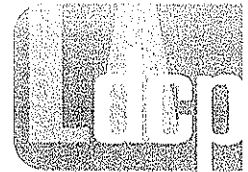




DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING

RECOMMENDATION REPORT



City Planning Commission **ITEM 7**

Date: June 12, 2014
Time: After 8:30 a.m.
Place: City Hall, 10th Floor
200 North Spring Street, Room 1010
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Public Hearing: Held May 1, 2014
Appeal Status: Not applicable (City initiated).

Expiration Date: August 20, 2014 [CPC shall act within 75 days of receipt of the Director's report and recommendation].

Multiple Approval: n/a

Case No.: CPC-2014-424-HD
CEQA No.: ENV-2014-425-CE
Incidental Cases: None
Related Cases: None
Council No.: 1-Cedillo, 13-O'Farrell
Plan Area: Silver Lake-Echo
Park-Elysian Valley
Partially within Echo
Park Community
Design Overlay (CDO)
Certified NC: Greater Echo Park
Elysian
Neighborhood
Commercial
GPLU: [Q]C2-1L-CDO,
[Q]C2-1L, C2-1L, R4-
1L-CDO
Zone(s):
Council File CF-13-0956 (O'Farrell-
Motion: Huizar)

PROJECT LOCATION: Parcels fronting Sunset Boulevard between Glendale Boulevard and Mc Duff Street; parcels south of Sunset Boulevard along Lemoyne Street and Logan Street; parcels north and south of Sunset Boulevard along Echo Park and Laveta Terrace; and parcels north of Sunset Boulevard along Fairbanks Place and Mc Duff Street.

PROPOSED PROJECT: Height District Change from 1L to 1VL [decrease allowed height from 75 feet to 45 feet].

REQUESTED ACTION:

1. Pursuant to LAMC Section 12.32 of the Municipal Code, **Adoption** of a Height District Change from Height District -1L to Height District - 1VL to decrease the height allowed from 75 feet to 45 feet.
2. Pursuant to Section 21084 of the California Public Resources Code, **Adoption** of ENV-2014-425-CE (Categorical Exemption) as the environmental clearance.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

1. **Approve and Recommend** that the city council **Adopt** a Height District Change from Height District -1L to Height District - 1VL
2. **Recommend** that the city council **Adopt** ENV-2014-425-CE (Categorical Exemption) as the environmental clearance.

MICHAEL J. LOGRANDE
Director of Planning

Ken Bernstein, AICP
Principal City Planner

Craig Weber, Senior City Planner

Haydee Urita-Lopez, Hearing Officer
Tel: (213) 978-1162

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Project Analysis..... A-1

Project Summary
Background
Conclusion

Findings..... F-1

General Plan/Charter Findings
Height District Findings
CEQA Finding

Public Hearing and Communications P-1

Exhibits:

A – Motion (CF-13-0956, O’Farrell-Huizar)

B – Maps

B1 – Land Use Vicinity Map

B2 – Height District Change Map (parcels identified for Height District change)

B3 – Echo Park CDO Map

C – Environmental Clearance (Categorical Exemption)

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Project Summary

The proposed Height District change is from 1L to 1VL. This height district change would decrease the maximum height allowed from 75 feet to 45 feet for parcels along Sunset Boulevard and adjacent residential streets; in the Echo Park neighborhood. The proposed district change includes some parcels along the following streets: Sunset Boulevard, from Glendale Boulevard to McDuff Street; and some parcels along Lemoyne Street, Logan Street, Echo Park Avenue, Fairbanks Place, Laveta Terrace, and McDuff Street. The parcels highlighted in the map below have been identified for the proposed height district change (see Exhibit B Maps for more details):



Background

On July 30, 2013 a Council motion (CF-13-0956, O'Farrell-Huizar) was approved instructing the City Planning Department to initiate proceedings for a height district change from the existing 1L designation (see Exhibit A), in an area that overlaps with the Echo Park Community Design Overlay District (CDO). Approximately 80% of the project area falls within the Echo Park CDO District Plan, which is an implementation tool of the Silver Lake-Echo Park-Elysian Valley Community Plan. This CDO provides goals that seek to strengthen and embrace its pedestrian orientation, connectivity to Echo Park Lake, and retention of its unique cultural neighborhood identity.

The Echo Park Community Design Overlay District is geographically bounded by Sunset Boulevard to the north, Echo Park Avenue to the east, the 101 Hollywood Freeway to the south, and Bonnie Brae Street to the west. The project area that staff analyzed overlaps with the northern portion of the Echo Park CDO and is north of Echo Park Lake.

The project area is mostly developed with one to two-story neighborhood commercial buildings along the north and south side of Sunset Blvd, all generally zoned Commercial (C2). Additional surrounding land uses include one to two-story, multi-family residential dwellings, including duplexes to the north in the R2-1VL Zone; mixed-use commercial-retail shops with 2nd-story dwelling units along Sunset in the C2-1VL Zone; more residential multi-family dwellings to the south in the R4-1L-CDO Zone; and properties with duplexes to the south in the RD2-1VL-HPOZ (Angelino Heights Historic Preservation Overlay Zone).

The zoning further adjacent to these uses corresponds to lower land use designations and lower height districts. The parcels surrounding the project area have parcels zoned with the 1VL height district, which allows up to a 45-foot height maximum. The buildings in the project area and the buildings immediately adjacent to the project area are not at 75 feet; the "tallest" building within the project area is the Jensen Recreation Center which measures approximately 35 to 40 feet in height. The most noticeable building adjacent to the project area is the commonly known Citibank Building, which is located on 1900 Sunset Blvd, near Glendale Boulevard/Alvarado. The height of the Citibank Building is above 75 feet and illustrates how this type of massing is not compatible with the surrounding neighborhood context.

Allowing for a 75-foot maximum would result in extra-large, super-size massing that is inconsistent with the character of the neighborhood. The current scale of the neighborhood is more compatible with a 45-foot maximum.

Conclusion

The Department recommends that the height district for the entire project area be decreased from 1L to 1VL. The current 1L Height District allows up to a 75-foot maximum and is out of scale with the character of the existing neighborhood and immediate neighborhood surroundings. Future infill development, remodels, alterations, or repairs should be compatible with the existing neighborhood character of this project area. The 1VL height district would allow a 45-foot height maximum and the 45 feet is more consistent with the character of the project area.

FINDINGS

GENERAL PLAN/CHARTER FINDINGS

1. The project complies with the City's General Plan Framework and land use designation. The project area falls within the area covered by the Silver Lake-Echo Park-Elysian Valley Community Plan Update adopted by City Council on August 11, 2004. The Silver Lake-Echo Park-Elysian Valley Community Plan designates the parcels in the project area as Community Commercial with corresponding zones of CR, C2, C4, and RAS3. All the parcels in the proposed project area are zoned C2, with a proposed 1VL Height District.
 - a. The Citywide General Plan Framework text includes policies related to conservation of existing lower-intensity residential and commercial districts. The proposed height district change from 1L to 1VL would be in conformance with the following policy:

Policy 3.4.1: Conserve existing stable residential neighborhoods and lower-intensity commercial districts...in accordance with the Framework Long-Range Land Use Diagram.

The project area is comprised of low intensity community commercial uses. Currently this project area is developed with local "mom and pop" retail shops, restaurants, and neighborhood uses that serve the local community. Most of the buildings are one story, with the exception of the historic Jensen Recreation Center, which is approximately 40-feet in height. In sum, the buildings and uses identified in the project area are low intensity and the built environment is already consistent with the Framework's goal of conserving low-scale neighborhood commercial districts.

The proposed height district change would lower the maximum height allowed. This change would provide certainty in the long-range, to protect the low-scale character of this corridor. A lower height threshold would decrease the intensity of land development. Lower intensities would guarantee long-range protection of the existing residential neighborhood and its local commercial corridor. The proposed height district change is consistent with the Citywide General Plan Framework and land use designation.

The proposed height district change complies with the Community Plan's policies for residential and commercial land use. The Silver Lake-Echo Park-Elysian Valley Community Plan is part of the General Plan Framework's Land Use element. The community plan text includes the following relevant policies that seek to ensure best practices for residential and commercial land uses:

Policy 2-3.4: Preserve community character, scale and architectural diversity.

Policy 1-1: Encourage new infill residential development that complements existing development and architectural style.

Policy 1-1.5: Protect existing stable single family and low-density multiple family residential neighborhoods from encroachment by higher density residential and other incompatible uses.

The above policies were identified for residential land use uses to address both existing residential neighborhoods, and future infill projects where deemed appropriate. These residential policies cautiously call for new infill development in the

context of neighborhood preservation and compatibility with the existing community scale. The proposed height district change to lower the height district meets the community plan's expectation to preserve community character and protect lower density neighborhoods from incompatible, higher density.

Similarly, the following policies for commercial land use, address compatibility and consistency:

Objective 2-4: Reinforce the identity of distinct commercial districts through the use of design guidelines and development standards.

Policy 2-4.1: Ensure that commercial infill projects achieve harmony with the best of existing development.

The proposed height district change would limit potential development to a height that is more compatible with the project area. The properties immediately adjacent to the south of the project area are in the Angelino Heights Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ). For the most part, HPOZs are special areas with unique historical and architectural elements. Buildings that fall within an HPOZ are subject to strict development and preservation guidelines, and normally follow a lower density pattern in comparison to other residential neighborhoods. The proposed height district change is a tool to shape the massing of proposed projects that benefit the project area and also results in protection of the surrounding lower density adjacent neighborhoods, including properties that fall within an HPOZ. The proposed height district change is consistent with the Community Plan's policies for residential and commercial land use.

- b. The proposed height district change complies with the Echo Park CDO's design goals and principles. Approximately 80% of the project area falls within the Echo Park CDO, which is an implementation tool of the Silver Lake-Echo Park-Elysian Valley Community Plan. This CDO provides goals that seek to strengthen and embrace its pedestrian orientation, connectivity to Echo Park Lake, and retention of its unique cultural neighborhood identity. This CDO includes the following design goals and principles:

The CDO seeks to create a walkable community that takes advantage of the unique characteristics of the area: historic homes, scenic hillsides, winding roads, all nestled between a lush park and lake that provides respite from the urban core and opportunities for greater physical health and well-being.

To preserve architecturally significant buildings in the neighborhood and to ensure that further incompatible alterations do not occur, and to encourage new development that is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood context.

Encourage a cohesive neighborhood character by building new structures and additions at a scale that is appropriate to the street and the surrounding neighborhood context.

The CDO calls for more context specific guidelines and standards that are unique to Echo Park. The project area for the proposed Height District change falls within the northern part of this CDO and is known for its pedestrian orientation and local commercial activities. The lower height district specifically addresses the concern to

avoid future incompatible alterations in this neighborhood. Currently, the Jensen Recreation Center (located north of Echo Park Lake) measures approximately 40 feet in height; the proposed height district change would establish a threshold on height which guarantees that future projects strive for consistency with the current massing and scale of this neighborhood, in keeping with the goals of the CDO. The proposed height district change is consistent with the Echo Park CDO's design goals and principles to ensure compatible land uses.

HEIGHT DISTRICT FINDINGS

2. Pursuant to Section 12.32-C of the Municipal Code, and based on these findings, the recommended action is deemed consistent with the public necessity, convenience, general welfare and good zoning practice.
 - a. Public Necessity. Granting the requested height district change, as recommended, will be deemed consistent with public necessity. The height district change will reduce the intensity of land development in a residential neighborhood and local commercial corridor that is characterized by buildings that are less than 45 feet in height. To satisfy the preservation of local character and require in-fill development to match the existing character of Echo Park's eclectic neighborhood, the Silver Lake-Echo Park-Elysian Valley Community Plan encourages the protection of lower density neighborhoods from incompatible higher density.
 - b. Convenience. Granting the requested height district change, as recommended, will be deemed consistent with public convenience. The proposed height district change contributes to the preservation of the neighborhood character and provides neighborhood stabilization. The proposed height district change to 45 feet provides certainty that the character, architecture, and unique local neighborhood culture of Echo Park will be embraced and maintained.
 - c. General Welfare. Granting the requested height district change, as recommended, will be deemed consistent with the general welfare, in that the height district change to a lower height will provide for a design aesthetic that is consistent with the design goals and guidelines of the Echo Park Community Design Overlay District Plan. The project area is currently subject to a 1L Height District, while the adjacent properties to the north, south, east, and west all observe a 1VL Height District. The proposed height district change would result in consistency for a neighborhood that currently falls within a community design overlay (CDO) that requires improved design practices that will ensure compatibility with the pedestrian orientation and architectural character of this neighborhood.
 - d. Good Zoning Practice. Granting the requested height district change, as recommended will be deemed consistent with good zoning practice. The requested height district change from 1L to 1VL is in conformance with the purposes, intent and provision of the General Plan as reflected the adopted Silver Lake-Echo Park-Elysian Valley Community Plan and the Echo Park Community Design Overlay District. The project area is currently subject to a 1L Height District, while the adjacent properties to the north, south, east, and west all observe a 1VL Height District. In addition, the project area is adjacent to an HPOZ that has a 1VL Height District, and also falls within a Community Design Overlay that has a 1VL Height District.

The proposed height district change would allow development that is consistent with that of surrounding properties; and is deemed consistent with Section 12.32-C of the Municipal Code.

CEQA FINDING

3. On February 5, 2014, the Department of City Planning issued Categorical Exemption No. ENV-2014-425-CE, per Class 5, Category 38, of City California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines (see Exhibit C). The justification for the exemption applies for height district changes that reduce the intensity of development of land. The proposed height district change is to decrease the current 75-foot height maximum to a 45-foot height maximum. The attached Categorical Exemption (CE) reflects the lead agency's independent judgment and analysis. The records upon which this decision is based are with the CPC Case file in Room 667, 200 North Spring Street, Los Angeles CA 90012.

PUBLIC HEARING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Hearing

A public hearing conducted by the Hearing Officer on this matter was held at the Edendale Library located at 2011 Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles CA, 90026, on Thursday, May 1, 2014 at 6:30pm.

1. Present: 14 Community stakeholders signed in, including residents, business owners, a local neighborhood council land use committee representative, Council District 13 staff, and the general public.
2. Initial Indication and Testimony: Three public comments were made in support of the Height District Change. Testimony included comments about:
 - Decrease of height limit to a livable size that matches the eastern portion of the project area, which is adjacent to parcels that have a 45-foot height maximum.
 - Local shop owner supports limitation because she wants to preserve the current lower massing of Echo Park.
 - Local resident likes the neighborhood feel of Echo Park and supports the height limitation so that height allowed is decreased from the current 75 feet (1L) to 45 feet (1XL).

The Hearing Officer extended the public comment period for one week, with a May 9, 2014 due date to email/mail/fax comment cards.

Open House

An Open House was held at Edendale Library, one hour before the public hearing to provide opportunity for the public to learn more about the proposed project and ask questions. The Open House started at 5:30pm and the information boards depicting massing elevations for the proposed Height District change remained in place so that incoming participants could still have an opportunity to ask questions. Planning staff, including bilingual staff were available to answer questions.

Communications Received

Emails and letters of support were received from the public in general. No letters of opposition were received. 25 comment cards and 5 emails were received in support of the proposed height district change.

13-0956

Ref CFs 09-2089

08-2548

CD 13

JUL 30 2013

PLANNING & LAND USE MANAGEMENT

MOTION

The Echo Park Community Design Overlay District (CDO) is located in the Silver Lake-Echo Park-Elysian Valley Community Plan Area which contain some height district limitations that are not compatible with its neighborhood character.


The Planning department needs to remove the Height District 1-L designation from the Echo Park CDO, which only applies to a very small area within the CDO geographical boundaries.

The Height District 1-L designation within the Echo Park CDO is completely out of scale with surrounding uses and zoning, inasmuch as other heights range from 1-VL (45 feet) to 1-XL 30 feet). The 1L designation allows up to 75 feet in height, and is completely out of scale with the neighborhood.

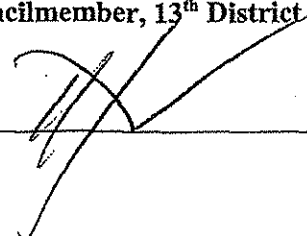
The removal of 1-L height district will help further the objectives of the Echo Park CDO by protecting the character and identity of the area, preserving the area's significant architecture, preserving view shed, and maintaining a scale that is compatible with existing development, and will also enhance the pedestrian orientation.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Council instruct the Planning Department to initiate the proceedings for a height district change from the existing Height District 1-L designation in the Echo Park Community Design Overlay District which only applies to a small area within its geographical boundaries, inasmuch as it is completely out of scale with surrounding uses and zoning.

PRESENTED BY:


MITCH O'FARRELL
Councilmember, 13th District

SECONDED BY:



ORIGINAL

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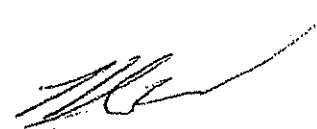
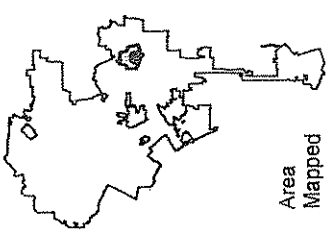
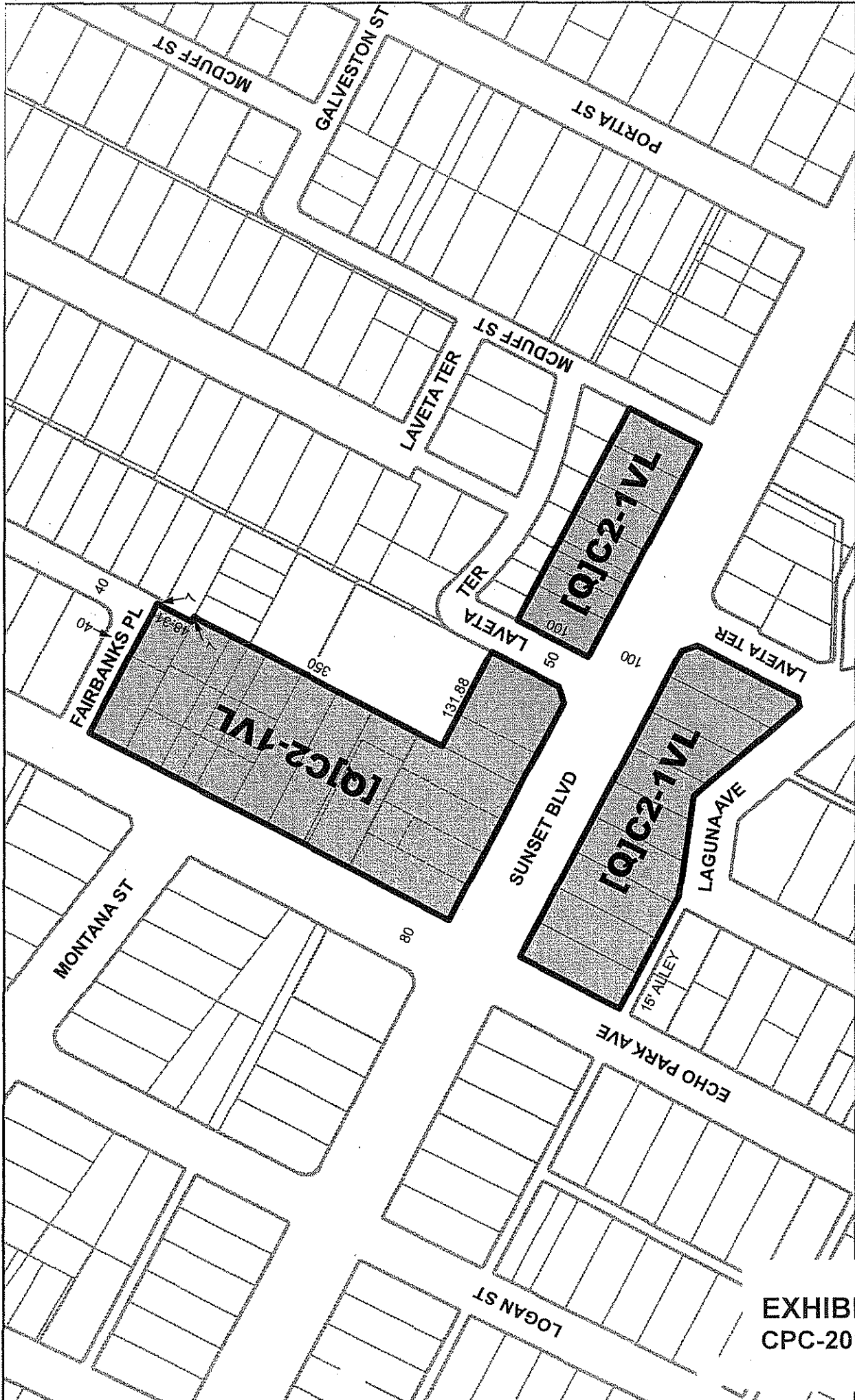

JUL 30 2013

EXHIBIT A
CPC-2014-424-HD



EXHIBIT B
CPC-2014-424-HD



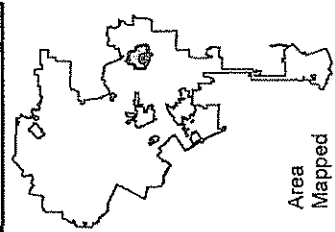
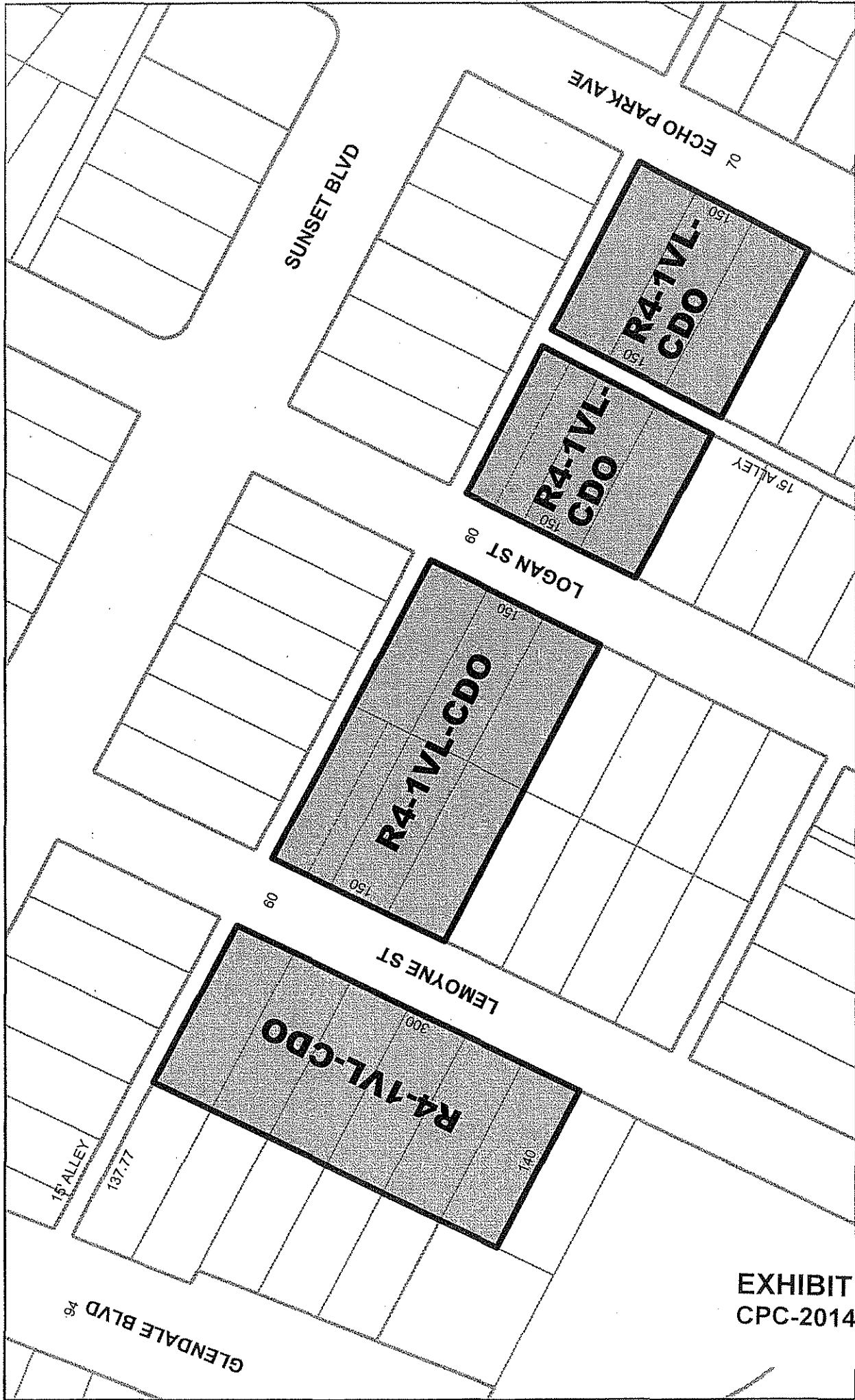
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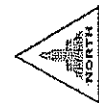
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LH/AB

EXHIBIT B
CPC-2014-424-HD



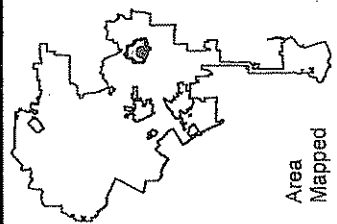
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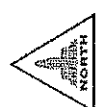
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LH/20 022614

EXHIBIT B
CPC-2014-424-HD



Area
Mapped

PAGE 1 of 3



100 50 0 Feet

C.M. 139-5 A 209 CPC 2014-424-HD

LH/23- 022614

EXHIBIT B
CPC-2014-424-HD

COUNTY CLERK'S USE

CITY OF LOS ANGELES

CITY CLERK'S USE

OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
200 NORTH SPRING STREET, ROOM 360
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

(California Environmental Quality Act Section 15062)

Filing of this form is optional. If filed, the form shall be filed with the County Clerk, 12400 E. Imperial Highway, Norwalk, CA 90650, pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21152 (b). Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21167 (d), the filing of this notice starts a 35-day statute of limitations on court challenges to the approval of the project. Failure to file this notice with the County Clerk results in the statute of limitations being extended to 180 days.

LEAD CITY AGENCY City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning	COUNCIL DISTRICT 1 and 13
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PROJECT TITLE * Height District Change on Sunset Blvd in the Echo Park "downtown" area.	LOG REFERENCE ENV-2014-0425
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PROJECT LOCATION
* Approx. all properties fronting the 1501-1800 block of Sunset Blvd, including properties in residential streets: Lemoyne St., Logan St., Echo Park Ave., Laveta Terrace, and McDuff St.

DESCRIPTION OF NATURE, PURPOSE, AND BENEFICIARIES OF PROJECT:
* Reducing Height Limit from 75 feet to 45 feet.

NAME OF PERSON OR AGENCY CARRYING OUT PROJECT, IF OTHER THAN LEAD CITY AGENCY:
* Department of City Planner per motion CF-13-0956.

CONTACT PERSON * Haydee Urita-Lopez, City Planner	AREA CODE * 213	TELEPHONE NUMBER * 978-1162	EXT.
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EXEMPT STATUS: (Check One)

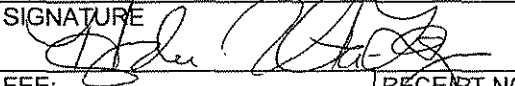
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<input type="checkbox"/> EMERGENCY PROJECT	Sec. 15269 (b) & (c)	Art. II, Sec. 2a (2) & (3)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION	Sec. 15300 et seq.	Art. III, Sec. 1

Class 5 Category 38 (City CEQA Guidelines)

☐ OTHER (See Public Resources Code Sec. 21080 (b) and set forth state and City guideline provision.

JUSTIFICATION FOR PROJECT EXEMPTION: Height District changes that reduce the intensity of development of land.

IF FILED BY APPLICANT, ATTACH CERTIFIED DOCUMENT ISSUED BY THE CITY PLANNING DEPARTMENT STATING THAT THE DEPARTMENT HAS FOUND THE PROJECT TO BE EXEMPT.

SIGNATURE 	TITLE City Planner	DATE 2-5-14
FEE:	RECEIPT NO.	REC'D. BY
		DATE

DISTRIBUTION: (1) County Clerk, (2) City Clerk, (3) Agency Record
Rev. 11-1-03 Rev. 1-31-06 Word

IF FILED BY THE APPLICANT:

*
NAME (PRINTED)

*
SIGNATURE

*
DATE

EXHIBIT C
CPC-2014-424-HD