

NOTICE OF INTENT TO ADOPT A NEGATIVE DECLARATION



CITY OF LAGUNA BEACH
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Pursuant to the State of California Public Resources Code and the "Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970" as amended to date, this is to advise you that the City of Laguna Beach has prepared an Initial Study for the following project.

PROJECT: Local Coastal Program Amendment 19-4482 and Zoning Ordinance Amendment 19-4483 to adopt a Downtown Specific Plan update.

LOCATION/ADDRESS: Downtown Specific Plan

APPLICATION NUMBERS: Local Coastal Program Amendment 19-4482 and Zoning Ordinance Amendment 19-4483

APN(s): Downtown Specific Plan Area

GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION AND ZONING: Central Business District (CBD); Land Use Districts: CBD-1 Resident Serving, CBD-2 Downtown Commercial, CBD Visitor Commercial, CBD Office, CBD Multiple-Family Residential, CBD Public Parks, Civic Art District, and CBD Central Bluffs.

PROJECT APPLICANT: City of Laguna Beach, Community Development Department, Laguna Beach, CA 92651 (949) 497-0712

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT: The purpose of the Downtown Specific Plan (DSP) is to provide policy direction and implementation measures that serve to guide growth, design and development standards in Downtown Laguna Beach, with the primary objective to preserve and enhance the unique character of the Downtown. The DSP coordinates and is consistent with the City's General Plan. The DSP provides a framework for policies, urban design and land use to be considered and acted upon in a comprehensive, coordinated manner for a range of topics related to the Downtown. The DSP focuses on topics such as village character; identity as an art colony; downtown commercial uses; parking, circulation and public transit; municipal services; hazard planning; view preservation; housing; and special planning areas that include the Central Bluffs District and proposed Arts District.

The proposed project consists of the adoption and implementation of the DSP, Local Coastal Program and Zoning Ordinance Amendments. The updated Specific Plan is a policy- and regulatory-level document that does not include any development proposals; and therefore, it would not directly result in physical environmental effects.

The proposed Specific Plan contains recommendations for various pedestrian and streetscape improvements and opportunity sites that are based on an updated urban design framework and revised urban design guidelines. These recommendations are intended to be used as guidance for the City in implementing these types of improvements at potential opportunity sites as well as undetermined sites throughout the plan area and would not entitle or fund any specific projects. Therefore, although the DSP identifies recommended improvements for specific locations, the recommendations for those sites are not binding on the City and thus would not result in any direct physical changes to the environment. Any future projects that would be implemented consistent with the proposed Specific Plan would require further design and engineering and would be subject to further CEQA review of project-level impacts by the City, and Planning Commission and/or City Council review and approval of required entitlements.

This Specific Plan is the most current update, culminating from a multi-year process that included extensive public outreach and comprehensive review of urban design and land use issues. The revisions to the goals, including the specific policies, guidelines and standards within the document support an overall vision for the future of the Downtown. The key updates to the DSP include:

- Allowing for changes in permitting requirements to occur on an as needed basis in order to incentivize or limit certain land uses in the downtown.
- Fostering opportunities and promoting diversity in housing type and affordability as part of mixed-use development and conversion of existing second-story buildings to help fulfill the need for downtown housing with access to services and transportation.

- Providing for greater flexibility in development standards such as increased building height and simplified parking requirements to meet future needs and growth.
- Establishing an urban design framework that identifies key opportunity sites and provides recommendations on pedestrian and streetscape improvements, such as pedestrian crossings, improved alleyways, and public parklets to make the area more vibrant, walkable and welcoming for residents and visitors.
- Revising urban design guidelines to provide further direction on elements such as site design, architecture and open space to property owners, developers, designers, City staff and appointed and elected officials involved in review of proposed development projects.
- Rebranding of the former Civic Art District as the Arts District to encourage a greater focus on art and cultural uses and to nurture a culture of creativity.
- Updating flexible criteria and development standards for proposed planned integrated developments that incorporate public amenities and/or benefits in special planning areas such as the Arts District and Central Bluffs District.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING: The City of Laguna Beach is located along the Pacific Ocean, generally between Dana Point and Laguna Niguel to the southeast, Irvine to the north, and Newport Beach to the west. Laguna Beach's location between the ocean and the hillsides and canyons led to the current small-town residential community development pattern. Laguna Beach has remained primarily a residential community. Commercial areas are limited to small neighborhood serving and visitor-serving uses dispersed throughout the City, and with a central downtown City center area.

The Downtown Specific Plan area comprises the City's central business district, and is generally framed by Laguna Canyon Frontage Road, the Pacific Ocean, Legion Street and Cliff Drive. The Plan also encompasses the area called the "Central Bluffs" situated on the south side of South Coast Highway between Laguna Avenue and Sleepy Hollow Lane. In addition, the Plan includes the entrance to the village from Laguna Canyon Road, an area that includes many of the civic and art institutions in town.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: From October 21, 2019 to November 20, 2019, the public and all affected agencies are hereby invited to review the Negative Declaration and Initial Study, and submit written comments. Such comments may be submitted prior to or during the public hearing(s).

PUBLIC HEARING DATE: Planning Commission Meeting; 6:00 p.m. – November 20, 2019; 505 Forest Avenue, Laguna Beach, CA; City Council Chambers

DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY: The Negative Declaration and Initial Study and other supporting environmental documents are available for public review on the City website at www.lagunabeachcity.net and at the City of Laguna Beach, Community Development Department, located at 505 Forest Avenue, City Hall. A Final Draft DSP Update Document is available on the project webpage at: http://www.lagunabeachcity.net/cityhall/cd/planning/mjrplanginitv/downtown_specific_plan_amendment/default.htm. Please note our City Hall hours: Mon – Thurs: 7:30am – 5:30pm; every other Friday: 7:30am – 4:30pm; closed alternating Fridays.

DECLARATION

Based on the Initial Study dated October 21, 2019, staff has determined:

- X This project does not have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment; substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species; cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels; threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community; substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of an endangered rare or threatened species; or eliminate important examples of major periods of California history or prehistory.
- X This project does not have the potential to achieve short-term environmental goals to the disadvantage of long-term environmental goals.
- X This project does not have possible environmental effects that are individually limited but cumulatively considerable. ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of the individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of current projects and the effects of probable future projects.)
- X This project will not have environmental effects that will cause substantial adverse effect on human beings, either directly or indirectly.

The aforementioned findings are contingent upon the following mitigation measures (if indicated) which have been incorporated into this project:

See attached mitigation measures. None required.

NEGATIVE DECLARATION PREPARED BY

City of Laguna Beach
505 Forest Avenue
Laguna Beach, CA 92651

Contact: Wendy Jung Title: Senior Planner
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Signature Wendy Jung Date 10/21/19

COMMENTS DUE BY November 20, 2019

The attached Negative Declaration dated October 21, 2019 is being referred to your agency/City department for review and comment. Your written comments should be received prior to, or be submitted verbally during the Public Hearing. If you have any questions, please contact the Contact Person above.

ATTACHMENTS

Negative Declaration and Initial Study

SUPPORTING ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS: See Source References within the attached Initial Study.