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## Increased noticing requirements now in effect for development hearings

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Staff Writer

Last October, a small group of community leaders met with Long Beach Planning Department staff to voice their concerns about what they said was the city's failure to require adequate notice of public hearings for developments that would significantly impact surrounding neighborhoods. It took about nine months for the city to incorporate those concerns into an amendment to the Long Beach's zoning ordinance.

On June 23, the Long Beach City Council unanimously approved the amendment. The new noticing requirements went into effect on August 13. "The changes were made with the goal of increasing community awareness about public hearings and in an effort to increase public engagement and participation in the planning process," said Ed Kamlan, spokesperson for the City Manager's Office. "All planning applications submitted on or after August 13 will be subject to these requirements." Changes to the noticing requirements include the following:

The required noticing radius has been expanded to 750 feet around the subject site. For city or institutional projects, the noticing radius has increased to 1,000 feet. The noticing radius is now measured only from the subject property boundaries and not the opposite side of any adjacent right-of-way, as was required in the original zoning ordinance.

In addition to property owners being notified of hearings (as was required in the original ordinance), now all residential and non-residential occupants must be given notice.

The sites of proposed developments must now be posted with a 30-inch by 40-inch notice poster, which will be provided to the developers by city planning staff.

The city's move toward changing the noticing requirements for developments actually began more than two years ago, when community leaders and activists complained to city officials that residents had not been notified about public hearings pertaining to proposed large developments in various parts of the city. In response to those complaints, on October 16, 2007, the city council adopted an emergency ordinance enhancing noticing requirements for all planning permit applications for an interim period of one year. To address residents' concerns over the lack of sufficient notice for discretionary hearings, the temporary ordinance required the expansion of the then-existing 300-foot notification radius to 500 feet plus two linear block faces in each direction; the positing of a 30-inch by 35-inch sign on the site of the proposed development; and the notification of all residential and business occupants within the radius instead of only property owners.

In addition, in 2007, the council directed planning staff to study the impacts of the interim noticing requirements and recommend changes to the zoning ordinance to provide for increased noticing. Staff's recommended changes were originally scheduled to be heard by the Long Beach Planning Commission on August 21, 2008, before that body would make its recommendations to the city council. However, the planning commission decided to continue the matter to its November 6, 2008 meeting in order to allow planning staff time to get input from community leaders.

On October 1 of last year, those leaders told staff that the interim ordinance did not go far enough. In response, staff recommended a larger noticing radius and a larger sign on the proposed development site. The planning commission approved those changes and incorporated them in its recommendations to the city council.

The recently adopted six-page zoning ordinance amendment contains several other requirements, including the following: Notices of public hearing must be made no less than 14 days and no more than 45 days prior to the hearing. The city must mail a notice of the hearing to the project applicant and all agencies expected to provide essential services and facilities to the project. The city may use the records of the county assessor/tax collector to get the most recent information on residents or commercial occupants than need to be notified of the public hearing. The city must mail notice to the California Coastal Commission regarding a public hearing for a development proposed within the coastal zone.

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