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Council Adopts Initial Principles For Updating Long Beach 2030 Plan

Focus On 'Active Living And Complete Streets' In Built-Out City

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As a first step toward updating urban design and mobility elements of the Long Beach 2030 General Plan, the Long Beach City Council approved several principles for developing future policy related to active living and complete streets.

The document, approved by councilmembers on June 21, is called "The Principles for Active Living & Complete Streets." It includes 10 principles that apply to urban design, mobility and land use: key elements of the General Plan.

In a city that is built out and is home to residents who use a variety of modes to get from one place to the next, these principles represent a baseline for developing strategies for General Plan implementation.

The 10 principles are:

- balance the needs of all modes of travel;
- promote walking;
- promote bicycling;
- promote transit;
- create dynamic and context sensitive streets;
- protect and enhance the environment;
- create active neighborhoods and healthy residents;
- create transit-oriented developments along transit routes;
- ensure connectivity to activity centers and other modes; and
- maximize public return on mobility investments.

City staff has been working on developing these principals since 2008 in concurrence the requirements of a \$300,000 grant from Los Angeles County Public Health Department's Policies for Livable, Active Communities and Environments (PLACE). The money funded walk audits, bike counts and the construction of the Vista Street Bike Boulevard. The grant, which expired June 30, also funded the city's former mobility coordinator position held by Charles Gandy.

However, the adoption of these principles allows the city to seek further funding, Burnham said. At this point, staff is focused on developing a mobility element for an update that Burnham said should come to the city council for action in the fall.

At the council meeting, Vice Mayor Suja Lowenthal felt that in order to adhere to these principles, it is necessary to define a complete street from the perspective of it being a public room that adds character to a neighborhood. "I want to emphasize the need for complete streets," she stated. "I know staff is very aware of our interest in doing that. For a built-out city, it's the



Long Beach Development Services Departments' Derek Burnham, left, project administrator, and Robert Zur Schmiede, deputy director, helped develop "The Principles for Active Living and Complete Streets." Recently approved by the Long Beach City Council, it provides guidelines for updating the Long Beach 2030 General Plan. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Thomas McConville)

only way to increase access and mobility throughout. In order to support active living in every part of the city . . . this item is a fantastic way to do that."

City Planning Administrator Derek Burnham and staff have been working with public on developing these principles for some time, developing the broader discussion about mobility with the community to gain a consensus on the impracticality of the Long Beach 2030 plan as written. "What you see in the existing transportation element [of the plan] is the call for a lot of street widening, adding additional lanes of traffic, fly-overs, overpasses and underpasses," he said.

"It's really geared toward moving cars and not moving people," Burnham continued. "This represents a significant shift." Long Beach has already taken a leadership role with its new bicycle facilities and approach to bicycle culture, as well as upgrading the downtown Transit Mall and utilizing public space for walking and outdoor activity.

Robert Zur Schmiede, deputy director of the Long Beach Development Services Department, said the principles, on a general level, serve to acknowledge that our streets – which take up about 20 percent of the area of the city – need to accommodate to multiple modes of transportation and that "they have equivalency of importance."

Even with the progress already made in developing complete streets and activating corridors, Councilmember Steven Neal pointed out to the council that his district may be disconnected from such upgrades. "The 9th District is home to many youth skateboarders, rollerbladers, bicyclists who desperately need better access to safe mobility and pathways," he said. "I would like to see a better community outreach in the future as the residents of the north haven't felt entirely connected to the improvements in the bicycle infrastructure." ■