



CITY OF CARSON

PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

PUBLIC HEARING: January 10, 2023

SUBJECT: Carson 2040 General Plan Update, General Plan Amendment No. 115-23

APPLICANT: City of Carson

REQUEST: Consider a Comprehensive General Plan Update, the Associated Final Environmental Impact Report and provide a recommendation to the City Council

PROPERTY INVOLVED: Citywide

COMMISSION ACTION

AYE	NO		AYE	NO	
		Chairperson (Vacant)			Hernandez
		Vice-Chair Palmer			Huff
		Diaz			Monteclaro
		Docdocil			Rashad
		Guerra			D. Thomas
					Alt. (Vacant) Alt. Mfume Alt. Wilson

I. Introduction

The effort to update the 2004 General Plan began in the Fall of 2017. This update, Carson 2040, included six phases. The Carson 2040 General Plan (General Plan) covers the Sphere of Influence of the City, which includes the City limits and some unincorporated areas to the northwest (north of Alondra) and east of the City (north of Del Amo and east of Wilmington). In the first phase, the consultant team produced an Existing Conditions Report that offered a detailed assessment of existing conditions, trends, and opportunities in the City. The report was developed using inputs from stakeholder interviews including City Council members, the community, and City Staff. On February 13, 2018 the consultant team shared the Existing Conditions Report at a joint City Council and Planning Commission meeting.

Item No. 6A

In the second phase of the update process the consultant team assisted in developing the City's Vision Statement and Guiding Principles. This effort was completed through extensive community outreach. Input was collected through an online survey, community workshops, stakeholder interviews, and General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) meetings. Decision-makers also provided input during a joint City Council and Planning Commission study session.

During the third phase, the consultant team produced three land-use alternatives and an Alternatives Report based on the previously established Vision Statement and Guiding Principles. To develop the three alternatives, potential "opportunity sites", sites with greatest potential for land use change or intensification over the next 20 years, were identified within the Planning Area. This was accomplished by mapping vacant and underutilized parcels using Los Angeles County Assessor's data, local knowledge, input from City staff and the community, and focused windshield surveys. The three land-use alternatives were then developed using the mapped opportunity sites along with input from stakeholders, decision makers and the GPAC. The three alternatives were also shared with the stakeholders who provided further input on them. Staff and the City's General Plan consultant, Dyett & Bhatia, incorporated the comments received from the community, stakeholders and decision makers and combined the three alternatives into one Preferred Plan.

During the public participation process for the Preferred Plan, the City of Carson's Planning Division provided a comment period to the community from September 2, 2020 to October 25, 2020. Outreach included direct mail postcards to each Carson commercial and residential address, weekly email blasts to over 3,000 Carson stakeholders, a hotline available in English, Spanish and Tagalog languages, a dedicated email inbox and website, and social media posts to encourage stakeholders to share their comments. Stakeholders were also permitted to write hard copy letters and place telephone calls to the Planning Division to share their comments.

On January 21, 2021, staff presented the key findings and community input on the Preferred Plan. The City Council approved the Preferred Plan as presented and completed the fourth phase. Dyett & Bhatia, started the fifth phase by preparing the draft 2040 General Plan Update. Similarly, and ESA, City's CEQA consultant, started the sixth phase, preparation of the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Report, based on the draft 2040 General Plan Update. The Planning Commission will be considering the draft 2040 General Plan Update and Final Environmental Impact Report and will make a recommendation to the City Council.

II. Analysis

General Plan

The 2040 General Plan update is a comprehensive update with 9 elements. It is designed to tailor the current 2004 General Plan to the current needs of the City and anticipated futures needs of the City. It introduces a greater mix of land uses to reflect new and changing priorities. It encourages sustainability through transit-oriented, mixed-use, infill development and greater opportunity and equity. It promotes development in the core area and provides greater diversity of non-residential uses. It includes a New Environmental Justice Element. The preparation of the General

Plan ran parallel with Housing Element Update for 6th Cycle (2021-2029) which has already been approved by the City Council.

Vision Statement and Guiding Principles

A vision is an aspirational description of what the community would like to be in the future. It is a summary of the shared goals to be achieved by the Carson General Plan and, along with the guiding principles, sets policy direction. Guiding Principles guide the goals and policies listed in each element. The Vision Statement and Guiding Principles are based on input from the community, developed through stakeholder interviews, a community workshop and pop-up outreach, GPAC meetings, City Council and Planning Commission workshops, and an online community survey. Through the process of creating a vision as part of preparing the General Plan, community members provided their perceptions of future challenges, opportunities, and possibilities.

Vision

Earlier in the General Plan process the vision for the 2040 General Plan was established by the stakeholders. Carson in 2040 is a vibrant, diverse, and energetic place that embraces technology, creativity, and innovation. Residents have access to quality jobs, housing, education, services and a fiscally-sound government. Businesses have access to infrastructure, investment, workforce training, and a collaborative environment. The community is filled with thriving neighborhoods and strategically located new development with inviting spaces for working, living, learning, dining, gathering, and recreation.

Guiding Principles

1. Embrace development and technology that fosters an adaptable, modern city.
2. Promote vibrant, safe, and walkable mixed-use districts and neighborhoods, and revitalized corridors.
3. Provide a diverse array of housing types to meet the needs of all segments of the community.
4. Support a diversified economy with a range of employment opportunities for all residents, a fiscally sound local government, and investment in infrastructure.
5. Encourage development of regional-scale destinations, as well as neighborhood-serving retail and amenities.
6. Foster harmony between industrial and residential land uses.
7. Improve public health and sustainability.
8. Promote development of a cohesive open space system.
9. Enhance the public realm and promote quality design.
10. Emphasize a diversity of transportation modes and choices.

General Plan Elements

The General Plan includes the following elements:

- Land Use and Revitalization
- Circulation
- Community Character and Design
- Recreation and Active Lifestyle
- Community Health and Environmental Justice
- Community Services, Education, and Safety

- Open Space and Environmental Conservation
- Noise
- Economic Development
- Housing Element (published and approved separately)

Land Use Element

The Land Use Element includes new mixed-use and overlay Districts to allow for more flexibility in future development of the City. The following includes the new mixed Districts:

- Mixed Use Districts
 - Downtown Mixed Use
 - Corridor Mixed Use
 - Flex District
 - Business Residential Mixed Use
- Overlay Districts
 - Mobile Home Park
 - Commercial Automotive

Land Use Key Strategies

The General plan identifies the following key strategies:

1. Walkable, transit-accessible, mixed-use infill in Downtown Core
2. Range of uses to remediate industrial land in Flex District
3. Residential and light-industrial uses in Business Residential Mixed Use
4. Retaining and enhancing density and character of most existing neighborhoods
5. Re-envisioning the former Shell site
6. Designated Commercial Automotive District
7. Compatible uses and neighborhood centers in Flex District
8. Pedestrian, cyclist, and transit-friendly green streets along Greenway Corridors

Circulation Element

The following provides the main goals of the Circulation Element:

- Enhancing connection and access through multi-modal mobility such as citywide bike lanes and working with Metro, Caltrans, and SCAG.
- Utilizing Complete Streets concept to create safe roadways for all users including pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders.
- Meet local and regional transportation goals to benefit the community, businesses, and the environment

Community Character & Design Element

This element provides for community design goals for the Downtown Core, Neighborhood Villages, employment centers, and Greenway Corridors. This is proposed to be accomplished by neighborhood, community, and social connectedness as well as promoting attractive, safe, and walkable neighborhoods. The element strives to enhance the city's visual identity and build sense of place and pride in Carson.

Recreation & Active Lifestyle Element

This element strives for maintaining and creating new recreational opportunities for the community. At General Plan buildout, the city will need approximately 85 new acres of parks including greenway corridors and community spaces at rate of 1.9 acres per 1,000 people. The following provides some examples of where these open spaces will be:

- Redevelopment of the Shell site
- Carriage Crest Park expansion
- Passive and active park system with greater connectivity and access for underserved areas

Community Health & Environmental Justice Element

SB 1000 requires cities with disadvantaged communities to include environmental justice in their general plans. CalEPA identifies disadvantage communities as low-income areas that are disproportionately affected by and/or vulnerable to pollution and other environmental hazards that negatively impact human health, most commonly among communities of color.

State law states the following regarding Environmental Justice:

“The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of people of all races, cultures, incomes, and national origins with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.”

The following includes Environmental Justice objectives:

1. Reduce pollution exposure (including air quality)
2. Reduce unique/compounded health risks
3. Promote public facilities (public improvements, public services, and community amenities)
4. Promote physical activity
5. Promote food access
6. Promote safe and sanitary homes
7. Promote civic engagement
8. Prioritize needs of disadvantaged communities

The following includes a list of Environmental Justice issues and policies in Carson:

- Reduce exposure to pollution and environmental hazards
- In 2018, CARB selected Wilmington-Carson-West Long Beach (WCWLB) under AB 617 to develop air monitoring and emissions reduction plans to improve community health. It targets the main pollution sources including industrial land uses and goods movement such as from the Ports of LA and Long Beach
- Strategies to improve community health and advancing equitable distribution of resources and opportunities could include identifying the “grocery gap” and creating opportunities for expanded food access – farmers’ markets, community gardens, urban agriculture and promoting health through education and awareness with the County and other partners

- Improving mobility and connectivity to existing resources for greater access could be encouraged by promoting physical activity through parks and recreation centers, greenways/trails, walkable streets.

Community Services, Education, & Safety Element

- Maintaining and obtaining high-quality educational, community, and public safety services are expected to be met. Partnerships with school districts, CSUDH, and the County could provide greater opportunities for learning and community engagement through programs and services will further this goal.
- The City should proactively identify, plan for, and reduce risks through multijurisdictional coordination to protect the public from geologic events, floods, and exposure to hazardous materials.

Open Space & Environmental Conservation Element

- This element encourages the protection of open space, biological, mineral, and cultural resources through connecting open space with recreation, and leveraging remediation opportunities. This will create biodiversity and ecological quality.
- Coordination with the County and other service providers will ensure continued safe, reliable, and sustainable utilities, solid waste and recycling services.
- The City will strive to protect the community health from air pollution by industrial and transportation sources by implementing the Climate Action Plan to reduce GHG emissions and building climate resiliency in the face of climate challenges like urban heat and drought.

Noise Element

This element encourages the City to maintain healthy sound environments and protect noise-sensitive uses. This is accomplished by land use considerations to locate and design noise-generators to minimize noise/vibration impacts to sensitive uses.

Economic Development Element

- The City is currently in the process of preparing an Economic Development Strategic Plan. Early findings of this Plan will be presented to the City Council in February.
- The City is currently an industrial and manufacturing center. The City should explore ways to add diversity and strengthen its resiliency to changing economic conditions by exploring industry clusters, employment centers, redevelopment of existing older buildings. These industrial new industry clusters diversify will create a mix of alternative employment opportunities and support local the workforce
- This element also encourages creating a livable, business-friendly community with services and commercial amenities for residents, workers, and visitors including fostering a vibrant downtown Core with mix of civic, office, retail, entertainment, and residential uses.

Draft Environmental Impact Report

The Draft EIR analyzed the following topics:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Service Systems

The following topics were found not to be significant in the Draft EIR:

- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Geology and Soils (use of septic tanks)
- Mineral Resources
- Wildfire

The following impacts were found to be less than significant impacts with mitigations incorporated:

- **Biological Resources**
 - Impact BIO-1 (Special-status Species)
 - Impact BIO-2 (Riparian Habitat)
 - Impact BIO-4 (Movement of Migratory Wildlife Species)
- **Cultural Resources**
 - Impact CUL-2 (Archeological Resources)

The following impacts were found to be Significant and Unavoidable Impacts:

- **Impact AQ-2**, The Project would result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard.
- **Impact AQ-3**, The Project would expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations.

- **Impact AQ-4**, The Project would result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) affecting a substantial number of people.
- **Impact CUL-1**, The Project would cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to Section 15064.5.
- **Impact TR-2**, the Project would conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, Subdivision (b).

The following impacts were found to be less than significant impacts:

- Aesthetics
- Biological Resources
 - State or federally protected wetlands
 - Local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources
 - Conservation plans
- Cultural Resources
 - Human Remains
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Transportation
- Conflict with transportation plans
- Design features
- Emergency access
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Service Systems

Project Alternatives Evaluated in the Draft EIR

The DEIR considered but rejected 2 Alternatives:

- The Core Alternative was rejected since it did not meet the basic project objective; and
- The Centers Alternative was rejected since it was infeasible due to existing land use limitations.

The DEIR evaluated 2 Project Alternatives:

- Alternative 1 – No Project Alternative
- Alternative 2 – Corridors Alternative

- The Corridors Alternative clusters new development around major thoroughfares throughout the city, with an increased focus on corridors with the greatest development opportunities.
- Mixed-use development would occur along major streets, with supporting retail, housing, office, and employment uses around the periphery of the mixed-use areas.
- Other large sites throughout the city would be redeveloped to support surrounding neighborhoods.
 - The Shell site would be redeveloped as a new, state-of-the-art R&D campus, bringing more jobs to Carson. R&D and industrial flex uses would be increased along Broadway in the northern portion of the Planning Area.
 - The Victoria Golf Course would be redeveloped as a recreational/open space area and South Bay Pavilion would provide a location for additional housing.
- The Corridors Alternative is projected to result in approximately 34,106 more residents, 9,880 new housing units, and 19,222 new jobs in Carson by 2040.

Final Environmental Impact Report

The FEIR reflects “independent judgment” of decision-making body, includes the following components, and must be “certified” before the General Plan is approved:

- Responses to comments received on the DEIR
- Revisions to the Draft EIR if needed
- Mitigation Monitoring & Reporting Program
- Includes the DEIR

The City received comment letters on the Draft EIR from the following agencies and organizations:

- California Department of Transportation
- Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts
- South Coast Air Quality Management District
- Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department
- Hanson Bridgett, LLP (on behalf of Watson Land Company)

On December 27, 2022, via email, the above agencies and organizations were notified of the availability of the responses to their comments on the Carson 2040 General Plan Update website.

Community Outreach Summary

General Plan

The Preferred Plan was circulated for public review from September 2, 2020 to October 25, 2020. Outreach included direct mail postcards to each Carson commercial and residential address, weekly email blasts to over 3,000 Carson stakeholders, a hotline available in English, Spanish and Tagalog languages,

a dedicated email inbox and website, and social media posts to encourage stakeholders to share their comments. The following provides a summary of public outreach for the General Plan:

- General Plan Stakeholder Interviews, Sep. 2017
- General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) Meetings, Sep. 2017-June 2018
- Online Surveys: Visioning, April 2018 and Alternatives, May 2019
- Community Workshops: Visioning, Nov. 2017 and Alternatives, May 2019
- Housing Element Stakeholder Outreach, June 2021
- Environmental Justice Outreach, Sep. 2021

Environmental Impact Report

The following provides a summary of public outreach for the EIR:

- Notice of Preparation informed the public that an EIR was being prepared for the General Plan Update and invited input from the public on the environmental topics to be addressed.
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 - First NOP - 39-day review period ended December 15, 2017.
 - Recirculated NOP - 30-day review period ended April 16, 2021.
 - Scoping meetings held on December 7, 2017 and April 14, 2021.
- Notice of Availability informed the public that Draft EIR was available and requested comments on the content of the document.
 - Public meeting to take comment on the Draft EIR held on September 29, 2022.
 - The 45-day review period for the DEIR ended on October 17, 2022.

Public Comments

1. C&K Walker, LLC. (Barns Plastics Inc.), 18903 Anelo, requested to keep the General Plan Designation of their property to Light Industrial instead of changing it to Business Residential Mixed Use.
2. William Pournamdari, requested notice of General Plan Hearings.
3. Mike Murchison, requested notice of General Plan Hearings.
4. Whitney Rubin, requested notice of General Plan Hearings.
5. California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), District 7, Miya Edmonson, Response to this comment has been provided in the FEIR.
6. LDR/CEQA Branch Chief Los Angeles County Sanitation District (LACSD), Raymond Tremblay, Department Head, Response to this comment has been provided in the FEIR.
7. South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD), Sam Wang, CEQA IFR Program Supervisor, Response to this comment has been provided in the FEIR.
8. Office of the Sheriff-Los Angeles County, Tracey Jue, Director of Facilities Planning Bureau, Response to this comment has been provided in the FEIR.

III. Environmental Review and CEQA Finding

The General Plan Update constitutes a “project” within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”). After notice of preparation and scoping were completed as required by CEQA, a Draft Environmental Impact Report (“DEIR”) was prepared and circulated in accordance with CEQA the concerning the General Plan Update. The DEIR was prepared by the City’s environmental consultant, working with City Planning staff, and has been independently reviewed by Planning staff and the Planning Commission. Following the DEIR public review period (a 46-day period from September 2, 2022 to October 17, 2022, during which the City also hosted a virtual public meeting on September 29, 2022), written responses were prepared on all comments received, and these comments and responses were incorporated into the Final Environmental Impact Report for the project dated December 19, 2022, (“FEIR”).

The FEIR also contains revisions to the DEIR, which do not result in any new or increased significant environmental impacts that would result from the project. The revised text does not provide new information that identifies new significant environmental impacts and does not identify mitigation measures that, if implemented, would result in significant environmental impacts. Instead, the additions and corrections made to the DEIR merely “clarifies or amplifies or makes insignificant modifications” in the already adequate DEIR, as is permitted by CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5(b). Therefore, the text changes provided in the FEIR do not change any of the conclusions presented in the DEIR in a manner that would require recirculation of the DEIR.

The FEIR includes and incorporates the information required by CEQA Guidelines Section 15132, including the DEIR (dated September 2, 2022) and the aforementioned revisions thereto as well as the comments received on the DEIR and the responses thereto. The FEIR also includes a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (“MMRP”), which has been prepared in accordance with Public Resources Code Section 21081.6 and CEQA Guidelines Section 15091(d).

In addition, a “Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations” (the “Findings & SOR”), was prepared as required by CEQA, including findings pursuant to and in accordance with Public Resources Code Section 21081 and CEQA Guidelines Section 15091, and a statement of overriding considerations in compliance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15093. The FEIR and the Findings & SOR were prepared by the City’s environmental consultant, working with City Planning staff, and have been independently reviewed by Planning staff and the Planning Commission.

IV. Public Notice

Notice of the public hearing was mailed to all property owners, occupants, and business owners within the City on December 21, 2022. A notice was published in the newspaper on December 20, 2022. The agenda was posted at City Hall 72 hours prior to the Planning Commission meeting.

V. Recommendation

That the Planning Commission:

ADOPT Resolution No. 23-___, entitled "A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF CARSON RECOMMENDING THAT THE CARSON CITY COUNCIL APPROVE AND CERTIFY THE FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT, ADOPT THE MITIGATION MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRAM, ADOPT THE CEQA FINDINGS AND STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS, AND ADOPT GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 115-23, THE CITY OF CARSON 2040 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE"

VI. Exhibits

1. Draft Resolution
2. 2040 General Plan Update, Draft Environmental Impact Report, Final Environmental Impact Report, and other supporting documents:
<https://www.carson2040.com/>
3. Comment Letter

Prepared by: Saied Naaseh, Community Development Director