

Chapter 3: Guiding Principles

Guiding Principles

Sustainability requires that planning practices meet the needs of Los Angeles County without compromising the ability of its future generations to realize their economic, social, and environmental goals. The following five guiding principles work to emphasize the concept of sustainability throughout the General Plan.

1. Employ Smart Growth: Shape new communities to align housing with jobs and services; and protect and conserve the County's natural and cultural resources, including the character of rural communities.

The General Plan implements smart growth by using strategies that are tailored to each community. In urban areas, transit-oriented development will create vibrant neighborhood centers around transit stations where people can live, work, and shop without the need to drive to each destination. Also in urban areas, active corridor development will connect major centers and neighborhoods. In rural areas, land uses and developments that are compatible with the natural environment and landscape will maintain existing community character. These work in conjunction with other smart growth strategies to "green" streets and buildings, and protect and conserve natural resources.

2. Ensure community services and infrastructure are sufficient to accommodate growth: Coordinate an equitable sharing of public and private costs associated with providing appropriate community services and infrastructure to meet growth needs.

Community-based services, such as schools, parks, libraries, police and fire services, and waste management are essential elements of all communities. In urban areas, quality of life is further dependent on infrastructure such as water and sewer systems, flood protection, utilities, and circulation systems and traffic signalization. Successful land use planning and growth management relies upon orderly and efficient planning and placement of community services where appropriate. It also relies upon the coordination of public and private partners to provide and maintain appropriate and sufficient services to all communities, and develop urban infrastructure where it is commensurate with urban growth. Planning for community services and infrastructure must be context-sensitive. The General Plan establishes policies and programs to ensure appropriate service levels for all communities, and provide urban infrastructure for new urban developments.

3. Provide the foundation for a strong and diverse economy: Protect areas that generate employment and promote programs that support a stable and well educated workforce. This will provide a foundation for a jobs-housing balance and a vital and competitive economy in the unincorporated areas.

Ensuring the economic vitality and long-term competitiveness of the unincorporated areas requires policies that will promote a stable and well-educated job base, generate tax revenues to support quality services, provide for a jobs-housing balance, and accommodate the businesses and industries that represent the jobs of the future. As planning for future growth and the appropriate land use mix has major impacts on the local and regional economy, the General Plan addresses the protection of industrial land in the unincorporated areas. The General Plan also provides policies and programs to foster economic development.

4. Promote excellence in environmental resource management: Carefully manage the County’s natural resources, such as air, water, wildlife habitats, mineral resources, agricultural land, forests, and open space in an integrated way that is both feasible and sustainable.

Stewardship of the natural resources in Los Angeles County, such as clean air, clean water, wildlife habitats, mineral resources, agricultural land, forests, and open space, is essential to a successful sustainability strategy. The majority of the natural resources in Los Angeles County are located in the unincorporated areas. Natural resources are vital for the recreational, scenic and wilderness opportunities they provide, as well as for their role in sustaining the function of natural environments. The General Plan provides policy guidance to protect and conserve natural resources and to improve the quality of its air, water and biological resources. The General Plan also includes goals, policies and programs to minimize risks and discourage development in areas that are prone to safety hazards, such as earthquakes, floods and wildfires.

5. Provide healthy, livable and equitable communities: Design communities that incorporate their cultural and historic surroundings, are not overburdened by nuisance and negative environmental factors, and provide reasonable access to food systems. These factors have a measureable effect on public well-being.

The General Plan promotes the creation of communities that foster physical activity, safety, and health. Land use that promotes physical activity and access to healthy food is a strategy to address the obesity epidemic and corresponding high rates of chronic diseases. In addition, policies to address environmental conditions, such as poor air quality, polluted urban runoff, deteriorated housing conditions, and ground and surface contamination have a direct impact on public health. Furthermore, promoting safety through improvements in the County’s bikeway network, the creation of pedestrian-friendly environments and complete streets that are accessible to all users produce positive outcomes from a land use and public health perspective.

The General Plan addresses environmental justice by providing information and raising awareness of a number of issues that impact the unincorporated areas, including but not limited to excessive noise, traffic, water pollution, air pollution, and heavy industrial uses. The General Plan also addresses environmental justice by emphasizing the importance of meaningful coordination and actions. The General Plan emphasizes the importance of sufficient community-based services and infrastructure; protecting and conserving open space, natural and resource areas; preventing and minimizing pollution impacts; and stakeholder participation in planning efforts.

Environmental Justice

Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

An environmentally just Los Angeles County is a place where:

- Environmental risks, hazards, and public service related environmental services, such as trash hauling and landfills, are distributed equitably without discrimination;
- Existing and proposed negative environmental impacts are mitigated to the fullest extent to protect the public health, safety, and well-being;
- Access to environmental investments, benefits, and natural resources are equally distributed; and
- Information, participation in decision-making, and access to justice in environment-related matters are accessible to all.

SB 1000 requires that local jurisdictions include an environmental Justice element to their General Plan or related goals, policies, and objectives as they relate to disadvantaged communities in other elements of the General Plan. The Green Zones Program supports the goals of SB 1000 and the implementation of environmental justice throughout the unincorporated areas by identifying communities that disproportionately bear a burden from stationary sources of pollution due to incompatible land uses and better regulating incompatible land uses in close proximity to each other through new Zoning Code definitions, new permitting requirements and development standards.