



Legislation Text

File #: 18-0186, **Version:** 1

Recommendation to receive supporting documentation into the record, conclude the public hearing, and confirm the proposed General Plan Land Use Element and Urban Design Element PlaceType and Heights Maps, and direct staff to update the Program Environmental Impact Report; and

Increase appropriations in the Development Services Fund (EF 337) in the Development Services Department (DV) by \$350,000, offset by funds available. (Citywide)

Every city and county in the State of California is required to adopt and maintain a consistent and comprehensive General Plan, which guides both public and private development throughout the jurisdiction. The matter currently before the City Council involves the update of the City's Land Use Element (LUE) and adoption of a new Urban Design Element (UDE) to the General Plan (Plan). These documents regulate where growth will occur, how much, how tall, and what it will look like. The requested updates are necessary not only to comply with State Law, but also to meet the City's employment and housing goals. Adoption of the updated Plan is necessary to implement the vision and many of the goals of the Mayor and City Council, as well as the City's Economic Blueprint, and the Workforce and Affordable Housing Study Group recommendations.

The current LUE was adopted in 1989 and forecasted out to the year 2000. The City does not currently have an adopted UDE and does not have policies addressing climate change, sea-level rise or environmental justice within its Plan. The proposed Plan will remedy these shortcomings, provide a pathway to facilitate investment, and improve employment and housing opportunities for City residents. While it does accommodate the 0.14 percent State-mandated annual population growth rate, the primary focus of the Plan is addressing existing overcrowding in the City through expanding opportunities for existing residents to improve their choice of housing accommodations. The Plan also seeks to expand the local economy, improving the opportunities for existing residents to work in Long Beach.

Why an Updated General Plan is Needed

General Plans provide a pathway for cities to accomplish shared goals such as shared economic prosperity, broad housing choices, and availability, promoting multimodal- mobility and overall sustainability. The Plan is used in evaluating private development as well as local governmental actions ranging from annual adoption of the City's Capital Improvement Program to planning for very long-term infrastructure needs. The current LUE is 29 years old and 19 years beyond its forecasted horizon year. More than 44,000 new residents have moved to, or been born in, Long Beach since the 1989 update; output at the Port of Long

Beach has tripled, major changes in the economy have occurred; and, commuting and lifestyle patterns have changed dramatically. A Plan update is necessary to assure that all future decision-making takes into consideration today's existing conditions and challenges related to climate change, sea level rise, and environmental justice.

A Plan update is also necessary to maintain the City's competitiveness for job creation. The Plan utilizes a four-point approach to job creation: continuing the growth of Downtown, capitalizing on existing major economic drivers at the Port, Long Beach Airport, waterfront, and medical centers; modernizing the City's industrial base with the new neo-industrial uses; and, expanding mixed-use opportunities as a mechanism for revitalizing commercial corridors.

The Plan also is needed to address existing infrastructure and community concerns. New development is required to upgrade adjacent infrastructure such as street and alley resurfacing, sidewalks, street trees, and other improvements as projects are built. New development will also provide code-required parking that will help ameliorate existing neighborhood parking impacts. Many existing, older structures were built before parking was required and now contribute to the parking deficiencies found in their neighborhoods.

This Plan addresses the City's housing crisis directly by supporting continued development of Downtown and the Blue Line transit corridor, as well as making modest, but meaningful changes throughout the remainder of the City to allow for new housing construction. In recent decades, the City has consistently missed its Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) required Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) goals due to a lack of adequate new housing construction. While many units have been built Downtown (2 percent of the City by total acreage) and along Long Beach Boulevard (also 2 percent of the City's total acreage), the totality of the City's housing needs cannot be accommodated in this small area. Further, the City has built less housing than is needed to address existing resident overcrowding and the fact that local births have outnumbered deaths year after year, has resulted in a gradual but consistent population growth.

The housing shortage will not improve significantly without updates to the Plan. The Workforce and Affordable Housing Study Group report identified 29 different initiatives to support increased housing production, including recommendation 3.7, which calls for regulatory relief and entitlement reform. Adoption of the proposed Plan is essential to that effort and an important step in the City's overall program to improve housing. The Plan does this by increasing housing production, providing residents with additional choices in where to live. This increased supply will increase the availability, quality and affordability of the housing stock. Importantly, the proposed Plan increases opportunities for housing production without modifying rules for single-family areas, which will be preserved.

Adoption of the Plan is also necessary to add the UDE to the Plan. The UDE will bring design standards to all development citywide assuring residents that all projects will be built to the highest standards of quality in terms of materials, architecture and site layout. Currently, the

City maintains design standards for specific areas, such as Downtown and Midtown, but does not have a consistent standard that can be applied citywide.

The Cost of Inaction

Delay or failure to adopt the Plan will inhibit the City's ability to meet its employment and housing goals, and will result in other troubling consequences. The existing Plan LUE is severely out of date and out of compliance with current legal requirements and guidelines opening the City up to potential legal challenges from any number of regulators, property owners and other entities. Staff remains extremely concerned that, in the long-run, a failure to update the Plan and increase housing production may result in an erosion of local control with the State and others using litigation and regulatory means to usurp the City's land use authority. Recent housing legislation can be directly attributed to the resistance at the local government level to enact plans and processes that facilitate housing production. Evidence suggests the State legislature will continue to usurp local control until meaningful progress is made in housing production at the local level.

In addition, the failure to have an up-to-date Plan does not mean growth will not happen; rather, it creates a lack of certainty and direction for the City, property owners and the public at large. The City will still be required to process development applications, but instead of providing a comprehensive roadmap to 2040, will be forced to process projects on an ad hoc basis without any larger context.

The Inclusive Public Process

The Plan has been developed through a 13-year public engagement process, occurring over roughly three periods: prior to February 2017, from February to August 2017, and most recently another round of meetings from August to October 2017. According to the Governor's Office for Planning and Research (OPR) General Plan Guidelines, provided by the State, "inclusive community engagement is a vital component of drafting and updating a General Plan." Inclusivity refers to soliciting a range of perspectives that reflect the diversity of a community, more so than a pure number of participants, though both are important. Given that Long Beach is one of the most diverse cities in the country, a variety of engagement techniques were needed to reach diverse populations throughout the Plan update process. These included, but were not limited to, residents (both renters and homeowners, given that 58 percent of the Long Beach population is made up of renters); people of all ages including students, young people and seniors; representatives of community groups and associations; business groups and associations; and, stakeholders that represent the range of diverse backgrounds and experiences, including country of origin, sexual orientation, languages spoken at home, and ability status. Another major caveat of the Plan development process includes coordination with other governmental agencies.

Overall, Plan development preparations began in 2004 with background research and initial engagement to existing neighborhood groups. In 2007, the City ramped-up to an

unprecedented engagement effort to establish the vision for the Plan. To involve as many people as possible in the process, the City made extensive efforts to reach the entire Long Beach community. These methods included, but were not limited to, phone banks to contact community groups, neighborhood organizations, and businesses representing the diverse composition of Long Beach. Staff attended community events such as farmers' markets, ethnic festivals, music concerts, car shows, and neighborhood movie nights.

In 2007, there were five large community festivals at which background materials and information were provided. The festivals were designed to be family-friendly, offering snacks and refreshments, a children's workshop play area, and a special bicycle raffle. This input from the festivals and related efforts was compiled in late 2007 into an "emerging themes" document that was shared with the public and posted online. Those emerging themes became the vision found in Chapter One of the Plan and have remained consistent throughout the Plan's decade-long development. Throughout 2008, staff conducted detailed analysis of existing physical and economic conditions throughout the City and continued the public engagement process. A map of community connectors (complete streets) and areas of opportunity and special planning was released to the public in October 2008. This map closely reflects the major areas of change and PlaceTypes map in the draft Plan now before the City Council.

While progress slowed considerably during the Great Recession of 2007, the Plan development process remained open and collaborative with the public. A full effort to finish the document resumed in 2014. The formal environmental process kicked-off with a citywide scoping meeting held in May 2015. A complete version of the LUE and UDE was posted online in May 2015, and iterative changes from that point forward were made based on public comment and interagency feedback. The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) process continued with a public review period from September 1 to November 18, 2016.

The Planning Commission served an important role during the entirety of this process. Study sessions were held in October 2010, February 2013, June and October 2015, and in October 2016. All of these meetings were open to the public and participation included addressing the Commission in-person, and through letters and emails to staff.

During 2016, staff held a citywide open-house regarding the Plan as well as ten community group meetings. Two Council Offices also held their own meetings where staff attended and presented the Plan for discussion. One group of CSULB students expressed their desire to stay in Long Beach after graduation, but also indicated that their employment opportunities would more likely lie outside of the City (Los Angeles, San Francisco and Irvine were given as examples by the students of cities with attractive job markets and housing options). Because the LUE is a long-term plan, it will have the largest impact on those who are currently young adults.

It is not possible to reach every resident of the City, or for an engagement process to be executed perfectly, so that all residents' competing needs and desires are met evenly. Again,

all efforts should be made to employ a variety of means for reaching a representative cross-section of people in ways that are culturally, technologically, and linguistically accommodating. In this case, the process has been comprehensive and has reached a representative sample of the City's residents.

From the beginning, two contrasting themes emerged in the public input received: many stakeholders are highly concerned with the availability and affordability of housing, and many stakeholders are concerned with maintaining the existing character of existing low-density, single-family neighborhoods. As a result, the Plan proposes no increases in development or changes in density within single-family zoned neighborhoods. To create a balanced Plan that also addressed the need for additional housing, increased height and density was introduced for Downtown, transit corridors, and multi-family and commercial areas throughout Long Beach.

Many stakeholders expressed concerns regarding traffic congestion, as well as a desire to continue with a car-centric suburban style of living and concerns about parking. These comments were balanced against comments noting a desire for improved multi-modal infrastructure and a desire to have goods and services within walking distance of housing. This tension led to key provisions that enhance the Plan: some suburban big-box shopping centers are retained as purely commercial, while strip-centers along major corridors will be allowed to convert to mixed-use. Single-family zoned areas will remain unchanged and the Plan does not require or pre-suppose that residents must give up their cars. For those who desire a denser mixed-use environment, opportunities will now be available in Downtown and along major commercial and transit corridors.

In areas where change will occur, growing the City's employment base, whether in mixed-use corridors or in employment centers such as Downtown and Douglas Park, the traffic impact will not be zero; however, it is minimized by the fact these locations are well served by transit and most City residents currently commute outside of the City. Providing an increased number of jobs in Long Beach will shorten trips and limit congestion. Many stakeholders representing business improvement districts expressed interest in mixed-use corridor development, reviving the City's existing commercial streets.

Air quality, vacant and abandoned properties, access to open space, infrastructure, and access to goods and services were all environmental justice concerns raised by many stakeholders. The Plan addresses these concerns with specific policy language prioritizing infrastructure and other investment in disadvantaged communities and acknowledges existing disparities and inequities that need to be addressed. The most important provision the Plan includes addressing environmental justice is replacing industrial areas outside of the Port complex to less-polluting neo-industrial uses that will improve the quality of life and employment opportunities for nearby residents. With these provisions, the Plan complies with SB 1000 requirements for environmental justice and general plans.

The City has a robust historic preservation program with thousands of homes and other

structures under different forms of protection. Many stakeholders expressed concerns about the impact of new development on these resources. As a result, the Plan has evolved over time and now includes height and density reductions around existing historic landmark districts. The Plan includes policy language to require new historic surveys in the greater Alamitos Beach and Belmont Heights areas to assure historic structures are protected.

Other comments raised were related to rates of growth, parks and open space, design, beautification, and other topics. All comments received were carefully considered and helped improve the Plan.

The second period of public engagement began on February 2, 2017, when the Planning Commission conducted a public hearing and initial review of the proposed Plan and associated PlaceTypes and Heights maps. The Commission directed staff to refine the Plan and explore options for increasing density outside of the Downtown and Transit Oriented Development (TOD) core areas. Commissioners directed staff to conduct further engagement in particular with the Wrigley community, given that the majority of the 28 people who provided public comment at the Planning Commission meeting were from the Wrigley neighborhood and expressed concerns that, in their view, the Plan unfairly burdened their area of the City through proposed density allowances focused around Metro Blue Line Stations proposed for transit-oriented development PlaceTypes. A motion was made and approved to have staff conduct at least one more study session to look for additional mixed-use corridor opportunities throughout the City to more equitably distribute height and density.

Based on direction from the Planning Commission, from February to March 2017, staff analyzed citywide corridors to assess them for capacity to accommodate potential height and density and produced a memo that presented maps, photographs and staff analysis of the potential corridors in locations throughout the City where additional density and height could be suitable. On April 6, 2017, the Planning Commission held a special study session on the LUE at the Michelle Obama Library in North Long Beach. An outside facilitator was brought in to identify and clarify what changes the Planning Commission wished to see in the document and maps.

To facilitate the outreach effort, staff developed an updated set of engagement materials, including a new webpage, flyer, and survey. Staff shared the survey, webpage, and opportunities to attend engagement events through an email blast to over 3,100 individuals who had expressed interest in the LUE and/or UED process over the past 10+ years. The survey, flyer, and webpage link were also distributed as part of engagement events throughout May and early June 2017, as described within this letter. The Long Beach 2040 General Plan survey was provided on the website in multiple languages.

The issues of community concern identified in the survey are specifically addressed by the Plan. Based on feedback at the February and April 2017 Planning Commission meetings, staff conducted targeted engagement in and around the Wrigley neighborhoods throughout May and June 2017. Staff conducted five pop-up events in the Wrigley area, including the

Wardlow Metro Station, the Dana Branch Library, and in front of three local businesses. Staff worked with the 7th District Council Office to email local residents alerting them of the pop-up events. Staff shared information about the Plan with passers-by and drop-ins at the pop-up events, distributed flyers with more detailed information, collected survey responses, and shared a webpage link to the online survey for those who did not have enough time to complete the survey in person.

Staff also conducted three small group format meetings with individuals from the Wrigley area who were identified by the 7th District Council Office as community members interested in having the opportunity to dive deeper into concerns about the draft Plan.

The 5th District Council Office held a drop-in event on June 9, 2017, where constituents could stop by to ask questions about all of Development Services' lines of business. Staff answered questions about the overall LUE and a number of specific questions regarding parcels in East Long Beach.

Staff conducted small group meetings with environmental justice advocates, CSULB students and faculty, and housing and homelessness advocates during this same period leading up to the August 17, 2017 Planning Commission meeting. The Planning Commission subsequently requested that staff conduct additional outreach, including additional focus on eastside residents who expressed concerns during the August Planning Commission hearing.

This third and final round of public engagement consisted of small group meetings such as neighborhood associations, business associations, and existing stakeholder groups such as the Workforce and Affordable Housing Study Group. Staff also conducted focus-groups with seniors, homeless youth advocates and students. Another component included staffing informational booths at community events such as Beach Streets and First Fridays.

In addition to these smaller events, staff held four large citywide workshops. While the original intent and format of the workshops was the open house format, staff accommodated in both town hall and open house style formats and planned for both formats after the first workshop. The workshops were organized to respond to a variety of learning styles, language proficiencies, comfort levels with public speaking, and pre-existing knowledge of the Plan. Staff answered questions in a town hall format in addition to providing a separate area with opportunities for one-on-one conversations at individual stations with boards that provided further Plan details. Handouts included draft maps, FAQs, flyers, and overview information provided in multiple languages. Additionally, in-person translators and sign interpreters were available. Participants were encouraged to submit written comments on City-provided comment cards and provide feedback on an online survey made available with iPads. All public comments received were responded to and posted on the project website. The survey results were consistent with prior surveys, while there is a diversity of opinions on how to achieve the Plan's goals, the majority of respondents agreed that changes are necessary and the City needs to address local job opportunities and expand the housing supply. Staff heard a number of concerns at these meetings related primarily to impacts on single-family

residences, traffic, impact of development on existing infrastructures, the impact of State laws on the Plan, additional density in the City, and the preservation of key commercial areas; among other concerns.

Based on the public input received during this third round of engagement, staff reduced height and density in all nine Council Districts, totaling 686 acres. These updates were released to the public in November 2017. A more comprehensive community engagement summary that was provided to Planning Commission in the December 11, 2017, staff report can be found in Attachment B. This attachment also includes a link to all the public comments received on the LUE website and LUEUDE2040@longbeach.gov, since the December 11, 2017, Planning Commission meeting. These comments can be accessed on the LUE website and on the March 6, 2018, City Council agenda for this item, on the City website.

In response to requests for additional opportunities for public feedback on the Draft LUE/UDE, Mayor Garcia organized a series of roundtable discussions with selected individuals and neighborhood representatives from throughout the City. These meetings were hosted by the Mayor during February 2018, in coordination with the Long Beach Council of Neighborhood Organizations (CONO), and the answers to technical questions posed at these meetings are summarized in Attachment C.

The Resulting Plan Based on Public Input

The Plan contemplates continued expansion at, and adjacent to, the Port complex, as well as continued development Downtown, adjacent to the Airport at Douglas Park, Kilroy Center and the former C-17 site. The Plan supports continued tourism development along the Shoreline including opportunity sites at the Pike, Alamitos Beach, and the recently adopted Southeast Area Specific Plan (SEASP). The Plan also contemplates a future effort to refresh the Belmont Pier area in partnership with area stakeholders. Consistent with the adopted Midtown Specific Plan, the proposed LUE supports the continued operation, expansion, and modernization of the hospitals and other medical uses along the Long Beach Boulevard corridor.

A major change in the Plan relates to those industrial areas that are not adjacent to the Port complex. For these areas, the Plan focuses on a transition over time to neo-industrial uses. Traditional industrial uses include refining, trucking, warehousing and other polluting uses. These uses still have a role in today's economy and will continue to be allowed adjacent to the Port and other limited areas. However, in most cases, all new construction and changes of use will need to meet neo-industrial standards, meaning cleaner uses such as product design, fulfillment centers, 3-D printing and product testing, biotechnology, and other clean industry. This will allow the City to attract job-dense, high-wage employers to the City, all while reducing the pollution burden for nearby residents.

The City's current commercial corridors are full of retail strip-centers and other commercial land uses that are increasingly at a competitive disadvantage due to changes in consumer

preferences in today's internet economy. While the City's corridors were originally built as mixed-use, the current Plan largely does not allow mixed-use on commercial corridors outside of Downtown and along the Blue Line transit corridor. The proposed Plan will allow mixed-use along most commercial corridors allowing walkable redevelopment that will bring restaurants, entertainment, goods, and services to the ground floor of new buildings with housing above. This change is anticipated to bring new investment and amenities to many corridors that are in need of upgrades and modernization to better serve adjacent residential neighborhoods.

The Planning Commission Recommendation

On December 11, 2017, the Planning Commission held a special meeting to consider its recommendation of the Plan to the City Council. The Commission received public testimony and made a number of changes to the maps. With these changes, the Commission unanimously recommended that the City Council finalize the maps and direct staff to update and recirculate the Program Environmental Impact Report. The major changes, amounting to an additional 98 acres of reduced density in Council Districts 2, 4, 5, and 6, consisted of:

CD2

- Reduce height on 7th Street from Walnut Avenue to St. Louis Avenue from five stories to three stories
- Change use, and thereby reduce density, on 7th Street from Walnut Avenue to St. Louis Avenue from Neighborhood Mixed-Use Moderate Density to Neighborhood Mixed-Use Low Density

CD4

- Change use, and thereby reduce density, on Bellflower Boulevard at Stearns Street (Sears) from Mixed-Use to Community Commercial
- Change use, and thereby reduce density, of the properties fronting the inner traffic circle (such as the Audi dealership) from Mixed-Use to Commercial
- Reduce height in Traffic Circle area from six stories to four stories (except existing buildings over four stories today)

CD5

- Change use, and therefore reduce density, on Bellflower Boulevard at Spring Street (Kmart/Lowes) from Mixed Use to Community Commercial
- Reduce height at Bellflower Boulevard at Spring Street (Kmart/Lowes) from three stories to two stories

CD6

- Reduce height outside the Midtown Specific Plan borders roughly bounded by Pine Avenue, Earl Avenue, Burnett Street, and Willow Street from five stories to four stories
- Reduce height in area bound by Earl Avenue, Pacific Avenue (alley behind), and 25th Street from five stories to two stories

- Change use, and thereby reduce density, in area bound by Earl Avenue, Pacific Avenue (alley behind), and 25th Street from Transit-Oriented Development to Founding and Contemporary (single-family)
- Reduce height in area east of Midtown Specific Plan bounded by Pasadena Avenue, Linden Avenue, Nevada Street and Vernon Street from five stories to four stories
- Reduce height on Pacific Avenue from 25th Street to 28th Street (outside of the Midtown Specific Plan) from four stories to three stories
- Change use, and thereby reduce density, on Pacific Avenue from 25th Street to 28th Street (outside of Midtown) from Transit-Oriented Development to Neighborhood Mixed-Use Low Density
- Reduce height on Pacific Avenue from 20th Street to 25th Street from four stories to three stories
- Change use, and thereby reduce density, on Pacific Avenue from 20th Street to 25th Street from Neighborhood Mixed-Use Moderate Density to Neighborhood Mixed-Use Low Density
- Reduce height in area bound by 20th Street Pacific Avenue, 19th Street and Locust Avenue from five stories to four stories

The Planning Commission recommended PlaceTypes and Heights Maps are included as Attachment D.

The Process Going Forward

If the City Council finalizes the maps depicted in Attachment D, including any modifications made by the City Council, staff will revise and recirculate the PEIR. The Planning Commission will hold a recommendation hearing on certification of the PEIR, likely during the Fall of this calendar year. The adoption of the Plan and PEIR are then subject to a final procedural adoption vote by the City Council. Additional public input opportunities are provided at each of these steps.

Once the Plan is adopted, staff will undertake a five-year effort to implement the necessary changes to the Zoning Code and City regulations to implement the goals and policies of the Plan. Public input will again be afforded during this process and individual code amendments will be subject to City Council review and approval. Finally, individual projects will remain subject to the entitlement process, in most cases including a public hearing before the Planning Commission with full public input. In summary, the action before the City Council will not result in immediate change, but is an important step forward toward addressing the City's long-term employment and housing needs over the next 22 years.

This matter was reviewed by Assistant City Attorney Michael J. Mais on January 29, 2018 and by Budget Analysis Officer Julissa José-Murray on January 25, 2018.

City Council action is requested on March 6, 2018. Section 21.21.103B of the Zoning Regulations requires a City Council hearing on a Planning Commission recommendation to

take place within 60 days of the Planning Commission hearing, which took place on December 11, 2017.

The cost of the PEIR is estimated at \$350,000. The cost will be offset from funds available in the Development Services Fund (EF 337); however, the expense is not currently appropriated. Therefore, an appropriation increase in the Development Services Fund (EF 337) in the Development Services Department (DV) in the amount of \$350,000 is requested.

There is no direct local job impact associated with these recommendations. While the LUE does seek to improve the local economy, generating new employment opportunities, retail and housing development, the exact fiscal impact of these actions is dependent on future macro-economic conditions that will occur over two decades and, therefore, cannot be estimated at this time.

Approve recommendation.

TOM MODICA
INTERIM DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

APPROVED:

PATRICK H. WEST
CITY MANAGER