



Date: September 29, 2017

To: Patrick H. West, City Manager *T.H.W.*

From: Amy J. Bodek, Director of Development Services *A. Bodek*

For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: **General Plan – FAQs and Misconceptions Collateral**

The City of Long Beach Development Services Department is conducting four additional General Plan engagement events (community open houses) to gain stakeholder feedback. The General Plan community open houses are scheduled as follows:

- Saturday, September 30, 3-5 p.m. at Veterans Park Community Center
- Wednesday, October 4, 6-8 p.m. at Whaley Park Community Center
- Saturday, October 14, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. at Best Western Golden Sails Hotel
- Wednesday, October 18, 6-8 p.m. at Expo Center in Bixby Knolls

In support of the community open houses, the Department has developed two collateral documents:

- Frequently Asked Questions
- Misconceptions and Concerns

Both documents will be available for viewing and download by the public on the City's General Plan website: www.longbeach.gov/lueude2040. Documents will also be available to community workshop attendees.

The Department has received inquiries regarding the format of the meetings. The open house meeting style was specifically selected as an outreach method to provide staff with the maximum input from a diversity of voices. A typical town hall format does not allow that to occur, and can be intimidating to some constituent groups who don't feel comfortable participating in more formal types of meetings. All four meetings will be handled in the same format, with the same opportunities to engage, to ensure that all information is disseminated in the same manner. The opportunity for a typical presentation format will still exist at the Planning Commission and City Council meetings.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call Amy Bodek, Director of Development Services, at (562) 570-6428.

ATTACHMENTS

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In the past 18 months, the City of Long Beach has conducted approximately 40 community engagement events regarding the General Plan. The meetings and workshops continue to provide valuable information from residents and business owners. The City expects to make important changes to the Plan based on comments from the public. After changes have been made, the Plan will be reviewed by the Planning Commission and upon approval, it will be presented to City Council near the end of 2017.

1. *What is a General Plan?*

A General Plan is a broad, long-range policy document that guides future development, conservation, and is a comprehensive collection of goals and policies related to a multitude of aspects of community life. In California, cities and counties are required by State law to have a General Plan. It is the local government's long-term blueprint for future development. Pursuant to State law, the General Plan must accommodate the required amount of projected population growth the State of California estimates for each city.

2. *What is Zoning and how is it different from the General Plan?*

Zoning ordinances implement General Plan policies through detailed development regulations, such as specific types of uses and building requirements. Zoning implements the General Plan with greater specificity as to what can be built where, development standards, parking requirements, etc.

3. *What makes up a General Plan?*

California requires seven elements within the General Plan: Land Use, Circulation (Mobility), Housing, Conservation, Open Space, Noise, and Safety. The City of Long Beach has also adopted optional elements including Scenic Routes, Public Safety, and Historic Preservation. Consistency across all adopted elements is legally required.

4. *Why update the General Plan?*

State law requires it. Also, the City must be prepared to manage industry changes and population growth.

5. *Why is the City proposing more residential density?*

Pursuant to State law, the General Plan must accommodate the projected population growth the State of California estimates for each local jurisdiction or city. The City's obligations to create housing are detailed in the City's state-approved General Plan Housing Element. The Land Use Element is legally required to be consistent with the Housing Element.

6. *What is the Land Use Element?*

The Land Use Element describes objectives, policies, and programs for areas within a city's boundaries in both narrative and graphic terms and establishes development criteria and standards. This includes a map of allowable land uses, building types, and heights. Land use categories are used to depict the general distribution, location, and extent of public and private uses of land. It includes forecasts for jobs and population, and establishes policy to accommodate those projections. It includes implementation measures to guide future public and private investment and development.

7. What are PlaceTypes?

This Land Use Element takes land use planning to a new level by also incorporating physical features and characteristics that define these unique places: building massing and scale (the size and magnitude of a structure with relation to other buildings in the area), development patterns, accessibility, infrastructure, and streetscape design. PlaceTypes take into consideration how the development looks and how it relates to the streets, sidewalks and neighboring buildings. This is a deliberate step away from regulating buildings based solely on how tall they are or how many square feet they contain.

8. What is the Urban Design Element?

While the Land Use Element focuses on specific parcels, the Urban Design Element focuses on “the stuff in between,” such as building form, space between buildings, pedestrian space, public open space, connectivity and linkages, and a building’s relationships to the street. The Urban Design Element supports PlaceType development with an emphasis on development patterns, streetscapes, and urban form components; and how PlaceTypes relate internally and with adjacent PlaceTypes.

9. Who will use the General Plan?

The City Council and Planning Commission use the goals and policies of the General Plan as a basis upon which to make both long-term and short-term decisions, determine long-term objectives, generate and evaluate budgets, plan capital improvements, and prioritize tasks. City staff throughout all of its departments will also reference the General Plan when considering development applications, capital improvements, service programming, and departmental budgeting. Individual residents, existing and prospective business owners, and the development community can also seek guidance for preserving and enhancing the community through the General Plan. Finally, other local and regional agencies will refer to the General Plan when projecting future needs and services. The General Plan is truly the City’s collective guide to the future.

LONG BEACH GENERAL PLAN

General Plan Land Use Element Misconceptions and Concerns

The General Plan can be complex. The City has heard some “statements” that we want to address so that residents and business owners are receiving the most accurate information.

1. *“These maps are final and there is no chance to change them.”*

The City is currently in the public outreach process on this plan. The maps are expected to change as the City continues to collect input. If you have comments on the plan, please fill out the survey and talk to the staff at the public outreach meetings about those specific concerns.

2. *“If this plan is adopted, we will start seeing new buildings almost immediately.”*

The long-term goal of the Plan is to expand the number of jobs and the amount of housing, and elevate design standards for new development. This is a long-range plan, and buildout of new housing and commercial areas are expected to occur over the next 23 years.

3. *“This plan will replace my favorite shopping center with housing.”*

Commercial areas will absolutely remain part of the Land Use Element. However, this plan allows certain shopping centers to redevelop in the future to allow both shopping opportunities and housing options. Under the plan, no shopping centers are being eliminated and replaced with housing.

4. *“New high-rise buildings will be built everywhere, including in single-family neighborhoods.”*

High-rises will not be allowed in single-family neighborhoods. The Plan allows for sustainable growth in downtown, with low, mid, and some high-rise buildings, where appropriate. Other areas of the City, such as Artesia Boulevard in North Long Beach or 7th Street through Central Long Beach, could see new mixed-use structures over time. These structures could be three, four or five stories in height. While these buildings may be taller than others on these streets, they will not be high-rise or tower structures. One of the main goals of this Plan is to improve housing supply, giving people new opportunities to live in a comfortable apartment or buy a condo, all while making this City more livable, walkable, enjoyable and preserving our existing single-family areas without change from how they exist today.

5. *“The Plan does not require any new parking for new development.”*

All new developments must provide parking to be in accordance with zoning requirements, and the Land Use Element does not change any parking regulations.

6. *“This seems very similar to the cracker boxes.”*

During the 1980s the City of Long Beach made a series of damaging and poor decisions that allowed for the construction of low-quality apartment buildings in and adjacent to single-family neighborhoods (also known as cracker boxes). These public policy mistakes left lasting effects on the City of Long Beach. The proposed Land Use Element takes a completely different approach. Single-family areas (referred to as Founding and Contemporary Neighborhood PlaceType in the Plan), account for more than 34 percent of the City’s land area and will not be changed. The Plan does allow for modest growth in other areas, such as along commercial streets, in Downtown, near transit stops, and at large shopping centers. In order to shape this new development, the Plan includes a proposed Urban Design Element that will hold all new developments to very high standards of design and quality.



LONG BEACH GENERAL PLAN

General Plan Land Use Element Misconceptions and Concerns

7. *“The Plan is based on the idea that people will walk, bike, and use public transit.”*

The General Plan, like our existing Mobility Element, is about giving people choices and making it easier to choose a healthier and sustainable lifestyle. Long Beach continues to improve transportation options, such as making the Metro system safer for riders or through the City’s Bike Share program. The goal over time is to have people choose more often to walk, bike, take the bus, or use a rideshare service. The Plan is also realistic and recognizes many residents and visitors may continue to drive, and that is why accommodations for cars, bikes, transit, and pedestrians are all made in the plan.

8. *“The City does not have a housing shortage.”*

In fact, Long Beach does have a housing shortage. The State of California projects population growth and assigns those projections to each region. The region then assigns growth to each city. Long Beach has seen 44,000 new residents since 1989 when the last General Plan update occurred, and the Land Use Element projects 3.9% growth by 2040, or 18,230 new residents. At the same time, the State has assigned the City with a proportion of regional housing needs. Per the State, the City must be able to accommodate at least 7,048 housing units by 2021.

9. *“The City is seeking to forcibly destroy churches and replace them with high-density housing.”*

The City respects all religious institutions; they are a part of the glue that holds our community together. The City cannot, and will not, use eminent domain against any owner of land for the benefit of new private development. While the City anticipates that all religious institutions will remain operating in their current locations, the Plan provides individual property owners with the opportunity and flexibility to move, sell or redevelop if they choose.

10. *“Our community would benefit more from keeping the current plan in place.”*

The existing Land Use Element was last updated in 1989 and only forecasts up to the year 2000. Without a revised General Plan, the City cannot set new goals to improve the community. A failure to update the Plan does not mean there will be a suspension of new development; it means population growth will continue to occur but in a haphazard manner because development will be processed without a clear masterplan.

11. *“If no action is taken, there will be no change in the City and people won’t move here.”*

The City does not control population growth, but we can all work together to plan for current and future generations. Since 1989, Long Beach has experienced 44,000 new residents. Increases in population will continue. The City’s housing needs stem from population growth and a housing shortage that already impacts existing residents and leads to unaffordable housing prices.

12. *“This plan is part of a statewide plot to override zoning and force neighborhoods to accept low-income residents.”*

The General Plan contains clear development policies and includes height restrictions throughout the City. The vast majority of new housing built over time will be market rate housing for a variety of family types.

LONG BEACH GENERAL PLAN

General Plan Land Use Element Misconceptions and Concerns

13. “We don’t have the infrastructure for new development (water, parks, trash, etc.)”

The City is currently making historic levels of investment to upgrade the City’s infrastructure for the benefit of existing residents, thanks to residents’ support of Measure A as well as new State and local transportation dollars. However, new development is required to pay substantial impact fees that will cover the cost of upgrading roads, police, fire, storm water, and school facilities for new buildings.

14. “There is no legal requirement to incorporate plans to improve housing or reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”

The Plan is written to comply with local, regional, and State laws and will comply with the State of California Planning and Zoning Law, the Office of Planning and Research General Plan Guidelines, the Southern California Association of Governments Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy, the SCAG Regional Housing Needs Assessment. The Plan will also comply with other State laws pertaining to global warming, reducing vehicle miles traveled and promoting transit, environmental justice, and climate change adaptation. Simply put, State law requires every city to have a current and compliant General Plan.

15. “The City has not done any outreach to the community.”

The City has conducted about 40 community engagement events over the past 18 months regarding the General Plan. The City’s methods of public engagement are intended to include the voices of many stakeholders throughout all corners of the city. Because of the City’s belief in the value of hearing many voices, our outreach process has likewise been varied. It has included traditional Q&A formats, but also relies on more modern outreach methods, including surveys, pop-up events, and drop-in open house workshops.

