

REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

DATE: JUNE 24, 2020

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: GREG RAMIREZ, CITY MANAGER

**BY: RAMIRO ADEVA, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR
DOUG HOOPER, PLANNING DIRECTOR**

**SUBJECT: DISCUSSION REGARDING THE DRAFT SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS
NORTH AREA PLAN UPDATE AND DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT
REPORT, AND COMMENTS TO FORWARD TO THE LOS ANGELES
COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF REGIONAL PLANNING**

Staff is requesting direction from the City Council to forward comments on the Draft Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan (“SMMNAP”) Update and Draft Environmental Impact Report (“Draft EIR”) to the Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning (“County DRP”). The County DRP is accepting comments on the SMMNAP and Draft EIR until June 30, 2020.

The Santa Monica Mountains North Area (“SMM North Area”) is in the unincorporated portion of the Santa Monica Mountains, in the western portion of Los Angeles County, and includes privately owned and publicly owned lands. This unincorporated project area encompasses approximately 32 square miles of unincorporated lands generally bounded by Ventura County and the City of Westlake Village to the west, Ventura County and local cities in Los Angeles County, including Agoura Hills, to the north, the City of Los Angeles to the east, and the coastal zone portion of the Santa Monica Mountains to the south.

The SMM North Area generally consists of five varying land types: urbanized areas, rural residential, ranches, vineyards, and open space. This planning area supports large blocks of undisturbed open space separating urban development along the US 101 Freeway from protected open space in the Santa Monica Mountains. Approximately 35 percent of the SMM North Area consists of conservation and park lands. The mountainous topography and limited road system has shaped development in the SMM North Area. Many of the residential communities occur in or near park lands or natural areas supporting biological resources. The project area supports a wide variety of sensitive plants and wildlife, unique geologic features, wildlife linkages, and aquatic features.

The SMMNAP is a component of the County’s General Plan, with focused objectives and policies for the Santa Monica Mountains North Area. The County DRP is proposing comprehensive updates to the policies of the SMMNAP and to development standards in the SMM North Area Community Standards District (“CSD”), and has released the draft

copy, and a draft EIR, for public review and comments. The CSD implements the policies of the SMMNAP and includes development standards that implement a number of the goals and policies of the SMMNAP. The CSD was adopted by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors in October 2001, and has since been amended four times: to add the Grading and Significant Ridgeline Ordinance in 2005, the Commercial Zoning Ordinance in 2007, the Fences, Walls, and Landscaping Ordinance in 2010, and the Vineyard Ordinance in 2015.

The updates are proposed to address concerns that have developed since the adoption of the SMMNAP in 2000, to strengthen existing environmental resources policies, and to identify policies and standards that continue to support the community's rural and semirural lifestyle. In addition, the County DRP is updating the SMMNAP and CSD to be in alignment on many of the environmental protection policies in the recently certified Santa Monica Mountains Local Coastal Program ("LCP"). Lastly, some of the SMMNAP policies adopted in 2000 have not been implemented in the CSD, including development standards for signs, vegetation management, and water resources protections. These issues will be addressed in the proposed updates.

Staff is supportive of SMMNAP and its extensive policies. The County DRP conducted public meetings with community members to receive input on issues included in the SMMNAP-CSD Update. Based on the input received, the SMMNAP includes the following key areas that are addressed in the update:

Habitat Protection

- Adopt habitat protection categories and policies/development standards to protect sensitive biological resources, but allow for continued development within the SMM North Area. The County conducted a biological assessment of the SMM North Area to document the key biological resources and establish habitat categories for resource protection. These categories are summarized below:
 - S1 = rare/very sensitive habitat, development limited to resource dependent development only
 - S2 = sensitive habitat, development must avoid and minimize impacts to habitat
 - S3 = disturbed habitat, development less restricted
 - S4 = previously developed land, development permitted

Equestrian Standards

- Allow small horse boarding by-right (up to 20 horses) in A-1, A-2 and R-R zones
- Allow large horse boarding by-right in A-2 and R-R zones, and with a CUP in the A-1 zone
- Require minimum one-acre lot size for horse boarding.
- Require best management practices (BMPs) such as runoff diversion, waste management
- Require vested legally-established equestrian facilities to comply with BMPs

Expanded Tree Protections

- Require a Protected Tree Permit to remove or encroach on a native tree species
- Establish Heritage Tree Protections that allow species that add value to the landscape or ecosystem to be registered and afforded the same protections as smaller native trees (trunk size more than 36 inches in diameter)
- Establish a Historic Tree policy/standard to address trees that are culturally or historically significant to the area or on a list of Historic Places
- Add policy to protect non-native trees that have high habitat or historic value
- Add policy/standard for protection of nesting birds that covers tree removal and/or construction near trees during bird nesting season, also add requirements during non-bird nesting season

Event Facilities (including dance pavilions and event venues)

- Add regulations that address noise, traffic, lighting, emergency evacuation, and breakdown and setup times
- Prohibit amplified noise after 8:00 p.m.
- Limit occupancy to 200 persons
- Require a parking and transportation plan

Other Policies and Standards

- Discourage high density and intensity development within the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, and direct development to areas less at-risk for fire and climate change-related hazards
- Limit exterior lighting, except when needed for safety. Require that new exterior lighting installations use best available dark skies technology to minimize sky glow and light trespass, thereby preserving the visibility of a natural night sky and stars and minimizing disruption of wild animal behavior, to the extent consistent with public safety
- Encourage the use of integrated pest management and use of least toxic methods of pest control
- Add application review procedures including need for biological studies if development is in an area with sensitive biological resources
- Add policies/development standards for scenic resource areas, scenic routes, visual resources, significant ridgelines, outdoor lighting and grading, as examples
- Other policies of possible interest to the community may be found in the following Sections of the SMMNAP:
 - *Conservation and Open Space Element*: Policies 9, 11, 13, 14, 18 (a&b), 21, 28, 30, 61, 62, 64, 79, 80-92, 94, 96, 97, 100
 - *Safety and Noise Element*: Policies 6, 77, 15, 19-23, 25, 28, 30-33, 35, 36, 40-44
 - *Land Use Element*: Policies 1-7, 9, 19-22, 24, 26-28, 30, 34-37, 39, 42, 52, 53, 58

- *Circulation Element*: Policies 1, 3, 7, 11, 12, 27, 29
- *Public Facilities Element*: Policies 16, 17 22, 26-29

The goals, policies and standards within the draft SMMNAP and CSD are generally more restrictive than the current SMMNAP, with the County's goal, as stated above, to strengthen existing environmental resources policies and identify policies and standards that continue to support the community's rural and semirural lifestyle. With this in mind, staff reviewed the draft SMMNAP and CSD to ensure the proposed land use goals, policies and standards did not conflict with those of the City, and the City's interests within the SMM North Area. The City Land Use/Economic Development Subcommittee ("LU/EDC") also reviewed the draft SMMNAP and CSD and met with staff on June 11, 2020. The LU/EDC recommended the City Council consider directing staff to send the following two (2) comments on the SMMNAP to the County DRP:

1. Land Use Element (Chapter 4) – *Zoning Map (Figure 8)*. The Zoning Map depicted in Figure 8 of the Land Use Element (Chapter 4) designates property north of Liberty Canyon Road as A-2 (Heavy Agricultural). It is recommend the zoning designation of the property be consistent with the Land Use Policy Map (Figure 7), with designations of OS-PR (Open Space-Parks) and OS-C (Open Space Conservation).
2. Land Use Element (Chapter 4) – *Land Use Policy Map* section states: "While the Land Use Map establishes the maximum number of units possible on a parcel, neither land use policy nor zoning standards are the sole determinates of the number of dwelling units appropriate for, or which may be approved, a given parcel. The application of all other LUP policies in addition to the requirements of other regulatory agencies with jurisdiction over the property, may *significantly reduce* [emphasis added] the number of units."

The City acknowledges the Department of Regional Planning's desire to not re-zone or re-designate privately owned land in the SMMNAP for increased density. However, the City recommends that the SMMNAP acknowledge the State's housing crises and local jurisdictions' obligation to accommodate for the regions' housing demand by stating within the SMMNAP and CSD the County's existing ministerial allowance of accessory dwelling units ("ADUs") on residential zoned properties. Similar to the ADU standards recently adopted by the City of Agoura Hills, the City also recommends that the SMMNAP provide for only one (1) ADU or Junior ADU per residential property if located in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, and that sizes be limited to 850 square feet for studio and one-bedroom units, and 1,000 square feet for units with more than one bedroom.

Staff is also seeking direction from feedback from the City Council on whether the City should comment on the Circulation Element Section of the SMMNAP, specifically regarding the proposed roadway widening prohibition. Staff acknowledges the statement

in the SMMNAP that “the SMMNAP seeks to improve circulation in and through the planning area, while protecting the environment, through transportation system management techniques,” and staff also acknowledges the County’s desire not to increase roadway capacity. However, Circulation Element Policy CI-1 states: “Maximize the capacity and operational efficiency of highways consistent with environmental protection and neighborhood preservation, *without widening roadways to increase capacity* [emphasis added].” In addition, Policy CI-3 states: “Expand roadway system capacity only where environmental resources (habitats/linkages, viewsheds, trails, etc.), residential neighborhoods, and rural communities are adequately protected. *Roadway widening to increase capacity shall be prohibited* [emphasis added].”

Staff asked the LU/EDC whether the City should request the SMMNAP plan for projected growth of neighboring jurisdictions and/or acknowledge the future cumulative traffic impacts such growth will have in the SMM North Area, including Kanan Road. The LU/EDC noted that the SMMNAP discourages additional development while protecting the environment and preserving neighborhoods. As such, the LU/EDC supports the SMMNAP Circulation Element policies as drafted, and recommended against the City sending comments on this particular issue, but requested it be forwarded to the City Council for their discussion.

In addition to receiving comments regarding the issues listed above, staff welcomes any other comments or direction to staff the City Council may wish to provide. Upon receiving the City Council’s direction, the Planning Director will forward the City’s comments on the draft SMMNAP and draft EIR to the County DRP.

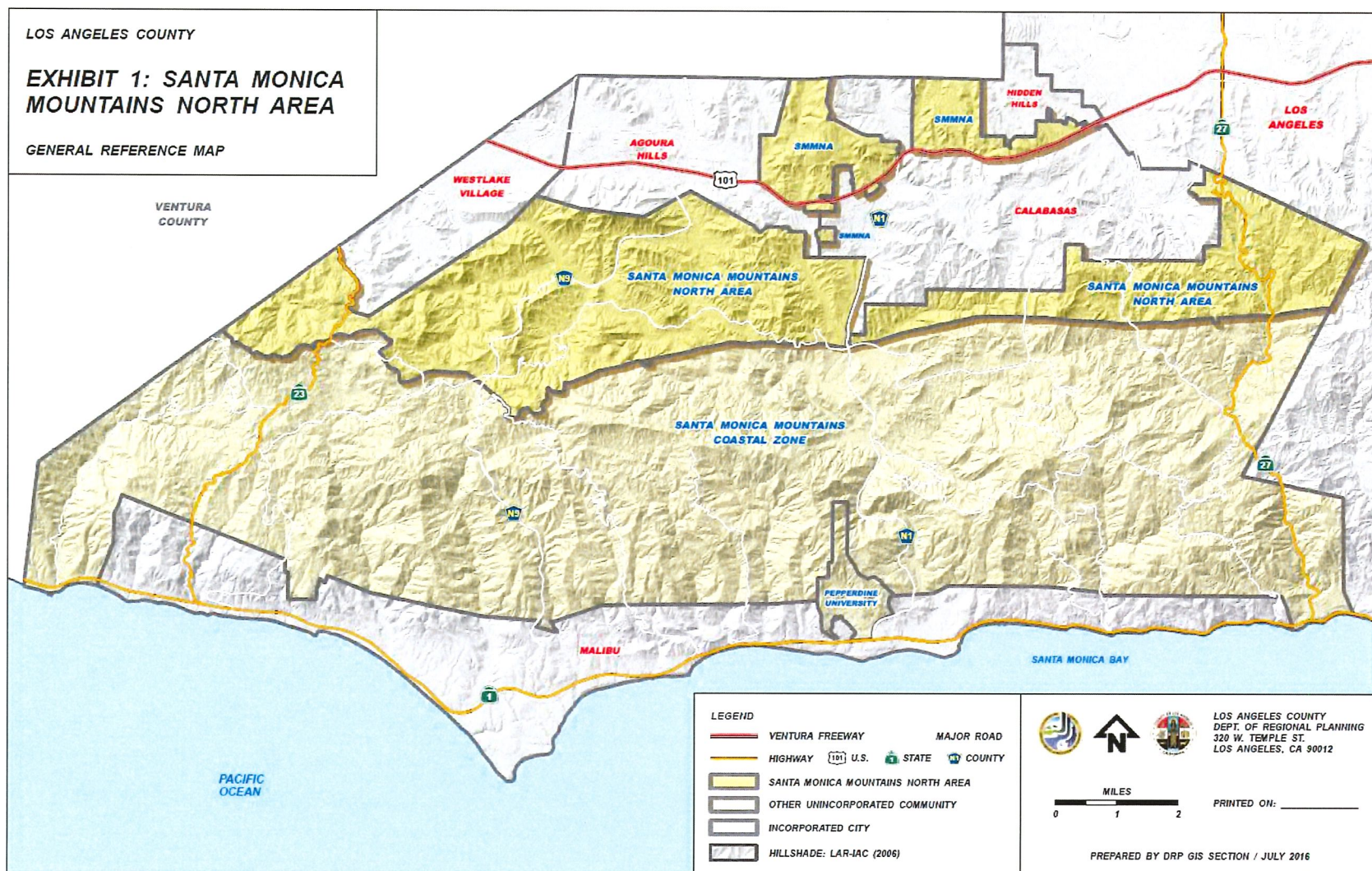
RECOMMENDATION

Staff respectfully recommends the City Council direct staff to forward comments on the Draft Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan Update and Draft Environmental Impact Report to the Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning.

- Attachments:
- A. SMMNA General Reference Map:
http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/smmnap_reference-map.pdf
 - B. SMMNA Plan – May 2020:
http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/smmnap_plan-2010may.pdf
 - C. SMMNA Community Standards District – May 2020:
http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/smmnap_csd-2020may.pdf
 - D. Draft EIR: http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/smmnap_eir-deri.pdf

Attachment A

Go to: http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/smmnap_reference-map.pdf



Attachment B

To view the Draft Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan (101 pages)
Go to: http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/smmnap_plan-2010may.pdf

May 2020

DRAFT

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS

NORTH AREA PLAN

Los Angeles County
Department of Regional Planning



Attachment C

To view the Draft Santa Monica Mountains North Area Community Standards District (89 pages)

Go to: http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/smmnap_csd-2020may.pdf

Chapter 22.336 Santa Monica Mountains North Area Community Standards District

Chapter 22.336 Santa Monica Mountains North Area Community Standards District

Sections:


- 22.336.010 Purpose
- 22.336.020 Definitions
- 22.336.030 District Map
- 22.336.040 Applicability
- 22.336.050 Application and Review Procedures
- 22.336.060 Biological Resource Standards
- 22.336.070 Community Wide Development Standards
- 22.336.080 Zone Specific Development Standards
- 22.336.090 Area Specific Development Standards
- 22.336.100 Modification of Development Standards
- APPENDIX I Criteria for Significant Ridgelines

Attachment D

To view the Draft Environmental Impact Report for
Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan and Community Standards District Update (418 pages)
Go to: http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/smmnap_eir-deri.pdf



Draft
Environmental Impact Report
for
Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan and
Community Standards District Update
SCH# 2018071065

 Los Angeles County
Department of Regional Planning

May 2020