

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION****DISTRICT 7**

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*Making Conservation  
a California Way of Life*

August 15, 2025

City of Lancaster  
Attention: Shannon Edwin, Planner  
44933 Fern Avenue  
Lancaster, CA 93534

RE: Sierra Azul Apartments (CUP No. 25-005) – Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND)  
SCH# 2025070610  
GTS #07-LA-2025-04855  
Vic. LA 14 PM R66.44

Dear Shannon Edwin,

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the review process for the above referenced project. The applicant proposes to construct a new, 100 percent affordable (30-60% AMI), 228-unit apartment complex in the Commercial Planned Development (CPD) zone. The project includes 24 one-bedroom units, 120 two-bedroom units, and 84 three-bedroom units. The project also proposes amenities associated with the apartments including a pool, community building, children's playgrounds, outdoor picnic areas, and basketball court. The project site will be accessed off 15th Street West. The parcel is currently undeveloped.

After reviewing the MND, Caltrans has the following comments:

Caltrans acknowledges and supports development that ultimately helps California to meet its climate, transportation, and livability goals. However, due to the amount of parking and auto-oriented site plan, the Sierra Azul Apartments Project is designed in a way that induces demand for unnecessary additional vehicle trips. For California to achieve its goals, this demand should be addressed with appropriate design and management principles. Caltrans recommends the following:

- Reducing the amount of parking whenever possible. Abundant car parking enables and encourages driving, with research looking at the relationship between land-use, parking, and transportation indicating that the amount of car parking supplied can undermine a project's ability to encourage public transit

*"Provide a safe and reliable transportation network that serves all people and respects the environment."*

and active modes of transportation. Additionally, rates of car ownership and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) are significantly lower for low-income households than they are for high-income households. At a minimum, car parking should be unbundled from the cost for each unit so that the accurate cost burdens of car ownership can be exposed to market forces.

- Eliminate car parking minimums and consider implementing car parking maximums. Seeing as this project is intended to be affordable housing, with nearly all units being reserved for low-income households, this should be taken into serious consideration. There is sufficient justification to consider implementing car parking maximums for affordable housing projects, like the one proposed, in order to promote affordability and achieve the project's goals.
- Reallocating car parking space towards additional bicycle parking. The project currently provides more than 2 car parking spaces per dwelling unit. Some of this should be used instead for high quality- long-term bicycle parking. Caltrans recommends at least one long-term bike parking space per dwelling unit.
- If surface parking must be built, it is recommended that it not face the street directly. By shifting the parking to the rear or interior of the project site, a more inviting streetscape can be created. A more active frontage, against the sidewalk, can encourage both recreational and transportation walking. These urban design principles can affect mode choice and help the State of California achieve its goals to improve health and reduce Green House Gases (GHG).

This project presents an opportunity for the City of Lancaster to create a streetscape that is safe and comfortable for all users. Caltrans encourages the Lead Agency to consider any reduction in vehicle speeds to benefit pedestrian and bicyclist safety, as there is a direct link between impact speeds and the likelihood of a serious or fatal crash. The most effective methods to reduce pedestrian and bicyclist exposure to vehicles is through physical design and geometrics. These methods include the construction of physically separated facilities such as Class IV bike lanes, wide sidewalks, pedestrian refuge islands, landscaping, street furniture, and reductions in crossing distances through roadway narrowing. Visual indicators such as, pedestrian and bicyclist warning signage, flashing beacons, crosswalks, signage, and striping should be used in addition to physical design improvements to indicate to motorists that they can expect to see and yield to people walking and people riding bikes.

By implementing these recommendations, the Sierra Azul Apartment Project can enhance regional connectivity, improve safety for all users, reduce VMT, and support sustainable transportation choices.

Finally, an encroachment permit is required for any project work proposed on or near Caltrans Right of Way. The transportation of heavy construction equipment and/or materials which requires the use of oversized transport vehicles on State highways will also require a Caltrans transportation permit. We recommend large truck trips be limited to off-peak commute periods and if construction trips are expected to cause issues on any State facilities, please submit a construction traffic control plan detailing potential impacts to Caltrans for review.

If you have any questions, please contact project coordinator Anthony Higgins, at [anthony.higgins@dot.ca.gov](mailto:anthony.higgins@dot.ca.gov) and refer to GTS #07-LA-2025-04855.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Miya Edmonson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Miya Edmonson  
LDR Branch Chief

Cc: State Clearinghouse