



Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning

Planning for the Challenges Ahead



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REPORT TO THE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE ISSUED:	April 15, 2021	
MEETING DATE:	April 28, 2021	AGENDA 6 ITEM:
PROJECT NUMBER:	2019-003993-(5)	
PROJECT NAME:	Elizabeth Lake and Lake Hughes Community Standards District	
PLAN NUMBER(S):	Advance Planning Case No. RPPL2019002602	
SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT:	5	
PROJECT LOCATION:	Elizabeth Lake and Lake Hughes	
PROJECT PLANNER:	Tahirah Farris, AICP, Regional Planner tfarris@planning.lacounty.gov	

RECOMMENDATION

The Department of Regional Planning (“Department”) staff (“staff”) recommends that the Regional Planning Commission (“RPC”) approve the attached resolution (Exhibit B – Draft Resolution of the RPC) recommending **APPROVAL** to the County of Los Angeles (“County”) Board of Supervisors (“Board”) of the Elizabeth Lake and Lake Hughes Community Standards District (“CSD”), Project Number 2019-003993-(5), Advance Planning Case No. RPPL2019002602.

Staff recommends the following motion:

I MOVE THAT THE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING AND FIND THAT THE PROJECT IS CATEGORICALLY EXEMPT PURSUANT TO STATE AND LOCAL CEQA GUIDELINES.

I ALSO MOVE THAT THE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION ADOPT THE ATTACHED RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING APPROVAL TO THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE ELIZABETH LAKE AND LAKE HUGHES COMMUNITY STANDARDS DISTRICT, PROJECT NO. 2019-003993-(5), ADVANCE PLANNING NO. RPPL2019002602

PROJECT DESCRIPTION**A. Project**

Advance Planning Case No. RPPL2019002602 is a proposed ordinance amending Title 22 (Planning and Zoning) of the Los Angeles County Code (“County Code”) to update the Elizabeth Lake and Lake Hughes CSD, Chapter 22.322, which was established in 2009.

The unincorporated communities of Elizabeth Lake and Lake Hughes are located in the southwestern portion of the Antelope Valley, northwest of Leona Valley, and are partially within the Angeles National Forest (Exhibit C – GIS Maps). Some portions of the communities are developed or partially developed with single family homes, light agricultural uses, and a limited amount of commercial and industrial uses. Other portions of the communities are largely undeveloped, are generally not served by existing infrastructure, contain environmental resources, such as Significant Ecological Areas (SEAs) and Hillside Management Areas (HMAs), and are subject to safety constraints, such as the San Andreas Fault and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. The San Andreas SEA is the County’s second largest SEA and includes several diverse biomes and important linkages for wildlife movement. For example, the Tehachapi Mountains within this area may be an important topographic reference for migrating birds, and provide high elevation foraging grounds along the migratory route. The several mountain ranges that meet at the western end of the SEA provide a valuable link for gene flow between divergent subspecies, varieties, and populations of many species. The SEA also includes many drainage washes that extend onto the Antelope Valley floor towards resources. These washes provide an important linkage for animals traveling between the Antelope Valley floor, buttes, and the western part of the San Gabriel Mountains.

The communities share one rural town center area in Lake Hughes, located along Elizabeth Lake Road between Trail I and Mountain View Road, west of the Lake Hughes Community Center. The rural town center services the daily needs of residents and provides local employment opportunities through rural commercial and light industrial uses.

The community of Elizabeth Lake includes rural town areas. The primary rural town area surrounds the Elizabeth Lake water body. North of Elizabeth Lake Road, the primary rural town is generally bounded by Hawk Drive, Gist Drive, and hillsides to the north; Munz Ranch Road to the west; and Peekaboo Road and hillsides to the east. South of Elizabeth Lake Road and the Elizabeth Lake water body, the primary rural town area is generally bounded by Sandrock Drive and Ranch Club Road to the north; the National Forest boundary to the west; Ranch Club Road and Kiptree Drive to the south; and Elizabeth Lake Road to the east. The privately-owned portion of the Elizabeth Lake water body is considered to be one of the communities’ rural preserve areas.

A secondary rural town area in Elizabeth Lake is located north of Johnson Road between Leadhill Drive and Limeridge Drive and is partially developed.

The community of Lake Hughes also includes a rural town area. The rural town extends west from the rural town center area and is generally bounded by Elizabeth Lake Road, Elderberry Street, High Trail, Lone Pine Trail, and hillsides to the north; Muir Drive and an unnamed road approximately 1,500 feet west of Lake Hughes Road to the west; Desswood Road, New View Drive, and South Shore Drive to the south, and Mountain View Road to the east.

The remaining lands in the community are effectively rural preserve areas with infrastructure constraints, environmental resources, and safety constraints.

Nearly the entirety of the community is located within a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (“VHFHSZ”) and the Rural Outdoor Lighting District. A select few parcels surrounding the north and south of Pine Canyon Road are in a Moderate Fire Hazard Zone. Many properties also fall within a Liquefaction Zone and Seismic Zone, with the San Andreas Fault running throughout the community along Elizabeth Lake Road and Pine Canyon Road. A 100-year Flood Zone also runs through the center of the community along Elizabeth Lake Road and Pine Canyon Road.

The CSD implements the Antelope Valley Area Plan (“AVAP”) Rural Preservation Strategy with development standards that preserve, protect, and enhance the community’s rural character and maintain sensitive features, such as significant ridgelines and HMAs; and ensure application of rural street standards, grading and vegetation protections, signage restrictions, standards of the Rural Outdoor Lighting District, standards for trail dedication and design, residential and commercial design standards, and a modification process requiring discretionary review with a public hearing.

B. Project Background

On June 16, 2015, the Board adopted the AVAP, which includes goals and policies applicable to the unincorporated areas within the Antelope Valley. As part of its implementation, the AVAP specifies that a comprehensive review shall be required of all existing CSDs, and may include a program to amend any existing CSDs, or prepare and adopt any proposed new CSDs (AVAP, Page IMP-6).

On June 13, 2018, the RPC initiated the Antelope Valley CSDs Update Program, which includes this CSD.

C. Major Elements and Key Components

The AVAP identifies the purpose of CSDs as community-specific zoning regulations that shall be consistent with the goals and policies of the AVAP. Such regulations shall be instituted only when a unique or detrimental condition exists within a community that prevents implementation of the AVAP (AVAP, Page I-11).

The following standards and procedures are included in the CSD to maintain and enhance the community’s unique rural character:

- **Fences** – Requirement for fences to be open to allow for the passage of wildlife and maintain the visual aesthetic of the rural community.
- **Hillside Management and Significant Ridgelines** – Design guidelines to protect hillsides and significant ridgelines.
- **Signs** – Prohibition of outdoor advertising signs, roof signs, pole signs, and internally illuminated signs; limited size of wall business signs and monument signs; and specify provisions for temporary real estate signs. The proposed signage standards set more restrictive limits, but still allow for the promotion of local businesses at a scale that is compatible with the community.
- **Trails** – Guidelines for the development of trails within new subdivisions or with discretionary land use permits.
- **Vegetation** – Requirement of a discretionary land use permit for vegetation removal with a minimum threshold of ground disturbance exceeding 30 percent of the gross area of the lot or 30,000 square feet.
- **Subdivisions** – Requirement of a minimum 2.5 net acres, requirement to underground utilities where feasible, prohibition of gated or walled subdivisions, as nearly the entirety of the CSD area is within a VHFHSZ, and prohibition of density-controlled development.
- **Utilities** – Requirement that small-scale solar energy systems be placed five feet from property lines and placed outside of required setbacks on lots greater than five or more gross acres. Requirement that wireless telecommunication facilities be designed to conform with their surroundings.
- **Residential** – Limitation on the height of residential buildings to two stories and require specified materials for building facades to be consistent with rural community character.
- **Commercial** – Limitation on the height of new commercial buildings to keep the rural look of the community with lower profile buildings. Requirement for a front yard setback of 10 feet for new commercial buildings.
- **Rural Outdoor Lighting District** – Requirement for additional shielding of exterior lighting and prohibition of flood lighting consistent with the Rural Outdoor Lighting District to maintain dark skies.
- **Notification and Modifications** – Requirement for all notification by mail to have a 1,000-foot notification radius consistent with Section 22.222.160 (Notification Radius) as well as an expanded radius to include a minimum of 15 parcels of real property in cases where the 1,000-foot notification radius does not include a minimum of 15 parcels. Requirement of a discretionary process for modifications.

ANALYSIS

A. Draft Plan/Ordinance Updates

Staff posted the public hearing draft for public review on the Department of Regional Planning's website on March 24, 2021.

B. General Plan Consistency

Policies in both the General Plan and AVAP support the communities' vision for rural character. To the communities, rural means large lots with minimal development;; narrower roads without curbs, gutters, or sidewalks; grading and vegetation protections; preservation of sensitive features including hillsides and significant ridgelines; and enhancement of the rural community character through consistent residential and commercial design.

The General Plan defines "rural" as a way of life characterized by living in a non-urban or agricultural environment at low densities without typical urban services. Urban services and facilities not normally found in rural areas, unless determined to be necessary for public safety, include curbs, gutters and sidewalks; street lighting, landscaping and traffic signalization; public solid waste disposal, integrated water and sewerage system; and commercial facilities dependent upon large consumer volumes, such as regional shopping centers, sports stadiums, and theaters.

The following policies of the General Plan are applicable to the project:

Signage and Commercial Development Standards

- *Policy C/NR 13.6: Prohibit outdoor advertising and billboards along scenic routes, corridors, waterways, and other scenic areas.*
- *Policy LU 6.1: Protect rural communities from the encroachment of incompatible development that conflict with existing land use patterns and service standards.*
- *Policy LU 6.3: Encourage low density and low intensity development in rural areas that is compatible with rural community character, preserves open space, and conserves agricultural land.*
- *Policy LU 10.3: Consider the built environment of the surrounding area and location in the design and scale of new or remodeled buildings, architectural styles, and reflect appropriate features such as massing, materials, color, detailing or ornament.*

Vegetation

- *Policy LU 6.2: Encourage land uses and developments that are compatible with the natural environment and landscape.*
- *Policy AQ 2.3: Support the conservation of natural resources and vegetation to reduce and mitigate air pollution impacts.*
- *Policy S 3.4: Reduce the risk of wildland fire hazards through the use of regulations and performance standards, such as fire resistant building materials, vegetation management, fuel modification and other fire hazard reduction programs.*
- *Policy S 3.5: Encourage the use of low-volume and well-maintained vegetation that is compatible with the area's natural vegetative habitats.*

Highway and Local Streets

Narrow roads, limits on use of curbs, gutters and sidewalks.

- *Policy M 7.5: In rural areas, require rural highway and street standards that minimize the width of paving and the placement of curbs, gutters, sidewalks, street lighting, and traffic signals, except where necessary for public safety.*

Hillside Management Areas and Significant Ridgelines

- *Policy C/NR 13.2: Protect ridgelines from incompatible development that diminishes their scenic value.*
- *Policy C/NR 13.8: Manage development in HMAs to protect their natural and scenic character and minimize risks from natural hazards, such as fire, flood, erosion, and landslides.*

Lighting

- *Policy C/NR 13.3: Reduce light trespass, light pollution, and other threats to scenic resources.*

Subdivisions

Prohibition of gated or walled subdivisions.

- *Policy LU 10.3: Consider the built environment of the surrounding area and location in the design and scale of new or remodeled buildings, architectural styles, and reflect appropriate features such as massing, materials, color, detailing or ornament.*
- *Policy LU 10.12: Discourage gated entry subdivisions (“gated communities”) to improve neighborhood access and circulation, improve emergency access, and encourage social cohesion.*

Undergrounding utilities

- *Policy PS/F 6.6: Encourage the construction of utilities underground, where feasible*

Trails

- *Policy P/R 4.1: Create multi-use trails to accommodate all users.*
- *Policy P/R 4.2: Develop staging areas and trail heads at strategic locations to accommodate multi-use trail users.*
- *Policy P/R 4.3: Develop a network of feeder trails into regional trails.*
- *Policy P/R 4.4: Maintain and design multi-purpose trails in ways that minimize circulation conflicts among trail users.*

The following policies of the AVAP are applicable to the project:

Highways and Local Streets

Narrow roads, limits on use of curbs, gutters, and sidewalks.

- *Policy M 3.2: In rural areas, require rural highway standards that minimize the width of paving and placement of curbs, gutters, sidewalks, street lighting, and traffic signals, as adopted by the Department of Public Works.*

- *Policy M 4.1: Require rural local street standards that minimize the width of paving and placement of curbs, gutters, sidewalks, street lighting, and traffic signals, as adopted by the Department of Public Works.*

Hillsides Management Areas and Significant Ridgelines

- *Policy COS 5.3: Require new development in Hillside Management Areas to comply with applicable Zoning Code requirements, ensuring that development occurs on the most environmentally suitable portions of the land.*
- *Policy COS 5.4: Require appropriate development standards in Hillside Management Areas that minimize grading and alteration of the land's natural contours, ensure that development pads mimic natural contours, and ensure that individual structures are appropriately designed to minimize visual impacts.*
- *Policy COS 5.6: Restrict development on buttes and designated significant ridgelines by requiring appropriate buffer zones.*

Lighting

Dark skies

- *Policy 15.4: Require compliance with the provisions of the Rural Outdoor Lighting District throughout the unincorporated Antelope Valley.*

Subdivisions

Prohibition of gated or walled subdivisions.

- *Policy PS 1.2: Require that all new developments provide sufficient access for emergency vehicles and sufficient evacuation routes for residents and animals.*

Minimum lot size requirements for density-controlled development.

- *Policy COS 19.1: When new development is required to preserve open space, requires design with large contiguous open space areas that maximize protection of environmental and scenic resources.*
- *Policy COS 19.2: Allow large contiguous open space areas to be distributed across individual lots so that new development preserves open space while maintaining large lot sizes that are consistent with a rural environment, provided that such open spaces are permanently restricted through dead restrictions.*

Undergrounding utilities

- *Policy COS 14.1: Require that new transmission lines be placed underground whenever physically feasible.*
- *Policy COS 14.2: If new transmission lines cannot feasibly be placed underground due to physical constraints, require that they be collocated with existing transmission lines, or along existing transmission corridors, whenever physically feasible.*
- *Policy COS 14.3: If new transmission lines cannot be feasibly be placed underground or feasibly collocated with existing transmission lines or along existing transmission corridors due to Antelope Valley Area Plan physical*

constraints, direct new transmission lines to locations where environmental and visual impacts will be minimized.

- *Policy COS 14.7: Require that electrical power lines in new residential developments be placed underground.*

Trails

- *Policy PS 8.7: Provide trails, bikeways, and bicycle routes for recreational purposes, as directed in the policies of the Mobility Element.*
- *Policy M 10.1: Implement the adopted Trails Plan for the Antelope Valley in cooperation with the cities of Lancaster and Palmdale. Ensure adequate funding on an ongoing basis.*
- *Policy M 10.3: Maximize fair and reasonable opportunities to secure additional trail routes (dedicated multi-use trail easements) from willing property owners.*
- *Policy M 10.4: Ensure trail access by establishing trailheads with adequate parking and access to public transit, where appropriate and feasible.*
- *Policy M 10.5: Locate and design trail routes to minimize impacts to sensitive environmental resources and ecosystems.*
- *Policy M 10.6: Where trail connections are not fully implemented, collaboratively work to establish safe interim connections.*
- *Policy M 10.7: Ensure that existing trails and trailheads are properly maintained by the relevant agencies.*
- *Policy M 10.8: Solicit community input to ensure that trails are compatible with local needs and character.*

Utilities

- *Policy COS 12.2: Require appropriate development standards for individual renewable energy systems to minimize potential impacts to surrounding properties. Simplify the permitting process for individual renewable energy systems that meet those development standards.*

Vegetation

- *Policy COS 9.7: Encourage reforestation and the planting of trees to sequester greenhouse gas emissions.*
- *Policy COS 16.1: Except within Economic Opportunity Areas, require new development to minimize removal of native vegetation. Discourage the clear-scraping of land and ensure that a large percentage of land is left in its natural state.*
- *Policy COS 16.2: Maximize the use of native vegetation in landscaped areas, provided that vegetation meets all applicable requirements of the Fire Department and the Department of Public Works.*
- *Policy LU 1.3: Maintain the majority of the unincorporated Antelope Valley as Rural Land, allowing for agriculture, equestrian and animal-keeping uses, and single-family homes on large lots.*

- *Policy ED 1.7: Promote farming and other agricultural activities that contribute to the Antelope Valley economy.*
- *Policy PS 1.3: Promote fire prevention measures, such as brush clearance and the creation of defensible space, to reduce fire protection costs.*

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

The project qualifies for categorical exemptions (Class 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 11, 20, and 21) under CEQA and the County environmental guidelines. The standards proposed as part of the project will be more restrictive than those found in the County Code and will also be more environmentally protective. The CSD includes additional reviews of the vegetation and landscaping proposals for discretionary projects; development standards for signage, which is considered an accessory use; limitations on the height of commercial buildings to align aesthetics with adjacent residential uses and limits to the hours of operation; protections for hillside management areas and significant ridgelines; and subdivision standards to prohibit gated or walled subdivisions, require a minimum lot size, and require undergrounding of utilities, where feasible.

Road widths and design standards for new subdivisions will be consistent with the existing rural character of the area and discretionary projects will continue to be reviewed for the potential inclusion of trails by the Department of Parks and Recreation. New subdivisions will have a required area of at least 2.5 net acres, which is consistent with the Department of Public Health's lot size requirement for traditional septic systems. All proposed development standards are consistent with current practices or provide additional limitations on development which further protect the community's natural beauty. Therefore, staff recommends that the Regional Planning Commission find that the project is categorically exempt from CEQA. A Categorical Exemption (Exhibit D – Environmental Determination) was issued for the project.

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

A. County Department Comments and Recommendations

1. Staff consulted with Public Works, Public Health, Parks and Recreation, and Fire on November 17, 2020.
2. In a clearance letter dated December 16, 2020, Parks and Recreation requested language revisions under Trails to include consistent language provided in other CSDs. Staff addressed this recommendation in the CSD.
3. Staff received clearance letters from Public Works on December 16, 2020, from Public Health on December 23, 2020 and Fire on August 5, 2020. Clearance was given by Fire on December 10, 2021 with no comments.

B. Project Outreach and Engagement

On May 17, 2018, staff attended a CSD Committee meeting with community members to identify and discuss the topics that they would like to see addressed in the CSD. Staff created and distributed a visual summary of the topics for the CSD, called the Elizabeth

Lake and Lake Hughes Community Concept Draft (Exhibit G – Elizabeth Lake and Lake Hughes Community Concept Draft).

Staff regularly attended the meetings of the Association of Rural Town Councils and briefed the attendees on the progress of the overall CSD effort on May 30, 2018; June 27, 2018; January 30, 2019; and May 29, 2019.

Also, staff conducted project outreach at community events, including the Leona Valley Cherry Festival on June 2, 2018; the Valley Fever Walk on August 4, 2018; and Parks After Dark events held on July 27, 2018, July 28, 2018, August 3, 2018, August 1, 2019, and August 2, 2019.

Due to the COVID-19 health emergency, which began on March 16, 2020, community meetings were moved to an online setting.

Following the release of the Elizabeth Lake and Lake Hughes CSD Community Concept Draft in June 2020, staff emailed the document to the CSD Committee to share with their community contact list. Staff also included the notice in an email blast and posts on social media. The notices included a link to the project website where comments could be submitted through an online form. From this outreach, staff only received comments from the CSD Committee.

A teleconference meeting with the CSD Committee was held on August 5, 2020. Staff continued to work with the CSD Committee to finalize the draft CSD language.

Staff held another meeting with the CSD Committee on September 22, 2020 to discuss the strategy for finalizing a draft of the CSD.

The majority of comments from the CSD Committee are focused on limiting development in the area and protecting the features that the community defines as “rural,” including hillsides and significant ridgelines. The CSD Committee expressed a desire to preserve dark skies; a preference of small signage; new roads that are rural in character and do not include curbs, gutters, or sidewalks unless necessary; open, see-through fencing to support wildlife passage and fit with the rural character of residential properties; residential and commercial design that uses specific materials to be consistent with the rural character; minimum lot size; no walled or gated subdivisions; maximum height and required setbacks for commercial structures; restrictions on grading; and vegetation protections.

The CSD Committee also expressed a desire to include standards for agricultural uses including commercial cannabis production. Staff met with various County agencies including the Office of Cannabis Management as well as the Agricultural Commissioner and determined to exclude language related to agricultural regulation or cannabis production in the CSD, as these topics are strictly regulated by the aforementioned agencies.

On February 4, 2021, staff held a CSD Committee meeting to reconcile any outstanding issues with the community prior to the public release of the CSD. Staff had a follow-up meeting with the CSD Committee on February 9, 2021. Staff provided additional information on February 25, 2021 and shared a final draft CSD with the CSD Committee on March 4, 2021.

Staff mailed a courtesy RPC public hearing notice (Exhibit E – Notice of Public Hearing) to 1,854 property owners and stakeholders on March 18, 2021. Staff also noticed the RPC public hearing in the Antelope Valley Press on March 24, 2021. The public hearing notice and materials were also posted on the Department’s website on March 24, 2021 and promoted through social media.

Following the release of the initial draft of the Elizabeth Lake and Lake Hughes CSD on, staff sent an email to all individuals on the project mailing list and distributed a digital flyer on social media. Staff also provided the digital flyer to the CSD Committee to share with their email lists. The email information included the release of the draft, provided ways to submit comments to the Department, and information on a public meeting on April 17, 2021 to discuss the content of the draft before the public hearing.

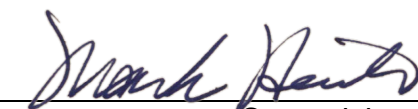
Staff held an online community meeting on April 17, 2021 using the Zoom meeting platform. A total of 14 people registered for the event.

C. Public Comments

Following the release of the draft CSD on March 24, 2021, staff received a comment from the Lakes Town Council representatives to revise language under the requirements for Subdivisions to prohibit density-controlled development. Staff incorporated the recommended change reflected in the most recent CSD draft dated April 15, 2021.

Report

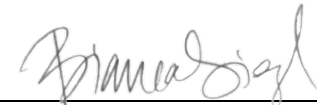
Reviewed By:



Mark S. Herwick, Supervising Regional Planner

Report

Approved By:



Bianca Siegl, Deputy Director

LIST OF ATTACHED EXHIBITS	
EXHIBIT A	Ordinance
EXHIBIT B	Draft Resolution of the RPC
EXHIBIT C	GIS Maps
EXHIBIT D	Environmental Determination
EXHIBIT E	Notice of Public Hearing
EXHIBIT F	Agency Correspondence
EXHIBIT G	Elizabeth Lake & Lake Hughes Community Concept Draft
EXHIBIT H	Public Correspondence