



# Staff Report

## City Council

Item No. {{section.number}}.G

**Meeting Date:** March 12, 2025

**From:** Andrew Firestine, Community and Economic Development Director

**Title:** General Plan Annual Progress Report 2023-2024

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

To review and accept the 2023 and 2024 General Plan Annual Progress Report for submittal to the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation.

### **BACKGROUND:**

Government Code Sections 65400 and 65700 require the City to prepare an annual progress report (APR) on the status and implementation of the General Plan for submittal to the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation.

The General Plan is the City's comprehensive, long-term plan to guide development of the community and preserve its resources. While it has a long-term perspective, it is not a static document. Rather, it is dynamic, evolving and multi-faceted, continuously defining and addressing the changing needs of the community. It is also based on an ongoing assessment and understanding of existing and projected community needs and conditions. The General Plan stands at the apex of a pyramid of City regulatory documents. As such, zoning, subdivisions, public works, specific plans, and other regulatory documents must be consistent with the General Plan and its elements.

State General Plan Guidelines do not mandate a specific structure or format for the General Plan, nor do they specify an appropriate number of elements, but it does mandate that certain topics or "elements" be discussed. The mandatory element discussion topics include Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Conservation, Open Space, Noise, Safety, Environmental Justice, and Air Quality.

The 2040 General Plan was adopted by the City Council on July 28, 2021. The General Plan is comprised of thirteen elements, each of which provides a discussion of the topic and contains goals, policies, and programs. The programs provide implementation measures, including an implementation schedule and identification of the responsible departments, needed to carry out the policies and achieve the stated goals.

This annual progress report provides an update on the implementation status of each of the

General Plan policies and programs for calendar years 2023 and 2024. The City's General Plan APR was presented to the Planning Commission in three parts on October 16, 2024, November 20, 2024, and February 5, 2025. The General Plan elements were divided into three parts thematically, as follows:

- Part 1: "Development" (Ch. 4 – Land Use Element; Ch. 5 – Circulation and Mobility Element; Ch. 6 – Housing Element; Ch. 8 – Community Design Element; Ch. 10 – Economic & Fiscal Health Element)
- Part 2: "Community Services and Facilities" (Ch. 7 – Parks and Recreation Element; Ch. 9 – Arts & Culture Element; Ch. 11 – Environmental Justice Element; Ch. 12 – Healthy & Sustainable Community Element; Ch. 16 – Public Services & Facilities Element)
- Part 3: "Environment" (Ch. 13 – Open Space & Conservation Element; Ch. 14 – Air Quality & Climate Stability Element; Ch. 15 – Safety Element)

The three corresponding Planning Commission staff reports are provided, for reference, in Attachment 2, 3, and 4.

## **DISCUSSION:**

### **New Development Review**

Development proposals are subject to a comprehensive review process. This review includes evaluation of the proposal for consistency with the General Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and Design Guidelines, as well as other applicable regulatory documents. Also considered during project review are existing site conditions, as well as constraints and opportunities related to the project's context such as sensitive or hazardous environmental conditions, required infrastructure improvements, and neighborhood character.

External agencies, such as Southern California Edison, SunLine Transit Agency, Burrtec, CVWD, DWA, and any other applicable agency, are consulted as needed.

The Development Services Committee (DSC) requires that development proposals for large projects, and those involving new construction, apply for preliminary review before making a formal application. The Preliminary Review application allows the DSC to provide high level feedback early in the review process. During this process, staff reviews existing site and surrounding area conditions and provides comments related to roads, utilities, drainage, zoning standards, and fire and building access. Staff will also provide site design recommendations during this stage, such as building orientations to improve energy efficiency or fire access requirements.

As the outcome of a Preliminary Review, staff will provide the applicant with a recommended course of action for the project, including what development applications, studies and materials will be required. Staff will also advise on the level of environmental review expected to be required. Overall, this process, allows staff to ensure that, at a high level, proposed projects are consistent with the City's General Plan goals, policies and programs.

Examples of goals, policies and programs implemented (ongoing or completed) through this activity:

- ***Housing Element - Program 1.A.8:*** Implement the formal ongoing (project-by-project) evaluation procedure pursuant to Government Code Section 65863 to
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ensure sufficient residential capacity is maintained to accommodate the current cycles RHNA. Should an approval of development result in a reduction of capacity below the residential capacity needed to accommodate the remaining need for lower income households, the City must identify replacements sites to accommodate the shortfall and ensure “no net loss” in capacity to accommodate the RHNA.

- **Community Design Element - Program 2.D:** New residential development proposals shall be reviewed by City staff to assure compliance with applicable design standards and guidelines, and promote design features, such as entry statements, recreational facilities, neighborhood parks and schools, and landscaping along public rights-of-way.
- **Open Space and Conservation Element - Biological Resources Program 1.B:** The City shall continue to implement and abide by the provisions of the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan, including collection of development impact fees and implementation of land use adjacency guidelines for development within or adjacent to MSHCP-designated Conservation Areas.
- **Safety Element - Flooding and Hydrology Program 6.A:** Stormwater retention for the 100-year storm shall be enforced through the development review process and routine site inspection.
- **Circulation and Mobility Element - Program 6.A:** The City shall apply to all development plans the adopted roadway classifications, and implement the Active Transportation Plan to maximize walking, bicycling, and use of LSEVs, and assure safe and efficient connections to City-wide and regional multi-modal facilities.

Strategic Plan Initiatives promoted:

- **C-5:** Implement a private development entitlement and plan review system which is predictable, streamlines internal intake and review processes, and creates applicant experiences which are facilitative vs regulatory.

#### Development Entitlements

Numerous initiatives are underway across departments to ensure that the City's development entitlement process is facilitative and efficient, and to support the development review process described above. These initiatives include ongoing DSC meetings, the launch of EnerGov and the Citizen Self Service Portal, as well as the forthcoming Zoning Ordinance update.

The buildout and launch of EnerGov and the Citizen Self Service (CSS) Portal have been an ongoing effort throughout reporting period. The launch of these services enables residents, business owners, and developers to apply for permits and licenses, submit plans for review, and request inspections online. On the back end, these services streamline the project review and plan check processes for staff. A consistent and facilitative development application process supports General Plan goals for community design as well as economic development.

Additionally, as described in greater detail below, the process of updating the City's Zoning Ordinance is also underway. This overhaul of the code will further bolster efforts to modernize the development entitlement process.

Examples of goals, policies and programs implemented (ongoing or completed) through this activity:

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- **Land Use Element - Public Services and Facilities Program 3.A:** Establish and/or maintain protocol and procedures to regularly consult, coordinate and cooperate with providers responsible for public utilities, police, fire, health, and other service, protection and care services in the community.
- **Community Design Element - Program 2.B:** To ensure that development proposals initiated are consistent with the City's community design principles and values, the City shall maintain comprehensive development application packages that provide detailed information on and direct applicants to City design guideline documents, ordinances and other requirements, standards and guidelines.
- **Economic and Fiscal Health Element - Program 2.B:** Continue to streamline and expedite the development review process without compromising development quality through concurrent application processing and efficient design review.

Strategic Plan Initiatives promoted:

- **D-2:** Complete and improve the installation of the Tyler EnerGov software to automate, improve and streamline the plan review, permitting and inspection processes

#### Zoning Ordinance Update

In the spring of 2024, the Planning Division began the process to comprehensively update the zoning code. This effort has included consultation with City staff, committee and commission members, as well as City Council members, about challenges with the existing code and priorities for the code update. This input has been incorporated into an RFP and Scope of Work. Staff will work with the consultant to ensure that the zoning code update supports the implementation of General Plan goals, policies, and programs. For example, programs in the Land Use Element and Economic and Fiscal Health Element address mechanisms to ensure that development plans are responsive to neighborhood character, support an efficient mix of uses, and adapt to changing industries.

Examples of goals, policies and programs implemented (ongoing or completed) through this activity:

- **Land Use Element - General Land Use Program 2.A:** The City shall ensure that development plans are responsive to the wishes and aspirations of the neighborhood or district in which they are located, and shall require that land uses provide an appropriate interface with adjoining neighborhoods and districts.
  - **Land Use Element - General Land Use Programs 8.A:** The City shall periodically review and maintain the consistency of the Zoning Ordinance/Development Code and the General Plan, and shall amend or revise the ordinance/code to ensure compatibility and consistency, and to optimize the function of the ordinance/code as the primary implementing tool of the General Plan.
  - **Community Design Element - Policy 1:** The City recognizes the importance of quality planning and design and shall develop and update standards and guidelines that address all areas of community design.
  - **Housing Element - Policy 2.E:** The City shall remove government constraints to develop affordable housing by regularly reviewing the Zoning Code and updating as necessary.
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Strategic Plan Initiatives promoted:

- **F-1:** Develop comprehensive strategy to amend zoning code and update design guidelines.
- **F-7:** Review land use regulations to support diverse, accessible, and affordable housing.
- **F-13:** Develop standard plans, streamlined processes and educational materials that promotes ADU's to increase housing production.

Active Transportation:

Numerous active transportation projects are ongoing throughout the City. Ongoing and recently completed ATP projects include the construction of bicycles lanes on Cathedral Canyon Drive (under construction) and East Palm Canyon Drive (complete), and the construction of the CV Link segment along the Whitewater River Channel between Cathedral Canyon Drive and the City of Palm Springs. The expansion of active transportation infrastructure supports the City's Environmental Justice and Healthy Community goals of improving the health, safety, and mental well-being of residents by creating convenient and safe opportunities for physical activity.

Furthermore, these projects will continue to increase multi-modal access to the downtown area and its arts and cultural venues, as well as providing new connections between residential neighborhoods and parks and open space. The City has also been awarded SB 821 grant funding to build a Class IV Protected Bike Lane on Perez Road, from Cathedral Canyon Drive to Date Palm Drive. This bike lane, which is currently in the design phase, will support the City's goal of strengthening the identity of the Perez Road corridor between Cathedral Canyon Drive and Date Palm Drive as a vibrant, cohesive art district. The City also continues to implement physical improvements to make bicycle and pedestrian travel to parks and recreational facilities safer. Recent projects include the installation of a crosswalk at Avenida Maravilla and Jarana Road for Panorama Park (complete) and construction of a CV Link connection to Esperanza Park (under construction).

Goals, policies and programs implemented (ongoing or completed) through this activity:

- ***Circulation and Mobility Element- Policy 1:*** The City circulation and mobility network shall be planned and developed to assure the provision of safe and efficient vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle and LSEV access to all parts of the community, effectively linking residents and visitors to the full range of residential, employment, shopping, and recreational land uses
  - ***Parks and Recreation Element - Program 4.B:*** Identify and program physical improvements, such as crosswalks, sidewalk improvements, signs, and traffic signalization, that would make bicycle and pedestrian travel safer to parks and recreational facilities.
  - ***Arts and Culture Element - Program 2.F:*** Continue to develop multi-modal circulation plans that maximize access to the downtown area and its arts and cultural venues, including the Festival Lawn and new amphitheater.
  - ***Environmental Justice Element- Program 1.A:*** To the greatest extent practicable, require that development be located and designed to reduce vehicular trips (and associated air pollution) by utilizing compact development patterns while maintaining community character.
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- ***Healthy and Sustainable Communities Element - Program 1.A:*** Support the completion of CV Link and other multimodal transportation facilities, including bike lanes, complete sidewalk networks and NEV paths.

Strategic Plan Initiatives promoted:

- **B-7:** Improve pedestrian access to parks through the use of crosswalks and sidewalk improvements.
- **F-7:** Review land use regulations to support diverse, accessible, and affordable housing.

### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

No impact.

### **FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN:**

#### **GOAL C – FISCAL STABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY**

Action C-8: Implement a private development entitlement and plan review system which is predictable, streamlines internal intake and review processes, and create applicant experiences which are facilitative vs regulatory.

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment 1: General Plan Annual Progress Report 2023-2024 Checklist  
 Attachment 2: Planning Commission Staff Report – GP APR Part 1  
 Attachment 3: Planning Commission Staff Report – GP APR Part 2  
 Attachment 4: Planning Commission Staff Report – GP APR Part 3  
 Attachment 5: Strategic Plan Matrix