



Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning

Planning for the Challenges Ahead



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July 23, 2019

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 CONNECT SOUTHWEST LA: A TRANSIT ORIENTED DISTRICT
SPECIFIC PLAN FOR WEST ATHENS-WESTMONT
PROJECT NO. 2016-000317
PLAN NO. RPPL2016002080
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT NO. RPPL2017009622
WEST ATHENS-WESTMONT ZONED DISTRICT
(SECOND SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT) (3-VOTES)**

SUBJECT

Connect Southwest LA: A Transit Oriented District Specific Plan for West Athens Westmont Plan (Specific Plan) proposes changes to land use and zoning to encourage transit oriented development and promote active transportation in the area between Metro's Green Line Vermont/Athens Station and Los Angeles Southwest College (LASC). The Specific Plan would potentially accommodate an additional 1,061 residential units and about 1.7 million square feet of non-residential land use.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE BOARD AFTER THE PUBLIC HEARING,

1. Indicate its intent to certify the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) and find that it has been prepared in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the state and local agency guidelines related thereto and reflects the independent judgment of the Board of Supervisors (Board);

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2. Find that where significant adverse environmental effects of the project, as described in the FEIR, have not been reduced to a level of less than significant, the Specific Plan benefits, such as specific social, economic, legal, technological or other considerations outweigh the environmental effects of the project as stated in the attached CEQA Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations for the project;
3. Indicate its intent to adopt the Findings of Fact, Statement of Overriding Considerations, and the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program for the project, included in the FEIR;
4. Indicate its intent to adopt the Specific Plan, Project No. 2016-000317 and related actions and determine that the recommended land use amendments, zone change and zone amendments to the West-Athens Westmont Community Plan (Community Plan) serve the public health, safety and general welfare and are in conformity with good zoning practice and are compatible with and supportive of the goals and policies of the Los Angeles County General Plan (General Plan); and
5. Instruct County Counsel to prepare the final ordinance amending Title 22: Planning and Zoning of the Los Angeles County Code to add Section 22.46.3300 – Connect Southwest LA: A TOD Specific Plan as recommended by the Regional Planning Commission (Commission) and to submit the final ordinance to the Board for its consideration.

PURPOSE/JUSTIFICATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTION

In 2015, the Board adopted the General Plan. One of the main policy areas of the General Plan is to encourage transit oriented development by establishing Transit Oriented Districts (TODs) that promote infill development and active transportation strategies. The General Plan designates eleven TODs that are areas located within a half-mile radius of an existing Metro station. The General Plan update also repealed earlier TOD regulations and established the Transit Oriented District Program. This program calls for the preparation of a specific plan for each of the TODs. The Specific Plan is the third plan developed to implement this program and was initiated in January 2016.

The Specific Plan area comprises approximately 658 acres adjacent to the Metro Green Line Vermont/Athens Station. This area was selected because of the station's proximity to the 64-acre campus of LASC, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Southwest Station and adjacent municipal service center, and its broader proximity to the aerospace industries in the City of Hawthorne as well as the Los Angeles Stadium and Entertainment District in the City of Inglewood.

The Specific Plan offers an opportunity to create more engaging and vibrant places by leveraging the community's assets, connecting uses and activities, and laying the

groundwork for attracting future investment. The Specific Plan provides for mixed use areas with aesthetically pleasing building design and enhanced connectivity. It recommends bicycle and pedestrian improvements and revises parking requirements to promote active transportation and make it easier to use public transportation. The Specific Plan will guide future transit oriented development throughout the project area expanding opportunities for more compact, infill development that will provide new housing and business opportunities while remaining compatible with existing neighborhoods.

Implementation of Strategic Plan Goals

The Specific Plan supports the following Strategic Plan goals:

- Goal I: Make Investments that Transform Lives
- Goal II: Foster Vibrant and Resilient Communities

The proposed Specific Plan establishes standards to encourage new housing, including affordable housing, and jobs in proximity to transit. Additionally, the Specific Plan promotes active and healthy lifestyles by encouraging active transportation modes within an integrated, multi-modal transportation system.

FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING

The recommended action had no fiscal impact to the County as it was completed under a grant from Metro and as part of the Department of Regional Planning's (Department) implementation of the General Plan. The adoption of the updated Specific Plan will not result in the need for additional departmental staffing.

FACTS AND PROVISIONS/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

A public hearing by the Board is required for this project pursuant to Section 22.232.040.B. of the County Code and Section 65856 of the California Government Code. The required notice must be given pursuant to the procedures and requirements set forth in Section 22.222.120.B.2 of the County Code. These procedures exceed the minimum standards of Sections 6061, 65090, and 65856 of the California Government Code related to the notice of public hearing.

The project was presented to the Commission on September 12, 2018, and November 14, 2018. During the public hearing on September 12, 2018, Department staff presented an overview of the Specific Plan, the findings of the FEIR including the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program and the CEQA Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations. The zone change map, Zoning Ordinance and Community Plan land use amendments were also included. In addition to four other speakers, a representative of the Southwest Community Association also provided testimony and submitted a letter to the Commission expressing concerns. Department

staff requested additional time to respond to constituents' concerns, clarify plan objectives, and incorporate certain revisions into the Specific Plan related to housing affordability, mobility and sustainability. On November 14, 2018, the Commission continued the public hearing off-calendar to allow Department staff additional time to fully address the concerns.

On May 29, 2019, the Commission held a duly-noticed public hearing to consider the proposed Specific Plan. During the hearing, Department staff provided a detailed response to the constituent letter submitted at the September 12, 2018 hearing. Department staff also presented an overview of the revisions completed. All revisions were within the scope of the completed environmental review. The changes did not affect the zone change map, zoning ordinance entry, or land use amendments. The only documents affected were the Commission Resolution (Attachment 1) and the Specific Plan document (included in Attachment 2). Therefore no changes resulted to the FEIR, Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, or the CEQA Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations.

After hearing testimony, the Commission closed the public hearing and voted 4 to 0 in favor (one absent) of the recommendation that the Board certify and adopt the FEIR, hold a public hearing to consider the proposed Specific Plan, adopt the recommended Community Plan land use amendments, zone change and zone amendments and determine that the Specific Plan is consistent with the goals and policies of the General Plan.

Additional Edits/Information

Since the public hearing, Department staff has incorporated minor edits and corrections for clarity as follows:

- Clarified potential strategies for the Vermont Station Corridor District in Chapter 3;
- Added a reference to the County's Density Bonus Ordinance under the Special Requirements Section in Chapter 4;
- Worked with Metro to ensure Mobility Strategy 6 reflected the most current language in Chapter 6; and
- Corrected a formatting error in the medium and long-term implementation Strategies Table in Chapter 8.

ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION

A Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) was circulated for public review and comment from May 16, 2018, to June 29, 2018, pursuant to CEQA reporting requirements. The DEIR was posted online as well as at the Wood Crest Library and the A.C. Bilbrew Library. The Notice of Completion/Availability was mailed and emailed to more than 3,931 postal addresses and 54 email addresses and was published in the Long Beach Press Telegram on May 15, 2018. A public meeting to take comments on the DEIR

was held on May 24, 2018. No comments were received from the two attendees. The County received four comment letters prior to the close of the comment period. All comments are addressed in the Response to Comments Section of the FEIR.

The FEIR contains a summary of the potential environmental effects of the Specific Plan, the recommended mitigation measures that would reduce or avoid those effects, and the level of significance after mitigation. Implementation of the mitigation measures, as detailed in each environmental analysis section presented in the EIR, would reduce most of the potentially significant impacts to a less than significant level. However, even with the implementation of the mitigation measures, the plan would result in significant and unavoidable impacts to the following: air quality, cultural resources, greenhouse gas emissions, transportation and traffic. The FEIR, which includes the DEIR, the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program and Response to Comments is included as Attachment 5.

IMPACT ON CURRENT SERVICES (OR PROJECTS)

Approval of the Specific Plan will not impact current services or projects. Per the applicability provisions in the Specific Plan, applications filed prior to the effective date of the ordinance may be reviewed for consistency with the Specific Plan land use and zoning or the land use and zoning in effect prior to adoption of the ordinance.

For further information, please contact Leon D. Freeman, AICP, Community Studies East Section, Advance Planning Division, at (213) 974-6406 or LFreeman@planning.lacounty.gov.

Respectfully submitted,



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Director of Regional Planning

AJB:DS:MK:LF:es

Attachments:

1. Regional Planning Resolution
2. Draft Zoning Ordinance (Includes entire Specific Plan)
3. Community Plan Land Use Amendments
4. Community Plan Zone Change
5. Commission Staff Reports and Correspondence
6. Final Environmental Impact Report

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C: Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
Assessor
Chief Executive Office
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Public Works

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