



WEST LA SAWTELLE NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

WWW.WESTLASAWTELLE.ORG // plum@westlasawtelle.org

MEMBERS: DAVID SWARTZ (CHAIR) // JAY HANDAL (VICE CHAIR) // VIC PACHECO // RON BEN-YEHUDA // LORI QUON // STEPHEN KIAZYK // JAY ROSS (SECRETARY)

PLANNING & LAND USE MANAGEMENT AND **BOARD OF DIRECTORS JOINT** **REGULAR MEETING**

AGENDA

TUES., APRIL 15, 2025

7:00 pm

ONLINE <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81811639087>

OR TELEPHONE (669) 900-6833 or (833) 548-0282.

MEETING ID: 818 1163 9087 (and press #)

Si requiere servicios de traducción, avisar al Concejo Vecinal 3 días de trabajo (72 horas) antes del evento. Contacte J. Altuner, Secretaria, james@westlasawtelle.org para avisar al Concejo Vecinal.

Persons wishing to address the Board must dial (833) 548-0282, enter 824 7476 9234 and press # to join the meeting. When prompted by the presiding officer, dial *9 or use the Raise Hand option, to address the Board on any agenda item. Comments on agenda items will be heard only when the respective item is being considered.

Comments on matters not on the agenda that are within the Board's jurisdiction will be heard during the General Public Comment period. Please note that under the Brown Act, the Board is prevented from acting on a matter that you bring to its attention during the General Public Comment period; however, the issue raised by a member of the public may become the subject of a future Board meeting. Public comment is a maximum of 90 seconds per speaker.

All items on the agenda are subject to discussion, possible action and filing of a Community Impact Statement to the Office of the City Clerk.

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL.

a. Link for meeting documents (agenda, minutes, plans, applications): <https://drive.google.com/>

II. MINUTES: Approval of Feb. 2024 meeting. Mar. meeting cancelled.

III. GOVERNMENT/AGENCY REPORTS: CD11 – Craig Bullock, Jeff Khau, Planning Deputy.

IV. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT: Non-agenda items (maximum of 90 seconds).

V. EX PARTE COMMUNICATIONS:

- a. 2215 S. Wellesley Ave. apartments, representative Gary Benjamin, Alchemy Planning: David Swartz, Jay Ross - PLUM scheduling and project information.
- b. 1770 Sawtelle Blvd. mixed-use, architect Shahab Ghods, Plus Architects: David Swartz, Jay Ross - PLUM scheduling and project information.
- c. 11568 Pico Blvd. mixed-use, architect Shahab Ghods, Plus Architects: David Swartz, Jay Ross - PLUM scheduling and project information.

VI. ADMINISTRATIVE

- a. All members must complete DONE's Cornerstone Planning 101 training.

VII. NEW / CONTINUING BUSINESS

- a. 2215 S. Wellesley Ave. apartment: Demolition of a 1-story house, and new construction of a 100% affordable apartment of 81 units and 7 stories. No parking is provided. 35,532 sf of building area. 4,087 sf of open space. 21 trees. Zone: R3 (EC).
 - i. NC Status: Motion may be considered for revised design
 - 1. At Feb. meeting, NC Board approved PLUM's motion to oppose the project, because:
 - 2. The area's infrastructure does not support this high-density project, and city should not approve large projects like this until it verifies that infrastructure can handle it, and
 - 3. The design is orders of magnitude taller and larger in massing than all the houses on the block (7 stories vs. 1-2 stories), and has no buffers nor transitional height to mitigate the extremely large massing (except along the front of Wellesley Ave.).
 - 4. We believe that 100% affordable ED1 projects can be designed with better balance, and at least some parking and greenery.
 - 5. We are concerned that the Palisades fire demonstrates this insufficient water, fire and mobility infrastructure.
 - 6. We request a revised design that provides some parking, some buffers to the neighboring houses, better and more varied design of the facade, more open space for the 140 expected tenants, and several trees planted in deep soil with enough room for roots and the branches to expand and grow to full maturity (12x12 ft notches in buildings or front and rear yards).
 - 7. We request that residents of this project be prohibited from receiving parking permits, because the tenants are not supposed to own cars.
 - ii. File: ADM-2024-7367-DB-VHCA-RED1.
 - iii. Plans/application: <https://planning.lacity.gov/pdiscaseinfo/search/case/ADM-2024-7367-DB-VHCA-RED1> (nothing posted as of Dec. 2).
 - iv. Entitlement request: Administrative ED1.
 - v. Base incentives (3):
 - 1. Unlimited density
 - 2. Reduced parking (0 spaces)
 - 3. Height increase of 33 ft (3 stories).
 - vi. Off-Menu incentives (5 - setbacks are combined):
 - 1. 50% reduction in open space to 4,087 sf (8,175 sf required).
 - 2. 10.3% reduction in unit sizes to 314 sf for co-living units (350 sf required).
 - 3. 33.4% reduction in common open space dimension to 10 ft (15 ft dimension required).
 - 4. Setbacks:
 - a. 50% north side yard reduction to 5 ft (10 ft required).
 - b. 50% south side yard reduction to 5 ft (10 ft required).

- c. 46.7% rear yard reduction to 8 ft (15 ft required).
 - 5.50% reduction of bicycle parking to 32 spaces (from 63 spaces).
 - vii. Waiver of Development standards:
 - 1. 86.6% FAR increase to 5.61 (maximum of 3.0).
 - viii. Planner: Kyle Winston.
 - ix. Applicant: Lindan Shiao.
 - x. Representative: Gary Benjamin, Alchemy Planning; Kevin Tsai, Kevin Tsai Architects
- b. Motion: Support for Single-Staircase Apartments proposal (CF #25-0247):
 - i. Revision to LAMC to allow smaller 3-6-story apartments to have only 1 staircase, instead of 2 (multiple fire escape routes if one is blocked) but with additional fire protection design. Allows more public/open air space for trees/sidewalks than larger 2-staircase buildings.
- c. Motion: Undeveloped properties and vacant buildings - solutions to prevent properties from languishing as public nuisances, and improve appearance and create uses while in limbo prior to construction or redevelopment.
 - i. West Los Angeles Sawtelle has faced increasing problems with the premature demolition of buildings without immediate redevelopment plans. The resulting vacant lots remain unmaintained, pose safety hazards, and harm the neighborhood's character and livability. We request an amendment to the current demolition permit requirements to ensure that buildings remain in use until redevelopment is imminent, with financial and construction commitments in place.
 - ii. Problem Statement: In recent years, our neighborhood has seen a significant number of demolitions where buildings are removed, but new development is delayed due to economic downturns, financing issues, or changes in ownership. The impact of these vacant lots includes:

1. Blight and Neighborhood Decline

- o Empty lots become overgrown with weeds and are often used for illegal dumping, leading to unsightly conditions and a decrease in property values.
- o The presence of long-term vacant lots gives an impression of stagnation and neglect, discouraging community engagement and investment.

2. Public Safety and Health Hazards

- o Unmaintained lots attract pests, including rodents and mosquitoes, increasing health risks to residents.
- o Coyotes and other wildlife have been reported taking shelter in vacant lots, posing a risk to residents and pets.
- o Some lots become gathering places for illicit activities, further diminishing the safety and security of the community.

3. Loss of Affordable and Usable Space

- o Many of the demolished buildings were rental properties, small businesses, or community-serving spaces that contributed to the neighborhood's economy and culture.
- o By allowing demolition before financing and construction plans are finalized, we accelerate the displacement of residents and businesses without assurance of timely replacements.

Proposed Solution To address these issues, we propose the following amendments to the current demolition policies:

1. Require Proof of Financing and Construction Commitment

- o Developers and property owners must demonstrate secured funding and a detailed construction timeline before a demolition permit is granted.
- o The project must have received all necessary entitlements, permits, and approvals to proceed with construction immediately after demolition.

2. Mandatory Temporary Occupancy

- o If a building is structurally sound, property owners should be required to keep it occupied until demolition is necessary for construction to begin.
- o Short-term leasing for residential, commercial, or community use should be incentivized to maintain active, productive use of the property.

3. Strict Maintenance Requirements for Vacant Lots

- o If demolition does occur without immediate construction, property owners must implement strict maintenance measures, including fencing, landscaping, and regular upkeep to prevent hazards and blight.
- o Violations should be subject to fines and potential liens on the property to enforce compliance.

Precedents and Benefits Similar policies have been successfully implemented in other urban areas to prevent long-term land vacancy. Cities like San Francisco and Chicago have strengthened demolition regulations to ensure continued use of properties, leading to more sustainable growth and fewer negative community impacts. Adopting such measures in West Los Angeles Sawtelle would:

- Preserve neighborhood character and vibrancy by preventing unnecessary displacement.
- Ensure responsible and timely redevelopment, reducing speculative demolitions.
- Protect public safety and environmental conditions by eliminating hazards associated with vacant lots.

d. Report: Status of city's power, water, fire and mobility infrastructure, and if it has enough capacity for increase in housing density in West LA neighborhood (JH).

e. Motion: Add the following fire-prevention elements to NC's Design Guidelines.

- i. Status: DS to review with design experts and report back:
- ii. City to purchase lots to create fire breaks (with no structures), which can double as public parklets.
- iii. Roofs shall use concrete tiles/shingles, instead of asphalt shingles (made with oil).
- iv. Walls with standard stucco shall be prohibited in fire-prone areas.
- v. Walls with stucco shall have fiberglass filament mixed in (extend time to resist heat).
- vi. Juncture in eaves shall use fire-proof materials (entry point for embers).
- vii. Walls in fire-prone areas shall resist fire for 4 hours (tilt-up concrete panels, full dimension 4-inch bricks (as opposed to thin brick veneer), 3-inch-thick stone walls, and metal).

f. Motion: The PLUM Committee recommends that the Board support the larger goals and efforts in the Landscape and Site Design Ordinance created by the Department of Planning. We request further that the City adopt more key recommendations from the Los Angeles Community Forest Advisory Committee and other professionals.

- i. Status: Mobility and Environmental Committee to consider:
- ii. By revising Section 3.5 Biodiversity and Habitat, the recently updated Landscape and Site Design Ordinance will be improved to create a greener, lush, healthier environment for residents and wildlife.
- iii. Palms NC passed a similar resolution in Jan. 2025: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1P-MFE1CM_BCLWMF_Y_Z2Whu2M_LcpLP/view
- iv. Mandatory Trees in Open Space Areas
 1. This effort to incentivize tree canopy is a good start. However, by requiring applicants to install trees that come in nursery stock sizes of 24-inch-box and up, the City unintentionally incentivizes the planting of non-native species that do not support biodiversity in the local ecosystem because most native species currently are only available in the slightly smaller 15-gallon standard nursery size. Generally, within five years, there is no difference in the canopy size of trees planted from a 24-inch-box or a 15-gallon container, because the smaller trees will acclimate to the site more quickly and grow faster. This section should be revised to allow for 15-gallon container trees to qualify, especially if the species are native to the California Floristic Province.

v. Native Plants

1. The ordinance requests 75% native plants for landscaping, but the current biodiversity crisis has pollinator and habitat loss at critical levels. Applicants should not be allowed to plant 25% non-native plants during this crisis. Plants that are not planted to create food for human consumption or a recreational playing field should be 100% native to the California Floristic Province.

vi. Greening in the Public Realm

1. In the vines section, there is inconsistency between the order of the scientific and common names of several species on the list.
2. The list should read: Island Morning Glory (*Calystegia macrostegia*), Virgin's Bower (*Clematis ligusticifolia*), Chaparral Honeysuckle (*Lonicera interrupta*), Pink Honeysuckle (*Lonicera hispidula*), California Blackberry (*Rubus*

- ursinus), Chaparral Clematis (*Clematis lasiantha*)
3. The list then continues with four non-native species we object to incentivizing that should be removed from the list. If the City needs additional native vining options to offer, we suggest: Dutchman's Pipe, California Grape (*Vitis californica*), Desert Wild Grape (*Vitis girdiana*), Chaparral False Bindweed (*Calystegia occidentalis*)

VIII. OLD / CONTINUING BUSINESS

- a. Discussion of PLUM Resolution (Jan. 2023) to recommend approval of new Sidewalk/ Pedestrian Plan for 2 blocks of Sawtelle Blvd. between Olympic and LaGrange.
 - i. Outreach to neighborhood groups.
 - ii. Board has not placed on Agenda.

IX. FUTURE PROJECTS

- a. 11568 Pico Blvd. mixed-use: Demolition of 2 1-story commercial buildings. New construction of 6-story, 85-ft mixed-use with 65 units (6 very low- & 2 moderate-income), 85 parking spaces in subterranean garage, and 69,263 sf of building area (6,500 sf retail). Parcel is 0.35 ac. Zone is C2-1VL (35 ft height). 93% lot coverage. No setbacks in front or rear. 20,000 cy of soil export > 2,000 truck trips. No trees in soil, all landscaping in planters and pots.
 - i. NC status: Motions may be considered. Project may be on hold because of high costs of DWP construction.
 - ii. File: CPC-650-DB-VHCA. ENV-2025-651-EAF.
 - iii. Plans/application: <https://planning.lacity.gov/pdiscaseinfo/search/casenumbr/CPC-2025-650-DB-VHCA>
 - iv. Entitlement request: Planning Commission (off-menu incentives).
 1. Off-menu incentive: Increase FAR from 1.5 to 4.73.
 2. Off-menu incentive: Reduce front setback from 5 ft to 0 ft.
 3. Off-menu incentive: Increase height from 45 ft/ 3 stories to 85 ft/ 6 stories.
 4. Waiver of development standards: Reduce rear setback from 5 ft to 0 ft.
 5. Waiver of development standards: Increase lot coverage from 85% to 93%.
 - v. Planner: Connie Chauv (213) 978- 0016 - Connie.Chauv@LACity.org.
 - vi. Applicant: Soheyla and Pouram Naimi,
 - vii. Representative: Dan Ahadian, Nur Development. Shahab Ghods, Plus Architects.

X. OFFICE HOURS

XI. ANNOUNCEMENTS

XII. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT: Non-agenda items (maximum of 90 seconds).

XIII. ADJOURNMENT.

Procedures: Multiple motions for an Item may be posted. The committee will vote on which one(s) it supports.

PUBLIC POSTING OF AGENDAS – Neighborhood Council agendas are posted for public review as follows:

- Stoner Park: 1645 Stoner Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90025
- www.WestLASawtele.org
- You can also receive our agendas via email by subscribing to L.A. City's Early Notification System at <https://www.lacity.org/subscriptions>

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(213) 978-1551 or NCsupport@lacity.org

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Notice to Paid Representatives - If you are compensated to monitor, attend, or speak at this meeting, City law may require you to register as a lobbyist and report your activity. See Los Angeles Municipal Code Section 48.01 et seq. More information is available at ethics.lacity.org/lobbying. For assistance, please contact the Ethics Commission at (213) 978-1960 or ethics.commission@lacity.org

Public Access of Records - In compliance with Government Code 54957.5, non-exempt writings that are distributed to a majority of the board in advance of a meeting may be viewed at the NC Office at 1645 Corinth Ave., at website: www.WestLASawtelle.org, online at <https://tinyurl.com/WLASNC-Board>, or at the meeting. If you want a copy of any record on the agenda, contact Ron Ben-Yahuda at: RonB@WestLASawtelle.org.

Public Records Act Requests: Requests shall be forwarded to DONE and the City Attorney for guidance in determining compliance with the request. The Board will respond to the person or agency requesting the records in writing, within 10 days of receipt of the request, informing them that their request has been received and forwarded to DONE and the City Attorney to determine compliance.

Link: <https://recordsrequest.lacity.org/>

DONE link: <https://empowerla.org/public-records-requests/>

Reconsideration and Grievance Process - For information on the NC's process for board action reconsideration, stakeholder grievance policy, or any other procedural matters related to this Council, please consult the NC Bylaws. The Bylaws are available at our Board meetings and our website www.WestLASawtelle.org