



CITY OF GLENDALE, CALIFORNIA REPORT TO THE SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM

Report: Update on the Tropic Transit Oriented District (TOD) and Presentation of the Draft Tropic Design and Development Standards

1. Motion to receive report and provide direction on the proposed zoning text and map amendments for the Tropic Transit Oriented District (TOD)

COUNCIL ACTION

Item Type: Report Only

Approved for September 13, 2022 **calendar**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Planning staff is providing an update on the Tropic Transit Oriented District (TOD) and presenting the draft Tropic design and development standards for the area surrounding the Glendale Transit Center for Council's review. No changes are proposed to the current density limits, except for the Hospital TOD District, as previously directed by City Council. The proposed zoning includes objective design standards and graphics in a similar format to the Downtown Specific Plan. Staff is also proposing to modify certain parking standards in the Glendale Municipal Code for the new TOD zoning. Based on Council's comments, staff will proceed with finalizing the proposed zoning text and map amendments for the Tropic TOD Zoning Districts for future presentation to the Planning Commission and adoption by City Council.

COUNCIL PRIORITIES

Housing: The proposed Tropico TOD amendments and zoning standards are directly related to City Council's Housing Priority #7 regarding the adoption of the South Glendale Community Plan and associated zoning (Tropico, multi-family development standards).

RECOMMENDATION

Direct staff to proceed with finalizing the proposed Tropico TOD map and text amendments, subject to any comments that City Council may have.

BACKGROUND

The following report summarizes the history of the planning efforts for the Tropico area, as well as the currently proposed set of development and objective design standards for Council's review and comment.

Located in the southern most portion of the City and adjacent to Glendale Transit Center and the Los Angeles City / Atwater Village border, the Tropico area has always been defined by its proximity to high-quality transportation and a mix of industrial, commercial and a few residential uses. The area is bisected by San Fernando Road running north-west to south-east, and also by Central Avenue running north and south, and Los Feliz Avenue running east and west. Narrower side streets featuring smaller lots run perpendicular between San Fernando Road and Gardena Avenue, with West Cerritos Avenue terminating at the Glendale Transit Center.

Given the proximity to mass transit and unique mix of uses, the area has great potential for sustainable residential and commercial growth. Planning efforts for Tropico were spurred by a \$225,000 competitive grant that was awarded in 2012 by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) to better direct future development in the Tropico area. Work on the Tropico Center Plan (a neighborhood-level policy study) and the South Glendale Community Plan (SGCP) began in Fall of 2012 and spanned over five years of intensive research, preparation and public outreach. The Tropico Center Plan, prepared with contributions by Cityworks Design, Patricia Smith, AICP, ASLA, and Nelson/Nygaard Consulting, consisted of policies and recommendations to promote transit, and to support pedestrian-friendly and transit-oriented development, many of which were carried over into the SGCP. The policy-level Tropico Center Plan was adopted by City Council on July 18, 2018, as part of the South Glendale Community Plan hearing. During that same hearing, Council also: certified the Final EIR for the SGCP and adopted a statement of overriding considerations; adopted a motion directing staff to modify the South Glendale Community Plan that included maintaining the current densities of the existing SFMU, IMU-R, IMU, C1, C2 and C3 zones; and adopted a motion to initiate preparation of the new TOD mixed-use zoning for the Tropico TOD Center.

Hyperlink to SCGP Council Report: [City Council Staff Report for SGCP 06-31-2018](#)

Following Council's actions, a lawsuit was filed challenging the Final SGCP EIR; the trial court rejected the legal challenges and the Petitioner appealed. The Appellate Court hearing on the appeal is set for October 20, 2022 with a decision expected by no later

than January 20, 2023. Based on the City Council’s direction and grant requirements for the South Glendale Community Plan and Tropico TOD study area, Planning staff commenced work on the new Tropico TOD zoning. . In March 2020, Glendale was awarded a \$625,000 grant through the SB 2 Planning Grants Program application from the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD); HCD’s intent for the grant money was to assist in accelerating or streamlining the production of affordable housing, consistent with the state’s planning priorities.

In April 2020, Council voted to accept and appropriate the SB2 Planning Grant and at the same time also authorized an amendment to the professional services agreement with Crandall Arambula to assist with the grant’s initiatives - updates to the multi-family and mixed-use standards, and also the completion of the design and development standards for the Tropico Center Plan. It was intended that the multi-family and mixed-use standards would follow the substantial completion of the Tropico zoning standards.

This sequencing of work is due in part to the Tropico zoning establishing a framework and informing the development and refinement of other zoning standards. As such, staff anticipates completing the updates to the multi-family and mixed-use zoning as soon as possible based on feedback from City Council on the Tropico TOD development standards.

Note: While the current SB 2 grant funding expenditure deadline is December 31, 2022, the State is considering extending that deadline to December 31, 2023.

ANALYSIS

The draft Tropico TOD zoning presented to City Council for review and comment has been designed to adhere to Council’s direction for the TOD zoning based on the July 2018 SGCP hearing, while fitting within the existing Zoning Code structure as a new mixed use chapter and also incorporating objective design standards, including figures and graphics, similar to the DSP. This is a different approach than the existing Residential, Commercial and Mixed Use chapters in the Zoning Code that are narrative and do not use visuals.

New Chapter: GMC 30.16 Transit Oriented Development Districts

The new zoning standards will be added as a new chapter in the Zoning Code – Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Districts. The new TOD districts are based on existing development patterns and the current zoning for the area (see Exhibit 1 – Maps of current and proposed zoning), but will incorporate zoning modifications authorized by the Council as follows:

- TOD I - This commercial and mixed-use TOD district is bounded by San Fernando Court to the north, San Fernando Road to the east, the parcels on the south side of South Brand Boulevard to the south, and the south-westerly border of the City to the west. The primary intent of the TOD-I district is to facilitate diverse employment options and a range of housing opportunities -- compatible in scale and form with a pedestrian oriented environment and accessible to

high quality public transportation (e.g., the Glendale Transportation Center). The TOD-I district allows for densities up to 87 units per acre, which is consistent with the SGCP decision, but a downzone from the existing IMU-R and SFMU allowable densities for the TOD I district.

TOD II - This commercial and mixed use TOD district is divided into two areas, with the northernmost district area located to the northeast of the intersection of San Fernando Road and Los Feliz Road and the southernmost district area located to the southwest of the intersection of West Cerritos Avenue and San Fernando Road. The primary intent of the TOD-II district is to encourage a diverse mix of active retail and residential uses that complements well-established businesses and serves surrounding neighborhoods. Building design emphasizes walkable urban form to enhance the pedestrian experience within proximity to Tropic's public transportation network. The TOD-II district allows for densities up to 43 units per acre, which is consistent with Council's SGCP decision to maintain the existing C3 allowable density (per the R-1250 zoning standards for residential development) for the district.

TOD III - This TOD district builds on the goals of TOD-I, and includes Glendale hospital uses and neighboring properties west of the Brand Boulevard of Cars. The primary intent of this zone is to allow for future hospital expansion that includes building heights up to 200 feet and encourages uses which support hospital uses, such as medical offices, treatment facilities, and special needs housing, as well as residential development at densities up to 100 units per acre. The height and density limits for this district were specifically agreed upon by City Council as part of the 2018 South Glendale Plan hearing.

Land Uses and Permit Requirements Table:

The new TOD chapter includes a use table based on the identical table format found in the Commercial, Industrial and Mixed Use chapters of the current Zoning Code. The permitted and conditionally permitted uses in each of the districts are essentially the same as corresponding C3, IMU-R and SFMU underlying zoning, except for TOD III, which focuses on medical and other uses that support the existing hospital uses.

General Development Table:

The TOD chapter also includes a General Development Standards Table using the same table format as found in the other zoning district chapters. Aside from the standard references, the table includes the following pertinent development standards:

Maximum Densities: The table specifies the maximum densities for the three new TOD districts, as previously identified by Council:

TOD I - Up to 100 dwelling units per acre (DU/AC) when not adjacent to multi-family zoning, otherwise – 87 DU/AC (as permitted in the existing SMFU and IMU-R zones);

TOD II - 43 DU/AC for lots greater than 90 feet in width, otherwise 35 DU/AC (as permitted in the existing C3 zones); and

TOD III - 100 DU/AC (as directed by Council).

These are consistent with the existing density standards for the area, except for TOD III – hospital district, which features an up-zone of up to a maximum of 100 DU/AC from the existing C3’s 43 DU/AC density limit given R-1250 zoning; this is consistent with City Council’s direction as part of the 2018 SGCP hearing and Tropicco zoning initiation. Council approved no other density changes as part of the SGCP hearing.

Maximum Heights: The maximum height in the TOD I and II Districts is proposed at 60 feet, as discussed during the SGCP hearing, and in anticipation of the mixed-use and residential projects in Tropicco exceeding this height standard, given the inclusionary housing requirement and density bonus provisions. The maximum height for the TOD III (hospital) district is 200 feet, as directed by Council in 2018.

TOD SECTIONS:

The new TOD chapter features four subsections with objective design standards that are similar to ones in the DSP: Site Planning; Massing & Scale; Architectural Elements; and Open Space, which includes landscaping standards.

Site Planning:

Public Realm:

Like the DSP standards for building setbacks regarding parkways, sidewalks and building adjacent zones (DSP 4.1.3), the new TOD chapter provide standards meant on focusing and creating a comfortable and inviting pedestrian experience. Such a pedestrian environment is vital to promoting other means of transportation, such as walking, and in this area, walking to adjacent mass transit that connects residents and workers to other areas of the city and beyond. As such, the TOD zoning requires a minimum 15-foot “Public Realm Setback” consisting of a “Parkway Zone”, “Sidewalk Zone”, and “Building Adjacent Zone”.

Building Setbacks:

Street front setbacks in the TOD districts depend on the type of building proposed: non-residential (which would include commercial and industrial) and residential. No setback is required for non-residential buildings and mixed-use buildings with non-residential ground floor occupancies. For residential buildings and ground floor residential units, in order to achieve privacy and separation for the residential units from the public realm, a minimum five-foot average setback is required. No setback is required if the units are located between 30 and 48 inches above grade, such as with stoops adjacent to the public realm.

Publicly Accessible Open Space (PAOS):

Currently, no publicly accessible open space is required for projects in Tropicco given the existing zoning in the area (C3, IMU-R, SFMU). The TOD zoning would require a minimum of 10 percent of the site to be devoted to PAOS. Many of the

same design standards for the PAOS provided in the DSP are included in the new TOD chapter. Such requirements for courtyards and paseos ensure the PAOS is meaningful, well-designed, and accessible to the public. The actual PAOS design standards are located in the Open Space and Landscaping section later in the TOD chapter.

Parking Design and Access Standards:

New objective design standards are proposed for the TOD district for at-grade parking. Currently, the Zoning Code requires that parking for residential uses be subterranean or semi-subterranean, which significantly adds to the cost of construction. Staff is proposing to amend the parking chapter to allow for at-grade residential parking in the TOD districts, provided the parking is appropriately screened from view with active ground floor uses or articulated building walls, as detailed in the new objective design standards. The standards also specify the location and orientation of parking garage entrances for all buildings, so as to ensure pedestrian safety and promote the active street frontages not focused on vehicular entrances.

Massing & Scale:

Step-backs:

A new objective design standard for the TOD districts to minimize blocky, massive building is the new step-back requirement. A step-back with a minimum average of six feet on street-facing elevations is required for all buildings greater than 50 feet in height; this step-back is a minimum average, allowing for flexibility for the architect, while ensuring relief at the top floor.

Façade Modulation

To further help break down the massing of larger new buildings and to provide visual interest along the elevations, the TOD chapter includes objective design standards similar to the ones found in the Urban Design chapter of the DSP, with a few new ones, and that are formatted into new groupings under “Façade Modulation”:

Vertical Modulation:

This subsection highlights standards for tripartite building layers – top, middle, base – to help break up the street-facing façade vertically for buildings four floors or greater. Differentiation of these layers through the use of architectural materials, textures and color are further detailed under architectural element section.

Horizontal Modulation:

This subsection provides objective design standards for articulation across a building façade that help to break up the massing horizontally. Street facing facades greater than 60 feet in length must have at least 30% of the elevation offset by a minimum of 24 inches, so as to provide undulation across a façade and not have solid, blank walls. Street facing façades

greater than 250 feet in length also must provide a building separation to cut down the longer massing of the structure. This building separation must have a minimum width and depth of 10% of the building length (example – 30-foot by 30-foot separation for a building that is 300 feet in length).

Interior Horizontal Façade Modulation:

Since often times the interior side elevations are visible from the surrounding properties and streets, objective design standards that require continuation of the façade treatment around the corner of the building and prohibit unbroken, solid wall planes greater than 30 feet in length are proposed for the interior elevations.

Corner Elements:

For buildings located at two street intersections, the building corner must be differentiated by height and design, so as to provide a focal point for the building at such visible locations.

Architectural Elements:

The TOD chapter features many of the same objective design standards set forth in the DSP Urban Design chapter under the same heading “Architectural Elements”, but with a few new ones that will be summarized below. The list of proposed Architectural Elements subsections includes the following:

- Façade Materials and Colors
- Storefront Transparency
- Building Entries and Lobbies
- Corners
- Canopies and Awnings
- Balconies
- Fenestration
- Freestanding Walls, Fences, and Gates
- Trash Enclosures
- Utilities
- Outdoor Lighting
- Rooftop Equipment
- Solar Equipment

The two subsections that contain new objective design standards are Storefront Transparency and Building Entries and Lobbies. The Storefront Transparency subsection highlights standards that ensure non-residential buildings have activated street frontages with transparent windows into the commercial and industrial ground floor uses; greater window transparency is appropriately required along San Fernando Road, Central Avenue and Los Feliz Avenue than on the side streets. Meanwhile, the Building Entries and Lobbies subsection provides general standards, such as ADA accessibility, distinctive paving and entry design, and then has objective design and locational standards for non-residential versus residential ground floor building entries, such as when stoops for individual units are proposed.

Open Space and Landscaping

The proposed Open Space and Landscaping section features a combination of the current open space requirements for IMU-R and SFMU zoning for residential developments, while also incorporating the objective design standards found in the DSP Open Space chapter. The section is broken into two subsections:

Publicly Accessible Open Space Standards
Residential Open Space Standards

Publicly Accessible Open Space Standards

As previously noted in the report, one of the most notable changes in the TOD district zoning is the addition of a publicly accessible open space requirement for new projects on lots greater than 60 feet in width; none of the current zoning for the area has this requirement. Based on the DSP Section 5.4, objective design standards for PAOS courtyards and plazas are specified in this subsection regarding such items as minimum dimensions, accessibility, materials, landscaping to ensure the PAOS is meaningful and well-designed.

Residential Open Space Standards

The current requirement for residential projects in the IMU-R and SFMU zones is that a minimum of 140 SF of open space be provided per unit; this residential open space can be provided as extra PAOS, common (rooftop deck, etc), private (balconies), or combination. This subsection keeps the same requirement, while adding standards found in the DSP's Section 5.5 Residential Development Open Space section to enhance the minimal requirements under current zoning.

PARKING AMENDMENTS

In order to incentivize development of transit-oriented projects adjacent to mass transit in the TOD districts, and reduce costly impediments towards such development, staff is also proposing several parking-related amendments in conjunction with the new TOD zoning. These amendments include the following:

- Allow for at-grade parking for residential uses, in conjunction with the new parking screening requirements in the TOD chapter, when currently, the Zoning Code requires all residential parking to be semi- or subterranean;
- Allow for tandem parking in certain situations, similar to those in the DSP;
- Modify the residential per unit parking requirements to match those in the DSP; and
- Require larger projects to comply with the same trip reduction and travel demand measures as in the DSP.

Such parking incentives similar to the downtown parking incentives, in addition to the pedestrian-oriented public realm design requirements, would help to support transit, walkable streets, and transit-oriented streets in the Tropic area.

DENSITY CONSIDERATIONS FOR TOD DISTRICTS

As previously noted, in 2018, City Council voted to maintain the existing density limits for the existing zoning in the SGCP, aside from the TOD hospital zone. The proposed TOD zoning reflects these existing limits: Up to 43 DU/AC for C3-zoned sites greater than 90 feet in width, and up to 100 DU/AC for IMU-R and SFMU sites when not adjacent to multi-family zones.

However, based on the geographical proximity to the Glendale Transit Center and mass transit line along San Fernando Road, Central and Los Feliz Avenues, as well as comments from the development community regarding the 43 DU/AC density limit for certain prime sites in Tropico, there is an untapped transit-oriented residential development potential that may be considered at this time.

By increasing the density limit up to 100 DU/AC for all sites in TOD II, consistent with the TOD I density limit, the City could see more redevelopment of larger sites north of Los Feliz and north-easterly of San Fernando Road. For instance, the Von's site on the north-west corner of Los Feliz and Central Avenues is a 2.79-acre site in a prime, transit-accessible location that developers have expressed interest in redeveloping with a mixed-use project that includes a new supermarket, but the low density of 43 DU/AC is a deterrence/non-starter.

Should Council wish to consider increasing the density in the TOD II to match TOD I, staff could bring back such a code update for Council's consideration, especially given that the SGCP EIR had already analyzed such increased density.

STAKEHOLDERS/OUTREACH

Following Council's direction, staff will initiate public outreach for the new standards prior to going to Planning Commission.

FISCAL IMPACT

No new costs associated with potential code revisions are expected at this time.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (CEQA/NEPA)

This action is exempt from further environmental review under CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15262 because it involves only feasibility or planning studies for possible future actions which the City has not yet approved, adopted, or funded. Environmental review will be completed prior to Planning Commission.

CAMPAIGN DISCLOSURE

This item is exempt from campaign disclosure requirements.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Direct staff to continue finalizing the draft TOD map and text amendments, including the amendments to the parking code, as submitted.
2. Provide comments and direct staff to proceed with revising the draft amendments,

- based on Council's comments.
3. City Council may consider any other alternative not provided by staff.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

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Approved by:

Roubik R. Golanian, P.E., City Manager

EXHIBITS/ATTACHMENTS

1. Tropico Area Maps – Existing and Proposed Zoning
2. Draft Tropico TOD Zoning Standards
3. Proposed Amendments to GMC Chapter 30.32 - Parking