

MINUTES
Regular PEQC Meeting of the
Planning and Environmental Quality Commission
Tuesday, February 4, 2025

The Regular PEQC Meeting Notice and Agenda of the Planning and Environmental Quality Commission of the City of Gardena, California, was called to order at 7:00 PM on Tuesday, February 4, 2025, in the Council Chambers at 1700 W. 162nd Street, Gardena, California.

PARTICIPATE BEFORE THE MEETING by emailing the Planning Commission at publiccomment@cityofgardena.org by 5:00 PM on the day of the meeting and write "Public Comment" in the subject line.

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 PM

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Deryl Henderson led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Deryl Henderson; Vice-Chair Ronald Wright-Scherr; Commissioner Jules Kanhan; Commissioner Steve Sherman and Commissioner Stephen P. Langley. Employees present: Director of Community Development Greg Tsujiuchi; Community Development Manager Amanda Acuña; Assistant City Attorney Lisa Kranitz; and Planning Assistant Kevin La.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

4.A December 3, 2024

MOTION: It was made by Vice-Chair Wright-Scherr and seconded by Chair Henderson to approve the minutes of the meeting on December 3, 2024:

The motion was passed by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Wright-Scherr, Henderson, Sherman, Langley and Kanhan

Noes: None

Absent: None

4.B January 7, 2025

MOTION: It was made by Commissioner Langley and seconded by Vice-Chair Wright-Scherr to approve the minutes of the meeting on January 7, 2025:

The motion was passed by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Langley, Wright-Scherr, Kanhan, Sherman, and Henderson

Noes: None

Absent: None

5. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Administrative Analyst I, Georgina Placido asked if any members of the public wished to speak to the Planning Commission.

- 1) Michael Brown, business owner spoke on the possibility of transferring his Conditional Use Permit for alcohol sales and Tobacco License to a new location for his cigar lounge due to an increase in rental costs.

Director Tsujiuchi reminded the Commissioners that the subject is not an agenda item and therefore cannot be discussed. Ms. Acuña noted for the record that Mr. Brown made a written comment to the Planning Commission, and a copy of that comment was provided to each Commissioner, with copies also made available for the public.

- 2) Abbi Rahim expressed his appreciation for pickleball and its benefits to the Gardena community. He would like to see a pickleball program geared toward the youth and seniors.

Chair Henderson asked Director Tsujiuchi to inform the Recreation Department about additional programs.

- 3) Alex Lee, spoke about his family's pickleball business, Dink House Los Angeles, located at 1495 W. 139th Street. He mentioned that the business had been shut down, and fines would be enforced if they continued to operate without the necessary permits. He requested a temporary allowance to operate while they work on obtaining the correct city permits and licenses required for their business.
- 4) Victor Joseph, a resident of Gardena shared his experience with pickleball and his interaction with Dink House. He requested that the business be allowed to remain open until it complies with city requirements.

Chair Henderson inquired whether all relevant information could be forwarded to the Recreation Department. Also wants to ensure that the business is operating legally within the city.

Chair Henderson also recommended that Mr. Brown's issue be presented to the City Council. Director Tsujiuchi informed the Commission that, by law, a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) is tied to the land, which is mandated by State law. Chair Henderson recalled that an ordinance had been previously prepared to address new cigar lounges. Assistant City Attorney Kranitz clarified that while cigar lounges are permitted, a Conditional Use Permit is necessary to open a new cigar lounge within the city. She explained that Mr. Brown's cigar lounge was established prior to this requirement, and at a new location they would be subject to obtaining a CUP for the use of a new cigar lounge. She confirmed that state law mandates a CUP is associated with the land.

6. OTHER ITEMS

6.A **1818 West Redondo Beach Boulevard, the Tire House Progress Report**

As requested by the Planning Commission at the January 7, 2025, meeting, staff presented an update report on the Tire House Inc.'s progress with meeting the requirements of Site Plan Review #4-15.

Planning Assistant Kevin La presented the Staff Report regarding the appellant's construction progress and final inspections to ensure compliance with the conditions of Site Plan Review #4-15. This progress report was requested by the Planning Commission during their meeting on January 7, 2025.

Community Development Director Greg Tsujiuchi, Community Development Manager Amanda Acuña and Assistant City Attorney Lisa Kranitz were present to answer any questions.

Mr. La reviewed a list of actions taken from August 26, 2015, to October 1, 2024, and provided a progress report from January 7, 2025, to February 3, 2025, as displayed on the screen. He noted that on February 3, 2025, a building inspection was conducted to update accessible parking and restriping; however, the inspection did not pass due to the property not displaying a required ADA parking sign. Mr. La also shared photographs of the property improvements.

The Planning Commission was asked to review the report on the progress the property owner has made and decide whether to uphold the Director's decision to revoke Site Plan Review #14-15.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff is recommending to the Planning Commission to:

- Receive the progress report from staff;
- Decide whether to adopt Resolution No. PC 10-24 reflecting the Planning Commission's decision of upholding the director's decision to revoke Site Plan Review #4-15; and
- Find that the action is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to guidelines Section 15321

Mr. La informed the Commissioners that both staff and the contractor for the property were available to answer any questions.

Director Tsujiuchi added that it appears the applicant has met all the conditions outlined by the Planning Commission, except for the ADA sign. Therefore, it is staff's recommendation that the conditions have been met. City Attorney Lisa Kranitz mentioned that if the Planning Commission agrees, they should not approve the resolution but instead request that staff prepare a resolution to approve the applicant's appeal, which would be presented at the next meeting.

Chair Henderson expressed satisfaction that the construction was finally completed after 10 years. City Attorney Lisa Kranitz inquired if the motion was to direct staff to bring forth a resolution to approve the applicant's appeal. Chair Henderson confirmed his agreement.

MOTION: It was made by Commissioner Langley and seconded by Vice-Chair Wright-Scherr to Direct City Staff to bring forth a Resolution to Approve the Applicant's Appeal:

The motion was passed by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Langley, Wright-Scherr, Sherman, Kanhan, and Henderson

Noes: None

Absent: None

7. PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

7.A Environmental Assessment #9-21 (SCH 2023060263), Specific Plan #1-23, Site Plan Review #5-21, and Development Agreement #1-21

The Planning Commission will consider a recommendation to the City Council on the Applicant's requests for the following entitlements for the redevelopment of approximately 6.3 acres of land:

- Specific Plan (SP #2-21):** Adoption of the 1450 Artesia Specific Plan to provide new zoning and development standards to allow the redevelopment of 6.3 acres with a mixed-use commercial/industrial development consisting of a 268,000 gross square foot (GSF) building with an approximate height of 75 feet. The project will feature self-storage (186,000 GSF, 1,480 units), industrial
 - warehousing (72,000 GSF, 10 loading docks), and office/retail space (10,000 GSF mezzanine);
- Site Plan Review (SP #5-21):** approving the physical design of the development;
- **Development Agreement (DA #1-21):** between the City and developer that guarantees the right to build the development as set forth in this Specific Plan for a period of 10 years and provides community benefits to the City including monetary contribution and space to hold community events.

Administrative Approval

Lot Merger (LM #1-21): to merge six lots into one single parcel for the site development.

Environmental Consideration:

Approval of these items requires certification of an Environmental Impact Report (EA # 9-21), adoption of a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan, and a Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Project Location: 1440, 1450, 1462, 1472 Artesia Boulevard, (APN: 6106-036-010, -012, -034, -035, -036, -037)

Project Applicant: 1450 Artesia Acquisition Company LLC (Representative: Brian Sorensen)

Community Development Manager Amanda Acuña presented the Staff Report and overview of the Environmental Assessment #9-21 (SCH 2023060263), Specific Plan #1-23, Site Plan Review #5-21, and Development Agreement #1-21, located at 1450 Artesia Boulevard.

Community Development Director Greg Tsujiuchi and Assistant City Attorney Lisa Kranitz were present to answer any questions.

Ms. Acuña presented a PowerPoint presentation that included the following information, along with photographs of the subject property: Property Location and Acreage Breakdown: The property located at 1450 Artesia Boulevard consists of a 6.33-acre lot, which is made up of six parcels: 1450 Artesia, parcel 6106-036-034, 1440, 1452, 1462, and 1472 Artesia Boulevard. Existing Structures: A list of existing structures was provided, indicating their types of use. It was noted that one of the structures is residential and currently vacant. Additionally, it was highlighted that these structures were originally constructed between the 1920s and the 1950s. Historical Use: The site was originally used for industrial purposes and later served as a waste disposal area known as the Gardena Sumps. In the 1980s, hazardous materials were discovered on the site, leading to environmental remediation efforts. This included covering the sumps with liners and concrete. The subject site has been under ongoing remediation with the appropriate agencies.

Ms. Acuña informed everyone that the applicants had prepared a presentation and were available to answer any questions.

Ms. Acuña proceeded with her presentation and gave background information about the subject project and a development group known as Insite Property Group (the "Applicant"), as displayed on the screen:

- **May of 2020**, the Gardena City Council held a study session to hear about a conceptual project for the 6.33 site.
- **December of 2021**, formal application to establish the 1450 Artesia Specific Plan, 268,000sf building with associated surface parking, landscaping, and circulation improvements.
- **November 2021**, the City entered into a consultant agreement with Dudek to prepare the required EIR and to provide peer review of Applicant provided studies.
- **June 22, 2023**, the City held a scoping meeting on the project CEQA.
- **EIR Review Period August 2024 – September 2024.**

Ms. Acuña listed the development project entitlements:

- Environmental Assessment #9-21: Certifying the EIR prepared for the project.
- Specific Plan (SP #1-23): Redeveloping the property for a commercial/industrial mixed-use project.
- Site Plan Review #5-21: Approving the physical design of the development.
- Development Agreement #1-21: Between the City and developer that guarantees the right to build the development as set forth in this Specific Plan for a period of 10 years and provides community benefits to the City.

Administrative Approval

- Lot Merger: to merge six lots into one single parcel for the site development.

Ms. Acuña went over the proposed project involving the demolition of all existing structures on the site and the construction of a 268,000sf mixed-use building for industrial and commercial:

- A three-level, over first floor, self-storage facility totaling 186,000sf, with 1,480 storage units.
- An industrial warehouse with one level totaling 72,000sf, including 10 loading docks.
- An office/retail space including a mezzanine totaling 10,000sf.

Ms. Acuña shared the zoning history of the site, noting that back in 2006, the city adopted the Artesia Corridor Specific Plan. This plan covered the area between Western Avenue and Normandie Avenue, south of Artesia Boulevard. The original specific plan allowed for commercial use and a mixed-use of commercial and residential development. However, the site was never developed as intended under this plan. In 2013, the city updated the land use plan and zoning map in connection with the city's housing element, which resulted in the rescinding of the Artesia Corridor Specific Plan. Nevertheless, the subject site retained its land use designation for the specific plan. A zoning designation was subsequently assigned to the site for the 1450 Artesia Specific Plan, serving as a placeholder while the project was going through the planning process.

Ms. Acuña noted that the applicant proposed for the site to include 36,000sf of community space for special events, which would require approval from the Director of Recreation, utilizing approximately 63 parking spaces.

Ms. Acuña provided a detailed overview of the On-site circulation and On-site Circulation During Special Events in detail as displayed on the screen.

Ms. Acuña talked about the 1450 Artesia SP/Site Plan Review – Standard permitted uses; Prohibited uses; Minimum lot size; Maximum building height, and Requirements; Minimum landscape; Parking; Parking dimensions (no compact spaces); Minimum landscape.

Ms. Acuña went over the Development Agreement, as follows:

- Guarantees the right to build the development as set forth in the Specific Plan for a period of 5 years with one 5-year extension available at the request of either party.
- Benefits to the City:
 - Exclusive access to a portion of the parking for periodic City Events
 - Monetary contribution of one million dollars
 - Local hiring/local buying program for construction

Ms. Acuña noted that the City has entered into a consultant agreement with Dudek to prepare the required Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and to provide a peer review of studies submitted by the applicant. She then informed everyone that Nicole Cobleigh, an Environmental Consultant from Dudek, had prepared a presentation to discuss the information.

Ms. Nicole Cobleigh reiterated that Dudek was hired by the City to conduct a peer review of the technical analysis provided by the applicant and prepared the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the document in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Ms. Cobleigh explained the process the City followed in preparing the EIR and discussed the findings within the report. She then noted that, just before the Planning Commission meeting, a comment letter was received from the Los Angeles County Unified School District (LAUSD) regarding the project. The letter expressed concerns about the potential impact on nearby school facilities. However, Ms. Cobleigh explained that the EIR had already addressed all the concerns raised in the letter and emphasized that no new or more severe environmental impacts would result from the project.

Director Tsujiuchi mentioned that staff had adequate time to thoroughly review the letter from LAUSD along with the consultants and that most of the concerns highlighted in the letter are being addressed in the documents that have been prepared and are required to be followed in compliance with federal, state, and local laws.

Vice-Chair Wright-Scherr asked whether there would be fencing around the construction site, considering that children would be going to school nearby. Ms. Cobleigh confirmed that there would be fencing around the project, and after the project is completed, there would also be fencing around the site.

Ms. Acuña added that the fencing requirements would be placed on the developer.

Ms. Acuña noted that all public comments were presented to the Planning Commission, and copies of these comments are available for the public and can be found at the back of the Council Chambers for those in attendance.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the City Council to:

- 1) Conduct the public hearing;
- 2) Receive testimony from the public;
- 3) Adopt Resolution No. PC 2-25 recommending to the City Council to certify the Final EIR and Adopt the Mitigation Measures and Statement Overwriting Considerations; and
- 4) Adopt Resolution No. PC 3-25 recommending to the City Council to Adopt 1450 Artesia Blvd Specific Plan, the site plan review and the development agreement.

Ms. Acuña informed the Commissioners that both the staff and the consultant were available to answer any questions, and the applicants had prepared a presentation for the commission.

Chair Henderson then asked if any of the Commissioners had questions for the staff, but no questions were asked at that time.

Brian Sorensen, the Applicant and Development Director for Insite, commended Ms. Nicole Cobleigh for effectively addressing the concerns raised by the Los Angeles School District. He also expressed his gratitude to Ms. Acuña for her presentation, noting that she did a commendable job in conveying the project's purpose.

Mr. Sorensen shared his excitement about the opportunity to present the proposed project, highlighting the work his team has accomplished over the past five years. He provided some background information about himself and the Insite Company, including his familiarity with the project site and his eagerness to initiate developments there. He displayed a map of Southern California, the Los Angeles region, showcasing various projects his team has completed in the last six years. Additionally, he shared historical context about the project site, detailing that it was used as cattle ground in the 1920s, transitioned to a brick manufacturing site that mined clay in the 1930s, and became a dumping area for petroleum byproducts in the 1940s, known as the Gardena Sumps.

Mr. Sorensen discussed the site's maintenance efforts and noted that it has been underutilized and underdeveloped for an extended period. He detailed the site's significant size, the designed building footprint limitations, the single access point from Artesia Blvd, and the railroad tracks that could not be crossed. He also mentioned concerns regarding contamination on much of the site along Artesia Blvd. He concluded by informing everyone that his team of experts was available to address any specific questions they might have.

Mr. Sorensen then introduced Mr. CJ Rogers, the Director of Design on the project. Mr. Rogers provided an overview of the project features and explained the significant constraints on development at the project site due to the site's contaminations. Mr. Rogers then presented renderings of the proposed design, highlighting the detailed work conducted by the design team.

Mr. Sorensen continued with his presentation, discussing the public benefits to the community; he emphasized the importance of not only creating an attractive development but also ensuring a safe cap and a long-term plan for the contamination on the site; he highlighted the potential increase in property tax; the school fees for the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), and the development agreement that was initiated in 2020. Additionally, he mentioned that there will be a community event space managed at the discretion of the city. He also displayed two additional renderings on the screen.

Mr. Sorensen expressed his appreciation to all the members of the Planning Commission and would like the opportunity to redevelop the subject property.

Chair Henderson thanked Mr. Sorensen and asked if any Commissioner had questions.

Chair Henderson asked that in the EIR it mentioned the "cap". He understood that the cap would consist of the parking lot and or other concrete surfaces. He expressed concern about the potential impact on the surrounding area if contaminants were removed, especially during the grading process, which requires leveling the ground. He asked how the contaminants would be contained and what the process for creating the cap would entail.

Mr. Sorensen responded that no hazardous materials would leave the site. He provided a detailed explanation of the grading process and how the cap would be constructed on top of the existing surfaces. Mr. Sorensen then turned to Mr. Jaydeep Purandare, the Environmental Consultant for the project, to provide further details. Mr. Purandare confirmed that the cap would be built over the existing materials. He elaborated on how the cap would function.

Chair Henderson inquired whether the cap and remediation efforts were already underway and if they were part of the land preparation. Mr. Purandare clarified that the remediation had not yet started and that Atlantic Richfield Company (ARC), would coordinate with the State's Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) to address this before the grading process commenced.

Vice-Chair Wright-Scherr asked if the completed cap would include vents to release gases. Mr. Purandare explained that a vent collection system features.

Commissioner Langley asked for clarification regarding the abutting properties to the eastern side of the project site, as illustrated on page 2-7 of Exhibit - 1450 Artesia Specific Plan. He asked for information on the ownership of that specific land and inquired about the trees to be planted there.

Mr. Sorensen turned to Mr. Ben Huber, the Civil Engineer overseeing the surveying, for additional information. Mr. Sorensen confirmed that there are other property owners between the railroad tracks and the subject site, and that the actual improvements extend onto their properties and some of the right-of-way directly in front of the property. He also mentioned that considerable thought was given to the landscape design. They created waterproof concrete planters to separate the landscaping and tree material from the cap, in accordance with DTSC requirements. Therefore, trees will not be planted directly into the cap.

Mr. Sorensen noted that any landscaping shown between the railroad tracks and the subject property could be conceptual, and there might be some overgrown weeds in that area. A rendering of the area was displayed on the screen to illustrate the areas Commissioner Langley referenced. Director Tsujiuchi added that the area in question is owned by LA County. Ms. Acuña displayed the initial site plan on the screen to provide a clearer understanding of the discussion. She identified the property line and the areas owned by LA County, after which Mr. Ben Huber approached the podium to explain the lines outlined in the site plan

Chair Henderson announced that the Public Hearing was open and asked if anyone wished to speak on this item.

Ms. Acuña informed everyone that there were two public speakers wanting to speak on the item.

PUBLIC SPEAKERS:

- 1) Jayson Baiz, a member of the Labor International Union of North America, shared some of the difficulties he has faced in life and expressed his appreciation for projects like this. He spoke in support of the project.
- 2) Kyle Patterson, a member of the Western States Carpenters, expressed his gratitude for projects like this and voiced his support for the project.

Chair Henderson announced the closure of the Public Hearing and thanked everyone for their comments and presentations.

Commissioner Kanhan expressed concerns about the parking availability for community events, uncertain about the expected size of these events. In response, Ms. Acuña explained that the site plan allocates approximately half of the parking area for city special events. Additionally, she noted that the other half of the parking lot would be designated for storage facility customers and employees during the events.

Commissioner Langley inquired about the height of the wall located on the east side next to the railroad tracks. Director Tsujiuchi asked if his concern was related to noise during events, noting that the ambient noise from Artesia and Normandie is quite loud and wouldn't typically be an issue, especially since it is below grade.

Chair Henderson requested confirmation that there would be some type of fencing along the perimeter on the east, south, and west sides. Mr. Sorensen confirmed that fencing would be installed around the property.

Commissioner Langley asked about traffic to and from the storage facility and whether it would only operate Monday through Friday. Mr. Sorensen explained that the facility would initially experience high foot traffic when it first opens, but this would decline shortly thereafter.

Commissioner Sherman asked about the parking area, specifically concerning how concrete would be laid over a capped site. He was curious if the concrete would go over the existing cap. Mr. Sorensen clarified that there is currently a temporary cap at the site, as required by the DTSC, to ensure human safety. The proposal includes constructing a better-engineered permanent cap.

MOTION: It was made by Vice-Chair Wright-Scherr and seconded by Commissioner Langley to Adopt Resolution No. PC 2-25 recommending to the City Council to certify the Final EIR and Adopt the Mitigation Measures and Statement Overwriting Considerations and Adopt Resolution No. PC 3-25 recommending to the City Council to Adopt 1450 Artesia Blvd Specific Plan, the site plan review and the development agreement:

The motion was passed by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Wright-Scherr, Langley, Sherman, Kanhan, and Henderson

Noes: None

Absent: None

Chair Henderson noted for the record that a brief recess would be taken and shortly after resumed the meeting.

7. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Community Development Director, Greg Tsujiuchi announced upcoming city events.

- 1) Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Parade & Celebration, Saturday, February 22, 2025 from 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM.

Director Tsujiuchi asked if any of the Commissioners were interested in participating in the parade. Ms. Acuña informed everyone that applications for Vice-Chair Wright-Scherr and Commissioner Kanhan were forwarded to the Recreation Department.

- 2) Bollywood Candlelight Dinner, Thursday, February 27, 2025.

8. PLANNING & ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

- 1) COMMISSIONER LANGLEY – He inquired whether the Planning Commission could request LA County to clean up the land south of the 1450 Artesia Project area.

Director Tsujiuchi stated that he would inform the developer to remove all property left behind if it has not already been done. He also mentioned that a request can be made to the Flood Control District.

- 2) COMMISSIONER KANHAN – No items to report.
- 3) COMMISSIONER SHERMAN – No items to report.
- 4) VICE-CHAR WRIGHT-SCHERR – No items to report.
- 5) CHAIR HENDERSON – No items to report.

9. **ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Henderson adjourned the meeting at 8:42 PM.

APPROVED:



DERYLL HENDERSON, CHAIR
Planning and Environmental Quality Commission

Respectfully submitted,

By: 

GREG TSUJIUCHI, SECRETARY
Planning and Environmental Quality Commission