

Chapter 1: Introduction

I. Purpose

The California Government Code requires that each city and county adopt a general plan “for the physical development of the county or city, and any land outside its boundaries which bears relation to its planning.” The Los Angeles County General Plan is the guide for long-term physical development and conservation through a framework of goals, policies, and implementation programs.

The unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County are comprised of approximately 2,650 square miles, and over one million people. The Los Angeles County General Plan provides the policy framework for how and where the unincorporated areas will grow through the year 2035, and establishes goals, policies, and programs to foster healthy, livable, and sustainable communities. This document represents a comprehensive effort to update the County’s 1980 General Plan.

The General Plan guides growth countywide through goals, policies, and programs that discourage sprawling development patterns; protect areas with hazard, environment and resource constraints; encourage infill development in areas near transit, services and existing infrastructure; and make a strong commitment to ensuring sufficient services and infrastructure. It also lays the foundation for future community-based planning initiatives that will identify additional opportunities for accommodating growth.

II. Document Organization

Part I: Introduction: This section is a user’s guide to the General Plan, with information on document organization, applicability, and the guiding principles of the General Plan. This section also provides background information and the growth forecast for the unincorporated areas.

Part II: Planning Areas Framework: This section provides an overview of the Planning Areas Framework, which facilitates the planning of all unincorporated areas through 11 identified planning areas.

Part III: General Plan Elements: This section contains the elements of the General Plan. These elements identify unincorporated countywide planning issues, as well as the goals and policies to address them. Policies are organized by topic for ease of use.

Part IV: General Plan Implementation Program: This section provides information on updating and maintaining the General Plan, including data and maps. This section also contains the implementation programs of the General Plan. The implementation programs create actions for policies, and also identify lead/partner agencies, and a timeline for program completion. The implementation programs are organized by General Plan element. This section includes a summary of all goals and policies.

Appendices: The appendices contain many of the data, methodologies and assumptions, background studies, and documentation that informed the development of the General Plan. The appendices are organized by General Plan element.

III. How to Use the General Plan

The General Plan provides a general policy framework for community-based plans, such as area plans, community plans and coastal land use plans, and works in conjunction with several planning documents, including strategic plans and master plans. The General Plan is implemented by the Los Angeles County Code, in particular, Titles 21 (Subdivisions) and 22 (Planning and Zoning). The California Government Code requires that all zoning ordinances, zone changes, subdivisions, capital improvement plans, and public works projects be consistent with the General Plan.

The General Plan also serves as an advisory countywide document to coordinate land use planning, public service and facilities planning, circulation, environmental management and regional land use and transportation initiatives with the 88 cities within Los Angeles County and with special districts and regional agencies, such as the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro), Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts, air quality districts, water districts and suppliers, and school districts.

There are many regulatory and policy components to this General Plan. Below are instructions for using and interpreting the General Plan:

- **Guiding Principles:** Guiding principles serve as the base metric for interpreting the General Plan goals, policies, and implementation programs.
- **Goals:** A goal is a general direction-setter that expresses the community's values. It may be abstract in nature and is generally not quantifiable or time dependent.
- **Policies:** A policy is a specific statement or diagram that guides decision-making. It indicates a commitment of the County to a particular course of action. A policy may be carried out through implementation programs and/or by direct application of the policy. No policy, whether in written or diagram form, shall be given greater weight than any other policy.
- **Topics:** Topics are used to categorize policies throughout the General Plan elements. Topics are meant to facilitate ease of use, and are not to be used to interpret policies.
- **Implementation Programs:** Implementation programs identify actions for carrying out the policies of the General Plan. Each program identifies lead/partner agencies; however, they are not exclusive and new partners can be added as needed. The programs also include general timeframes that assume the availability of adequate funding. The programs and timeframes may need to be modified accordingly if adequate funding is not available.
- **Maps and Tables:** Maps and tables provide background information, technical justification for policies, and/or other policy information. They should be updated regularly and interpreted in the context of General Plan goals and policies.