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August 10, 2022

The Honorable City Council  
City of Los Angeles  
City Hall, Room 395  
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Honorable Members:

**PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES ORDINANCE PUBLIC OUTREACH AND  
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN; CF 12-0460-S4**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

On June 23, 2021, the City Council instructed the Department of City Planning (DCP) to prepare a report with recommendations, in consultation with the City Attorney, relative to a community outreach plan of action on how DCP staff will be trained; and, on the feasibility of the hiring of a contractor to assist the DCP in its implementation. This report therefore outlines the Department's plan for Ordinance implementation, organized according to the following categories: public outreach and awareness, staff training, and the potential for consultant services. Given the comprehensive nature of the proposed Ordinance, it is the goal of DCP to oversee a smooth transition to the new system of entitlement review and administration. To that end, in consultation with the City Attorney, DCP has determined that having the Ordinance take effect six months following Council adoption is appropriate to allow sufficient time for such implementation preparation. The Ordinance prepared by the City Attorney as to form and legality will include such provisions as necessary when transmitted to the City Council for consideration.

The City Council additionally instructed DCP to produce a line-by-line chart of the proposed changes to be transmitted for consideration and made available to the public before the final Ordinance is considered. In response, accompanying this report is a comparison chart that displays the correspondence between existing processes and the proposed processes, as well as any changes in decision makers, public hearing notification requirements, and appellate procedures.

**BACKGROUND**

The proposed Ordinance is the first component of a larger initiative to comprehensively update the City's Zoning Code. The Ordinance focuses on creating a clear set of administrative procedures that will be used to consider and process requests for Zoning Code entitlements. As such, this Ordinance is meant to lay the groundwork for a more user-friendly, transparent, and

predictable set of zoning regulations and is also of important utility for the remainder of the new Zoning Code to come. The Ordinance will maintain long-standing opportunities for public participation, while also making it easier for both applicants and the public to clearly understand how DCP considers land use and development proposals and how to navigate the decision-making process. The Ordinance achieves this by consolidating and standardizing the processes and procedures for project review; locating the processes and procedures in one central location – Article 13 of Chapter 1A of the Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC); and establishing a standard visual format with flowcharts.

In response to the Council's instruction, DCP has established a transition team composed of staff across multiple divisions of the department to prepare for the roll-out of the Ordinance. The transition team consists of a steering committee responsible for executive decisions, as well as four subcommittees focused on the following topics: application forms, application fees, technology and systems, and staff training. Both the steering committee and the four subcommittees have been meeting on a regular monthly basis since the beginning of 2022 and are anticipated to continue meeting until the future operative date of the Ordinance. This report will therefore cover the implementation preparation work that has been completed to date, as well as those tasks that are in progress or are still to be fully developed and refined.

## **PUBLIC OUTREACH AND AWARENESS**

Over the past several years, DCP has invested considerably in enhancing and developing the Department's digital tools and resources accessible to the public and all stakeholders. These efforts were further accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to adapt to a new system of engaging with the public when traditional outreach methods were infeasible due to public health concerns. As a result, the DCP website - [planning.lacity.org](http://planning.lacity.org) - has become a critical mechanism for sharing information with the public regarding new work programs and ordinances, as well as a repository for existing resources regarding entitlement cases (e.g., application forms, application fee estimator tool, and hearing notices). The transition team has therefore identified several ways in which the DCP website can be leveraged to reach a wider audience and serve as a one-stop shop of information for all stakeholders, especially during the initial transition period to the new processes and procedures post-Ordinance adoption.

Learning from recent efforts, a best practice that has proven successful is to create a website landing page specifically for the work program in question. While the Processes and Procedures Ordinance and corresponding outreach materials such as Fact Sheets and recorded presentations are currently available online, these materials are embedded among many other ordinance work programs and can be difficult to find. As a result, the transition team will be working closely with the Department's External Affairs and Systems teams to develop a dedicated landing page for the Processes and Procedures Ordinance to be launched prior to the Ordinance operative date. The following list is an initial inventory of explanatory materials and resources that are anticipated to be made available to the public:

- Processes comparison chart that displays the correspondence between existing processes and the proposed processes, as well as any changes in decision makers, public hearing notification requirements, and appellate procedures
- Ordinance implementation fact sheet covering frequently asked questions
- Contact information for staff managing Ordinance implementation
- Recorded videos to provide an overview of policy changes, as well as explanations of new entitlement processes
- Final Ordinance, inclusive of flowcharts (post-adoption)

While the DCP website and Ordinance landing page will be available to the public as a 24-hour resource, the transition team has also discussed the need to provide opportunities for the public to engage directly with City Planning staff. Therefore, staff anticipates hosting “virtual office hours” prior to the Ordinance operative date during which stakeholders may reserve appointment slots. The “virtual office hours” are intended to provide stakeholders a venue in which to meet and consult with staff in a smaller setting, so that the focus can be on answering questions specific to that stakeholder. Key staff from the transition team will also present the latest information and make themselves available for questions at Neighborhood Council Alliance meetings and PlanCheck NC. In addition, the Department’s public awareness campaign would include concerted outreach to the following groups: business stakeholders, locally represented and minority-owned trade associations, neighborhood groups, private and non-profit affordable housing developers, land use consultants, and permit expeditors.

Finally, the transition team is working closely with the DCP External Affairs team to coordinate a social media strategy and public awareness campaign for the Ordinance. DCP is currently able to reach an audience of 15,400 followers through Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn combined, along with a consolidated interested parties list of approximately 65,450 subscribers. The consolidated interested parties list can be broken down into the following topic-specific lists:

- External Monthly Newsletter ~ 37,000
- Citywide Ordinances and Code Amendments ~ 10,000
- Economic Development ~ 500
- General Plan and Community Plans ~ 17,300
- Community Stakeholders (chamber/land use) ~ 200
- Neighborhood Councils ~ 100
- Processes and Procedures ~ 350

Stakeholders who are subscribed to multiple lists do not receive duplicate emails.

## **STAFF TRAINING PLAN**

Based on lessons learned from previous efforts, the transition team has identified a two-phased approach to training for DCP staff relative to Ordinance implementation. The first phase of training would be provided after the City Council’s final adoption vote and focus on policy changes included in the Ordinance, while the second phase would be provided in the two months preceding the Ordinance operative date and focus on operational changes in project review and case processing protocols. As the legislative calendar is controlled by the City Council rather than DCP, the specific timeline for these phases is not confirmed. However, the transition team has tentatively anticipated that the initial phase of staff training could take place during the last quarter of 2022, and the second phase could take place during the first quarter of 2023.

### Staff Training Phase 1

Phase 1 is intended to provide staff with an understanding of the Ordinance components, with a particular focus on how the Zoning Code has been amended to enable the standardization and consolidation of entitlement processes and procedures. This would include an introductory training session that provides an overview of all the changes contained within the Ordinance, such as any changes in decision maker, appellate procedures, public hearing notification requirements, and changes in entitlement process names. Additionally, as the Ordinance relocates the Zoning Code processes and procedures into one centralized location – Article 13 of Chapter 1A of LAMC, as well as establishes a standardized visual format with flowcharts, training sessions would also be dedicated to educating staff on how to navigate the new formatting.

Another main objective of Phase 1 is to familiarize staff with the concepts and key components of the Ordinance, so as to lay a solid foundation of understanding for the more detailed training sessions to come in Phase 2. As such, the transition team will continue to develop and refine training materials for Phase 2 throughout the duration of Phase 1, incorporating any feedback from staff and taking note of topics that may benefit from additional explanation.

### Staff Training Phase 2

Phase 2 is intended to provide staff with an understanding of operational changes that will occur as a result of the Ordinance, including any impacts to day-to-day operations involving project review and case processing protocols that are not specified in the Zoning Code but established by department practice. At a minimum, training sessions during this phase will cover any updates made to the Planning Case Tracking System (PCTS), which is the internal case management system used by staff when processing planning entitlement cases, as well as any updates to application forms and associated application fees. Such updates will include new case tracking nomenclature to reflect changes in process names and updated Code citation references on all application materials to reflect the new location of the administrative provisions. The transition team has also identified Phase 2 as a timely opportunity to train staff on consistent operational workflows department-wide, as well as to refresh the existing New Staff Core Training series with the most up-to-date information.

In addition to the foundational training series that would be provided department-wide, staff also intend to provide focused, supplemental training sessions on specific topics, as needed. To date, the following list of topic-specific training sessions has been identified by the Department's transition team:

- Revised Processes - substantive changes to existing processes, particularly any changes in decision maker
- New Processes - new entitlement processes being added by Ordinance, specifically Modification of Entitlement and Alternative Compliance
- Notification Requirements - changes to public hearing notification requirements, including new requirement that Neighborhood Councils must be included in mail notice and new 300 ft notification radius
- Appellate Procedures - standardized 15-day appeal timeline and new "de novo" standard of appellate review
- Processing Pipeline Projects - protocols for processing cases that are filed but not completed prior to the Ordinance operative date
- Joint DBS-DCP Training - changes to inter-departmental workflows

The transition team will continue to further develop and refine the Phase 2 training series as the Ordinance proceeds through the legislative adoption process.

### **POTENTIAL FOR CONSULTANT SERVICES**

In regard to the feasibility of the hiring of a contractor to assist DCP in its implementation of the Ordinance, a limited fee study is currently underway and anticipated to be completed prior to the Ordinance operative date without the need for additional funds. However, the transition team has identified a potential opportunity for consultant support to enhance public outreach efforts; DCP therefore requests General Fund revenues for contractual services to augment the Department's community engagement, including the preparation of visuals and graphics associated with the City's public awareness campaign over the course of the next two years. Finally, the Department

may also explore the feasibility of engaging a contractor after the initial 1-2 years of Ordinance implementation to help conduct an assessment of the program and identify potential areas for improvement. These items are discussed in further detail below.

#### Limited Fee Study (prior to operative date)

As the Ordinance primarily consolidates and standardizes existing processes, no further study is required for DCP to continue charging existing fees that correspond to existing processes upon adoption of the Ordinance. However, the Ordinance also includes the establishment of two new processes - Alternative Compliance and Modification of Entitlement - that will be available to applicants, for which no fees currently exist. Therefore, a fee study is required to analyze the services provided by DCP and the associated costs in order to develop appropriate user fees for the above-stated new entitlement processes prior to the operative date of the Ordinance. To that end, DCP expects to release a Request for Bids (RFB) from a qualified list of on-call consultants in the coming weeks. Due to the limited scope of work, the fee study is anticipated to be completed in a matter of months and no additional funds are anticipated to be requested from the City Council.

#### Community Engagement and Visual Design (upon Ordinance adoption)

Given that the Processes and Procedures Ordinance is technical in nature, a major component of public outreach will include the preparation of explanatory materials that can serve as helpful references for stakeholders, such as the previously described processes comparison chart enclosed with this report. Expanding on those efforts, the transition team has identified an opportunity to further improve tools for public outreach and awareness with the assistance of a consultant, specifically in the area of visual and graphical resources. Therefore, DCP requests \$100,000 in General Fund revenues for contractual services to augment the Department's community engagement, including the preparation of visuals and graphics associated with the City's public awareness campaign over the course of the next two years.

#### Program Assessment (1-2 years after Ordinance has been in operation)

The transition team may explore the need for additional support from a contractor after the initial 1-2 years of Ordinance implementation to help conduct an assessment of the program and identify areas for improvement. An assessment would be a useful tool in gauging program effectiveness, particularly if there are any notable changes in case processing times, such as a reduction or increase in the number of staff hours needed to complete review of particular entitlement types. Changes in processing times would also have potential implications for fees collected by DCP, as application fees are calculated based on the amount of staff time that is required for each entitlement and would need to be updated accordingly.

In the meantime, the transition team has been working in close collaboration with the Department's Performance Management Unit to inventory existing systems infrastructure and performance metric tools in an effort to establish a baseline for future comparison, as well as to identify future enhancements that would facilitate improved data collection and program assessment. This includes the creation of a pre-set drop-down menu for standardized entitlement requests, which will allow DCP to aggregate information for analysis and future comparison. At this time, no additional consultant services are needed to support DCP's implementation of the Ordinance, as existing Department resources have been determined to be sufficient. However, once standardized data collection is enabled, an established baseline of performance metrics can be leveraged for program assessments in the longer term and those efforts could potentially be supported by a contractor.

## CONCLUSION

DCP appreciates the Council's recognition of the preparation required to successfully implement a work program as comprehensive and wide-ranging as the Processes and Procedures Ordinance, as well as the opportunity to report back on the matter prior to the final stages of the legislative adoption process. To that end, the proposal to delay the effective date six month following Council adoption is an integral component of the Department's action plan for raising public awareness and educating stakeholders, as well as providing staff with sufficient training. In support of that objective, the accompanying line-by-line processes comparison chart is also intended to serve as a resource for stakeholders at all levels of familiarity with the Zoning Code, including not only the public, but also City Planning and Council staff. Lastly, in regard to the potential for contractor assistance, DCP requests \$100,000 in General Fund revenues for contractual services to augment the Department's community engagement, including the preparation of visuals and graphics associated with the City's public awareness campaign over the course of the next two years. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact Bonnie Kim via email at [bonnie.kim@lacity.org](mailto:bonnie.kim@lacity.org).

Sincerely,



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Director of Planning

VPB:AV:NPM:hsc:bk

encl: Processes Comparison Chart