

Meeting Notes: Tuesday, September 24, 2024

Meeting Time: 7–8:30 p.m.

Location: Altadena Community Center Via Zoom

Topics Covered:

1. Public Works Update on UWS Service and Customer Service Response

Speaker: Khaled Alqam, Principal Engineer, Los Angeles County Public Works

- **Service Requests:**
 - There were a total of 71 requests for June, July, and August 2024.
 - The rate of concerns increased slightly: +0.07% in June, 0.00% in July, and +0.12% in August.
- **Customer Service Call Wait Times:**
 - Average wait times improved over the summer:
 - June: 2 minutes, 19 seconds
 - July: 3 minutes
 - August: 1 minute, 14 seconds
- **Bear-Resistant Waste Carts Program:**
 - Residents of Altadena and Kinneloa Mesa can exchange their current waste carts (black, blue, green) for bear-resistant ones certified by the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee at no extra cost. Contact Universal Waste Systems (UWS) for this exchange, facilitated by Los Angeles County Public Works.
- **Mulch & Compost Giveaway:**
 - Universal Waste Systems (UWS) provides mulch and compost giveaways. Contact UWS for more information about availability and distribution.

2. Altadena Libraries Construction Updates

Speaker: Nikki Winslow, Director, Altadena Library District

- **Measure Z Funding:**
 - Thanks to Measure Z, the Altadena Library District is undergoing a major renovation project for both the Main Library and the Bob Lucas Memorial Library, starting in spring 2022.
- **Grant Opportunities:**
 - The District is seeking additional grant funding to expand and enhance the design options for the Main Library. Final decisions on these grants are expected by late spring/early summer. The Main Library Town Hall has been postponed until more information is available.
- **Bob Lucas Library Priorities:**
 - Expansion with an indoor-outdoor reading court and new literacy program rooms.

- Reconfiguration of interior and exterior spaces for better use.
- Enhancement of the building's visual appeal to establish it as a community landmark.
- **Main Library Priorities:**
 - Ensure full accessibility and ease of use.
 - Conduct structural, seismic, and safety repairs while preserving the historic mid-century architecture.
 - Develop flexible and future-proof indoor and outdoor spaces.

3. Planning Updates: Nuccio's Nursery Site Sale

Speaker: Sean Donnelly, Senior Planner, Los Angeles County Planning

- **Understanding Planning Permits:**
 - **Conditional Use Permit (CUP):** Required for land uses not typically permitted under current zoning but can be approved with certain conditions.
 - **Discretionary Permit:** Allows for land use or development projects that need special approval, typically involving a detailed review of the project's potential impacts and adherence to zoning laws.
- **Application Review Process:**
 - Initial plan review takes 30–60 days.
 - Involves compliance with **Title 22** (Planning and Zoning) and **Title 21** (Subdivisions of Los Angeles County Code).
- **Consultation Review:**
 - After initial review, the plan is reviewed by various agencies: Public Works, Parks & Recreation, Public Health, Arts & Culture, Sheriff's Department, Fire Department, and any other relevant entities. This step typically takes at least 30 days.
- **California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Review:**
 - CEQA aims to prevent environmental damage through review and public involvement.
 - Projects may be **Categorically Exempt** if they have minimal or no significant environmental impact. If not exempt, a full Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is required.
 - **EIR Process:** Evaluates potential environmental impacts, such as traffic, air quality, noise, and wildlife disruption. This process can take 9–16 months.
- **State Clearinghouse Review:**
 - CA tribes and state agencies have an opportunity to review and provide feedback on the EIR to ensure compliance with environmental and cultural standards.
- **Public Hearing Process:**
 - Once the CEQA review is complete, a public hearing is announced:
 - **Announcement Details:** Includes project number, name, hearing date and time, and is posted on the website and in newspapers.

- **Hearing Bodies:** Hearing Officer, Regional Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors, Airport Land Use Commission, Historical Landmarks Commission.
 - **Role:** These bodies review the project for compliance with county codes and environmental laws. They also consider public comments.
- **Public Comment and Appeal Process:**
 - Community members can submit public comments in person, via Zoom, or through written submissions during the hearing.
 - After the hearing, the public can appeal decisions within 45 days. Appeals can be made for or against the project and must be submitted to the LA County Courts. Appeals require filing forms and can include arguments related to legal, environmental, or procedural issues.

UWS Q&A

Q: How does the collection of kitchen waste in plastic bags work?

A: UWS collects kitchen scraps in plastic bags, which are then transported to the Oracis machine located in the city of Vernon. The machine separates the organic waste from the plastic bags. The kitchen scraps are converted into composting fuel, while the plastic bags are sent to another facility for further processing.

Q: Can you explain the Oracis machine's process?

A: The Oracis machine uses mechanical and chemical processes to separate organic waste from non-organic materials like plastic bags. The organic waste is then processed into composting fuel, which is used to create sustainable energy, while the plastic bags are sent to a facility that specializes in recycling or disposal of non-organic waste.

Q: Are tours available at the Green Waste facility?

A: Yes, Matt, the owner of UWS, offers tours of the Green Waste facility.

Q: Did a notice go out about cleaning green bins?

A: Yes, a notice was sent out two weeks before the cleaning began. The cleaning is for the interior of the green bins only, and customers can still request this service. Blue and black bin cleaning services are available at the customer's expense.

Bob Lucas Library Q&A

Q: What happened to the mature native shrubs at Bob Lucas Library?

A: Some mature plants were removed to expand the literacy room and kids' corner. The Library is working with landscape designers to preserve existing healthy plants wherever possible.

LA County Planning and Polytechnic School Project Q&A

Disclaimer: *The Polytechnic School's purchase of Nuccio's Property is still in escrow. This is a private sale, and the public cannot intervene in a private transaction.*

Q: What stage is the Polytechnic School project currently in?

A: The project is in the review process. Polytechnic School has until mid-October to respond to LA County Planning's request for additional information. For updates, visit EpicLA

Q: Are plans grandfathered-in with the land once they are complete?

A: No, once plans are complete, they must still go through public hearings and reviews.

Q: How can the public check Polytechnic School's due diligence, and when is information made public?

A: The public can request information from LA County Planning, but the County will not post incomplete or draft applications. Once the CEQA review process begins, plans will be posted publicly.

Q: Did the Polytechnic expansion include any expansion into the West San Gabriel Monument?

A: The West San Gabriel Monument is a protected area. The public can confirm details about any potential expansion by contacting the LA County Planning Department.

Q: How does LA County Public Works evaluate traffic patterns?

A: Public Works uses specific codes and requirements for traffic analysis. The public can request these requirements directly from the department.

Q: How much influence do public comments have on a project?

A: Public comments are taken seriously and can influence project conditions. The public can voice concerns and suggest changes during hearings and review periods.

Q: Does the project need to comply with Oak Tree Ordinances?

A: Yes, the project must comply with LA County's Oak Tree Ordinances. The ordinance information is available on the LA County Planning website.

Q: What permits have been pulled for the Polytechnic project?

A: Permits for parking, oak tree clearing, and a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a sports field have been pulled. This information is accessible through EpicLA.

Q: Where can the public get status updates on the project?

A: The public can email Sean Donnelly, the senior planner, at SDonnelly@planning.lacounty.gov or info@planning.lacounty.gov.

Q: Is the National Forest Service included in the CEQA review?

A: Yes, the CEQA review process includes various state agencies, such as the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the National Forest Service.

Q: Can Regional Planning expand their required radius for hearing notifications?

A: The minimum notification radius is 1,000 feet from the property perimeter. For more information, contact the 5th District Supervisor's office.

Q: Is the applicant required to meet with the community?

A: There is no requirement for Polytechnic to meet with the community, but LA County Planning strongly encourages it. The Altadena Town Council and Land Use Committee represent the community's voice and review projects. The Town Council can facilitate communication between the school and residents.

Q: Can adjacent neighbors influence the project more than others?

A: Feedback from directly adjacent neighbors may carry more weight, especially if the project impacts their properties.

Q: How much power does Regional Planning have?

A: Regional Planning can make recommendations, but final decisions are made by the Regional Planning Commission. Contact the LA County Planning Department for more information.

Q: Has Polytechnic School asked the Altadena Town Council to set up a meeting?

A: No, but the Town Council recommends that Polytechnic engage with the community.

Q: How can people sign up for CEQA updates?

A: Email Sean Donnelly (SDonnelly@planning.lacounty.gov) to sign up for updates. Note that signing up for updates through CEQA, you will receive updates on all active projects under CEQA review.

Q: Does the CEQA review include a biology review?

A: Yes, LA County Planning has a dedicated biology department for this purpose.

Q: What additional information has LA County Planning requested?

A: They have requested details on secondary emergency access and a road study from LA Public Works. The road study assesses the impact of the project on local infrastructure.

Q: What can be said in public comments to potentially deny the project?

A: It's important to cite specific codes and regulations that the project may not comply with, as well as express personal opinions and concerns.

Q: What conditions does LA County Planning consider for projects?

A: Conditions include sound and lighting, based on County codes and ordinances. The public can find these codes on the LA County Planning website.

Q: What are boilerplate conditions?

A: These are standard conditions applied to many projects, enforced by the Advance Planning Division and the Land Use Regulation Division.

Q: Can a Notice of Violation be revoked before the condition expiration date?

A: It depends on compliance with conditions. Violations can be cleared if all conditions are met before the expiration date.

Q: What determines conditions set by the regional planner or hearing officer?

A: Conditional Use Permits (CUP) range from Levels 1 to 5, depending on the project scale. Large projects go through the Regional Planning Commission, which has the authority to approve or deny them.

Q: How long will it take for a decision on the Polytechnic project?

A: Most projects in Altadena take 1-3 years for a decision.

Q: How will the County evaluate Crest Trails and ensure the project doesn't impact them?

A: The County will review environmental and community impact reports to ensure Crest Trails are not affected. Plans must comply with all relevant regulations.

Q: Has LA County Planning walked the property?

A: A site visit is typically conducted during the review process with plans and conditions in hand.

Q: Why was the review process extended?

A: Polytechnic requested an extension to submit additional information.

Q: What is a VTM, and is it needed for this property?

A: A Vesting Tentative Map (VTM) is needed if the project subdivides the property into parcels. If applicable, Title 21 of the LA County Code will govern the process.

Q: Do you need a VTM with a CUP?

A: It depends on the project specifics and whether subdivision is involved.

Q: What is the current zoning for Nuccio's Property?

A: It is zoned R-1 10,000, which dictates usage and development standards. Information is available on the LA County Planning website.

Q: How can the public be confident there is no leniency between the County and Polytechnic School?

A: The Levin Act requires transparency and disclosure of any conflicts of interest. The hearing officer must disclose any conflicts, and owner information is publicly available.

Q: Will the construction of the parking lot be the largest grading project ever?

A: This is currently unknown.

Q: How can we ensure no additional buildings will be added after the plans are approved?

A: Any changes to plans before the public hearing must start from the beginning. After approval, changes require a "Revised Exhibit A," which also restarts the process and must be less than 10% of the original plan.

Q: When can the public challenge the Polytechnic project?

A: The public can challenge during the public comment period before the project is approved. After approval, legal actions can be taken if the project violates specific codes or regulations.