

LA COUNTY PARKING + HOUSING AFFORDABILITY PROJECT
CORE COMMUNITY VOICES SESSION—SUPERVISOR DISTRICT 5 FOCUS—MINUTES

FEBRUARY 15, 2022—9:00 TO 10:30 AM

Meeting Attendees

Alyson Stewart, Senior Planner, LA County

Diane Marcussen, Altadena Town Council

Dorothy Wong, Active Transportation Professional, Altadena

Connie Chung, Deputy Director, Advanced Planning Division, LA County

Ines Chessum, Crescenta Valley Town Council

Meeting Hosts

Mallory Baker, Walker Consultants

Steffen Turoff, Walker Consultants

Drew Willsey, Walker Consultants

1. Participant Introductions
2. Ms. Baker gave a PowerPoint presentation, which included a review of the following topics:
 - a. Project background/purpose
 - b. Project scope and schedule
 - c. Project objectives
 - d. Core Community Voices
 - e. Parking and Housing Questionnaire
 - f. On-the-ground data collection
 - g. Upcoming next steps
3. Question and Answer
 - a. Ms. Marcussen asked the following questions and made the following comments:
 - i. Was the chair of land use committee for a long time. What I see when we do projects is: here's the code surrounding this restaurant, the restaurant has x number of tables, therefore it should have x number of parking spaces. Then there's a nursing home that's supposed to have x number of parking spaces. Then, there's a synagogue that's supposed to have x number of spaces. But for all those uses, if you don't have the parking, you can just park on street. Projects shouldn't be put into a bubble. Need to look at the big picture of what's next to what. A lot of LA County doesn't have overnight parking on street by code. With parking enforcement, we could have a town without overnight parking, which might make things "much nicer." When we end up with a lot of cars on street all of a sudden, the supervisor hears about it. Parking needs to be looked at in terms of the bigger, broader picture.
 - ii. Mr. Turoff responded: Right now there are parking requirements that are county-wide. When you talk about different land uses that are supposed to have x number of spaces,

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those codes typically haven't been updated in a long time. One thing we're looking at is gathering data to say how much parking is really needed, area by area. The requirement is only meant to say what is needed. The premise is that, in LA County, with the high housing prices, we know to some extent that residential units are not being built because of parking requirements. The question is, how much isn't being built because of those requirements. If research shows that the requirements are keeping 1000's of units off the market that otherwise could be built, then it's a problem. We know that some types of residential units typically have less than 1 car per unit. Those units don't need 1.5 or 2 parking spaces per unit.

- iii. Developers can always ask for an exception or a variance. Unless you put in your rules that you can't go above and beyond the requirement, that's part of the bigger picture. For large lower-income housing project, maybe people won't need a car at first, but may need a car later when they're more successful. The county tends to look at things in boxes.
 - iv. Many ADUs are not even being used as low-income housing.
 - v. Ms. Baker responded: We want to clarify a couple things. Some themes are emerging, such as contextuality. Need to understand the context of the larger community. Changes to residential parking may impact other uses and other things. In some communities, there is great transit access, density. In others, there are mostly single-family homes with poor transit access. This project and plan can't be all things and can't address everything. But we do want to make sure that we hear and understand these issues. It's really important that we understand parking challenges, mode share and mode split in different communities, and conditions in terms of how land use regulations are impacted.
 - vi. Then you need to have a section on dependency. Don't say you're not going to take away our parking when you are. If some areas can have more people parking on street, then it might be taking away my street parking.
 - vii. Mr. Turoff responded: Even parking on hiking trails has become contentious in LA County. In many cases, it's not what we do but how we do it. I've been doing [parking planning] for 20 issues focused solely on parking issues and how they relate to other issues. Storage [in parking garages] has become a big issue. We worked on ordinance in San Diego County and changed it so that multi-family parking requirements didn't facilitate or perpetuate people storing things in garages instead of cars. Even with changes like sharing more parking, storage is an issue. We did a large study in East LA and we saw bad parking congestion. Don't want to incentivize people not to use their garages for parking cars. Parking isn't intended to store stuff. Also, we know that all parking can't be shared. But reserved spaces can sit empty, so we do need to look at shared parking opportunities.
 - viii. We have lots of businesses in Altadena that don't have the parking they should have. Spillover parking from businesses can affect property values. I have struggled with regional planning and with everyone getting exceptions or variances for parking.
- b. Ms. Wong asked the following questions and made the following comments:
- i. Can't say enough that one thing that's missing is an active transportation plan. We need to be looking and accelerating active transportation planning. The county tried to apply for grant but was told that the grant won't be competitive in Altadena. If we do anything, we need to accelerate thinking about how we're moving around so that not

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everyone isn't driving. Metro/micro program is very successful. We need to make it safe for people to move around by foot or scooter. Change is important as housing increases. Haven't yet implemented LA County Pedestrian Plan. If more housing is coming, including ADUs, we need to have actual plans, not just be reliant on pilot programs. Need to think holistically. We have a lot of hard-working people in Altadena. Really need to pay attention to transportation.

- c. Ms. Chessum asked the following questions and made the following comments:
 - i. To make housing costs more affordable, you need to take the cost of parking out of multi-family housing. But if we're looking at changing parking, then what are the options? The first option is that people park on street. But where there's multi-family housing, on-street parking is impossible and "streets become nightmare." Another option is alternative transportation. But that's a challenge too. If you take away my parking, I'm still not going to walk 10 blocks to access transit. In LA, you need a car. Ground-floor level commercial isn't allowed sometimes, but it is critical in activating commercial zones and roadways. It also allows people to do business without needing to drive as much. Can we share parking? Ground floor commercial or office can potentially be shared with residential above. There are many empty lots at night that are unavailable and chained off; you can't park there overnight. We need to approach problems and solutions as a community.
 - ii. Can the county subsidize parking? We subsidize housing. With more people working from home, why do we need to have separate parking for work and living? Maybe one vehicle can be owned and shared between two household residents.

4. Mural Board Activity

- a. Ms. Baker provided an overview of the activity and instructions on how to use the Mural platform, a digital engagement tool where respondents provide written comments that can be seen by others in the group.
- b. Feedback was requested related to four topics:
 - i. "To me, success for new residential parking requirements looks like..."
 - ii. "It might surprise you, but success does not look like..."
 - iii. "A concern I have about creating new requirements is..."
 - iv. "Something that would help address my concern might be..."
- c. The following questions and comments were provided for each topic area:
 - i. To me, success for new residential parking requirements looks like...
 1. "Creative partnerships and incentives, including with other communities."
 2. "Can we use this to discover/elevate other planning efforts around transportation and mobility?"
 3. "Sharing parking between complimentary uses."
 4. Integration/consideration of local transportation networks. Micro access for communities?"
 5. "Integrated approach that reflects current community concerns regarding parking maybe encourages/accelerates other planning efforts like the Active Transportation Plan."
 - ii. It might surprise you, but success does not look like...
 1. No comments or questions were provided for this quadrant.

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- iii. A concern I have about creating new requirements is...
 - 1. “Community safety – e.g. -, traffic safety for pedestrians.”
 - 2. “Pay attention to the impacts of variances and allowances for people to go against the plan/intent of the plan.”
 - 3. “Need to look at the bigger picture – e.g., other planning efforts going on beyond just the Housing Element.”
- iv. Something that would help address my concern might be...
 - 1. “Show and demonstrate how different planning efforts are working together.”
 - 2. “Present information in a way that is positive and demonstrates the mutual benefit.”
- d. Ms. Baker then asked if attendees could elaborate on the questions and comments that they provided for each of the four top areas.
- e. What does success look like?
 - i. Ms. Wong: Success, to me, is an integration of community concerns regarding parking. It’s how parking can be integrated with an active transportation plan. I’ve become multi-modal in my 50s and it’s changed my life. Don’t have to rely on car for the whole trip. There are solutions out there, and this can help us discover solutions. Also, I like the idea of sharing parking with businesses or even churches. Churches have massive lots only used on Sundays, for instance. Finally, incentivizing parking. Many people park work trucks on-street because there’s nowhere else for them to park work trucks.
 - ii. Ms. Marcussen: We have a problem with [unincorporated] areas bordering Pasadena because Pasadena has no overnight parking ordinance. So people go to those areas to park overnight.
 - iii. Ms. Wong: Agrees that that is a huge problem.
 - iv. Ms. Chessum: In my area, high schoolers can’t wait to have car. Most families have the ability to provide a car to their high schoolers. Also, there are hills. If we had network of local transportation, they might choose that instead, even if it ran only during school hours. We could maybe avoid so many high schoolers driving. Microtransit could become important for community access.
 - v. Ms. Marcussen: We need to remember that we’re trying to look at low-income housing here.
 - vi. Ms. Wong: [Success is] working on e-bikes and getting people out of cars and onto e-bikes. Also, it’s important to look at safety, such as along Foothill Blvd. We need to look at how to get e-bikes into the hands of those who otherwise might not be able to afford them.
 - vii. Ms. Baker: We can look at [TDM strategies] such as carshare or e-bikes as condition for granting administrative reductions for parking requirements. There are many creative ways to incentivize more transportation options.
- f. What are some fears and concerns?
 - i. Ms. Wong: Safety. Things such as dark streets can create traffic safety issues. Crime isn’t huge in community, but more cars plus lack of sidewalks can be unsafe. There is a Greenway Bikeway Network plan in the works.
 - ii. Ms. Marcussen: Not easy to get sidewalks installed in some areas due to property.

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- iii. Ms. Chessum: Sidewalks are always an issue, and [the issue is] not easy to solve.
 - iv. Ms. Marcussen: [A concern is creating] new requirements without looking at the bigger picture. Are we looking at the West San Gabriel Valley Plan? Also, the housing plan will designate where and how much more housing can be built. Then, in two years, the county will require zoning changes to mixed use so that residential could be added if property owners want it.
 - v. Ms. Baker: We can take this critique and incorporate it into our approach. To help address concerns, we need to understand other planning efforts and how they interact and relate to our planning process.
 - vi. Ms. Marcussen: Areas are drastically different. In my area, a bike plan was put in place a long time ago. They redesignated [some right of way along some streets] for bikes, but it wasn't well thought out in some places. Seems like there are a lot of stakeholders that are all trying to do different things. There are a whole lot of things going on that aren't talking to each other.
 - vii. Ms. Baker: One thing we can use to assuage concerns is to demonstrate how all those planning efforts are integrated. Our team needs to go back to county to talk about that.
 - viii. Ms. Marcussen: Consultants and planners have to agree that they're not going to do exceptions. We can't say, here are the rules, but if you want to develop without parking, here's how you do it. If every developer can go to regional planning for an exception, then it defeats the purpose. Can't just pay money in exchange for exceptions. Policies and requirements, whatever they turn out to be, need to be firm.
 - ix. Ms. Baker: The County needs to have a vision that all plans are working towards.
 - x. Ms. Marcussen: I'm not saying don't allow exceptions necessarily, but don't let them be overwhelming.
- g. Before the meeting concluded at 10: 34 AM PST, Ms. Chessum had the following final questions and comments:
- i. Moving forward, we need to focus on and community how this can become a positive? How are we making the situation better? How do we look at parking, so we don't see it as a negative, but we see it as a benefit?