

TWIN LAKES COMMUNITY PLAN

a component of the
Los Angeles County GENERAL PLAN

May 9, 1991

County of Los Angeles
Department of Regional Planning
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Twin Lakes Community Plan Legislative History

Plan Adoption

6 December 1990 ~ Resolution adopted by the Regional Planning Commission

9 May 1991 ~ LPA 90-424 adopted by the Board of Supervisors

Community Standards District

6 December 1990 ~ Resolution adopted by the Regional Planning Commission

9 May 1991 ~ Ord. No. 91-0067 adopted by the Board of Supervisors [Adopting ZC 90-424 which added Section 22.44.121, Twin Lakes Community Standards District, to Title 22, the Planning and Zoning Code.]

Introduction

Established in the 1920s as a rural resort area, Twin Lakes is a small community just north of Chatsworth in the San Fernando Valley. The community developed slowly and sporadically during its first 50 years. However, in the late 1970s and 1980s, pressures for residential development on vacant parcels in the community increased. The additional development, symptomatic of trends in the greater Los Angeles region, started to change the rural character of the community and to tax the system of private roads and sewage disposal.

In 1988, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors directed the Department of Regional Planning to undertake a planning study for Twin Lakes to address the problems emerging in the community. The planning process utilized a "team" approach involving three main participants:

- The Planning Advisory Committee, consisting of members of the Twin Lakes community, providing direct, resident involvement in the effort;
- Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, providing key County staff resources; and
- Cotton/Beland/Associates, Inc., providing planning assistance to the effort.

The Twin Lakes Community Plan includes policies adopted by the County of Los Angeles for the unincorporated area of Twin Lakes, and actions to implement these policies. The plan does not itself initiate or recommend any development, intensification of land use, or change in County General Plan Land Use designation or zoning, but does serve as a

guide for future improvement and development of the area.

The intent of the Twin Lakes Community Plan is to retain, to as great an extent as possible, the existing rural atmosphere of the community while providing public improvements at levels which assure at least minimal standards for public safety. The objectives and strategies contained in the plan are designed to address longstanding problems and issues in the community concerning emergency access, building bulk on small lots, road conditions, water service and sewage disposal. For the purpose of this Plan, the term "rural" means the description of Twin Lakes as an area of individual homes designed to the terrain, surrounded by native vegetation and rock outcroppings, and connected by a network of narrow winding roads; broad, open vistas enhance much of the area.

Three major components comprise the Twin Lakes Community Plan: a Summary of Constraints and opportunities, a Statement of Community Goals and Objectives, and Community Plan Strategies. These set forth the policy direction and suggest programs for action. The Community Standards District is the regulatory framework to help carry out the plan and its programs.

The Twin Lakes Community Plan and Implementation Program refine certain aspects of the County-wide General Plan by reflecting local characteristics, concerns and preferences and setting forth standards and criteria tailored to conditions within the community. In instances where a decision may involve direction not found in the Community Plan, Countywide Policy is to be used.

Following public hearings by the Regional Planning Commission and Board of Supervi-

sors, the Board adopted the Twin Lakes Community Plan on May 9, 1991 as Local Plan Amendment No. 90424.

Location

Twin Lakes is an unincorporated area located just north of the community of Chatsworth in the San Fernando Valley. More specifically, the Twin Lakes community is situated on the north side of the Simi Valley Freeway (Highway 118) at its intersection with Topanga Canyon Boulevard.

Summary of Constraints and Opportunities

A Background Report was prepared which contained the results of research conducted by the planning team. The findings are summarized in a statement of constraints and opportunities:

Constraints

1. The existing antiquated road system consists entirely of private streets which do not meet contemporary standards. These roads are extremely narrow and, in many instances, not able to accommodate two-way traffic. They feature tight curves, are poorly maintained and, in many areas, are unpaved. As a result, not only is normal traffic circulation strained, but the efficient provision of fire and other safety services is impeded. In addition, roads frequently do not follow the easements recorded in the original subdivision, which leads to confusion as to the location of property lines. The combination of hillside topography and existing small lot development make it impractical to improve roads to contemporary standards.
2. Continuing and increasing reliance on

septic systems for sewage disposal increases the risk to public health and safety either through system failure, or seepage into either ground water or surface waters off site. Small lots and soil conditions severely limit the use of on-site systems.

3. Recent construction of relatively large houses on small lots gives a more intense, "urban" feel to the community, may obstruct the views from adjacent parcels, may encourage on-street parking due to inadequate driveway and garage area, and limits options for septic system locations.
4. Traffic noise from Highway 118 disrupts the quiet, rural atmosphere of Twin Lakes.
5. While steep slopes limit development possibilities, the potential build-out — based on the number of vacant, legal lots — poses limits to innovative planning controls that could protect community character and minimize future problems.
4. Existing fire hydrant system does not meet minimum standards for protection of all existing development.
5. Current zoning and subdivision regulations have not been entirely successful in preventing development which is inconsistent in scale and design, thereby detracting from the aesthetic quality and rural nature of the community.

Opportunities

1. Residents of Twin Lakes, particularly members of the Planning Advisory Committee and other participants in this planning process, are assuming responsibility for directing the future of the community.

2. Recent increases in property values point out the desirability of Twin Lakes as a community.
3. Many of the vacant lots are in clusters; merging of parcels would provide larger building sites and reduce the potential density of the community.
4. The vacant lots and unsubdivided parcels could provide additional off-street parking areas, recreational/open space areas, or other uses which could complement the residential uses in the community.
5. Public sewer lines are very near Twin Lakes, in both Topanga Canyon Boulevard and Canoga Avenue.
6. The views from the area are striking, including open hillsides to the north and scenic vistas to the south.
7. The community is relatively secure from crime.
8. The rugged natural terrain and existing vegetation all contribute to the appealing character of Twin Lakes.
9. The Devil Canyon stream and riparian area constitutes a natural resource of scenic and recreational value.

Community Goals and Objectives

A survey of residents was taken in January 1989 to discern feelings about the future of Twin Lakes. In addition, four community meetings were held to provide residents an opportunity to voice their concerns regarding issues facing the community. The following goals and objectives incorporate this community input:

GOAL 1: To ensure that the public health and safety are adequately served especially with respect to streets and sewage disposal.

Objective 1: Limit the amount of new residential development so that overall density in the community does not exceed the capacity of roads and does not create a public health and safety problem due to improper sewage disposal.

Objective 2: Improve roadway widths and paving surfaces to meet Fire Department access needs.

Objective 3: Minimize on-street parking.

Objective 4: Dispose of sewage in a manner which minimizes risk to public health and safety.

GOAL 2: To preserve the unique rural character of Twin Lakes.

Objective 1: Ensure that the scale of new development is appropriate for the size and characteristics of parcels.

Objective 2: Maintain view corridors to the north and south when feasible.

Objective 3: Provide noise attenuation from traffic-related noise on Highway 118.

Objective 4: Improve the appearance of Twin Lakes through better design and maintenance of homes.

Community Plan Strategies

In order to achieve these goals and objectives, a "future development scenario" was assumed which was intended to:

- a) encourage lot consolidation which would result in build out of the community at approximately 50% over the existing total (approximately 140 units total, south of Devil Canyon)--primarily through incentives created by a Community Standards District.
- b) assure at least minimum rural standards for public safety by upgrading public improvements (paving primary access roads and upgrading water availability for fire suppression needs)--through a combination of conditions for new construction and community self-assessment, and
- c) coordinate community review and input for discretionary permit processing through the Twin Lakes Homeowner's Association.

Controls presently exist which regulate such community concerns as sewage disposal and building height; their administration and enforcement should reflect the goals and objectives of this Plan. The following new strategies are designed to influence land use intensity, circulation, parking and view corridors as means of preserving and enhancing the rural character of Twin Lakes, as defined in the Community Standards District.

- 1. Raise funds through local pledges by property owners or establish a benefit-assessment district to pay for the following public improvements (Responsibility: Twin Lakes Community):

- paving to 20 foot width (no curbs and

gutters) with street signs along primary access roads (Mayan Drive and others);

- street signs and minor repairs to other streets as required;
- installation of water lines and fire hydrants to meet minimum fire safety standards.

- 2. Adopt a Community Standards District as a section of Los Angeles County Code Title 22 (Planning and Zoning) to contain the following (Responsibility: Department of Regional Planning and Board of Supervisors):

- Slope Intensity Standard - a formula designed to limit building floor area based upon lot area and the slope of the land, designed to ensure compatibility of scale between the lot and structure, and to help preserve view scapes;
- Parking and driveway standards to increase off-street parking area, minimize on-street parking and prevent parking in yards; and
- Yard standards.

{Note: This ordinance was adopted by the Board of Supervisors on May 9, 1991 as Section 22.44.121 of Title 22, the Planning and Zoning Code.}

- 3. Establish a Planning Advisory Committee comprised of members of a recognized community organization such as the Twin Lakes Homeowners' Association, with the following functions (Responsibility: Twin Lakes Community):

- provide a community forum which may review and comment on discretionary permits for compliance with County regulations;
- help ensure that surveying/monumentation is established and maintained for all new construction; and
- coordinate with Los Angeles County to establish fire lanes and to install street and "No Parking" signs.

