

FINDINGS

General Plan/Charter Findings

1. City Charter Findings

Charter Sections 556 and 558 - The City Charter was adopted by voters at the General Municipal Election held June 8, 1999, and sets forth various provisions related to City Departments. Charter Sections 556 and 558 require the City Planning Commission and City Council to adopt the following findings when taking any action to (i) create or change a zone or zoning district created for the purpose of regulating the use of land, or (ii) zoning the permissible uses, height, density, bulk, location or use of buildings or structures, size of yards, open space, setbacks, building line requirements, and other similar requirements, including specific plan ordinances:

(1) The zoning ordinance is in substantial conformance with the purposes, intent, and provisions of the General Plan. (Charter Sec. 556.)

(2) The zoning ordinance is in conformity with public necessity, convenience, general welfare, and good zoning practice. (Charter Sec. 558.)

In accordance with City Charter Section 556, the proposed Landscape and Site Design Ordinance is in substantial conformance with the purposes, intent, and provisions of the General Plan in that it would further accomplish the goals, objectives, and policies of the General plan as outlined below. (For Charter Section 558 findings, see discussion below titled, "Zoning Code Amendment and Specific Plan Amendment Finding."

2. General Plan Findings

This section provides relevant goals, objectives, policies, and programs that are established in the General Plan that form the basis for Staff's recommended actions for the Proposed Ordinance. The Proposed Ordinance is in substantial conformance with the purposes, intent, and provisions of the General Plan, as noted below.

The City of Los Angeles' General Plan consists of the Framework Element, seven (7) required Elements that are mandated by State law, including Land Use, Mobility, Housing, Conservation, Noise, Safety, and Open Space, and optional Elements including Air Quality, Service Systems, and Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles. Thirty-five individual community plans comprise the Land Use Element.

General Plan Framework Element

The proposed Landscape and Site Design Ordinance will meet the intent and purposes of the General Plan Framework Element which advocates that good neighborhood design is key to creating a livable City. In particular, the proposed ordinance would further the intent and purpose of the following relevant goals, objectives, and policies of the Framework Element:

Goal 5A: A liveable City for existing and future residents and one that is attractive to future investment. A City of interconnected, diverse neighborhoods that builds on the strengths of those neighborhoods and functions at both the neighborhood and citywide scales.

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

Policy 5.5.1: Plant and/or facilitate the planting of street trees, which provide shade and give scale to residential and commercial streets in all neighborhoods in the City.

Policy 5.5.2: Install "slow residential streets" where requested by residents and feasible within the established street hierarchy. Techniques include speed bumps, diagonal parking, widened sidewalks and narrowed streets.

Policy 5.5.3: Formulate and adopt building and site design standards and guidelines to raise the quality of design Citywide.

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.

Policy 5.5.7: Promote the undergrounding of utilities throughout the City's neighborhoods, districts, and centers.

Housing Element

The proposed Landscape and Site Design Ordinance addresses pressing policy issues related to climate, health and equity in site design across Los Angeles. The new Ordinance aligns with Executive Directive 7, aimed at streamlining housing production and directing the Planning Department to develop objective design standards for multi-family housing projects to enhance the City' standard of review. The Ordinance aims to advance environmental justice and urban forest equity in identified Health and Urban Forest Equity Priority Areas that will help address climate needs and health and social factors. As such, it is in substantial conformance with the purpose, intent and provisions of the General Plan in that it would further accomplish the goals, objectives, policies and programs of the Housing Element outlined below:

Goal 2: A City that preserves and enhances the quality of housing and provides greater housing stability for households of all income levels.

Objective 2.3: Preserve, conserve and improve the quality of housing.

Policy 2.3.2: Rehabilitate and/or replace substandard housing with housing that is decent, safe, healthy and affordable.

Goal 3: A City in which housing creates healthy, livable, sustainable, and resilient communities that improve the lives of all Angelenos.

Objective 3.1: Use design to create a sense of place, promote health, foster community belonging, and promote racially and socially inclusive neighborhoods.

Policy 3.1.4: Develop and implement environmentally sustainable urban design standards and pedestrian-centered improvements in development of a project and within the public and private realm such as shade trees, parkways and comfortable sidewalks.

Policy 3.1.5: Develop and implement environmentally sustainable urban design standards and pedestrian-centered improvements in development of a project and within the public and private realm such as shade trees, parkways and comfortable sidewalks.

Policy 3.1.6: Establish plans and development standards that promote positive health outcomes for the most vulnerable communities and populations.

Policy 3.1.7: Promote complete neighborhoods by planning for housing that includes open space, and other amenities.

Policy 3.1.9: Encourage “convertible design” of above ground parking structures in transit- rich areas so they can later be converted to housing

Objective 3.2: Promote environmentally sustainable buildings and land use patterns that support a mix of uses, housing for various income levels and provide access to jobs, amenities, services and transportation options.

Policy 3.2.4: Provide streamlining, incentives and flexibility for residential buildings that promote energy and resource conservation particularly those that exceed existing green building standards.

Policy 3.2.5: Promote and facilitate the reduction of water, energy, carbon and waste consumption in new and existing housing.

Program 74: Building Design and Materials for Sustainability. Ensure guidelines are developed and updated. Integrate guidelines into all project reviews.

Policy 3.2.7: Provide environmentally sustainable development standards and incorporate sustainable best practices in building and zoning code updates.

Mobility Plan 2035

The proposed Landscape and Site Design Ordinance reflects best practices in addressing climate needs and social factors, and provides multiple pathways to advance site design principles that make our streets and sidewalks more walkable, support healthy communities, provide spaces for nature and biodiversity to flourish, and create buildings and places that support positive community interaction. It establishes a Citywide street tree planting requirement of at least one street tree for every thirty linear feet of street frontage for new development projects, directly contributing toward creating complete streets and improving the public realm experience. Additionally, the Point System includes numerous standards aimed at reducing pedestrian and vehicular conflicts through careful driveway planning and design, and includes standards to encourage the activation of ground floor uses, which promote safer and more walkable streets. As such, the Ordinance is in substantial conformance with the purpose, intent and provisions of the General Plan in that it would further accomplish the objectives, policies and programs of the Mobility Plan outlined below:

Chapter 1: Safety First. People want streets to be safe, stress-free places for all ages and modes of travel.

Policy 1.2: Complete Streets. Implement a balanced transportation system on all streets, tunnels and bridges using complete streets principles to ensure the safety and mobility of all users.

Program SF-26: Tree Canopy. Continue to expand the City’s tree canopy using tree species that are appropriate for the location, climate, water supply, planting conditions and existing street infrastructure.

Chapter 2: World Class Infrastructure

Policy 2.3: Pedestrian Infrastructure: Recognize walking as a component of every trip, and ensure high quality pedestrian access in all site planning and public right-of-way modifications to provide a safe and comfortable walking environment.

Policy 2.10: Loading Areas: Facilitate the provision of adequate on and off-street loading areas.

Chapter 5: Clean Environments and Healthy Communities

Objective: Reduce the number of unhealthy air quality days to zero by 2025.

Objective: Reduce the pollutant load of stormwater runoff to meet Total Maximum Daily Load standards.

Policy: 5.5 Green Streets: Maximize opportunities to capture and infiltrate stormwater within the City's public right-of-ways.

Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles

The proposed Landscape and Site Design Ordinance promotes health and environmental justice as a priority for the City's future growth and development. The Ordinance emanated from the Healthy Buildings, Healthy Places initiative launched in 2020 at the height of the pandemic, which underscored the glaring health inequities communities in Los Angeles are confronted with, which are closely linked to our built environment and the enduring legacy of past zoning decisions. The proposed Ordinance responds to emerging research linking public health outcomes with the built environment, encouraging projects that better connect site design, climate resilience, walkability, and livability. The accompanying Point System directly includes 'Designing for Health' standards to help ensure projects meet the required points via health and site design related strategies.

The proposed Ordinance will support the policies and programs of the Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles, such as reduced vehicle use and idling (Policy 5.1); increasing the number of trees and green spaces (Policy 3.8); improving energy efficiency (Policy 5.6); reducing noxious activities (Policy 5.4); promoting design that reduce per capita GHG emissions (Policy 5.7); and increasing the City's resilience to risks resulting from climate change (Policy 5.6).

Additionally, the proposed Ordinance encourages the design and rehabilitation of buildings and sites for healthy living and working conditions (Program 1), by promoting pedestrian circulation, healthy building materials, access to natural light and ventilation, and the use of stairs. It will also satisfy the Implementation Program 36 which calls for streamlining and updating the City of Los Angeles Landscape Guidelines and Ordinance to promote climate adaptation and sustainability.

The Landscape and Site Design Ordinance is expected to protect the health of buildings users and to indirectly improve air quality by promoting walkability through design standards that encourage pedestrian and bicyclist amenities, protection of on-site significant trees, and the planting of new trees. Individual future projects will have the potential to prioritize pedestrian circulation over the use of vehicles to generate fewer vehicular trips than existing conditions and therefore could potentially lessen cumulative long-term air quality impacts in excess of current conditions (Policy 5.1). Future projects located near freeways will have to comply with standards to protect building users from air pollution (Policy 5.2) and all developments subject to the Ordinance will be incentivized to provide shade trees on private property and in the public realm to promote passive cooling and cleaner air (Policy 5.6).

Finally, the Landscape and Site Design Ordinance will meet the objectives of the Plan's "Chapter 5: An Environment the life thrives" by promoting conservation, soil and water quality and biodiversity and habitat through strategies that protect existing trees, preserve existing and further encourage native and drought tolerant landscaping, promote biodiversity and habitat, and the protection of the environment. As such, it is in substantial conformance with the purpose, intent and provisions of the General Plan in that it would further accomplish the goals, objectives, policies and a program of the Plan for Healthy Los Angeles as outlined below:

Chapter 1: Los Angeles, a Leader in Health and Equity

In Los Angeles, where a person lives often determines their health destiny, geographic location is such an important indicator of health that a person born and raised in Watts can expect to live 12 years less than a person born and raised in Brentwood. To some degree, every community in the City is impacted by poor health outcomes. However, the stark health disparities that are primarily seen in the City's low-income communities illustrate the implications of historic economic, environmental, and social disinvestment.

Policy 1.1 Leadership. Position Los Angeles as a regional leader by collaborating across departments, agencies, sectors, and jurisdictions to incorporate health, equity, and sustainability considerations into policies, programs, and procedures.

Policy 1.2 Collaboration. Develop intentional strategic partnerships with public, private, and nonprofit entities to improve health outcomes by leveraging capacity, resources, and programs around mutually beneficial initiatives that promote health, equity, and sustainability.

Policy 1.3 Prevention. Promote healthy communities by focusing on prevention, interventions, and by addressing the root causes of health disparities and inequities in Los Angeles.

Policy 1.5 Plan for Health. Improve Angelenos' health and well-being by incorporating a health perspective into land use, design, policy, and zoning decisions through existing tools, practices, and programs.

Program 1: Healthy Building Design Guidelines: Work in collaboration with organizations such as the American Institute of Architects, the American Planning Association, Urban Land Institute, Green Building Council, and local universities to develop, adopt, and train staff to implement Healthy Building Design Guidelines (HBDG) that establish guidelines and quantifiable parameters to promote healthy living and working conditions in new and rehabilitated sites and structures.

Program 36: Landscape guidelines and ordinance: Update the City of Los Angeles landscape guidelines and ordinance to streamline and update the requirements to promote climate adaptation, sustainability, and increase healthy food access and perennial crops across the City. Include a section on public property including parks, open spaces, and the public right of way.

Program 58: Healthy communities implementation program: Create a cross-departmental committee staffed by City and as appropriate Los Angeles County departments (such as Department of Public Health, Environmental Health, Mental Health, and Metro) to promote coordinated implementation of the Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles and other health-promoting general plan elements and plans; such as the Mobility Plan 2035 and the Housing Element. Implementation should be executed using a 'Health in all Policies' lens by geographically-focused cross-departmental teams. Efforts should specifically target reducing health disparities and advancing health, equity, and sustainability in Los Angeles

Chapter 2: A City Built for Health

A city that is built for health uses design, construction, and public services to promote the physical, mental, and social well-being of its residents. A healthy city has neighborhoods where health-promoting goods and services are abundant and accessible, so that the healthy choice is the easy choice for all residents.

Policy 2.2: Healthy building design and construction. Promote a healthy built environment by encouraging the design and rehabilitation of buildings and sites for healthy living and working conditions, including promoting enhanced pedestrian-oriented circulation, lighting, attractive and open stairs, healthy building materials and universal accessibility using existing tools, practices, and programs.

Policy 2.5: Schools as centers of health and well-being. Support strategies that make schools centers of health and well-being by creating economic, environmental, social, and physical conditions in and around local schools that are safe, abundant in healthy goods and services, and offer opportunities for physical activity and recreation.

Policy 2.6: Repurpose underutilized spaces for health. Work proactively with residents to identify and remove barriers to leverage and repurpose vacant and underutilized spaces as a strategy to improve community health.

Policy 2.10: Social connectedness. Acknowledge the mental and physical health benefits of social connectedness by promoting and valuing public spaces, social interaction, relationship building, and resilience in community and urban design.

Policy 2.11: Foundation for health. Lay the foundation for healthy communities and healthy living by promoting infrastructure improvements that support active transportation with safe, attractive, and comfortable facilities that meet community needs; prioritize implementation in communities with the greatest infrastructure deficiencies that threaten the health, safety, and well-being of the most vulnerable users.

Chapter 3: Bountiful Parks and Open Spaces

Abundant and accessible parks and beautified open spaces are fundamental components of healthy neighborhoods. Parks and open spaces should support opportunities for physical activity, offer safe havens for families and children, provide spaces for social interaction, provide access to nature, and offer mental respite.

Policy 3.8: Active spaces. Support public, private, and nonprofit partners in the ongoing development of new and innovative active spaces and strategies to increase the number of Angelenos who engage in physical activity across ages and level of abilities.

Chapter 5: An Environment Where Life Thrives

Los Angeles is committed to green and sustainable growth that provides a healthy environment for all Angelenos.

Policy 5.1: Air pollution and respiratory health. Reduce air pollution from stationary and mobile sources; protect human health and welfare and promote improved respiratory health.

Policy 5.2: People. Reduce negative health impacts for people who live and work in close proximity to industrial uses and freeways through health promoting land uses and design solutions.

Policy 5.3: Smoke-free environments. Reduce exposure to second-hand smoke by promoting smoke-free environments and market and support public, private, and nonprofit cessation programs and services.

Policy 5.4: Noxious activities Protect communities' health and well-being from exposure to noxious activities (for example, oil and gas extraction) that emit odors, noise, toxic, hazardous, or contaminant substances, materials, vapors, and others.

Policy 5.6: Resilience In collaboration with public, private, and nonprofit partners, increase the city's resilience to risks (increasing temperatures and heat related effects, wildfires, reduced water supply, poor air quality, and sea level rise) resulting from climate change, and target resilience in the most vulnerable communities.

Policy 5.7: Land use planning for public health and GHG emission reduction. Promote land use policies that reduce per capita greenhouse gas emissions, result in improved air quality and decreased air pollution, especially for children, seniors and others susceptible to respiratory diseases.

Safety Element

The proposed Landscape and Site Design Ordinance addresses climate vulnerability by utilizing multiple healthy design and sustainability focused strategies such as tree canopy preservation and expansion, passive cooling strategies, and the conservation of water and energy resources, aimed at reducing climate impacts. As such, it is in substantial conformance with the purpose, intent and provisions of the General Plan in that it would further accomplish the goals, objectives, policies and a program of the Safety Element outlined below:

Goal 1: Hazard Mitigations. A city where potential injury, loss of life, property damage and disruption of the social and economic life of the City due to hazards is minimized.

Objective 1.2: Confront the global climate emergency by setting measurable targets for carbon reduction that are consistent with the best available methods and data, center equity and environmental justice, secure fossil free jobs, and foster broader environmental sustainability and resiliency

Policy: 1.2.1 Environmental Justice. In keeping with the Plan for a Healthy LA, build a fair, just and prosperous city where everyone experiences the benefits of a sustainable future by correcting the long running disproportionate impact of environmental burdens faced by low income families and communities of color.

Policy 1.2.2 Renewable Energy. Aggressively pursue renewable energy sources, transitioning away from fossil based sources of energy and toward 100% renewable energy sources.

Policy 1.2.3 Local Water. Continue to lead in water conservation and smart water policy through improvements to per capita water use, watershed management, and wastewater and stormwater recycling, incorporating more ecological, systems-based approaches to water management.

Policy 1.2.4 Clean and Healthy Buildings. Design, build and rebuild buildings using passive energy principals, advanced efficiency and safety measures, and on-site renewable energy.

3.City Charter Finding 558, LAMC Section 12.32 (Public Necessity, Convenience, General Welfare, Good Zoning Practice) and LAMC Section 13.B.1.3 Zoning Code Amendment

In accordance with City Charter Section 558 (b)(2) and LAMC Section 12.32 C.2 and C.7, the proposed Ordinance is in substantial conformance with public necessity, convenience, general welfare, and good zoning practice by promoting economic development, public safety, and community vibrancy. In accordance with LAMC Section 13.B.1.3 in approving a Zoning Code Amendment, the City Planning Commission and City Council shall find that:

- a. the action substantially conforms to the purposes, intent and provisions of the General Plan; and
- b. the proposed ordinance is in conformity with public necessity, convenience, general welfare and good zoning practice

As made evident by the list of General Plan goals, objectives and policies above, the proposed ordinance is in conformance with a range of General Plan goals related to promoting healthy design, walkability, sustainability and resilience. Specifically, the Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles clearly recognizes the City's vision to elevate health and environmental justice as a priority for the City's future growth and development and the City should promote policies and programs to create healthy and vibrant communities. The proposed amendment responds to the General Plan by utilizing objective design standards to represent a more comprehensive approach to site design that aligns with the broader Citywide policy goals of climate resilience, designing for health and the protection and enhancement of the City's urban forest and biodiversity.

The proposed amendment not only responds to goals in the Framework Element and the Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles, the City's Health Element, but to goals found in the Mobility Plan, Housing and Safety Elements, by enhancing livability, sustainability and resilience.

Health, housing, transportation, and safety are inextricably linked. Los Angeles is a city with deep health disparities and where a person lives influences their health and future. Chronic health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, and heart disease are concentrated in the same neighborhoods as poverty, environmental hazards, lack of access to parks and unemployment. At the same time, better site

planning that promotes physical activity and the use of transit, a focus on healthy building design with amenities that allow for social interaction and access to greenery and shade can help achieve the goal of creating a healthy and sustainable City. The links between design, landscaping and health are clear, and research indicates that health-driven policies and better design can increase opportunities for good health.

For all these reasons and the Findings described above, the proposed Ordinance is in substantial conformance with the purpose, intent and provisions of the General Plan in that it would also further accomplish the goals, objectives, policies and programs of the following citywide elements: Framework, Housing, Mobility, Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles, and Safety Element.

The proposed ordinance is in conformity with public necessity, convenience, general welfare and good zoning practice, as noted below:

Public Necessity. The City of Los Angeles faces overlapping crises of environmental injustice, a global pandemic, and climate change that demonstrate that steps must be taken to create healthy communities at all levels of City Planning, from the General Plan to Community Plans, to the Zoning Code, and at the granular level of project review with the thoughtful design of places for living. The proposed Ordinance is one of many strategies to address the need for better designed, healthier and greener communities.

Convenience. One of the purposes of the proposed Ordinance is to establish a more streamlined implementation process that integrates site design, climate resilience, urban forest and biodiversity efforts, and healthy building design best practices. By including an easy to use implementation tool, the online Calculator, applicants will know the City's project design expectations early on and staff will save time on compliance verification.

General Welfare. Planning decisions have a long-term impact on community development, health, and wellness. The absence of a strong and easy to implement Landscape Ordinance limits staff and decision-makers' ability to shape projects to specifically improve health and well-being. This proposed Ordinance fosters a built environment that promotes health and well-being, a zoning code that removes barriers and incentivizes health-promoting activities, and the ongoing consideration of landscaping and site design as projects are reviewed and shaped by staff and considered by decision-makers.

Good Zoning Practice. The proposed Ordinance is going to be implemented via an Administrative Review process utilizing Article 13 of the New Zoning Code, taking steps towards aligning the existing and new Zoning Code (Chapter 1A). Additionally, the proposed Ordinance is improving the internal City workflow and interdepartmental coordination on issues affecting public right-of way trees, site and driveway design, which in the past have contributed to conflicting project outcomes.

CEQA Finding

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), LA City Planning, as the lead agency, prepared a draft Negative Declaration, Case No. ENV-2022-4857-ND, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15074(a), which will be published and circulated for comment on October 24, 2024.

The initial study analyzed the impact categories and found that the adoption of the Landscape and Site Design Ordinance would have no impact on the environment. To the extent that an individual development project may affect the environment, the project-specific analysis will be analyzed separately through a subsequent CEQA clearance; any effects associated with the landscape component is, however, expected to be beneficial and projects completed in compliance with the proposed Ordinance are expected to have fewer environmental impacts than those presently being constructed. Projects subject to the Ordinance will be of a higher quality overall and will include outdoor amenities and spaces that encourage social interaction, high quality improvements to the public realm,

an emphasis on landscaping and green spaces with native plants, shade trees and an overall sustainable and health-oriented design.

Therefore, Los Angeles City Planning recommends that the City Planning Commission recommend that the City Council find in its independent judgment, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15074(b), after consideration of the whole of the administrative record, including the Negative Declaration, No. ENV-2022-4857-ND (“Negative Declaration”), and all comments received, that there is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment and the negative declaration reflects the lead agency's independent judgment and analysis.