

April 17, 2025

CHAIR AND PLANNING COMMISSIONERS
City of Long Beach
California

RECOMMENDATION:

Recommendation to find that this action is exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); and receive and file the 2024 General Plan Implementation Report and instruct the Director of Community Development to submit the Implementation Report to the City Council, State Office of Planning and Research (OPR) and Housing and Community Development Department (HCD). (Citywide)

APPLICANT: City of Long Beach Department of Community Development
411 W. Ocean Blvd, 3rd Floor
Long Beach, CA 90802

DISCUSSION

Background

Plans are nothing more than bookshelf decorations unless they are implemented, produce results and those results are measured so that implementation can be adjusted to maximize goals and performance. The annual reporting process has always been a legal requirement but has grown in complexity and importance in recent years as City Council has directed further information sharing as public and decision-maker interest in housing and mobility performance has grown.

The City of Long Beach's (City) General Plan is a policy document required by State law, which establishes the goals and policies that will guide growth and development in the City through 2040. The aim of these documents is to guide Long Beach to a more sustainable future, improve mobility choices, expand transit access, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and accommodate growth projections in accordance with state law. Cities and counties in California are required to prepare and adopt a general plan as a comprehensive guide for long-term development. The General Plan analyzes existing conditions and projects needs into the future, as a basis for determining policies, programs, and objectives. It also establishes a long-term policy framework for day-to-day decision-making based upon these objectives.

California law [Government Code §65400] requires cities and counties to provide annual reports on their General Plans to their respective legislative bodies and to the Governor's Office of



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Planning and Research. Reports are required to provide the status of implementation measures found in each element, and with specific reporting requirements for the Housing Element portion of the annual report to be submitted to the State Housing and Community Development Department (HCD). The intent of the statute is to ensure that the General Plan directs all land use decisions and remains an effective guide for future development. The purpose of this annual reporting, then, is to provide enough information to allow local legislative bodies to assess how General Plans are being implemented in accordance with adopted goals, policies, and implementation measures (General Plan Guidelines, 2017, p. 259). Specifically, this report has been produced to satisfy this requirement for the General Plan, and to highlight the implementation achievements with an emphasis on progress in 2024. The most recent updates to the General Plan include the Noise Element (2023), Housing Element (2022), the Land Use Element (LUE) and Urban Design Element (UDE) (2019), and the Mobility Element (2013). Additionally, an effort to update the Open Space and Recreation Element commenced in 2024. Progress and implementation achievements are summarized in this report and detailed in the 2024 General Plan Implementation Report (Attachment A - General Plan Implementation Report).

Housing Element

Calendar year 2024 is the third full year in the 6th Cycle Housing Element Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) cycle. For Long Beach, the RHNA is approximately 26,500 new housing units by 2029 and will be accommodated through a rezoning program designed to implement the policy direction of both the Land Use and Housing Element. The Housing Element aims to achieve a number of housing related goals that include accommodating housing needs in compliance with State law; increasing housing production for all income levels and household types, including special needs populations; improving housing affordability; preserving existing affordable housing; and promoting fair housing choice for all. Housing is a critical community priority and has been noted as one of the most important equity issues in the City as described in the Long Beach Framework for Reconciliation. The Housing Element Update was grounded in equity analyses based on extensive data combined with input from communities most impacted by the housing crisis that shaped the plan's goals, policies, actions, and strategies.

On January 10, 2023, the City Council adopted a proclamation of a local homelessness emergency to facilitate a coordinated, citywide focus and response to the homelessness crisis. This included the temporary suspension of certain procedural requirements in the City's zoning code to allow further streamlining of affordable housing and homeless services development projects. Therefore, many Housing Element programs designed to serve the city's unhoused population were implemented on or before the committed timeframes in the element including related to the addition of emergency shelter sites, a safe parking site, and homeless services resource centers. The City Council declared the emergency period over on February 29, 2024, however implementation of best practices from the emergency period continue to date.

2024 was another banner year for housing production in Long Beach. The City entitled 1,788 housing units, maintaining momentum from the record high established the year prior. More notably, the City set a new annual record for building permits issued with 1,704 housing units permitted, of which 747 were Accessory Dwelling Units and nearly 250 were affordable.

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Furthermore, 1,204 new units were finalized and made available for tenants to occupy. Due to tariffs on building materials such as steel and lumber, uncertain state and federal budgets and sticky high interest rates, City staff cannot provide projections for the short-term on housing starts but does foresees continued high levels of housing activity in the medium and long-term given the approximately 1,500 units of housing in the development pipeline pending Planning approval as of March 2025. Figure 1 below provides a decadal look at residential building permit activity in Long Beach through 2024. As shown on the chart, the trendline for housing construction has progressively increased over time with an increased curve since 2019 which coincided with the adoption of the City’s current Land Use Element. A complete list of permit activity and other required reporting for the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) is provided in the 2024 Annual Progress Report (Attachment B – 2024 Housing Element Annual Progress Report).

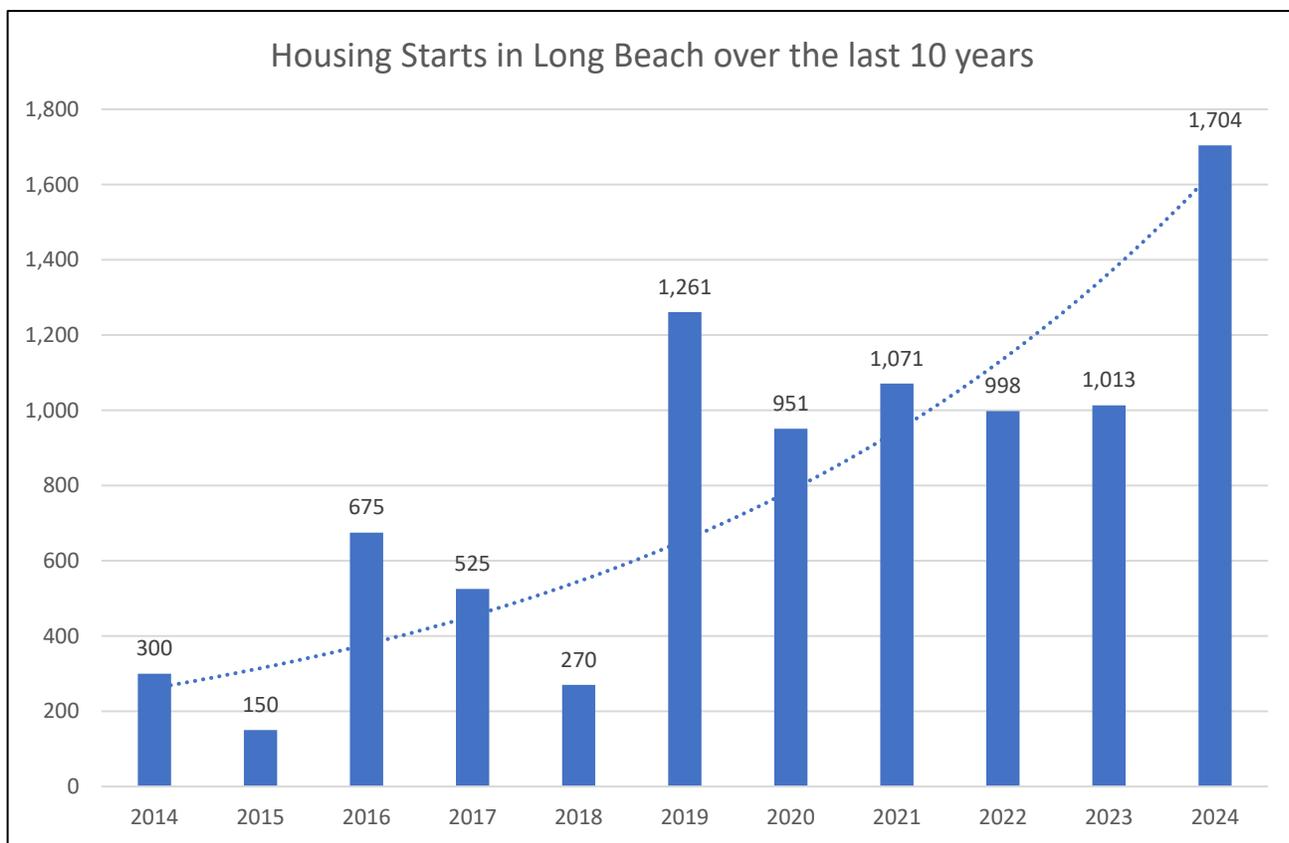


Figure 1

Implementation of several housing element strategies and programs succeeded in facilitating a broader geographic spread of affordable and mixed-income housing developments in 2024. As evidenced in a 2024 analysis by City staff to support expansion of the inclusionary housing policy, the City’s inclusionary housing requirements in the Downtown and Midtown area have facilitated 168 affordable rental units as a direct result of the policy in its first three years of implementation. In 2024 the City initiated the process to expand its inclusionary housing policy citywide and guarantee a mix of affordable units in all major future developments throughout Long Beach. The

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Planning Commission recommended approval for said update in December 2024, and the changes were ultimately adopted by City Council in early 2025. Additionally, the City made major progress with its comprehensive rezoning program known as Zone In. Zone In: City Core and Zone In: Uptown Planning Land Use and Neighborhood Strategy (UPLAN) were both adopted by City Council in September 2024, completing multi-year rezonings for thousands of properties along major corridors in North and Central Long Beach.

The current Housing Element provides the City with a roadmap for accommodating the projected housing units needed to house existing and future City residents through 2029 and guides future decisions that impact housing. California law requires that all cities and counties submit to their legislative bodies as well as HCD a Housing Element which demonstrates that the City has sufficient zoning capacity to accommodate the 6th Cycle Housing Element RHNA allocation or undergo a rezoning program to create that capacity. In addition to Zone In: City Core and Zone In: UPLAN, several rezoning initiatives that help implement the Land Use Element (LUE) and the Housing Element have begun or made progress, including the Downtown Plan Update, Zone In: Bixby Knolls, Zone In: Wrigley, and Zone In: 10th to Broadway. Finally, the City secured significant funding in 2024 to supplement its efforts to maximize housing production, affordability, and equitable spatial distribution through grant funded initiatives including Everyone's Coast, a coastal rezoning and mobility effort under Zone In and a study to support a forthcoming update to its Enhanced Density Bonus program citywide.

Land Use Element

The City's General Plan LUE update and companion UDE were adopted by the City Council on December 3, 2019. The LUE establishes the goals and policies that will guide growth and development in the City through 2040. This update of the City's General Plan aims to guide Long Beach to a more sustainable future, to improve mobility choices, expand transit access, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and accommodate growth projections in accordance with state law.

The LUE and UDE accommodate the City's population and employment projections through the horizon year of 2040 while also advancing General Plan goals for open space, active living, improved urban design, sustainability, and overall quality of life. In addition to accommodating the City's population and employment projections through the horizon year of 2040, the plan creates sufficient housing opportunity to address the City's existing housing need due to overcrowding. The plan focuses on new development near transit and seeks to transform under-utilized commercial corridors to denser, more mixed-use corridors and nodes served by bus lines. This creates development opportunities while helping recycle under-performing strip malls, improving the pedestrian experience, increasing access to jobs, and minimizing direct displacement. The LUE advances several goals and policies for addressing equity in access to housing, jobs, community resources, and open space, while creating more opportunities for active living, improved urban design, sustainability, and overall quality of life for all.

The LUE introduces the concept of "PlaceTypes," which replaced the former Euclidean approach of segregating property through traditional land use designations. PlaceTypes divide the city into

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distinct neighborhoods, allowing for greater flexibility and a mixture of compatible land uses within these areas. This allows for the creation of more complete communities with a greater mix of housing, jobs, and retail within neighborhoods to shorten trips and allow more opportunity for people to take advantage of the City's significant investments in multi-modal transportation, building upon the City's Mobility Element. The LUE's companion UDE defines the physical aspects of the urban environment and facilitates the PlaceTypes established in the LUE by creating attractive and vibrant places; ensuring appropriate scale and massing; improving the urban fabric and public spaces; and defining edges, thoroughfares, and corridors to further enhance the public realm, walkability, bikeability and neighborhood character. Policies and regulations guiding how and to what intensity land can be used are one of the City's primary tools for shaping how the city will develop and evolve over time. How land is used impacts people's access to housing, jobs, shopping, and open space. The most fundamental decisions in planning begin with land use, and there impact on community's health, access to opportunity, the environment and quality of life. Given that property taxes are the number one form of revenue for the City, land use regulations also impact the City's fiscal health and ability to provide city services.

Although there are many actions underway to implement the LUE, the primary mechanism for implementing the LUE is through a comprehensive update to the zoning code through the Zone In program outlined above, which is currently underway in several areas throughout the City. In the 2024 calendar year, the rezoning efforts across the City continued to make great progress. UPLAN Phase 2 and Zone In: City Core were adopted by City Council on September 17, 2024. The adoption included amendments to Title 22 of the Long Beach Municipal Code (LBMC) to establish new zoning districts to implement the Neo-Industrial, Multifamily Residential-Low, and Multifamily Residential-Medium PlaceTypes of the Long Beach General Plan LUE Update in 2019 and to tweak and improve all existing zoning districts contained within Title 22 through a series of minor amendments.

While efforts are behind schedule for projects such as Zone In: Bixby, Zone In: Wrigley and Zone In: 10th Street to Broadway, the Community Development Department (Department) has made major progress toward both overall staffing and addressing rezoning needs of the City. All three projects have resumed with engagement and technical review in 2024 following the adoption of Zone In: City Core and Zone In: UPLAN. Zone In: Bixby is anticipated to come before the Planning Commission and City Council for adoption by Fall 2025.

Additionally, the Planning Bureau in the City of Long Beach received a Caltrans Sustainable Communities Grant to support coastal rezoning and connectivity studies to provide greater access to the beach for Central Long Beach residents while reducing car dependency. The City began a procurement process to secure a consultant that will help staff implement the project known as Zone In: Everyone's Coast. One major aspect of the project is rezoning in the greater Alamitos Beach area tackling tricky issues around mobility and parking shortages, housing growth while preventing displacement and loss of naturally occurring affordable housing, coastal resource protection and visitor and resident serving uses.

Furthermore, there was major progress for the PD-30 Downtown Plan and PD-6 Shoreline Plan updates; in 2024 the City developed a draft Specific Plan for the former that will be released for

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public review in 2025, while the latter had extensive engagement and technical analysis conducted for the Shoreline Vision Plan throughout the year, as exemplified by the three-day summer charrette series and accompanying Downtown Shoreline Vision Plan Opportunities Lookbook.

Building on rezoning work from the previous years, there has consistently been indicators that the amendments to Title 22 are working, with new projects continuing to make their way through the City's development pipeline. Many of these projects rely on and are directly facilitated by the recent rezoning. It is expected that completion of the comprehensive rezoning will appreciably increase housing production in the City consistent with the RHNA assigned to the City and the buildout projections found within the LUE. Additionally, more compact and walkable development not only assists the City in meeting the housing needs of its residents but also in reducing the City's per capita carbon footprint.

The Long Beach Climate Action Plan (LB CAP) is an implementing plan of the LUE and achieved significant progress in 2024, including spearheading the Open Space and Recreation Element update for the first time in 23 years to expand and improve Long Beach's open space network with critical considerations around park equity, accessibility and climate resilience and adaptation measures. Furthermore, the Office of Climate Action and Sustainability had significant achievements around education, outreach and community engagement related to native plants and tree plantings and restoration of Willow Springs Park, alternative transportation options such as bicycling and walking, and green business certification. The Fiscal Year 25 Budget adopted in September 2024 included prioritizing our urban tree canopy, clean coastline access, electric vehicle transition efforts, Bikeshare, parks and open space, water quality enhancements, and infrastructure improvements. These efforts all drive movement towards reducing the urban heat island effect, our reliance on fossil fuels, and water quality issues while improving community connectivity and access to open space.

Finally, in 2024, the Department was recognized as Planning Agency of the year by the American Planning Association Los Angeles Chapter. The award recognizes the department for its excellence in programs and services related to planning, affordable housing, building and safety, code enforcement, neighborhood improvement, and historic preservation to help create and maintain more sustainable, equitable, and livable neighborhoods. The award also recognized how the Department itself has improved and evolved to better serve our diverse community. The Department also received the regional Urban Design Award for the City's recently adopted Victory Park Design Guidelines.

Mobility Element

On October 15, 2013, the City Council adopted the Mobility Element, one of the seven mandated elements of the Long Beach General Plan. The Mobility Element provides direction for how residents, visitors and goods move around the City. The Mobility Element was shaped by extensive outreach to residents, property owners and other community stakeholders. It was based on the City's Principles for Complete Streets and Active Living. Since the Mobility Element was adopted, several supporting plans and policies have been developed, providing a comprehensive mobility planning framework for the City. Streets and sidewalks, known together as the "public

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right of way”, comprise most of the public space maintained by the City. Therefore, it is critical that mobility planning focuses on all users. A central theme of the Mobility Element is support for a balanced, multi-modal transportation network that enhances connectivity and supports existing development patterns, while retaining community character, and enhancing environmental sustainability by reducing gasoline consumption and greenhouse gas emissions and improving public health by improving air quality while providing greater opportunities to be physically active such as through walking and biking. A balanced transportation system uses multiple modes of travel including motor vehicles, public transportation, bicycles, pedestrians and to a lesser extent rail and air transportation.

The emphasis on multi-modal, context sensitive street design advances several broad goals including retaining community character; enhancing environmental sustainability by reducing gasoline consumption and greenhouse gas emissions; and improving public health by improving air quality while providing greater opportunities to be physically active through walking and biking. In addition, the Mobility Element serves as a guide for a wide range of City planning documents and programming activities, such as the Capital Improvement Program, transportation-related plans, project entitlement applications and regional planning documents. Since the Mobility Element was adopted, the Downtown/Pedestrian Transit-Oriented Development Master Plan, the Bicycle Master Plan and the Communities of Excellence in Nutrition, Physical Ability, and Obesity Prevention Pedestrian Plan have all been developed and adopted as technical appendices of the Mobility Element. Key accomplishments include new bikeway and pedestrian improvements, updates to 39 Mobility Capital Improvement projects and Mobility of Goods which is made possible in collaboration with our partners at the Port of Long Beach.

In addition, on December 10, 2024, City Council adopted a Zoning Code Amendment and Local Coastal Program Amendment for the Change of Use Parking Amendment (COUPA). This adoption came as a result of both City Council direction and changes in the City’s business climate after the pandemic with an effort to ease the pressure of parking requirements on business redevelopment and outdoor operational opportunities. This included a request for City staff to explore removing the change use parking requirements on existing buildings, to reduce barriers to activating vacant storefronts, which currently leads to blight and adverse impacts on communities. One of the efforts to achieve this goal has been to address the parking requirements for change of use, where one business use changes to another use with minimal or no expansion of the existing building or tenant space. These types of circumstances have been identified as a barrier to filling storefront vacancies. COUPA helps accomplish a series of policy objectives including removing additional parking requirements for the change of use for a building more than ten years old, creating a Parking Exempt Area and removing parking minimums to bring the code into compliance with California Government Code Section 65863.2 (Assembly Bill 2097), and updating entitlement processes relating to parking requirements. Given that transportation accounts for nearly half of greenhouse gas emissions in Long Beach, actions to encourage low-carbon and carbon-free forms of transportation such as walking, biking, and taking public transit are also central to implementation of LB CAP.

The 2024 General Plan Implementation Report provides an overview of these and other key accomplishments and status updates. Specific implementation program and project updates are

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included in an appendix to the report. Significant progress has been made toward achieving the Plan's goals, as this report and the past three annual reports demonstrate. The Implementation Report was prepared by the Department with input from the Public Works, Health and Human Services and Harbor Departments.

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

This item is not a public hearing; therefore, no public hearing notice is required. However, this item appeared on the Planning Commission meeting agenda that was provided in accordance with the provisions of the LBMC. No public comments have been received as of the preparation of this report.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This annual report is exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378 as this action is not defined as a project. The annual report is an administrative activity and does not authorize new development. Furthermore, in accordance with the CEQA Guidelines, the aforementioned general plan elements were analyzed for potential environmental impacts at the time of adoption, which included a Negative Declaration (ND-01-11) for the adoption of the 2013-2035 Mobility Element, a Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR-03-16) for the adoption of the LUE/UDE, an Environmental Impact Report Addendum (EIRA-02-21) for the Housing Element Update, and an Environmental Impact Report (EIR-03-20) for the adoption of the Noise Element. The General Plan helps the City achieve its vision and goals for creating a more sustainable community.

Respectfully submitted,



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DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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Attachment A – General Plan Implementation Report
Attachment B – 2024 Housing Element Annual Progress Report