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CITY OF LOS ALTOS WELCOMES NEW DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIRECTOR

Los Altos, Calif. — May 9, 2022 — The city of Los Altos welcomes Michael ‘Nick’ Zornes as its Development Services Director, who will oversee operations within the Planning and Building Divisions.

Zornes brings more than 14 years of community development experience to Los Altos, 10 of which were within public sector agencies for state, county, and city levels of government. Zornes will manage long range development and support staff on short-term planning projects. His role also works closely with the Planning Commission as its staff liaison and advisor.

“We are excited to welcome Nick to the City to lead our Development Services Department. Nick brings great experience and success in areas critical to the mission of Los Altos,” said City Manager Gabriel Engeland.

Zornes comes to Los Altos after serving as the Planning Manager for the county of Riverside, where he oversaw 40 staff and managed a budget of \$40 million. During his tenure, Zornes helped lead efforts in reorganizing the department by adding more staff and consultants to effectively meet the operational needs of the County and its community members.

Prior to his time in Riverside, Zornes worked for the city of Encinitas as a Planner in the Advanced Planning and Housing Section, where he was part of the team integral in obtaining certification for the Housing Element Update. Zornes also assisted in streamlining the department’s development review process.

Engeland continued, “Nick will be leading the Development Services Department through a transition to tightly focus on planning and development, applying Code and State law, and creating and leading programs to implement the updated Housing Element.”

Throughout his career, Zornes has worked in jurisdictions where he primarily concentrated on current and advanced planning, housing, homelessness, and economic development and redevelopment.

“I am excited to join the city of Los Altos. As the Development Services Director, I look forward to working with the residents, businesses, and stakeholders on a variety of projects and issues within the City: planning for the future, while preserving the past,” said Zornes.

Zornes holds a master’s degree in Community Development from the University of Nebraska and a bachelor’s degree in Urban Planning and Sustainability from Arizona State University. He has also earned several certifications from federal and state-recognized organizations in environmental review, hazardous waste operations and emergency response, geographic information systems, and leadership within planning.

Zornes' first day is today, Monday, May 9. His hiring has filled a vacancy left open following the retirement of former Community Development Director Jon Biggs. Laura Simpson, current Interim Planning Director, will aid with the transition before her departure at the end of May.

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