

August 25, 2010

Cecilia Brown, Chair
County of Santa Barbara Planning Commission
123 E. Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Re: Comments Regarding Los Alamos Community Plan

Dear Planning Commission,

Thank you so much for continuing the review of the Los Alamos Community Plan (LACP) until October 13, 2010. This will provide staff time to respond to your comments and provide suggestions to fine tune the LACP.

It was made clear at the last Planning Commission hearing that I do not live in Los Alamos. I have however, been involved with land use planning in Los Alamos for 30 years as a county planner in the 1980's and as a land use consultant on almost every project in Los Alamos for the last 20 years. I participated in the 1994 LACP for three years and have been an active participant with this LACP. I believe strongly that the best planning is done when all comments are considered and there is consistency within the plan.

These comments were provided throughout the three years of this Community Plan process but were not addressed. My intensions are not to make more work for staff or disregard the LAPAC's work.. As one of the few consultants that will use this document and advise landowners in the future on how to develop in Los Alamos, I must in good faith, provide on the public record my comments and concerns about this plan.

Now that we are at the public hearing stage of this Community Plan it is critical that every Goal, Policy, Action and Dev, Std be considered as legal provisions that must be adhered to by the landowners, developers, county staff and the decision makers. Once adopted, they cannot be changed easily. These words mean a lot to the future of Los Alamos and should be review with the goal of making it easier to improve Bell Street and not hamper these infill buildings with excessive and costly requirements.

I agree with staff and LAPAC members that all efforts should be made to encourage the development and redevelopment of the Bell Street corridor and that is the focus of my review.

My comments are based on the July 2010 version of the LACP and also follow up with my comment letter in the EIR on the points that were not addressed in that letter. I will also make suggestions on the form based code that will assure that it actually will work in the future.

Page iii	Please correct name to read David Tate, Former Vice Chair.
Page 2	The LACSD also does the street lights and maintains the small Ferrini park in the center of town.
Figure 2	The green and red boundary lines are hard to read and would be lost in making a copy of this aerial photo. The boundary lines should be made much thicker and made to stand out. Use a better color like white and yellow. Figure 2 in the old LACP plan was much better.
Table 1	This table artificially calculated worst case build out of LACP however; it did not acknowledge that the historical buildout from 1994 until now was 20-30% less than the zoning allowed and in some cases much less. It also over estimates development on Bell Street that are in the flood way and flood plain. It is hard to imagine that 288 apartment units would be built in Los Alamos when only 250 residential units were built over the last 15 years total.
Figure 6	The affordable housing overlay on Lomito de Oro and the other project should be removed because these two projects were not built with the overlay standards of 8 units per acre just DR-4.6 units per acre. The record should be correct.
Figure 7	Redundant same as Figure 6. Please delete.
Policy LU-LA-1.1	This policy should be amended to either state that Los Alamos will not be expanded for the next 10 years or that the 104 acre property to the north east between Bell Street and 101 may be considered for inclusion in the Los Alamos Community Plan and the Los Alamos Community Service District based on the future development of the property. To require another full update of the community plan would be a waste of county resources because items 3 and 4 would be reviewed as part of a future project on this site. I recommend deletion of items 1 and 2 of this policy. They no longer apply.
Action LUR-LA-1.1.1 and 1.1.2	Both of these action items will be completed upon approval of the LACP and should either be deleted, archived in the back of the document like the OCP, or the text changed to state that this has been completed as part of the approval. It is no longer an action item because it is done.
DS LUR-La 2.2.1	This 100 foot setback could substantially impact the development of these two properties. The reference to 100 feet should be deleted.
Policy LUR-LA-3.1	This policy should be deleted or note that it does not apply to the Bell Street corridor if a proposed mixed use project will remove the unit.
Policy LUR-LA.3.2	Delete or archive as completed with the approval of this LACP.
Pol LUR-LA-3.3	This policy is inconsistent with itself in that any of the mobile home or trailer units that would be lost in the flood plain area would most likely not be allowed to be replaced in the flood plain and flood way. See Figure 6.
Goal LUC-LA-2	This goal is redundant and should be deleted.
LUC-LA-2.1	New commercial mixed use development. Add this wording.
LUC-LA-2.2	Redundant. Please delete or archive.
LUC-LA-2.3	This policy should be placed under Goal LUR-LA-1.

LUC-LA-2.4	This policy should be referring to Action CIRC-1.2.1.
Page 49	Correctly list high school as Santa Maria Joint Union High School District.
Policy Serv-LA-I.1	Redundant same as LU-LA-1.2. Please delete or achieve.
Pol. Serv-LA-1.3	This should be an action item and the last phrase should be deleted as it repeats what are currently development impact fees. There are no standards in-lieu fees for infrastructure unless staff is proposing to create an in lieu fee for the Flood Control improvements in Bell Street..
Action-CIRC-LA-1.2.2	This is not a LACP issue. It is a county wide issue and should not be in this document.
Policy CIRC-LA-1.2 and Policy LA-1.2	These two policies should be combined. The county standard is LOS C and if any of the roads approach that standard, they should be restudied or reclassified. Of course it is hard to imagine that Los Alamos would ever hit LOS C based on the full build out of Los Alamos as indicated in the EIR.
CIRC-LA-1.5 ...	The phrase “and should incorporate permeable paving to the extent feasible” should include “as approved by County Public Works Department and ADA standards.” It is a county sidewalk and they have to maintain them over the long term.
Action CIRC – LA-1.5.1	This action item should be deleted in that the only pedestrian corridors are sidewalks along the streets and the path along San Antonio Creek (if this is part of this plan) there is nothing else to plan for. Already included in Action CIRC-LA.1.2.3.
DS CIRC-LA-1.6.1 and act.CIRC-LA-1.6.2 and CIRC –LA-1.2.1	Both of these parking policies are inadequate in dealing with the full build out of Los Alamos. Either the infrastructure works and there is adequate parking or the mixed use standard needs to be reduced so that there is a direct relationship with future parking in the commercial core. There should not be deferred for a parking study, this plan should cover all issues to be successful.
Policy CIRC – LA-1.7	This policy says the same thing as CIRC-LA-1.2. They should be merged into one policy with the realization that even with full build out these policies will never be triggered based on the EIR Traffic Section.
Policy CIRC LA-2.1 and Policy CIRC-LA-2.2, Action CIRC-LA-2.2.3	All of these policies should be deleted or archived in that this town has a grid pattern and pedestrian and bikes will be either on the sidewalks or in the street or along the creek. There are no other options and there is no need to study this more. Most o these were cut and paste from other Community Plan and should be deleted and save the county some money.
Action CIRC-LA-2.2.4	This action item is a county wide policy that already exists in the Circulation Element and Measure A funds and should not be solely in the Los Alamos Community Plan. Please delete or archive.
Fire Policies	Except for the last two items all of these policies are county actions and should include dollar amounts to these items. The county CIP has already allocated several million dollars for the fire station. This amount should be noted here.
Action PRT-LA-1.1.2	This is the exact same policy as the 1994 plan. Why not have this plan establish the trail at this time instead of deferring for another twenty years. Every other community plan had a trail plan with it. Also, there are a number of policies in this plan that refer to the trail along San Antonio creek so either it is planned for or not. If not, delete all of the other related policies in this plan.
Police Policies	These are all county policy and action items and should be included in the

	County CIP and should show how much this will cost the county in this plan.
Policy RRC-LA.1.1	This is a standard development condition and should not be as a community plan policy. Please delete this policy.
Action RRC-LA.1.1.1	The county is now collecting recycled materials throughout Los Alamos which they were not doing in 1994 so this action item should be deleted or archived.
Policy SCH-LA-1.2 and 1.3	Both of these policies are standard development conditions and should not be listed as policies in the LACP. They should be Dev Std or deleted.
Figure 10	This figure is the same as Figure 2 and needs to have better line colors and weight. Also it is very hard to read the labeling of the sewer plant and the water tanks. It would really help if you gray scaled the area outside of the community plan boundary.
Sewer	
Water	
Air Quality	This section is such over kill that there is no way that a small in-fill project can meet all of these fifteen items or provisions. Remember that most of Bell Street development will be ministerial and so the Air Quality section should be broken down into what will be applied to ministerial permits versus discretionary permits. (LA.1.4.2, LA 1.4.6, LA 1.4.7, and others refer to discretionary permits). Please make it very clear what mixed use ministerial projects are required to do.
Policy AO-LA 1.2	With the approval of this plan, the LACP is consistent with the Clean Air Plan. Please either delete or archive this policy.
Policy AQ-LA-1.3	This check list of policies does not apply to Los Alamos. Most of these should be deleted because the Mixed Use Ordinance by itself will meet these provisions. This list is a cut and paste list from policies from Los Angeles and does not apply to small infill projects in the small town of Los Alamos.
Dev Std. AQ-La-1.1.1 AQ-LA-1.1.2 AQ-LA-1.4.2 AQ-LA-1.4.3 AQ-LA-1.4.6	These are all standard planning APCD conditions and should not be legislated. If these standard conditions change over the years, is Los Alamos stuck meeting these?
AQ-La-1.4.4 AQ-LA-1.4.5	This 500 foot line should be placed on a map in this document so that the landowners within this area know that they will be impacted by these standards. Is it measured from the center line or the curb line or the right-of-way line?????
AQ-LA-1.4.8	Delete reference to single family lots and the BAR should not have any review of solar panels. It should be allowed by right if they lay flat on the roof.
AQ-LA-1.4.9	Again this is over kill for Los Alamos and will assure that nothing gets built. This policy should be deleted because the Mixed Use Ordinance is consistent with greenhouse gas reduction programs and all this other stuff is just clutter. Bullet two: why would anyone be required to do this on an individual basis? Does it apply to ministerial infill permits? In bullet three there is a sentence that refers to CC&R's and planting of turf. What does this mean?
AQ-LA-1.4.10	Again does this apply to ministerial or discretionary permits? Also please change the word to LEED's "qualified" not LEED's certified. Recent pricing on a LEED's certification can cost between \$20,000 to \$30,000 and much more depending on the size of the building. Most infill projects will not be able to afford this added cost.

AQ-LA-1.5	This section should be deleted until the county has an overall GHG program. or rewrite this to state that future discretionary projects will be consistent with GHG policies when the county has an approved program..
Biology	
Dev Std BIO – LA 1.1.1	How can there be setback from Calaveras Creek when it is almost completely built up except at the park? This policy should apply only to San Antonio Creek.
DS Bio LA-1.1.3	This should not apply to Calaveras Creek and should be deleted from San Antoine Creek if this is for the bike trail alignment.
Bio. LA 1.4.1	This should not apply to Calaveras Creek.
Bio-LA 1.5.1	There is no way that this Dev Standard could be applied to any tree in Los Alamos. If an oak tree is impacted, the county should be encouraging replanting of oaks at the park not on a commercial lot or this policy should be completely deleted along Bell Street. Are there any oak trees on the undeveloped lots along Bell Street?
BIO-LA-1.7	Did Parks Department agree to this policy? It seems very unsafe. Do they agree with the tree source or do they get their trees from anywhere in the county? Why can't development projects get their plants from Santa Maria or Santa Ynez Valley? This seems too specific and costly.
Bio-LA-1.7.1	Parks Department does not have this responsibility. Do they know that this policy is being proposed for them to do more work? What is the point?
Bio -LA-1.8.1	Please delete this policy. It has already been determined that the Bell Street corridor is the only area for major future development and there are no bio resources noted in the EIR for this area. Why subject additional studies if the work has already been done, unless you are focused on the few parcels on the east side of town.
BIO-LA-1.8.2	Please delete this policy for the Bell Street Corridor. It is very unlikely that there are any native grasslands in Los Alamos that meet the county density standard. This should be deleted.
DS FLD-LA-1.3.1	<p>There is a concern about how Flood Control will review these projects in the future and none of the policies stated here clarify the historical problem that has prevented commercial development in the Bell Street Corridor.</p> <p>In the past Flood Control has required that each new building either provide a basin on site or install storm pipe to take drainage to San Antonio Creek. There is no statement in these policies that Flood Control is waiving this requirement to encourage development on Bell Street. If this standard is not waived, then there is no point in the LACP because county staff did not address the number one issue that prevents development from happening in Los Alamos.</p> <p>If you read between the line of this Dev Std., every project has to put their own storm pipe down to San Antonio Creek and the costs are so expensive that nothing will be built again for the next 20 years.</p> <p>If they cannot pipe to San Antonio then each building on Bell Street will have to provide its own basin in the front of the building because it will need overland escape. This means that about 10 to 20% of each lot will not be</p>

	<p>able to be developed as shown in the Mixed Use Ordinance. That is why these lots have not been built on for the last 20 years. Staff has glossed over this issue and has stated that each building will have to work with Flood Control.</p> <p>This plan should have made it very clear how the flood control improvement were to be built and installed and hopefully an in lieu fee for each project to contribute to the capital project Without this pipeline plan and county leadership on this matter very little or nothing will be built on Bell Street.</p> <p>Also there is no direction on how the lots on the north side Bell Street beyond St Joseph's Street will be built because it is clearly indicated that this area is in the flood way and flood plain of San Antonio Creek. This document would have more credibility if the county standards for these lots are clearly spelled out. In most cases the buildings would have to be raised 2 feet above the 100 year flood plain elevation and in some of the lots will never be built on because they are in the flood way. These blocks of the township should be deleted from the total number of units and square footage.</p> <p>In conclusion the flood control section needs a lot of work and clear direction on how the drainage and clean water standards are going to work on each of these small in-fill lots in Los Alamos. These flood control standards and requirements need to be in the Mixed Use Ordinance so that it is clear what will be required for each lot. Also, clean water conditions will reduce development potential of each of these lots. These flood control constrains were one of the first items raised at the community meetings and has not yet been resolved. Planning staff does not understand how detrimental these standards are to development in Los Alamos.</p>
Figure 13	This figure is very hard to read in that the numbering in the aerial photo gets lost. It may be better to use the APN map in this section with numbering.
N-LA-1.1.1	Item A in this policy should be reworded to be a positive statement. Such as outdoor patios and porches shall be allowed along Bell Street to be compatible with the Bell Street Design Guidelines. It should be noted that at times the noise level may be greater than the county 65 dba level but these outdoor features are important to Los Alamos and can be exposed to higher noise levels at times. We should not have to spend time or money trying to prove something that the county already knows along Bell Street.
DS N-LA-1.1.3	Which parcels are these that they have three dev. stds. tied to them? The PC should know where they are located.
Ds VIS LA-1.2.3	<p>To require a 50 foot setback from 101 would result in a waste of developable land on the parcels along the freeway and a possible no man's land that will not be maintained. This is not the requirement in Santa Barbara or the Santa Ynez Valley. Do the landowners along 101 know about this policy? Exhibit C in the staff report shows the parcel that this 50 foot setback would apply to. There would be very little lot left to build on if this provision is left in this document. Maybe that is the point.</p> <p>Item B talks about not blocking views but how can you not block views if there is going to be a building? It would be better to state that buildings shall not be</p>

	<p>higher than two stories or 26 feet along this section of hwy. Then there is no subjective review and everyone knows what could happen.</p>
	<p>CM-LA Mixed Use Ordinance.</p>
	<p>In the uses category of the CM-LA ordinance there are a couple of corrections that need to be made. The following items should be listed as permitted:</p> <p>Parks: Playgrounds-Public Ferrini Park Trails for hiking and riding (if San Antonio Creek Trail is adopted)</p> <p>Most of the items listed in Residential should be permitted uses</p> <p>Retail permitted uses to be added: Building and landscaping-indoor Building and landscaping outdoor Farm supply and feed store Restaurant ,café etc in office building Service station Visitor serving commercial</p> <p>Services: Medical clinic should be permitted use Charitable or philanthropic is permitted use (Men’s Club) Car wash should be permitted with service station</p> <p>Infrastructure: Drainage channel/storm pipe should be permitted in Los Alamos Flood Control projects Parking facilities (park and ride) permitted Road why would this need a CUP??? Should be permitted Utility services should be permitted??? What about solar panels? They should be permitted based on AQ policies</p>
<p>Table 2-18 Table 2-19</p>	<p>I have read this chart many times and still do not understand what it means. Why would anyone want to create a donut hole in the middle of a commercial project? The driveway access and parking area eats up so much space and it is all hardscape that it makes for a wasted project design. This also does not take into consideration the drainage, trash, and fire access issues to serve these separated buildings.</p> <p>There has been no consideration to the cost of building two separate buildings on a small 50 by 200 lot.</p> <p>Sections F and G need to be rewritten to allow for parking and services at the rear of these lots along the through street frontage. Without this correction there will just be undeveloped areas in the back of these lots.</p> <p>I agree with the front and side yard setbacks.</p>
	<p>Architectural Features and Colonnades in sections H and K should be clearly noted that they will have to get either CalTrans or County permits to encroach</p>

	on the right of way. Even if they are cantilevered over the right of way.
	i.b. Additions to existing structure should not be forced to meet these new setback standards that do not make sense. They should be able to use the old setbacks if it assures that the development and renovation is going to happen.
	Based on the setback in section F there is no such thing as a rear yard building type because it requires building in the back. Based on this description the parking can be in the rear of the lot so there is an inconsistency in the ordinance. See section G. I agree with this description and recommend that sections F and G be deleted completely and that sections J, K L, and M remain. These sections are the true form based code standards. The setback sections are too confusing and very limiting to the design of these future buildings. These make sense and can be clearly used by landowners, architects and decision makers for the finding of consistency with the ordinance.
	Design guidelines
	The design guidelines for Los Alamos are very thorough and detailed. But they will be much more successful and even better with the deletion of pages 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, and 26. By deleting these conflicting setback provisions and doughnut hole parking provisions. There will be more area for development , better and easier location for some parking in the back of the buildings, better location for trash enclosure that actually can be picked up and also have the ability to have area for Clean Water standards and LID's that are not listed anywhere in these guidelines. There is nothing about the lots on Bell Street that will need to be raise three to five feet above the Flood Plain and Floodway. And how they will be reviewed by staff.

In closing, I think that I have hit on most of the requested changes and edits. My comments are focused on creating a community plan that will serve as a guide to the community and future development with a hope that something will actually get built in the next twenty years.

Sincerely,



Laurie Tamura, AICP
Principal Planner

Cc: Michael Cooney, First District Commissioner
Marell Brooks, Third District Commissioner
Joe Valencia, Fourth District Commissioner
Dan Blough, Fifth District Commissioner
Vicki Parker, Deputy Director, Long Range Planning
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