



Los Angeles County
Department of Regional Planning

Planning for the Challenges Ahead



Richard J. Bruckner
Director

June 2, 2011

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

FROM: ^{MA} Mark Herwick, AICP, Supervising Regional Planner
General Plan Development Section

**SUBJECT: JUNE 15, 2011 – AGENDA ITEM #6
PROJECT NO. R2011-00173-(5)
AMENDMENT TO TITLE 22 (ZONING ORDINANCE) TO ESTABLISH
THE STONYVALE COMMUNITY STANDARDS DISTRICT**

BACKGROUND

Section 22.44.090 of the Los Angeles County Zoning Ordinance provides for the establishment of Community Standards Districts (CSDs) “to provide a means of implementing special development standards contained in adopted neighborhood, community, area, specific and local coastal plans within the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County, or to provide a means of addressing special problems which are unique to certain geographic areas within the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County.” The Board of Supervisors has established CSDs for many unincorporated areas, and they have proven to be an effective tool for enhancing the environment and quality of life in unique and diverse communities throughout the County.

On November 30, 2010 the Board of Supervisors adopted a motion (74-D) directing the Department of Regional Planning to prepare a CSD for the unincorporated community of Stonyvale, a private inholding of 30 parcels totaling slightly more than 57 acres in the Angeles National Forest, which was destroyed in the 2009 Station Fire. The intent of the CSD is to modify some development standards of the community’s A-1-1 base zoning to facilitate construction of single-family residences and accessory structures in a manner that substantially approximates the character of the community prior to the fire.

In order to address the desire of the Stonyvale community residents to reestablish their community to the state of vitality and wholeness that existed before the Station Fire

swept through and to account for the unique development conditions of the community, staff recommends establishment of the CSD.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

The 2009 Station Fire that engulfed the Angeles National Forest burned more than 160,000 acres and destroyed more than 80 homes. The Stonyvale community suffered the loss 18 of the 22 homes that existed before the fire. As the residents went about reorganizing their lives following the fire they collaborated closely with all County permitting agencies to start the process of reestablishing their community to the way it was before the fire. Emergency Oak Tree Permits have been issued and will continue to be issued as necessary by the Forestry Division. Fire has determined that water capacity for fire protection that existed before the fire is sufficient and that tanks can continue to be used. Public Works has conducted a road survey to determine the true location of parcels as they front Stonyvale Road.

The Board motion of November 30, 2010 (74-D) focused attention on matters central to the Stonyvale residents' desires for reestablishing their community as it was before the fire—front setbacks, wall heights and horse-keeping. Front setbacks and wall heights are addressed in the proposed CSD to meet the unique development conditions and security needs in the community. The Board motion requested that horse-keeping be explored as residents had expressed a desire in stabling up to three horses on parcels of .6 acres or more. Staff research subsequently found that 23 of the 30 parcels far exceed the minimum 15,000 square feet necessary to keep three horses for personal use as defined in Title 22. Property owners of the remaining seven parcels that are less than .6 acres did not desire to have horses on their property. Therefore, it is not necessary to include a horse-keeping provision in the CSD.

The road survey conducted by Public Works demonstrated that there is substantial overlap of public right of way into private property on many parcels to the north of Stonyvale Road. This combined with the proximity of the Big Tujunga Wash to parcels south of Stonyvale Road is central to the residents' request for three foot front yard setbacks for flexibility in the location of the new homes they will construct. Residents are also very concerned about the security of their community and consider a wall height of eight feet to be sufficient for this purpose and are therefore requesting eight foot wall heights in all setbacks.

Stonyvale residents are aware that while the proposed CSD will change some development standards to facilitate reestablishment of the character of the community before the fire, they realize that any new construction must meet current regulations of Building and Safety, Environmental Health, and Fire.

EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS

While the intent of the proposed CSD is to address unique land development conditions in the community of Stonyvale, your Commission raised a question about community-wide emergency early warning systems at its meeting of March 23, 2011. Staff researched this question and found that while the Fire Department does not require such systems to be installed by developers of new projects or residents building single-family homes in remote areas, the County Office of Emergency Management has coordinated the implementation of an emergency mass notification system that is used to contact County residents and businesses via recorded phone messages, text messages or e-mail messages in case of emergency. This system, known as Alert LA County, utilizes telephone companies' 911 databases and is able to contact land-line telephone numbers, whether listed or unlisted. Alert LA County has the added capacity of allowing cell phone numbers, voice over IP phone numbers, and e-mail addresses to be registered for use in the system. Further information about Alert LA County can be found at the Office of Emergency Management website <http://lacoa.org/>.

OUTREACH

The Stonyvale community is small, yet well organized. Following the 2009 Station Fire, the community rallied and established an ad hoc group of community members that proceeded to advocate on behalf of the entire community for coordinated County actions to facilitate the reestablishment of the destroyed community. Shortly after the Board motion on November 30, 2010, staff participated in a guided tour of the Stonyvale community on December 16, 2010 with the ad hoc community group and met with them again on January 27, 2011 to clarify the process and schedule for preparation of the CSD.

Throughout the process of preparing the CSD the ad hoc community group was kept apprised of progress through email correspondence and telephone conversations. Seven community members attended the informational presentation made to your Commission on March 23, 2011 and the ad hoc community group met with SD5, Public Works, Environmental Health, and Regional Planning on April 28, 2011 to review progress on the preparation of the CSD.

In early May 2011, the draft CSD ordinance and map of the proposed CSD boundary were made available to the community for viewing at the Acton Agua Dulce Library and DRP website. The CEQA Notice of Exemption for the project was placed on the DRP website.

COMMUNITY STANDARDS DISTRICT

The Zoning Ordinance provides for the use of CSDs for small geographical areas to address unique land use problems. General Plan policies encourage guidelines

governing scale and design on a community-by-community basis. Establishing a community standards district is therefore consistent with the policies of the Countywide General Plan.

The Los Angeles County Zoning Ordinance does not address some of the land use issues that exist in the community of Stonyvale. In order to address these issues, the draft CSD establishes new development standards intended to ensure that future improvements reestablish the character of the community as it was before the Station Fire and are consistent with the goals, objectives and policies of the Antelope Valley Areawide General Plan. The draft CSD addresses the following items: front yard setback and wall height.

ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION

The 2009 Station Fire in the Angeles National Forest resulted in the Governor of California declaring a state of emergency (Executive Order S-05-09). Acknowledging this fact, staff conducted required California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) analysis of the draft CSD ordinance and determined, in consultation with County Counsel, that it is statutorily exempt under the Public Resources Code § 21172, Inapplicability to Project in Emergency Disaster Area; and categorically exempt under CEQA Guideline § 15269(a), Emergency Projects.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Regional Planning Commission adopt the attached resolution and forward Project No. R2011-00173-(5) to the Board of Supervisors for consideration in a public hearing.

RECOMMENDED MOTION

I move that the Regional Planning Commission adopt the attached resolution and forward the proposed Stonyvale Community Standards District to the Board of Supervisors for consideration in a public hearing.

Please find attached the resolution, CSD ordinance, CEQA Notice of Exemption, and Board motion 74-D. Should you have any questions, please contact me at mherwick@planning.lacounty.gov or (213) 974-6470.

JS:MSH:msh

Attachments:

1. Resolution for Commission adoption
2. Ordinance for Commission adoption
3. CEQA Notice of Exemption
4. Board motion 74-D