

Sherman Oaks Neighborhood Council CIS on Van Nuys Airport Vision Study Presentation at 1/24/2024 Airport Committee Meeting

Whereas,

The Los Angeles City Council in CF 22-1127 requested that the Department of City Planning in consultation with Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) create a Specific Plan and/or other land use tools to replace the existing Van Nuys Airport (VNY) Airport Plan and zoning ordinance. As the initial step in this process LAWA is conducting a “Vision Study” to identify what land uses should be incorporated into the Specific Plan for VNY.

SONC, other Neighborhood Councils, community groups, and individuals have submitted numerous comments and recommendations to LAWA in writing and orally at public meetings regarding flaws in the Vision Study process, its lack of transparency, insufficiency of data to base decisions on, and non-responsiveness to community input. These comments and recommendations have for the most part been ignored.

The most egregious Vision Study flaw is that so far, including its January 24, 2024 presentation to the SONC Airport Committee, LAWA has only presented land use options which involve the continued conversion of VNY to a major private jetport for the very wealthy. LAWAs latest Vision proposal is potentially even worse than the prior alternatives in that it proposes to consolidate land use categories to allow for sites that currently can't be used for fixed base jet operations (FBOs) to permit FBO/jet uses. SONC is strongly opposed to this reclassification and believes that there are better options for VNY that balance its role as a jetport along with its historic role as a general aviation airport for occasional use aircraft. SONC further believes that a more balanced approach as described below would be significantly more compatible with the surrounding densely populated neighborhoods.

Therefore,

Because LAWAs Vision for VNY land uses as presented in the “Vision Collaboration” slide do not meet the impacted communities objectives, SONC recommends that the current Vision Collaboration concept be replaced by a Vision Collaboration concept that more accurately reflects true community input. The revised concept should be based on the following goals and features:

1. Any redevelopment of parcels and/or modernization of existing facilities must be done without increasing overall parcel acreage or facility square footage allocated to jet aircraft at VNY.
2. Increase the physical distance between air and noise polluting activities/facilities directly adjacent to residences by replacing those activities/facilities with a landscaped buffer and/or other uses acceptable to the affected neighborhoods.

3. Keep all sites currently designated “Aviation Area - Propeller Aircraft” for prop planes only, and increase acreage for prop planes as needed to accommodate potential future growth, including from the scheduled closure of Santa Monica Airport in 2028.
4. Retain sites currently designated for “Aviation Related Areas” for non-Fixed Based Operations uses such as aircraft maintenance, retrofitting, and other aircraft support functions.
5. Retain and/or provide comparable acreage within the existing Airport boundaries for current “Special Aviation Area” uses such as the on-site fire station, fire fighting aircraft and other disaster relief aircraft.
6. Retain or increase acreage within the existing Airport boundaries for “Public Facility Area” uses such as the existing aviation mechanic school.
7. Set aside land in reserve so that it can be phased at a future date into a site(s) for Advanced Aviation technologies (e.g. eVTOL) and/or other low impact aviation uses, should these technologies be found acceptable to the surrounding communities.
8. Since they are a significant generator of jobs and revenue, retain and intensify, where appropriate, current sites designated for Airport Commercial. Additionally, seek FAA concurrence, if necessary, to convert some acreage currently designated as “Aviation Related Areas” and “Airport Light Industrial” to “Airport Commercial” uses. Revenue from the added Airport Commercial should be used to subsidize use of biofuel, unleaded fuel, and other sustainability goals at VNY.
9. Require all new facilities and modernization of existing facilities to be built using US Green Building Council LEED certification standards including installation of fixed electric ground hook-ups for Ground Power Units (GPUs) to replace use of on-board and ground based APUs.