CF# 14-0389

RE: DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING REPORT TO PLUM COMMITTEE

REGARDING MOTION DATED APRIL 1, 2014 TO HELP PRESERVE EQUINE

KEEPING IN THE CITY.

Dear Honarable Members:

This report is in response to the motion introduced by Council Member Felipe Fuentes on April

1,2014 (Exhibit A). This motion instructed the Department of City Planning, with the assistance

of the Departments of Building and Safety and Animal Services, to create a Zoning Information

(ZI) File on all equine keeping properties, develop a uniform interpretation of the distance

requirements between equine uses and habitable spaces, provide clarification of existing

procedures related to equine keeping, and establish standards to protect equine uses. The motion

also directs Department staff to work with the Los Angeles Equine Advisory Committee and

residents of Shadow Hills and to prepare a report within 45 days.

Background

Many Los Angeles communities have a long tradition of equine keeping, which contribute to

these communities' distinctive character and quality-of-life. This is especially the case in the San

Fernando Valley, particularly in communities such as Lake View Terrace, Shadow Hills,

Chatsworth, Sylmar, as well as many other Valley neighborhoods.

The equestrian neighborhoods of the San Fernando Valley are among the few remanung

residential areas of Los Angeles with land zoned for equine keeping. As development pressures

have mounted in these traditionally lower-density neighborhoods, larger lots (typically zoned

RA, RE20, RE40, AI, or A2) in equine keeping areas and designated Equinekeeping "K"

Districts are being subdivided into sizes that do not comply with lot area requirements for equine

keeping or the Zoning Code buffer requirements between equine and non-equine uses. In many

instances, new development has encroached on the ability to maintain equine keeping on

adjacent properties, and commonly used trails have been obscured or interrupted. Over time,

these pressures have resulted in a loss of valuable and irreplaceable equine keeping lots that have

and continue to contribute to the rich and dynamic character of Los Angeles.

There are numerous rules that govern equine keeping in the City. The Los Angeles Municipal

Code (Zoning Code) has specific regulations related to the keeping of equine. Generally, equine

keeping is permitted in most residentially zoned lots of 20,000 square feet or greater in

conjunction with the residential use of the lot. The Zoning Code also regulates the placement of

equine structures/enclosures on a lot, specifically the distance between structures/enclosures and

any habitable space located on both the equine keeping lot and adjacent lots. In addition, the

Zoning Code defines certain equine-related terms, establishes the number of equine allowed on

a lot, and places other limitations on equine keeping.

Certain neighborhoods in Los Angeles are also located within an Equinekeeping "K" District,

which is a specific overlay district which is more permissive than the Zoning Code. Under

Section 13.05 of the Zoning Code, the City Council may establish "K" Districts in order to

establish reasonable and uniform limitations, safeguards, and controls for the keeping and

maintenance of equines within Los Angeles. The intent of the "K" District is to provide

regulations for the keeping of equine on residential properties and to dedicate areas where

residents, who prefer to, can keep equine and generally retain the semi-rural environment of

those communities where such existing uses are demonstrated to be compatible with surrounding

uses. Generally, regulations related to equine keeping within a "K" District are more

accommodating. For example, the minimum lot area for each equine is 4,000 square feet

regardless of the residential zone, there are no minimum lot area requirements for stables, and

structures may be located up to 10 feet from side lot lines as opposed to 25 feet for lots not

located within in a "K" District. However, equine keeping properties within designated "K"

Districts are facing similar development pressures of subdivisions and are consequently

struggling to retain the rural, open space character of the City's traditionally equestrian

communities.

Improved regulations and more consistent and streamlined application of existing regulations can

assure that existing equine areas are preserved, and that future development in these areas

continues to contribute to the City'S rich tradition. The following short-term and long-term

strategies to address this issue are recommended:

**Short-Term Objectives**

Develop a unifonn intemretation of existing requirements and clarify procedures

Zoning Information (ZI) File No. 2438 (Exhibit B) outlines the required permit process and

institutes a procedure (i.e. Equine Keeping Checklist Form, Site Plan, and inspection process) to

ensure that the creation of new habitable space does not inappropriately encroach upon equine

keeping uses. The ZI clarifies that no permit shall be issued by the Department of Building and

Safety (LADBS) for any building that creates new habitable space on lots that are zoned AI, A2,

RE20, RE40, or RA and/or are located within an Equinekeeping "K" District without completing

an Equine Keeping Checklist form provided by LADBS. This form shall be submitted and/or

completed during plan submittal. Properties subject to the ZI File will be flagged on the City's

Zoning Information Map Access System (ZIMAS) and will require a clearance on the Plan

Check Inspection System (PCIS) form prior to the issuance of a permit by LADBS.

The intent of the Equine Keeping Checklist form is to provide LADBS with the necessary

information to determine whether specific equine keeping regulations are applicable and to

verify compliance with such requirements. Overall, it provides the opportunity for LADBS to

appropriately apply and enforce the Zoning Code with regards to equine keeping in the City. For

details on the permit application process refer to the attached Flowchart.

The ZI File also provides an interpretation of how to measure the existing distance requirements

to ensure that the method of measuring distance requirements is applied in a uniform and

consistent manner. For purposes of determining the distance between an equine

structure/enclosure and habitable uses, the distance shall be measured from the structure or the

"unsupervised" enclosure where the equine is maintained and not the "supervised" enclosure

where the equine is exercised with supervision, generally the fence surrounding the perimeter of

the rear yard. For more information refer to the attached ZI File for Definitions.

ZI File No. 2438 can be uploaded onto Zimas within a month from approval by City Council and

immediately implemented by City staff.

**Long-Term Solution**

Utilizere:code LA to establish new standards to protect equine keeping uses

While.the ZI and the clarification of how the distance requirements are measured will provide

some protections in the short-term, longer term solutions are necessary. The City is currently

undertaking a project to rewrite the Zoning Code. This process provides an opportunity to make

the necessary Code Amendments that will further clarify and safeguard equine keeping uses in

the longer term.

One of the goals ofre:code LA is to update the City's Zoning Code to create a wider range and

more flexible set of zoning tools that better reflect the diversity of the City'S neighborhoods and

aid in implementing land use and planning goals of the City. The Department of City Planning

released the *Zoning Code Evaluation Report* this March which discusses in great detail the issues

that the new Zoning Code aims to address (Exhibit C). This report identifies the need to retain

the rural lifestyle (Evaluation Report Topic 1.6) as a key objective and recommends that existing

provisions related to equine keeping be reviewed in order to more effectively retain the rural

lifestyle, and provide for long term viability of equine keeping and other uses in unique semirural

areas of Los Angeles.' This report is expected to go to City Council for adoption in

SummerlFallof2014.

This project provides the community with an opportunity to comprehensively modernize the

City'S approach to equine keeping in rural and suburban areas. The Department recognizes that

various approaches and Code regulations are currently used that do not provide sufficient

safeguards desired by many residents who wish to retain a rural lifestyle. Provisions such as

rendering equine uses nonconforming if licenses are not consecutively maintained for three

years, as well as others, will be analyzed as part of the re:code LA process.

This report, the ZI File, as well as the Equine Keeping Checklist form were prepared in

collaboration with LADBS.

The Department of City Planning recommends that ZI File No. 2438 be approved and that code

amendments pertaining to equine keeping in the City continue to be studied and analyzed as part

of re:code LA.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Anita Cerna, City Planner, at

anita.cerna@lacity.orgor818-374-5042.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL 1. LOGRANDE

Director of Planning

ALAN BELL, AICP

Deputy Director of Planning