strategy Report would establish development standards, case processing procedures and development incentives for areas communities surrounding the Vermont and Hawthorne Green Line transit stations that would stimulate the provision of needed commercial services and affordable housing, in turn, increasing transit ridership.

### **FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING**

Implementation of the proposed amendments would not result in any new significant costs to the County or to the Department of Regional Planning. The ordinance proposes to reduce development project filing fees and streamline case processing requirements for neighborhood oriented businesses and affordable housing projects within the Districts. As a result, this Department may experience a limited reduction in revenues associated with such project filings; however, staff time and costs required to review such projects will also be reduced accordingly. Additionally, tax revenues may increase in accordance with the stimulation of new construction and increased business activity within the Districts.

No requests for financing are being made in conjunction with these proposed ordinance amendments.

### **FACTS AND PROVISIONAL/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS**

As cited above, staff's and the Regional Planning Commission's response to your Board's directive includes three parts: the proposed the Transit Oriented District ordinance provisions, related zone changes, and the Green Line Transit Oriented Districts Strategy Report, all of which are attached for your Board's consideration. A description of each of these components of the proposed Green Line Transit Oriented Districts regulations and policies follows below:

- 1) The proposed Ordinance would amend existing development regulations, streamline case processing procedures for appropriate uses, and provide new neighborhood business and affordable housing incentives for areas within approximately a one-quarter mile radius of the Vermont and Hawthorne Green Line stations.
  - The new development standards include a broad spectrum of requirements aimed at helping to promote a pedestrian oriented environment. Some examples of such standards include requirements for:
    - Pedestrian-scale reduced height limits in commercial zones, and new limits on floor area ratios for commercial and mixed-use structures in commercial zones.
    - Progressive recessing of each successive upper story of commercial and mixed-use structures in commercial zones.
    - New esthetic treatments for pedestrian and driveway entrances.
    - A zero front yard setback for commercial and mixed-use buildings, or an allowance of up to ten feet setback if certain pedestrian amenities are provided in front of building.
    - Special esthetic treatments of long commercial facades and long rooftops.
    - Location of retail commercial uses exclusively on the ground floor of commercial and mixed-use buildings.
    - Unique landscaping such as street trees at intervals of at least thirty feet.
    - A conditional use permit (CUP) requirement for all multiple-family residential structures of five units or more in Zone R-3 (Limited Multiple-family Residence). (Current Countywide R-3 zoning provisions allow up to 30 dwelling units per net acre with an unlimited number of units in one apartment building.)
    - Prohibition of certain previously permitted uses in Zones R-2 and R-3 that are inappropriate in transit oriented and pedestrian oriented neighborhoods, i.e. airports, cemeteries, radio and television stations and towers, oil wells, and several other uses.

- Some examples of the newly proposed streamlined case processing procedures include:
    - Mixed-use structures would be allowed with a director's review. (Previously such structures required a CUP.)
    - Small markets and restaurants would be allowed on corner and corner-adjacent lots in Zones R-2 and R-3 with a conditional use permit. (Previously such uses were prohibited in such zones.)
    - Very small notions and snack shops would be allowed on the ground floor level of multiple-family residential structures with a conditional use permit. (Previously such uses were prohibited in such zones.)
    - Allowance for affordable and senior housing density bonuses in residential and mixed-use structures a director's review. (Previously such uses required a CUP).
  - Some examples of the newly proposed development incentives besides actual streamlining of case processing procedures include allowances for:
    - Increased height limits and floor area ratio limits for mixed-use buildings in commercial zones.
    - Reduction in off-street parking requirements for uniquely neighborhood-oriented commercial uses.
    - Reduction in fees for director's review and in accordance with a range of zoning case-filing requirements.
- 2) The Regional Planning Commission is also recommending the following changes of zone within the two new Green Line Districts:
- Vermont Transit Oriented District—Total acreage rezoned: 15.9 acres
    - Change 1.3 acres from M-1 (Light Manufacturing) to B-1 (Buffer)
    - Change 14.3 acres from Zone C-3 (Unlimited Commercial) to Zone C-2 (Neighborhood Business)
    - Change .3 acres from R-1 (Single Family Residence) to C-2.
  - Hawthorne Transit Oriented District—Total acreage rezoned: 8.8 acres
    - Change 4.7 acres from M-1 to C-2
    - Change .2 acres from C-3 to C-2
    - Change 3.0 acres from CPD (Commercial Planned Development) to C-2
    - Change .8 acres from R-3-P (Limited Multiple Residence—Parking) to C-2.
    - Change .1 acres from C-3 to R-3-P
- 3) The Green Line Strategy Report contains land use policies that constitute an overall vision for the future improvement of the areas surrounding the transit stations, and related goals and objectives. The proposed ordinance provisions flow from these strategic policies. The policies are subdivided into the issue-areas listed below. Accordingly, the Report promotes:

- The slow transformation of inappropriate land uses surrounding the Green Line transit stations into appropriate pedestrian-oriented uses.
- Long-term property maintenance, esthetic upkeep and rehabilitation.
- A mix of residential densities.
- An esthetic and functional relationship between new land uses and the transit stations.
- A safer living environment.
- New neighborhood and pedestrian oriented commercial services, such as markets, pharmacies and child care centers.
- Distinct neighborhood and transit station identities within the T.O.D.'s.
- New public spaces, and civic and cultural activities.
- Circulation patterns that support neighborhood, pedestrian and transit oriented development and are interesting for pedestrians.
- Affordable and senior residential development.
- Neighborhood pride.
- Attraction of new business interest, capital, jobs and development projects to the T.O.D. areas.
- Use of the transit system by residents within the T.O.D.'s.

The Regional Planning Commission recommended approval of these amendments to the zoning ordinance, and related zone changes and Strategy Report, believing that new regulations and policies would promote a pedestrian oriented environment, increase transit use and foster neighborhood revitalization within the areas surrounding the Vermont and Hawthorne Green Line stations.

### **PUBLIC HEARING AND NOTICE**

A public hearing is required pursuant to Section 22.16.200 of the County Code and Section 65856 of the Government Code. Required notice must be given and the public hearing must be given pursuant to the requirements set forth in Section 22.60.174 of the County Code. These procedures exceed the minimum standards of Government Code Sections 6061, 65090, 65856, and 66016 relating to notice of public hearing.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION**

The attached initial study concludes that there is no substantial evidence, in light of the whole record before your Board, that the adoption of the proposed ordinance and zone changes, and approval of the Strategy Report may have a significant effect on the environment. Therefore, in accordance with Section 15070 of the State CEQA Guidelines, a Negative Declaration was prepared. A copy of the proposed Negative Declaration has been transmitted to 80 public libraries for public review. Public notice was published in 13 newspapers of general circulation pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21092. No comments on the proposed Negative Declaration were received during the public review period.

**IMPACT ON CURRENT SERVICES (OR PROJECTS)**

The Ordinance would stimulate new development within the Green Line Transit Oriented Districts that will improve neighborhood commercial services and stimulate affordable housing. The Ordinance would streamline case processing requirements for affordable housing, mixed-use buildings and development projects with a pedestrian-oriented scale, expediting the provision of neighborhood commercial services and affordable housing in the Districts. The Ordinance would also authorize the County to require new infrastructure in conjunction with new development proposals in many instances.

Although the Ordinance would accommodate some moderate increases in residential densities, overall development potential and demand for services would be reduced in accordance with a pedestrian-scale of development.

Respectfully submitted,

DEPARTMENT OF REGIONAL PLANNING

James E. Hartl, AICP  
Director of Planning

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Attachments

1. Resolution of the Regional Planning Commission (RPC)
2. Project Summary
3. Ordinance Recommended for Board Action
4. Zone Change Maps
5. Green Line Strategy Report
6. Negative Declaration
7. Summary of RPC Proceedings
8. Legal Notice of Board Hearing

C: Chief Administrative Officer  
County Counsel  
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors  
Director, Department of Public Works