

MINUTES
Regular PEQC Meeting of the
Planning and Environmental Quality Commission
Tuesday, April 1, 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, April 1, 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 7:00 PM.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Stephen Langley led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

Present: 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; Deputy City Attorney Rosemary Koo; and Planning Assistant Kevin La.

Chair Deryl Henderson was away on an excused absence.

4. ELECTIONS

1. Election of Chair
2. Election of Vice-Chair

Commissioner Langley made a motion to postpone the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair to a future Planning Commission meeting with a full quorum.

MOTION: It was made by Commissioner Langley and seconded by Vice-Chair Wright-Scherr to Postpone the Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair to a future Planning Commission meeting with a full quorum:

The motion was passed by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Langley, Wright-Scherr, Sherman, and Kanhan
Noes: None
Absent: Henderson

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

5.A March 4, 2025

MOTION: It was made by Commissioner Langley and seconded by Commissioner Sherman to approve the minutes of the meeting on March 4, 2025:

The motion was passed by the following roll call vote:

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

Noes: None

Absent: Henderson

5.B March 18, 2025

MOTION: It was made by Commissioner Kanhan and seconded by Commissioner Langley to approve the minutes of the meeting on March 18, 2025:

The motion was passed by the following roll call vote:

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

Noes: None

Absent: Henderson

6. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Vice-Chair Wright-Scherr asked if there were any comments from the public. Planning Assistant Kevin La noted for the record that no member of the public wished to speak to the Planning Commission at this time.

7. OTHER MATTERS

7.A FIRST EXTENSION OF TIME REQUEST FOR CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT #9-23, SITE PLAN REVIEW #5-23, AND VARIANCE #1-23

A request for a six-month extension for Conditional Use Permit #9-23, Site Plan Review #5-23, and Variance #1-23, for the construction and the use of a new public utility facility by the Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts in the General Commercial (C-3) zone within the City.

LOCATION: 1919, 1923, 1931 W. Artesia Boulevard; APNs: 4094-007-903, 906, 905

APPLICANT: Los Angeles County Sanitation District No. 5

Director of Community Development Greg Tsujiuchi and Deputy City Attorney Rosemary Koo were present and available to answer any questions.

Community Development Manager Amanda Acuña presented the Staff Report and informed the Commissioners of the six-month extension request by the Los Angeles County Sanitation District for the entitlements issued by the Planning Commission back in May 2024 for the site located at 1919 - 1931 W. Artesia Boulevard in the (C- 3) zone, as displayed on the screen.

Ms. Acuña proceeded to inform the Commission about the request under Conditional Use Permit #9-23, Site Plan Review #5-23, and Variance #1-23, for the demolition of the existing facility by the Los Angeles County Sanitation District and for the construction of a new facility.

Ms. Acuña displayed the approved entitlements from May 21, 2024, by the Planning Commission.

Conditional Use Permit #9-23

To allow for the relocation of a public utility facility by the Los Angeles County Sanitation District, within the C-3 zone.

Site Plan Review #5-23

The construction of a new 4,000 square foot building with a height of 35-feet, perimeter fencing and related mechanical and electrical equipment's.

Variance #1-23

Variance requests from minimum landscape setback, increase in fence height within front yard setback, and variance on roof-top equipment screening.

Ms. Acuña stated that, as conditioned by the Planning Commission, the Conditions of Approval for the Entitlements Approved called for the utilization within a 12-month period from the date of approval, unless an extension would be granted in accordance with the applicable municipal code sections.

Ms. Acuña stated that on March 13, 2025, the applicant submitted the first request for a six-month extension for all three entitlements.

Ms. Acuña noted that the Gardena Municipal Code calls for the Planning Commission's authority to grant up to two extensions of time up to six months each for both a conditional use permit and variance. The Director holds the authority to grant similar extensions of time for a site plan review. She also noted that, as all the entitlements approved for the project were by the Planning Commission, the requests for the extensions are being brought back to the Commission for an extension request.

Ms. Acuña stated that the Planning Commission is being asked to review and consider a six-month extension for Conditional Use Permit #9-23, Site Plan Review #5-23, and Variance #1-23, for the 0.54-acre site located at 1919, 1923, and 1931 W. Artesia Boulevard.

Ms. Acuña informed the Commission that the applicant was present and available to answer any questions.

Project Engineer Nan Harold from the LA County Sanitation District introduced herself and announced that they are requesting a six-month extension for the use of the Conditional Use Permit. She went on to explain their bidding process, mentioning that the contract was awarded in November. She shared details about the contractors' submittals, which included a traffic control plan for Gardena and Torrance. This plan is currently under review by the Gardena Public Works department for approval. Ms. Harold also outlined the contractors' responsibilities and requirements for the project, as specified in their contract agreement, which is the basis for the extension request.

Commissioner Langley inquired whether Ms. Harold represented Sanitation District No. 2 or No. 5. Ms. Harold confirmed that it was District No.2, because they have consolidated all their assets under District No.2.

Commissioner Sherman requested clarification on the term "potholing." Ms. Harold provided a detailed explanation.

MOTION: It was made by Commissioner Langley and seconded by Vice-Chair Wright-Scherr to Approve the First six-month extension for Conditional Use Permit #9-23, Site Plan Review #5-23, and Variance #1-23, for the site located at 1919, 1923, and 1931 W. Artesia Boulevard:

The motion was passed by the following roll call vote:

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

Noes: None

Absent: Henderson

7.B 2024 General Plan Annual Progress Report

An information report to the Planning Commission providing an overview of the City of Gardena's 2024 General Plan Annual Progress Report.

Director of Community Development Greg Tsujiuchi and Deputy City Attorney Rosemary Koo were present and available to answer any questions.

Community Development Manager Amanda Acuña shared an annual report that provides an overview of the City's efforts in implementing its goals and policies outlined in the General Plan—the City's Comprehensive Plan. She noted that the report was prepared, presented, and sent to the City Council as required by state law.

Ms. Acuña informed the Commissioners that since the Planning Commission reviews many projects that involve various elements of the General Plan, including the Housing Element. The Housing Element outlines the city's plan for an eight-year period and is the only element within the General Plan that must be updated every eight years. Currently, the city is in the 6th cycle of the Housing Element, which covers the planning period from 2021 to 2029.

Ms. Acuña also stated that the prepared report is submitted to the state office for review, where the city is required to report the number of housing units that have been processed, approved, and completed within the specified time frame.

Ms. Acuña handed the presentation to Planning Assistant Kevin La, who provided an overview of the number of Housing Element projects the City has approved to date.

Mr. La provided a recap of events from 2024, highlighting that an entitlement was approved for 300 units for the Picerne project on Western Avenue. He clarified that it is only an entitlement, meaning that it has not yet been submitted for building and safety permits, nor has it been completed; it solely reflects what the Commission or the City Council has approved. Mr. La also explained in detail the table breakdown that displayed the number of residential units that were entitled, permitted, and completed in 2024.

Ms. Acuña continued with the presentation and displayed a table detailing all the housing units that the city has developed during the Planning period from 2021 to 2029. She noted that the breakdown categorizes the units according to the different income levels assigned to the city under its Regional Housing Need Assessment (RHNA). Ms. Acuña stated that this information is crucial for the report submitted to the state to demonstrate how many units the city is constructing. The units counted towards these numbers are based on the number of building permits issued. She emphasized that in the previous table, the middle column represents the permitted units, which contribute to the city's RHNA totals. Since 2021, and including the new 189 units permitted last year, the city has a total of 966 permitted units to date. By her account, the city was allocated a total of 5,735 new units for the entire Planning period, of which 966 units have received permits.

Ms. Acuña informed the Commissioners that the report has been prepared and officially submitted to the State's Department. She clarified that the report is intended for informational purposes. Ms. Acuña acknowledged that many of these projects come before the Planning Commission, and discussions often revolve around RHNA numbers and new allocations. She wanted to ensure that the Commission is well-informed about the numbers being reported to the state.

Vice-Chair Wright-Scherr inquired if we are technically on track with the state. Ms. Acuña responded that there is no specific number that we have to hit every year, but the city is compliant with the state requirements.

Commissioner Langley stated that we are primarily building above moderate-income housing. He inquired whether the Commission has the authority to reject a project solely because it consists entirely of above moderate units, stating a preference for developments that include low to very low moderate-income housing. He also requested the locations of the seven low-income projects mentioned in the report.

Ms. Acuña provided the locations of those projects, noting that the developments that have been presented to the city, which include some affordable units, were proposed under the State's Density Bonus Program. This program offers incentives to encourage the inclusion of affordable units.

Ms. Acuña informed Commissioner Langley that he was describing an inclusionary housing ordinance, which requires the city to include a certain number of affordable units. She mentioned that a report had been conducted a few years ago to assess the feasibility of this within the city's Housing Element. However, the report was pending the outcome of other projects and involved certain fees for new housing units. She mentioned that if that type of ordinance were in place, we would stop any housing development. The city currently does not have that type of ordinance in place.

Commissioner Langley responded that without proper incentives, we will continue to see an increase in the construction of above-moderate housing. He questioned whether the Commission has the authority to declare that there is already enough above-moderate housing in the City of Gardena.

Director of Community Development Greg Tsujiuchi clarified that it depends on the specific project. If a development meets the required standards, it won't come to the Commission for approval; these are considered "by-right" projects. Developers build in accordance with the density allowed for that particular parcel. However, if a developer seeks an entitlement—meaning they want to convert a commercial property to residential or exceed the standard allowances—they may require a development agreement or a conditional use permit. In such cases, the Commission can impose conditions on the project. But for by-right projects, the Commission has no authority to intervene since the market dictates it. Developers cannot be forced to take a financial loss; otherwise they simply won't build.

Vice-Chair Wright-Scherr asked how many developers are proposing projects and if they can request a specific percentage of affordable housing units, allowing developers to compete for the property.

Director Tsujiuchi clarified that the city does not have control over the land. The property is owned by someone else, and any negotiations for its acquisition will be between the developers and the property owner.

Commissioner Langley expressed concern that the number of low to very low-income units being unrealistic. Director Tsujiuchi agreed and provided a detailed explanation.

Vice-Chair Wright-Scherr inquired if the State can set a number of units, although we may not be required to meet it. Director Tsujiuchi responded with relevant information, and Commissioner Langley contributed his insights on the matter.

Commissioner Kanhan stated that everything depends on the market. When developers come to the neighborhoods, they purchase the property, and the cost of the land influences the price of the houses they are building.

Commissioner Langley then asked if there are any trends indicating that fewer developers want to build at this time or if there is less property available.

There was a brief conversation with the Commissioners, Director Tsujiuchi, and Ms. Acuña regarding Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in their neighborhoods.

Vice-Chair Wright-Scherr asked a specific question about the requirements for ADUs. Mr. La responded that ADUs must have their own sanitation facilities and kitchens. He noted that only Junior Accessory Dwelling Units (JADUs) can share a sanitation facility because they are attached to the main house.

8. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Community Development Director, Greg Tsujiuchi announced upcoming city events.

- 1) Hoppin Bunny Breakfast, Saturday, April 19, 2025; 8:30 AM – 11:30 AM at the Nakaoka Community Center.
- 2) EggStravaganza Bonanza, Saturday, April 19, 2025; Egg Hunt begins at 11:00 AM at Rowley Park.
- 3) Cinco De Mayo Parade & Festivities, Saturday, May 3, 2025. Parade starts at 10:00 AM on Gardena Blvd.

Ms. Acuña reminded the Commissioners that staff had sent an email asking if they were interested in participating in the parade. They should fill out the application and submit it to the Recreation Department for consideration.

9. PLANNING & ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

- 1) COMMISSIONER LANGLEY – No items to report.
- 2) COMMISSIONER KANHAN – No items to report.
- 3) COMMISSIONER SHERMAN – No items to report.
- 4) VICE-CHAIR WRIGHT-SCHERR – No items to report.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Vice-Chair Wright-Scherr adjourned the meeting at 7:35 PM.

APPROVED:



DERYL HENDERSON, CHAIR
Planning and Environmental Quality Commission

Respectfully submitted,

By: 

GREG TSUJIUCHI, SECRETARY
Planning and Environmental Quality Commission