

FEBURARY 19, 2019

LETTER TO: Mayor and City Council

CC: Planning Commission

Christopher Koontz, AICP, Planning Manager

Cynthia De La Torre, Planner IV

REQUEST FOR A MORATORIUM ON DRIVE-THROUGH CUPs

Honorable Mayor and Council Council,

In the past three years (2015 to 2018), according to Development Services, there have been 12 Conditional Use Permit (CUPs) requests approved for drive-through lanes at new convenience or fast food restaurants in all parts of the City. Six more applications are pending, and only one has been denied during that period.

Drive-throughs represent the worst kind of new development--auto-oriented, low-density, unhealthy, and generic--exactly the kind of development we should be avoiding. This is especially troubling in underserved communities that already struggle with an over-abundance of unhealthy, usually fast food, options (food swamps) and/or a dearth of healthy food choices (food deserts).

The City has adopted policies, including Health in All Policies, to create healthier and more walkable communities, support more local businesses, and enhance unique local flavor, including our many unique ethnic communities. Drive-throughs fly in the face of these important efforts. Typically, drive-throughs offer few healthy choices, are operated by national corporate chains that contribute to ubiquitous and bland suburban corridors, and extract money from our community as opposed to local businesses that keep profits local. Each new drive-through represents a missed opportunity for something better to be built. Therefore, the approval or placement of any new drive-throughs should be carefully considered.

Development Services is beginning a policy study on drive-throughs, including community meetings and study session with the Planning Commission to discuss amendments to the regulations and required findings for new drive-throughs. While this effort is underway, it's worth taking a "time out" to figure out what's best for Long Beach going forward.

While a moratorium will not affect those drive-throughs already approved or in the approval pipeline, now is the time to act to avoid any future damage to our urban fabric. We do not support drive-through lanes, especially in pedestrian-oriented corridors and near sensitive land uses, and think that they should only be allowed in very specific and limited circumstances. We need to use this time to craft sensible regulations for drive-throughs.

The City plans no ban on future drive-throughs while the policy is being contemplated. Our hope is that a moratorium can be put in place by the City Council now on any new drive-throughs until the new regulations are put in place.

If you have any questions about our request for a moratorium or would like to discuss the issue further, please contact Steve Gerhardt from Walk Long Beach at [562-912-6004](tel:562-912-6004) or Steve@WalkLongBeach.org.

Thank you for your consideration.

