

MOTION

The Cornfield Arroyo Seco Specific Plan (CASP) in Council District One is currently undergoing significant revisions aimed at modernizing development standards and implementation measures of approximately 600 acres (1.0 square miles) of land in Chinatown, Cypress Park, and Lincoln Heights. In December 2023, the City Planning Commission (CPC) officially adopted the CASP Update. This updated plan seeks to enhance the production of affordable, mixed-income, and permanent supportive housing while underscoring the importance of regulating industrial uses to enhance environmentally sound approaches and foster a balanced relationship between housing and industrial activities.

The CASP Update achieves this goal in many ways, including one strategy to require a conditional use permit (CUP) for warehousing, distribution, and storage uses over 15,000 square feet, a change my Office advocated for during the CPC hearings. Notably, the original CASP did not include CUP requirements for wholesale and warehouse operations of any magnitude. As a result, the City Planning Department proposed a CUP mandate for facilities surpassing 25,000 square feet. However, my Office pushed for a lower threshold to ensure increased community participation during the public hearing process. This adjustment allows for the thorough consideration of safety, health, and environmental concerns, a particularly crucial aspect for low-income households and communities of color. Historically, these communities have borne the brunt of various impacts associated with living near industrial land uses, such as warehousing operations.

The majority of residents within the CASP boundaries are from Latine and Asian backgrounds. Approximately 48% of renter households in the CASP earn below a very low-income threshold of \$59,550 for a family of four. According to data from the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (CalEnviroScreen 4.0), these communities rank within the top 3% percentile of disadvantaged communities in the State. For decades, these communities have faced resource scarcity and environmental injustice. While the new CUP adjustment may not address all historical inequities experienced by this community, it serves as a safeguard to help mitigate further damages.

Studies from reputable experts and organizations illustrate an array of short-term and long-term effects on the health, environment, and safety of warehouse facility operations in urban areas. A 2020 study from the University of California (UC), Davis, found that the diesel-powered vehicles mainly utilized by warehousing facilities release nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions into the atmosphere that, when mixed with other compounds found in the presence of sunlight, create ozone — a harmful gas that contributes to smog, lung irritation, inflammation, and chronic illnesses. Additionally, the trucks emit a variety of pollutants, including small particles known as diesel particulate matter (DPM), a subset of particulate matter (PM) 2.5, one of the most detrimental particles that exacerbate various cardiovascular and respiratory diseases (Angelo, 2020).

Shockingly, Census tracts within the CASP boundaries indicate high levels of these pollutants: five out of the six tracts exhibit above-average levels of ozone in the 60th percentile range; five out of the six tracts have a disproportionate burden caused by multiple sources of pollution in the 96th percentile; and all six of tracts fall into the 90th percentile of PM 2.5 exposure, one of the highest rates throughout the State. These pollutants indisputably affect the health of residents and even more so for pregnant people, elders, and children. Early exposure to PM 2.5 increases the likelihood of developing asthma, premature mortality, hospitalization for lung and heart diseases, developmental disorders, and premature birth weight (CalEnviroScreen 4.0).

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Moreover, the effects of warehousing operations extend beyond traffic patterns, posing safety risks for residents in proximity to these facilities. According to data from the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (DOT), there have been a total of thirty-three collisions within the boundaries of the CASP between 2018 and 2023, resulting in one fatality, one serious injury, and approximately nineteen instances of property damage attributed to truck trailers. Furthermore, case studies show that the presence of warehouse vehicles contributes to noise pollution and road damage, exacerbating the challenges faced by severely underserved neighborhoods like those within the CASP.

Given the various factors at play, it is evident that wholesale and warehousing activities can have adverse effects on local communities and the environment. While these industries are integral to the local economy, implementing sensible regulations is crucial to safeguarding communities from the numerous impacts outlined above. Currently, the CASP is progressing through several phases of the legislative process. However, until the Council approves the CASP Update, none of the proposed regulations will be enforceable. Therefore, it is imperative to enact an interim control ordinance to lower the threshold for discretionary review of warehousing, distribution, and storage facilities to 15,000 square feet until the CASP Update is fully in effect. There are significant health and safety concerns associated with permitting large wholesale and warehouse operations in neighborhoods where there is a concerted effort to increase affordable housing in Northeast Los Angeles.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Council instruct the Planning Department, in consultation with the City Attorney, to prepare and process an Interim Control Ordinance (ICO) to impose temporary regulations establishing a discretionary review process on the issuance of permits associated with any demolition, building, use of land, and grading for Warehousing, Distribution, and Storage uses over 15,000 square feet, pending Council adoption of the Updated Cornfield Arroyo Seco Specific Plan (CPC-2021-2642-SP), within the geographical boundaries of the existing Cornfield Arroyo Seco Specific Plan, located to the northeast of Downtown Los Angeles and is generally bounded by the communities of Chinatown to the west, Lincoln Heights to the east, and Cypress Park to the north. Thoroughfares include North Figueroa Street at the north, North Spring Street and North Main Street at the south, and North Avenue 19 and North San Fernando Road near the center portion of the Project Area. The Los Angeles River, Arroyo Seco, Interstate 5, State Route 110, and Metro A Line (formally L Line and Gold Line) pass through the Project Area, which also includes the Los Angeles State Historic Park.

I FURTHER MOVE that the ICO include an Urgency Clause, making it effective upon publication; and consistent with California Government Code § 65858, the ICO shall run for 45 days, with a 10-month and 15 days extension by Council Resolution, and can be further extended for an additional 1 year, or until the adoption of the appropriate land use regulatory controls have been prepared by the Planning Department, adopted by the Council and become effective, whichever occurs first.

PRESENTED BY: _____

EUNISSES HERNANDEZ
Councilmember, 1st District

SECONDED BY: _____

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