

Introduction to the Community Standards District (CSD) and Q&A

LA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF REGIONAL PLANNING



Hello, my name is Caroline Chen and I am your planner for the proposed Pearblossom Community Standards District or CSD. The purpose of this 16 minute video is to explain what a CSD is, how it works, and to answer some questions that were sent to us by the Pearblossom CSD Committee.

My goal for today is to provide you foundational knowledge about CSDs so you can have an informed conversation with planners like me, so we can co-create your CSD.

What is a Community Standards District or CSD?


First, the Zoning Code..

“How to
implement
development?”

The Zoning Code
(Title 22)

22.02.020 - Purpose.
 In the creation of the respective zones set forth herein by this [Title 22](#) ordinance, the Board of Supervisors has given due and special consideration to the peculiar suitability of each and every such zone herein created for the particular uses . . . for the development of the entire County, **paying particular attention to those areas in said unincorporated area in which more densely populated communities have arisen, giving to such communities urban characteristics.**

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So, what is a CSD?

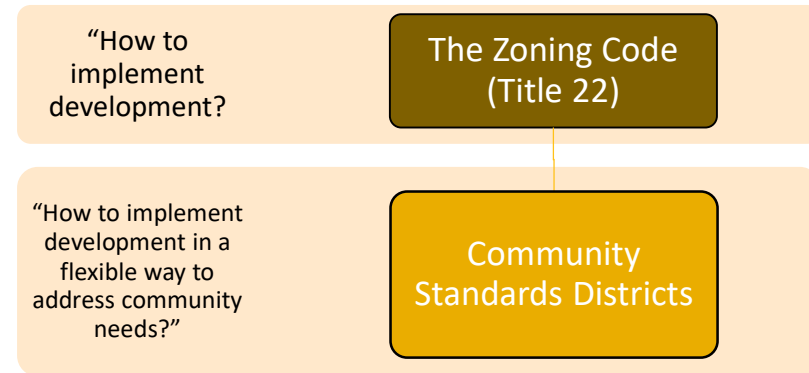
To understand what a Community Standards District or CSD is, it helps to first understand what the Zoning Code is. The Zoning Code is a set of regulations that apply to all communities throughout unincorporated Los Angeles County. It regulates what can and cannot be built.

The Zoning Code is the set of tools for implementing the Los Angeles County General Plan. I will talk about the General Plan later.

The main thing to know is the Zoning Code regulations were designed to apply to urban and suburban areas, and thus may not fit so well with how people live in rural areas.

What is a Community Standards District or CSD?

Answer: A CSD supplements the base Zoning Code to make development standards more flexible to community needs.



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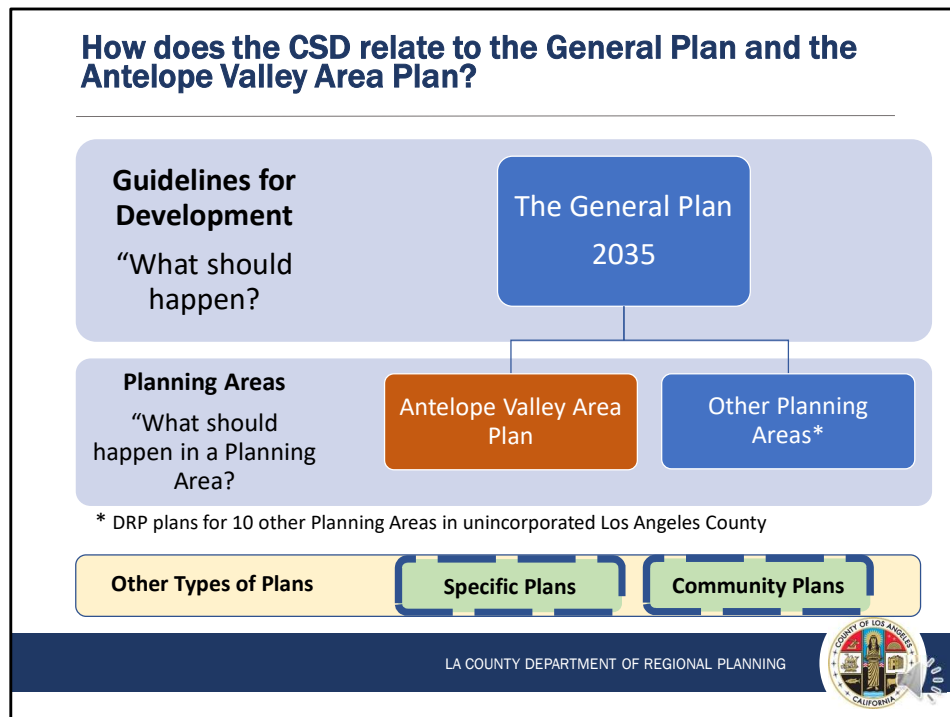


This is why Community Standards Districts or CSDs exist.

The purpose of a CSD is to address land use issues that are not addressed by the Zoning Code's countywide zoning. I will call the Zoning Code's countywide zoning here the "base" zoning. One can also think of the **base Zoning Code** as a layer of regulations painted over and across the land. The CSD is an extra layer, let's call it "an overlay", that supplements and works with the base Zoning Code by adding development standards which makes the base Zoning Code more flexible to community needs.

I'll give an example of how CSDs achieve this:

In the community of Stonyvale in the Angeles National Forest, houses were constructed with very short front yard setbacks. But then a wildfire swept through the town and burned down homes. The Stonyvale CSD allowed rebuilds to have front yard setbacks of three feet. Without a CSD, the base Zoning Code would have required rebuilds to have a front yard setback of 20 ft which would have substantially altered the community character that existed before the fire.

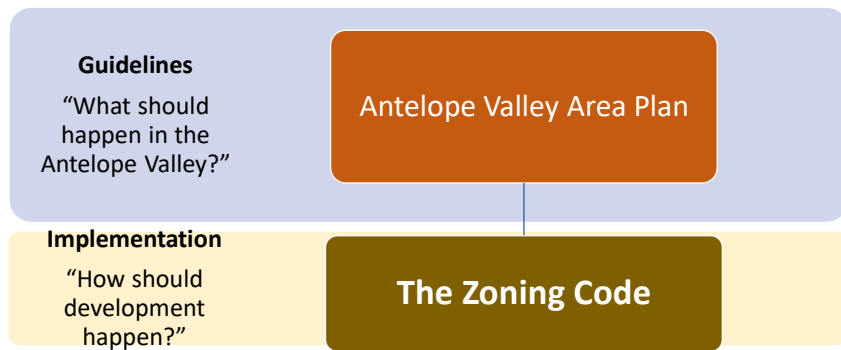


So I mentioned the General Plan earlier...the purpose of the General Plan is to set the overall direction for development in the unincorporated areas of LA County. The General Plan answers the question **“What should happen?”**

The Antelope Valley **Area Plan** is part of the General Plan. It focuses County goals and policies on issues specific to the Antelope Valley. It answers the question **“What should happen in the Antelope Valley?”**

The Department of Regional Planning or DRP is responsible for planning in 11 Areas in unincorporated LA County, and the Antelope Valley is one such Planning Area. DRP also develops other kinds of plans such as Specific Plans for new towns that developers want to build, and Community Plans for communities within a Planning Area.

How does the CSD relate to the General Plan and the Antelope Valley Area Plan?

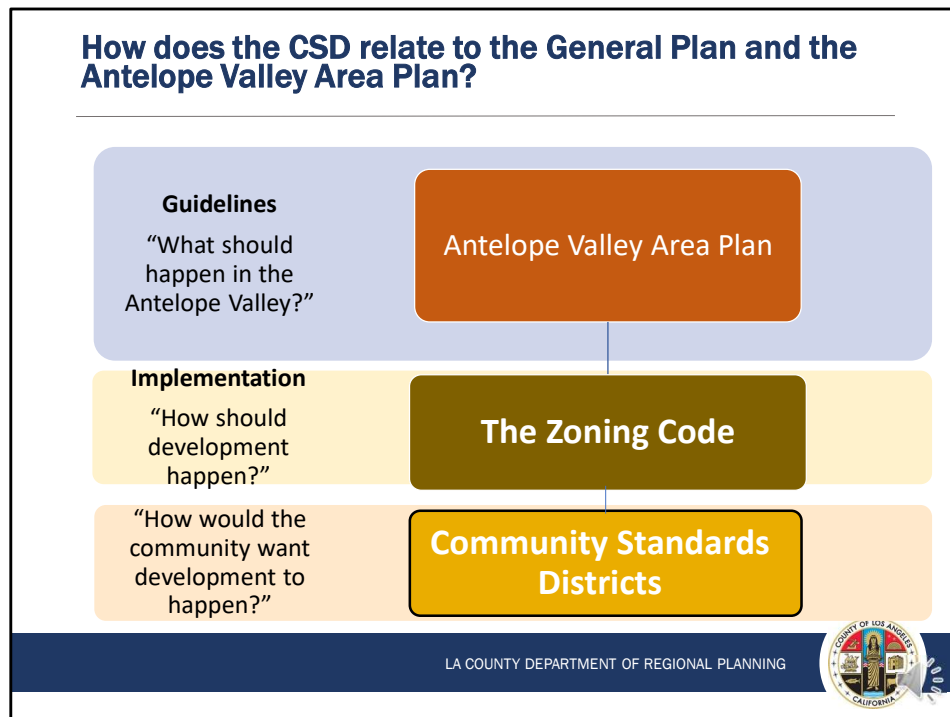


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So as I mentioned before, the Zoning Code implements the goals and policies that appear in the General Plan and Antelope Valley Area Plan.

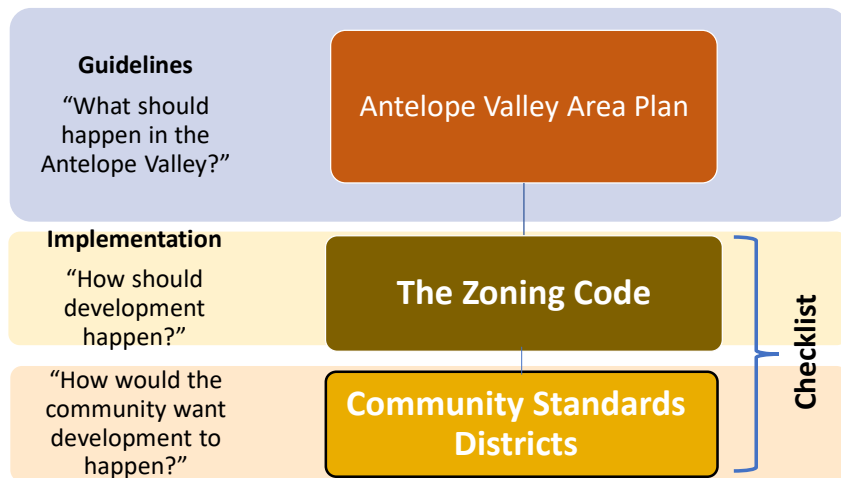
The Zoning Code contains base (or default) development standards that regulate **how** development should happen.



The CSD supplements the Zoning Code to respond to a local area’s unique circumstances that are not addressed by the Zoning Code’s base development standards.

Together, the base Zoning Code and the CSD answer the question **“How would the community want development to happen?”**

About the CSD...



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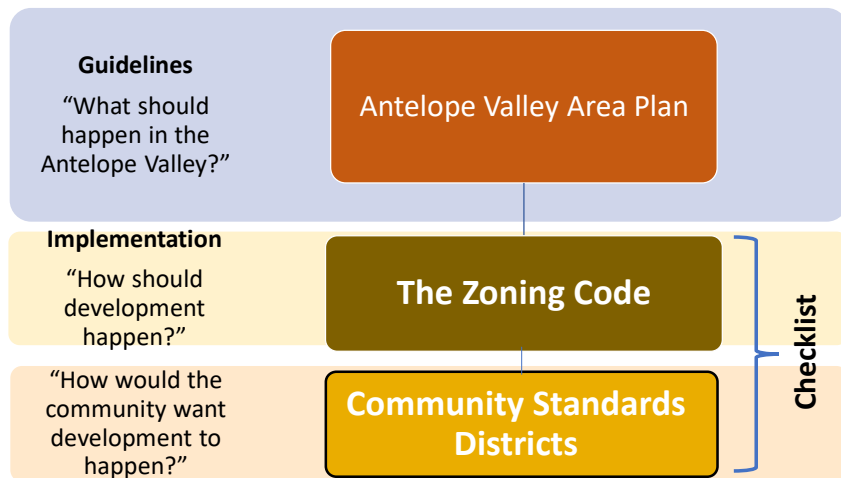
It is important to note that a CSD *supplements* the Zoning Code. Thus, a CSD's development standards cannot contradict the Zoning Code.

Also regulation topics that are not explicitly addressed in the CSD will default to regulations in the base Zoning Code.

Together, the Zoning Code and the CSD form a **checklist** for development standards that apply to a community.

About the CSD...

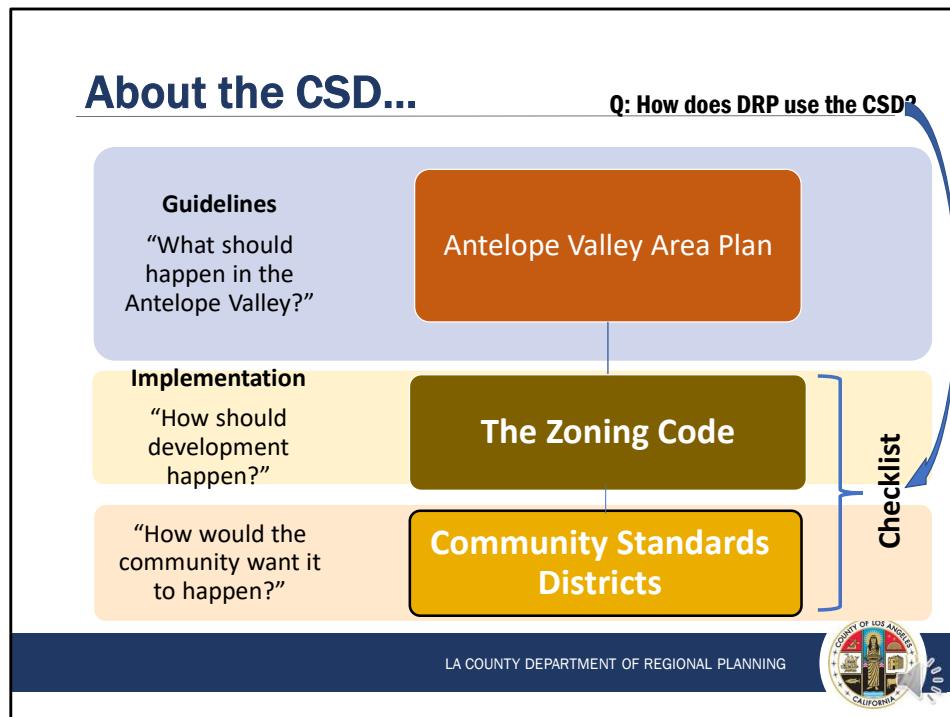
Q: How does DRP use the CSD?



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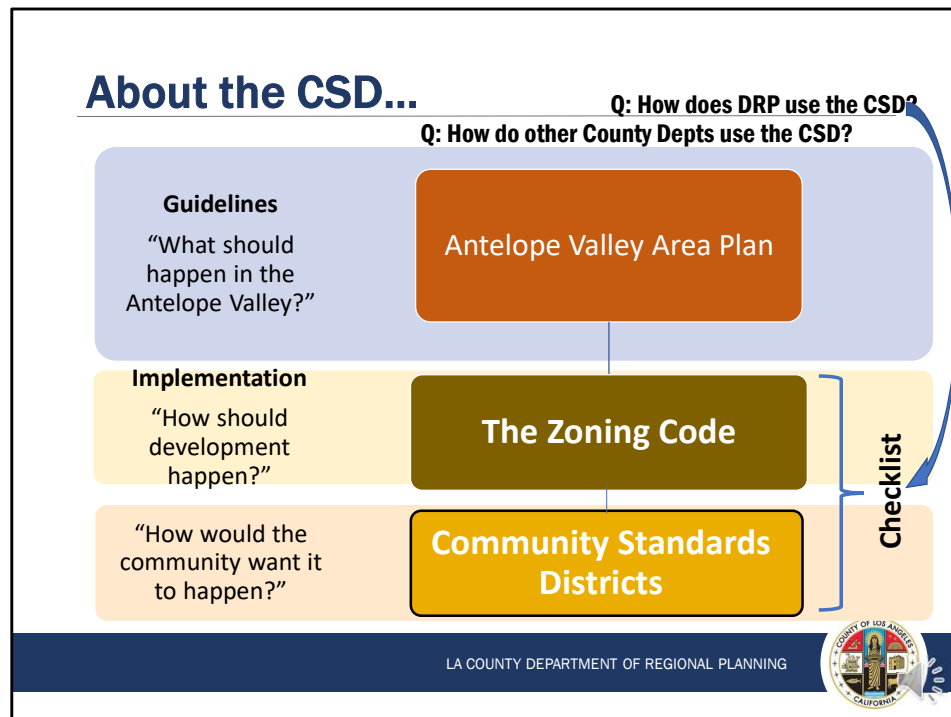


So, how does Regional Planning use the CSD?

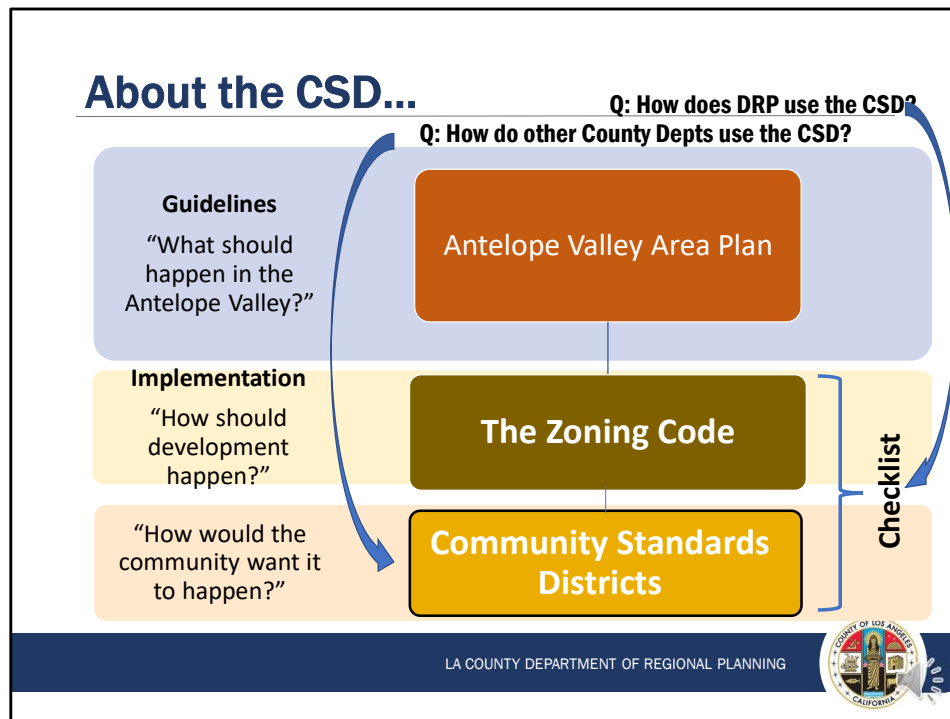


When projects are proposed within a CSD, planners who review plans will use both the Zoning Code and the CSD together (if a community has a CSD) as their “checklist” to decide whether a project complies with the ***base Zoning regulations with the CSD standards***.

If residents call Regional Planning with a complaint, planners who enforce land use regulations visit the site and use a combination of ***the Zoning Code with the CSD standards*** as a checklist to decide whether a violation ***in fact*** exists.



How do other County departments use the CSD?



Once developed, the CSD is added to a sub-section of the Zoning Code.

Other departments involved in land development processes like Public Works also refer to the CSD for guidance.

One example of this is **rural road design**.

Some CSDs in the Antelope Valley limit rural road widths and use inverted shoulders rather than curbs. Public Works uses the CSD as a guide to understand what kind of road design is preferred by the community. Ultimately, Public Works will decide on the appropriate design based on traffic safety.

What are the benefits of having a CSD?

Answer: Increased Flexibility (e.g., Conserve open space, taller fences, cargo container storage.)

Base Zoning Code	<i>Leona Valley CSD's Zoning Code</i>	
Only one cargo container for accessory use on A-1 and A-2 parcels with a minimum net area of two acres	Number of Cargo Containers Allowed per Net Acreage	
	Net Acreage of Lot	Maximum Number Allowed
	1 to less than 5 acres	1
	5 to less than 10 acres	2
	10 or more acres	3

No matter how large the property, only one cargo container is allowed for A-1 and A-2 parcels > two net acres.

With a Ministerial Site Plan Review, there is more flexibility with the number of cargo containers as storage allowed.

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What are the benefits of having a CSD?

In short: increased flexibility.

CSDs are intended to address development issues that the community is facing. The base Zoning Code may have regulations that are more appropriate for urban settings. A CSD provides the opportunity to preserve existing community character.

For example, DRP policy is that the maximum number of cargo containers for storage allowed on A-1 or A-2 properties with a minimum of two net acres is **ONE**.

Leona Valley's updated CSD allows the number of cargo containers for storage to be based on property size.

What are the costs of having a CSD?

Answer: The Ministerial Site Plan Review fee increases by **\$216**. This is the kind of Review needed for building a single-family house, an ADU, and adding a cargo container. All SPRs will have the new fee, regardless of whether the item is in the CSD or not. All other permit fees remain the same.

TABLE 22.16.030-A: PERMIT AND REVIEW REQUIREMENTS			Fees (effective March 1, 2022)	
Abbreviation	Permit or Review Requirement	Reference	Zoning Code only	Zoning Code with CSD overlay
-	Not Permitted		n/a	n/a
P	Permitted		n/a	n/a
AP	Animal Permit	Chapter 22.152	\$1,864	same
CEM	Cemetery Permit	Chapter 22.154	\$10,886	same
CUP	Conditional Use Permit	Chapter 22.158	\$10,886	same
MCUP	Minor Conditional Use Permit	Chapter 22.160	\$1,864	same
EP	Explosives Permit	Chapter 22.164	\$10,886	same
SPR	Ministerial Site Plan Review	Chapter 22.186	\$977	\$1,193
SEP	Special Events Permit	Chapter 22.188	\$253 - \$4,061*	same
SMP	Surface Mining Permit	Chapter 22.190	\$5000 deposit	same
ZCR	Zoning Conformance Review		\$559	same

* Depending on the complexity of the Special Event

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This brings us to the important question of fees: What are the costs of having a CSD?

For all communities that have a CSD, permit fees for the **Ministerial Site Plan Review** rises by **\$216**. **All other permit fees remain the same.**

Projects that require a **Ministerial Site Plan Review** include those that involve a free-standing structures. Examples include: (1) building a single-family residence, (2) building a free-standing ADU, and (3) placing a cargo storage container on a property for accessory use.

Fees for all other permits stay the same, including fees for the **Zoning Conformance Review or ZCR**. I will talk more about ZCRs shortly.

Will the County eliminate a CSD's Ministerial Site Plan Review fee?

Answer: With more staff work, DRP charges \$216 more. However, for projects that are not complex, planners have the discretion to use a Zoning Conformance Review (e.g., pools, patios, additions to single-family residences, and ground-mounted solar panels.)

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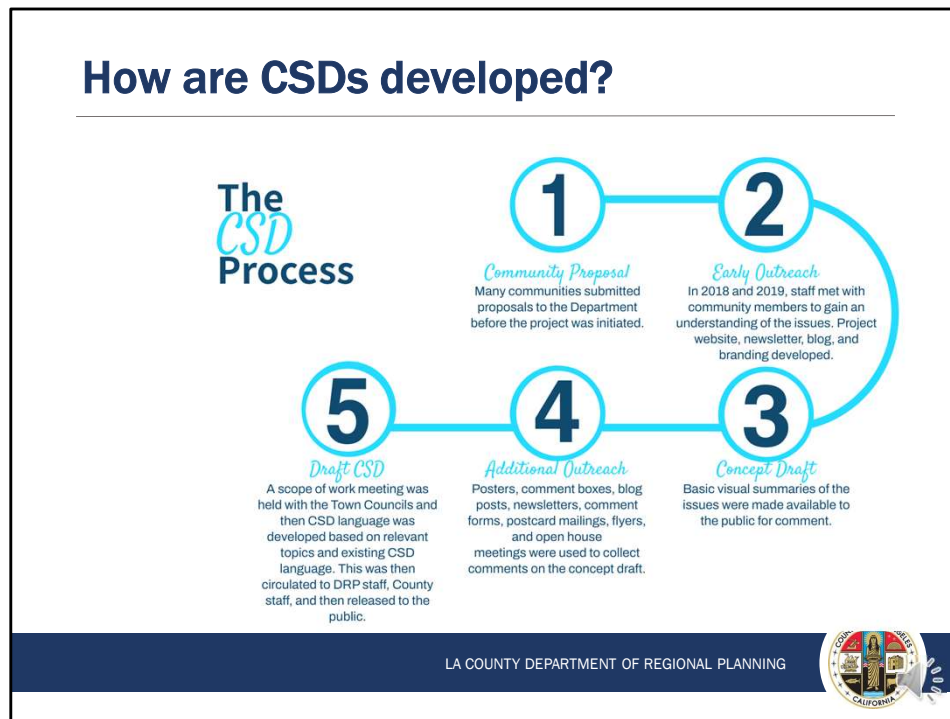
Will the County eliminate a CSD's Ministerial Site Plan Review fee?

The reason why the permit fee for Ministerial Site Plan Reviews will increase by **\$216** is because planners checking a project plan will have to take more time to reference both the base Zoning Code and the CSD development standards to figure out whether the project complies.

CSDs vary in complexity. Some CSDs are very simple; Stonyvale's CSD lists only two development standards: (1) a maximum fence height of eight feet and (2) a minimum front yard setback of three feet. Others, such as the Santa Monica Mountains CSD is very long, detailed and complex.

To account for the differing complexity of CSDs and projects, planners reviewing proposed projects that are relatively straightforward have the discretion to perform a **Zoning Conformance Review or ZCR** in place of a Ministerial Site Plan Review. The ZCR fee is **\$559**, less than the fee for a Ministerial Site Plan Review. The ZCR fee is the same for both communities with and without CSDs.

Examples of past projects that planners have processed as ZCRs in communities with CSDs include pools, patios, additions to single-family residences, and ground-mounted solar panels for personal use.



Now that you know what a CSD is, here's some info about the CSD development process.

How are CSDs developed?

The Board of Supervisors adopted the Antelope Valley Area Plan in 2015, which required a comprehensive review of all the existing CSDs in the Antelope Valley. The review would comprise a program to prepare and adopt any proposed **new** CSDs or **amendments to existing** CSDs. In 2018 DRP started the Antelope Valley CSD Update Program to achieve this goal.

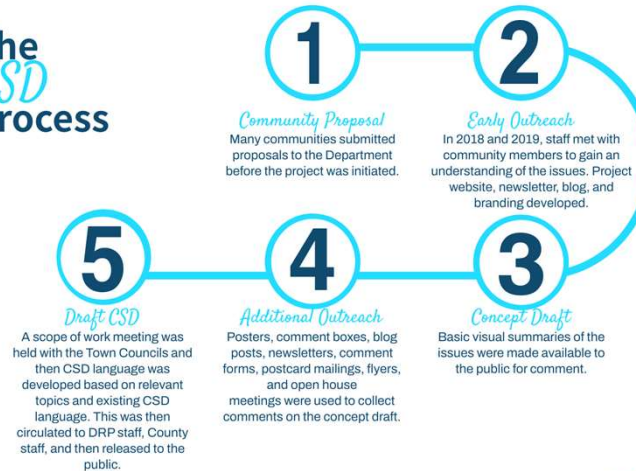
To develop a CSD, DRP typically works with Town Councils and their CSD committees. After the first draft of the CSD is ready, the public has the opportunity to review the draft. DRP then collects the comments, incorporates changes, and then presents the revised draft to the Regional Planning Commission. The public is also invited to provide feedback at this time.

The Commission will then recommend the draft is either advanced or not advanced to the Board of Supervisors. If the Commission recommends advancing the draft, DRP will incorporate any direction from the Commission provides, and then will present the final draft to the Board. The Board then adopts or rejects the final CSD. If adopted, the CSD is added to the Zoning Code.

About the CSD process...

Q: Is there voting on CSDs among residents?

The CSD Process



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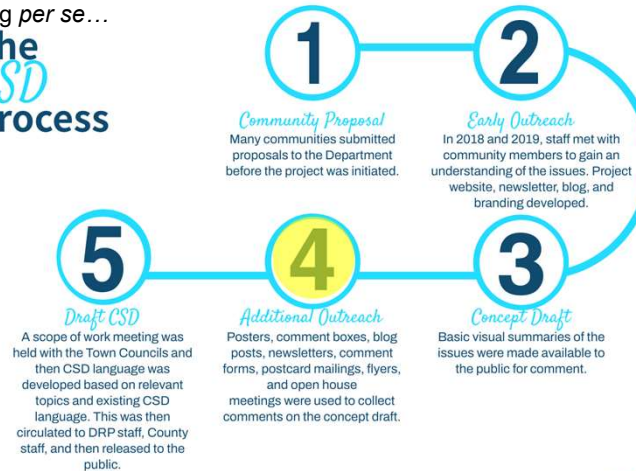
So, one of the questions we received was: is there voting on CSDs among residents?

About the CSD process...

Q: Is there voting on CSDs among residents?

A: No, no voting *per se*...

The CSD Process



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In the past, residents have not voted on the CSD.

What Regional Planning typically does is notify all property owners within the CSD boundaries with postcards to inform them that a CSD draft is ready. It is then up to property owners to provide DRP feedback. DRP also convenes open houses and other outreach events to encourage the community to provide feedback.

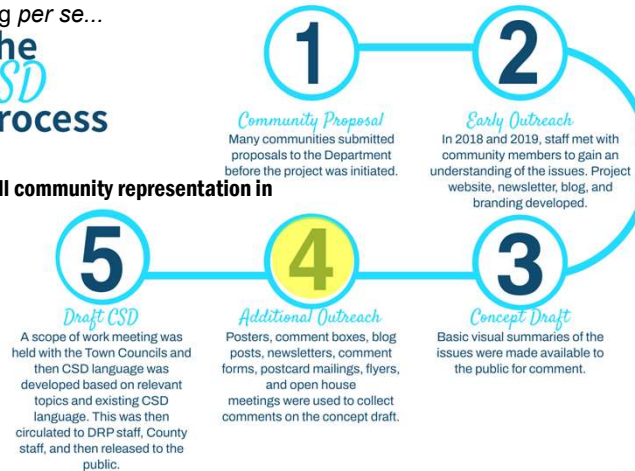
About the CSD process...

Q: Is there voting on CSDs among residents?

A: No, no voting *per se*...

The CSD Process

Q: How do you ensure full community representation in approving a CSD?



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How do we ensure full community representation in approving a CSD?

As the project lead for the Pearblossom CSD, I have some discretion on how to collaborate with the community, and to explore and pilot...

About the CSD process...

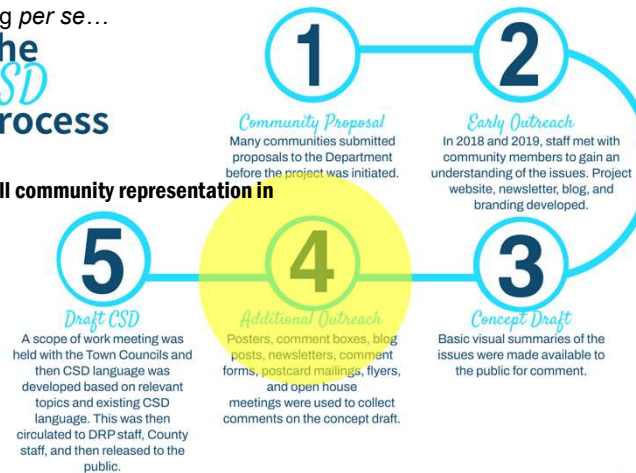
Q: Is there voting on CSDs among residents?

A: No, no voting *per se*...

The CSD Process

Q: How do you ensure full community representation in approving a CSD?

A: In collaboration with Pearblossom's leadership, we can explore novel methods of engagement to maximize representation



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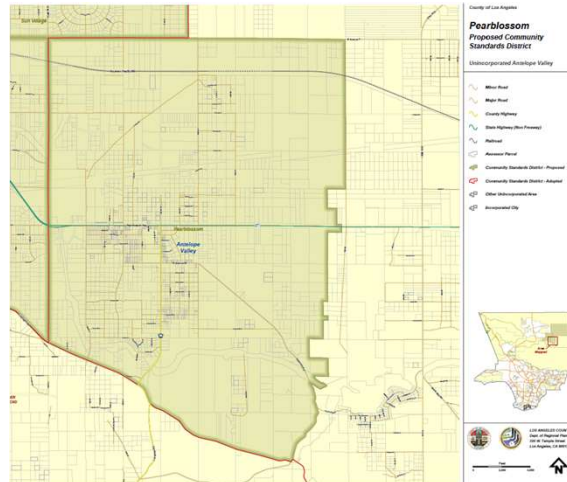


.... **novel methods** of community engagement to maximize representation as an alternative to relying solely on the postcard mailing **after** the CSD draft is ready.

In collaboration with the Pearblossom Town Council and CSD Committee, I would like to explore alternative methods of increasing residential response rates, especially among residents who have not previously been engaged in civic activities.

I personally believe that such a process will increase awareness of Pearblossom as a community with a unique identity **that is creative and artistic, adaptive, and resourceful, and which values representation, inclusion, and direct democracy.**

Does the County recognize the CSD as a town border?

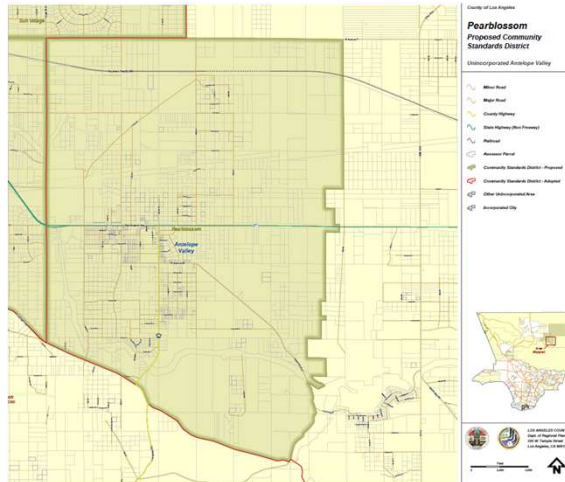


Does the County recognize the CSD as a town border?

For DRP, the CSD boundaries identify the geographical area where certain development standards will or will not apply.

Does the County recognize the CSD as a town border?

Answer: Yes, the CSD boundary is recognized by the County as the boundary of an area with special zoning development standards.



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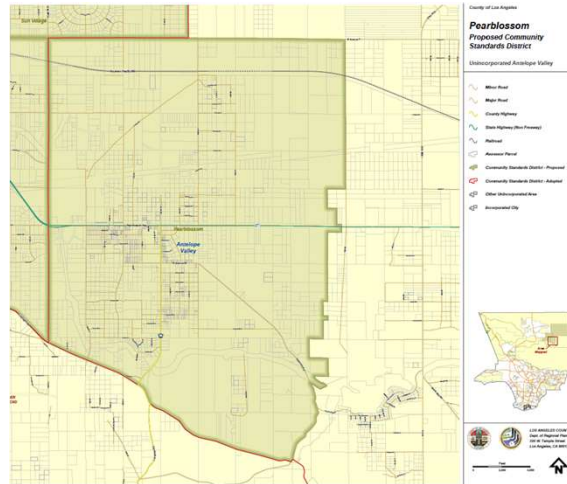


So when a CSD is adopted with a community name, it **is** recognized by the County as the boundary of an area with special zoning development standards.

While a CSD does not confer political jurisdiction, **it does informally acknowledge the location and spatial extent of an unincorporated town or place, which the County references.**

About a community's boundaries...

Q: Can residents leave a CSD?



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Can residents leave a CSD?

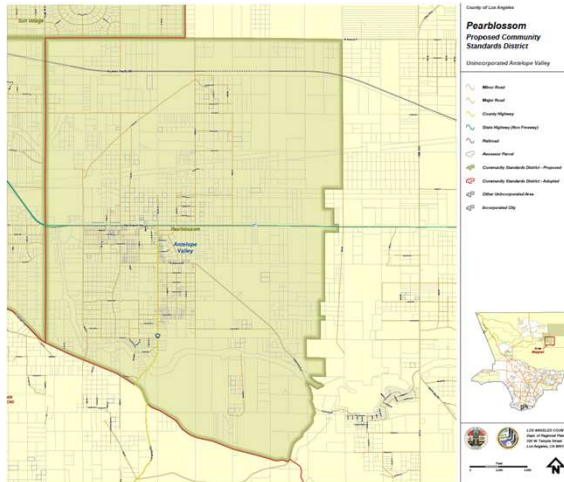
A CSD comprises regulations tied to a bounded geography.

About a community's boundaries...

Q: Can residents leave a CSD?

Answer: Possibly, either by:

- (1) creation of a new CSD in a community that did not have one before, or
- (2) by negotiations between adjacent Town Councils to adjust boundaries.



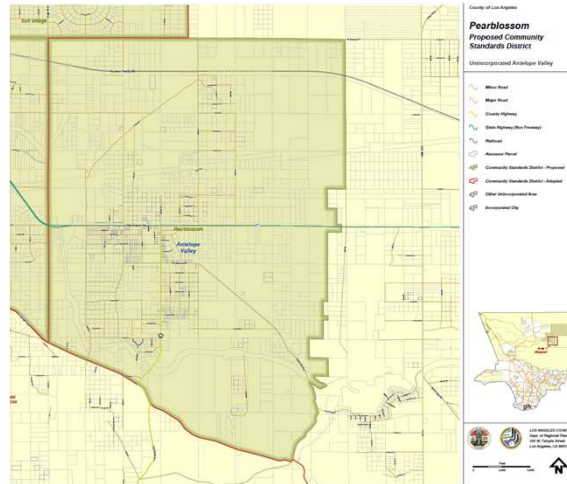
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If residents would like to be excluded from the CSD, the boundaries of the CSD must be adjusted. This may be accomplished by (1) creation of a new CSD in a community that did not have one before, or (2) by negotiations between adjacent Town Councils to adjust boundaries.

About a community's boundaries...

Q: How are disagreements handled?



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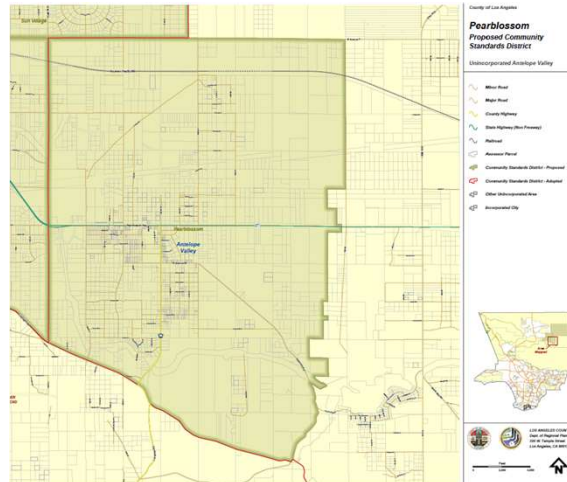


So how are disagreements handled?

About a community's boundaries...

Q: How are disagreements handled?

Answer: Through robust stakeholder engagement and in collaboration the CSD Committee



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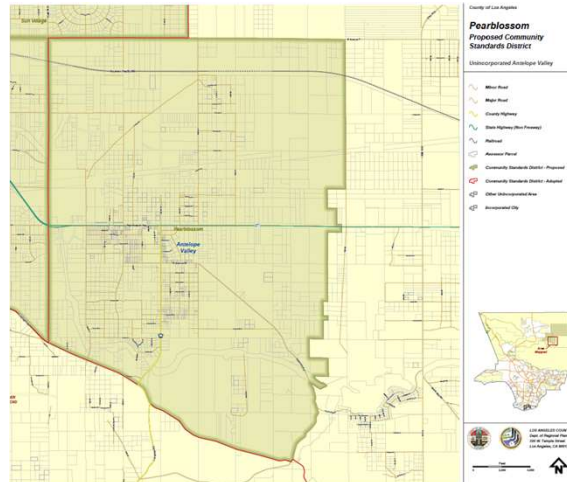
Through early outreach, we gathered feedback from the community to begin developing a draft of the CSD. We are planning more activities to further engage the community in focus groups and in a survey that will inform the first draft of the CSD.

Once the first draft is ready, this is an opportunity for all community members to review the draft and share their comments. If we receive conflicting comments, we will resume discussions with the community's CSD committee to collaborate and find a way forward.

In some cases, we may include comments in the staff report to the Commission. In other cases, we can revise the CSD language in collaboration with the CSD committee.

About a community's boundaries...

Q: Who has the authority to challenge CSD boundaries?



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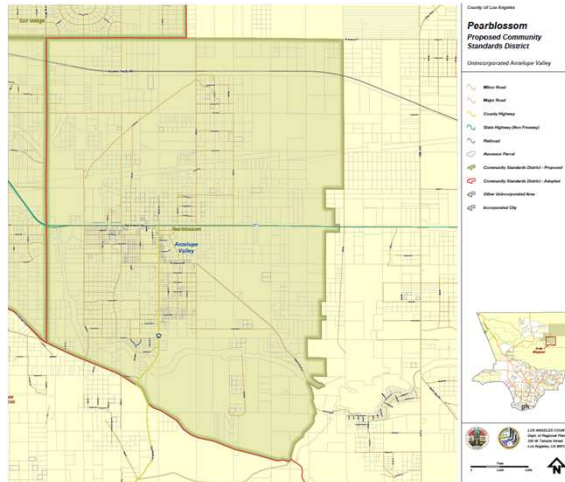
Our second to the last question: Who has the authority to challenge CSD boundaries?

About a community's boundaries...

Q: Who has the authority to challenge CSD boundaries?

Answer: Residents may provide feedback on boundaries.

DRP will collaborate with the CSD Committee to work through all comments.



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The Town Council provided DRP boundaries as a starting point because DRP needs a map of the CSD boundaries for the CSD draft.

When the CSD draft is shared with the community, residents may provide feedback ***on the boundaries as well.***

As noted earlier, we hope to collaborate with the CSD Committee to work through comments and develop recommendations for the Commission together. The Commission will in turn make recommendations to the Board.

Most of our CSD topics...

...seek to *loosen* County requirement and fees, not make requirements stricter.

Is this within the scope of the CSD committee?

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The last question we were asked: “Most of our CSD topics **seek to *loosen* County requirement and fees, not make requirements stricter. Is this within the scope of the CSD committee?**”

Most of our CSD topics...

...seek to *loosen* County requirement and fees, not make requirements stricter.

Is this within the scope of the CSD committee?

Answer: A CSD can make development standards more *flexible* to address issues raised by the community.

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The way we'd prefer answer is to use the word "*flexible*" instead of "*loosen*" because sometimes a community may ask for some regulations to be "*tightened*".

Some reasons why the CSD team may want to tighten existing Zoning Code regulations include:

- Discouraging high-density sprawl
- Protecting native vegetation
- Conserving open space
- Requiring drive-throughs to have waiting lanes that can handle a minimum number of cars -- to avoid creating a dangerous backup of cars onto Pearblossom Highway.

If a proposed CSD development standard does not create a direct conflict with a regulation in the Zoning Code, regulations can become more *flexible*.

Which is the reason why CSDs exist, to make the Zoning Code more flexible so it can address the unique needs of rural communities.

Thank you!!



View to the east showing Yearblossom's unique development along the south side of the Yearblossom Highway. The right-of-way of the subsurface portion of the California Aqueduct is shown in the foreground.

Contact: Caroline Chen

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Again, my name is Caroline Chen and my email is on the slide:

cchen@planning.lacounty.gov

Send me your questions. Thank you so much for your attention and time!