



Introduction

CITY OF LAWNDALÉ GENERAL PLAN

Introduction

Since its historic founding in 1905, the City of Lawndale has grown from a small agrarian society into a thriving residential community characterized by its small-town feel, support for local businesses, and convenient location in the heart of the South Bay region of Los Angeles County.

In 2023, over 32,000 people call Lawndale home. Looking forward over the next 20 years, the City will continue to value its existing residents while planning for a prosperous and sustainable future by embracing smart growth and economic development. New opportunities for residential, commercial, and mixed-use development are envisioned alongside quality public services, facilities, and infrastructure. The *Lawndale General Plan* embodies community principles. Through thoughtful planning, Lawndale is prepared to make decisions that support the community's long-term goals, as defined here in the General Plan.

The *Lawndale General Plan* is a dynamic policy document that identifies the community's vision for the future and provides a framework to guide the City's long-term growth and development. The General Plan reflects the community's values and desires and addresses important issues such as land use and urban design; mobility; housing; resource management; public safety; environmental justice; economic development; community facilities and services; and public health. Although it may be updated periodically to reflect changing market conditions, new legislative requirements, and modern local opportunities, the intent of the *Lawndale General Plan* is to lay the foundation for long-term decision-making that stands the test of time.

The Lawndale General Plan is supported and implemented by important complementary plans and programs, including the Hawthorne Boulevard Specific Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and Climate Action Plan. While the General Plan provides high-level guidance on local issues and priorities, these plans and programs implement the General Plan and provide more specific direction regarding critical topics, such as the redevelopment of Hawthorne Boulevard, which serves as the City's primary transportation route, corridor of economic activity, and community focal point; expectations on permitted uses throughout the City; and the City's strategy to support a more resilient and sustainable future. Taken together with the General Plan, these plans and programs chart the path forward for Lawndale for the next 20 years.

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What is a General Plan?

The general plan serves as a “blueprint” for future development of a city or county. It establishes land use designations and policies to assist decision makers as they review proposals for new development or consider changes to city ordinances. The general plan addresses issues that impact the entire city, such as how land is used, where buildings are built, the locations of roads and parks, safety, noise, and more.

Purpose of the General Plan

In California, all cities and counties are required to adopt a general plan. The general plan is a comprehensive policy document that shapes the long-term physical development of a jurisdiction’s planning area. The planning area is the geographic area for which the general plan provides a framework for long-term growth and resource conservation. State law requires the planning area for the general plan to include all territory within the incorporated area as well as “any land outside its boundaries which in the planning agency’s judgment bears relation to its planning” (California Government Code Section 65300).

The general plan must include eight state-mandated elements including land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, environmental justice, and safety elements, as specified in Government Code Section 65302, to the extent that the issues identified by State law exist in the City’s planning area. Additional elements that relate to the physical development of the city may also be addressed in the general plan. The degree of specificity and level of detail of the discussion of each general plan element need only reflect local conditions and circumstances. The *Lawndale General Plan* has been prepared consistent with the requirements of State law and addresses the relevant items addressed in Government Code Section 65300 et seq.

General Plan Objectives

The General Plan is more than just the legal basis for all local land use decisions; it is the vision for how the City will evolve, reflecting the community’s objectives. The objectives of the *Lawndale General Plan* include:

- Reflect the current goals and vision expressed by City residents, businesses, decision-makers, and other stakeholders;
- Address issues and concerns identified by City residents, businesses, decision-makers, and other stakeholders;
- Protect Lawndale’s existing residences, character, and sense of community;
- Proactively plan for and accommodate local and regional growth in a responsible manner;
- Encourage mixed-use development patterns along major corridors that promote vibrant commercial and residential areas;
- Allow for a range of high-quality housing options;
- Attract and retain businesses and industries that provide jobs for local residents;
- Continue to maintain and improve multimodal transportation opportunities;
- Maintain strong fiscal sustainability and continue to provide efficient and adequate public services;
- Address new requirements of State law; and
- Address emerging transportation, housing, and employment trends.



A general plan is:

Comprehensive

A general plan is comprehensive in nature, covering a wide range of topics such as land use, housing, economic development, infrastructure, public safety, recreation, and natural resources.

Long Range

A general plan provides guidance on achieving a long-range vision of the future for a city or county. To reach this envisioned future, the general plan includes goals, policies, and implementation programs that address both near-term and long-term needs. The City of Lawndale's General Plan looks ahead approximately 20 years—to the year of 2045. At the same time, the General Plan will provide policy direction that allows for flexibility to respond to changes in the marketplace and in technology, positioning the City for long-term success.

Consistent

A general plan must be internally ("horizontally") consistent, meaning it cannot contradict itself. A general plan uses a consistent set of assumptions and projections to assess future demands for housing, employment, public services, and infrastructure and must fully integrate its separate parts and relate them to each other without conflict. Additionally, all adopted portions (elements) of a general plan have equal weight. None may supersede another, so the general plan must resolve conflicts among the provisions of each element. Finally, all other plans, ordinances, and policies must be consistent with the general plan. This "vertical" consistency helps resolve conflicts between local specific plans, the City's Zoning Code, and the General Plan.



Scope and Content of the General Plan

General Plan Policy Document

The General Plan policy document contains the goals and policies that will guide future decisions within the City and identifies action items (implementation measures) to ensure the vision and goals of the General Plan are carried out. Two important documents support the General Plan: the Existing Conditions Report and the General Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Both are intended to be used in conjunction with this General Plan and to serve as companions to this policy document. The Hawthorne Boulevard Specific Plan (HBSP) provides detailed policies, standards, and criteria for the corridor's development, consistent with the direction provided in the General Plan policy document and as analyzed in the General Plan EIR.

The *Lawndale General Plan* also contains a land use diagram (map), which serves as a general guide to the distribution of land uses throughout the City. The *Lawndale General Plan* addresses all of the elements required by State law, in addition to a range of optional topics and elements that the City has decided to include. The table below identifies the elements included in the *Lawndale General Plan* and the corresponding requirement in State law.

Relationship Between General Plan Elements and State Requirements

General Plan Elements		State Mandated								
		Land Use	Circulation	Conservation	Open Space	Noise	Safety	Housing	Environmental Justice	Optional Topics
Lawndale General Plan	Land Use	▲								
	Mobility		▲							
	Housing (Separate Cover)							▲		
	Resource Management			▲	▲					▲
	Public Safety					▲	▲			
	Environmental Justice								▲	
	Economic Development									▲
	Community Facilities									▲

Organization of the General Plan Elements

Each element (i.e., chapter) of the General Plan is organized into a set of goals, policies, and implementation actions. Each goal is supported by a particular set of policies and actions to implement and achieve that goal.



Planning Process

The last comprehensive update to the General Plan occurred in 1992. Since then, substantial changes to the planning context of the City have occurred, including shifts in the community's demographics and new ways of thinking about sustainability, public health, and placemaking. In light of these changes, the City undertook a comprehensive update of the General Plan (*Lawndale General Plan*) as an opportunity to reassess its long-term vision and identify new challenges, opportunities, and approaches to make that vision a reality. The update process began in 2020 and included the following steps.

Public Participation

The *Lawndale General Plan* was developed with community input and reflects the community's vision for Lawndale. A summary of the community outreach and public participation process is provided below.

Outreach Objectives

Objectives established for the comprehensive outreach program were to:

- Conduct an open and transparent process.
- Engage the full spectrum of Lawndale community members, residents, business owners, landowners, and other stakeholders in the General Plan Update process; enhance public awareness of the project and its importance.
- Gather meaningful community input, ideas, and feedback to shape the vision, alternatives, and policies to be included in the *Lawndale General Plan*.
- Build a framework to develop community consensus throughout the process.
- Strengthen and expand relationships and trust between the City and community members.

Lawndale General Plan Outreach

For all public workshops and meetings, the City of Lawndale conducted extensive bilingual outreach (English and Spanish), using a wide variety of methods and tools, to inform and encourage the community to participate in the update process. The following is a list of methods and tools used to inform the public of meetings, workshops, and the status of the work efforts.

- **General Plan Website:** A website devoted to informing the public about, and encouraging participation in, the update process has been maintained throughout the general plan update process. The website includes workshop materials, background information, and draft and final work products.
- **Focus Group Briefings:** The City held briefings with interested focus groups including representatives from the development community and community health and wellness stakeholders.
- **E-mail distribution list:** The list was developed and maintained over time, and included email contacts for agencies, organizations, stakeholders, and individuals.



Visioning Workshops

The City hosted eight workshops (February through December 2021), addressing a different topic of focus each month. Each workshop was conducted in a bilingual environment (English and Spanish) to minimize barriers to participation. Each workshop included a brief overview of the General Plan, including why it's important and why the City is updating its Plan, some background information on the evening's topic, and a series of facilitated activities to solicit input on key topics or ideas.

Workshop 1: Values, Issues, and Opportunities

The first General Plan Visioning Workshop was held virtually on February 2, 2021 (English) and March 9, 2021 (Spanish). The focus of this Visioning workshop was to introduce the General Plan and Hawthorne Boulevard Specific Plan Update, and ask for input from residents on what they value in Lawndale, what they see as challenges, and what their vision is for the future of the City. After a brief presentation on the General Plan and Hawthorne Boulevard Specific Plan Update, the City held a discussion and answered questions from the community.

During this workshop there was approximately 26 attendees for the English workshop and 3 Spanish speakers.

Workshop 2: Land Use

The second workshop was held virtually on March 23, 2021 (English) and April 26, 2021 (Spanish). The workshop included a presentation followed by a discussion with the community. During this workshop staff explained to what Land Use is and the types of Land Uses within a community. Residential, Commercial, Institutional, Open Space and Industrial uses were described. During this workshop there was a public comment period where staff interacted with the community to obtain public opinions on the existing and desired land uses. There was approximately 16 attendees at this meeting's conclusion.

Workshop 3: Land Use and Transportation

The third workshop was held virtually on April 27, 2021 (English) and May 18, 2021 (Spanish). The focus of the last workshop was on land use and transportation. As part of the overview presentation, the group considered the interface between transportation and land use planning in Lawndale. This meeting also recapped the desirable and undesirable land uses as proposed by the residents.

Workshop 4: General Plan and Land Use

The fourth workshop was held telephonically on May 17, 2021. This event gave the community an opportunity to call in and ask questions, as well as provide comments and suggestions on the General Plan and Hawthorne Boulevard Specific Plan Update. During this workshop there was no attendees.

Workshop 5: Virtual Community Workshop

The fifth workshop was held virtually on May 20, 2021. The workshop included a presentation followed by a discussion with the community. Staff discussed the Environmental Justice element and explained its importance. Staff also took some public comments. There were approximately 8 attendees at the meeting's conclusion.

Workshop 6: Virtual Community Workshop

The sixth workshop was held virtually on June 22, 2021. The workshop included a presentation that provided a recap on the General Plan Elements and Hawthorne Boulevard Specific Plan, followed by a discussion with the community. This workshop focused on obtaining public opinions on the future of the City.

Workshop 7: Virtual Community Workshop

The seventh workshop was held virtually on August 4, 2021. The focus of this workshop was the Housing Element and Fair Housing Act. The workshop included a presentation followed by a discussion with the community. The Housing element was explained, residential sites inventory was presented. During the



workshop staff discussed potential sites suitable for housing to accommodate all future housing from the Regional Housing Needs Assessment provided by California Department of Housing and Development.

Workshop 8: Interactive Community Workshop

The eighth workshop was held virtually on August 31, 2021. The workshop included a presentation followed by a discussion with the community. Staff prepared an in-person workshop. There were several interactive activities including setting up desired density locations, choosing desired and undesired land uses, going over all elements and providing public comments. There were 7 attendees at this in person workshop.

Workshop 9: Virtual Community Workshop

The ninth workshop was held virtually on November 17, 2021. The workshop included a presentation followed by a discussion with the community. During this workshop staff presented the housing sites chosen for the housing element. Staff presented types of density and locations where they would be placed during the next RHNA cycle. Staff took notes on the public comments and responded to questions.

Workshop 10: Virtual Community Workshop

The tenth workshop was held virtually on December 15, 2021. The focus of this workshop was the Housing Element, including proposed sites. The workshop included a presentation followed by a discussion with the community. This was the final workshop, which was a whole recompilation review of the General Plan Update and what the intent of the workshops were.

Online Surveys and Polls

In order to capture as much input from the community as possible, including input from those who may not have participated in workshop community engagement opportunities, the project team designed two online surveys that were open to all and available throughout the outreach phase of the project. The surveys were administered online via the SurveyMonkey web platform and were available in English and Spanish. Survey #1 focused on visioning, values and living conditions in Lawndale as well as demographic questions. Survey #2 focused on community priorities and existing conditions related to housing. The City received a total of 99 responses to the surveys. The survey responses provide insight into the demographics and opinions of Lawndale community members concerning goals and topics related to the update of the City's General Plan.

Community Vision Statement

A Vision Statement is a collection of aspirational statements framing community needs and desires. Vision Statements are important to help guide the creation of the General Plan. The Lawndale Community Vision—illustrated on the following pages—was developed to reflect the meaningful community input received at the *Lawndale 2020 General Plan* workshops, online surveys, from key community members and stakeholders, and elected and appointed officials.



LAWNDALE

Community Vision 2020

Lawndale is an energetic, small but highly urbanized place with a small-town feel characterized by its well-established neighborhoods and local businesses. Strategically-located within the central South Bay, Lawndale's exceptional climate and location provide exciting redevelopment opportunities that offer inviting spaces to live, work, learn, shop, and socialize. The City takes pride in collaborating with our residents, businesses, and local organizations to meet our long-term social and economic needs. Together, we promote a safe, healthy, vibrant, and diverse community that grows stronger every year.





WE ARE A **TIGHT** COMMUNITY **-KNIT** THAT CARES FOR ITS RESIDENTS

Lawndale celebrates its strong neighborhood connections and community culture, including its history, diversity, inclusivity, and family-friendly atmosphere. High-quality community services, facilities, and events create a lifestyle that residents value. Residents are represented by a responsive and effective local government that cultivates relationships with local organizations, the business community, and other local and regional partners to maintain our outstanding quality of life.





WE ARE A COMMUNITY WITH QUALITY HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

Lawndale offers diverse housing options for persons of all incomes and lifestyles, including homeowners, renters, families, retirees, and young people. Established residential neighborhoods are quiet, well-maintained, and safe and make-up the backbone of our community. Mixed-use development that includes multifamily housing is focused along Hawthorne Boulevard.





**WE HAVE A
MIXED-USE
ACTIVITY CENTER
ALONG
HAWTHORNE BLVD
WHERE PEOPLE CAN**

**LIVE, WORK,
SHOP, AND
SOCIALIZE**

Hawthorne Boulevard features a successful mix of businesses, residences, and amenities within an attractive, walkable environment. The active streetscape supports a variety of complementary uses that welcome enhanced pedestrian activity, social interactions, and window shopping. Characteristics of Hawthorne Boulevard include appropriately-scaled buildings, well-kept landscaping, safe pedestrian crossings, and distinctive sense of place.





WE ARE SUPPORTED BY A ROBUST, RESILIENT LOCAL ECONOMY

Lawndale provides for a diversity of businesses that support and are supported by the local community. Businesses cater to the daily needs of residents and attract visitors from outside the area. Lawndale's premier location and business-friendly environment is able to attract and retain high-quality employers that create good jobs and economic opportunities within the City. Lawndale maintains a robust, diverse, and resilient local economy that provides long-term fiscal sustainability.





WE CHOOSE

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

THAT PROMOTE
A HEALTHY AND
ACTIVE COMMUNITY

Lawndale contributes to improved environmental quality and public health outcomes by promoting compact and sustainable infill development practices. Healthy community priorities are promoted through enhanced access to housing, jobs, and lifelong learning opportunities. Air quality is improved and greenhouse gas emissions are reduced through the promotion of green building techniques, multi-modal transportation options, and renewable and efficient energy sources. Our residents have increased access to public transportation and infrastructure improvements that promote walking, biking, and ride-sharing.





Applying the General Plan

The General Plan is intended for use by a broad range of persons, including City decision-makers, City staff, developers, and community members, to serve the following purposes:

- To identify land use patterns, growth, transportation, environmental, economic, and community goals and policies as they relate to land use, conservation, development, and provision of community services and facilities.
- To articulate a vision and strategy for the future development of Lawndale and its residents.
- To enable the City Council and Planning Commission to establish long-range land use, transportation, services, conservation, and growth goals and policies.
- To provide a basis for judging whether specific private development proposals and public projects are in harmony with these goals and policies.
- To inform citizens, developers, decision makers, and other jurisdictions of the policies that will guide development and resource conservation within Lawndale.

The General Plan applies to lands in the incorporated area of the City, to the extent allowed by Federal and State law. Under State law, many actions, such as development projects, specific plans, master plans, community plans, zoning, subdivisions, public agency projects, and other decisions must be consistent with the General Plan. State law requires that the City's ordinances regulating land use be consistent with the General Plan. The Zoning Code, individual project proposals, and other related plans and ordinances must be consistent with the goals and policies in the General Plan.

Interpreting the General Plan

In reading the General Plan, one should infer that the goals, policies, and implementation measures are limited to the extent that it is financially feasible and appropriate for the City to carry them out and to the extent legally permitted by Federal and State law. For example, policies and measures which indicate that the City will “provide,” “support,” “ensure,” or otherwise require or carry them out do not indicate an irreversible commitment of City funds or staff resources to those activities, but rather, that the City will support them when the City deems that it is financially feasible and appropriate to do so. In some cases, the City will carry out various policies and measures by requiring development, infrastructure, and other projects to be consistent with the policies and actions of the General Plan. In other cases, the City may include General Plan items in the Capital Improvement Program, annual budget, or other implementation mechanisms, as the City deems appropriate.

Key Terms

Goal: A description of the general desired condition that the community seeks to create.

Policy: A specific statement that guides decision-making as the City works to achieve the various goals. Once adopted, policies represent statements of City regulations.

Action: An action, procedure, implementation technique, or specific program to be undertaken by the City to help achieve a specified goal or implement an adopted policy.



How to Read Lawndale's General Plan

As the guide for future development and desired conditions, residents, property owners, and business owners should also familiarize themselves with how to read this document. Each element contains a brief introduction, several goals and related policies, and a description of related actions to help implement the City's vision.

Goals

A goal in the General Plan is the broadest statement of community values. It is a generalized ideal which provides a sense of direction for action. Goals are overall statements of desired future conditions.

Policies and Implementation Actions

The essence of the General Plan is contained within its policies. Policies are statements which further refine the goals, and guide the course of action the City must take to achieve the goals in the plan. It is important to note that policies are guides for decision makers, not decisions themselves. Policies and implementation measures must be clear to be useful. However, policies may range in terms of commitment of resources, importance, and expected results. Therefore, it is important for readers to understand the distinctions between various levels of policy and implementation action. The following is a list of common terms used in policies and implementation measures, and how to interpret its usage in the General Plan. In cases where other terms are used (and not defined below), an equivalent to the closest applicable term can be used.

Shall: Absolute commitment to the policy or action, and indicate that the policy must be adhered to in all cases.

Should: Policy will be followed in most cases, but exceptions are acceptable for good reasons.

Ensure: Policy indicates that the City plays a role in making sure something happens, often times in partnership with other agencies or as part of other City programs and processes.

Encourage: Policy is highly recommended and/or desired, and should be pursued when feasible.

Allow: Policy will be supported within certain parameters and certain guidelines.

Coordinate: Policy will occur in conjunction with another entity, and the City will carry its share of the responsibility.

Explore: Effort will be taken to investigate the subject at hand, to discover whether or not further commitment is relevant.

Consider: Policy may or may not be followed, depending upon the results of analysis that will be completed.

Limit: Effort will be taken to keep the subject within certain limits, or will at least make undesired change more difficult.

Restrict: Effort will be taken to keep the undesired action to a minimum.



Amending the General Plan

The General Plan is not static, but rather is a dynamic and multi-faceted document that defines and addresses the changing needs of the City. It is based on an on-going assessment and understanding of existing and projected community needs. The City's decision-makers have broad discretion in interpreting the General Plan and its purposes, and are allowed to weigh and balance the various goals and policies when applying them. Recognizing the need for the General Plan to remain current and reflective of local issues and policies, State law allows the City to periodically amend the General Plan to ensure that it is consistent with the conditions, values, expectations, and needs of its residents, businesses, and other stakeholders. The General Plan may be amended in accordance with State law. While specific findings may be applied on a project-by-project basis, at a minimum the following standard findings shall be made for each proposed General Plan amendment:

1. The amendment is deemed to be in the public interest;
2. The amendment is consistent and/or compatible with the rest of the General Plan;
3. The potential impacts of the amendment have been assessed and have been determined not to be detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare; and
4. The amendment has been processed in accordance with the applicable provisions of the California Government Code, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and the City's Municipal Code.

City-initiated amendments, as well as amendments requested by other parties, are subject to the same basic process described above to ensure consistency and compatibility with the General Plan. This includes appropriate environmental review, public notice, and public hearings, leading to an official action by the City Council.

Timing

Under State law, mandatory elements of the General Plan may be amended up to four times in each calendar year. The City Council or any citizen may initiate consideration of a General Plan Amendment. State law further requires that the Housing Element be reviewed and updated at least once every eight years.

Exemptions

The State Legislature has recognized that occasions arise which require the local jurisdiction to have some flexibility in amending the General Plan. As set forth in the California Government Code, the following are exempt from the General Plan amendment schedule:

- Amendments to optional elements.
- Amendments requested and necessary for affordable housing (Section 65358(c)).
- Any amendment necessary to comply with a court decision in a case involving the legal adequacy of the general plan (Section 65358(d)(1)).
- Amendments to bring a general plan into compliance with an airport land use plan (Section 65302.3).

Annual Reporting

Given the long-term nature of the General Plan, it is critical to periodically evaluate its effectiveness and to document the implementation status of the various policies and actions that it contains. State law provides direction on how cities and counties can maintain the General Plan as a useful policy guide. State law also requires the City to annually report "the status of the plan and progress in its implementation" (California Government Code Section 65400(b)) to the City Council. The Action items in each Element identifies each measure to be carried out by the General Plan.