

STAFF REPORT



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

DATE: November 10, 2026

TO: Justin Hess, City Manager

FROM: Patrick Prescott, Community Development Director
VIA: Fred Ramirez, Assistant Community Development Director, Planning
Scott Plambaeck, Planning Manager
BY: Amanda Landry, Principal Planner
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SUBJECT: Adoption of a Resolution Certifying a Final Environmental Impact Report for the Media District Specific Plan Update; Adopting a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program with a Statement of Overriding Considerations, and Adopting Findings of Fact pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act that Includes the Sustainable Infrastructure Alternative as the Preferred Project; Adoption of a Resolution Amending the Burbank2035 General Plan Land Use Element and Land Use Map Consistent with the Media District Specific Plan Update; Adoption of a Resolution Adopting the Media District Specific Plan Update; and Introduction of an Ordinance Amending Title 10, Chapter 1 (Zoning) of the Burbank Municipal Code (BMC) to Implement the 2026 Media District Specific Plan Update

RECOMMENDATION

1. Adopt A RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BURBANK CERTIFYING A FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT (FINAL EIR) FOR THE MEDIA DISTRICT SPECIFIC PLAN UPDATE; ADOPTING A MITIGATION MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRAM WITH A STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS, AND ADOPTING FINDINGS OF FACT PURSUANT TO THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) THAT INCLUDES THE SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE ALTERNATIVE (SIA) AS THE PREFERRED PROJECT (Attachment 1);
2. Adopt A RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BURBANK AMENDING THE BURBANK2035 GENERAL PLAN LAND USE ELEMENT AND

LAND USE MAP CONSISTENT WITH THE MEDIA DISTRICT SPECIFIC PLAN UPDATE (Attachment 2);

3. Adopt A RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BURBANK ADOPTING THE MEDIA DISTRICT SPECIFIC PLAN UPDATE (Attachment 3); AND
4. Introduce AN ORDINANCE OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BURBANK AMENDING TITLE 10, CHAPTER 1 (ZONING) OF THE BURBANK MUNICIPAL CODE (BMC) TO IMPLEMENT THE 2026 MEDIA DISTRICT SPECIFIC PLAN UPDATE (Attachment 4).

BACKGROUND

The Media District Specific Plan (MDSP), originally adopted in 1991, provides the land use and regulatory framework for one of Burbank's most significant employment centers. Over the past four years, the City has undertaken a comprehensive update of the MDSP (MDSP Update) to respond to changes in the physical, economic, and regulatory environment; establish clear and objective development and design standards; facilitate housing production near employment and transit; support continued commercial and economic development; and strengthen protections for surrounding residential neighborhoods.

The proposed MDSP Update reflects extensive community engagement, policy development, technical analysis, and environmental review. Following public review of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR), additional analysis was conducted to evaluate the Sustainable Infrastructure Alternative (SIA), which reduces anticipated development through the 2035 planning horizon to better align potential growth with infrastructure capacity and improvements that can feasibly be completed during that period. The Final EIR identifies the SIA as the environmentally superior alternative, and staff recommends adoption of the SIA as the Preferred Project.

On September 28, 2026, the Planning Commission conducted a public hearing to consider the MDSP Update Project, Final EIR, and associated implementation actions. Following public testimony and deliberation, the Commission voted 5-0 to recommend that the City Council: 1) certify the Final EIR and adopt a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) with associated environmental determinations and findings (including the SIA as the Preferred Project); 2) adopt the General Plan Amendment; 3) adopt the MDSP Update Project and 4) amend the Burbank Municipal Code (BMC) to incorporate the Project and take the related actions necessary to adopt and implement the Project.

The 1991 MDSP was originally adopted in response to significant commercial development within the Media District and concerns regarding the potential effects of future development on surrounding residential neighborhoods. The 1991 MDSP regulates development intensity and includes land use, development, transportation demand management, and design requirements intended to accommodate economic activity within the Media District while protecting adjacent neighborhoods. The MDSP has not been comprehensively updated since its adoption more than 30 years ago.

Since 1991, the physical, economic, transportation, and regulatory environment affecting development within the Media District has changed substantially. The Burbank 2035 General Plan directs the City to periodically evaluate and update its specific plans through a public participation process, and the 2021-2029 Housing Element directs the City to establish objective development and design standards through the MDSP Update. In addition, changes in State housing law increasingly require streamlined or ministerial review of qualifying housing projects based on objective standards in effect at the time an application is submitted.

In 2022, the City initiated a comprehensive update of the MDSP to establish a contemporary land use and regulatory framework for the Media District. Over the subsequent four years, the City conducted extensive public outreach, prepared and revised the MDSP policy document and objective development and design standards, evaluated infrastructure capacity and improvements, and completed a Program EIR. Throughout this process, the Planning Commission and City Council considered the MDSP Update at multiple publicly noticed study sessions, allowing the MDSP Update to be progressively refined in response to community, stakeholder, and decision-maker feedback. The resulting MDSP Update intends to emphasize context-sensitive development and neighborhood protection, facilitate transit-oriented growth, streamline housing production, and support continued economic activity within the Media District.

DISCUSSION

Final Media District Specific Plan Update

The final draft of the MDSP Update establishes a comprehensive land use, development, and implementation framework intended to guide future development within the Media District while balancing opportunities for housing and economic development with neighborhood compatibility and infrastructure needs. The MDSP Update establishes objective development and design standards that are intended to be practical and predictable to administer while ensuring that future development remains sensitive to surrounding uses and neighborhoods. During development of the MDSP Update, these standards were evaluated and revised in response to public and decision-maker feedback to simplify their application while maintaining the MDSP Update's context-sensitive design objectives.

The MDSP Update also establishes a more refined land use strategy for the Media District. The associated General Plan Amendment would consolidate existing General Plan land use designations within the Media District into a Media District Specific Plan land use designation and refer to the MDSP Update policy document for parcel-level residential density and non-residential intensity allowances. Development potential is generally concentrated toward the center of the Plan Area, away from existing lower-scale residential neighborhoods. The MDSP Update also modernizes permitted uses and revises parking standards to provide greater flexibility for commercial and other non-residential uses, including opportunities for adaptive reuse of existing buildings.

Implementation of the MDSP Update will occur incrementally over the life of the Plan through regulatory changes, development review, future planning efforts, infrastructure improvements, and coordination among City departments and other agencies. Certain components, including the updated permitted uses and objective development and design standards, would become effective immediately as part of the regulatory framework applicable to development within the Media District. Other implementation measures, including construction of future infrastructure improvements and programs, will require additional analysis, funding, prioritization, or future City action through departmental work programs, the annual budget, and capital improvement planning processes.

Sustainable Infrastructure Alternative

As part of the environmental review process, the City released the Draft Program EIR for public review on February 7, 2026. Following review of comments received on the Draft EIR, staff determined that additional analysis was warranted and developed the Sustainable Infrastructure Alternative (SIA). The SIA reduces the amount of anticipated development compared to the originally proposed Project to better account for practical limitations on infrastructure improvements that can feasibly be completed within the Plan's 2035 horizon. SIA was subsequently analyzed in the Recirculated Draft EIR released on July 11, 2026.

Under the SIA, anticipated development potential through 2035 is reduced from 9,702 residential units and approximately 4.0 million square feet of non-residential development under the originally proposed Project to 2,258 residential units and approximately 684,000 square feet of non-residential development; both scenarios include 400 hotel rooms. Importantly, the SIA retains the fundamental goals and policy framework of the MDSP Update to facilitate the development of housing, encourage transit-oriented development and to streamline the permitting process, and concentrate development in key areas that are further away from adjacent residential neighborhoods, while better aligning anticipated development with infrastructure capacity and improvements that can feasibly occur during the planning horizon.

The environmental analysis determined that the SIA would reduce impacts across numerous environmental resource areas compared to the originally proposed Project and would reduce the significant utilities and service systems impact to less than significant with mitigation incorporated. In addition, the SIA would meet the Project objectives. Although significant and unavoidable impacts would remain in certain resource areas, the Final EIR identifies the SIA as the environmentally superior alternative. Because the SIA fulfills the Project objectives while resulting in fewer impacts on City resources, staff recommends that the City Council identify the SIA as the Preferred Project moving forward. Consistent with this recommendation, the revised density and intensity maps in Chapter 7 of the MDSP Update have been updated to reflect the SIA.

Planning Commission Recommendation

On September 28, 2026, the Planning Commission conducted a duly noticed public hearing to consider the MDSP Update, Final EIR, and associated implementation actions. The Commission received public testimony, discussed the proposed Project and SIA, and voted 5-0 to adopt a resolution recommending that the City Council certify the Final EIR and approve the General Plan Amendment, MDSP Update, and implementing Ordinance. During its deliberation, the Commission expressed general support for the MDSP Update while discussing several policy and implementation considerations. The Commission's discussion focused on the permissibility of hotel uses and whether future hotel development should automatically require a Development Agreement; the implementation of the SIA beyond the 2035 planning horizon; and the City's ongoing efforts to better coordinate land use planning with infrastructure capacity and investment. The Commission also expressed interest in receiving regular future updates regarding the City's broader efforts to align long-range land use and infrastructure planning. Members of the public also provided testimony addressing hotel uses and aspects of the proposed Plan, including the fiscal impact of possible future infrastructure upgrades, and requesting clarification about the SIA and concerns about wildfire evacuation routes. (Attachment 6).

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Extensive community engagement has been conducted throughout development of the MDSP Update. Over the four-year planning process, the Project team participated in approximately 40 public events, including community workshops, neighborhood meetings, stakeholder briefings, walking tours, listening sessions, public events, and presentations to the City Council, Planning Commission, and other City boards and commissions. The City also utilized a variety of digital and traditional outreach methods, including the Project website, social media, email notifications, signage, and an interactive web mapping tool. Community and stakeholder feedback received throughout this process informed successive revisions to the MDSP Update, including revisions to the proposed development and design standards.

Additional opportunities for public participation were provided through the environmental review process. The Draft EIR was released on February 7, 2026, for a 45-day public review period, and following the receipt of new public comments and the preparation of additional environmental analysis, the Recirculated Draft EIR was released on July 11, 2026, for an additional 45-day review period. The Planning Commission conducted a duly noticed public hearing on September 28, 2026, and the City Council public hearing represents the final public hearing prior to consideration of the requested Project approvals.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The MDSP Update is subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and a Program EIR was prepared to evaluate the potential environmental effects associated with implementation of the Plan. The Program EIR evaluates the MDSP at a programmatic level and is supported by technical studies addressing infrastructure, utilities, transportation, and other environmental resource areas.

The Draft EIR was released for public review on February 7, 2026. In response to comments received during the public review period, additional analysis was conducted, and the SIA was developed and evaluated in a Recirculated Draft EIR released on July 11, 2026. The Final EIR incorporates the Draft EIR, Recirculated Draft EIR, comments received during the applicable public review periods, responses to comments, and revisions to the environmental analysis.

As discussed above, the Final EIR identifies the SIA as the environmentally superior alternative that still meets the Project objectives. Significant and unavoidable environmental impacts would remain in certain resource areas; therefore, approval of the Project requires the City Council to certify the Final EIR, adopt the MMRP and Findings of Fact, and adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations finding that the identified benefits of the Project outweigh its significant and unavoidable environmental effects. (Attachment 1.)

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with the adoption of the MDSP Update. Implementation of certain longer-term programs and infrastructure improvements identified in the MDSP Update may require future City funding; however, those expenditures are not authorized by adoption of the MDSP Update. Individual programs and capital projects requiring City funding would be evaluated and prioritized through future departmental work programs, the City's annual budget and Capital Improvement Program, and other applicable City processes. Technical studies prepared for the MDSP Update and Program EIR will also assist the City in identifying infrastructure needs and evaluating appropriate and proportional development impact fees associated with future development.

CONCLUSION

The MDSP Update provides a comprehensive framework to guide future growth and development within one of Burbank's most significant employment centers. The MDSP Update modernizes the City's land use and regulatory framework, establishes clear and objective development and design standards, facilitates housing production near employment and transit, supports continued economic development, and maintains a focus on neighborhood compatibility and infrastructure planning.

Following four years of community engagement, policy development, technical analysis, and environmental review, the SIA provides a balanced approach that retains the fundamental objectives of the MDSP Update while better aligning anticipated growth through 2035 with infrastructure capacity and feasible improvements. On September 28, 2026, the Planning Commission voted 5-0 to recommend City Council approval of the Project. Therefore, staff recommends that the City Council certify the Final EIR and approve the General Plan Amendment, MDSP Update, and implementing Ordinance as noted in the Recommendation section of this report.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Resolution of the City Council of the City of Burbank certifying a Final Environmental Impact Report (Final EIR) for the Media District Specific Plan Update; adopting a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program with a Statement of Overriding Considerations, and adopting Findings of Fact pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) that Includes the Sustainable Infrastructure Alternative (SIA) as the Preferred Project
- Attachment 2 – Resolution of the Council of the City of Burbank amending the Burbank2035 General Plan Land Use Element and Land Use Map consistent with the Media District Specific Plan Update;
- Attachment 3 – Resolution of the Council of the City of Burbank adopting the Media District Specific Plan Update; and
- Attachment 4 – Ordinance of the City Council of the City of Burbank amending Title 10, Chapter 1 (Zoning) of the Burbank Municipal Code (BMC) to implement the 2026 Media District Specific Plan Update.
- Attachment 5 – September 28, 2026, Planning Commission Summary Minutes, Staff Report, and Attachments
- Attachment 6 – Summary of Planning Commission Public Hearing Comments and Staff Responses