



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
(805) 568-2240

Department Name: Planning and  
Development  
Department No.: 053  
For Agenda Of: September 9, 2008  
Placement: Administrative  
Estimated Time: 2 Hours on 9/23/08  
Continued Item: No  
If Yes, date from:  
Vote Required: Majority

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TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Department John Baker, Planning & Development, 568-2000  
Director(s) John McInnes, Office of Long Range Planning, 568-3552  
Contact Info: Derek Johnson, Deputy Director, 568-2072

SUBJECT: **Draft Los Alamos Community Plan Initiation**

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**County Counsel Concurrence**

As to form: Yes

**Auditor-Controller Concurrence**

As to form: N/A

**Other Concurrence:** N/A

As to form: N/A

**Recommended Actions:**

That the Board of Supervisors set a hearing for September 23, 2008 to initiate environmental review for the draft Los Alamos Community Plan update, Form-Based Code, and Design Guidelines.

Staff recommends that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Adopt a Resolution to initiate environmental review for the Draft Los Alamos Community Plan, Design Guidelines, and Land Use and Development Code Amendments, as specified in Attachment A.
2. Adopt a Resolution addressing the acceptance and processing of Comprehensive Plan amendments and rezones during the Los Alamos Community Plan update, as specified in Attachment B.

**Summary Text:** The Los Alamos Community Plan update is a funded project in the 2008-2009 Annual Work Program. Staff is requesting that the Board of Supervisors consider the draft Community Plan, Form-Based Code, and Design Guidelines and initiate environmental review of the project.

## **Background:**

### **1.0 Background and Advisory Committee Process**

The Los Alamos Community Plan was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in February 1994. Since its adoption 14 years ago, new development has taken place within the community, public facilities and services such as water and sewer have expanded, and population growth has occurred.

In 2005, the owner of property partially within, but mostly outside the community's urban boundary (APN 101-100-038, see Figure 1), approached the County with a Specific Plan application. The project, identified as "Los Alamos Commons," included a proposal to develop approximately 200 housing units on 104 acres located northwest of the town. The Board of Supervisors added the Community Plan update to the 2006-2007 Annual Work Program and directed that Phase I of the update consider the Commons Project. Because funding did not exist to fully fund a Community Plan update, the developer of the Los Alamos Commons project agreed to fund 50% of the Phase I cost, and potentially fund Phase II. With this funding agreement in place, the Board of Supervisors initiated an update to the Community Plan through creation of the Los Alamos Planning Advisory Committee (LAPAC) on August 8, 2006.

#### **A. Public Process**

The draft Los Alamos Community Plan update, Form-Based Code, and Bell Street Design Guidelines were prepared over a period of 19 months with an all day Saturday public workshop and 30 LAPAC meetings. The draft Design Guidelines and Form-Based Code were reviewed at a joint meeting with the LAPAC and Central Board of Architectural Review (CBAR) in October 2007 to discuss form-based code principals and objectives, and to discuss the design review process for Los Alamos. The CBAR reviewed the draft Design Guidelines and Form Based Code at two hearings.

The first phase of the update was largely informative, with staff presenting information on the current demographics of the community as well as the current status of public facilities and services, resources and constraints, and environmental issues. Current development proposals were also discussed in the context of the Community Plan update. Following the information gathering phase, the LAPAC and the public engaged in a full day community visioning exercise and a series of meetings focused on goal development and recommended policy changes.

#### **B. Focus on Bell Street In-Fill Development**

Bell Street is the historic "main street" for Los Alamos, containing a few historic buildings which are scattered along this state highway. Development is discontinuous along the street, with 23 vacant parcels (approximately 17.5 acres) and many underutilized commercial lots. Town residents have expressed a desire for a greater amount of retail and services on Bell Street. While a few mixed-use development projects (residential over commercial) have been proposed over the past few years, no new commercial development has occurred in town for some time.

A financial feasibility study was prepared by the County's consultant to evaluate the financial feasibility of new commercial development in Los Alamos. Specifically, Strategic Economics evaluated the market potential for additional retail along Bell Street and found that demand by residents alone will not be

sufficient to support a critical mass of commercial activity. Strategic Economics also researched case studies of small towns with successful “main street” retail. In every scenario, the research showed that tourists and other non-resident visitors were necessary to support even a small retail district. Given that the quantity of future residential development in Los Alamos is limited due to infrastructure constraints (i.e. wastewater capacity), it is clear that Los Alamos will need to attract additional visitors in order to support even a very small retail district.

Strategic Economics prepared an additional financial feasibility study to analyze how market constraints and County zoning regulations, such as parking requirements, height restrictions, and residential limitations in the C-1 and C-2 zone districts affect the financial viability of development projects. The County hired Shubin and Donaldson Architects to complement the financial study and to prepare a development concept plan. The concept plan analyzes the future development patterns of the Bell Street corridor, maintaining the integrity of the historic built environment. The concept plan looked at a variety of building mass and height configurations, building placement, on-site parking configurations, residential unit intensities, and mixed use configurations. Strategic Economics worked with Shubin and Donaldson Architects to test the financial feasibility of development programs on typical lots located along Bell Street.

In response, County staff developed a form-based development code to alleviate identified zoning constraints. The proposed Los Alamos Form-Based Code would achieve the community’s desired building mass and form and serve as a catalyst for new development. The development standards of the new zone were created to maximize the feasibility of development along the Bell Street, streamline the permit process and create a commercial corridor consistent with the desired form and character of Los Alamos.

In April 2007, the LAPAC recommended that the Community Plan update should focus on mixed-use urban infill along Bell Street and voted not to expand the Urban Boundary. On September 4, 2007, the developer of the proposed Los Alamos Commons project submitted a letter withdrawing the option of funding Phase II, the environmental phase of the Community Plan update.

In May and June 2008, the LAPAC approved two resolutions for the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors consideration which recommend the initiation of environmental review for the Draft Los Alamos Community Plan, Design Guidelines and Form-Based Code (Attachments C & D). The resolution in Attachment C was approved by a vote of 4-3-0. The resolution in Attachment D was unanimously approved.

### **C. County Planning Commission Recommendations**

On July 9, 2008, the draft Community Plan, Design Guidelines, and Form-Based Code were reviewed by the County Planning Commission. The Planning Commission, on a vote of 5-0, recommended that the Board of Supervisors initiate environmental review of the documents (Attachment E). Two minor changes were recommended at the hearing as follows:

1. The Planning Commission noted an inconsistency between use of the terms “Exterior Lighting” and “Outdoor Lighting” and requested that the Community Plan and Design Guidelines use the same terminology. Staff has revised the Design Guidelines incorporating the term “Outdoor Lighting” where appropriate.
2. The Planning Commission also suggested several text changes with respect to signage to make the Design Guidelines consistent with the County Sign ordinance. Staff has revised the Design Guidelines to reflect these suggested changes.

#### EIR Alternative

At the July 9<sup>th</sup> Planning Commission hearing, the applicant for the Los Alamos Commons project requested that their project be considered as an alternative in the upcoming Community Plan environmental impact report (EIR). Guidance with respect to appropriate range of EIR alternatives is provided in Section 15126.5 of the State CEQA Guidelines, which states:

“An EIR shall describe a reasonable range of alternatives to the project...which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project.”

The Community Plan update project description, recommended by the LAPAC, is predicated upon the following primary land use goals:

*GOAL LU-LA-1:* Encourage growth within the Community Plan Area rather than expanding the existing boundary; and

*GOAL LUR-LA-1:* Encourage infill and mixed use residential\commercial growth within the existing Urban Boundary.

Consideration of the Los Alamos Commons project as an EIR alternative would be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6 since it would not meet the basic land use policy objectives of the Community Plan to encourage growth within the existing Urban Boundary. The Commons project would require a significant expansion of the Urban Boundary and commitment of remaining sewer treatment capacity. This would compromise the ability to implement mixed-use residential\commercial development along Bell Street which is supported by the policy direction recommended by the LAPAC.

The Planning Commission considered this information and ultimately voted to exclude the Los Alamos Commons project as an EIR alternative (Vote 3-2). Staff concurs with the Planning Commission’s

direction and recommends that the Board of Supervisors not include the Los Alamos Commons project as an alternative in the Community Plan EIR.

#### **D. Tribal Consultation**

Consistent with Government Code §65352.3, the County provided the Santa Ynez Band of Mission Indians the opportunity to consult regarding the Los Alamos Community Plan update. The County also requested a standard record search for cultural resources in the plan area. The Santa Ynez Band of Mission Indians did not respond to the consultation invitation and a follow up letter was sent noting that the opportunity to consult expired but encouraged them to submit comments throughout the adoption processes as members of the public.

### **2.0 Project Description**

The project involves the following elements:

1. Los Alamos Community Plan. The Draft Los Alamos Community Plan (Attachment F) is intended to direct all aspects of development, including both policy and regulatory elements used in evaluating future development projects. The Draft Community Plan will amend the 1994 Los Alamos Community Plan, updating the goals, policies, development standards and actions intended to regulate and guide future development and improvements.
2. Land Use and Development Code Amendments. The Los Alamos Form-Based Code (Attachment G) will be implemented through the County Land Use and Development Code (LUDC). The proposed amendments to the Land Use and Development Code would implement the applicable policies, development standards and action items from the Los Alamos Community Plan.
3. Bell Street Design Guidelines. The Los Alamos Bell Street Design Guidelines (Attachment H) are intended to provide reasonable, practical and objective guidance to assist developers and designers in a) identifying the components that define the character of the Bell Street commercial corridor and b) designing new or remodeled buildings. The guidelines will also provide the tools needed for staff and the County's Central Board of Architectural Review (CBAR) to properly evaluate development proposals.

#### **2.1 Draft Los Alamos Community Plan Update**

##### ***Significant Issues Addressed by Proposed Goals, Policies, Actions and Development Standards***

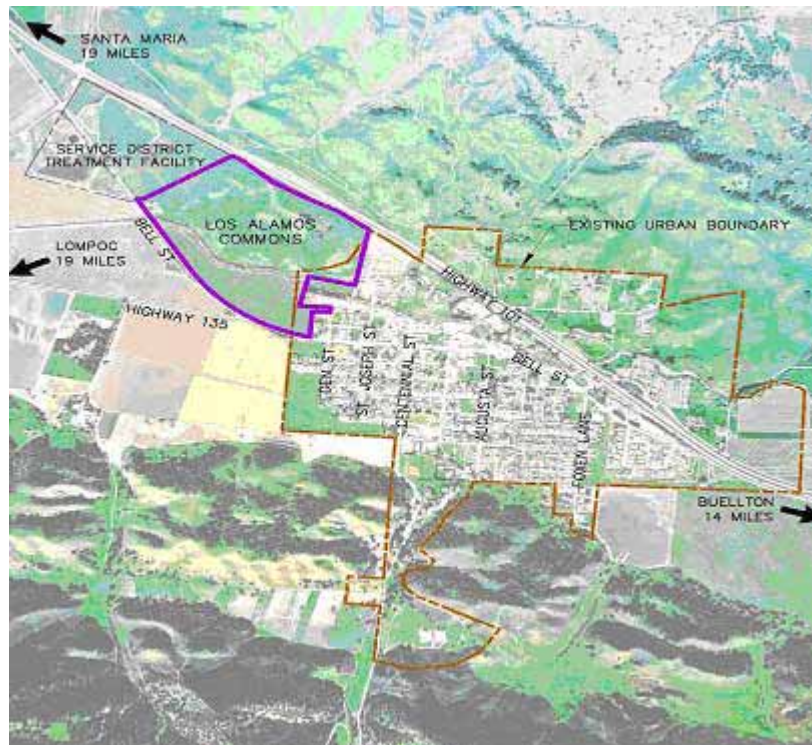
This section outlines the significant topical issues addressed by the proposed new goals, policies, actions, and development standards contained in the Draft Los Alamos Community Plan. The information is intended to summarize the key policy issues that are addressed in greater detail in the Community Plan. The standards have been crafted to address recurrent problems and issues which, up to now, have been handled case-by-case with mixed outcomes. These criteria also are intended to provide better guidance and predictability within the development review process to the overall benefit of project applicants, community members, and decision makers.

The Draft Community Plan is considered a “working” document in that it includes existing language from the 1994 community plan. Existing text recommended for deletion is noted with a strikethrough. New text added to the Community Plan is underlined.

### A. Land Use

On April, 2007, the LAPAC voted to not expand the Urban Boundary and instead focus on urban infill with the primary emphasis on the Bell Street corridor. Figure 1 below shows the proposed area considered for Urban Boundary expansion and the current and proposed urban and Community Plan boundary.

**Figure 1**



**Residential Buildout:** Residential buildout under the proposed plan is estimated at 1,268 units. The analysis is based on existing units plus new potential units on vacant sites under current land use designations and on sites with the proposed land use changes. Of the 1,268 units, 301 units could be built within the Bell Street corridor under a proposed Los Alamos Form-Based Code.<sup>1</sup> The proposed Form-Based code would be implemented through the LUDC as a new zone district “Community Mixed Use - Los Alamos” (CM-LA) as further described in this report.

<sup>1</sup> The buildout analysis assumes that certain existing historical structures on Bell Street would not be redeveloped.

**Table 1 - Community Plan Buildout Summary**

Existing Residential Units	Potential Additional Residential Units (Includes 301 units within CM-LA)	Total Residential Units at Buildout	Existing Commercial and Industrial S.F.	Potential Additional Commercial and Industrial S.F.	Total Commercial and Industrial S.F. at Buildout
625	643	1,268	215,200	534,709 <sup>2</sup>	749,909

**Commercial/Industrial Buildout:** The estimated maximum buildout of commercial and industrial square feet is based on an analysis of existing commercial projects and the potential buildout of vacant lots. The estimated buildout of commercial space within the proposed CM-LA zone is based on the form-based code. The total potential commercial and industrial buildout is 749,909 square feet. The industrial component of this buildout is roughly 348,480 square feet and occurs on one parcel on the east end of the Community Plan Area. The parcel, APN# 133-130-039, is the site of the proposed Lucas and Lewellen winery. When constructed, the winery facility would be approximately 75,502 square feet, thus lowering the potential buildout of industrial use.

**B. Sewer Treatment Capacity**

The Los Alamos Community Services District (LACSD) currently provides sewer service to parcels within the boundaries of LACSD. In 2005, the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) approved Phase III of the wastewater treatment plant upgrade which authorized the facility to discharge up to a maximum of 225,000 gallons per day (gpd). The actual design capacity of the treatment plant is 283,000 gpd. The plant is currently operating at 50% of permitted capacity with flows averaging 112,000 gpd in the summer and 109,000 gpd in winter.

Recent completion of the Phase III expansion added 18 acres of spray irrigation (total of 47.6 acres) for reclamation of the treated wastewater which increased the effluent spray irrigation rating to 283,000 gpd. Residential buildout under the proposed plan is estimated at 1,268 units which include 16 residential units located outside the LACSD boundary.

In response to the potential wastewater constraints, the draft Community Plan includes Development Standard WAT-LA-1.2.1 which requires new development to demonstrate significant methods for conserving water that will include, but not be limited to, waterless urinals in commercial projects, low flow toilets in commercial and residential projects and low flow showers in residential projects.

Buildout of land uses proposed in the Community Plan update, including development allowed under the new CM-LA zone district would utilize all of the remaining surplus wastewater treatment plant capacity and would require additional capacity beyond treatment plant’s permitted capacity. The upcoming Los Alamos Community Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will thoroughly analyze the wastewater

<sup>2</sup> Assumes APN# 133-130-039, site of Lucas and Lewellen Winery, is built at maximum zoning of light industrial at 348,480 square feet. The approved winery on this site would be approximately 75,502 square feet. The actual buildout of Industrial use would be less once the winery is constructed and operating as a winery.



demands associated with Community Plan buildout, and include alternatives and mitigation measures to avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project upon the LACSD wastewater treatment facilities and capacity.

**C. Key Land Use and Zoning Changes**

In addition to the newly created CM-LA zone, the LAPAC recommended to amend the land use and zoning maps in Los Alamos for two parcels within the Planning Area (Figure 2).

The first parcel (APN# 101-120-022) is located on the north side of Highway 101. Los Alamos property owner, Christine Burtness requested the LAPAC review the current land use and zoning for their property. Ms. Burtness requested a more flexible commercial zoning other than the current zone of Commercial Highway. Staff recommended the LAPAC support a change of land use and zoning of this property from Commercial Highway to retail Commercial (C-2). The C-2 zoning could accommodate a wider range of commercial uses that would be more compatible with the character of the neighborhood north of Highway 101.

The second parcel (APN# 101-260-059) is located on the eastern end of Bell Street adjacent to Highway 101. Daniel F. Thompson requested a change in zoning from Residential (DR-8) to General Commercial (C-3). Due to the narrow configuration on the lot and its close proximity to Highway 101, residential development was deemed to be a less appropriate use of the property. Staff recommended the LAPAC support a change of land use and zoning of this property as requested by the owner.

**Figure 2**

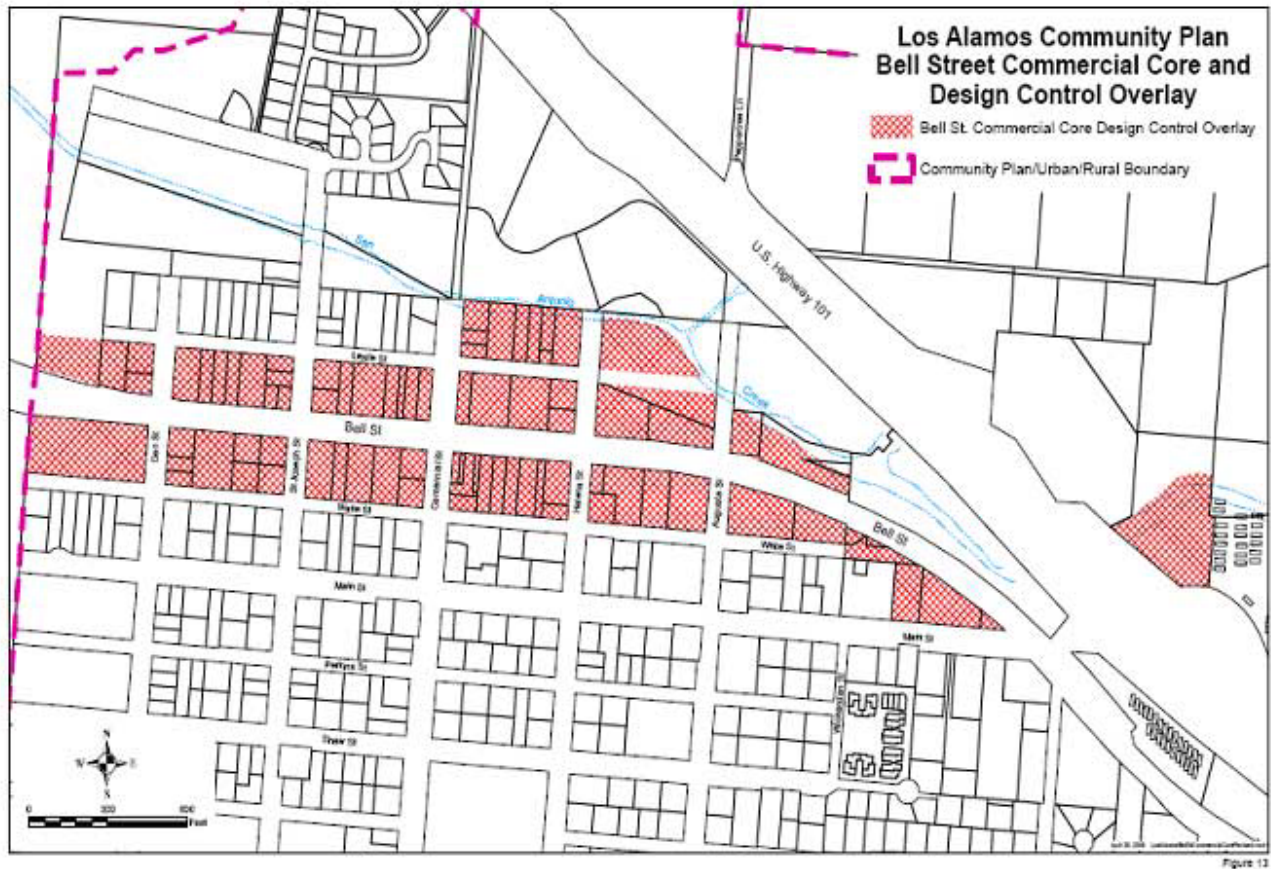


**D. Expansion of Design Control Overlay**



The Bell Street Design Control Overlay (Figure 3) has been expanded to cover the commercial zoned parcels from the western edge of Bell Street within the Planning Area to the east at the intersection of Bell Street and Main Street and Highway 101. The design overlay has also been expanded to the proposed C-2 parcel on the north side of Highway 101. This parcel represents a major gateway to Los Alamos as it is the location of the northbound Highway 101 off ramp.

Figure 3



## 2.2 Draft Bell Street Form-Based Code

Form-Based Codes address the relationship between building facades and the public realm, the form and mass of buildings in relation to one another, and the scale and types of streets and blocks. The regulations and standards in form-based codes, presented in both diagrams and words, are keyed to a *regulating plan* that designates the appropriate form and scale (and therefore, character) of development rather than only distinctions in land-use types. This is in contrast to conventional zoning's focus on the segregation of land-use types, permissible property uses, and the control of development intensity through simple numerical parameters (e.g., floor area ratios, dwellings per acre, height limits, setbacks, parking ratios).

A form-based code was drafted for the Bell Street corridor in Los Alamos to give certainty to developers and the community on the desired outcome of new and redeveloped projects. Based on the financial

feasibility study prepared by Strategic Economics, the current commercial zoning along Bell Street unduly restricts commercial development.

**A. New “Community Mixed-Use” Zone District:**

The proposed regulations and standards in the Los Alamos Form-Based Code (Attachment G) are regulations which would be implemented through a new “Community Mixed Use – Los Alamos” (CM-LA) zone district crafted specifically for the Los Alamos Township and applied to a portion of the existing C-1 and C-2 parcels within the Bell Street Corridor. The new CM-LA zone district, shown on Figure 10 of the Community Plan, would be implemented through new standards in the County Land Use and Development Code (Attachment I). Attachment J includes allowed land uses under the Old Town Orcutt Residential/General Commercial (OT-R/GC) zone for comparing CM-LA with a similar mixed use zone within the County.

**B. Land Use Permit (LUP) versus Development Plan (DP)**

Currently under C-1 (Limited Commercial) and C-2 (Retail Commercial) zoning, a Development Plan (DP) is required for buildings and structures that total 5,000 or more square feet in gross floor area or where onsite buildings and structures and outdoor areas designated for sales or storage total 20,000 square feet or more.<sup>3</sup>

A DP allows for discretionary review of projects allowed by right within their respective zoning districts which, because of type, scale, or location require comprehensive review. The DP is an important mechanism which allows various County Departments (Public Works, Flood Control, etc.) to apply conditions of approval to otherwise ministerial projects.

Many of the project conditions typically required by County departments as part of the DP review process have been incorporated as new development standards in the new CM-LA zone district. With these standards in place, the LAPAC is recommending that the DP threshold be increased from the current trigger of 5,000 square feet or greater, to the new trigger of 15,000 square feet cumulative per lot or greater. These changes will help streamline permit review by reducing permit processing time and costs for applicants and allow more projects to be processed ministerially. A Land Use Permit (LUP) would still be required, since County regulations require a LUP before using any land or structure or commencing any work to erect, move, alter, enlarge or rebuild any building or structure in the unincorporated area of the County of Santa Barbara.

**C. Residential Intensities**

The current C-1 and C-2 zoning allows for a maximum of two bedrooms for every 1,000 square feet of commercial development. Residential use within these zones is limited to less than 50% of the total building square footage. The CM-LA zone would allow residential units at 2 bedrooms for every 700 square feet of commercial square feet. Residential square footage under CM-LA can exceed the square footage of the commercial portion of the parcel making residential the primary use.

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<sup>3</sup> Santa Barbara County LUDC Section 35-24.030

## **D. Parking Placement and Inventory**

The proposed CM-LA zone includes modification to the County's existing parking requirements. Currently the C-2 zone requires one space per unit plus one guest space for every five units for residential uses (two bedrooms or less), and one space for every 300-500 square feet of gross floor area for commercial development (depending on the type of use).

The CM-LA zone would require one off-street space per residential unit (Off-street parking spaces are not required on lots with 2 or fewer units). On-site parking is not required for commercial uses. However, available off-site parking must be demonstrated.

County staff recently completed a parking inventory for the Bell Street corridor (see Attachment K). There are currently 479 available on-street parking spaces throughout the Bell Street corridor study area. An estimated 690 spaces could be provided by establishing angled parking on the north side of Bell Street, and on side streets one block on either side of Bell Street, and parallel parking on the south side of Leslie Street when parking is adjacent to commercial use. The potential buildout of the CM-LA zone would put peak parking demand of 632 on-street parking spaces. Development Standard CIRC-LA-1.7.1 would require the County to work with Caltrans when Bell Street development reaches 50% buildout capacity to implement a parking and roadway configuration to accommodate peak parking demand.

### **2.3 Draft Bell Street Design Guidelines**

The Draft Los Alamos Bell Street Design Guidelines (Attachment G) seeks to add clarity and depth to the existing Los Alamos Design Guidelines (1994), without adding additional development requirements, processing steps, or review beyond what is currently required. The Design Guidelines provide clearer direction to applicants and property owners so that there is greater guidance and standards for design review which is intended to reduce the amount of time for review and appeals. Primary sources of content for the update included the current Los Alamos Design Guidelines (1994) and the County's Design Guidelines for Orcutt, Mission Canyon, and Goleta. In the event the existing building does not already comply with the Design Guidelines, only the portions being altered are subject to the Design Guidelines and CBAR Design Review.

The Design Control overlay zone map is proposed to be expanded to cover the entire Bell Street corridor and include the parcel on the north side of Highway 101 proposed to be rezoned from CH to C-2, which is currently the site of an abandoned gas station. The parcel north of Highway 101 was included due to its visibility as a commercial gateway parcel into Los Alamos.

### **3.0 Procedure to Address Processing Comprehensive Plan Amendments and Rezones**

Historically, the Planning & Development Department has discouraged submittal of rezone and/or Comprehensive Plan amendment applications within a planning area boundary while a Community Plan is being prepared. The LAPAC and County Planning Commission are recommending that the Board of Supervisors adopt a resolution to formalize this procedure (Attachment B). Comprehensive Plan amendment and rezone applications would not be accepted for processing while the Plan is being prepared, unless the Planning Commission determines a project to be for a public purpose. The Planning

Commission and the Board of Supervisors could reconsider this procedure if the Plan is not adopted with two years of the adoption of said Board of Supervisors resolution. At this time, there are no projects with pending Comprehensive Plan or rezone applications within the Plan area.

**Performance Measure:**

New land use policies and zoning ordinance changes proposed in the Los Alamos Community Plan and Form-Based Code will provide property owners a financial incentive to pursue new mixed-use commercial and residential development along Bell Street by alleviating existing zoning constraints which have been a contributing factor affecting the financial feasibility of past mixed-use projects. The Bell Street Design Guidelines will reduce design review time for applicants and provide clear design guidance and standards to maintain the integrity of the historic built environment.

**Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:**

Budgeted: Yes

**Fiscal Analysis:**

<u>Funding Sources</u>	<u>Current FY Cost:</u>	<u>Annualized On-going Cost:</u>	<u>Total One-Time Project Cost</u>
General Fund	\$ 220,834		
State			
Federal			
Fees			
Other:			
Total	\$ 220,834	\$ -	\$ -

**Staffing Impacts:**

**Legal Positions:**  
 N/A

**FTEs:**  
 N/A

**Special Instructions:**

Clerk of the Board shall post legal notice in the Santa Maria Times and Santa Barbara News Press at least 10 calendar days before the hearing.

**Attachments:**

- A. Board of Supervisors Resolution initiating environmental review for the draft Los Alamos Community Plan, Design Guidelines, and form-Based Code
- B. Board of Supervisors Resolution restricting Comprehensive Plan amendments and Rezones.
- C. Los Alamos Planning Advisory Committee – Resolution 2008-01
- D. Los Alamos Planning Advisory Committee – Resolution 2008-02
- E. County of Santa Barbara Planning Commission Resolution # 08-04 and #08-05
- F. Draft Los Alamos Community Plan
- G. Draft Los Alamos Form-Based Code
- H. Draft Bell Street Design Guidelines
- I. Draft Land Use and Development Code (LUDC) amendments
- J. C-1, C-2, OT-R/GC and CM-LA Allowed Uses Comparison
- K. Los Alamos Bell Street Corridor Parking Study

**Authored by:**

Derek Johnson, Deputy Director, 568-2072

**cc:**

OLRP Chron file