

REPORT TO THE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE ISSUED:	October 4, 2022	
MEETING DATE:	October 19, 2022	AGENDA
		ITEM: 6
PROJECT NUMBER:	2019-003978-(5)	
PROJECT NAME:	Pearblossom Community Standards District	
PLAN NUMBER(S):	Advance Planning Case No. RPPL2019002601	
SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT:	5	
PROJECT LOCATION:	The community of Pearblossom	
PROJECT PLANNER:	Caroline Chen, Regional Planner cchen@planning.lacounty.gov	

RECOMMENDATION

LA County Planning staff (“staff”) recommends the Regional Planning Commission (“RPC”) adopt the attached resolution recommending approval to the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors the Pearblossom Community Standards District, Project Number 2019-003978-(5), Advance Planning Case No. RPPL2019002601.

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 OF THE PEARBLOSSOM COMMUNITY STANDARDS DISTRICT, PROJECT NUMBER 2019-003978-(5), ADVANCE PLANNING NUMBER RPPL2019002601 TO THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, WITH THE ADDITIONAL CHANGES AS PROPOSED BY STAFF.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A. Project

Advance Planning Case No. RPPL2019002601 is a proposed ordinance amending Title 22 (Planning and Zoning) of the Los Angeles County (“County”) Code to establish the Pearblossom Community Standards District (“CSD”).

The unincorporated community of Pearblossom is situated in the southeast Antelope Valley. At an altitude of 3,050 feet above sea level, this foothill community is higher than most of the other communities in the Antelope Valley and enjoys a more moderate climate than most of the Antelope Valley. Pearblossom is bounded by the communities of Lake Los Angeles and Sun Village to the north, Llano to the east, Juniper Hills to the south, and Littlerock to the west. The CSD is bounded by Avenue T to the north, 155th Street East to the east, Fort Tejon Road to the south, and 106th Street up to 116th Street East at the northwest corner of the CSD. Pearblossom Highway (CA-138) bisects the Pearblossom CSD and is the community’s main street and rural town center area. Nearly all commercial properties are situated on the south side of Pearblossom Highway and the north side of Pearblossom Highway is largely undeveloped. About two dozen multifamily units are located in the rural town area south of the rural town center area. Most residential development in Pearblossom comprise single family residences on lots two-thirds of an acre and larger in size. Most other parcels in Pearblossom that are vacant are designated rural preserve areas. Many of the roads in the community are private and unpaved. Pearblossom is not connected to public sewer or natural gas infrastructure, and some homes have small-scale solar.

Pearblossom has many natural hazards. South of Pearblossom Highway, half of the community is situated in a High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, while the other half is situated in a Moderate Fire Hazard Severity Zone. To the east of Pearblossom is Big Rock Creek, an alluvial fan that originates from the Angeles National Forest, spreading out between Pearblossom and the community of Llano to the east. Big Rock Creek is a groundwater recharge area for the Antelope Valley and is also a Mineral Resource Zone for Los Angeles County, which stretches northward toward the community of Lake Los Angeles. The Federal Emergency Management Agency designates this area, which comprises about one third of Pearblossom, a Special Flood Hazard Area (100-year [1 percent annual chance] flood area). A smaller 500-year flood hazard area (500-year [0.2 percent annual chance] flood area) is found in the western portion of the CSD. The active San Andreas Fault appears in two places within the Pearblossom CSD: on the western edge of the Pearblossom CSD, just south of Pearblossom Highway, and a more extensive stretch that is just outside the southern boundary of the Pearblossom CSD on the other side of Fort Tejon Road. A small number of properties are in Liquefaction and Seismic Zones. Land undisturbed by agriculture is found in two areas in Pearblossom: west of 121st Street East, and along the eastern boundary of the

CSD near 155th Street East, which is part of the Antelope Valley Significant Ecological Area (SEA). Joshua trees and California junipers are found throughout Pearblossom.

The Pearblossom CSD is located inside the East Economic Opportunity Area with properties along Pearblossom Highway (CA-138), which is the community's main commercial corridor. This rural town center area extends from 121st Street East and to 133rd Street East. Designated for rural commercial and light industrial uses, nearly all of Pearblossom's development is located south of Pearblossom Highway, leaving the community an unobstructed view of the Antelope Valley toward the north. In the northeastern area of the Pearblossom CSD, a small number of parcels occupied by gravel mines are zoned for heavy industrial use. The Southern Pacific railroad line runs east to west across the northern half of Pearblossom and is used by mining companies to transport gravel. Also, on the north side of Pearblossom Highway is land owned by the Bureau of Land Management; Jackrabbit Flats, a wildlife sanctuary managed by the County; and a pumping plant for the California State Water Project which pumps water from the California Aqueduct toward San Bernardino. To the south of Pearblossom Highway and adjacent to Big Rock Creek, are two more wildlife sanctuaries that are also managed by the County: Longview Wildlife Sanctuary and Blalock Wildlife Sanctuary. Pearblossom also has a County-managed park, three gas stations, a mobile home park, an elementary school, churches, eateries, stores, a community center, a post office, and a fire station.

The CSD implements the Antelope Valley Area Plan ("AVAP") Rural Preservation Strategy with development standards that preserve, protect, and enhance the community's heritage and rural character. For Pearblossom, this means celebrating and continuing its artistic and creative legacy as the home and/or focus of writers and artists such as Aldous Huxley, Ruth Prue, and David Hockney. The community also values protecting the natural environment, including western Joshua trees, California juniper, and cholla cacti, and demonstrates a self-reliant and resourceful attitude toward living in the high desert. Furthermore, the community wants to preserve its small-town, rural character.

Standards that are community-wide in the Pearblossom CSD will include regulations that restrict the location of alcoholic beverage sales; require graffiti clean-up; preserve vegetation; require rural road standards; allow display of rural artifacts; specify signs and streetlights; require trail easements; prohibit gated communities; and require new subdivisions to connect new streets to the existing road network.

Standards for agricultural and residential zones include regulations for cargo shipping containers and onsite materials storage areas for use as residential accessory storage; fence and wall maximum heights; minimum distances between buildings; personal vehicle

clarifications; residential ranch signs allowances; minimum subdivision lot sizes; and open space for new subdivisions of five units or more.

Standards for rural, commercial, and industrial zones include regulations for the Modern Rustic design standard; community amenities of new developments; maximum building floor areas; the placement of drive-through facilities away from Pearblossom Highway; maximum height and floor areas; minimum distances between buildings; landscape requirements; permeable paving; sign provisions; cul-de-sac prohibitions; wall and screening requirements; and requirements for wireless communication facilities to enhance rural character.

The Blossom Community Corridor, which includes the rural town center area, prohibits impactful uses such as truck sales, rentals, and storage, including incidental repair from being established inside the rural town center area. The notification radius for discretionary applications is expanded to 1,500 feet to ensure adequate reach among residents living on larger lots in Pearblossom. Furthermore, a conditional use permit is required to modify CSD standards for a specific project.

B. Project Background

On June 16, 2015, the Board adopted the Antelope Valley Area Plan (“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 (AVAP, Page IMP 6). 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). On June 13, 2018, the Regional Planning Commission (“RPC”) initiated the Antelope Valley CSDs Update Program, which includes establishing new CSDs for communities such as Pearblossom.

C. Major Elements and Key Components

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

Application and Review Procedures

- **Notification** – Notices of discretionary permits are required to be mailed to property owners located within a 1,500-foot radius of the applicant’s property.

Community-Wide Development Standards

- **Alcoholic Beverage Sales** – Alcoholic beverage sales for off-site consumption are prohibited on parcels that are within 1,000 feet of any public school or place used for religious worship.
- **Graffiti** – Property owners are required to remove graffiti within fourteen calendar days (under “Property Maintenance”).
- **Highway and Local Streets** – Public Works is required to follow alternate rural highway standards that eschew curbs, gutters, and sidewalks
- **Preservation of Vegetation** – This standard requires a minor conditional use permit for disturbance of areas with vegetation, including ground disturbance and scraping, over 25,000 and up to 40,000 square feet, and a conditional use permit for disturbance of areas with vegetation over 40,000 square feet on a parcel that is two gross acres or larger. No more than 70% of vegetation shall be removed from the acreage of any property that is two gross acres or larger.
- **Rural Artifacts** – The display of commonly found rural equipment, such as tractors or mining carts, is permitted with standards.
- **Signs** – Billboards, internally illuminated signs, and digital and electronic signs are prohibited. External lighting of signs is required to have externally mounted light fixtures that focus light downward onto the sign with no light trespass.
- **Streetlights** – Streetlights are required to use the “Mission Bell” design or equivalent that is compliant with the Rural Outdoor Lighting District and that is compatible with the Modern Rustic design standard.
- **Subdivisions** – Gated communities are prohibited. New streets are required to connect to existing streets. Where feasible, utility wires and cables are placed underground.
- **Trails** – New subdivisions are required to provide multiuse trail easements and feeder routes. Where Parks and Recreation is not required to maintain trails, new subdivisions shall maintain trails through a homeowner’s association or special district as a condition of approval.
- **Wireless Communications Facilities** – Wireless communications facilities shall enhance the community’s rural character.

Zone-Specific Development Standards

Residential and Agricultural Zones

- **Cargo Shipping Containers** – Accessory cargo shipping containers on agriculturally zoned parcels are permitted with screening, and the number of containers allowed is based on lot size (under “Property Maintenance”).

- **Distance Between Buildings** – The distance between main buildings in development projects that have five or more units is 20 feet; the distance between main buildings and accessory buildings in development projects that have five or more units is 10 feet.
- **Fences and Walls** – The height of fences, walls, and gates within front yards is allowed up to six feet, and in the interior side and rear yards, up to eight feet.
- **Onsite Materials Storage Area** – Storage of materials incidental to residential uses, including salvage materials for art projects and hobbies, is permitted in a contiguous and screened 400 square feet area, no higher than six feet in height (under “Property Maintenance”).
- **Personal Vehicles** – Pickup trucks and vehicles under 10,000 pounds Gross Vehicle Weight are allowed to park where passenger vehicles park.
- **Residential Ranch Entrance Signs** – Signs are allowed up to 50 square feet at a maximum height of 20 feet per parcel, and a second sign is allowed on properties with larger frontages.
- **Subdivisions** – New lots are required to be at least two gross acres in area; new subdivisions with five or more units are required to have minimum open space requirements.

Pearblossom Highway (CA-138) is the main street of Pearblossom’s rural town center area. The Pearblossom Town Council informed staff that since Caltrans improved Pearblossom Highway in 2019, drivers began traveling at higher speeds on the road, and creating a hazard for drivers which resulted in nine resident fatalities. Data from the California Integrated Traffic Records System confirmed the high number of crashes that occur on the stretch of Pearblossom Highway in Pearblossom.

The Pearblossom community is concerned about uses that could create more crash risks which may include drive-throughs with long queuing lines, and truck services. The Pearblossom CSD addresses this potential risk by requiring drive-through facilities to be located on parcels at least 300 feet. The Blossom Community Corridor addresses this by requiring truck services to be located on parcels at least 500 feet away from the Pearblossom Highway right-of-way.

Rural, Commercial, and Industrial Zones

- **Aesthetic: Modern Rustic** – The Modern Rustic design standard applies to all new commercial and industrial developments or expansion of an existing legally established use. Developments are required to use three building materials from a list of five building

materials on at least 65 percent of the building frontage.¹

- **Amenities** – New developments are required to provide trash receptacles in addition to two other pedestrian amenities from a list.
- **Building Maximum Floor Area** – New commercial developments are limited to a maximum floor area of 15,000 square feet per structure; new industrial developments are limited to a maximum floor area of 25,000 square feet per structure.
- **Distance Between Buildings** – The distance between main buildings is 20 feet; the distance between accessory buildings and main buildings is 15 feet.
- **Drive-Through Facilities** – Drive-through facilities are prohibited on parcels within 300 feet of Pearblossom Highway (CA-138). In addition, a conditional use permit is required for new drive-through facilities associated with food service.
- **Height** – New commercial buildings have a height limit of 30 feet; new industrial buildings have a height limit of 25 feet.
- **Landscape** – Lots will have minimum landscape requirements by acreage. In addition, commercial and industrial lots adjacent to residential and agricultural lots are required to have a 25-foot landscape buffer along the side lot line adjoining the Residential or Agricultural-zoned property, and parking lots have minimum landscape requirements.
- **Paving** – Businesses are required to use pervious materials for paving and are allowed to use wheel stops in lieu of parking space striping.
- **Signs** – Businesses with narrow frontages are allowed to have roof, freestanding, and wall business signs, including hand-painted wall signs. Signs have maximum areas, heights, and placement allowances.
- **Subdivisions** – New lots are required to be at least one gross acre in area; no cul-de-sacs are allowed.
- **Wall and Screening Requirements** – Certain industrial and commercial uses are required to have a solid wall or view-obscuring fence of at least eight feet in height along all street frontages to obscure view of operations.

Area-Specific Development Standards

- **Blossom Community Corridor** – Certain industrial and commercial uses are prohibited in the Blossom Community Corridor; specific landscape requirements apply to this area.

¹ The five building materials are: real wood, steel, natural stone, brick, and glass (textured or frosted).

Modification of Development Standards

- **Modification of CSD Standards** – Modifications to the CSD require a conditional use permit.

As part of the Pearblossom CSD, staff is collaborating with the CSD Committee to develop a Pearblossom CSD Implementation Guide to help residents comply with the CSD standards. The Guide will include examples of proper screening for accessory storage, vegetation preservation practices, Rural Outdoor Lighting District-compliant outdoor lighting, and “Modern Rustic” building materials, among other topics. Once completed, this document will be posted on the LA County Planning website as reference documents.

ANALYSIS

A. Ordinance Draft

The public hearing draft (Exhibit A – Ordinance Draft) was posted for public review on LA County Planning’s website and the Pearblossom CSD project website on August 23, 2022.

B. General Plan Consistency

Policies in both the General Plan and AVAP support the community’s vision for rural character. 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. The objective of this CSD is to augment the Zoning Code, which shapes development in urban and suburban contexts, with an overlay of standards that guide future development in a manner that recognizes, honors, and supports rural practices and values. Key practices and values that inform Pearblossom’s rural identity include: (1) preserving a small-town ambiance through small-scale developments; (2) protecting the natural environment; (3) enabling community resilience and resourcefulness; and (4) supporting the arts and creativity.

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

- *Policy LU 3.1: Encourage the protection and conservation of areas with natural resources, and SEAs.*
- *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 6.2: Encourage land uses and developments that are compatible with the natural environment and landscape.*
- *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.*
- *Policy LU 10.5: Encourage the use of distinctive landscaping, signage and other features to define the unique character of districts, neighborhoods or communities, and engender community identity, pride and community interaction.*
- *Policy AQ 2.3: Support the conservation of natural resources and vegetation to reduce and mitigate air pollution impacts.*
- *Policy M 2.1: Provide transportation corridors/networks that accommodate pedestrians, equestrians and bicyclists, and reduce motor vehicle accidents through a context-sensitive process that addresses the unique characteristics of urban, suburban, and rural communities whenever appropriate and feasible.*
- *Policy M 2.9: Encourage the planting of trees along streets and other forms of landscaping to enliven streetscapes by blending natural features with built features.*
- *Policy M 3.3: Complete the following studies prior to the implementation of innovative design concepts: · An analysis of the current and future context of the community and neighborhood in which they are proposed; · A balanced assessment of the needs of all users and travel modes (i.e., pedestrian, bicycle, transit, vehicular, and equestrian, where appropriate); · A technical assessment of the operational and safety characteristics for each mode; and · A consistency check with transportation network plans, including the Highway Plan, Bicycle Master Plan, and Community Pedestrian Plans.*
- *Policy M 6.3: Designate official truck routes to minimize the impacts of truck traffic on residential neighborhoods and other sensitive land uses.*
- *Policy M 6.4: Minimize noise and other impacts of goods movement, truck traffic, deliveries, and staging in residential and mixed-use neighborhoods.*
- *Policy N 1.2: Reduce exposure to noise impacts by promoting land use compatibility.*
- *Policy S 2.1: Discourage development in the County's Flood Hazard Zones*
- *Policy S 3.5: Encourage the use of low-volume and well-maintained vegetation that is compatible with the area's natural vegetative habitats.*
- *Policy S 3.6: Ensure adequate infrastructure, including ingress, egress, and peak load water supply availability for all projects located in [Fire Hazard Severity Zones] FHSZs.*

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

- *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 LU 1.4: Ensure that there are appropriate lands for commercial and industrial services throughout the unincorporated Antelope Valley sufficient to serve the daily needs of rural residents and to provide local employment opportunities.*

- *Policy LU 1.5: Provide varied lands for residential uses sufficient to meet the needs of all segments of the population, and allow for agriculture, equestrian uses, and animal-keeping uses in these areas where appropriate.*
- *Policy LU 5.2: Encourage the continued development of rural town centers that provide for the daily needs of surrounding residents, reducing the number of vehicle trips and providing local employment opportunities.*
- *Policy LU 5.3: Preserve open space areas to provide large contiguous carbon sequestering basins.*
- *Policy LU 5.4: Ensure that there is an appropriate balance of residential uses and employment opportunities within close proximity of each other.*
- *Policy LU 6.2: Ensure that the Area Plan is flexible in adapting to new issues and opportunities without compromising the rural character of the unincorporated Antelope Valley.*
- *Policy M 1.1: Direct the majority of the unincorporated Antelope Valley's future growth to rural town centers and economic opportunity areas, to minimize travel time and reduce the number of vehicle trips, as indicated in the Land Use designations shown on the Land Use Policy Map (Map 2.1) of this Area Plan.*
- *Policy M 1.2: Encourage the continued development of rural town center areas that provide for the daily needs of local residents, reducing the number of vehicle trips and providing local employment opportunities.*
- *Policy M 1.3: Encourage new parks, recreation areas, and public facilities to locate in rural town center areas, rural town areas, and economic opportunity areas.*
- *Policy M 1.4: Ensure that new developments have a balanced mix of residential uses and employment opportunities as well as park, recreation areas and public facilities within close proximity of each other.*
- *Policy M 1.5: Promote alternatives to automobile travel in rural town center areas and rural town areas by linking these areas through pedestrian walkways, trails, and bicycle routes.*
- *Policy M 2.1: Encourage the reduction of home-to-work trips through the promotion of home-based businesses, live-work units, and telecommuting.*
- *Policy M 2.3: In evaluating new development proposals, require trip reduction measures to relieve congestion and reduce air pollution from vehicle emissions.*
- *Policy M 2.5: As residential development occurs in communities, require transportation routes, including alternatives to automotive transit, to link to important local destination points such as shopping, services, employment, and recreation.*
- *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.*
- *Policy M 4.2: Maintain existing local streets to ensure safety and require adequate signage for emergency response vehicles.*
- *Policy M 5.2: Direct truck traffic to designated truck routes and prohibit truck traffic on designated scenic routes, to the greatest extent feasible.*
- *Policy M 5.4: Add rest stops along designated truck routes to provide stopping locations away from residential uses.*
- *Policy M 6.8: In planning for all regional transportation systems, consider and mitigate potential impacts to existing communities, and minimize land use conflicts.*
- *Policy M 11.1: Improve existing pedestrian routes and create new pedestrian routes, where appropriate and feasible. If paving is deemed necessary, require permeable paving consistent with rural community character instead of concrete sidewalks.*
- *Policy M 11.3: Within rural town center areas, promote pedestrian-oriented scale and design features, including public plazas, directional signage, and community bulletin boards.*
- *Policy M 11.4: Within rural town center areas, encourage parking to be located behind or beside structures, with primary building entries facing the street. Encourage also the provision of direct and clearly delineated pedestrian walkways from transit stops and parking areas to building entries.*
- *Policy COS 1.2: Limit the amount of potential development in areas that are not or not expected to be served by existing and/or planned public water infrastructure through appropriate land use designations with very low residential densities, as indicated in the Land Use Policy Map (Map 2.1) of this Area Plan.*
- *Policy COS 2.1: Require new landscaping to comply with applicable water efficiency requirements in the County Code.*
- *Policy COS 2.3: Require onsite stormwater infiltration in all new developments through the use of appropriate measures, such as permeable surface coverage, permeable paving of parking and pedestrian areas, catch basins, and other low impact development strategies.*
- *Policy COS 9.1: Implement land use patterns that reduce the number of vehicle trips, reducing potential air pollution, as directed in the policies of the Land Use Element.*
- *Policy COS 9.2: Develop multi-modal transportation systems that offer alternatives to automobile travel to reduce the number of vehicle trips, including regional transportation, local transit, bicycle routes, trails, and pedestrian networks, as directed in the policies of the Mobility Element.*
- *Policy COS 9.3: In evaluating new development proposals, consider requiring trip reduction measures to relieve congestion and reduce air pollution from vehicle emissions.*

- *Policy COS 9.7: Encourage reforestation and the planting of trees to sequester greenhouse gas emissions.*
- *Policy COS 17.8: Require onsite stormwater infiltration in all new developments through use of appropriate measures, such as permeable surface coverage, permeable paving of parking and pedestrian areas, catch basins, and other low impact development strategies.*
- *Policy COS 14.1: Require that new transmission lines be placed underground whenever physically feasible.*
- *Policy COS 14.7: Require that electrical power lines in new residential developments be placed underground.*
- *Policy COS 15.1: Ensure that outdoor lighting, including street lighting, is provided at the lowest possible level while maintaining safety.*
- *Policy COS 15.2: Prohibit continuous all-night outdoor lighting in rural areas, unless required for land uses with unique security concerns, such as fire stations, hospitals, and prisons.*
- *Policy COS 15.3: Replace outdated, obtrusive, and inefficient light fixtures with fixtures that meet dark sky and energy efficiency objectives.*
- *Policy COS 15.4: Require compliance with the provisions of the Rural Outdoor Lighting District throughout the unincorporated Antelope Valley.*
- *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 COS 17.6: Require new landscaping to comply with applicable water efficiency requirements in the County Code.*
- *Policy COS 17.8: Require onsite stormwater infiltration in all new developments through use of appropriate measures, such as permeable surface coverage, permeable paving of parking and pedestrian areas, catch basins, and other low impact development strategies.*
- *Policy COS 19.1: When new development is required to preserve open space, require designs 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 space areas are permanently restricted through deed restrictions.*
- *Policy PS 1.2: Require that all new developments provide sufficient access for emergency vehicles and sufficient evacuation routes for residents and animals.*
- *Policy PS 3.1: Limit the amount of potential development in Flood Zones designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency through appropriate land use*

designations with very low residential densities, as indicated in the Land Use Policy Map (Map 2.1) of this Area Plan.

- *Policy PS 3.2: Require onsite stormwater filtration in all new developments through use of appropriate measures, such as permeable surface coverage, permeable paving of parking and pedestrian areas, catch basins, and other low impact development strategies.*
- *Policy PS 3.3: Review the potential local and regional drainage impacts of all development proposals to minimize the need for new drainage structures.*
- *Policy PS 3.4: Ensure that new drainage structures are compatible with the surrounding environment by requiring materials and colors that are consistent with the natural landscape. Discourage concrete drainage structures.*
- *Policy PS 5.1: Support neighborhood preservation programs, such as graffiti abatement, removal of abandoned or inoperable vehicles, and removal of trash and debris.*
- *Policy ED 1.16: Preserve the scenic resources of the Antelope Valley, including Scenic Drives, Significant Ridgelines and Significant Ecological Areas, in such a way that can contribute to the economic activities in the area.*
- *Policy ED 1.17: Promote uses and activities that rely on the natural state of the environment to take advantage of the vast areas of relatively undisturbed natural areas in the Antelope Valley. These include recreational, tourism and film-making uses.*

These policies support the values that the Pearblossom community identified. They recognize the infrastructure limitations that small rural communities face and support maintaining the character of rural land. In the Pearblossom CSD, this will be implemented by standards that require increased distances between buildings, open space requirements for subdivisions of five units or more, and maximum floor areas for commercial and industrial developments.

The CSD identifies the Blossom Community Corridor, which discourages truck traffic in the rural town center area. The community's interest in protecting the natural environment is also aligned in policies that promote preservation of open space and requiring water efficient landscapes. These policies are reflected in CSD standards that will allow existing, onsite desert landscape to count toward landscape requirements to discourage the practice of scraping desert land for sale. Permits would be required when ground disturbance such as grading, removal of vegetation, or scraping exceeds threshold acreages, and no ground disturbance shall exceed 70 percent of any lot larger than two gross acres.

The community's desire to be self-reliant and resourceful is consistent with AVAP policies to reduce vehicles miles traveled. The CSD allows residents more storage opportunities in the form of cargo shipping containers for accessory storage and onsite materials storage areas in residential and agricultural zoned lots. Having access to onsite storage will support the

existing practice of rural residents to plan and stock up on supplies and materials to avoid making multiple trips to distant commercial centers. By having a place to store materials and supplies incidental to residential use -- including salvage that can be incorporated into art and hobby projects, or repurposed and recycled to decorate and maintain a property -- residents will potentially lower their greenhouse gas emissions.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

This project qualifies for a Categorical Exemption (Class 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 11, 20, and 21 Categorical Exemptions) under the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) and the County environmental guidelines. The project will include development standards for accessory uses as well as an aesthetic for commercial and industrial developments. None of the proposed standards allow new primary uses in the zone or deviate from the existing baseline conditions of the area. These regulations do not create a change in land use or density for any of the properties located within the CSD boundaries. Additionally, no construction activities or specific developments are proposed as part of this project. Therefore, staff recommends that the Regional Planning Commission determine that the project is categorically exempt from CEQA. A Notice of Exemption (Exhibit F – Environmental Determination) was prepared for the project.

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

A. County Department Comments and Recommendations

County Departments’ clearance letters are included in Exhibit H (Agency Correspondence).

1. The Fire Department submitted a clearance letter on June 9, 2022.
2. Parks and Recreation submitted a clearance letter on June 14, 2022, with minor revisions.
3. Public Health submitted a clearance letter on July 27, 2022.
4. Public Works noted that a large portion of the CSD area is in a Special Flood Hazard Area.

B. Project Outreach and Engagement

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 Antelope Valley Valley Fever Walk on August 4, 2018; a Joint Community Open House on October 26, 2019; and the Juneteenth celebration at Jackie Robinson Park on June 18, 2022.

Three CSD Working Group meetings were held with community members in 2018 on August 15, September 24, and October 29; and three more CSD Working Group meetings were held in 2019 on March 21, May 6, and May 16 to identify and discuss the topics that community members would like to see addressed in the CSD. These topics were then summarized in the “Pearblossom Concept Draft” (Exhibit J – Community Concept Drafts).

Following the release of the Pearblossom Concept Draft, postcards were mailed to all property owners within the community notifying them of the concept drafts and inviting them to an open house event on Saturday, October 26, 2019, at the Jackie Robinson Park gymnasium. The event was well attended and allowed community members to share their thoughts on the concept draft. Staff from Parks and Recreation were also available at the open house event.

LA County Planning staff transitioned from in-person community meetings to online meetings after the COVID-19 health emergency began on March 16, 2020. Staff held one meeting on May 5, 2020 to respond to feedback received from the concept draft, and from this information, developed a scope of work for the CSD draft. Outreach also continued through the project website (planning.lacounty.gov/avcsds), phone calls, and the newsletter distributed by email.

After a hiatus caused by the COVID-19 health emergency, staff met with the Pearblossom Town Council on November 11, 2021 to review the CSD development process and answer questions. Staff then collaborated with the co-chairs of the Pearblossom CSD Committee to co-host 12 working group meetings in 2022: three meetings in January, four in February, two in March, and one each in April, May, and July. The purpose of the working group meetings was to develop a CSD purpose statement, prioritize standard topics, and discuss topics such as fencing and wall heights, cargo shipping containers, the Modern Rustic design standard, onsite materials storage areas, vegetation preservation, and the enforcement process for both Planning and Public Works. These meetings were open to the public, recorded, and are posted on the project website. While developing the CSD standards, staff created one online survey to gather CSD Committee feedback on cargo shipping containers as accessory storage.

Over the course of the CSD Committee’s working group meetings, the Pearblossom Town Council and the Littlerock Town Council discussed and agreed upon a boundary change between the Southeast Antelope Valley CSD and the proposed Pearblossom CSD. A letter dated June 1, 2022 confirming this change is included in Exhibit I (Public Correspondence).

In addition to direct engagement with the Pearblossom CSD Committee, staff created a public survey to gather feedback from residents. Fifty-three respondents filled out the survey. The public survey was posted on the Pearblossom CSD project website in both Spanish and English, and included questions about what residents value; whether cargo shipping containers should be allowed as accessory storage; and whether property owners should be required to set aside a percentage of the landscape to retain a sense of openness in the community. For survey respondents who left contact information, staff followed up by phone to gather further feedback about CSD topics.

Survey respondents reported valuing the quiet, views, rural setting, and sense of openness of Pearblossom, as well as the small-town ambiance and friendly neighbors. In addition, about three fourths of survey respondents support the use of cargo shipping containers for storage, while about an additional fifth of respondents supporting the use of containers with some limitations. Two thirds of survey respondents also support preserving landscape to maintain a sense of openness.

Based on feedback from the Pearblossom CSD Committee and the public surveys, a CSD draft was created. Another CSD Committee meeting was held on July 28, which included a review of the draft. After receiving feedback, staff revised the draft and posted it on the project website.

On August 12, staff sent an RPC public hearing notice (Exhibit G – Notice of Public Hearing) to 1548 property owners and 20 addresses from the department’s applicable courtesy lists. Staff posted the public hearing notice and materials on the Antelope Valley CSD project website (planning.lacounty.gov/avcsds) and promoted them through social media. On August 25, staff sent an email to all individuals that signed up to be added to the project mailing list and distributed a flyer, which announces the release of the public hearing draft and a public meeting to discuss the draft and provides options for submitting comments. Staff also noticed the RPC public hearing in the Antelope Valley Press newspaper on August 29.

The first community meeting was held on September 8 to present the new Pearblossom CSD public hearing draft. But due to a complete power outage in Pearblossom, only four individuals who had battery backup and one property owner who did not live in Pearblossom were able to attend. To provide the community another opportunity to learn about the Pearblossom CSD draft, a second community meeting was held on September 20 which was attended by 16 community members.

C. Public Comments

At the first community meeting on September 8, one community member asked for clarification on the landscape requirement for commercial development, suggesting the requirement was excessive. Upon follow-up email exchanges and conversations after the meeting, the community member changed his mind and decided to support the standard after learning the existing desert landscape that is preserved on site may count towards fulfilling this landscape requirement which aligns with his desire to protect and preserve the desert landscape.

Also at the first community, another community member commented that the requirement to plant 24-inch box trees in the Blossom Community Corridor is not adaptive to the desert environment and that smaller 1-gallon trees are not only more economical but will be better able to adapt to drought and extreme heat. On September 28, another community member pointed out tree planting requirements in other portions of the CSD that specified 15-gallon trees and asked whether the County biologist can propose an alternative tree planting requirement to the 24-inch box trees for the Blossom Community Corridor, one that will increase the likelihood of tree survival. On October 3, a community member who has professional experience as a landscape contractor suggested 5-gallon trees for the Blossom Community Corridor because this would balance the trade-off between using smaller trees that are more likely to survive while shortening the length of time the community must wait before the smaller trees mature and are able to provide screening and shade.

In late August, a community member expressed his concern that the widening of Pearblossom Highway (CA-138) resulted in two pedestrian deaths. After the first community meeting on September 8, a series of follow-up meetings about the Blossom Community Corridor took place on September 12, 14, 22, 27, 28, and 30 where community members discussed reducing the width of the area from 1,500 feet to 500 feet from both sides of the highway rights-of-way. Community members noted two commercial areas in the Southeast Antelope Valley CSD, the Pearblossom Highway Commercial Corridor Area and the Palmdale Boulevard Commercial Area, extend from 200 feet to 900 feet from the highway right-of-way. The revised Blossom Community Corridor Area is available on the last page of the Revised Ordinance Draft (Exhibit B) as a redlined map.

On September 9, a community member who is a resident, local businesswoman, and owner of multiple Pearblossom properties submitted a comment expressing her support for the CSD, especially for allowing cargo shipping containers to be used as accessory storage and rural artifacts to be displayed in yards. At the second community meeting, a community member said the maximum height for onsite materials storage should be eight feet instead of six feet. On September 27, another community member stated his support for cargo shipping

containers as accessory storage due to their ability to withstand the harsh environment of the desert, and because they may be locked.

On September 9 and 22, two community members submitted comments expressing their general support of the Pearblossom CSD. One noted that the effort to establish a CSD began in 2000 and acknowledged the time and energy community members have committed to develop these standards. The other wrote that he is in full support of the CSD because it will help maintain and enhance their rural lifestyle.

ADDITIONAL STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends the following changes to the public hearing draft (Exhibit A – Ordinance Draft), released on August 23, 2022, as shown in Exhibit B (Revised Ordinance Draft):

1. For the Vegetation Preservation standard, replace “canopy acreage,” “groundcover acreage,” and “removal and destruction of vegetation” with “disturbance of areas with vegetation” and “ground disturbance” per subsequent discussion with the County biologist. The term “ground disturbance” is a more appropriate measure of desert vegetation, which does not have clearly measurable canopy as vegetation in other more temperate areas in the Los Angeles basin. Also, identify specific forms of ground disturbance to be avoided, such as grading, blading, discing, and excavating, for clarity. Lastly, expand the requirement to document native onsite vegetation to all onsite vegetation in a development plan, given that applicants may not know which vegetation are native and which are not.
2. For the Wireless Communications Facilities standard, remove “display the Pearblossom town name where feasible and blend in” to provide flexibility in ensuring that these facilities enhance the community’s rural character.
3. Remove the height limit for Residential- and Agricultural-zoned properties of 35 feet because this is already the standard in Title 22.
4. Remove five prohibited uses in the Blossom Community Corridor because they are already prohibited in Title 22.
5. Reduce the width of the Blossom Community Corridor from 1,500 feet to 500 feet from the highway right-of-way of Pearblossom Highway (CA-138) because the shorter distance includes most of the industrial and commercial lots and is more in scale with the width of the other commercial corridor areas in the neighboring Southeast Antelope Valley CSD.
6. Change the tree requirement for the Blossom Community Corridor from one 24-inch box tree to one 5-gallon tree (for every 20 linear feet of street frontage), per subsequent discussions with the County biologist and landscape professionals who live in Pearblossom. All agreed that smaller trees have a greater likelihood of survival than

larger trees because smaller trees are better able to adapt to harsh and arid conditions of the high desert.

Report

Reviewed By:


Mark S. Herwick, Supervising Regional Planner

Report

Approved By:


Connie Chung, Deputy Director

LIST OF ATTACHED EXHIBITS

EXHIBIT A	Ordinance Draft
EXHIBIT B	Revised Ordinance Draft
EXHIBIT C	Project Summary Sheet
EXHIBIT D	Draft Resolution
EXHIBIT E	GIS Maps
EXHIBIT F	Environmental Determination
EXHIBIT G	Notice of Public Hearing
EXHIBIT H	Agency Correspondence
EXHIBIT I	Public Correspondence
EXHIBIT J	Community Concept Drafts
EXHIBIT K	Southeast Antelope Valley Native Plant List