



City of El Centro
Community Development Department
1275 Main Street
El Centro, California 92243

NOTICE OF PREPARATION (NOP)

Draft Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR)

City of El Centro General Plan Update

Date: July 17, 2020

To: State Agencies, Responsible Agencies, Local and Public Agencies, Trustee Agencies, and Interested Parties

Subject: Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) for the City of El Centro General Plan Update

The City of El Centro (City) is updating its General Plan Land Use Element and Mobility Element and preparing an Environmental Justice Element (project). As the lead agency, the City determined that the project will require the preparation of a Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, Section 15082, this notice serves as an NOP of the PEIR to advise and solicit comments and suggestions regarding the scope and content of the PEIR to be prepared for the proposed project and to notice the public scoping meeting.

Comment Period: CEQA requires a 30-day scoping period. The public review period on the NOP is scheduled to begin July 17, 2020, and end August 16, 2020. Because of the time limits mandated by state law, comments must be received by this deadline. Please indicate a contact person and send comments to the following:

Angel Hernandez, Associate Planner
1275 Main Street
El Centro, California 92243
angel_hernandez@cityofelcentro.org
<https://www.elcentro2040.com/>

NOP Scoping Meeting: The City will hold a scoping meeting in conjunction with this NOP to present the project and the PEIR process and to provide an opportunity for agency representatives and the public to assist the lead agency in determining the scope and content of the environmental analysis for the PEIR.

NOP Scoping Meeting

Thursday, July 30, 2020, at 11:00 a.m.

El Centro City Council Chambers

1275 W. Main Street

El Centro, California 92243

Zoom URL: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87920473020>

All project information, including the NOP, can be accessed at the following URL:

<https://www.elcentro2040.com/>

Project Location: The City encompasses approximately 11 square miles and is the largest city in the Imperial Valley. It is in the County of Imperial, Southern California, 11 miles north of the United States–Mexico border, is adjacent to the City of Imperial along its northern boundary, and is approximately 120 miles east of the City of San Diego. Interstate 8 provides a regional east–west connection, which leads to north–south connectivity by way of State Route 86 in the City and State Route 111 east of the City.



Project Description: The City is undertaking updates to the Land Use Element and Mobility Element of its General Plan and the creation of a new Environmental Justice Element. The General Plan was last updated in 2004. The updates are being funded by a grant from the Sustainable Communities Program administered by the California Department of Transportation. The intent of the updates is to improve sustainability, promote public health, and anticipate future advancements in transportation technology.

Land Use Element Update

The proposed update to the Land Use Element in the General Plan would be based on the City's existing Vision 2050 Strategic Plan (2015); Project Shape; policy direction from the City Council, Planning Commission, and staff; and input from the Community Advisory Committee and the public. The update would designate the proposed general distribution and extent of land uses in the City, focusing on preserving established land uses and accommodating future growth and physical development of the community. It would incorporate policies that integrate land use and transportation strategies to increase the share of bicycle, transit, and pedestrian trips, reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Specific topics to be incorporated into the Land Use Element update include equity, health, sustainability, economy, and the environment. An overarching objective of the update would be to promote infill development and encourage efficient development patterns to spur economic revitalization, provide opportunities for innovative lifestyles envisioned by the Vision 2050 Strategic Plan (2015), and promote environmental justice.

The overall goal of the Land Use Element update would be to create a land use plan that would promote quality of life, health, and safety; meet the needs of the City's residents; support multiple modes of transportation; foster economic prosperity; provide a range of affordable housing options; be sustainable and environmentally responsible; encourage social cohesion and equity; and reflect and celebrate the City's unique character, culture, identity, and traditions.

Mobility Element Update

The proposed update to the Mobility Element in the General Plan would be based on the current Circulation Element in the General Plan (2004), Bicycle Master Plan (2010), Vision 2050 Strategic Plan (2015), and Active Transportation and Safe Routes to School Plan (2019). Specific objectives of the Mobility Element update would include adopting Complete Streets policies that are accessible to all ages, supporting a safe pedestrian and bicycle transportation network, promoting a public transportation network that allows convenient access to major destinations, offering appropriate vehicle circulation, and providing a safe and efficient mobility system.

The overall goal of the Mobility Element update would be a balanced, interconnected, multimodal transportation network that provides for the efficient and safe movement of people and goods; promotes walking, bicycling, and healthy living; reduces vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions; and accommodates future growth for the City.

Environmental Justice Element Preparation

A new Environmental Justice Element is being prepared as a chapter of the General Plan. The Environmental Justice Element is a new state requirement for jurisdictions with disadvantaged communities and represents an opportunity to develop new goals and policies that reduce the unique or compounded health risks in the community. While state requirements specify the topic areas that must be included in the Environmental Justice Element, the specific policies would be customized to the City. The Environmental Justice Element would critically examine the disproportionate impact negative environmental factors have on disadvantaged



communities in the City. Particular concerns to be addressed include pollution exposure, improvement of air quality, land use incompatibility, food access, safe and sanitary homes, and physical activity. The Environmental Justice Element would address these topics and ensure the City's long-term commitment to seeking out and implementing solutions to environmental justice issues. Potential solutions and opportunities for improvement to be explored in the Environmental Justice Element include expanding efforts to involve residents in civic affairs, increasing collaboration with associated public agencies and organizations, promoting food security and healthy eating, increasing opportunities for physical activity, addressing housing affordability and homelessness, and incorporating plans for new public facilities in strategic locations.

Land Use Element Opportunity Areas

As part of the updates to the General Plan, the following five potential opportunity areas were identified throughout the City. These are larger, specific areas where targeted change is anticipated or desired in the following decades that would be identified in the updated General Plan (see Proposed Opportunity Areas figure).

Opportunity Area 1

Situated along the Adams Avenue corridor, this opportunity area is identified as a potential location for mixed-use development in the Vision 2050 Strategic Plan (2015). Under the draft proposal, the land use would change to a neighborhood-focused mixed-use designation, which would allow a combination of residential and commercial uses along the corridor at a density of 15 to 30 residences per acre. In this opportunity area, outdoor uses would be encouraged, and creating a pleasant, walkable streetscape would be the focus, with stores and residences oriented toward Adams Avenue and parking taking access from the alley.

Opportunity Area 2

This opportunity area is the City's downtown. The focus of this opportunity area would be on small-scale, artisanal, entertainment, restaurant, and retail uses that celebrate the culture and heritage of the City. Ideas include pop-up retail, festivals, markets, food trucks, a kitchen incubator for small food businesses, and the addition of murals and other public art. Small "parklets," outdoor seating for restaurants, activation of vacant buildings, and evening uses could also be a focus of this opportunity area.

Opportunity Area 3

This existing industrial area is north of Interstate 8, along the eastern border of the City. Although the existing General Plan currently designates this opportunity area for general industrial use, the area is mostly undeveloped. Two options for the opportunity area would be to expand the commercial land use while allowing some light industrial use, such as business parks, to remain or to make the entire area tourist commercial use, which could include hotels, restaurants, RV parks, active senior living communities, and other entertainment uses aimed at attracting visitors to the City. Infrastructure improvements for water, sewer, transportation, and streetscape features would be recommended with either option.

Opportunity Area 4

This opportunity area is south of Opportunity Area 3, on the southern side of Interstate 8 along the eastern border of the City. It currently includes large retail uses, including the Imperial Valley Mall, and some property zoned general industrial. Two options for the area include replacing the industrial area with commercial uses and allowing mixed-use/master-planned projects. Alternatively, the area could be developed with more tourist commercial uses and incorporate multi-family residential uses near the mall retail stores designed to be easily walkable and to create a live/work/shop destination. In either option, pedestrian and bicycle connections, landscape, and streetscapes would be improved.



Opportunity Area 5

This opportunity area is south of Interstate 8 along the future extension of Imperial Avenue in the southwestern part of the City. Two options exist for this opportunity area. Option A would extend commercial use along the Imperial Avenue frontage, with single-family residential behind the commercial uses. Option B would transform the area into a village-style master-planned community with residential and commercial uses and possibly schools, hotels/motels, and small-scale agriculture. Both options would include a focus on bicycle and pedestrian connections, improved streetscapes, and landscaping.

Preliminary Environmental Review: The PEIR will address the short- and long-term effects of the General Plan Update on the environment. Mitigation measures would be identified as necessary to reduce potentially significant impacts. Based on the results of the technical studies and Initial Study checklist, the project could potentially affect the following environmental factors, each of which will be addressed in detail in the PEIR:

- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Noise
- Transportation

Attachments

- Proposed Opportunity Areas Figure

Noema M. Salica 7-16-2020
Signature Date

Proposed Opportunity Areas

