



AGENDA ITEM: 6.
DATE: 11/13/23

STAFF REPORT

**GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 17-007
ZONE CHANGE NO. 17-006**

DATE: November 13, 2023

TO: Lancaster Planning Commission

FROM: Jocelyn Swain, Senior Planner
Community Development Department
Planning and Permitting Division

APPLICANT: BYD/Simon Li

LOCATION: ±160 gross acres on the south side of Avenue H between 50th Street West and 55th Street West
(Assessor Parcel Numbers [APNs] 3269-011-015, 3269-011-007)

REQUEST: General Plan Amendment to change the general plan designation from NU (Non-Urban Residential) to LI (Light Industrial) and a Zone Change to change the zoning from RR-2.5 (Rural Residential, minimum lot size 2.5 acres) to LI (Light Industrial) for a 630,000 square foot electric school bus manufacturing facility.

RECOMMENDATION: Adopt Resolution No. 23-35 recommending approval to City Council of General Plan Amendment (GPA) No. 17-007 to change the general plan designation to LI and Zone Change (ZC) No. 17-006 to change the zoning to LI for 160 gross acres located on the south side of Avenue H between 50th Street West and 55th Street West (APNs 3269-011-015, 3269-011-007), adopting the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (SCH# 2023100285), approving the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program and authorizing staff to execute the Notice of Determination

BACKGROUND

There have been no previous hearings before the Planning Commission or City Council on the subject property.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Table 1 summarizes the general information concerning this project.

Table 1: General Information

ITEM	DESCRIPTION
APNS	3269-011-015, 3269-011-007
LOCATION	±160 gross acres on the south side of Avenue H between 50 th Street West and 55 th Street West
ZONING AND LAND USE	The subject property is RR-2.5 and is currently vacant.
SURROUNDING LAND USES AND ZONING	North: Vacant, single-family residence; SP 95-02 (Fox Field Specific Plan) South: Vacant, single family residences further to the southwest; RR-2.5 East: Vacant, single family residences to the southeast; RR-2.5 West: Vacant; RR-2.5
CURRENT DEVELOPMENT	The project site is currently vacant.
ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW	<p>An initial study/mitigated negative declaration (SCH #2023100285) was prepared for the proposed project and circulated for a 30-day public review period in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The public review period started on October 10, 2023 and ended on November 9, 2023.</p> <p>Effective January 1, 1991, applicants whose projects have the potential to result in the loss of fish, wildlife or habitat through urbanization and/or land use conversion are required to pay filing fees as set forth under Section 711.4 of the Fish and Game Code. Pursuant to Section 21089(b) of the Public Resources Code, the approval of a project is not valid, and no development right is vested, until such fees are paid.</p>

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The proposed project consists of the construction and operation of a 630,000 square foot electric school bus manufacturing facility on approximately 30 acres of a 160 acre site. The facility would include 570,000 square feet of manufacturing space and 60,000 square feet of office space. The office space would be divided between the ground floor and a mezzanine level. Prep and paint booths would also be included as part of the manufacturing process. At full production levels, it is estimated that the facility would produce approximately 4,000 buses per year. A total of 138 bus parking spaces (for completed buses) would be provided on the west side of the building while employee parking would be provided along the northern and eastern portions of the project site. It is anticipated that the proposed project would employ 650 individuals; 100 office staff and 550 manufacturing staff.

A total of three drainage basins would be provided along the eastern portion of the project site between the driveway and the employee parking area. The entire perimeter would be landscaped and landscaping would be placed throughout the parking areas. Access to the project site would be from two driveways from Avenue H.

The building would be grey and white insulated metal construction with dark grey, black and cypress green accent features. The building entrance would be on the north side facing Avenue H, with rollup doors for deliveries and buses on the west and east sides. The building would be required to comply with the design guidelines for 360 degree architectural features.

As part of the proposed project, a General Plan Amendment (GPA No. 17-007) and Zone Change (ZC No. 17-006) have been requested for the entire 160 acres. The General Plan Amendment would change the General Plan designation from NU to LI and the Zone Change would change the subject property's zoning from RR-2.5 to LI. These changes are necessary in order for the project to be permitted as manufacturing facilities are not allowed in the RR-2.5 zone.

ANALYSIS:

General Plan Consistency

In order to grant a General Plan Amendment, Section 17.24.140 of the Lancaster Municipal Code states that the Planning Commission must show that such amendment is necessary to implement the General Plan and/or that public convenience, the general welfare, or good zoning practice justifies such action.

The proposed project is consistent with the following policies contained within the City of Lancaster 2030 General Plan:

Policy 3.1.1: Ensure that development does not adversely affect the groundwater supply.

- Policy 3.2.1:** Promote the use of water conservation measures in the landscape plans of new developments.
- Policy 3.2.5:** Promote the use of water conservation measures in the design of new developments.
- Policy 3.3.1:** Minimize the amount of vehicular miles traveled.
- Policy 3.3.3:** Minimize air pollutant emissions generated by new and existing development.
- Policy 3.4.2:** Preserve significant desert wash areas to protect sensitive species that utilize these habitat areas.
- Policy 3.4.4:** Ensure that development proposals, including City sponsored projects, are analyzed for short- and long-term impacts to biological resources and that appropriate mitigation measures are implemented.
- Policy 3.5.1:** Minimize erosion problems resulting from development activities.
- Policy 3.5.2:** Since certain soils in the Lancaster study area have exhibited shrink-swell behavior and a potential for fissuring, and subsidence may exist in other areas, minimize the potential for damage resulting from the occurrence of soils movements.
- Policy 3.6.1:** Reduce energy consumption by establishing land use patterns which would decrease automobile travel and increase the use of energy efficient modes of transportation.
- Policy 3.6.2:** Encourage innovative building, site design, and orientation techniques which minimize energy use.
- Policy 3.6.3:** Encourage the incorporation of energy conservation measures in existing and new structures.
- Policy 3.6.6:** Consider and promote the use of alternative energy such as wind and solar energy.
- Policy 3.8.1:** Preserve views of surrounding ridgelines, slope areas, and hilltops, as well as other scenic vistas.
- Policy 4.3.1:** Ensure that noise sensitive land uses and noise generators are located and designed in such a manner that City noise objectives

will be achieved.

- Policy 4.4.2:** Limit the uses surrounding airport facilities at Fox Field, Edwards Air Force Base, and Plant 42 to ensure their continued safe operation.
- Policy 4.5.1:** Ensure that activities within the City of Lancaster transport, use, store, and dispose of hazardous materials in a responsible manner which protects the public health and safety.
- Policy 4.7.2:** Ensure that the design of new development minimizes the potential for fire.
- Policy 14.1.1:** Design the City's street system to serve both the existing population and future residents.
- Policy 14.1.4:** Encourage the design of roads and traffic controls to optimize the safe traffic flow by minimizing turning movements, curb parking, uncontrolled access, and frequent stops.
- Policy 14.5.1:** Provide adequate roadways and a support system to accommodate both automobile and truck traffic.
- Policy 15.1.2:** Cooperate with local water agencies to provide an adequate water supply system to meet the standards for domestic and emergency needs.
- Policy 15.3.1:** Direct growth to areas with adequate existing facilities and services, areas which have adequate facilities and services committed, or areas where public services and facilities can be economically extended.
- Goal 16:** To promote economic self-sufficiency and a fiscally solvent and financially stable community.
- 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.
- Policy 18.2.2:** Encourage appropriate development to locate so that municipal services can be efficiently provided.

There are no goals, objectives, policies, or specific actions of the General Plan that would conflict with the proposed amendment. The property to the north is part of the Fox Field Specific Plan

which has an underlying zoning on Light Industrial. This area is meant to encourage a mix of industrial and office type uses; however, it is highly fragmented into smaller sized lots which do not allow for larger type developments.

The proposed amendment extends the Light Industrial general plan designation to two parcels on the south side of Avenue H totaling 160 acres. This would allow for larger scale, industrial development, including the proposed school bus manufacturing facility, to be constructed providing a source of needed jobs in the community. The proposed amendment would not adversely affect the economic health of the City, as the development of the project would not require a major investment to provide access or public infrastructure to the site. Access already exists from Avenue H with close access to the Antelope Valley Freeway, 2.5 miles east. Additionally, public utilities existing in the immediate vicinity of can be easily extended including water, sewer, and electricity. While there are a handful of single family residences in the vicinity, most of the surrounding property is vacant. Additionally, other property designated LI is located approximately 0.5 miles south surrounding the prison. The proposed amendment would be compatible with the surrounding land uses and general plan designations.

No environmental impacts were identified in the initial study that cannot be reduced with the implementation of the identified mitigation measures.

Housing Element Consistency

The proposed project is not a housing project, and as such was not analyzed for consistency with the housing element in detail. However, it is being proposed on land that is currently designated and zoned for residential uses and the applicant is requesting a general plan amendment and zone change to Light Industrial. The current zoning of the project site is RR-2.5 which would allow for a maximum of 64 single family residences over the 160 acres or 12 residences on the 30 acre site proposed for the electric school bus manufacturing facility.

The recently certified City of Lancaster's 2022 Housing Element (revised 2023) contains Program H-1.2, No Net Loss, requiring that the City ensure that it can accommodate its share of the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) in accordance with Government Code Section 65863. The Housing Element includes a surplus inventory of sites to meet this need. The 160 acres proposed for the general plan amendment and zone change are not listed in the Housing Element as sites to be utilized to accommodate the RHNA numbers. As such, changing the general plan designation and zoning of the subject property to allow for industrial uses would not have an impact on the City's ability to meet its RHNA numbers and the proposed project would be consistent with the Housing Element.

Compliance with the Lancaster Municipal Code (LMC)

The proposed project complies with the development standards for industrial uses as identified in Sections 17.16.130, 17.16.210, 17.16.220 of the LMC.

Compliance with the City of Lancaster Design Guidelines

The proposed project complies with the intent of the Design Guidelines with respect to site design and layout for industrial developments. The elevations and floor plans for the proposed development would be reviewed as part of the Site Plan Review for compliance with the Design Guidelines prior to the issuance of construction permits. This would ensure quality design with 360-degree architecture which enhances the community's image and quality of life.

ZONE CHANGE FINDINGS

In order to grant a Zone Change (ZC), Section 17.24.120 of the Lancaster Municipal Code states that the Planning Commission must make all of the following findings:

- a. That modified conditions warrant a revision in the zoning plan as it pertains to the area or district under consideration.**

Modified conditions warrant a revision in the zoning plan in order to allow for the permitting of the proposed project. The 160 acre project site is immediately adjacent to property located in the Fox Field Specific Plan with a Light Industrial underlying zoning. However, the lots within the Specific Plan tend to be smaller and fragmented which does not allow for the development of a larger sized industrial development such as the proposed project. These larger developments are necessary to provide living wage jobs to the residents of the Antelope Valley and a stable economic environment. Additionally, while there are some residences located near the project site, most of the surrounding property is vacant and other industrially zoned property is located approximately 0.5 miles south of the project site. Therefore, the proposed zoning would be compatible with the surrounding zoning designations and land uses.

- b. That a need for the proposed zone classification exists within such area or district.**

A need for the proposed LI zoning on the subject property exists as larger sized industrially zoned property is not currently available. The larger lot industrially zoned property is necessary in order to develop larger projects which can meet the employment needs of the City and Antelope Valley. The proposed LI zoning would allow for the same type of developments as currently allowed on the north side of Avenue H, would provide for the larger sized lot needed for the proposed project and would be compatible with the surrounding uses and zoning.

- c. That the particular property under consideration is a proper location for said zone classification within such area or district.**

The particular property under consideration is a suitable location for the LI zone as the property on the north side of Avenue H is located in the Fox Field Specific Plan with an

underlying zoning of Light Industrial. The property approximately 0.5 miles south of the project site near the prison is also zoned LI. While there are some residences in the vicinity of the project site, most of the surrounding is vacant and zoned for residences on 2.5 lots which allows for any necessary buffers. Additionally, access to the project site would be obtained directly from a major arterial and would not require the construction of additional roadways to access the site.

- d. That placement of the proposed zone at such location will be in the interest of public health, safety, and general welfare and in conformity with good zoning practice.**

Placement of the proposed zone at this location will be in the interest of public health, safety and general welfare and is in conformity with good zoning practice. The proposed zone change would provide consistent zoning with the property to the north and would be compatible with the surrounding zoning and existing developments in the vicinity.

LEGAL NOTICE

A notice of Public Hearing was mailed to all property owners within a 1,500-foot radius of the project, posted in three places, posted on the subject property, and noticed in Antelope Valley Press on November 3, 2023.

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt Resolution No. 23-35 recommending approval to City Council of General Plan Amendment (GPA) No. 17-007 to change the general plan designation to LI and Zone Change (ZC) No. 17-006 to change the zoning to LI for 160 gross acres located on the south side of Avenue H between 50th Street West and 55th Street West (APNs 3269-011-015, 3269-011-007), adopting the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (SCH# 2023100285), approving the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program and authorizing staff to execute the Notice of Determination.

Attachments:

- A. Resolution No. 23-35
- B. Draft Ordinance
- C. Initial Study