

ACONA Meeting Notes

January 30, 2019

After introductions the following topics were covered.

ADU: Accessory Dwelling Units (Granny Flats)

Ayala Scott, LA County Regional Planning Department

ADUs are separate units that have a kitchen and a bathroom but are considered part of the original house. County has allowed them since 2004; the State added a law in 2016. County is updating its ordinance to comply with the new state law. CSD has a lot of say in the specifics of ADUs (size, height, etc.). Areas of Altadena that are in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones have additional requirements (a parking space for the ADU is one requirement). State law is particularly friendly to garage conversions (e.g., no setback requirements). County has a 5-foot setback requirement on new construction. The website planning.lacounty.gov/adu details the new ordinance and the interim rules until the newly updated ordinance is implemented. Field office for Altadena is the San Gabriel Valley office, 125 S. Baldwin Ave., Arcadia; 626-574-0941. Link to the field office info online: http://planning.lacounty.gov/locations/view/san_gabriel_valley_office

Q: What about water supply? A: 2016 law specifies that ADUs can't be counted as additional density. They are considered part of the original house. When someone applies for a permit, they have to show there's adequate water capacity as well as access to sewer system.

Leaf Blowers and Title 12 Environmental Protection

Robert Vasquez, Industrial Hygienist, Environmental Health Division, LA County Department of Public Health

Evenor Masis, Industrial Hygienist

The office's purview has expanded from just industrial overview to community overview. Title 12 Chapter 12.08 covers noise in unincorporated areas. Code is on [municode.com \(https://library.municode.com/ca/los_angeles_county/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT12ENPR\)](https://library.municode.com/ca/los_angeles_county/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT12ENPR). 12.08 was codified in 1988 and has never been modified. But there is work being done on modifying the code. Standards are based on the average noise level for a type of property (residential, commercial, industrial). There are also noise sensitive areas but Altadena doesn't have any. There are additional standards for noises like gunshots or air compressors (short duration sounds) that are higher than the ambient standards. When noise levels increase over time, the ambient level becomes the new standard. There's no specific code in Title 12 about leaf blowers. Title 12 only covers external noises on commercial or industrial property. Leaf blowers are exempt from Title 12 unless they are operating outside of 7am-8pm Monday-Saturday or 9am-8pm on Sunday. A notice violation can only be issued outside of these hours. Working on revising the entire ordinance and possibly introducing a new code on leaf blowers. Might be possible to include regulations for leaf blowers in Altadena's CSD.

Protecting Homes from House Fires and Wildfires

Maria Grycan, Community Services Liaison, LA County Fire Department

House Fires

Most people hurt/killed in house fires are usually affected by asphyxiation. If a fire starts, get out first, call 911 next, then go to your family meeting place (make sure everyone knows where that is). Practice EDITH — Exit Drills In The Home. Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and change their batteries when you change your clock. Test hard-wired detectors periodically. Conduct a home hazard hunt and fix any problems. Cooking fires are a common

cause of house fires. Watch your sleeves when cooking. Don't daisy-chain power strips or surge protectors.

Wildfires

Strong winds and low humidity trigger red flag warnings. Staff is augmented during red flag warnings. *Ready! Set! Go!* booklet details a plan for wildfire safety ([there's a link on the Resources page](#)). Move combustibles away from the house on red flag days. Move furniture away from outside walls. If you have to evacuate leave your lights on. Prioritize your list of what to take with you if you have to evacuate.

Q&A

ADUs

Q: What is the time frame for the new ADU ordinance? A: The Board of Supervisors approved it in May 2018 and is now under review by the county legal team. After review it goes back to Board for final consent and it take effect 30 days after that.

Q: There's supposed to be a mandate to create additional units in Altadena (heard it's 2000 units). What is the dynamic between state and county? A: General plan doesn't mandate creation of a certain number of units, it just mandates the density for a specific area. County has to do an adequate sites inventory and report it to the state. But actual construction is not mandated.

Q: If you have an existing garage and want to extend it to create an ADU, do you have to comply with the 5-foot setback? A: Yes, most likely. Would have to look at the specific plan for the unit.

Q: The lack of a parking requirement would have an impact on parking in general. A: ADUs may not be used for short-term rental. Ordinance doesn't prevent providing a parking space for an ADU, but can't require one.

Q: How does the ADU regulation apply when there's a detached condominium complex? A: Doesn't apply. The regulation is for single-house lots.

Leaf Blowers

Q: What about other kinds of pollution other than noise regarding leaf blowers? A: South Coast AQMD (Air Quality Management District) and CARB (California Air Resources Board) are resources. ([See Resources page for website links.](#))

Q: Three basic issues with leaf blowers: noise, particulate matter, exhaust from gas blowers. A: Other cities have passed ordinances that include air pollution.

Q: There's a man using a leaf blower on a paved lot, just blowing dust. What can we do? A: There's no ordinance against it.

Q: If we have an issue with toxins from leaf blowers and their action, what's the path for getting some action? A: Contact SCAQMD and also your representatives, who can apply pressure to get a response from agencies responsible.

Comment from audience: SCAQMD can't really make and enforce rules. They can use inducements, such as an exchange program, electric blowers for gas blowers.

Q: AB617 community air protection program: Is the Environmental Health Division involved in it? A: Not as such, but we have a toxicologist and other people addressing this.

House Fires and Wildfires

Q: Who do we call about fire pits? They are burning wood and burning too close to a house. A: Call your local fire department.

Q: Where is the best place to put smoke alarms in the house? A: Not in the kitchen or just outside the kitchen. Bedrooms are the most important location.

Q: Vent screens are good. Exterior sprinklers: where? A: Spraying your house with water doesn't do much good; just wastes water. Sprinklers work better after a fire, when they work to

cool the house. Screens prevent embers from entering a house and are the most effective preventative measure.

Q: Where do we put fire screens on vents? A: Put them on any vent that is a point of entry into your home. You can add them post-construction. There are after-market solutions.

Q: What about open eaves? A: Make sure it's clean, along with the rain gutters. Maybe a mesh.

Q: Is there a foam you can put on your house if a fire is approaching? A: It's a gel — Barricade Gel is the one Maria is familiar with. It's not really removable. Its potency dissipates over time and loses its fire resistant capabilities, but if it gets wet it bubbles up again.

Comment from Ellen Walton: The pictures below show before and after images of a house that had a very wide cleared area around it, but no vent screens. This house was caught in the Woolsey fire.

For me the object lesson from these photos is that clearance is not enough to save homes. Ironic as clearance is my job.

Homeowners need to fortify the exterior of their home so that an ember has no fuel to land on and no point of entry into the home. Then they need to seriously examine their landscaping to see what creates safety and what increases the risk—palms with fronds, cypresses, junipers, vines on the house—anything that catches fire (embers) easily and could bring the fire against the structure for long enough to ignite it—like plastic patio furniture, chair cushions, awnings and umbrellas.

Fire has a regulation that any flammable source like firewood or propane tanks have to be 30 feet from the structure. Homeowners should reverse engineer that guideline and examine anything that is within 30 feet of their exterior walls.

