

City of Lancaster

2024 General Plan

Annual Progress Report



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INTRODUCTION

Government Code Section 65400 requires local jurisdictions to prepare an annual report on the status of the City of Lancaster's 2030 General Plan and progress in its implementation. This report is provided to the Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI) and the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). The Annual Progress Report (APR) allows for the regular review of the General Plan, to assess its level of implementation and effectiveness as a guide for growth, development, and preservation within the community. This APR summarizes the General Plan implementation progress for the 2024 calendar year and highlights the City's progress in meeting its share of regional housing needs. The APR includes the following primary elements:

1. Summary of the General Plan background and status, including active General Plan Amendments and compliance with state law;
2. Summary of recently completed and active Zoning Ordinance amendments, in addition to active long-range projects;
3. Summary of active development projects in 2024; and
4. General Plan Implementation Status.

GENERAL PLAN BACKGROUND AND AMENDMENTS

General Plan Background

General Plan 2030 is the City's long-term outlook for the future and reflects the community's vision of the city. The General Plan identifies the types of development, and general pattern of future development, which will be permitted in the city. The plan contains goals, objectives, policies, and specific actions which provide the framework for achieving the community's long-term vision. All projects and development proposals must be consistent with the General Plan.

In order to keep the plan relevant and implementable, the city regularly re-examines the goals, objectives, policies, and specific actions, in order to ensure that the General Plan remains consistent with the community's priorities. The General Plan was adopted on July 14, 2009, and the horizon year for the adopted General Plan is currently 2030. Certain elements of the General Plan have been updated since its adoption, including the replacement of the 'Plan for Physical Mobility' element with a new Circulation Element in 2020, the adoption of the current Housing Element, the replacement of the 'Plan for Public Health and Safety' with a new Safety Element in 2022, and the creation of the new Environmental Justice Element in 2022.

Pending General Plan Amendments in 2024

Westside Annexation

The City of Lancaster is pursuing the annexation of approximately 11 square miles on the northern boundary of the City. The proposed annexation area is generally bound by 30th Street West, Avenue B, Edwards Air Force Base boundary/Sierra Highway, and the existing northern boundary of the City of Lancaster. In 2024, the LAFCO application for this project was filed and annexation processes are underway.

Eastside Annexation

The City of Lancaster is pursuing the annexation of approximately one square mile on the northeastern boundary of the city. The proposed annexation area is generally bounded by Avenue I to the north, the existing city boundary primarily along Avenue J to the south, 50th Street East to the west, and 60th Street East to the east. In 2024, the annexation is being prepared by staff.

Avenue M & Division Industrial Site

Site Plan Review No. 24-003, General Plan Amendment No. 24-001, and Zone Change No. 24-001 are to allow for the construction of two multi-tenant industrial buildings, totaling approximately 800,000 square-feet. The General Plan Amendment/Zone Change portion of the project proposes to redesignate the site from a General Plan designation and zoning designation of Office Professional (OP), to a General Plan designation of Light Industry (LI) and a zoning designation of Light Industrial (LI). In 2024, the proposal is under staff review.

Pacific Opal Single-Family Development

Tentative Tract Map No. 83299, Conditional Use Permit No. 20-06, General Plan Amendment No. 20-01, and Zone Change No. 20-01 are to allow for the construction of 413 single-family (55+) residential units with associated amenities. The General Plan Amendment/Zone Change portion of the project proposes

to redesignate the site from Non-urban Residential (NU) to Urban Residential (UR) in the General Plan, and to jointly rezone the site from Semi-Rural Residential (SRR) to Residential 7,000 (R-7,000) to allow for the proposed density. The proposal is under staff review.

15th Street West & Avenue L Mixed-Use Development

Conditional Use Permit No. 21-01, General Plan Amendment No. 21-01, and Zone Change No. 21-01 are to allow for the construction of a 235-room hotel with amenities, apartment buildings with 181 units and associated improvements, 12,800 square feet of retail/commercial space, and a 3,800 square foot clubhouse. The General Plan Amendment/Zone Change portion of the project proposes to redesignate the site from Non-urban Residential (NU) to Mixed-Use (MU) in the General Plan, and to jointly rezone the site from Rural Residential 2.5 (RR-2.5) to Mixed-Use Commercial (MU-C), to allow for the proposed uses. The proposal is under staff review in 2024.

HNR-4

Site Plan Review No. 23-009, Tentative Tract Map No. 23-003, General Plan Amendment No. 23-001, and Zone Change 23-001 are to construct a two-phase, 100% affordable gated housing development along Sierra Highway. The overall development consists of 499 units, with 303 units dedicated to seniors. The site is currently zoned and designated for residential and park uses. The General Plan Amendment/Zone Change would change the General Plan designation of the site to Multi-Residential 1 (MR1) and the zoning of the site to Medium Density Residential (MDR). This proposal received General Plan Amendment approval in December of 2023, and the second reading of the associated Zone Change was held in January of 2024. Construction of the first phase began in 2024.

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Site Plan Review No. 17-003, General Plan Amendment No. 17-07, and Zone Change No. 17-06 are to allow for the construction of an electric school bus manufacturing facility, developing approximately 30 acres of the subject site, and employing an anticipated 650 individuals. The General Plan Amendment/Zone Change portion of the project proposes to redesignate the site from Non-Urban Residential (NU) to Light Industrial (LI) in the General Plan, and to jointly rezone the site from Rural Residential 2.5 (RR-2.5) to LI, to allow for the proposed uses. This proposal received General Plan Amendment approval in December of 2023, and the second reading of the associated Zone Change was held in January of 2024. Construction of the project is anticipated to begin in 2025.

Compliance with State Law and the General Plan Guidelines

The City of Lancaster, along with all jurisdictions in California, is mandated to update its Housing Element for state certification every eight years. On June 14, 2022, City Council adopted the Housing Element, and it was certified by the California Department of Housing and Community Development on February 10, 2023. On January 5, 2023, minor changes were made to respond to additional HCD comments. In accordance with state law, the update to the Housing Element triggers updates to other elements of the General Plan, which include the Safety Element and the new Environmental Justice Element. These General Plan Elements were also adopted on June 14, 2022, by the City Council.

RECENT OR ACTIVE ZONING AMENDMENTS AND LONG-RANGE PROJECTS

Zoning Amendments

Administrative Updates

In 2024, staff began internal discussions and processes to complete certain administrative updates to the Lancaster Municipal Code. These updates will be made to the portions of the code which are most necessary to ensure clarity and consistency, both internally for staff and externally for the public. Zone Text Amendments for the identified revisions are anticipated in mid-2025.

Long-Range Projects

Lancaster Health District Master Plan

The Lancaster Health District Master Plan area is located in the central portion of the City of Lancaster. The plan area encompasses approximately 272 acres and is generally bounded by Avenue J, Avenue J-12, 20th Street West and 12th Street West. The Master Plan allows for the build-out of the plan area over the next 20 years. Specifically, the following uses and maximum size, shown in Table 1, are proposed. At this time, staff is considering possible revisions to the Master Plan and associated Environmental Impact Report to aid in its implementation. The grading permit for the replacement hospital within the Master Plan area was issued in November 2024.

Table 1: Project Information

| PROPOSED USE | SIZE |
|---|---|
| Replacement Hospital and Plant Facility | 700,000 sf (300 beds); 12,000 sf plant facility |
| Acute care facility; Sub-acute care | 91,000 sf (80 beds); 249,800 sf (284 beds) |
| Continuum of care facility | 480,000 sf (400 beds) |
| Residential | 1,600 units (250 condos; 1,350 apartments) |
| Office (including medical) | 600,000 sf |
| Commercial (retail and restaurant) | 242,000 sf |
| Hotel and conference center | 180 rooms and 70,000 sf conference center |
| Parking Garage | 385,000 sf/1,100 parking space |

Parkway Village Specific Plan

The Parkway Village Specific Plan area encompasses approximately 433 acres and is generally bounded by Avenue K, Sierra Highway, 10th Street West, Avenue K-8, and the eastern side of existing apartment complexes at approximately 6th Street West. This plan seeks to provide a mixed-use, walkable community with a variety of commercial, residential, medical, and open space/public uses, with build-out of the plan area taking place over the next 20 years. At the end of 2024, staff has presented a draft of the plan to Planning Commission and is making administrative revisions. Adoption of the plan is anticipated in late 2025.

STATUS OF RHNA OBJECTIVES

State law requires all regional councils of governments to determine the existing and projected housing need for its region. The City of Lancaster is located within the region covered by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG). For each Housing Element cycle, SCAG is required to determine the share of the regional housing need to be allocated to each local jurisdiction within the SCAG region. This is called the Regional Housing Need Assessment (RHNA) allocation.

The city is not required to directly build the dwelling units allocated through the RHNA process, but rather is required to plan for the allocated growth. This is accomplished by zoning available land to accommodate RHNA numbers and by adopting housing programs which promote and facilitate housing construction. As such, the city's Housing Element includes a variety of programs which support housing development inclusive of all income categories.

The city prepares an annual Housing Element APR which provides HCD with an update on building activity and Housing Element implementation. This year's Housing Element APR includes housing data for the 2024 calendar year, as well as the status of adopted Housing Element programs.

Entitlement and Permit Activity in 2024

As shown in Table 2, Planning entitlements were granted for a total of 712 residential units in 2024. These units consisted of 700 single-family residences and 12 multi-family units throughout the area. To comply with streamlining requirements, in early 2023, the processing of ADU applications was transferred to the Building & Safety Division.

Building permits were issued for 917 residential units in 2024, and Certificates of Occupancy were granted for a total of 1,094 units.

Table 2: Entitlement and Permit Activity in 2024

| | Planning Entitlements | Building Permits | Certificates of Occupancy |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Single-Family Dwellings | 700 | 359 | 460 |
| Multi-Family & Other | 12 | 240 | 461 |
| Accessory Dwelling Units | N/A | 318 | 173 |
| Total | 712 | 917 | 1,094 |

GENERAL PLAN IMPLEMENTATION STATUS

The city is continuously implementing all aspects of the 2030 General Plan, but in 2024, there were a number of areas that the city excelled in. This included the promotion of alternative energy resources, safety and policing, the expansion of regional entertainment facilities including the Lancaster Municipal Stadium and the Parris Center, and commercial/industrial job creation. The following sections outline distinct accomplishments and growth achieved by the city, in compliance with General Plan objectives and policies. The General Plan does not need to be arranged in eight distinct elements if the content necessary for each of the required elements is included in the General Plan.

| Plan for the Natural Environment | |
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| Conservation Element | |
| Biological Resources | |
| Objective 3.4: | Identify, preserve, and maintain important biological system within the Lancaster sphere of influence, and educate the general public about these resources, which include the Joshua Tree – California Juniper Woodlands, areas that support endangered or sensitive species, and other natural areas of regional significance. |
| Implementation: | Joshua trees in particular continue to be a conservation priority for the city. All projects involving potential impacts to Joshua trees are conditioned to obtain an Incidental Take Permit from California Department of Fish and Wildlife in accordance with the California Endangered Species Act and/or the Western Joshua Tree Conservation Act. |
| Policy 3.4.3: | Encourage the protection of open space lands in and around the Poppy Preserve, Ripley Woodland Preserve and other sensitive areas to preserve habitat for sensitive mammals, reptiles, and birds, including raptors. |
| Implementation: | At the December 10, 2024 City Council meeting, the city authorized the use of \$1,045,500 of Biological Impact Fee funds for the acquisition of a property near Saddleback Butte State Park. The 154.4-acre property will be owned and maintained by Wildlands, Inc. and deed restricted to prevent future development, providing conservation habitat in perpetuity. Several state and federally listed species are known to occur either on-site or in the immediate vicinity of the site including Joshua trees, desert tortoise, Swainson’s hawk, and Mohave ground squirrel. |
| Energy Resources | |
| Policy 3.6.6: | Consider and promote the use of alternative energy such as wind energy and solar energy. |
| Implementation: | On March 19, 2024, the City of Lancaster approved the development of a 100% renewable energy powered (off-grid solar) hydrogen fuel production |

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| | <p>facility. Construction of this facility is anticipated to begin towards the end of 2025.</p> <p>In June of 2024, the City of Lancaster and ReCarbon, Inc. announced the launch of the Antelope Valley Circular Hydrogen Initiative (AVCHI), a multi-stakeholder, public-private partnership with the goal of transforming waste biogases into clean hydrogen to help fuel the growth of the local clean energy economy and provide energy and economic resilience in the Antelope Valley. The partnership launched with the development of an innovative pilot plant to be located at the Lancaster Water Reclamation Plant owned and operated by the Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts.</p> <p>In December of 2024, the city also announced the launch of First Public Hydrogen (FPH2) in partnership with the City of Industry. FPH2 is a public renewable hydrogen utility, designed to transform the renewable hydrogen market by connecting producers with reliable off-takers through a seamless, transparent process.</p> |
| Scenic Resources | |
| Objective 3.8: | Preserve and enhance important views within the City, and significant visual features which are visible from the City of Lancaster. |
| Implementation: | <p>In 2024, the city continued operation of its TIDE (Team of Illegal Dump Eliminators) Crew, which was established in 2020 and works to clear abandoned trash and graffiti citywide. These efforts serve to preserve and beautify high-traffic areas and local natural landscapes.</p> <p>In early 2022, the city introduced the TIDE-Y Up A Mile (TUAM) program, allowing community members to adopt a roadway section for a two-year period, affording an opportunity to beautify a portion of the community and bring awareness to their work. This work continued into 2024, notably including a clean-up event hosted in honor of Earth Day.</p> |
| Safety Element (2022) | |
| Crime Prevention and Protection Services | |
| Policy 4.6.1: | Ensure that adequate law enforcement is provided to the residents and businesses of the City of Lancaster. |
| Implementation: | <p>The City of Lancaster proudly celebrated the grand opening of the Lancaster Police Department's (LPD) new headquarters on Saturday, September 28, 2024. The new facility includes state-of-the-art technology designed to improve non-emergency response times, as well as community spaces for outreach events, educational programs, and safety initiatives.</p> <p>Among the many initiatives being led by LPD was the launch of a gunshot detection technology called ShotSpotter, which is designed to identify,</p> |

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| | locate, and track active gunfire. Once the sound is detected, the system automatically alerts law enforcement agencies by directing resources to the precise location of more than 90% of gunfire incidents with tremendous accuracy. |
| Policy 4.6.3: | Promote programs and partnerships that encourage residents to take a proactive role in community safety and the welfare of their neighborhoods. |
| Implementation: | In March of 2024, the city launched an initiative aimed at mitigating retail theft and improving the safety and experience of shoppers at Lancaster retail stores, called the “Safer Shopping Initiative,” in partnership with the Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department. It includes increasing police presence, enhancing surveillance, and other changes to improve the overall shopping experience for the entire family. |
| Disaster Preparedness and Evacuations | |
| Policy 4.8.1: | Maintain a level of preparedness to respond to emergency situations that will save lives, protect property, and facilitate recovery with minimal disruption. |
| Implementation: | In 2023, the city began efforts to update its Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP), aimed at enhancing the community's preparedness and response to natural hazards and other potential disasters. The LHMP is expected to go before City Council for adoption in early 2025. |
| Policy 4.9.1: | Ensure city residents and businesses can effectively evacuate during or after an emergency/hazard event, if necessary. |
| Implementation: | In 2023, the City of Lancaster, the City of Palmdale, and the Antelope Valley Fair Authority worked in conjunction to begin plans for a Multi-Agency Regional Resilience Center (MARRC), which was formally named the “Parris Center” at its groundbreaking ceremony in July of 2024. The Parris Center is intended to include 240,000 square feet of new and renovated space at the existing AV Fair & Event Center and would serve as a large-scale emergency shelter available regionally to Lancaster and Palmdale residents. Construction work for this project will continue into 2025. |
| Plan for Active Living | |
| Open Space Element | |
| Pedestrian, Equestrian, and Bicycle Trails | |
| Policy 10.2.4: | Facilitate the use of bicycles as an alternative form of transportation, as well as a form of recreation. |
| Implementation: | In 2024, the city continued construction and approval of several new miles of bike lane as part of numerous residential tract developments. |

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| Policy 11.1.2: | Encourage a wide variety of performing and visual arts programs, productions and exhibits within the City of Lancaster. |
| Implementation: | In 2024, staff have worked diligently to compile a draft Public Arts Master Plan which will be available for public review in early 2025. The draft plan establishes visual art installations as a means to express the community's diverse identities and strengthen both community and tourism. |

Circulation Element (2020)

Streets and Highways

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| Policy 14.1.6: | Work with regional partners to ensure that the regional circulation system provides adequate connections across the Antelope Valley for convenient circulation and rapid emergency access. |
| Implementation: | In early 2024, Lancaster City Council successfully advocated for the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to make significant changes to a traffic control plan impacting SR-14 through the Antelope Valley. These key changes included establishing a segmented approach to construction work through the City of Lancaster, and maintaining more open lanes of traffic during construction, in order to minimize disruption to local commuters and residents. |
| Policy 14.2.3: | Support a roadway network that takes into consideration noise and safety issues, along with other quality of life issues. |
| Implementation: | In 2024, the city prioritized the construction of several miles of new traffic medians, primarily as part of residential tract developments. This prioritization allows for improved safety and clarity of circulation in the affected areas. |

Plan for Municipal Services and Facilities

Levels of Service

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| Policy 15.1.1: | Promote continued coordination between the City of Lancaster and local service providers. |
| Implementation: | Throughout 2024, city staff participated in Development Agency Working Group (DAWG) meetings in order to streamline development. These meetings involve the City of Lancaster, the City of Palmdale, SoCal Edison, SoCal Gas, LA County Waterworks, and several other outside agencies, and allow an opportunity to discuss and plan for upcoming large developments. |

Plan for Economic Development & Vitality

Creation and Retention of Local Employment

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| Policy 16.1.3: | Promote economic self-sufficiency through the application of programs and efforts that help to revitalize local commerce and create a sustainable and prosperous marketplace. |
| Implementation: | <p>Lancaster launched the “Shop Local – Open Rewards” program with Bludot Technologies, Inc. in December 2022. The program lets shoppers earn cash-back rewards for buying from locally owned, brick-and-mortar businesses by linking their card or scanning receipts. Rewards can then be redeemed at other small businesses in the community.</p> <p>In 2024, the program experienced significant growth in our community. Registered users jumped from 3,956 to 6,366, and total mapped transactions rose from 13,767 to 51,650. The economic impact increased from \$650,404 to over \$2.8 million, and rewards distributed to consumers nearly doubled, going from \$166,266 to \$353,831. These numbers highlight how well the program is working to boost local shopping and support our economy.</p> |
| Policy 16.2.2: | Provide local businesses with access to financial, technical, labor, and regulatory assistance when feasible in order to promote business success. |
| Implementation: | In 2024, the City of Lancaster was honored for a record-breaking fourth time with the “Eddy Award” for Most Business-Friendly Large City in LA County by the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation (LAEDC). |

Establishment of Lancaster as a Center for Regional Activities

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| Policy 16.5.2: | Encourage the development of recreational uses which can stimulate economic growth and provide for local recreational needs. |
| Implementation: | In 2024, the existing Lancaster Municipal Stadium is being converted from its minor league baseball configuration to a 5,300-seat, soccer-specific stadium. This new stadium is intended to bring men’s professional and women’s pre-professional soccer to the AV, offering exciting new opportunities to both watch and play. |

Plan for Physical Development

Land Use Element

Define Land Use Categories

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| Policy 17.1.4: | Provide for office and industrial-based employment-generating lands which are highly accessible and compatible with other uses in the community. |
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| Implementation: | 2024 saw the approval and post-approval processing of several large-scale industrial sites throughout the city. These properties are expected to bring a significant volume of new jobs to the city, in areas suitably distant from sensitive uses and easily accessible from SR-14. |
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Interagency Land Use Coordination

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| Policy 20.1.1: | Promote harmonious and mutually beneficial uses of land between the City of Lancaster, the City of Palmdale, the Counties of Los Angeles, Kern and San Bernardino, and the United States Air Force. |
| Implementation: | All development projects with potential for regional impacts are routed for review by the neighboring agencies identified in this policy. |

Housing Element (2023)

Housing Element Update

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| Implementation: | The updated 2021-2029 Housing Element was adopted in 2022 and certified by the California Department of Housing & Community Development on February 10, 2023. This update allows for a reevaluation of housing needs, constraints and resources in the Lancaster area, and identifies adequate capacity to facilitate development of the 9,023 units allocated to Lancaster through the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) developed by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG). The Housing Element makes particular note of disadvantaged communities which may be most impacted by housing disparities, identifying goals and funding to alleviate strain on persons experiencing homelessness, special needs residents (including persons with disabilities, the elderly, large households, farmworkers, and female headed households), and racially/ethnically concentrated areas of poverty. |
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Environmental Justice Element (2022)

Healthy and Affordable Housing

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| Policy EJ-1.1 | Promote and further fair housing policies and programs. |
| Implementation: | The city continued its First-Time Homebuyer Program in 2024, providing down payment assistance to help local families bridge the funding gap to buy their first home and put them on a path to building generational wealth. This year, families from various backgrounds (ranging from single parents with children to young couples and professionals) were able to close on homes under the program. |
| Policy EJ-2.1 | Support and expand programs that increase awareness among residents about property maintenance, upkeep, weatherization, and neighborhood quality. |

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| Implementation: | In 2024, the city continued its Housing Rehabilitation Program, offering grants for emergency repairs, housing rehabilitation loans, and turf replacement, with additional funding available for veterans, seniors, and disabled citizens. This variety of funding categories allows the city to cater to the different needs present within the community, ensuring that safe and well-maintained housing options are available throughout the Lancaster area. |
| Community Programs and Services | |
| Policy EJ-7.2 | Promote health equity and access through policy evaluation and health valuation. |
| Implementation: | In 2024, the city expanded cooling center access during extreme heat events. In addition to existing programs in partnership with Los Angeles County, the city opened several supplemental cooling centers, intended to remain open when LA County centers are closed due to federal holidays, construction, etc. The program ensures that residents who are most at risk have a safe haven from heat when it is at its most extreme. |