



Los Angeles County  
Department of Regional Planning

*Planning for the Challenges Ahead*



Amy J. Bodek, AICP  
Director

September 25, 2018

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

Dear Supervisors:

**HEARING ON PROJECT NO. R2018-00408-(5)  
VESTING TENTATIVE TRACT MAP NO. TR073336  
TENTATIVE PARCEL MAP NO. TR073335  
CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT NO. 201500019  
ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW NO. 201500030 (SUPPLEMENTAL EIR)  
APPLICANT: NORTHLAKE ASSOCIATES LLC (JOHN ARVIN)  
CASTAIC CANYON ZONED DISTRICT  
(FIFTH SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT) (3-VOTES)**

**SUBJECT**

The proposed Project R2018-00408-(5) (Project) includes development of Phase 1 of the NorthLake Specific Plan to be implemented via Vesting Tentative Tract Map No. TR073336 (VTTM 73336), which includes approximately 720 acres of the southern portion of the 1,330-acre Specific Plan area. The remaining property of 610 acres for Phase 2 is to be developed at a future time. The overall Specific Plan would involve development of up to 3,150 residential units, 20.4 acres (38,700 building square feet (sf)) of mixed-use community commercial uses, 2.5 acres (32,175 building sf) of highway commercial uses, 799.5 acres of parks and open space, a 23-acre school site, and a 1.4-acre pad for a future fire station. Of the total 3,150 dwelling units, 2,295 (or 73 percent) are proposed within Phase 1 and the proposed VTTM 73336. A 10-percent affordable housing set-aside component is included in the Project. The affordable housing set-aside component includes a total of 315 affordable units (257 rental, 58 ownership) in a variety of housing formats (apartments, live-work, and mixed-use) proposed to be established in the "mixed-use village" area within Phase 1 of the Project. Fifty percent (or 158) of the 315 affordable housing set-aside dwelling units are proposed to be reserved for low and very-low income households, leaving 157 reserved for moderate-level incomes. Ninety-five of the total 315 units will be reserved as affordable housing set-asides for senior citizens. Lastly, separate from the affordable housing, 345 units will be age-restricted for senior citizens. As part of the project, external map improvements, including connection

to existing utilities and relocation of existing utility lines, drainage facilities, and other infrastructure would occur outside of the area specified as the proposed Project site.

The Project was approved by the Regional Planning Commission (Commission) on April 18, 2018. This approval is being appealed by the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD), The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC), and the Golden State Environmental Justice Alliance (GSEJA).

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE BOARD AFTER THE PUBLIC HEARING,**

1. Indicate its intent to ADOPT the Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) associated with Environmental Assessment No. 201500030, finding that the Project will have significant and unavoidable effects on the environment after all Project design features and feasible mitigation measures have been implemented; and
2. Indicate its intent to DENY the appeals and instruct County Counsel to prepare the necessary findings to affirm the Commission's approval of VTTM 73336, Tentative Parcel Map No. TR073335, and Conditional Use Permit No. 201500019.

**PURPOSE/JUSTIFICATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTION**

**General/Area Plan Consistency**

The Project would be consistent with the applicable policies of the Los Angeles County General Plan, as it would: a) encourage employment opportunities and housing to be developed in proximity to one another (Policy LU 5.10); b) encourage patterns of development that promote physical activity (Policy LU 9.2); and c) design development adjacent to natural features in a sensitive manner to complement the natural environment (Policy LU 10.2).

The Project would be consistent with the applicable policies of the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan, as it would: a) reduce dependence on the automobile, particularly single-occupancy vehicle use, by providing safe and convenient access to transit, bikeways, and walkways (Policy C-1.1.1); b) provide for flexibility in the transportation system to accommodate new technology as it becomes available, in order to reduce trips by vehicles using fossil fuels where feasible and appropriate (Policy C-1.1.10); and c) promote the use of site-appropriate native or adapted plant materials, and prohibit use of invasive or noxious plant species in landscape designs (Policy CO-3.1.5).

The Project would be consistent with the adopted 1992 NorthLake Specific Plan, as it would:

- Remain a cohesive community that will be served by a proposed new fire station site, public school site, and mixed-use commercial, live-work, and highway commercial employment areas;
- Enjoy substantial open space and recreational amenities distributed throughout the Project site, to include a proposed public park and public-accessible trail systems;
- Provide a substantial amount of new housing development for the local community and overall County, to include senior citizen and affordable housing set-asides;
- Contribute its fair share of local traffic improvements that will benefit the Project and the surrounding community;
- Conform to the vision of the original Specific Plan to have a high quality of design in the construction of proposed new streets, buildings, lighting, walls, fencing, and signage; and
- Conform to the vision of the original Specific Plan by ensuring the proposed beautification of the site through the use of a wide variety of attractive tree plantings and other landscaping that will meet current County standards for native/non-invasive and drought-tolerant species.

#### Implementation of Strategic Plan Goals

The Project implements the following Strategies of the 2016-2021 Los Angeles County Strategic Plan:

- **(I.1.5) Increase Affordable Housing Throughout Los Angeles County**, by developing 315 new affordable housing set-aside dwelling units for low, very low, and moderate-income households; 257 of the 315 units will be rental apartments;
- **(I.2.7) Plan for Age-Friendly Communities for Older Adults**, by developing 345 new senior citizen age-restricted housing units (separate from the affordable set-aside units), and by developing 95 (of the total 315) new affordable housing set-aside units for seniors citizens;
- **(II.1.2) Support Small Businesses and Social Enterprises**, by developing 38,700 building sf of new mixed-use community commercial uses, to include 46 new mixed-use units, and six new live-work units with a total of 7,500 sf of live-work commercial space;

- **(II.2.2) Expand Access to Recreational and Cultural Opportunities**, by developing more than 187 acres of new recreational facilities, to include a proposed new 20-acre public park and ten private parks, along with a publicly-accessible trail system connecting within the Project and to existing offsite open space and trails.
- **(II.2.4) Promote Active and Healthy Lifestyles**, by developing a walkable built environment that encourages physical activity that connects housing to new mixed-use/commercial and recreational destinations which are located nearby and/or onsite. Also, by providing opportunity for local food production through onsite community gardens, homeowner's association (HOA) allowance of maintained front yard or side yard food gardens, and a centrally located Farmer's Market for sales of locally-grown food items;
- **(II.3.2) Foster a Cleaner, More Efficient, and More Resilient Energy System**, by funding the equivalent of three kilowatts of solar energy systems on 50 percent or more of all new housing units, and funding and/or providing that 100 percent of all new residences are solar-equipped and solar-ready. Further, by funding and/or providing 135 or more electric vehicle EV charging stations within the Project site and in locations within the surrounding Castaic community; and by funding/providing EV chargers in ten percent or more of all residential dwellings constructed within the Project site, and EV charging capability and wiring for all residential dwellings constructed within the Project site; and
- **(II.3.5) Support a Clean, Flexible, and Integrated Multi-modal Transportation System that Improves Mobility**, by funding and/or providing a proposed community shuttle and service tram for the Northlake Project residents and guests that serves local destinations within the Project site (such as the school, parks, and the commercial/industrial area) as well as regional destinations outside the site (such as the Northlake Hills Elementary School, downtown Castaic/shopping center, Sports Complex, and Valencia Commerce Center).

### **FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING**

Approval or denial of the appeal would result in no new significant costs to the County or to the Department of Regional Planning, as the proposed Project is a private development. All construction and operating costs will be borne by the applicant. Existing and proposed infrastructure and public services are adequate to accommodate the proposed Project, as confirmed by the Departments of Public Works, Fire, Parks and Recreation, and Public Health.

## **FACTS AND PROVISIONS/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS**

A duly noticed public hearing was held on February 21, 2018, before the Commission. During the February 21st hearing, the Commission heard presentations from staff and the applicant, and public testimony was heard. During public testimony, nine persons spoke in favor of the Project, citing reasons such as: adding needed housing, environmentally-conscious design, recreational amenities (such as parks, trails, and bike paths), local traffic construction improvements, ridgeline preservation (in cooperation with the Town Council), reduction in the overall proposed number of dwellings, improved water conservation measures, adding EV chargers within the Project and surrounding community, and general benefit to the local community economy. In addition, four persons spoke in opposition or otherwise had concerns with the Project, citing reasons such as: no Planned Unit Development (or detached condos) should be allowed, the Environmental Impact Report needs redrafting/recirculating, insufficient traffic analysis (does not consider Newhall development), too much adverse impact to onsite habitat, and destruction of wildlife linkages.

After hearing all testimony, the Commission discussed the Project and continued the public hearing to a date certain of April 18, 2018, instructing the applicant to report back to the Commission on the following issues:

- a. Consult with local transit agencies to improve offsite jobs/employment connections;
- b. Add an affordable housing set-aside component into the Project; Comparison of expire (1993) Development Agreement community benefits with current Project benefits;
- c. Re-address school noise impacts;
- d. Process and ownership of open space dedication;
- e. Wildlife movement and connectivity; and
- f. Re-address traffic study and mitigations for traffic impacts.

On April 5, 2018, staff submitted a supplemental memo to the Commission that included an update on the proposed Project and the following main items:

- a. Develop a summary of new features added into the Project, to include: 315 units of affordable rental housing set-asides for very low, low and moderate income households, with 95 of the 315 set-aside units reserved for senior citizens; new mixed-use "village" area designation containing 46 affordable mixed-use housing set-aside units and six market-rate live-work units; met with the SMMC and enhanced the Project's wildlife connections and crossings; met with City of Santa Clarita Transit and augmented and expanded the proposed developer-provided transit tram service to offsite/regional destinations; added noise mitigation measures for the existing elementary school; clarified ownership and maintenance of the

- proposed Project open space; compared the public benefits of the expired 1993 development agreement with the current proposed Project benefits; and clarified traffic improvements and impacts with respect to Newhall Ranch;
- b. SEIR errata document describing potential impacts of added Project features;
  - c. Revised California Environmental Quality Act findings, Statement of Overriding Considerations, and Mitigation Monitoring Reporting Program;
  - d. Revised draft Findings and Conditions of Approval; and
  - e. Revised Design Guidebook.

A duly noticed continued public hearing was held on April 18, 2018, before the Commission. At the public hearing, staff and the permittee gave presentations and additional testimony was heard from five persons. Three persons testified in opposition to the Project, indicating concerns about lack of open space, lack of alternatives, impacts to onsite creek lands and Castaic Lagoon, impacts to onsite habitat, fire safety, light pollution, visual impact, water quality impact, climate change impacts, and need for an SEIR revision/recirculation. The permittee gave rebuttal testimony to these concerns. Two persons testified in support, one person indicating the economic benefits of the Project to the local community, and general support of the Project by the local community; and one person indicating support but requested that the Project provide additional traffic signals and soundproofing for existing homes.

During the April 18, 2018, public hearing, the Commission heard all presentations, testimony, and rebuttal testimony. After hearing all presentations and testimony, the Commission discussed the Project, making the following points:

- a. Commented that while providing sufficient overall open space and recreation amenities, the Project generally has a limited amount of undisturbed open space (approximately 300 acres, or 23 percent of the site);
- b. Communicated concerns about blue-line stream destruction, too many dwelling units near a freeway, and, in general, the need for more urban alternatives that place housing closer to existing mass transit;
- c. Expressed appreciation for the new affordable housing component (315 units) added into the Project;
- d. Asked that the permittee consider, in the future, how the Project can help the County address its challenge to provide emergency sheltering for the homeless, to which the permittee responded that they are trying to address the "root causes" of homelessness by providing more affordable housing and connection to employment opportunities;
- e. Asked how traffic improvements will be funded and open space permanently preserved, to which the permittee responded that bridge and thoroughfare fees will fund the improvements, and the future HOA to be

- established will ensure that the open space is permanently preserved; and lastly,
- f. That, given all the above, the Project “has met all current criteria, addressed the importance of sustaining a regional (Santa Clarita) jobs-housing balance, has proposed housing consistent with market preferences (not all people wish to live in “high rises” in denser urban areas), and that the current proposal is “quite superior to” the original 1992 Specific Plan.

During the April 18, 2018, public hearing, after all discussion, the Commission voted three to one (one absent) to approve the Project.

Pursuant to Subsection A of Section 22.60.230 of the County Code, the GSEJA appealed the Commission’s decision to the Board of Supervisors on April 23, 2018; the SMMC appealed the Commission’s decision to the Board on April 27, 2018; and the CBD appealed the Commission’s decision to the Board on April 30, 2018.

A public hearing on the appeals is required pursuant to Section 22.60.240 of the County Code. Notice of the hearing must be given pursuant to the standards of Government Code Sections 6061 and 65090 relating to notice of public hearing.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION**

An SEIR was prepared for the Project, in which impacts associated with the Project were determined to remain significant and unavoidable after implementation of Project design features and mitigation measures. The following areas of environmental analysis will have significant and unavoidable impacts: traffic, air quality, and noise. The public review and comment period for the SEIR was May 2, 2017 to June 15, 2017 (45 days). An SEIR is the appropriate environmental document for the Project, as a prior EIR was certified with mitigation measures adopted in 1992 and implementation of the NorthLake Specific Plan requires the Project to provide updated environmental analysis and mitigation measures that reflect minor changes to the Project as well as current site and community conditions.

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

Action on the appeal of the Project entitlements is anticipated to have no negative impact on current services.

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For further information, please contact Jodie Sackett, Land Divisions Section, at (213) 974-6433 or [jsackett@planning.lacounty.gov](mailto:jsackett@planning.lacounty.gov).

Respectfully submitted,



Amy J. Bodek, AICP  
Director

AJB:SA:SDJ:JDS:ems

Attachments: Appeal Letters  
Applicant Appeal Response Letter  
Findings and Conditions of Approval  
Commission Staff Reports and Correspondence  
Supplemental Environmental Impact Report

c: Executive Office, Board of Supervisors  
Assessor  
Chief Executive Office  
County Counsel  
Fire  
Parks and Recreation  
Public Health  
Public Works

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