

LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF REGIONAL PLANNING

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January 30, 2024

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Supervisors:

**PUBLIC HEARING ON THE METRO AREA PLAN PROJECT
PROJECT NO. PRJ2021-004165
GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. RPPL2021011925
ZONE CHANGE NO. RPPL2021011985
ADVANCE PLANNING PROJECT NO. RPPL2021011918
ADVANCE PLANNING PROJECT NO. RPPL2022010129
ADVANCE PLANNING PROJECT NO. RPPL2022010131
ADVANCE PLANNING PROJECT NO. RPPL2022010133
ADVANCE PLANNING PROJECT NO. RPPL2022010143
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT NO. RPPL2021011920
(ALL SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICTS) (3-VOTES)**

SUBJECT

The recommended actions are to certify the Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) and approve the Metro Area Plan (MAP) and the associated amendments to: (1) the General Plan; (2) Title 22 (Planning and Zoning) of the Los Angeles County Code, including the zoning map; (3) the Florence-Firestone Transit Oriented District (TOD) Specific Plan; (4) the East Los Angeles Third Street Specific Plan Form-Based Code; (5) the Willowbrook TOD Specific Plan; and (6) Connect Southwest LA: A TOD Specific Plan for West Athens-Westmont, collectively known as the Project. The MAP is a component of the General Plan that guides development in the seven unincorporated communities within the Metro Planning Area (Planning Area) – East Los Angeles, East Rancho Dominguez, Florence-Firestone, Walnut Park, West Athens-Westmont, West Rancho Dominguez-Victoria, and Willowbrook – over the next 15 years. The associated amendments to the General Plan, Title 22 and Specific Plans implement the goals and policies in the MAP and maintain consistency between the General Plan, the MAP, and the MAP's implementing documents. The Project also rescinds the East Los Angeles Community Plan, Walnut Park Neighborhood Plan, West Athens-Westmont Community Plan, and Florence-Firestone Community Plan. A project summary is included as

Attachment 1. The proposed text amendments to the General Plan are included as Attachment 2. The proposed MAP, including the appendices, is included as Attachment 3. The proposed Zone Change Maps, including the proposed amendments to the Florence-Firestone TOD Specific Plan zoning map, are included as Attachments 4 and 5. The proposed Title 22 amendments are included as Attachment 6. The proposed amendments to the Willowbrook and Connect Southwest LA TOD Specific Plans are included as Attachments 7 and 8. Furthermore, the PEIR is included as Attachment 9.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE BOARD AFTER THE PUBLIC HEARING:

1. Certify that the Final PEIR (Environmental Assessment No. RPPL2021011920) for the Project has been completed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and reflects the independent judgment and analysis of the County; find that the Board has reviewed and considered the information contained in the Final PEIR prior to approving the Project, adopt the mitigation monitoring program, finding that the mitigation monitoring program is adequately designed to ensure compliance with the mitigation measures during project implementation; and determine that the significant adverse effects of the project have either been reduced to an acceptable level or are outweighed by the specific overriding considerations of the Project, as outlined in the Environmental Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations, which findings and statement are adopted and incorporated by reference;
2. Indicate its intent to approve the Project (General Plan Amendment No. RPPL2021011925, Zone Change No. RPPL2021011985, Advance Planning Project No. RPPL2021011918, Advance Planning Project No. RPPL2022010129, Advance Planning Project No. RPPL2022010131, Advance Planning Project No. RPPL2022010133, and Advance Planning Project No. RPPL2022010143), and rescind the East Los Angeles Community Plan, Walnut Park Neighborhood Plan, West Athens-Westmont Community Plan, and Florence-Firestone Community Plan, as recommended by the Regional Planning Commission (RPC); and
3. Instruct County Counsel to prepare the necessary final documents for the Project and bring them back to the Board for their consideration.

PURPOSE/JUSTIFICATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTION

Approval of the recommended actions will certify the Final PEIR and establish a policy framework for the Planning Area that (1) celebrates unique community cultures and identities; (2) supports small businesses and entrepreneurs; (3) promotes housing opportunities; (4) encourages active transportation, safety, and mobility; (5) promotes environmental justice; and (6) streamlines and standardizes zoning regulations. Specifically, approval of the recommended actions will support the implementation of the Green Zones Ordinance (GZO), which took effect on July 14, 2022. Furthermore, approval of the recommended actions will

assist the County in meeting a portion of its Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) in the Planning Area, and ensure the County is in compliance with the State Housing Element Law, Government Code sections 65580 – 65589.11.

On September 13, 2023, the RPC held a public hearing and voted unanimously to recommend approval of the Project. A summary of RPC proceedings is included as Attachment 10. The RPC's resolution is included as Attachment 11.

Key Components

The Project includes the following key components:

Metro Area Plan (MAP)

As a policy document and a component of the General Plan, the MAP directs future development and land use decisions for communities within the Planning Area. In recognition of the history of the Planning Area, the MAP strategically considers changes in the areas of land use, historic preservation, environmental justice, infrastructure, open space, and economic development. The MAP is organized into five chapters. *Chapter 1 Introduction* provides a summary of the document, including why it is needed and how it was developed. *Chapter 2 Historic Roots to Realtime* is a summary of the information gathered as a part of the historic context statement and provides historical perspective on the built environment for these communities; and context for the goals, policies, and programs being proposed. *Chapter 3 Area-Wide Goals and Policies* outlines the shared goals and policies across the seven communities and addresses land use, health/wellness/environmental justice, mobility, economic development, safety/climate resiliency, and historic preservation. *Chapter 4 Community-Specific Goals and Policies* highlights goals and policies unique to each community in the Planning Area. *Chapter 5 Implementation* contains a list of new and existing programs that will help implement goals and policies described in Chapters 3 and 4.

The MAP also includes the Land Use Policy Map (Appendix D of the MAP), on which a total of 844 lots is proposed to be redesignated to accommodate 17,747 units of the County's RHNA. With the exception of five lots proposed to be redesignated from H18 (Residential 18; 0-18 du/ac) to H30 (Residential 30; 20-30 du/ac), the remainder of these lots are located along major commercial corridors and proposed to be redesignated to Mixed Use (MU). The proposed MU land use designation allows for pedestrian-friendly and community-serving commercial uses that encourage walking, bicycling, and transit use, residential and commercial mixed uses, and multifamily residences. The MU land use designation allows a residential density of 50 to 150 dwelling units per net acre and a maximum FAR of 3.0 for non-residential and mixed-use development. Furthermore, to maintain consistency with the General Plan Land Use Legend, each lot in East Los Angeles, Walnut Park, and West Athens-Westmont is assigned a General Plan land use designation that is equivalent to the existing land use designation from the communities' existing local plans, which are to be rescinded as part of the Project. For lots

within the East Los Angeles Third Street Specific Plan, the existing Transect Zones were also taken into consideration when selecting an equivalent General Plan land use designation.

Zoning Map

Zone changes are proposed to ensure consistency with the Land Use Policy Map and implement the MAP. Zone changes are proposed on the 844 lots that are proposed to be redesignated on the Land Use Policy Map. Zone MXD (Mixed Use Development) is proposed on lots that are redesignated to MU (Mixed Use), and Zone R-3 (Limited Density Multiple Residence) is proposed on lots that are redesignated to H30 (Residential 30; 20-30 du/ac). In addition, as part of the Housing Element Rezoning Program, four lots are also proposed to be rezoned from R-1 (Single-Family Residence) to R-2 (Two-Family Residence) to be consistent with the existing H18 (Residential 18; 0-18 du/ac) land use designation. Also, the “-GZ” Combining Zone is added onto industrial lots that are within 500 feet from sensitive uses such as residences, schools, and parks. The mapping of the Combining Zone makes it easier to identify industrial lots that are subject to existing Green Zones regulations. Other technical changes are also proposed on the zoning map to better reflect the existing, on-the-ground uses, correct mapping errors, and eliminate unnecessary split-zoning.

Title 22 (Planning and Zoning)

The proposed amendments to Title 22 implement the goals and policies of the MAP as follows:

Support Small Businesses and Entrepreneurs: The proposed Title 22 amendments support small businesses and encourage local entrepreneurship by permitting (1) the establishment of Accessory Commercial Units (ACUs) on residential corner lots in the Planning Area; (2) the continued operation of certain existing nonconforming neighborhood-serving small businesses in the residential zones by right in the Planning Area; and (3) the establishment of shared kitchen complexes in certain commercial and industrial zones countywide.

Promote Housing Opportunities: The proposed Title 22 amendments promote housing opportunities, including affordable housing and mixed-income development by requiring housing development on certain parcels identified in the Housing Element to provide a 20 percent affordable housing set-aside for lower-income households, pursuant to California Government Code sections 65583.2(c) and (h).

Encourage Safety and Mobility: The proposed Title 22 amendments encourage safety and mobility by requiring a conditional use permit (CUP) for K-12 schools in certain zones in the Planning Area to address community members' concerns over traffic safety around schools. As part of the CUP review, Public Works (PW) determines whether a traffic impact analysis and any infrastructure improvements are needed. Student loading and unloading is also restricted to designated areas to the satisfaction of PW.

Streamline and Standardize Existing Zoning Regulations: The Planning Area has several zoning regulatory layers, including four TOD Specific Plans, six Community Standards Districts (CSDs) and five Setback Districts. The multiple regulations can cause confusion and uncertainty. The proposed Title 22 amendments streamline the smaller-scale regulatory layers by establishing the Metro Planning Area Standards District (PASD), under which similar development standards in existing CSDs are combined or consolidated into a single set of Metro Planning Area-wide regulations. Since some existing CSD development standards will be applicable to all unincorporated communities in the Planning Area instead of individual communities, the Willowbrook and East Rancho Dominguez CSDs are to be rescinded, and the boundaries of the East Los Angeles, Walnut Park, and West Athens-Westmont CSDs are modified. The existing Setback Districts are also rescinded, and the special setback requirements are incorporated as CSD development standards into the PASD regulatory framework so that applicable development standards are centralized in a single chapter in Title 22. Furthermore, certain zones in the four existing TOD Specific Plans are amended to maintain consistency in how uses such as ACUs, shared kitchen complexes, and K-12 schools are regulated across all communities in the Planning Area. Regulations in the Connect Southwest LA and Willowbrook TOD Specific Plans are also reorganized and reformatted in Title 22 for ease of use.

Additional Amendments to Specific Plans

All non-regulatory information in the Willowbrook and Connect Southwest LA TOD Specific Plans, including background studies, outreach efforts, design guidelines, infrastructure recommendations, and implementation programs remain in the Specific Plans to inform discretionary reviews and plan implementation. Non-substantive revisions within the reference document include reorganization within some sections for continuity and adding content and cross references for clarity, as sections inform or relate to the associated regulations in Title 22. Additionally, there are “plain language” edits, as well as edits to correct typographical and formatting errors.

Implementation of Strategic Plan Goals

The Project supports the County’s *Strategic Plan Goal I: Make Investments That Transform Lives; Objective I.1.5: Increase Affordable Housing Throughout L.A. County* by allowing higher density housing development in certain areas where appropriate and increasing housing options.

In addition, the Project supports the County’s *Strategic Plan Goal II: Foster Vibrant and Resilient Communities; Objective II.1.2: Support Small Businesses and Social Enterprises* by creating new retail opportunities through permitting accessory commercial units, legalizing certain nonconforming businesses, and allowing shared kitchen complexes to support new food enterprises. The Project also supports *Strategy II.2.2: Expand Access to Recreational and Cultural Opportunities* by establishing a goal to identify and study the feasibility of future

freeway cap parks. As the Project supports the implementation of the GZO and commits the County to further explore the feasibility of various strategies that will facilitate industrial land uses and operations that are compatible with neighboring sensitive land uses, it also supports *Strategy II.2.3: Prioritize Environmental Health Oversight and Monitoring*. The Project also supports *Objective II.2.4: Promote Healthy and Active Lifestyles* through policies and zoning that encourage mixed use developments and active transportation such as walking, biking, and other mobility modes to access local services. Moreover, the Project supports *Strategy II.3.5: Support a Clean, Flexible, and Integrated Multi-Modal Transportation System that Improves Mobility* through its mobility and TOD-related goals, policies, and implementation programs.

FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING

Approval of the Project will not result in any significant new direct costs to the Department of Regional Planning (DRP) or other County departments and agencies.

FACTS AND PROVISIONS/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The Project supports Goals LU 1, LU 2, LU 3, LU 4, LU 5, LU 7, LU 9, LU 10, M 1, M 2, M 4, M 5, AQ 1, AQ 2, AQ 3, P/R 1, ED 1, ED 2, HE 1, and HE 3 of the General Plan in that it will improve housing choice and affordability for residents of various incomes, promote infill development, support a mix of land uses that promote bicycling and walking, and encourage compatible land uses that also foster economic development while addressing environmental justice.

In addition to the public hearing conducted by the RPC on September 13, 2023, a public hearing before the Board is required pursuant to County Code section 22.232.040.B.1. Required notice (Attachment 12) has been given pursuant to the procedures and requirements set forth in County Code section 22.222.180. Additionally, courtesy public hearing notices were mailed to 1,516 property owners and emailed to a contact list of 1,417 stakeholders. The mailing list is included as Attachment 13.

A variety of strategies was used to meet the outreach goals of cultivating active participation. A summary of the two-year outreach process for the Project is included as Attachment 14.

ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION

The Final PEIR has been prepared in compliance with CEQA and County environmental guidelines to identify and mitigate any environmental impacts from the Project.

The Notice of Preparation was available for public review from February 14, 2022 to March 17, 2022. DRP held a scoping meeting on March 2, 2022 to provide project information and receive public comments. To protect public health and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic, the scoping meeting was held via the Zoom virtual platform and Facebook Live teleconference.

Based on comments received from the first draft PEIR circulated between November 17, 2022 to January 31, 2023, the Project was revised, most notably to remove the proposal to establish two new industrial zones on certain industrial parcels in the Planning Area. A recirculated draft PEIR was released for a 45-day public review period from June 12, 2023 to July 28, 2023. The recirculated PEIR concludes that the Project would result in less than significant impacts to the following areas: Aesthetics, Agriculture/Forestry Resources, Energy, Geology and Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hydrology/Water Quality, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Transportation, and Wildfire. Impacts to Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Noise, Population and Housing, Public Services (Parks), Recreation, Tribal Cultural Resources, and Utilities and Service Systems were determined to be significant and unavoidable, requiring a Statement of Overriding Considerations.

The Final PEIR addresses the comments received during the June 12, 2023 to July 28, 2023 comment period. None of the revisions made to the recirculated draft PEIR resulted in new significant impacts; none of the revisions resulted in a substantial increase in the severity of an environmental impact identified in the recirculated draft PEIR; and none of the revisions brought forth a feasible project alternative or mitigation measure that is considerably different from those set forth in the recirculated draft PEIR.

The Project has economic, social, legal, and other considerable benefits that outweigh the significant and unavoidable environmental effects as described. The Project creates opportunities for housing development, encourages reduction of vehicle miles traveled by placing services near residential uses and promoting other forms of mobility aside from single occupancy vehicles, prioritizes preservation of historic resources, and promotes land use compatibility between industrial and sensitive land uses.


A mitigation monitoring and reporting program is included in the Final PEIR and is adequately designed to ensure compliance with the mitigation measures during Project implementation.

IMPACT ON CURRENT SERVICES (OR PROJECTS)

Approval of the Project will not significantly impact County services.

Should you have any questions, please contact Patricia Hachiya of the General Plan/Transit-Oriented Communities Section at phachiya@planning.lacounty.gov or Tina Fung of the Housing Policy Section at tfung@planning.lacounty.gov.

Respectfully submitted,



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Director of Regional Planning

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Attachments:

1. Project Summary
2. Proposed Amendments to General Plan 2035
3. Proposed Metro Area Plan
4. Proposed Zone Change Maps
5. Proposed Florence-Firestone TOD Specific Plan Zoning Amendment Map
6. Proposed Title 22 Amendments
7. Proposed Willowbrook TOD Specific Plan
8. Proposed Connect Southwest LA TOD Specific Plan
9. Final PEIR and Attachments
10. Regional Planning Commission Hearing Proceedings
11. Regional Planning Commission Resolution
12. Hearing Notice
13. Notification List: Mailing
14. Engagement Plan and Outreach Summary

c: Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
Chief Executive Office
County Counsel
Fire Department
Los Angeles County Development Authority
Public Works