

Neighborhood Council of Westchester/Playa NCWP Planning and Land Use Committee Meeting Minutes

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Committee: Planning and Land Use Committee

Chairperson: Patricia Lyon

Meeting Date: Tuesday, September 19, 2017 - 6:30pm

Meeting Place: Westchester Municipal Building Community Room / 7166 Manchester Avenue, Westchester, CA 90045

Committee Attendance

- Present: Patricia Lyon, Joan Trimble, Garrett Smith, Don Hellwig, Alan Quon, David Voss, Dave Oliver, Janine Ying, Kimberly Fox
- Absent: None

Meeting called to order at 6:35pm

1: Welcome and Introduction (Patricia Lyon, Chair)

2: Review and Approval - Minutes from 20 June 2017 and 18 July 2017 Meetings

- Move to Approve: Garrett Smith
- Seconded: Alan Quon

3: Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

None

4: Information & Action Item - Sidewalk Repair or Replace Permit Requirement

Background - Requesting PLUC support update to City permitting and inspection process. Proposal: when a residential property is replaced or significantly remodeled, construction requirements include repair or replacement of sidewalk(s) associated with the property. Requesting NCWPDR take a supportive position and network with other neighborhood councils to support this change.

Presenter - John Ruhlen, Westchester Homeowner

Presentation Comments

- Observed 7 homes on his street alone have been remodeled recently, 5 of those with major remodeling. Yet none have repaired the side walk associated with their lot.
- Reports the City works a 30-year plan to replace or repair sidewalk issues throughout Los Angeles.
- Requests the Committee consider writing a letter to all dignitaries proposing the following: Building and Safety Department include requirement for sidewalk repair

be completed prior to final permit of occupancy for both Commercial and Residential projects.

- Also, requesting Committee explore getting other NC's to support this proposal as well.

Related Documents - None.

Public Comment - None

Committee Discussion

- Discussion of contractor hiring for the work: City mandated contractor or developer's selection. General agreement that developers would hire their preferred sub, and be expected to execute upgrades and repairs to City code standards.
- Some question of curb style: the updated, more "vertical step up" style or the older Westchester style of smooth transition from street to sidewalk.
- Agreement that repair or replacement should match with existing curb style in the area.
- Alan Quon: would be city mandated contractor to do the work?
- Also discussed: City of Los Angeles currently responsible for sidewalks, which they "claim to own." Therefore, what's being proposed is forcing the cost of maintenance of a public space to the homeowner.
- Agreement that any motion include the provision that homeowner is reimbursed the cost of sidewalk repair or replacement from their building permit fees.

Motion to support proposal with letter: David Voss.

Seconded: Don Hellwig.

Vote: voice vote passes; one abstention.

Request that presenter John Ruhlen attend the NC Board meeting when this proposal is discussed.

5: Information & Discussion Item - re:code LA Update

Background - The proposed Processes and Procedures Ordinance is one of the first components of the re:code LA project. Aimed at improving accessibility to the Zoning Code by making it easier to use and understand. Also aimed at improving clarity re steps in how the Department evaluates development proposals, so all stakeholders can ID the decision makers and opportunities for public participation. (New processes and procedures retain long-standing opportunities for public comment.)

Presenter - Tom Rothmann, Principal City Planner; Division Manager of Code Studies and Project Manager for **re:code LA** project

Related Documents - provided during the meeting. See addendum for copies.

1. Re:code brochure (4 pages)
2. PowerPoint printout re “Processes and Procedures Staff Hearing - Sept 2017”
3. Processes and Procedures Ordinance Q&A (2 pages)

Presenter Comments

- He has 18 years with LA Planning Department; head of the re:code project.
- New Ordinance re Processes and Procedures in draftin process currently; 4 public hearings taking place. Then draft will go to PLUM in December for consideration.
- The re:code LA project - Comprehensive revision to zoning code; variances, R1 zoning, parking requirements, setbacks, heights. Community planning process uses the options for zoning defined in the re:code update, and chooses what code to put “on the ground” in their community.
- Challenge: LA City Code created in 1946; been adding to it continuously since then. LA Zoning Code started as pamphlet; now a “big fat binder that’s virtually impossible to navigate.” Reports LA has “the second oldest city zoning in the country.”
- 4-5 years decided to throw it away and start over again. Goal is the definition of new types of zones to get at what neighbors and communities want (instead of the overlay zones, Q conditions, etc.) “Today, to figure it all out takes a land use attorney.”
- Goal is accessibility; web-based, user friendly structure and search.
- Have completed first deliverable: creating a group of 16 new single family zones. Addresses the “mansion-ization” trend in the city to keep R1 projects in scale with communities existing R1 structure.
- Addressing “contextual” zoning > questions of where to put structure massing based on other structures immediately around.
- Re:code zones will be “rolled out Community Plan by Community Plan.” Not rezoning everything. Rather, Community Planners look at options in the updated re:code zones and decide what they want applied in their community, via the Community Plan.
- Next phase of new code release: now that R1 codes are complete, working on an update re processes (e.g., how to get a variance, do a track map, activate certain entitlement processes. Goal: address the duplicates and “randomness” of current processes. Hoping to craft something “easy to read” with flow charts, so public “knows where to look if you need something.” Taking 114 processes in LA Code today and consolidating that down to ~50.

Committee Discussion

Q / Lyons: Can you address the so-called “Granny Flat” issue (accessory structures as legal rentals.)

Rothmann: not being done in my office; I do code amendments except those related to housing. We’ve worked on it and it’s currently being reviewed by the City Attorney’s office. Not yet approved. Reviewed first by City attorney, then presented to full Council.
Note: all housing-related issues to go Matt Glesne in Planning.

Q / Smith: Walk us through R1 new coding?

Rothmann: There are now 16 types of single family zoning. All require a 5K sq ft lot to build a single-family home. Some are called R1 V2, R1 R2. After R1, a letter and number. The letter is a V for variable mass, we don't care where the massing goes.

R = bulk of mass goes to the rear.

F = bulk of the mass moves to the front (street)

R1 R = push mass to the back and have the street slide

Numbers = 1,2,3 = floor area ratio; size of the house.

"Some neighborhoods didn't want to see small houses. Some neighborhoods wanted to maintain a small bungalow feel. This allowed neighborhoods to get what they wanted re size and bulk massing."

Q / Quon: How does this fit with the Specific Plans?

Rothmann: Tough issue, given Specific Plans call out areas we decided were different for some reason. We're doing an analysis; we want to figure out how to rezone the new way so we can get out of the old system to avoid maintaining 2 systems. And won't touch Specific Plans until a Community Plan comes up for revision.

Q / Quon: What about a historical plan?

Rothmann: HPOZ's - same process; they might choose a different R1 zoning when they start their Community Plan. Note: the Community Planning process has started, with 6 neighborhoods in the first group.

Q / Voss: A concern: perception among developers that re:code amounts to a tectonic shift in policy. Question of whether this rewriting process is pursued so people can't see the difference in the changes. One issue: the sense that the re:code push encourages/favors increasing mixed-use zoning. Re:code as you see it: is it overall increasing mixed-use so commercial use has more influx into residential areas?

Rothmann: We're not rezoning. We're providing tools. Commercial corridors are already mixed-used. Re intrusion into residential areas: if the community wants that, they can. Or not. Re:code provides tools to do that, or not do that.

Q / Voss: the 16 R1 zones in the new code: are we going to have a process to decide which ones we wish to apply where.

Rothmann: You had that with the Kentwood request for rules to address mansionization.

Comment / Lyon: Kentwood Home Guardians was asking for (new zoning) because mansionization was becoming a problem. Good timing, in that Kentwood issue came up when City was communities to try the 15 or 16 options. Would note that process did not go through PLUC or public process.

Comment / Voss: Possible we would have picked a different (code category). What was chosen was imposed without a public process through PLUC or a Community Plan update process. Top down message: “we’re going to tell you how your City should function better.” The concern: re:code is cover for making changes we don’t want.

Rothmann: hearing two things: zoning imposed on your neighborhood. And action taken due to very vocal group of home owners.

Comment / Voss: The change was the result of a small group able to get the attention of the Councilman. It did not happen through the standard channels so everyone would be involved. Not the standard channels so everyone was involved.

Rothmann: Kentwood was an isolated zone change due to crisis the people in the neighborhoods (Kentwood and others) were having.

Q / Voss: I’m hearing there’s a perceived bias towards infill associated with re:code. If you wanted to development a property at corner of Sepulveda and Manchester, does the proposed process and zoning change make it so the developer will be able to do that by-right? Are approvals baked into the code?

Rothmann: Hard to answer because we haven’t come to rezone your neighborhood. If they community planners want infill they can approve that. Or green space, if people want that.

Q / Lyon: This is the question I’m hearing from community stakeholders. Will the Community Plan update allow us to go street by street? For example, saying we would like to see less density in the area around Pershing and Manchester? This neighborhood is seeing many buildings end up succumbing to SB181 Density Bonus incentives with many units and significant traffic impacts. Want to assure the neighbors the process will allow them to be heard, give feedback. What Kentwood did was champion a (zoning) change based on fear that certain projects were actually stealth student housing or AirBnB properties—remodels with many bedroom-bathroom combos, looking more like an Embassy Suites then true R-1 projects.

Comment / Smith: I live in Kentwood and I’m happy with the way it’s been zoned. But agree the process wasn’t great, didn’t go through broader public channels.

Rothmann: The anti-mansionization rezoning went very fast. We had to do an emergency interim development with zone on the ground that had to meet as many needs as possible. Several neighborhoods being effected by mansionization, so we had to move.

Comment / Lyon: Initially we were told we’d be in the last (community to get new Community Planning process). Have passed a motion addressed to Bonin, Planning and the Council. Asked to move us forward due to high impact of our community: growth of modernized LAX, HH center diverted from commercial to residential with 600 units as we speak. Playa Vista growth. We’re surrounded by growth. Hoping we aren’t put out 5-6 years but earlier in the process.

Rothmann: There are some things you can probably do before the Community Plan is initiated.

Comment / Voss: SB1818 has come in as over-ride on Q conditions we set previously. The City doesn't require a developer to demonstrate financial need for (Density Bonus incentives).

Rothmann: Have heard over the years that SB1818 has blown out the approved zoning. We're proposing a maximum base FAR. The SB1818 by-right will bring you to 3:1. And could go to X:1 with the bonus. But if you put in affordable housing it's open-ended.

Committee Comment / Voss: The larger concern is not FAR as much as height. If it's too high it has a bigger impact. Our concern is height bonus.

Comment / Lyon: 45' height restriction and that can become 52' with Density Bonuses; in beach neighborhood, trying to come up with the right solutions.

Comment / Voss: Understand a big shift re re:code is the elimination or reduction of mandatory parking requirements. Rumors leaking out that you're going to eliminate mandatory parking requirements. We need an answer in re:code to satisfying our problem. Planning position that parking encourages driving, so reduction in parking will encourage less driving. In reality, it just means people don't have a place to park.

Rothmann: Dealing with a big city, 170 sq miles. Re:code project refers to 9 "themes" for areas in the city: Downtown is a theme. Coastal zone is a theme. Hillside is theme. Some themes are very urban, some very suburban. Today, that's 9 'cities' that we keep accommodating with special zoning overlays. Re:code's goal: create development standards that fit each theme. Example: we're hearing downtown theme doesn't want parking minimums. But there's still an option in re:code to keep parking standards as they are. In your Community Planning process, you have the option to review that issue. As a Coastal Zone community, you might have very specific requirements and parking requirements may be one of them.

Q / Voss: Do all the re:code choices re parking reduce parking requirements?

Presenter: During Community Planning process, will talk about every specific thing. If you don't see the parking package you have today, we'll work on that: parking the same, parking reduced, parking increased.

Comment / Lyon: SB1818 is the big impact. 86 unit on small lot, and they want 45 parking spaces. Single apartment is renting \$1600-\$1800; that takes 2 people and they each have a ½ car parking. Major concern that we update our Community Plan, think we've done the right thing. Then a developer comes in, goes SB1818 (Density Bonus for affordable units included in the project), and suddenly there's nowhere to park on that project.

Comment / Ying: Parking is a huge issue. People parking for LAX, tourism. Every single project since I've been on the committee comes out like this: 600 units with 400 parking. Public transportation isn't as available in this area; pushes parking issues into the neighborhood streets.

Rothmann: that's why we choose themes. Hillside, equine districts, all have in different requirements. Yours might be Coastal Context and some Suburban.

Public Comment

Speaker: Gregg Anioleck

Expressed concern that giving input on re:code is a process that happens in the community. Does not want a "downtown" process where people have to travel to downtown, take a half day off, just to give comment.

Comment / Lyon: would like Rothmann to return with another community presentation on re:code and include Sharon Cummings so she can address the history of process to create it.

Comment / Rothmann: planning on bringing Procedures and Processes draft to Commission on Dec 14, 2017.

6: Information & Action Item - 5529 W Manchester Ave (aka LAX Shopping)

Background - Proposal for project to demolish 4,150 sq ft of existing retail due to lost visibility, resulting from concrete block wall built for Metro Extension. Proposed project would retain approximately 24,041 sq ft of retail and will add approximately 73,674 of self-storage in a 7-story building adjacent to Metro Extension. Total land area is approximately 65,171.

Presenters

- Daniel Khakshouri, Owner
- Michael Gonzalez, Attorney

Related Documents - presentation boards shown during meeting.

Presenter Introduction / Lyon: This is opportunity for information and possible action item. Property owner has short term plans, discussion opportunity re making this shopping center something it isn't today, longer term, with benefit for the community.

Presenter Comments

- Metro expansion in LA a "great thing."
- For this particular property however, it's been "a disaster" due to bridge over Manchester Ave resulting not in pillars to hold the bridge and keep the property visible. Rather, Metro has build solid walls, eliminates visibility of the shopping center from Manchester Ave.

- Consulted with various land use experts on possibilities for the property. Word came back “basically nothing you can do” in terms of retail.
- Next, went to City re other option. Suggestion of M2-1, which we studied but outside the expertise of his operating company. Far from retail purpose of the property as purchased.
- Considered a hotel; told it was very risky, and on our site, even worse.
- Looked at commercial office space; vacancy rates can be very high; 50% “isn’t unheard of.”
- Left with few options; Self Storage seemed feasible. Study showed local operations 100% occupied. Demand confirmed, and lack of visibility for the building “not an issue.”
- Least desirable part of the property is the back corner where owner proposing Self Storage building.
- Proposing metal cladding + glass building. Auto parking inside the structure for loading and unloading.
- Going to start with developing the least desirable part of the lot property.
- Hoping as City updates its plans, new zoning to use the 2 other better parts of the property for something more than Self Storage or the current retail.

Committee Discussion

Q / Quon: Are you saying when you bought the property, you didn’t realized Metro was planning to build?

Khakshouri: other stations had columns; weren’t worried about the Metro build out for this area. Didn’t expect a solid wall.

Q / Quon: Public Storage business, will you run it on your own?

Khakshouri: No, have some professional with storage experience run it.

Q / Oliver: You’re going to build to suit, then lease it?

Khakshouri: probably a 3rd party manager, someone who only does that.

Q / Garrett: how much parking are you going to lose by putting up this building?

Khakshouri: Never seen more than 3-4 cars at a storage facility; low user traffic. This is over parked.

Q / Lyon: how tall is the building?

Khakshouri: 7 stories and a basement.

Q / Smith: You’re allowed to build. What are you asking for from us?

Gonzales: Site plan review; unlimited vertical height.

Q / Lyon: When we tend to hear public storage we kind of wince. Doesn’t give much back to the community. This isn’t an aesthetic, cultural, educational improvement. But on the other hand, we have a developer with what % vacancy?

Khakshouri: 20%

Comment / Lyon: It's a huge concrete wall. Would challenge you to envision what you could do, as far as making money and giving something back to the community. Would be great for this to become housing, SB1818 Density Bonus, with open area where the sewer line easement falls. I've brought the project to Councilman. He's adamantly against public storage. But when asked if he would be willing to approve storage if there was a larger plan to convert the retail to mixed use with housing? He would be willing to ask for a zone change to allow for housing. Some nice housing. Right next to transportation location. Great location. Bonin is willing to listen to it. If committee puts together a motion: we'll support public storage if we get mixed use down the road. That requires the Developer to do a Community Development Agreement; not binding.

Comment / Oliver: I'm totally against more housing.

Comment / Smith: Would like Mr. Gonzalez bring us something with ideas about the longer-term vision for the property.

Gonzalez: housing on the site = highest and best use. Now have Triple J on the books. Must comply with the labor agreements, which raises cost of construction. Housing project would be owner's preference. Lender is going to say what's the risk? It's a zone change. We're open to it if the Councilmember to initiate the zone change on his own.

Comment / Lyon: Overall, Councilman has been opposed to any zone change. First time he's said he would go to bat on a zone change to counter balance the Public Storage with housing, mixed-use with housing.

Gonzalez: this building could be done in a different foot print but Daniel is trying to preserve the other parts of the property.

Khakshouri: if we do a 7 story storage is a lot more expensive than a 3 story one. Taller you get it becomes Type 1 construction, the most expensive. You'd pay less for 5th floor than the 1,2,3. If that was our end game would be to do 3 stories and there wouldn't be any more space on the site. It's costing us a lot more to go this way.

Q / Ying: are you going to update the shops in the area?

Khakshouri: as we can, but to be honest with the vacancy rate it's almost hard to make the loan payments. We're hoping (new public storage) can generate cash flow. And future cash flow to develop further. Our real estate is our pride of ownership, want it to look as nice as we can. But have to be realistic about the financial plan. Rezone would be our hope.

Q / Lyon: Have you reached out to neighbors on the shopping center across the street, talk to them, show them what you want to do, find out if they have plans to redevelop?

Khakshouri: we tried to contact 3 owners and no one responded. They're bigger corporate entities and you don't get much feedback. On the other sides: Police Academy. And an industrial user that makes meals for the airlines.

Comment / Smith: You seem like a nice enough guy. But I haven't been a big fan of your tenants. I walk the area. At 11:30 pm, not great. I'm really surprised you're bringing something that's almost acceptable to us. Want you to come back with something more concrete.

Gonzales: Owner can commit to working with the Councilman to get the zone change. It's complicated. There are risks. But if the Councilman commits to spear head we'd be right there with you.

Comment / Lyon: Would appreciate having a list of your property holdings. I know you have only owned (this property) for a few years. Have to say, it's one of the more run-down parcels in our area. Public storage is now up for discussion. But you've owned the parcel for 3 years and allowed illegal operations (tenants). Neighbors concern: are they going to clean up the shopping center? You might not be putting in \$5M, but would expect better security and legal businesses operating. You've owned it for 3 years, but it's been a mess for 30 years. We know the J Spot doesn't always comply with the law. The hookah place doesn't comply. Gang issues between your center and the G&S Bar across the street.

Comment / Smith: Would encourage you to reach out to the other shopping center. Managed by the Drollinger Company.

Comment / Lyon: Also the grey building across the street, next to car rental> The intersection is the three of you. Also, for the record, I received an email from the Smog Check / Grey Building (AMR) about their issues about public storage.

Comment / Smith: Would like to see you come back. Beautiful storage building. Reach out to the neighbors, come back with a more comprehensive answer re future plans.

Gonzalez: If we look at the future, at this point the future is a M1 zone.

Comment / Lyon: Committee is suggesting you come back next month. Between now and then, meet with the two neighbors. Bring a presentation to say "I've done my community outreach, this is what neighbors are saying, here's a plan for cleaning up the tenant legality situation. And although I can't commit to, we'd like a rezone of the parcel, so we could work on raising capital for creating housing in the next phase.

Khakshouri: What is the process for redoing the local Community Plan (re rezoning)?

Comment / Lyon: if its handled as an acception to a zone change, it's more likely to get done before our Community Plan update process. It's going to be a while.

Q / Ying: What does Metro say? What do they say about a 7-story building next to the train?

Khakshouri: M2-1: no restriction by right. I think the City made it “-1” is because of what’s going on around that intersection. If you’re going to have a tall building there’s not a place better for that than here.

7: Announcements

LAX LAMP project: Ying brought paperwork from their environmental impact report; making it available to Committee to review.

Home Sharing Draft Ordinance: Committee asking the NC Board President to author a Community Impact Statement report to attach to Council file.

- Motion by Garrett Smith.
- Seconded by Alan Quon.
- Voice vote: passed unanimously

Grinder Project: per Lyon, coming back to PLUC soon with traffic report.

New Project - La Cienega Triangle: preview of new project. Developer looking to create updated shopping center. They’re signing letters of intent with some brand-name, quality retailers. Will present on October agenda. Existing Burger King and Kentucky Fried Chicken remain. Liquor stays (building owned by business operator). Dr’s offices on La Tijera owned by Drollinger negotiating to have the building “re-skinned” to match new buildings.

Howard Hughes Promenade: Fox requests an update presentation from new owners re construction process and update on tenant situation. Lyon to outreach, attempt a set-up for November agenda.

Education Quality in NC: Lyon reported informal meeting with Nick Melvoin re unintended consequences of public education that doesn’t support the community stakeholders. E.g., local residents opting out of public schools. Initiating discussion of building an education component that supports building the neighborhood.

8: Meeting Adjourned @ 8:59