



STAFF REPORT

DATE: 03/19/2025

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Planning & Development Department

2025-103

REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL ACTION

SUBJECT:

GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT 2024-0002 TO REVISE THE CITYWIDE ROADWAY PLAN WITHIN THE CIRCULATION ELEMENT OF THE GENERAL PLAN TO REFLECT A CHANGE IN THE ROADWAY CLASSIFICATION FOR A PORTION OF WEST ONTARIO AVENUE FROM MAJOR ARTERIAL 4 LANE TO MAJOR ARTERIAL 6 L

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This staff report asks the City Council to approve General Plan Amendment 2024-0002 (GPA2024-0002) to amend the Circulation Element and Public Safety Element. The amendment will change the City's master planned roadway system of the Circulation Element to support the City's Capital Improvement Project on the Ontario Avenue widening and will update the description of the City's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) of the Public Safety Element to be consistent with the updated LHMP adopted by the City Council on August 7, 2024.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the City Council:

- a. Approve General Plan Amendment 2024-0002 as recommended by the Planning and Housing Commission, based on the findings contained in the staff report and

adopt the Addendum to the certified General Plan Environmental Impact Report (SCH# 2018081039) pursuant to Section 15164 of the State CEQA Guidelines.

- b. Approve Resolution No. 2025-014 tentatively approving an amendment to the City's General Plan to revise the citywide roadway plan within the Circulation Element to change the roadway classification for a portion of West Ontario Avenue from Major Arterial 4 Lane to Major Arterial 6 Lane and to revise the Public Safety Element to update the definition and description of the City's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan approving General Plan Amendment 2024-0002 as part of Cycle 2 of the General Plan Amendment for 2025 (GPA2024-0002).

BACKGROUND & HISTORY:

General Plan Amendment 2024-0002 (GPA2024-0002) proposes revisions to the Public Safety and Circulation Elements of the City's adopted General Plan. The amendment to the Circulation Element is a result of the City's West Ontario Avenue Widening Project, a City Capital Improvement Project (CIP) to expand a segment of Ontario Avenue from its present four lane configuration to six lanes (three on each side) over an approximately four-block stretch (approximately 20.13 acres) of West Ontario Avenue between Via Pacifica to the west and Taylor Avenue to the east.

Most of West Ontario Avenue is improved to six lanes moving east-west through the City. The narrowing of lanes within the project area causes slowdowns or a diversion of traffic onto surrounding streets. The expansion is intended to alleviate an existing traffic bottleneck within the project area, complete missing roadside infrastructure, and broadly create homogeneity and continuity in the design of vehicular and pedestrian infrastructure.

The West Ontario Avenue Widening Project was initially heard by the City Council at its meeting on September 21, 2022, and subsequently on October 19, 2022. Since those proceedings, two outreach meetings have been conducted by the Public Works Department on March 21, 2024, and May 18, 2024, respectively.

The amendment to the Public Safety Element is a result of the City's updated Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP), which was adopted by the City Council on August 7, 2024. According to the Disaster Mitigation Act, the purpose of the LHMP is to identify and foster preparedness among local agencies against natural and human-caused disasters. The LHMP outlines programs and strategies to reduce or eliminate the aforementioned risks. Additionally, the City is eligible to receive certain federal disaster relief funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) if it has an adopted LHMP. Additionally, the City would become eligible for part or all local-share costs for eligible Public Assistance funding (including disaster relief) as provided by the State through the California Disaster Assistance Act (CDAA).

ANALYSIS:

Revision to Citywide Roadway Plan of Circulation Element
(West Ontario Avenue Widening Project)

The Citywide Roadway Plan would be amended to reflect a change in the Roadway Classification for a segment of West Ontario Avenue from “Major Arterial 4 Lane” to “Major Arterial 6 Lane.” The Circulation Element is one of the eleven elements of the City’s adopted General Plan and serves as the blueprint to facilitate the movement of people, goods, and resources by prescribing goals, policies and programs intended to reduce local traffic congestion, encourage increased transit use, respond to the needs of local businesses, and encourage pedestrians and bicyclists to use the City’s network of streets for travel and recreation.

Revision to Public Safety Element (Local Hazard Mitigation Plan)

The Public Safety Element would be amended to update and revise the definition of “Hazard Mitigation Plan” following adoption of an updated Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) by the City Council in August 2024. The Public Safety Element is one of the eleven Elements of the General Plan, serves as the equivalent to the Safety Element as required under State law, and provides several proactive and coordinated programs for implementation by City departments to provide for general emergency response and preparedness, as well as for protection against foreseeable natural and human-caused hazards. The revision to LHMP definition is shown below.

Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP). ~~Corona’s LHMP identifies hazards and establishes a plan to prepare for emergencies and prevent or mitigate potential impacts. The City Council adopted its 2017 LHMP, and this general plan references and is consistent with the goals, policies, and programs specified therein.~~ The LHMP for the City of Corona planning area was developed in accordance with the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA 2000) and followed Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) 2011 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan guidance. The LHMP incorporates a process where hazards are identified and profiled, the people and facilities at risk are analyzed, and mitigation actions are developed to reduce or eliminate risk. The implementation of these mitigation actions, which include both short-term and long-term strategies, involve planning, policy changes, programs, mitigation projects, and other activities. The County of Riverside Operational Area Multi-Jurisdictional LHMP can be found here. MJLHMP 8.7.23.pdf (rivcoready.org)

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

This is a city initiated application and no application fee is associated with this request.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

Pursuant to Section 15164 of the Guidelines for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the City, as the lead agency, has prepared an Addendum to the General Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR), which was certified on June 3, 2020, for the proposed amendment to the Citywide Roadway Plan in the Circulation Element of the General Plan. The City has determined that the activity does not raise any new issues or result in impacts not previously analyzed in the certified General Plan EIR, and none of the

conditions described in Section 15162 otherwise requiring the preparation of a subsequent EIR exist.

As the General Plan amendment relates to updating the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan description in the Public Safety Element of the General Plan, the City has determined that this activity is covered under Section 15061(b)(3) (“common sense exemption”) of the CEQA Guidelines, because the proposed scope of work includes legislative changes only and accordingly it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that such activity would have a significant effect on the environment.

PLANNING AND HOUSING COMMISSION ACTION:

At its meeting of February 10, 2025, the Planning and Housing Commission considered the subject matter and took the following action:

Motion was made, seconded (Alexander/Woody) and carried with Commissioner Vernon absent, that the Planning and Housing Commission adopt Resolution No. 2659 granting GPA2024-0002 as part of Cycle 2 of the General Plan Amendments for 2025, and recommend that the City Council: (1) approve GPA2024-0002, based on the findings contained in the staff report; (2) adopt the Addendum to the certified General Plan Environmental Impact Report pertaining to the Circulation Element; and (3) find that GPA2024-0002 be exempted from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15061 (b)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines pertaining to the Public Safety Element. The minutes of the Planning and Housing Commission meeting are included as Exhibit 3.

PREPARED BY: JOANNE COLETTA, PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Exhibit 1 - Resolution No. 2025-014
2. Exhibit 2 - Planning and Housing Commission staff report
3. Exhibit 3 - Minutes of the Planning and Housing Commission meeting of February 10, 2025