

**STAFF REPORT**  
**City of Lancaster, California**

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Date: June 23, 2009

To: Mayor Parris and City Council Members

From: Brian S. Ludicke, Planning Director

Subject: **Lancaster Comprehensive General Plan Update**

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**Recommendation:**

Adopt **Resolution No. 09-52**, a resolution of the City of Lancaster, California, certifying the Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and Master Environmental Assessment (MEA), adopting environmental findings, Statement of Overriding Considerations, Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, and adopting the comprehensive General Plan Update that encompasses the entire city.

**Background:**

On February 8, 2005, the City Council initiated a comprehensive update of the adopted General Plan for the City of Lancaster. This update represents the first comprehensive revision to the General Plan since 1997 and reflects new growth projections from the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), extending the planning horizon to the year 2030. On January 24, 2006, the City Council approved an agreement for professional services with RBF Consulting, Inc. for the update of the City's General Plan. The agreement included an extensive outreach program, which helped identify the community's "vision" for the long-term growth of Lancaster.

On June 13, 2006, the City Council approved the formation of the General Plan Citizens Advisory Committee (GPCAC). The GPCAC met regularly from January to November 2007. They reviewed the goals and objectives of the General Plan Policy Document, participated in the development of land use alternatives, and recommended a preferred land use plan. On December 1, 2008, the City released a draft of the EIR for a sixty-day public review and held a meeting before the Planning Commission on January 6, 2009, to receive public comment on the draft document.

From September 2008 through April 2009, the Planning Commission held eleven special meetings to receive public comment and to study the draft General Plan documents. The Planning Commission held a public hearing on May 11, 2009, and voted 7-0 to approve Resolution No. 09-12, recommending to the City Council certification of the EIR and MEA, adoption of environmental findings, Statement of Overriding Considerations, Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, and adoption of the comprehensive General Plan Update.

**Analysis:**

This “community based” General Plan reflects the community vision priorities gathered from the outreach process:

- Balance Growth
- Ensure Economic Well-Being
- Strengthen Community Identity
- Improve Public Safety
- Promote Active Living
- Focus on Education and Youth
- Support Environmental Conservation
- Ensure a Balanced, Efficient Transportation System

The GPCAC revised the General Plan goals and objectives in conformance with the above vision priorities. They also assisted in the development of land use alternatives, and recommended a preferred land use plan that best represented the vision priorities.

The three land use alternatives analyzed included the “No Project Alternative,” the “Balanced Growth Alternative” and the “Focused Growth Alternative.” The “No Project” reflects the existing 1997 General Plan land use map. The “Balanced Growth” promotes a balanced distribution of land uses throughout the city. The “Focused Growth” emphasizes utilization of available infill areas within the urban core, and promotes development of localized community centers, characterized by compact mixed uses. Neither of the alternatives showed an expansion of the urbanizing area, or areas designated for urban density development. Staff determined that the urbanizing area contains enough land to support year 2030 growth projections. The Preferred Plan developed and selected by the GPCAC uses the “Focused Growth” as a base, but also includes features of the “Balanced Growth” alternative. The GPCAC Preferred Plan concentrates future growth within the urban core, but also allows for a balanced distribution of land uses in areas outside the urban core.

The Planning Commission Land Use Recommendation is largely based on the GPCAC Preferred Plan, but includes modifications, some in response to requests received after the development of the Preferred Plan, deemed appropriate by the Commission. The Commission recommendation slightly redefined the urbanizing area to include a half-mile area bounded by Avenues J and K, from 65<sup>th</sup> to 70<sup>th</sup> Street West. It also includes a small area by the Plant 42 overflight area, near Avenue K-8, west of 15<sup>th</sup> Street East, in respect to comments received from Air Force officials. The recommendation also includes a quarter-mile buffer area of NU (non-urban) east of the State prison, bounded by Avenues I and J, from 47<sup>th</sup> to 50<sup>th</sup> Street West.

Despite these changes, the recommendation includes no large conversion of rural land outside of the Urbanizing Area, consistent with the community’s vision priorities, as well as new State mandates for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions (AB 32). The recommendation’s emphasis on compact, infill development reduces vehicle miles traveled, and creates alternative transportation opportunities. It contains a land use pattern that promotes sustainability, through the prioritized use of existing infrastructure and the concentration of services within localized areas. Further, it supports the concept of developing balanced neighborhoods within the urbanizing area, containing a mix of residential, commercial, educational, and recreational uses, instead of the large single-use areas.

Due to these reasons, staff and Planning Commission recommend that the City Council approve the comprehensive General Plan update, with all corresponding documents.

CCN:BSL/jr

**Attachments:**

Resolution No. 09-52

PC Staff Report for the May 11, 2009, Meeting

Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR)(cd;Available for review in the City Clerk Department)

Master Environmental Assessment (MEA)(cd;Available for review in the City Clerk Department)

General Plan Policy Document (Available for review in the City Clerk Department)

General Plan Land Use Map (Available for review in the City Clerk Department)