



## City of Santa Clarita

### Planning Commission Agenda Item

#### Canyon Country Energy Storage Facility Project (Master Case 21-027)

#### Information

<b>Department:</b>	Planning Commission	<b>Sponsors:</b>	
<b>Category:</b>	Adopt	<b>Sub-Categories:</b>	Resolution

#### Attachments

[Agenda Report](#)  
[Resolution P21-18](#)  
[Exhibit A - Conditions of Approval](#)  
[Attachment A - Aerial and Zoning Map](#)  
[Attachment B - NOE and Exemption Report](#)  
[Attachment C - MC21-027 Public Notice 12-7-21](#)  
[Attachment D - Plan Sets, Site Plan and Elevations](#)  
[Attachment E - PC Agenda Report 8-17-21](#)  
[Attachment F - Applicant response to PC](#)  
[Attachment G- Letters of Support](#)

#### Recommended Action

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission:

- 1) Receive staff's report;
- 2) Open the public hearing and receive testimony from the public; and
- 3) Adopt Resolution P21-18, approving Master Case 21-027, Conditional Use Permit 21-001, Architectural Design Review 21-004, and Development Review 21-003, to allow for the construction and operation of a lithium-ion battery energy storage facility located at 18358 Soledad Canyon Road (APNs 2844-001-058, portion of 2844-001-059), subject to the attached Conditions of Approval (Exhibit A).

#### Background/Alt Actions

##### REQUEST

The applicant, Placerita ESS, LLC, is requesting the approval of Conditional Use Permit 21-001, Architectural Design Review 21-004, and Development Review 21-003, to allow for the construction and operation of the Canyon Country Energy Storage Project, a lithium-ion battery energy storage facility.

##### BACKGROUND

On August 17, 2021, the Planning Commission conducted a public hearing regarding the Canyon Country Energy Storage project (Project). There were two speakers in opposition to the Project citing concerns regarding fire safety and the proximity of residential uses.

At that meeting, the Planning Commission requested further information be provided to assist in their ability to make a decision regarding the proposal. Direction from the Planning Commission included a request for additional details including:

1. Provide information on Fire Suppression Systems;
2. Provide information on the frequency of fire events and examples;
3. Provide information on toxicity levels and impacts from fumes associated to related fires;
4. Provide information Fire Department preparedness and necessary on-hand materials at the local station to adequately address a fire at this facility;
5. Provide information clarifying the circumstances surrounding the Valley Center approval in San Diego County;
6. Provide a list or exhibit of where these facilities are currently located within California, and Los Angeles County (LA County), specifically. Include siting distances from residential uses;
7. Provide a list or exhibit of where these facilities are currently located within Santa Clarita;
8. Provide information clarifying the role of TerraGen, LLC (Applicant), and Southern California Edison (SCE) and provide evidence of SCE support or agreement;
9. Provide information gathered from jurisdictions where these facilities are located regarding applicable development standards;
10. Provide information detailing the initial use of these facilities and the evolution of the technology;
11. Provide information clarifying the manufacturer(s) to be used and the number of enclosures proposed for the facility; and
12. Provide detailed information on foundation design as it pertains to earthquake safety;

Following the meeting, staff provided the applicant with a comprehensive list of those items in which the Planning Commission requested additional information.

At the meeting, the Planning Commission continued the item to the regularly scheduled meeting of September 21, 2021, and then at that meeting, the Planning Commission continued the item to the regularly scheduled meeting of October 19, 2021, at which time the Project was continued to a date uncertain to allow the Applicant additional time to prepare a set of responses to the information requested by the Planning Commission.

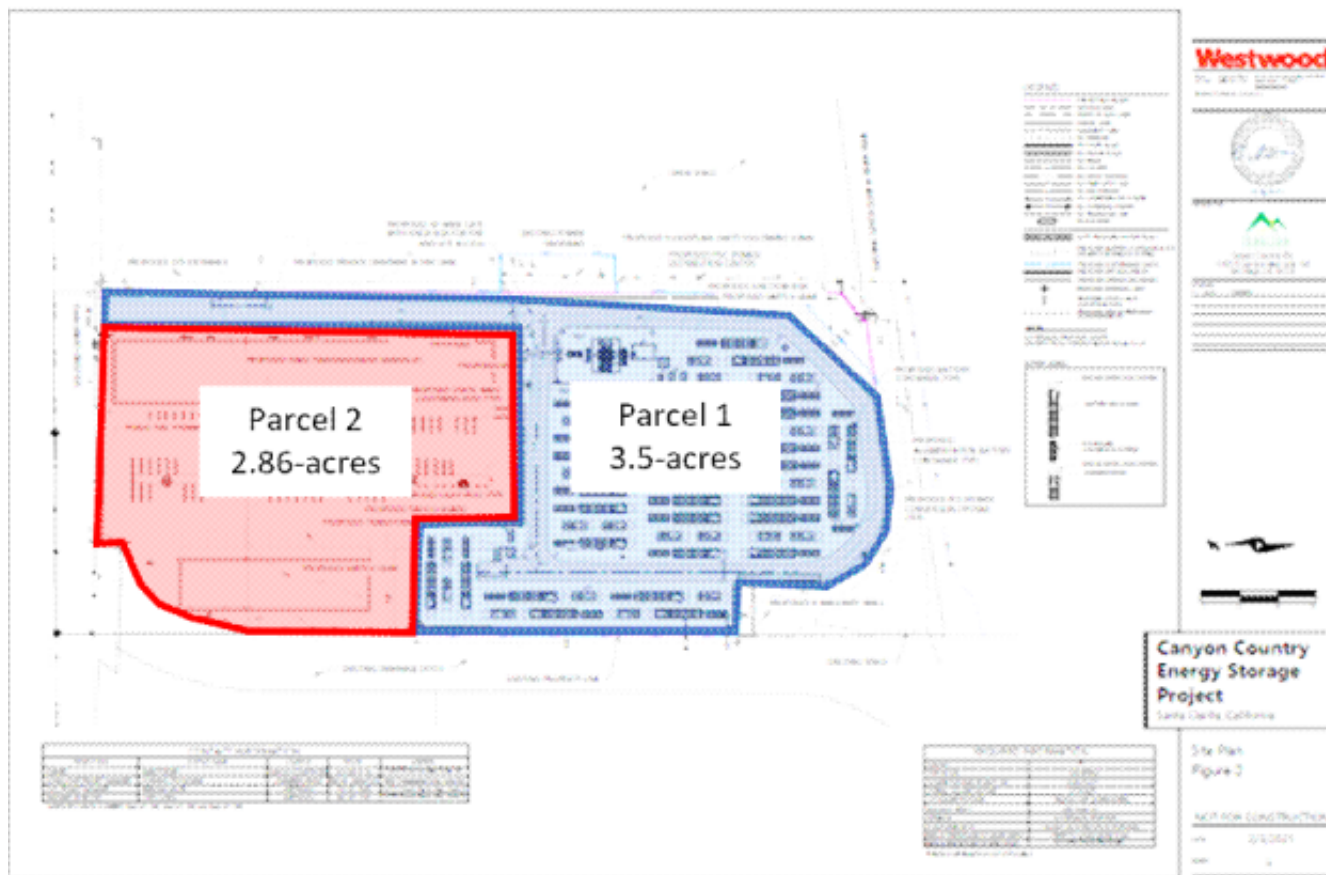
## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Applicant is requesting approval of a Conditional Use Permit, Architectural Design Review, and a Development Review to allow for the construction and operation of the Canyon Country Energy Storage Project, a lithium-ion battery energy storage facility on a 3.5-acre parcel created by Tentative Parcel Map 83414, approved by the Planning Commission on July 6, 2021.

The Applicant proposes to construct, own, and operate the Project which will connect to the existing, adjacent to SCE North Oaks Substation by way of a new 125-foot generation tie-line. A CUP is required for

the proposed land use, three utility poles and up to four lightning rods that exceed the 35-foot maximum allowable height within the zone.

**Figure A - Proposed Site Plan**



**GENERAL PLANNING AND ZONING**

The Project site is within the Soledad Canyon-Urban Center (SC-UC) zone of the Soledad Canyon Road Corridor Plan (SCRCP), which encourages high-quality, higher-density commercial and residential opportunities and, allows for certain public and semi-public uses within the zone, to achieve the goals of the General Plan.

The Project site is bounded by existing flood control infrastructure, an existing commercial center, and an existing multifamily development to the west, Soledad Canyon Road, food service and mobile home uses to the north, an SCE facility and an approved, but unbuilt, 136-unit multifamily residential project to the east, and the Santa Clara River Trail to the south. Adjacent and nearby land uses are described in Table 1 below.

<b>Table 1 - General Plan, Zoning, and Land Uses</b>			
	<b>General Plan</b>	<b>Zoning</b>	<b>Land Use</b>
<b>Project Site</b>	<b>MX-C*</b>	<b>Corridor Plan - SC-UC</b>	<b>Soledad Commercial Center</b>

North	MX-C	Corridor Plan - SC-UC	Food Service, Mobile Home Park
East	MX-C	Corridor Plan - SC-UC	Southern California Edison Facility, Approved/Unbuilt Multifamily Residential
South	OS*	OS	Santa Clara River Trail
West	UR3*	UR3	L.A. County Flood Control, Commercial Center, Multifamily Residential

## ANALYSIS

Table 2 below details the specific additional information requested by the Planning Commission and the Applicant's response to each item. Additional details on each item can be found in Attachment F.

**Table 2: Applicant response to Planning Commissions request for additional information**

	<b>Planning Commission Request</b>	<b>Applicant Response</b>
1	Provide Information on Fire Suppression Systems	The Fire Code and UL9540A require rigorous large-scale fire testing that demonstrates and certifies that the energy battery storage systems will not pose a fire or explosion risk to adjacent receptors. Testing and certification requires manufacturers to demonstrate that their fire suppression systems work as designed. Suppression systems vary by manufacturer, some use chemical-based systems while others use water-based systems. Contrary to public perception, water is an effective method of suppressing and controlling lithium-ion based battery fires. Recently, some manufacturers are complying with these performance-based requirements without the use of active suppression systems, rather, they use passive design features that include suppressive fire barriers and chemical coatings between cells and equipment. Fire suppression systems will not pass the Fire Code's rigorous tests if they fail to demonstrate that they pose no explosion or fire risk to adjacent equipment and uses.
2	Provide Information on the frequency of fire events and examples	Fire events at utility-scale battery storage facilities are rare. As of Q2 2021, there were approximately 3,500 MW of battery storage projects operating in the United States. Only one fully UL-certified battery energy storage facility that is compliant with the Fire Code has had a fire incident and that event was quickly brought under control because the system worked as designed. There are over 100 battery storage facilities in California and none of them have had a fire. This is a testament to the rigorous codes, standards, testing and procedures that have evolved in what is a mature industry with advanced fire and safety codes, standards and procedures that work.
3	Provide information on toxicity levels and impacts from fumes associated to related fires	If a lithium-ion battery catches fire, it will produce fumes and gases similar to those produced by a typical conventional structure, such as a residence, commercial building or vehicle fire. The most prevalent gases released from the batteries during a fire are carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, hydrogen, and a number of flammable hydrocarbons. However, these gases disperse readily and safely in open atmosphere posing little hazard to health. During normal operations, lithium-ion batteries do not release flammable or toxic air contaminants.

4	Provide information as to if the Fire Department has the necessary materials on hand at the local station to adequately address a fire at this facility	No special equipment or materials are required to adequately address a fire at an electrical energy storage facility. The LA County Fire Department already has the equipment needed including standard structural firefighting personal protective equipment (PPE), handheld infrared cameras, and basic four-gas monitors which should include a carbon monoxide cell. Water is an effective means of suppressing and controlling lithium-ion battery fires.
5	Provide information clarifying the circumstances surrounding the Valley Center approval in San Diego County	On September 11, 2020, the San Diego County Planning Director approved the Valley Center Project's discretionary permit. Although it had previously objected to the project, on September 14, 2020, the Valley Center Community Planning Group (CPG) met and voted not to appeal the San Diego County decision determining that "the battery storage project will provide numerous benefits to the community," and considered "the fact that the County determined the project was safe according to their guidelines" and "the fire department has(d) also approved the initial project plans."
6	Provide a list or exhibit of where these facilities are currently located within California and LA County specifically. Include siting distances from residential uses	Please see comprehensive separate exhibit of tables and figures (Attachment F) demonstrating California projects, including siting distances from residences, which are commonly directly incorporated within residential areas, adhering to fire, Building & Safety setbacks. Utility scale battery storage projects are commonly within 30 feet and, by way of example, the closest structure to the proposed Project is 130 feet. Please also see the information in Attachment F regarding the approximately 25,000 battery storage projects that are already located at and within residences, commercial buildings, hospitals, and schools throughout California. Please also note the 2020 California Energy Code, which mandates battery storage infrastructure on future residences, hospitals, schools, and other commercial buildings.
7	Provide a list or exhibit of where these facilities are currently located within Santa Clarita	The Canyon Country Energy Storage Project would be the first utility-scale battery storage project providing energy storage service within the City of Santa Clarita (City). The fact that there is not yet a utility scale battery storage facility in Santa Clarita is a primary reason why the Project is needed in Santa Clarita and the Canyon Country community. This Project will supply much needed grid reliability benefits to Santa Clarita and the region and help avoid Public Service Power Shutoff (PSPS) outages. In 2020, Santa Clarita experienced over a dozen PSPS outages and in December 2020 alone, two PSPS outages took power service out for over 25,000 homes. The Canyon Country community was hit particularly hard by those events. As the City recognized in their unanimous support for AB418, disadvantaged communities are hit particularly hard by PSPS outage events. It is important to recognize that lithium-ion battery energy storage facilities are already well established throughout the City of Santa Clarita and the County of Los Angeles in residential and commercial buildings. Please see Attachment F for details including a detailed explanation of how we chose Santa Clarita and the Project Site.
8	Provide information	TerraGen, LLC, has executed an 'Engineering & Procurement' Agreement commencing engineering and design activities for the Project's interconnection

	clarifying the role of Terra Gen and SCE and provide evidence of SCE support or agreement	<p>to the grid. SCE is supportive of the Project and worked closely with TerraGen, LLC, to identify the Project location. SCE is obligated to provide interconnection services to the Project as signatories to the Large Generator Interconnection Agreement that will be signed in Q4 2021 between the Parties.</p> <p>In September 2021, TerraGen, LLC, and a major utility entered into confidential negotiations for services from the Project under a long-term power purchase agreement. SCE is a likely candidate to procure the majority, if not all the services from this Project under a long-term Power Purchase Agreement. Regardless which utility secures the contractual services from the Project, the California Independent System Operator (CAISO) has ultimate control of the Project's services during reliability and emergency events in order to ensure the public service benefits to our community and ensure grid reliability.</p>
9	Provide information gathered from jurisdictions where these facilities are located regarding applicable development standards	To our knowledge, there are no jurisdictions in California that have adopted development standards exclusively for battery energy systems. Instead, for zoning purposes, cities and counties have treated energy storage as a "utility" or "public utility" use, applying the same development standards they would apply to a utility use, such as an electric substation or electric generation facilities.
10	Provide information detailing the initial use of these facilities and the evolution of the technology	A detailed summary of the evolution of the market and where it is going has been provided as a part of Attachment F.
11	Provide information clarifying the manufacturer(s) to be used and the number of enclosures proposed for the facility	The Project will make final selection of manufacturers and equipment suppliers during the building permit application process. The dimensions, number and configuration of the BESS system and enclosures needed to make-up the charging and discharging capabilities of the Project, an 80 MW, 4-hour system, varies by manufacturer and will be finalized upon building permit review and approval by City and County officials. The equipment layout will, however, be confined to the same 55,000 square feet identified on the Project Site Plan. Prior to issuance of building permits, the City and Fire Department will review the selected equipment and final lay-out for compliance with the codes and standards. LA County Fire's detailed review of the Project design, equipment, installation, commissioning, and operational requirements will occur during the building permit process to the satisfaction of LA County Fire prior to their approval. Codes and Standards required for the Project include: the 2020 County of Los Angeles Fire Code, the 2019 California Building (CBC), Mechanical (CMC), Plumbing (CPC), and Electrical (CEC) Codes, the 2019 California Energy Code, and the 2019 California Green Building Standards Code (CalGreen) pursuant to the CUP Conditions of Approval.
12	Provide detailed	A detailed description of this information has been provided as a part of Attachment F.

information on foundation design as it pertains to earthquake safety
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## ENVIRONMENTAL

The Project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as a Class 32 In-fill Development Project exemption, in accordance with Article 19 Categorical Exemptions, Section 15332 of the CEQA Guidelines. The Project would qualify as a Class 32 exemption as it is located within City limits on a project site less than five acres; does not have the potential as habitat for rare, endangered, or threatened species; would not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality; would be served by all required utilities, and would be located on a site with less than 20 percent average slope. Further, the proposed Project would not require a variance or exception to be granted approval and is otherwise consistent with the General Plan, the UDC, and SCRCP.

## NOTICING

As required by the UDC, all tenants within the subject commercial center and all property owners and occupants within a 1,000-foot radius of the subject site were notified of the public hearing by mail and a public notice was placed in The Signal on November 16, 2021. A sign was posted at the site on November 23, 2021, for this public hearing.

## CONCLUSION

The proposed utility substation on the subject site, located in the SC-UC zone, is consistent with the provisions outlined in the General Plan, UDC, and SCRCP. Therefore, staff has drafted the necessary findings for Conditional Use Permit 21-001, Architectural Design Review 21-004, Development Review 21-003 as set forth in Chapter 17.25 of the UDC, subject to the attached Conditions of Approval (Exhibit A).