

Venice Auxiliary Pumping Plant (VAPP)

(submitted to LUPC 7/24/24)

MOTION: The Venice Neighborhood Council opposes CPC-2024-2010-GPA-ZC-CU2-SPPC--allowing the City of Los Angeles to obtain a General Plan Amendment (GPA) and Zone Change (ZC) from RW2-1 to Public Facilities at 133 Hurricane St., a Project Review (SPPC), and a Conditional Use for the construction, use, and maintenance of a public parking area in a residential zone (CU2) for the empty lots located at 128 Hurricane St/3913 Esplanade--unless LA Public Works (LAPW) materially and in good faith addresses the community's serious issues with this project, including but not limited to:

1. Conformance to the certified Venice LUP (Policies I.A.5, I.C.1, I.C.6, and I.D.1);
2. Adherence to court-mandated ESHA protections in the surrounding lagoon area;
3. Mitigation of EIR issues related to loss of species and habitat, groundwater impact, and potentially significant methane gas release;
4. Mitigation of "significant and unavoidable" issues including ground-borne vibration, which could result in residential building damage, and construction noise that exceeds LA CEQA Thresholds guidelines;
5. Improvement of inadequate emergency access during construction activities;
6. Change to five day/week construction instead of proposed six days/week;
7. Elimination of the proposed parking lot at 128 Hurricane St. for which parking requirements can be fulfilled via restricted street parking around the current Venice Pumping Plant (VPP), a savings of at least \$2.5 million to the city;
8. Modification of project design so that it is compatible with its residentially zoned neighborhood;
9. Protection of residential properties from dirt, dust and other construction impacts;
10. Upgrade of deficient maintenance plan for both the new and existing facility.

DESCRIPTION: LAPW has proposed the Venice Auxiliary Pumping Plant (VAPP) at 128 Hurricane St and an associated parking lot for employees and limited public use at 133 Hurricane St, MDR. The residents acknowledge the VAPP is considered critical infrastructure. During the final city approval process, the City Planning Commission instructed LAPW to meet with the community regarding these important issues. However, LAPW never meaningfully addressed any concerns regarding the impact of this project.

Specifically, the proposed facility does not conform to the Venice LUP as the use conflicts with: (1) Policy 1.A.5 that seeks to preserve and protect stable multi-family neighborhoods, (2) Policy I.C.1 that states that the scale and design of such facilities must be compatible with adjacent and neighboring uses, (3) Policy 1.C.6 that states that hazardous industrial uses shall not be located adjacent to residential areas and, (4) Policy 1.D.1 that states that the only permitted development adjacent to the canal and lagoon shall be habitat restoration, single family homes and parks.

The plan also does not meet established Public Benefit standards including no 10' landscaped, irrigated buffer along all property lines and is based on performance standards applicable to projects on a major or secondary highway, not a residential street.

Environmentally, the Ballona Lagoon and Grand Canal are recognized as an Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area (ESHA) which legally cannot be disturbed. Section 30240 of the Coastal Act requires that ESHA be protected and that development adjacent to ESHA be designed to prevent impacts that significantly degrade the ESHA. Previous court cases have found that dredging and use of any heavy equipment in the lagoon is not allowed, but which is part of the city's plan for this project.

In addition, the project EIR and addendum were both instigated and certified internally by Public Works without any public outreach for the addendum or arms-length analysis by a recognized independent party, resulting in a final mitigation plan insufficient to address the anticipated damage to the Grand Canal and Ballona Lagoon. This includes loss of species and habitat, groundwater impact and potentially significant methane gas release. Based on a request by Public Works for a "regional solution," the community put forth a plan to address at least some of these issues, Phase Two of the Grand Canal Restoration Plan. Phase One had previously been completed by the city. Phase Two was approved but not executed. However, Public Works never expressed any interest to engage in a productive dialogue towards a meaningful outcome.

The EIR also identified "significant and unavoidable" issues that will materially impact resident quality-of-life for the multi-year duration of construction including but not limited to (1) ground-borne vibration levels which could result in residential building damage, (2) noise levels that exceed construction noise criteria provided by the LA CEQA Thresholds Guidelines and (3) inadequate emergency access during construction activities.

The parking lot element of the VAPP plan proposes a dual use employee/limited public lot at 128 Hurricane St to include benches and public art. There is very little community support for this facility. It will create safety issues as a magnet for homeless individuals given the easy access into the lot as well as unnecessary traffic congestion on Hurricane St, especially during heavy beach use periods. The community has proposed an alternative solution addressing employee and public parking needs without development of this site at a savings of at least \$2.5M to the city. Further, these funds can be used to address many of the issues raised in this motion. It is also important to note the parking lot was not included in the original presentations to the community and VNC.

Additionally, there have not been any modifications to community requests for (1) five day/week construction vs proposed six days/week, (2) a project design that was never adequately presented to the community and does not fit within its residentially-zoned neighborhood, (3) an ongoing plan to protect residential properties from dirt, dust and other construction impacts and (4) an appropriate, sustainable maintenance plan for both the new and existing facility.

A letter will be sent to Council Member Traci Park, City Council President Paul Krekorian, DONE General Manager Carmen Chang, City Attorney Hydee Feldstein Soto, all Public Works board members, City Engineer (Head of Bureau of Engineering) and Coastal Commission Staff.

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