



## STAFF REPORT

### CATHEDRAL CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

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**MEETING DATE:** October 16, 2024

**CASE NO.:** General Plan Annual Progress Report

**APPLICANT:** City of Cathedral City

**LOCATION:** City wide

**REQUEST:** Presentation and discussion of the General Plan Annual Progress Report for calendar years 2023 and 2024, Part 1.

**STAFF PLANNER:** Dominique Camps, Associate Planner

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

To receive Part 1 of the 2023 and 2024 General Plan Annual Progress Report for information and discussion.

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**BACKGROUND/ ANALYSIS:**

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 Planning and Research (OPR). Separate from this report, the City was also required to prepare an annual progress report on the Housing Element, which was presented to the City Council and submitted to the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) on March 28, 2024. For reference, a copy of the narrative of the City Council agenda report for the annual Housing Element progress report is also attached.

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.

State General Plan Guidelines do not mandate a specific structure or format for the General

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Plan, nor do they specify an appropriate number of elements. “Elements” are referred to as “topics that California law require to be covered in a General Plan” (Gov. Code Sec. 65302). Mandatory element discussion topics include Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Conservation, Open Space, Noise, Safety, Environmental Justice, and Air Quality. These topics may be discussed separately or logically grouped within a common element. 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.

The 2040 Cathedral City 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 APR provides an update on the implementation status of each of the General Plan policies and programs for calendar years 2023 and 2024. To make the reporting more digestible, the City’s General Plan APR is being presented to the Planning Commission in three parts:

- 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)

This report provides Part 1 of the APR for calendar years 2023 and 2024. The APR will be presented to the City Council for review and acceptance prior to submittal to OPR.

## **ANALYSIS**

This report provides Part 1 of the General Plan APR to the Planning Commission for information and discussion. Please refer to Attachment 1 for a detailed list of the goals, policies and programs contained in the Land Use, Community Design, Circulation and Mobility, Housing, and Economic and Fiscal Health Elements. Attachment 1 also includes a checklist with the implementation status and a description for each policy and program. The full General Plan document can be accessed on the City website (<https://tinyurl.com/mryevh4v>).

For purpose of discussion, this report highlights key activities undertaken across City departments to implement these elements of the General Plan during 2023 and 2024.

Development Review: New 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 such as specific plans, the Housing Element RHNA allocation, the Palm Springs Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (PSALUCP), and the Coachella Valley Multi Species Habitat Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP). 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, as well as the applicable local water agency, are consulted as needed. As the Planning Division transitions the review process to EnerGov, the Division is working to integrate consultation with external agencies as a consistent component of project review. Based on the findings made through this process, the Planning Division makes a preliminary determination about what level of environmental review will be required, if any. This process also informs staff's recommendations to the Architectural Review Committee and Planning Commission.

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.
    - **General Land Use Policy 5:** Land use planning and development proposals north of Interstate-10 shall take into consideration and address physical constraints, including geotechnical and flooding hazards, sensitive biological resources and MSHCP Conservation Areas, and limited infrastructure of the area. Development proposals shall conform to approved Specific Plans in this part of the City.
    - **General Land Use Policy 6:** Land use planning and development in the vicinity of the City's Mountains and hillsides shall be consistent with MSHCP Conservation Area lands, the City's Hillside Protection Program and inherent physical constraints, and shall be applied to City lands as well as those located in adjoining jurisdictions.
    - **General Land Use Policy 1:** All legislative land use proposals (i.e. General Plan amendments, zone changes, Specific Plans and amendments, and ordinance amendments) that are citywide or located within the Airport Influence Area (AIA) shall be reviewed by the Riverside County Airport Land Use Commission for consistency with the adopted Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP). All non-legislative land use proposals within the AIA shall be reviewed by City staff as to consistency with the ALUCP, and considered by the City's approving body.
    - **Residential Land Use Policy 10:** All residential development shall be subject to review by the City Architectural Review Committee and/or the City Planning staff for compliance with City architectural standards and guidelines.
  - Circulation and Mobility Element
    - **Program 4.A:** City staff shall analyze development proposals to determine the potential of the project to adversely impact mid-block segments or intersections. Development impacts shall be identified, and fair-share mitigation shall be established and incorporated into the conditions of approval.
  - Housing Element
    - **Program 1.A.8:** Implement the formal ongoing (project-by-project) evaluation procedure pursuant to Government Code Section 65863 to 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
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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.

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 development services committee meetings, the launch of EnerGov and the Citizen Self Service Portal, as well as the forthcoming Zoning Ordinance update.

The development services committee (DSC) includes representatives of the Planning Division, Building and Safety Division, Engineering Department, Police Department, Fire Department, and the City Manager’s Office. Through this regular interdepartmental review of new development applications, the Planning Division is able to more effectively capture comprehensive feedback, including potential public safety, community design, circulation and public works concerns, and provide this feedback to project applicants earlier in the review process. To be more responsive to the development community, DSC meetings have increased from once a month to bi-monthly.

The buildout and launch of EnerGov and the Citizen Self Service (CSS) Portal have been an ongoing effort through the 2023-2024 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.

Goals, Policies and Programs implemented (ongoing or completed) through this activity:

- Land Use Element
    - **General Land Use Policy 9:** The consideration of major development proposals shall include and assessment of their economic vitality, and community fiscal costs and benefits associated with such proposals.
    - **Industrial Land Use Program 8.B:** Industrial and business park development proposals shall be reviewed with a special consideration for their potential to generate public health or safety issues. The issues shall be taken into consideration when assessing the appropriateness of proposed development and surrounding existing and planned land uses.
    - **Public Safety Services and Facilities Land Use Policy 1:** Ensure the planning, development and provision of public facilities and services through City programs and requirements placed on development, which results in adequate levels of service and staffing requirements, while continuing to be compatible with surrounding uses.
    - **Public Services and Facilities Land Use Program 3.A:** Establish and/or
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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 are initiated 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.
  - **Program 1.C:** The City shall review proposed and existing commercial development for opportunities to enhance pedestrian and other multi-modal circulation, safe and convenient ingress and egress, screening of outdoor storage/loading and other unsightly areas, lighting, signage, and the planting of mature landscaping.
- Circulation and Mobility Element:
  - **Policy 4:** Given the programmatic nature of the General Plan traffic analysis, development proposals which may generate traffic volumes or other impacts beyond the scope of the General Plan analysis should be required to conduct project-specific traffic studies to assure that project impacts are adequately mitigated.
  - **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.
- 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.

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.

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.
    - **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.
    - **Commercial Land Use Program 1.A:** The City shall encourage the development of integrated neighborhoods that include residential and
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neighborhood-serving commercial in a convenient and compatible manner, consistent with appropriate development standards set forth in the City Zoning/Development Code.

- 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.
  - **Policy 2:** Community design, architecture, and landscaping standards and guidelines shall be compatible with and enhance the City's desert setting and natural scenic resources.
  - **Policy 1:** To the greatest extent practicable, promote residential development that provides a variety of housing types and affordability within a single neighborhood, instead of separating people by income level, age or family situation.
- 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.
- Economic and Fiscal Health Element:
  - **Program 6.A:** Assure that appropriate development standards, applications, and review processes are in place to address the needs of new industries.

Housing: As discussed in the 2023 Housing Element Annual Progress Report, entitlements were approved for 276 residential units in 2023. Fifteen (15) of these approved units are deed restricted moderate-income units, which were approved as part of the 11% density bonus for the Desert Bloom Villas development (PUD 22-001 and TTM 38269). Building permits were issued for 133 residential units in 2023, including 28 permits issued for accessory dwelling units (ADUs). Reporting on housing production in 2024 will be provided in the 2024 Housing Element Annual Progress Report, which shall be submitted to HCD by April 1, 2025.

The Housing Element contains programs designed to promote housing production in Cathedral City. Some of these have been completed in 2023-2024, including the adoption of two major zoning ordinance amendments that respond to changes in state housing law: Zoning Ordinance Amendment (ZOA) No. 23-001 ("ADU Ordinance") and No. 23-002 ("Two-Unit Residential Developments and Urban Lot Splits").

The Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Ordinance provides updated development standards for ADUs, including changes to location, lot coverage, access, and parking requirements, with the goal of facilitating the construction of ADUs. In further support of this effort, the City also launched the Pre-Approved ADU Program in August 2024, providing ADU building plans to residents, available for use at no cost other than permitting fees. Consistent with Senate Bill 9, ZOA No. 23-002 allows two primary residential units on properties within single-family zones, as well as the ministerial review of parcel maps to subdivide one into two lots within single-family zones. These changes to the zoning ordinance encourage efficient development patterns and facilitate the development of housing in a range of sizes, configurations, and affordability levels.

However, there remains significant progress to be made in the implementation of programs to promote housing production. In the next twelve months, the Planning and Economic Development Divisions plan to collaborate on establishing incentives for affordable housing, such as fee waivers and expedited processing. The forthcoming Zoning Ordinance update

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will also explore flexible development standards to facilitate the production of varied housing configurations and the efficient use of lands with potential development constraints. The City also needs to make progress on programs supporting the rehabilitation of the existing housing stock. For example, establishment of a Housing Rehabilitation Program to provide access to low interest loans for low-income families to mitigate displacement risks. Finally, as emphasized throughout the Housing Element, the need for continued partnerships with outside organizations, such as CVAG and local non-profits, is ongoing. The City will continue to advance these initiatives, both over the course of General Plan implementation and during the 2021-2029 Housing Element planning period.

Goals, Policies and Programs implemented (ongoing or completed) through this activity:

- Land Use Element
  - **General Land Use Policy 4:** In-fill development and lot consolidation shall be encouraged as a means of enhancing existing development and as a means of optimizing the use of existing roadways and utility infrastructure.
  - **General Land Use Program 4.A:** Where appropriate, the City shall identify areas where in-fill development and lot consolidation are best suited for efficient and timely development. The City shall consider such incentives as density/use intensity bonuses, City participation and other approaches that encourage in-fill and lot consolidation and development. An ongoing program shall be developed, implemented and regularly monitored and reported upon.
  - **Residential Land Use Policy 2:** In-fill development shall be encouraged on partially built-out subdivided lands, where major investments in streets and infrastructure have already been made, while maintaining and enhancing the integrity of the neighborhood.
- Housing Element
  - **Program 1.A.9:** Develop and establish incentives for subdividing large lots (10 acres or greater) or creating new parcels to make the development of affordable housing projects more feasible (lot sizes of 0.5 to 10 acres) while encouraging a range of development sizes. Affordable housing projects will be allowed by-right, and the City will establish fee waivers, flexible development standards, and expedited processing in its incentive program.
  - **Policy 1.D:** Encourage the development of appropriate unit sizes in affordable multi-family rental projects and second units on single family lots.

Circulation and Mobility: Aside from implementation of Circulation and Mobility policies and program through the development review process, several public improvement projects throughout the city have been in progress or completed during the 2023-2024 reporting period which implement the City's Active Transportation Plan and support the implementation of General Plan programs.

The Active Transportation Plan (ATP) was adopted with the 2040 General Plan Update in July 2021. Multiple public works projects have been underway or completed during the 2023-2024 reporting period to implement the ATP. Notable projects include the construction of bike lanes on Date Palm Drive from Dinah Shore Drive to Ramon Road, bike lanes and a multi-use trail on Cathedral Canyon Drive from Ramon Road to the bridge, as well as bike lanes on East Palm Canyon from Cathedral Canyon Drive to the western City limits. These active transportation projects, in conjunction with intersection and road safety improvement projects funded by HSIP, will result in a circulation system that is safe and efficient multiple modes of transportation.

Other noteworthy infrastructure projects include the following:

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- North of I-10, projects to widen and improve Date Palm Drive and Varner Road are currently in the design phase.
- In partnership with the City of Palm Springs, projects to widen the Ramon Road Bridge and to construct a Vista Chino Bridge are currently in the planning and design phase.
- Projects to repair Date Palm Drive from Dinah Shore to Ramon Road, and to widen Date Palm Drive from E Palm Canyon to the Whitewater River, are currently under construction.

Goals, Policies and Programs implemented (ongoing or completed) through this activity:

- Community Design Element:
  - **Policy 1:** As many services and activity areas as possible, including commercial, professional and health services, should be located with convenience multi-modal access, including within easy walking or biking distance of transit stops.
  - **Program 1.B:** The City shall implement its Active Transportation Plan and Complete Streets principles in a manner that encourages pedestrian and bicycle use and shall be spatially defined by buildings, trees and lighting, and discourages high speed traffic.
- 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.
  - **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.
  - **Program 7.A:** Based on biennial monitoring of the roadway network, maintain a transportation Capital Improvement Program (CIP) that sets forth timelines for the construction of new roadway, bike and LSEV lanes and paths, and other transportation infrastructure in the community. The program shall plan in five-year increments.
- Economic and Fiscal Health Element:
  - **Policy 2:** The City shall support completion of all segments of CV Link, particularly those within its boundaries.
  - **Program 1.B:** Continue to enhance the walkability and identity of Perez Road between Cathedral Canyon Drive and Date Palm Drive, and promote it as a vibrant and cohesive community arts district.

#### **ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment 1: General Plan APR Checklist – Section 1 (Development)

Attachment 2: Housing Element Annual Progress Report 2023 (narrative only)