

## GENERAL PLANS

The City of Yucaipa is updating its General Plan in accordance with state law. This handout provides a brief summary of the purpose, content, and legal requirements involved in the preparation of a general plan.

### What is a General Plan?

California State law requires each city and county to adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan. A general plan represents the community's desire for its future; it is a blueprint for the preservation, growth, and development of a community. City councils and planning commissions use the general plan to guide land use decisions for the community.

The general plan is considered "comprehensive" because it covers the entire area within a city's boundaries and areas outside the city under its purview. It is also comprehensive in the issues it addresses. A general plan addresses land use, housing, traffic, natural resources, open space, safety, public facilities, and many other services.

The general plan is also considered "long-term" since it looks 20 years or further into the future. The general plan reflects the long-term vision of the community and supporting goals and policies. The general plan and/or supporting implementation plans inform shorter-term decisions, budgeting, and programs to support the vision.

The City of Yucaipa's General Plan has provided a strong foundation for the quality of life enjoyed by residents and businesses. However, since the General Plan was prepared nearly a decade ago, an update is necessary to address emerging issues, state law requirements, changes in the economy, and other issues affecting our community.

The Yucaipa General Plan update is intended to refine our course for the next 20 years while staying true to our vision. The General Plan update will adjust the goals and policies where needed and provide civic leaders the most up-to-date tools to continue improving and maintaining a high quality of life for our community.

## CONTENT OF THE GENERAL PLAN

State law allows cities considerable flexibility to determine the best structure for a general plan. What is important is that the general plan and its elements satisfy the minimum legal requirements as to content, format, and procedure. Most general plans in California contain the following features in one form or another.

### Vision

Many general plans have a vision or guiding principles for the community's future. The vision is a statement of desired future conditions, values, and characteristics to be achieved by the plan. A vision reflects what a community values and shapes the general plan policies and programs needed to achieve the vision.

### General Plan Elements

State law requires that general plans contain seven elements or topics, although additional topics are often included.

#### *Land Use*

The land use element describes the distribution, location, and extent of use of land in the city. It also contains goals, objectives, policies, and programs that guide the preservation, development, and improvement of areas within a jurisdiction.

#### *Circulation*

The circulation element deals with the location and extent of roadways, pedestrian and bicycle trails, transportation routes, transit, and public utilities and facilities. It serves as an infrastructure plan and supports the land use element.

#### *Open Space*

The open space element provides a plan for the preservation of open space. It must specify plans for preserving natural resources, for managing the production of resources, for outdoor recreation, and for public health and safety.

#### *Housing*

The housing element plans for a balance of housing types and prices as well as support services to meet the needs of residents and the workforce. The housing element also focuses on improving neighborhoods to ensure a high quality of life for residents.

#### *Conservation*

The conservation element addresses the conservation, development, and/or managed use of various resources, including water, forests, hillsides and natural landforms, soils, waterways, wildlife, and mineral deposits.

#### *Noise*

The noise element identifies and analyzes projected noise conditions from a variety of stationary and transportation sources and includes measures to abate or mitigate potential noise levels to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public.

#### *Safety*

The safety element must identify seismic, geologic, flood, and wildfire hazards, and establish policies to protect the community from them.

#### *Optional Elements*

A city may adopt other elements that address unique issues in a community. Common themes include: parks and recreation, historic preservation, community design, or economic development. Once adopted, these optional elements have the same standing as mandated elements.

#### *Implementation*

General plans often contain shorter-term actions to carry out and achieve the goals and policies of the general plan. This may include one-time initiatives by the city, decisions on development projects, municipal operational programs, capital improvements, and partnerships with jurisdictions or private and public agencies.

## CONSISTENCY

A key requirement for general plans is consistency within the document and with other city plans.

### Internal Consistency

State law requires that no textual or diagrammatic policies conflict between the components of a general plan; that is, a general plan must be internally consistent. Internal consistency has five dimensions:

1. All elements of the general plan have equal legal status; no element takes priority over another.
2. Elements must be consistent with one another. For instance, if land use element policies result in an increase in traffic, the circulation element must accommodate those impacts.
3. Each element's data, goals, objectives, policies, and programs must be consistent. For instance, if the housing element indicates that current housing supplies will meet future demand and another section describes a shortage of affordable housing, the element is not consistent.
4. Goals, objectives, policies, and implementation programs identified in a special policy area or specific plan must be consistent with the goals and policies of the general plan.
5. Text and diagrams within the general plan must be consistent. In other words, the diagrams of land use, circulation, open space, and natural resources must reflect the written policies and programs of the general plan elements.

### External Consistency

General plans also require external consistency with other city actions. This means that all subdivisions, public works projects, specific plans, and zoning decisions must be consistent with the general plan. Actions that are determined to be inconsistent with the general plan cannot be approved.

## STAY INFORMED

For more information on the City of Yucaipa General Plan update, please contact Joe Lambert, Director of Development Services, at 909.797.2489 or visit the City's website:

[www.yucaipa.org](http://www.yucaipa.org)

# GENERAL PLANS IN CALIFORNIA

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