



City Council Agenda Report
November 6, 2024

TO: Honorable City Council

FROM: Jesus M. Gomez, City Manager

BY: Alex Hamilton, Interim Community Development Director
Gena Guisar, AICP, Contract Planner

SUBJECT: **RESOLUTION NO. 24-58 - FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT STATE CLEARING HOUSE NO. 2022070103 / RESOLUTION NO. 24-56 - GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 2022-01 (2024-01) / RESOLUTION NO. 24-57 - ZONE CHANGE NO. 2022-01 (2024-02) / ORDINANCE NO. 24-1754 - ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT NO. 2022-02 (2024-04) TO ESTABLISH SPECIFIC PLAN AREA NO. 17, THE "NORWALK TRANSIT VILLAGE SPECIFIC PLAN"**

Background:

The following staff report supplements the staff report for the City Council public hearing held on October 15, 2024, in consideration of the Norwalk Transit Village Specific Plan ("Specific Plan"). The October 15, 2024, staff report and attachments can be found on the City's website at the following link: <https://norwalk.primegov.com/Portal/Meeting?meetingTemplateId=4405> (refer to Public Hearing Item No. 11).

Prior to the October 15, 2024 hearing, the City's website experienced technical difficulties. To allow adequate time for all members of the public to review the agenda packet and provide public comment, the City Council opened the public hearing on October 15, considered the staff report, asked questions, received public comments (written and verbal), then voted to continue the public hearing to the next Regular City Council meeting this evening.

There were 26 people who spoke during the public comment period of the hearing on October 15, 2024. Of the speakers, five commented in favor of the project and twenty-one were opposed. Staff also received 27 comments via e-mail in opposition to the project.

Comments in support of the project referenced its overall benefits to the community and the City, including the redevelopment of a decaying site, the provision of needed housing, including

affordable housing, and the community-serving commercial component. Reasons for opposition included concerns with potential parking spillover into adjacent neighborhoods, Environmental Impact Report (EIR) considerations such as construction related noise and Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, affordable housing concerns, no documented commitment to local hire, and building height.

The public hearing will resume tonight to allow anyone an additional opportunity to provide comments on the project.

Discussion:

The following is a synopsis of substantive comments received during the public hearing and the City's responses.

Off-Street Parking

One commenter stated that they were uncertain if the proposed site design included adequate parking for the proposed Specific Plan area. The commenter expressed concern that residents of the Norwalk Manor Townhome community often park on the streets in their neighborhood and worried that residents of the Norwalk Transit Village project would do the same.

Response: A comprehensive parking study was completed for the project which confirmed adequate parking would be provided per the Specific Plan to accommodate the proposed mix of land uses on site. The project's site design incorporates an integrated mobility and parking strategy with narrow, multimodal streets and Class II and III bike lanes and bike parking. Off-street parking objectives aim to provide sufficient parking on-site while also encouraging transit use.

The proposed site plan includes dedicated off-street parking within garages for all residential uses, including parking garage structures positioned within the core of the multi-family developments. The parking design will allow the Norwalk Transit Village project to function as a self-contained development that addresses its parking requirements on-site. The Specific Plan's residential parking requirements by use, are listed as follows:

Use	Requirement
Market Rate Multifamily Apartments	1.75 spaces per unit
Affordable Multifamily Apartments	1.25 spaces per unit
Student Micro-unit	0.75 space per unit
Senior Unit	0.75 space per unit

Townhomes	2 spaces per unit
Residential Guest Parking	0.25 spaces per unit

The non-residential off-street parking requirement is designed to accommodate the parking demand on-site similar to the residential standards, as follows:

Use	Requirement
Non-residential in Planning Area 1	1 space/250 SF of Net Leasable Area (per NMC*)
Hotel	1 space/2 guest rooms; plus parking for any restaurant/retail uses as computed separately.
Electric Vehicle Charging	Per CALGreen

*Norwalk Municipal Code (NMC)

The Specific Plan proposes bicycle parking as follows:

Use	Requirement
Residential Short-Term	1 space per 10 units
Residential Long-Term	1 space per 3 units
Commercial Short-Term	1 per 1,000 SF
Commercial Long-Term	1 per 1,000 SF, but not less than 4 per building

Building Height

A commenter expressed concern that the proposed building heights would be too high and would block her view of the local mountains.

Response: The proposed Specific Plan allows heights up to 65 feet and five stories, however there is an approximate 96' separation area with landscaping, trees and a masonry wall that serves as a buffer between the single-family homes to the south and the multi-family buildings. Additionally, buildings in excess of four stories must include a minimum eight foot step back for the fifth story.

Planning Area No. 6, which abuts the entirety of the northern property line, has a height limit of 35' and three stories, which is similar in scale to the abutting townhome community. Planning Area 6 will also include a buffer area with landscaping, trees and a masonry wall.

Affordable Housing

Comments in this category included the statements that the provision for 40% affordable housing units was too much and the project should cater to Norwalk's middle class.

Response: The State Surplus Land Act (SLA) mandates that at least 40% of the project's residential units shall be affordable, of which 50% shall be affordable to very low-income households and the remaining 50% shall be affordable to households whose incomes are equal to or less than 75% of the maximum income of lower income households. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) describes the 2024 Area Median Income (AMI) as \$98,200 for a family of four. To provide perspective, a few examples of very low-income jobs that would qualify for HUD's AMI would be secretaries, truck drivers, medical assistants and paralegals. Lower income jobs would include teachers and those in manufacturing and construction trades.

As stated in the October 15 staff report, existing law authorized the Director of the State Department of General Services (DGS) to sell or lease the project site to the County of Los Angeles by January 1, 2015, at market value upon terms and conditions and subject to reservations and exceptions the DGS determined were in the best interests of the State, and, after January 1, 2015, authorizes the DGS to sell the property to any other party at market value through a competitive bid process.

Assembly Bill (AB) 518, which was enacted in 2020 and effective January 1, 2021, authorizes DGS, until January 1, 2025, to sell the property to the City of Norwalk at fair market value upon terms and conditions DGS determines are in the best interests of the State. The bill authorizes DGS, notwithstanding those provisions, to sell the property below fair market value for purposes of providing housing to persons and families of low or moderate income. After January 1, 2025, the bill authorizes DGS to dispose of the property in accordance with specified procedures and priorities otherwise applicable to the disposal of surplus property by DGS. The bill exempts the sale of the property from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Under the provisions of AB 518, which amended Government Code Section 11011.28, the City is pursuing the purchase of the project site from the State and proposes a Specific Plan and mixed-use development.

Environmental Impact Report

Two letters were received prior to the October 15, 2024 City Council hearing and included comments related to the EIR.

Response: The City's CEQA consultant, Michael Baker International (MBI) prepared response memos addressing these comment letters. The response memos to the letters are attached to this staff report as Attachment Nos. 5 and 6.

Commitment to Local Hiring

Multiple commentors stated a concern regarding no commitment to local hiring.

Response: The City, as the project proponent and applicant, will not build the project and is not in a position to directly negotiate with labor unions. The developer has reached out to several local trade union representatives who recently commented on the project to review their concerns. It should be noted that the Affordable Housing component (40% of all residential units) will require prevailing wage for construction workers.

Conclusion:

As the Public Hearing and City Council's consideration of the Norwalk Transit Village Specific Plan resumes this evening, it should be noted that the public comments received to date do not warrant a change in any of the analysis that were previously prepared in the EIR. City Council will continue to receive comments, ask questions, and discuss the proposed project prior to rendering a decision.

Recommended Action:

Staff recommends City Council:

- a. adopt Resolution No. 24-58, A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF NORWALK ADOPTING ENVIRONMENTAL FINDINGS PURSUANT TO THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT, CERTIFYING THE FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR SPECIFIC PLAN AREA NO. 17, THE "NORWALK TRANSIT VILLAGE SPECIFIC PLAN" (SCH #2022070103), APPROVING A MITIGATION MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRAM, AND ADOPTING A STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS;
- b. adopt Resolution No. 24-56, A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORWALK APPROVING GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 2022-01 (2024-01) ADDING A SPECIFIC PLAN AREA LAND USE DESIGNATION AND CHANGING THE CURRENT DESIGNATION FROM INSTITUTIONAL (I) TO SPECIFIC PLAN AREA NO. 17;
- c. adopt Resolution No. 24-57, A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORWALK APPROVING ZONE CHANGE NO. 2022-01 (2024-02) TO RE-ZONE THE PROPERTY LOCATED AT 12300 BLOOMFIELD AVENUE FROM INSTITUTIONAL (I) TO SPECIFIC PLAN AREA NO. 17; and
- d. introduce by title only Ordinance No. 24-1754, AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF NORWALK ADOPTING ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT NO. 2022-02 (2024-04) ESTABLISHING THE SPECIFIC PLAN AREA NO. 17, THE "NORWALK TRANSIT VILLAGE SPECIFIC PLAN", and schedule for adoption.

Attachments:

1. Resolution No. 24-58
2. Resolution No. 24-56
3. Resolution No. 24-57
4. Ordinance No. 24-1754
5. EIR Responses to Lozeau Drury Letter dated October 14, 2024
6. EIR Responses to Mitchell Tsai Letter dated October 15, 2024

**Item Nos. 5 and 6 are posted on the City's website at:*

<https://www.norwalk.org/city-hall/departments/community-development/planning/advanced-planning-projects/norwalk-transit-village>

and available in the Community Development Department.