

**STAFF-RECOMMENDED MODIFICATIONS  
DOWNTOWN LANCASTER SPECIFIC PLAN  
September 9, 2008**

1. **Figure 5-3 (Boulevard District Regulating Plan):** Under Subdistrict BD-2, add “Live-Work Lofts” and “Rowhouses” as allowable building types.
2. **Figures 5-3 to 5-9 (All Districts):** Under the “Notes” portion of the text, revise the third sentence to read: “In addition to the above building types, civic and public buildings are allowed within all Downtown Districts subject to approval of the Reviewing Agency.”
3. **Page 5-23 under “Exceptions”,** revise second sentence to read: “An exception to a development specification on Figures 5-10 through 5-17 may be granted only if the Reviewing Agency approves the following findings for the exception:”. Add sentence following the listed findings to read: “The Reviewing Agency’s determination may be appealed to the Planning Commission as provided in Chapter 6.”
4. **Section 5.6, Page 5-45 under “Exceptions”,** revise the second sentence to read as follows: “An exception to a Design Regulation may be granted only if the Reviewing Agency approves the following findings for the exception:”. Amend sentence following the listed findings to read: “The Reviewing Agency’s determination may be appealed to the Planning Commission as provided in Chapter 6.”

# PLANNING COMMISSION

AGENDA ITEM: 4.

**ACTION** Approved (5-0-0-2)

DATE: 08-18-08

Commissioners Ervin and Jacobs absent

## STAFF REPORT

### GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 08-01 DOWNTOWN LANCASTER SPECIFIC PLAN (SP 08-01)

DATE: August 18, 2008

TO: Lancaster Planning Commission

FROM: Planning Department

LOCATION: 140± acres generally bounded by the Kettering Street, the Union Pacific Railroad ROW, Newgrove Street east of Date Avenue and Milling Street west of Date Avenue, and 10<sup>th</sup> Street West, with extension west of 10<sup>th</sup> Street West at the intersection with Lancaster Boulevard

REQUEST: 1. Approval of a General Plan Amendment to redesignate the site from a combination of C (Commercial), MR2 (High Density Residential), LI (Light Industrial) and P (Public) to SP (Specific Plan) (**Note: Portions of this area are currently within the Transit Village District boundary as defined by the General Plan; this action will not alter those boundaries.**)

2. Approval of the Downtown Lancaster Specific Plan (DLSP), rezoning the site from a combination of CBD (Central Business District), CPD (Commercial Planned Development), C (Commercial), HDR (High Density Residential), LI (Light Industrial), and P (Public) to Downtown Lancaster Specific Plan (SP 08-01).

RECOMMENDATION: Adopt Resolution No. 08-19 recommending to the City Council certification of Environmental Impact Report No. 07-02, approval of General Plan Amendment No. 08-01, and the adoption of the Downtown Lancaster Specific Plan (SP 08-01).

GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION, EXISTING ZONING AND LAND USE: The area covered by the proposed specific plan contains a mix of residential, commercial, industrial, and public land use designations, zoning classifications, and uses as noted in Section 5.1 of the final environmental impact report. The land use designations, zoning classifications, and existing uses bordering on the proposed specific plan area are also varied, but are primarily industrial to the east, residential to the south, a mix of commercial and residential to the west, and a mix of residential and institutional to the north.

PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS: The downtown area contains various infrastructure systems, including streets, sidewalks, water, sewer, and other utilities that have been installed over time to serve development that has occurred. The draft specific plan describes potential changes that could occur to the physical layout of area as additional development occurs in the area, including the modification of street widths and configurations, the addition of public plazas, and the upgrading of sewer and water systems (depending on density of new development). Potential impacts and necessary mitigation measures relative to public improvements is discussed in Sections 5.3, 5.7, and 5.10 of the final EIR.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW: A final EIR has been prepared that analyzes the potential impacts of the proposed project. The Planning Commission is required to recommend to the City Council whether to certify this final EIR and make recommendations on required environmental findings. Ultimately, it will be the responsibility of the Council to determine whether the EIR was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and to find that the identified environmental effects are insignificant, adequately mitigated, or acceptable due to overriding considerations prior to any final approval of the Downtown Lancaster Specific Plan. These required findings are contained in Exhibit "A" of Resolution No. 08-19.

Effective January 1, 1991, applicants whose projects have the potential to result in the loss of fish, wildlife, or habitat through urbanization and/or land use conversion are required to pay filing fees as set forth under Section 711.4 of the Fish and Game Code. Pursuant to Section 21089(b) of the Public Resources Code, the approval of a project is not valid, and no development right is vested, until such fees are paid.

LEGAL NOTICE: Notice of Public Hearing was posted in three places and noticed in a newspaper of general circulation per prescribed procedure.

ANALYSIS: The Downtown Lancaster Specific Plan (DLSP) was initiated by the City of Lancaster in 2005. The DLSP is part of a larger overall planning effort within the downtown area of Lancaster that commenced with the preparation of the North Downtown Transit Village Vision Plan and the establishment of the Transit Village District within the Lancaster General Plan in 2001. The goal of the DLSP was to establish a long-term vision and the necessary design requirements to guide future development for the portion of the downtown area centered on Lancaster Boulevard, the historic "main street" of the City.

The DLSP also represents a next step in the long-term commitment of the community to the downtown area. Since Lancaster's incorporation in 1977, the City has made considerable investment within the historic downtown area, including the placement of public facilities (City Hall, Museum/Art Gallery, Lancaster Performing Arts Center), encouraging the placement of various County facilities (Sheriff's Station, Los Angeles County Library), the improvement of infrastructure (parking lots, drainage), and aesthetic improvement (removal of roof signs, installation of street trees and street furniture).

A major component of the overall preparation process for the DLSP was public outreach. Described in detail in Chapter 3 of the specific plan document, the outreach effort involved downtown property owners, business owners, community leaders, and members of the community. On May 18-20, 2006, the City, in conjunction with RBF Consulting, conducted a three-day “downtown immersion” community involvement process that served to define the community’s vision of downtown, identify positives and negatives, and provide some education on downtown revitalization. The effort culminated in a design charette on Saturday, May 20, in which participants were given the opportunity to graphically describe their vision for downtown Lancaster. In addition to the immersion effort, opportunities were provided for public education and input through a website and information centers located in several downtown areas. The information compiled in this effort was used to create a draft vision for downtown that was presented to the public on July 20, 2006, for review and comment. Further refinements were made based on input received at these July 20 presentations.

Once the draft vision was confirmed, RBF Consulting was tasked with preparing a draft specific plan that would allow for implementation of the overall vision. This information was presented to the community in various meetings held in May and June 2007, for a final review. Once accepted, RBF initiated preparation of the draft EIR, which was released for public review in May 2008 concurrent with the draft DLSP.

#### Contents of the Downtown Lancaster Specific Plan

The DLSP is comprised of several sections that address various aspects of future downtown development. Chapter 2 describes how the specific plan is consistent with State planning law and is consistent with the adopted Lancaster General Plan. Chapter 3, as previously discussed, outlines the public participation effort that resulted in the overall vision for downtown Lancaster. Chapter 4 describes the projected development scenario by 2030, and a summary of the infrastructure improvements that would be necessary to accommodate the projected growth. Chapter 6 establishes how the adopted plan would be administered, which is discussed further below.

Chapter 5 contains the regulating code, and is the primary section that will dictate the manner in which individual developments are built. The regulating code differs from conventional zoning in that it is a “form-based” code, meaning that it places greater emphasis on building placement, design, and appearance, and less emphasis on use. Form-based codes, because of their emphasis on the built environment, are more effective at creating pedestrian-friendly space between the buildings that is “comfortable” to be in. In contrast, a conventional zoning ordinance places most emphasis on use, and the resulting buildings and spaces between them may bear little relationship to each other. Within the proposed DLSP, the regulating code consists of several different components:

#### Downtown Districts

Based on community input, the DLSP identifies seven distinct districts within the downtown area. Each of these districts represents a different emphasis, based on location, existing use, and the long-term downtown vision. Participants in the downtown visioning effort supported this approach, noting that even now there are contrasts between various sections of

downtown. They felt that this would provide more diversity over the long term, certainly a goal of any higher-intensity, mixed-use area such as envisioned for downtown Lancaster.

#### Land Use

As previously noted, a form-based code does not place primary emphasis on land use controls, although they do exist. Within the DLSP, land use requirements are established by a simple matrix for each of the districts in Table 5-1, along with some explanatory notes.

#### Building Types and District Regulating Plans

The plan establishes for each of the seven districts the types of buildings, roof forms, elevation treatments, and site layouts required or allowed within Section 5.4. In addition, Section 5.5 establishes maximum building heights for the area, which are done both to ensure proper scale and relationship with outdoor space and other surrounding buildings. Within each of these districts, there is sufficient flexibility to allow for a diversity of architectural styles while ensuring compatibility between buildings in terms of mass and height, as well as the relationship between open areas and the buildings themselves.

#### Development and Design Standards and Guidelines

Section 5.6 establishes both design regulations (basic requirements that must be met by all development) and design guidelines (descriptive elements that serve to further define the desired character for the downtown area, but may not be required of all projects). Taken together, these elements are intended to provide for building details that further enhance the appearance of the downtown area, regulate signage design and placement, and deal with accessory elements such as walls, fences, landscaping, etc.

#### Administration

The plan establishes a Reviewing Agency composed of the Planning Director, Director of Public Works, Director of Economic Development/Redevelopment, Director of Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization, and the Director of Parks, Recreation, and Arts with the responsibility of administering the various components of the plan. This Reviewing Agency would be responsible for the review of development proposals within the specific plan area to ensure that they are consistent with the intent and requirements of the regulating code of the specific plan. The Reviewing Agency would also have the authority to grant adjustments to the development and design standards within certain limits as described in the plan. This approach is similar to the one established within the specific plans for the Fox Field Industrial Corridor, the Lancaster Business Park, and the Armargosa Creek Specific Plan. The exception to this is that any requirement for a conditional use permit as established in Section 5.3 would still require review and approval by the Planning Commission. Also, determinations of the Reviewing Agency could be appealed to the Planning Commission.

#### Proposed Modifications

In the review of the draft DLSP, staff has found several areas that require minor modification. In some cases, these changes provide some additional flexibility in the allowable development for

certain areas, and in others they are necessary to ensure consistency in the administration of the plan with respect to the authority of the Reviewing Agency. Staff feels that the Commission should recommend these modifications to the City Council as part of the adoption of the plan:

- Figure 5-3 (Boulevard District Regulating Plan): Under Subdistrict BD-2, add “Live-Work Lofts” and “Rowhouses” as allowable building types.
- Figures 5-3 to 5-9 (All Districts): Under the “Notes” portion of the text, revise the third sentence to read: “In addition to the above building types, civic and public buildings are allowed within all Downtown Districts subject to approval of the Reviewing Agency”.
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Staff feels that the specific plan establishes the necessary vision, regulating code, and other requirements to ensure that downtown Lancaster can develop as a vibrant, distinctive, mixed-use area. The plan reflects the input and vision of the community received through a series of public engagement efforts. Therefore, staff recommends that the Planning Commission recommend certification of the final environmental impact report and approval of the proposed general plan amendment and specific plan to the City Council.

Respectfully submitted,



Brian S. Ludicke, Planning Director

Attachments: Exhibit “A” – Findings (Draft)  
Exhibit “B” – Downtown Lancaster Specific Plan

## RESOLUTION NO. 08-19

A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF LANCASTER, CALIFORNIA, RECOMMENDING TO THE CITY COUNCIL CERTIFICATION OF THE FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT (EIR NO. 07-02), THE ADOPTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL FINDINGS, THE ADOPTION OF A STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS, AND APPROVAL OF AN AMENDMENT TO THE ADOPTED GENERAL PLAN OF THE CITY, KNOWN AS GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 08-01, AND THE ADOPTION OF A SPECIFIC PLAN, KNOWN AS SPECIFIC PLAN NO. 08-01 (DOWNTOWN LANCASTER SPECIFIC PLAN)

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 3.A of City Council Resolution No. 93-07 an amendment to the adopted General Plan of the City has been initiated by the Lancaster City Council in 2005 to redesignate 140± acres as shown in the Downtown Lancaster Specific Plan document to SP (Specific Plan), and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 17.24.040 of the Lancaster Municipal Code, the City Council has initiated a change to the zoning designation on the subject property to the Downtown Lancaster Specific Plan, and

WHEREAS, notice of intention to consider the General Plan amendment and specific plan for the subject property was given as required in Sections 65854 and 65905 of the Government Code of the State of California; and

WHEREAS, staff has performed necessary investigations, prepared a written report, and recommended that the General Plan amendment and specific plan requests be approved; and

WHEREAS, public notice was provided as required by law and a public hearing was held on August 18, 2008; and

WHEREAS, this Commission hereby recommends to the City Council certification, pursuant to Section 15090(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, that the final environmental impact report prepared for this proposed project has been completed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as described in Section 3 of Exhibit "A" of this resolution; and

WHEREAS, this Commission hereby certifies, pursuant to Section 15090(a)(2) of the State CEQA Guidelines that the final EIR was presented to the Commission, and that the Commission reviewed and considered the information contained in the final EIR prior to making a recommendation to the City Council; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 15090(a)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines, this Commission hereby recommends that the City Council certify that the final environmental

impact report reflects the City's independent judgment and analysis as described in Section 4 of Exhibit "A"; and

WHEREAS, this Commission based on the evidence in the record, hereby adopts the following findings in support of approval of General Plan Amendment No. 08-01:

1. There is a need for the proposed land use designation of SP in order to allow for a specific plan to be approved for the downtown Lancaster area that will allow for long-term development of a mixed use district in an aesthetically pleasing manner.
2. The proposed designation will be compatible with other land use designations in the area, including nearby commercial, industrial, and residential designations, because the SP designation will allow for adoption of a specific plan that provides for proper building and design transitions between these adjoining areas and the downtown area.
3. The proposed amendment is consistent with and implements Goals 16 and 19 of the adopted General Plan, because it will promote the economic viability of the downtown area, and thereby the City as a whole, and will allow for the establishment of a mix and variety of land uses with an aesthetically pleasing physical environment.
4. The proposed amendment is consistent with the following objectives and policies of the General Plan:

**Objective 16.5:** "Maintain downtown Lancaster as a cultural, financial, and governmental center."

**Policy 16.5.2:** "Encourage the development of cultural facilities and related businesses in the downtown area."

**Policy 16.5.3:** "Support Redevelopment efforts to encourage appropriate office and commercial development in downtown Lancaster in order to accommodate finance-related businesses."

**Policy 16.5.3:** "Promote the development of a transit village development district around the Metrolink Commuter Rail Station order to further strengthen the role of downtown Lancaster as the cultural, financial, and government center of the City."

**Objective 19.1:** "Ensure that all development within the City of Lancaster yields a pleasant living, working, or shopping environment, and attracts the interest of residents, shoppers, and visitors as the result of consistent exemplary site, architectural, and landscape design."

**Policy 19.1.1:** "Promote high-quality projects and facilitate innovation in building design, land use mixes and site planning, and by encouraging mixed-use



developments that contain, when appropriate, pedestrian scale and uses that encourage a sense of place.”

**Policy 19.2.5:** “Promote the creation of a transit village development district around the Metrolink commuter rail station to provide opportunities for transit-oriented development, including housing, shopping, public services, and employment opportunities with a safe, pedestrian-friendly environment.

5. The proposed amendment would encourage the provision of a range of housing styles and types, because it allows for the adoption of a specific plan that encourages mixed use development, and allows housing within the various districts that comprise the downtown area.
6. As noted within the final EIR (EIR 07-02), there may not be sufficient water available to serve all development contained within the expected 2030 build-out scenario. However, the intent of the proposed general plan amendment is to allow for the adoption of a specific plan that would guide the long-term development of the downtown area with respect to physical design, and the general plan amendment and specific plan itself do not make such development mandatory or constitute a development project, but are instead regulatory in nature. All individual development proposals would be required to obtain water service from the appropriate water purveyor, currently Los Angeles County Waterworks District No. 40, or any subsequent purveyor, prior to construction. The benefits of the regulatory framework provided by the specific plan outweigh the potential lack of water to allow development, as noted within Section 7 of Exhibit “A”.
7. The proposed amendment would not adversely affect the economic health of the City, because the proposed specific plan would allow for the generation of additional economic activity within the downtown area.
8. The proposed site could be adequately served by necessary services and utilities, based on information contained in the final environmental impact report prepared for the Downtown Lancaster Specific Plan (EIR 07-02), provided that appropriate upgrades in size and capacity of existing facilities are made over the life of the specific plan as warranted by development that occurs in the downtown area.
9. The proposed amendment may have an adverse effect on traffic and circulation systems as noted in the final EIR and discussed in Exhibit “A”. Mitigation measures exist to reduce this impact in certain cases to less than significant; however, significant effects would still occur; these significant effects are considered acceptable due to overriding considerations as noted in Section 7 of Exhibit “A”.

10. The proposed amendment is in the public interest, because it would allow for the adoption of a specific plan that will provide a framework for the development of the downtown area into a vibrant mixed use district in accordance with community goals as expressed in the public outreach effort conducted for the preparation of the Downtown Lancaster Specific Plan.

WHEREAS, this Commission, based on the evidence contained in the record, hereby makes the following findings in support of the approval of the adoption of an ordinance adopting the Downtown Lancaster Specific Plan (SP 08-01):

1. The proposed Downtown Lancaster Specific Plan (SP 08-01) is consistent with the proposed General Plan land use designation of SP proposed for the subject property, and with identified goals, objectives, and policies of the adopted General Plan as noted within this Planning Commission resolution.
2. Modified conditions, including the opportunity to allow for development of the downtown area as a mixed use district containing retail, dining, office space, residential, and public uses in accordance with community goals as expressed in the public outreach effort for preparation of the Downtown Lancaster Specific Plan, warrant a revision in the zoning plan as it pertains to the area under consideration.
3. A need for the Downtown Lancaster Specific Plan exists to establish the necessary development standards and guidelines for the development of a mixed use area within downtown Lancaster.
4. The particular property under consideration is a proper location for adoption of this specific plan, because it will allow for development that is compatible with and will enhance the City's historic center.
5. Adoption of the Downtown Lancaster Specific Plan at such a location will be in the interest of public health, safety, and general welfare and in conformity with good zoning practices, because it allows for development in a way that is sensitive to and consistent with the community's long-term goals for the downtown area.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

1. This Commission hereby recommends to the City Council certification of the final environmental impact report as stated in this Resolution.
2. This Commission hereby recommends to the City Council adoption of all environmental findings and the Statement of Overriding Considerations as contained in Exhibit "A".

3. This Commission hereby recommends to the City Council approval of General Plan Amendment No. 08-01 to redesignate the subject property to SP (Specific Plan).
4. This Commission hereby recommends to the City Council adoption by ordinance of Specific Plan No. 08-01, known as the Downtown Lancaster Specific Plan, as contained in Exhibit "B", with modifications as noted on the attached cover sheet to Exhibit "B".

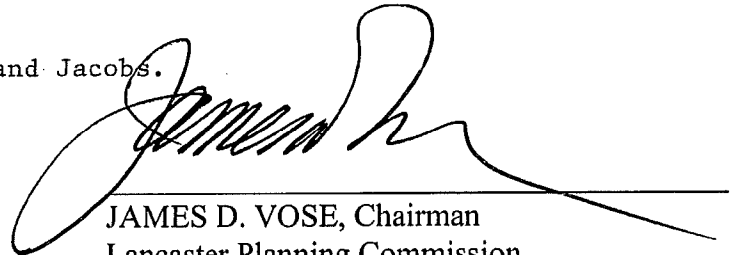
PASSED, APPROVED and ADOPTED this 18<sup>th</sup> day of August 2008, by the following vote:

AYES: Commissioners Burkey, Haycock and Malhi, Vice Chair Smith, Chairman Vose.

NOES: None.

ABSTAIN: None.

ABSENT: Commissioners Ervin and Jacobs.



JAMES D. VOSE, Chairman  
Lancaster Planning Commission

ATTEST:



BRIAN S. LUDICKE, Planning Director  
City of Lancaster