

October 17, 2024

CHAIR AND PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

City of Long Beach
California

RECOMMENDATION:

Recommendation to receive and file a study session on the observance of National Community Planning Month. (Citywide)

DISCUSSION

Background

The City of Long Beach (City) Community Development Department's (Department) Planning Bureau (Bureau) facilitates urban planning and helps guide development in the City. The Bureau is dedicated to creating a vibrant, equitable, and sustainable city through effective land use planning and development review, community engagement, and policy development.

In recent years, the Bureau has worked to address significant local challenges and changes, including the housing and homelessness crises, climate emergency and the need to rectify historical inequities. To address these issues, the Bureau has implemented several initiatives while also achieving key milestones.

Highlights of Significant Achievements

- **Housing Entitlements:** In 2023, Long Beach had a record year for entitling housing units, with 2,934 units entitled, far exceeding the average of the previous three years. Of these, 645 units were designated as affordable, underscoring the City's commitment to providing housing for all.
- **New Housing Construction:** Last year, the City granted building permits to 1,011 new units, including 671 Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), contributing to continued growth throughout Long Beach. So far for 2024, Bureau staff anticipates being on track to have a record year for new construction, or new housing starts.
- **Advancing Fair Housing:** The entitlement approvals for three major mixed-use, mixed-income housing developments under the Southeast Area Specific Plan marked a significant achievement, providing the first covenanted affordable housing units in the southeastern "high-resource" area in decades, which directly addresses geographic fair housing disparities.



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- **Rezoning Efforts:** Planning's "Zone In" citywide rezoning initiative made substantial progress in modernizing zoning regulations to support new housing and address land use equity by adopting new zoning districts in North and Central Long Beach through a community-centered process.
- **Pro-Housing City:** Long Beach was formally recognized by the State Housing and Community Development Department as a "Pro-Housing City," affirming the City's dedication to housing initiatives.
- **Parks Design Guidelines:** The update of the Victory and Santa Cruz Parks Design Guidelines, adopted by City Council after decades of work, reflects Planning's commitment to preserving and enhancing Long Beach's public green spaces.
- **Awards and Recognition:** Earlier this year, the City's Community Development Department was honored as Planning Agency of the Year by the American Planning Association (APA) Los Angeles Chapter. Additionally, the Victory and Santa Cruz Parks Design Guidelines and the Race and Suburbanization Historic Context Statement also received awards.

Community Celebration

In honor of Community Planning Month, to share in these accomplishments and continue the Bureau's engagement efforts, the community is invited to a pizza party after the October 17, 2024, Planning Commission meeting. The celebration will be held in the lobby at Long Beach City Hall (411 W. Ocean Boulevard, Long Beach, CA 90802).

Looking Ahead

The milestones mentioned above are largely the result of the community partnerships Bureau staff have cultivated in recent years. These partnerships have allowed for more meaningful engagement, particularly with the residents most directly affected by the housing crisis through various formats, including virtual, in-person, mail-based, and door-to-door outreach. The Department's approach has evolved from a traditional extractive model to becoming more collaborative and mutually beneficial, focusing on co-developing engagement strategies and recommendations while sharing City resources to meet immediate community needs, all while participating in long-range planning. The Bureau is committed to continually enhancing its communication and outreach strategies to better serve Long Beach's diverse communities.

The Department is also implementing communication improvement strategies, including continued website reform and introducing digital engagement through video series and interactive multilingual resources. Ongoing communications efforts include:

- **Engaging with the Community:** The Department will continue to host events such as the Housing Policy Forums series to continue soliciting feedback while showcasing progress achieved so far and explore creative ways to increase access to quality, affordable, stable housing.

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- **Rectifying Historical Inequities:** City staff will work on initiatives that help to address the legacies of inequality and segregation to further fair housing commitments while tackling the City's housing and climate crises.
- **Updating the Downtown Plans:** Bureau staff is working closely with the community and organizational partners to shape the future of the Downtown and Downtown Shoreline.
- **Continuing "Zone In" Initiatives:** Ongoing Citywide rezoning efforts and the adoption of Title 22 will further support housing development and land use equity.
- **Further Promoting Housing in High-Resource Areas:** Department staff are working to create new opportunities for housing citywide through zoning reform, inclusionary housing and density bonus, including in high resource areas
- **Updating the Open Space Element (Partnership with Parks, Recreation and Marine Department):** The City will focus on park equity and open space access as City staff begin efforts to update this element of the General Plan later this year.
- **Advancing Historic Preservation:** Bureau staff is working to apply an equity lens to its historic preservation initiatives, ensuring marginalized groups and their histories are included in the process.
- **Environmental Justice Initiatives:** Department staff is working on being awarded grants to support environmental justice goals and projects while ensuring residents' voices shape these efforts.
- **Enhancing Communication Strategies:** The Department is working on a host of communication improvement strategies, such as continued website reform and introducing digital engagement through video series and interactive multilingual resources.

As the City celebrates its progress made so far, staff recognizes that Long Beach stands at a crucial turning point. Planning for a shared future has never been more important and City staff continues to encourage the community to get involved. Residents and stakeholders can get connected through:

- [Signing up via LinkLB for notifications](#) about planning initiatives, public hearings, and more.
- Following Community Development on social media (Facebook, X, Instagram) - @LongBeachBuilds
- Getting involved to make the Downtown Shoreline "Everyone's Shoreline"! [Learn more about exciting potential for the revisioning of Downtown's Shoreline and share your feedback on these BIG IDEAS!](#)

The City's progress is a testament to the dedication and collaboration of its communities. Looking ahead, the Bureau looks forward to working for and with the community to create a vibrant, equitable, and sustainable Long Beach.

Respectfully submitted,

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ALEJANDRO SANCHEZ-LOPEZ
ADVANCE PLANNING OFFICER



ALISON SPINDLER-RUIZ, AICP
PLANNING BUREAU MANAGER



CHRISTOPHER KOONTZ, AICP
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR