



Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning

Planning for the Challenges Ahead



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SUBDIVISION AND ZONING ORDINANCE INTERPRETATION NO. 2021-03 – BATTERY ELECTRIC STORAGE SYSTEMS

PURPOSE

This memorandum provides an official interpretation of the Department of Regional Planning regarding the definition of utility-scale energy storage devices (Energy Storage Devices). This memorandum is intended to serve as interim guidance for staff until such interpretation is superseded by subsequent interpretations or is incorporated into Title 22 (Planning and Zoning) of the the Los Angeles County Code (County Code).

APPLICABILITY

This memorandum is applicable to all parcels within unincorporated Los Angeles County and is effective as of the date of this memo.

INTERPRETATION

County Code Section 22.14.050 defines “Electric Distribution Substation (EDS)” and “Electric Transmission Substation (ETS).” The primary difference between these uses pertains to the conveyance of energy to users, with ETS typically being larger in volume than EDS. For purposes of defining energy storage devices as a land use, energy storage devices shall be considered most similar to EDS.

BACKGROUND

With the recent growth in renewable energy production, particularly utility-scale solar and wind resources, there has been an increased need in the development and deployment

of Battery Electric Storage Systems (BESS). These devices are essentially large battery systems with appurtenant equipment that store energy typically produced by renewable energy sources such as sunlight or wind. This energy is then released to the electrical grid during evening or peak periods, and can help even out imbalances that occur between the production and consumption of renewable energy.

BESS devices are similar in size, bulk, and use to EDS. These utility-like devices are typically comprised of 40-foot-by-8-foot steel containers on concrete pads to house battery systems, pad-mounted transformers, and switchgear.

JUSTIFICATION

EDS are allowed in all zones with either a Site Plan Review (SPR) or a Conditional Use Permit (CUP), except the Mixed Use Development Zone where it is prohibited. ETS are allowed only in commercial and industrial zones with a CUP and SPR respectively and in Open Space and Watershed Zones with an SPR. Unlike the conduit nature of transmission substations, BESS are more similar to EDS.

In conclusion, to regulate these facilities in a consistent manner and to properly regulate them for community compatibility, the use most closely associated with them shall be EDS. Development standards for EDSs, Section 22.140.200, shall apply to BESS.

AJB:DJD:MG:SD:lm

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