

FINDINGS

The subject city-owned properties have a history of use as part of a landscaped buffer between Sepulveda Boulevard on the east and single-family residential uses on the west, and has functioned as part of a gateway into this part of the Westchester community, enhancing community identity. The proposed General Plan Amendment and Zone Change from Low Residential (R1) to Public Facility (PF) is consistent with this historical use, and ensures that the properties will continue to be maintained as both a buffer and for aesthetic enjoyment.

General Plan Framework

The General Plan defines the foundation for all land use decisions as the city implements growth and development policies; it also provides a holistic and comprehensive view of the City of Los Angeles. Amendments to adopted community plans are allowed to further refine land use boundaries and categories to reflect local conditions, existing land uses, parcel characteristics, and public input.

The Public Facilities land use designation and corresponding zone is appropriate for parcels that are planned for institutional uses and/or open space areas, but not for residential uses. While the proposed project removes property designated for residential development and use, the involved properties are individually too small - averaging 50 feet wide by 5 feet deep and totaling approximately 3,270 square feet in area - for the practical development of even one dwelling unit within the limitation of the existing R1 zone. The existing Low Residential land use designation is not reflective of the existing and historic use of the site for landscaping and sidewalks since the mid-1940s. All 13 of the contiguous properties along this portion of Sepulveda Boulevard are owned by the City and match other landscaped buffers along important Arterial Boulevard I (Major Highway, Class I).

The proposed land use designation and zone is consistent with the General Plan Framework's policies that seek to enhance livability:

Objective 5.1: Translate the Framework Element's intent with respect to citywide urban form and neighborhood design to the community and neighborhood levels through locally prepared plans that build on each neighborhood's attributes, emphasize quality of development, and provide or advocate "proactive" implementation programs.

Policy 5.1.1: Use the Community Plan Update process and related efforts to define the character of communities and neighborhoods at a finer grain than the Framework Element permits.

The project will provide for the continued maintenance of a landscaped aesthetic along Sepulveda Boulevard, benefitting both local residents and visitors to the community. The proposed revision to the project site's land use designation and zone furthers the Framework's objective to more finely define the character of the community through the continued use and maintenance of the existing landscaped area. The General Plan Amendment process is the tool through which changes and adjustments, such as being proposed, can be made without taking on the lengthy process of a comprehensive Community Plan Update.

Objective 5.5: Enhance the livability of all neighborhoods by upgrading the quality of development and improving the quality of the public realm.

Policy 5.5.4: Determine the appropriate urban design elements at the neighborhood level, such as sidewalk width and materials, street lights and trees, bus shelters and benches, and other street furniture.

The project, through the continued use and maintenance of landscaping along Sepulveda Boulevard, enhances the aesthetic of the public realm along this arterial.

Westchester-Playa del Rey Community Plan (Land Use Element)

The Land Use element of the General Plan is comprised of 35 community plans and they strive to ensure that sufficient land is designated to provide for the housing, commercial, employment, educational, cultural, social and aesthetic needs of the City's residents. Community plans are intended to promote an arrangement of land uses, streets, and services which encourage and contribute to the economic, social and physical health, safety, welfare and convenience of the people who live and work in the community.

The subject site is situated on the west side of Sepulveda Boulevard. This neighborhood is located in the east-central portion of the Westchester-Playa del Rey Community Plan area. Most of the buildings in the neighborhood were constructed in the 1940s.

Changing the land use designation and zoning to match the current use is consistent with the following policies and objectives described in the Westchester-Playa del Rey Community Plan:

Community Design and Landscape Guidelines:

B. Streetscape

Objective 2: Establish a comprehensive streetscape and landscape improvement program for identified corridors and districts that will set standards and priorities for the selection and installation of the following: Street trees, Street Lighting, Streetscape Elements, and public signage

The Westchester Streetscape Improvement Project identified this area of Sepulveda Boulevard for improvements, consisting of a decorative sidewalk, street trees, and drought-resistant landscaping.

Currently, the Westchester-Playa del Rey Community Plan designates the subject properties with a Low Residential land use designation and R1 zoning. The purpose of the request is to better reflect and preserve the property's current use as a landscape buffer.

Public Necessity. Granting the requested action, as recommended, is consistent with public necessity. The current community plan land use designation is Low Residential and the zoning of the properties is R1 (One-Family Residential). The Low Residential land use designation allows for a range of low density single-family zones to be applied to the properties. In the instant case, the R1 Zone is applied to the subject properties. However, the physical dimensions of the individual lots and their area in aggregate make residential development impractical for residential use. The existing use of the site for landscaping and meandering sidewalks does not correspond to a Low-Density Residential land use designation.

Convenience. Granting the requested legislative action, as recommended, is consistent with public convenience and will align the historic and future use of the site with a more appropriate general plan land use designation and zone. The proposed actions contribute to the preservation of the neighborhood character.

General Welfare. Granting the requested legislative action, as recommended, is consistent with the general welfare, in that the proposed general plan amendment and zone change would preserve a valuable aesthetic asset to the community. The proposed action will result in the preservation of landscaping that provides a buffer between a major highway and established residential uses, as well as the protection of the character of the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Good Zoning Practice. Granting the requested legislative action, as recommended, will be consistent with good zoning practice. Currently, the existing land use designation and zoning call for a development and use that cannot be practically implemented, and does not reflect the historic, current, or anticipated future use of the site. The proposed legislative action would make the Westchester-Playa del Rey Community Plan's General Plan Land Use designation and corresponding zoning of the properties consistent with both the current and historic use of the site, as well as further the implementation of the community plan's goals to enhance livability for the community's residents.

Based on the foregoing, the proposed General Plan Amendment and Zone Change to the Westchester-Playa del Rey Community Plan is consistent with both the General Plan Framework as well as the Community Plan Policies, Goals, and Objectives. Further, the recommended action is deemed consistent with the public necessity, convenience, general welfare and good zoning practice.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA)

Pursuant to Section 21082.1(c)(3) of the California Public Resource Code, the Department of City Planning prepared a Negative Declaration (ENV-2016-1769-ND), which concludes that the proposed land use designation change and zone change will result in no significant impacts. This declaration reflects the independent judgment of the lead agency. The Negative Declaration was published for a period of 20 days, from July 28, 2016 to August 17, 2016; no comments were received during that time.

As stated in the mandatory findings of significance in the Negative Declaration, the Department of City Planning concludes the following:

The proposed changes and revisions to the land use designation and zoning would not have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, or reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal.

The impacts of the proposed change of land use designation and zoning are considered not significant. The current Los Angeles Municipal Code and all applicable ordinances and building and safety processes and procedures remain in effect. The proposed change in land use designation from Low Residential to Public Facilities and zoning and from R1 to PF will ensure consistency with the existing use of the subject site that has historically served as a landscaped buffer/parkway.

The proposed change of land use designation and zoning have no impacts to human beings since the project reflects the current conditions, and no other changes are proposed.

The environmental case file can be found in the Policy Division of the Department of City Planning, Room 667, 200 North Spring Street, Los Angeles CA 90012.