

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

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07/14/09
MVB

Date: July 14, 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, with modifications as adopted by the City Council.

**June 23, 2009, City Council Meeting:**

On June 23, 2009, the City Council opened the public hearing for the General Plan Update. The Council considered the testimony of several members of the public related to the overall General Plan, including the issue of the land use designation at the northeast corner of Avenue M and 30<sup>th</sup> Street West (allow designation of OP (Office Professional) to provide opportunity for the development of office uses as financial support for a religious temple). The Council also reviewed and considered several minor changes to the proposed General Plan policy document.

The Council also requested supplemental information on two other issues related to the General Plan. The Planning Commission recommended that the property on the east side of the prison (roughly bounded by Avenue I, 47<sup>th</sup> Street West, Avenue J, and 50<sup>th</sup> Street West) be designated as NU (Non-Urban) to provide a “buffer”. Currently, this area is designated for a combination of multi-residential and urban residential, and two applications are currently filed for residential projects in this area.

The second issue involves 120 acres in the vicinity of 110<sup>th</sup> Street West and Avenue J. This area is currently recommended for approval as NU (Non-Urban) with a specific plan overlay. The City Council also requested supplemental information on this issue. The City Attorney has prepared memorandums regarding both issues for review by the City Council.

**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 (Available for review in the City Clerk Department)

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)