



City of Claremont

Quarterly Hotel/Motel City Interdepartmental Team (CIT) Report

Reporting Period: January 1 through March 31, 2023

Publish Date: April 27, 2023

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January 2023

Proactive Building & Safety Inspection Program for Hotels/Motels

To ensure the safety and satisfaction of those who are visiting our Claremont hotels and motels, the Claremont Building Division initiated a proactive building and safety inspection program, which consists of periodic inspections of ALL hotels and motels by Building Inspection and Community Improvement staff. The goal is to visit 5-10 unoccupied guest rooms and accessible common areas at each of the five hotels/motels in Claremont to ensure that building and safety standards are being met.

Inspection at all five hotels/motels in Claremont were completed in January 2023. Any items that required follow-up after the inspections are actively being addressed by City staff and hotel/motel staff. The City is appreciative of this opportunity to work with all hotels and motels to improve our community and further support a vibrant local economy.

Undercover Police Detail

On January 27, 2023, the Claremont Police Department along with the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office Bureau of Investigation conducted an undercover prostitution detail in the area of Indian Hill Blvd. and the I-10 freeway. During the operation, subjects ("Johns") who sought to engage in commercial sexual acts solicited four undercover officers who posed as prostitutes. After the undercover officers were solicited for sex acts, additional undercover officers in the area arrested the "John." During the enforcement detail, 16 subjects were arrested for soliciting a "Prostitute" for sexual acts.

Hotel/Motel Ordinance

On January 28, 2023, a joint meeting of the Planning Commission and the Police Commission was held. At the meeting, Commissioners discussed potential amendments to the City's existing Hotel/Motel Ordinance and provided staff with conceptual direction on the contents of a draft amended ordinance to bring back to the Planning Commission (for a recommendation) and City Council (for adoption).

February 2023

Hotel/Motel Ordinance

During their February 21, 2023 meeting, the Claremont Planning Commission voted to recommend a draft Hotel/Motel Ordinance to the City Council for adoption.

March 2023

Hotel/Motel Ordinance

After months of review and input from stakeholders, including commissions, community members, staff, and hotel/motel operators, a proposed Hotel/Motel Ordinance was presented to the City Council during a public hearing held on March 14, 2023. The City Council approved the second reading and adoption of this Ordinance at their regular meeting on March 28, 2023. Once it becomes effective (April 27, 2023), the Ordinance will become a new, stand-alone chapter in the City's Zoning Code and will impose several new requirements for hotel/motel operators citywide:

- A hotel/motel operator may not re-rent rooms when guests check out before their minimum length of stay has elapsed (i.e., 18 hours for motels; overnight for hotels)
- The Ordinance will require guests to provide a valid credit/debit card as a way to verify their identity (even if they are paying for their room with cash)
- All hotels and motels are required to maintain a guest register that contains guest information specified in the Ordinance, and employees are required to sign an attestation stating that a guest matches the photo on their Identification Document (ID)
- All hotels and motels are required to scan images of a guest's ID
- Permit parking is required for all hotels/motels
- CCTV recording cameras are required in a hotel/motel's common areas, entry points, and parking areas
- The Ordinance explicitly outlines site and operational requirements, like security, cleanliness, room furnishings, and the condition of the exterior of the property and common areas
- The Ordinance reflects the strictest possible inspection requirements that are permitted under current law

Several "exceptions" to these requirements will only be granted to a hotel/motel operator if they are approved for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP). Changes in hotel/motel operations imposed by the Ordinance will need to be completed within three months (July 27, 2023) of Ordinance adoption and changes that require physical improvements to the property will need to be completed within one year (April 27, 2024) of Ordinance adoption. The City will also offer an expedited CUP process and a flat rate (\$1,250) for hotels/motel operators who apply for exceptions before October 27, 2023.

City Interdepartmental Team

A City Interdepartmental Team (CIT) was established to proactively address criminal and nuisance activity at hotels and motels, particularly at freeway motels. Representatives to the CIT were appointed as follows:

- Katie Wand, Assistant to the City Manager (CIT Team Lead)
- Alisha Patterson, City Attorney
- Detective Michael Snyder, Claremont PD
- Detective William Livingston, Claremont PD
- Bradley Fliehm, Building Official
- Jason Barber, Community Improvement Coordinator
- Wendy Ramallo, Citizen Representative

Staff may invite community partners (i.e., Los Angeles County Fire Department, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health) to meetings of the CIT, as needed.

Role of the Citizen Representative

Staff is pleased to announce that the City Manager has appointed Wendy Ramallo as the Citizen Representative on the CIT. Staff looks forward to gaining insight and feedback from Ms. Ramallo, who will primarily act as a liaison between community members and the CIT. It should be noted that City staff and the City Attorney will not be able to discuss ongoing/open code enforcement cases, potential legal responses to criminal or nuisance activity, or anything else that is not publicly accessible information with the citizen representative or with members of the community.

Status of University Inn (formerly Knights Inn)

On March 21, 2023, the Planning Commission voted to approve a CUP for the proposed Residence Inn by Marriott at the site of the current University Inn (formerly operated as Knights Inn). The CUP exceptions that were granted for the new hotel (once constructed and operating) are as follows”

- Allowing guest stays of more than thirty consecutive days. Residence Inns are intended to accommodate longer stays. Although these stays rarely last more 30 consecutive days, it is an important part of the service model that the chain uses to attract business travelers and corporate employees.
- Similarly, the operator may also rent rooms to guests for more than sixty cumulative calendar days in a 180-day period.
- While not anticipated to be a significant part of the business, the operator was granted the ability to offer a “day use” program (i.e., hourly room rentals that do not require an overnight stay) if this is something that Marriott wants to offer as a corporate-level program.
- The operator was granted an exception to utilize “digital check-ins” for pre-qualified Marriott customers (i.e., certain Marriott Bonvoy Club members) if that becomes a requirement of the Marriott corporation.
- The operator intends to use parking lot security gates as its parking permit program. If the gates are ever removed, the operator agrees to utilize a parking permit program as required by the Ordinance.

Staff has fielded several questions from community members regarding the next steps. It is staff's understanding that the University Inn is currently not operating as a motel or any other business; it is closed to the public. Based on what the property owner has shared with City staff, there are no plans to operate University Inn prior to demolition; however, the City cannot guarantee this. What the City can and will guarantee is that should the University Inn re-open, it will be in compliance with all of the health and safety protocols described in the new Hotel/Motel Ordinance.

At this time, staff is working with the property owner to establish a timeline to submit plans to demolish the structure. Staff believes that it will be after the appeal period ends.

Status of Motel 6 Landscaping

The deadline for Motel 6 is six months from the date of the City Council appeal hearing date (November 22, 2022); however, the Community Development Director has the ability to grant an additional six-month extension to the deadline. Staff's initial direction to Motel 6 was to complete within the first six months; however, City staff has had some difficulty in assisting their lighting consultant with appropriate lighting solutions so that has delayed all of the work up to this point. Staff hopes to have a solution very soon.

Motel 6 has begun the removal work that is required to complete their landscape plan. Motel 6 has committed to notice City staff a few days prior to removal work that will be completed directly adjacent to residential properties (i.e., they will be removing trees and immediately replacing them with new trees). City staff will inform impacted residents as soon as we receive updates from Motel 6 staff. We anticipate that the removal work should commence in the next few days. We are pleased that Motel 6 has been actively working with City staff to ensure that they meet the requirements of the Architectural Commission and City Council within their six-month deadline.

CIT Next Steps

Next Reporting Period: April – June 2023

Estimated Publish Date for Next Report: July 27, 2023

Goals for Next Reporting Period

- Establish CIT meeting schedule.
- Establish comment form on the City's website (to allow members of the public to provide feedback on hotels and motels).
- Determine the most effective way to document relevant calls for service at hotels/motels (specifically, criminal and nuisance activity that may be stemming from hotel/motel operations) so that this information can be shared in future reports.
- Continue to conduct outreach and offer support to all hotels/motels regarding the requirements imposed by the new Ordinance.
- Assist interested hotels/motels with the streamlined CUP process.