

October 17, 2019

CHAIR AND PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

City of Long Beach
California

RECOMMENDATION:

Recommend that the City Council 1) certify the revised Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR 03-16) based on the final set of maps approved by the Long Beach City Council on March 6, 2018; 2) adopt the updated Land Use Element to the Long Beach General Plan; 3) adopt the new Urban Design Element to the Long Beach General Plan; and 4) repeal the existing Scenic Routes Element to the Long Beach General Plan. (Citywide)

APPLICANT: City of Long Beach
Department of Development Services
411 West Ocean Boulevard, 3rd Floor
Long Beach, CA 90802
(Application No. 1701-01)

DISCUSSION

After more than 10 years of staff and City Council effort, on March 6, 2018, the City Council voted at a public hearing to confirm the General Plan Land Use Element and Urban Design Element PlaceType and Heights Maps and directed staff to update the Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR). Since that time, staff has been working to update the PEIR for the Land Use Element (LUE) and its companion Urban Design Element (UDE), as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The revised PEIR is based on the final set of maps adopted by City Council on March 6, 2018, as well as the updated LUE and UDE plan texts, to which technical changes have been made to align and ensure consistency with the map changes voted on by City Council and the revised CEQA analysis.

THE PLAN

The City of Long Beach's (City) General Plan is a policy document required by State law, which establishes the goals and policies that will guide growth and development in the City through 2040. The General Plan Land Use Element has not been updated since 1989, and citywide development regulations reflect this anachronistic policy framework. The update of the City's General Plan aims to guide Long Beach to a more sustainable future, to improve mobility choices, expand transit access, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and accommodate growth projections in accordance with state law. The proposed LUE and UDE (collectively "The Plan") accommodates the City's population and employment

projections through the horizon year of 2040 while also advancing General Plan goals for open space, active living, improved urban design, sustainability and overall quality of life.

The proposed project includes the approval of two General Plan Elements, the LUE, which is required by state law, and a companion UDE, which would replace the existing LUE (Exhibit A) and Scenic Routes Element (Exhibit B) of the Long Beach General Plan, respectively. The proposed LUE would introduce the concept of "PlaceTypes," which would replace the current approach in the existing LUE of segregating property within the City through traditional land use designations and zoning classifications. PlaceTypes would divide the City into distinct neighborhoods, thus allowing for greater flexibility and mix of compatible land uses within these areas. The proposed UDE would define the physical aspects of the urban environment and would facilitate the PlaceTypes established in the proposed LUE by creating attractive and vibrant places; ensuring appropriate scale and massing for the neighborhood context based on PlaceTypes; improving the urban fabric and public spaces; and defining edges, thoroughfares, and corridors.

THE PROCESS

CEQA requires recirculation of an EIR when significant new information is added after public notice is given of the availability of the Draft EIR, but before the certification of the EIR. In this instance, recirculation is required, due to the substantial changes made to the LUE maps, after the first PEIR was circulated for public review in the fall of 2016. Based on City Council's direction on March 6, 2018, staff developed and published the final set of PlaceType and Height maps consistent with the City Council's motion and made technical changes to the LUE and UDE texts to align and ensure consistency with the map changes voted on by City Council (Exhibits C, D and E). The revised EIR fully analyzed the revised project and has been substantially updated to reflect those changes to the maps and plans (Exhibit F); however, the 2016 EIR is still part of the administrative record (Exhibit K).

Updating the PEIR has involved revising the project description to reflect the City Council changes to the LUE text and maps and working with technical experts in transportation modeling, population forecasting, greenhouse gas emissions modeling and analysis and more, to update the analyses of the proposed LUE, for identifying and disclosing potential environmental impacts and feasible mitigation measures, in accordance with CEQA. Compared to the PlaceType and Height maps analyzed in the 2016 EIR, many areas experienced a reduction in PlaceType intensity and/or maximum height allowance. A full description of these changes is included in Section 3.0: Project Description of the revised PEIR, including Figures 3.7 and 3.8 which depict all changes in PlaceType and Height designations and provide a comparison between the 2016 maps and the final 2018 maps.

The LUE and UDE texts have been updated with technical changes to align them with the Council's direction, to correct minor errors, and to address environmental impacts arising from the environmental review process (Exhibit J). These changes are documented in Section 3.0: Project Description of the revised PEIR (Exhibit F), specifically in sections 3.5.3.3 (UE Policies and 3.5.5.1 UDE Policies and Textual Revisions.

The revised PEIR includes an updated CEQA baseline year of 2018; as such, environmental analyses are based on updated base year data whenever available. Updating the PEIR also included re-modeling existing and future conditions for 88 intersections throughout the city, updating forecast models related to air quality, and conferring with other agencies, such as the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), to gain consensus on these methodologies. Similar to the 2016 EIR, the revised EIR analysis found that all impacts can be reduced to a less than significant level with adherence to Standard Conditions and prescribed Mitigation Measures, with the exception of impacts related to Air Quality, Global Climate Change, and Transportation. The only new impact found to be significant and unavoidable relates to noise. The 2016 EIR did not find Noise impacts to be significant, but, given that the timing and extent of future construction-related noise is unknown, the revised EIR finds this impact to be significant and unavoidable; this conclusion represents a more conservative analysis. Pursuant to CEQA, all required environmental impacts and project alternatives have been considered, and in light of this analysis, the proposed project has been found to provide the only acceptable alternative, despite potential future environmental impacts (Exhibit G).

As required by State CEQA Guidelines Section 15087, a Notice of Completion (NOC) of the Recirculated Draft EIR was filed with the State Clearinghouse on June 18, 2019, and a Notice of Availability (NOA) for the proposed project was filed with the County of Los Angeles (County) Clerk on June 18, 2019. The Recirculated Draft EIR was circulated for public review for an extended period of 60 days, from June 18, 2019, to August 16, 2019, longer than the mandatory 45-day review period. The NOA and/or copies of the Recirculated Draft EIR were distributed to all Responsible Agencies and to the State Clearinghouse in addition to various public agencies, citizen groups, and interested individuals. Copies of the Recirculated Draft EIR were also made available for public review at the Department of Development Services, at all local libraries in the City, and on the City's website. Prior commenters on the project were notified of its availability, including all those who commented on the previous PEIR in 2016 and attendees who signed-in and provided their email addresses during the 2017 outreach process.

A total of 17 letters commenting on the Recirculated Draft EIR were received during the public review period or immediately thereafter. Comments were received from State and local agencies, as well as interested individuals. Comments that address environmental issues are responded to in the Final EIR. Comments that (1) do not address the adequacy or completeness of the Recirculated Draft EIR; (2) do not raise environmental issues; or (3) request the incorporation of additional information not relevant to environmental issues do not require a response, pursuant to Section 15088(a) of the State CEQA Guidelines. However, the City has attempted to provide a response to each comment. Information provided in the Final EIR clarifies, amplifies, or makes minor modifications to the Recirculated Draft EIR. No significant changes have been made to the information or analysis contained in the Recirculated Draft EIR because of the responses to comments, and no significant new information nor any new mitigation measures have been added that would require recirculation of the Recirculated Draft EIR document.

GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY

The LUE and UDE are designed to work together, and upon adoption, will be consistent with each other. These Elements will replace the existing Land Use Element and Scenic Routes Element. The LUE and UDE have been prepared consistent with the OPR Guidelines published in July 2017, and within the framework of California Government Code §65300 (Authority for and Scope of General Plans). Consistency is also present with all remaining required and optional elements of the General Plan.

In 2010, the City adopted an optional element, the Historic Preservation Element, in order to safeguard and capitalize on the historic structures within the City. The LUE and UDE maps depict the City's historic districts and contain policies to continue the historic preservation program of the City. Goal 1 of the Historic Preservation Element, to maintain and support a comprehensive, citywide historic preservation program to identify and protect Long Beach's historic, cultural, and archaeological resources, directly related to LUE Goal 4, support neighborhood preservation and enhancement. LUE implementation strategy LU-M-3, LU-M-43 as well as the neighborhood strategies advance the goals and policies of the Historic Preservation Element. The LUE has focused growth outside of historic districts so that the City's historic and cultural resources may be preserved and retained into the future.

Open Space serves both as a buffer and as recreational space, and to that end the City updated and adopted its Open Space and Recreation Element in 2002. LUE Goal 8 seeks to increase access and the amount and distribution of open space, while the Open Space and Recreation Element seeks to manage open space for public health and safety (Goal 3) and open space for outdoor recreation and recreational facilities (Goal 4). The LUE also seeks through Goal 9 to preserve, protect, restore and reconnect with natural resources, which corresponds to the Open Space and Recreation Element goals of managing open space for preservation of natural resources (Goal 1) and open space for the managed production of resources (Goal 2).

A central focus of the LUE is to expand and diversify housing opportunities (LUE Goal 5). The Housing Element, adopted in 2014, contains consistent goals including to provide housing assistance and preserve publicly assisted units (Housing Element Goal 1, consistent with LUE Goal 4 supports neighborhood preservation and enhancement), address the unique housing needs of special needs residents (Housing Element Goal 2 consistent with LUE Goal 5 and UDE Strategy 1 improve function and connectivity within neighborhoods and districts), retain and improve the quality of existing housing and neighborhoods (Housing Element Goal 3, consistent with LUE Goal 4 support neighborhood preservation and enhancement), and provide increased opportunities for the construction of high quality housing (Housing Element Goal 4, consistent with LUE Goal 2, accommodate strategic growth and change and Goal 5, diversify housing opportunities). Additional Housing Element goals (Goal 5 mitigate government constraints to housing investment and affordability, Goal 6 provide increased opportunities for home ownership, and Goal 7 ensure fair and equal housing opportunity) will be accomplished through the LUE implementation programs involving updates to the Zoning Code and development review procedures, and other measures.

The draft LUE is consistent with the existing Noise Element insofar as it limits noise exposure to improve the compatibility between noise-sensitive land uses and uses that generate noise, for example, recognizing the need to incorporate proper noise insulation and buffers to minimize interior noise in new or rehabilitated housing in residential land uses in areas where ambient noise levels are high. The Noise Element is being updated concurrently and draft policies, similar to the current Noise Element, continue to guide how noise and land use compatibility are addressed throughout the City based on noise contour maps that reflect future development patterns proposed by the LUE.

The City's Mobility Element was updated in 2013 to focus on transforming the City's right-of-way and transportation system to a multimodal approach. The proposed LUE and UDE respond to the Mobility Element's multimodal focus by providing guidance for the way private development and public space is designed to be accessible to all transportation modes. Goal 1 in the Mobility Element relates to creating an efficient, balanced, multimodal mobility network. This goal is consistent with the LUE Goal 1 of sustainable planning and development and Goal 7 to provide reliable public facilities and infrastructure. Broadly, the LUE and UDE focus on multi-modalism, increasing areas of mixed-use and promoting pedestrian friendly design and public realm improvements. At the same time, the LUE and UDE recognize that many residents and visitors will continue to drive. As such, it concentrates growth in transit-rich and mixed-use areas, while allowing for some growth in other areas and maintaining some areas for convenient access by automobile, such as the Community Commercial PlaceType.

The LUE and UDE are also consistent with the Mobility Element Goal 2 to Maintain and Enhance Air, Water and Ground Transportation Capacity; and Goal 3 to Lead the Region by Example with Innovative and Experimental Practices. The LUE maintains transport-reliant industrial uses near the Port, explores neo-industrial uses elsewhere and supports maintenance of the existing street grid while allowing for innovation and complete streets treatments over time. The LUE and UDE work together to create innovative land-use patterns, including establishing the Neo-Industrial PlaceType to accommodate 21st century job-generating uses and improve transitions between residential and industrial zones.

The LUE implementation program includes creation of a Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP) in the immediate term and the PEIR calls for development of the CAAP as a mitigation measure to reduce the greenhouse gas impacts of LUE buildout. The proposed LUE and UDE are consistent with the Air Quality Element adopted in 1996. Four principles guide the air quality element: achieve air quality improvements in such a manner that sustains current economic development while encouraging future growth; improve the quality of life for our citizens by providing greater opportunities, convenience, and choices; reinforce local mobility goals by reducing peak-hour traffic congestion; and foster behavior change through public information and education, incentives and pricing that reflects total societal costs for administration and enforcement. Development of a CAAP is well underway and includes adaptation measures that will additionally lessen the adverse impacts of air quality in Long Beach.

The LUE starts with Goal 1 to implement sustainable planning and development practices. Although all aspects of the LUE and UDE address sustainability, the creation of the CAAP will

further the Air Quality Element's initial intent. Land Use policies related to climate change and sustainability are summarized in Chapter 7 (Appendix) of the LUE.

The City's Seismic Safety Element, adopted in 1988, provides guidance which is consistent with the LUE and UDE. By accommodating strategic growth and change (LUE Goal 3) including diversifying housing opportunities (LUE Goal 5), the City can achieve its goal of accommodating the City's housing need and facilitating upgrades to existing structures.

The LUE implementation program includes updates, as necessary, to the City's adopted Local Coastal Plan (LCP). The LUE and UDE are consistent with the LCP was adopted in 1980. There are minor changes in height contemplated. However, outside of the approved SEASP update process, major changes to the Coastal Zone are not contemplated in the LUE/UDE.

The proposed General Plan update is not only consistent with the other elements of the General Plan, it is consistent with the state statutes and guidelines for preparation of a General Plan. The focus of the plan is to sustainably accommodate housing need and job-generating uses while improving the quality of the built environment in the City, and specific protections are in place to assure safety, quality design and protect historic structures. A more detailed set of consistency findings can be found in (Exhibit H).

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

The required public hearing notice was provided in accordance with the Long Beach Municipal Code (LBMC). A public hearing notice was published in the Long Beach Press-Telegram and in the Grunion Gazette, public hearing notices were mailed to the California Coastal Commission and all City libraries, and three public hearing notices were posted in public places within the City. No comments have been received as of the preparation of this report.

In accordance with CEQA guidelines, the Recirculated Draft EIR was circulated for public review for an extended period of 60 days, from June 18, 2019, to August 16, 2019, longer than the mandatory 45-day review period. The NOA and/or copies of the Recirculated Draft EIR were distributed to all Responsible Agencies and to the State Clearinghouse in addition to various public agencies, citizen groups, and interested individuals. Copies of the Recirculated Draft EIR were also made available for public review at the Department of Development Services, at all local libraries in the City, and on the City's website. Prior commenters on the project were notified of its availability, including all those who commented on the previous PEIR in 2016 and attendees who signed-in and provided their email addresses during the 2017 outreach process.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

In accordance with CEQA guidelines, a Program EIR (EIR 03-16) has been prepared for this project and circulated for public review. CEQA requires a Lead Agency to prepare an EIR for any project that may have a significant environmental effect that cannot be mitigated. For plans such as the LUE and UDE, the City prepares a Program EIR (PEIR), which is a type of

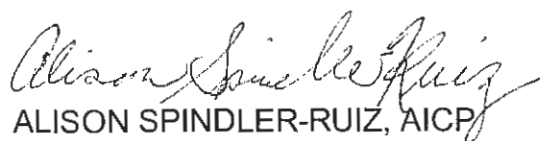
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EIR document designed to consider "broad policy alternatives and program-wide mitigation measures." [CEQA Guidelines §15168(b)(4)]. Subsequent activities, such as development projects or other legislative actions that would be undertaken by the City to implement the LUE and UDE that occur as a result of approval and certification of a PEIR must be further evaluated in light of the PEIR to determine whether or not an additional environmental document must be prepared, depending on whether it is found that new environmental effects could occur and whether new mitigation would be required.

Respectfully submitted,



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LFT:CK:PAD:asr

Attachments:

- Exhibit A - Adopted Land Use Element
- Exhibit B - Adopted Scenic Routes Element
- Exhibit C - Proposed Land Use Element
- Exhibit D - Proposed Urban Design Element
- Exhibit E - Final Land Use & Height Map Adopted by City Council on 3/6/18
- Exhibit F - Draft & Final EIR
- Exhibit G - CEQA Findings of Fact & Statement of Overriding Considerations
- Exhibit H - General Plan Findings
- Exhibit I - City Council Action Taken on 3/6/18
- Exhibit J - Updates and Corrections to LUE and UDE Plan Texts
- Exhibit K - 2016 Draft & Final EIR