



Introduction

Draft General Plan Amendment No. 960

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Chapter 1

Introduction

NOTE TO THE READER:

The County of Riverside is recirculating Draft Environmental Impact Report No. 521 (DEIR No. 521) for public review from February 21, 2015 through April 6, 2015 in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act, Section 15088.5. Correlative changes were made to Draft General Plan Amendment No. 960 (GPA No. 960) and the Draft Climate Action Plan. The revised GPA No. 960 and CAP documents are made available for public reference.

The documents were previously circulated from May 1, 2014, through June 30, 2014. The circulation garnered a substantial amount of comments from government and regulatory agencies, interest groups, and Riverside County citizens, which resulted in the aforementioned changes. Additionally, several changes to the documents occurred in order to more accurately reflect the existing conditions of the County, and to further analyze impacts associated with the GPA No. 960. The following is a summary of the changes that occurred to the documents:

Draft General Plan Amendment No. 960:

- *Data corrections to the Lakeview Nuevo Area Plan to reflect the removal of Specific Plan 342.*
- *Removal of the Lakeview Mountains Policy Area from the Lakeview Nuevo Area Plan.*
- *Addition of language clarifying the Wine Country Community Plan (GPA No. 1077) in relation to the Southwest Area Plan.*
- *Addition of language clarifying Airport Land Use consistency and Mixed Use Planning Areas.*
- *Addition of Policy S 1.4 requiring the County to implement the County of Riverside Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan.*
- *Addition of Policy OS 4.9 discouraging development within watercourses and areas within 100 feet of riparian vegetation.*
- *Minor modifications to text and policies as a result from comments received during the circulation of the draft document.*

Draft EIR No. 521:

- *The Draft EIR was updated to better reflect the existing conditions within the County.*
- *Several analysis sections of the Draft EIR were further refined in order to reflect changes associated with the updated background information. These sections included Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas, Biological Resources, Transportation and Circulation, Water Resources, and Cumulative Impacts.*
- *All analysis sections were updated where relevant to maintain consistency with any changes made in the Draft General Plan Update and Draft Climate Action Plan.*

Draft Climate Action Plan:

- *The Draft Climate Action Plan was updated with new implementation measures.*

The recirculated documents better account for the changing environment in Riverside County and more accurately address future conditions. Although comments submitted during the previous comment period do not require a written response, it should be noted that these comments are part of the administrative record and were taken into consideration while drafting the revised document. Any comments made during the May 2014 circulation of the documents will be included in the administrative record; however they will not be addressed in the Response to Comments. Per Section 15088.5(f)(1) of the CEQA Guidelines, only those comments submitted in response to the recirculated Environmental Impact Report will receive a formal written response in the Response to Comments as a part of the Final EIR.

In order to clearly display all of the changes that have been made during the General Plan Update Process, text has been formatted to show changes made in each step of the process. This includes:

- **Black Text:** General Plan text prior to GPA No. 960 is noted in black text.
- **Red Text:** Textual changes proposed as part of the May 2014 previously circulated document are shown in red text.
- **Blue Text:** Textual changes made to the documents after the May 2014 circulation are shown in blue text.

The color coding of the edits allows the reader to distinguish more clearly between the original General Plan text, the previously proposed May 2014 revisions (red) and the new February 2015 proposed revisions to GPA No. 960, EIR No. 521 and the Climate Action Plan.

The Origin: Setting the Stage for the General Plan

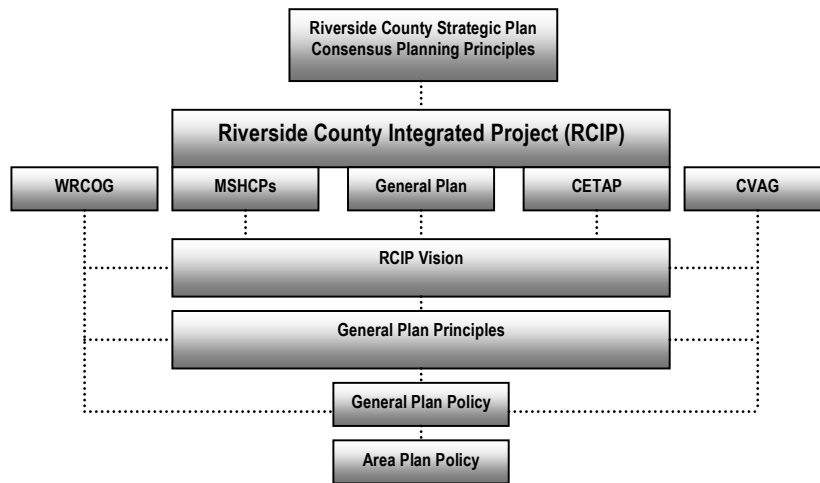
Two powerful and consistent messages were voiced by the residents of Riverside County when asked for their input into the direction of the Riverside County Integrated Project and the General Plan. During 22 outreach meetings conducted throughout the County, and in a countywide public opinion survey, the messages were:

- The public does not want Riverside County to be like much of the older development in Southern California that symbolizes urban sprawl; and
- The communities that make up the County are important, distinct and special, and must be preserved or enhanced.

The foundation for this revised and restructured General Plan for the County of Riverside has developed over a number of years. Riverside County's Strategic Vision, adopted in October of 1998, incorporates a set of 15 Consensus Planning Principles drafted and endorsed by a coalition of Riverside County stakeholders, including the building industry, property owners, environmental groups, and others, and are intended to guide the work of the Riverside County Integrated Project (RCIP). The RCIP is comprised of the Community Environmental Transportation Corridor Acceptability Process (CETAP), a Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) and the Riverside County General Plan update. The Consensus Planning Principles have in fact become the foundation for the RCIP Vision statement that was developed by a similarly diverse and expanded stakeholder group that has served as the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC). (See Chapter 2, Vision, for the text of the Vision Statement.)

This revised General Plan's structure is two-tiered (see diagram below). The General Plan covers the entire unincorporated portion of the County of Riverside and is augmented by 19 more detailed Area Plans covering Riverside County's territory with the exception of the undeveloped desert areas and the March Air *Joint* Reserve Base. The thrust of the General Plan is to manage the overall pattern of development more effectively. The Area

Plans provide a clear and more focused opportunity to enhance community identity within the County of Riverside and stimulate quality of life at the community level.



The diagram above does not depict a conventional hierarchy of authority. It intends to illustrate the interactive and intergovernmental process that shaped the development of this General Plan. The remarkable consistency in the Consensus Planning Principles, the RCIP Vision, and the General Plan Principles is most significant. These documents reflect several common themes that have driven the development of this General Plan, and that should shape the future of Riverside County. These themes are:

Quality of Life: Securing a high quality of life for Riverside County residents, even as we face a large projected population increase, by integrating and balancing the need for community and economic development, permanent multipurpose open space preservation, and multimodal transportation systems development. The innovative features of this Plan are designed to keep Riverside County economically competitive within the region and to provide an attractive environment and mobility for the high-wage employers sought by the County of Riverside. This is the key to bringing jobs and housing into better balance in Riverside County and significantly improving quality of life.

Community Identity, Form and Focus: Providing expanded opportunities for strategically located, compact activity centers, or nodes, that foster community identity and a sense of place. Key to this identity is a mix of land uses that will enable a broader range of community needs to be met (e.g. living, working, shopping, playing) within compact development areas, while at the same time providing them with definite edges or separation from other communities or clusters of communities.

Choice: Enabling the development of a greater variety of housing types than has previously been developed in the County of Riverside. This involves strategies that enable the County of Riverside to develop multiple housing types and meet the housing needs of residents in a wide range of socioeconomic categories.

Refining and Redefining the Development Process: Revising the Riverside County development processing system in order to strike a balance between certainty and flexibility, regulation and incentives. This involves providing certainty in the pattern of development and conservation, allowing flexibility in development choices within defined areas, and attempting to achieve the development we want by using a blend of incentives and regulations.

Incentives: Developing a system of practical incentives to stimulate compliance with the Vision, reward excellence in planning and development, and stimulate compact forms of development where they are most appropriate.

Stakeholders as Part of the Team: Building and maintaining a strong constituency for the Plan through stakeholder involvement and buy-in during its development. Stakeholder participation has been one of the key and unique features of the planning program. The involvement of stakeholders in Advisory Committees had a major impact on the content of the General Plan and Area Plans. Support from a committed group of stakeholders during the Plan's implementation will be equally important.

Collaboration: Fostering a new level of regional collaboration between cities and the County of Riverside. Many General Plan-level issues are not Riverside County's alone; they are regional. Solutions, in relation to transportation systems development, for example, must be collaborative.

The Process: Foundation

Background

The last update of Riverside County's General Plan, prior to this Plan revision, was in 1987. At that time the Plan did not contain a countywide land use map for the unincorporated area. Instead, policy direction was given in relation to land use at the General Plan level, and the Open Space, Agriculture, Mountainous, and approved Specific Plans' areas of Riverside County were mapped for reference. The Plan has been amended over 300 times since that date. Eleven Community Plans describing and mapping land use, policy direction and consistency zoning had also been adopted by the Board of Supervisors as part of the General Plan. Four more Community Plans were in draft form.

This update of the General Plan was undertaken by a team of consultants over a 36-month period of time, in order to:

- clearly map Riverside County's land use designations for the unincorporated areas;
- develop a streamlined, consistent set of land use categories for the County of Riverside;
- update and restructure the existing Community Plans and translate them into a new set of 19 Area Plans covering most of the Western Riverside County area, the Coachella Valley, Desert Center and the Palo Verde Valley

Team

The consulting team developed the General Plan in concert with Riverside County staff. Perhaps most significant is that a General Plan Advisory Committee also worked closely with consultants and staff as an integral part of the team, and strongly influenced the content of the General Plan. The General Plan Advisory Committee met monthly for the entire life of the project. A Subcommittee of the GPAC met weekly and at key intervals in the project with consultants and Riverside County staff.

The GPAC was comprised of two representatives appointed directly by each Riverside County Supervisor, as well as representatives of the Western Riverside Council of Governments, Building Industry Association, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Community Access Center, Endangered Habitats League, Sierra Club, Farm Bureau, Riverside County Office of Education, Riverside County Economic Development Agency, Riverside County Property Owners Association, and selected cities.

The CETAP effort included preparation of the circulation element, examination of transit options, and identification and refinement of four new transportation corridors for Riverside County. The consultant's work was also undertaken in concert with Riverside County staff and an Advisory Committee composed of a diverse group of Riverside County stakeholders.

The MSHCP for Western Riverside County, if adopted, will be implemented through integration into the General Plan Multipurpose Open Space element, and at the Area Plan level. The MSHCP Advisory Committee, a third stakeholder group, also played a key role in shaping the development of the MSHCP for Western Riverside County, together with Riverside County staff and consultants. The proposed Coachella Valley MSHCP is referred to in the General Plan Multipurpose Open Space Element, as well as the Area Plans for REMAP, The Pass, Western Coachella Valley and Eastern Coachella Valley.

Vision Process

Public Meetings and Survey: Between June and October of 1999, two rounds of community meetings were held to determine the issues that residents of Riverside County wanted to have considered in planning for Riverside County's future. The meetings were designed to engage the public in dialog with Riverside County staff and the consultants, and with each other, about issues critical to the success of the Plan and to Riverside County's future in general. (See Appendix D for a summary of these community workshops.) A survey relating to planning, traffic and circulation, and multi-species habitat areas was distributed, and the results were incorporated into the subsequent refinement of the RCIP Vision statement. At the same time a professional research firm completed a telephone survey of 600 registered voters in Riverside County, including 120 from each Supervisorial District. (See Appendix C for a summary of the community survey results.) Additional input came from a workshop that involved members of the Board of Supervisors and the Riverside County Transportation Commission.

The public input garnered from the public in the Vision outreach process did shape the structure of the Vision statement, which was further developed and deepened under the leadership of the General Plan Advisory Committee.

Resident's responses in the outreach process indicated their support for the following key ideas related to the General Plan:

1. Continued planned growth in response to population growth;
2. Road corridors that connect communities and connect Riverside County and adjacent counties;
3. Open space corridors that connect habitats;
4. No leapfrog development;
5. Less sameness, greater densities for "smart" developments;
6. Regional north/south and east/west solutions to congestion;
7. Better air quality through less traffic congestion and more local jobs;
8. A Plan that has a financing strategy; and
9. A planning pact with cities to help achieve the plan.

Technical Studies

Fiscal/Financial Analysis: Growth scenarios were prepared incorporating analysis of: employment and payroll trends, demographics, residential real estate trends, taxable retail sales, industrial and commercial real estate trends, community characteristics, competitive advantage, and infrastructure environment. The scenarios predicting low, medium, and high potentials for growth over the next 20 years were then used to evaluate the land use alternatives generated in the preparation of the Plan. (See Appendix F, Riverside County Population and Employment Forecasts, and Appendix G, Fiscal Analysis.)

Existing Conditions Report: The Existing Conditions Report prepared as part of this General Plan update provides a description of the countywide conditions that form the assumptions upon which the plan is based. This report covers land use, circulation, housing, open space and conservation and public safety conditions, and is published as part of the Environmental Impact Report for the General Plan.

Designed to meet State General Plan requirements (per California Government Code Section 65300 et seq.) and implement the RCIP Vision, this Plan outlines policies, standards, and programs to guide day-to-day decisions concerning Riverside County's future. Updating and revising the County's General Plan also serves several other important purposes, it:

- Provides clarity and stability in community development policy;
- Establishes a comprehensive and sound database for further implementation, project evaluation, administration, and monitoring; and
- Provides a basis for collaborative planning initiatives by cities, councils of government, the County and other governmental agencies.

Plan Development

Review/Assessment of Existing General Plan and Community Plans:

The consultants analyzed fifteen existing community plans, eleven approved by the Board of Supervisors and four in draft form. The plans were reviewed with respect to the following topics and characteristics: consistent or inconsistent structure; areas of distinction; land use designation systems; socioeconomic characteristics; land use allocation maps; zoning consistency; communities of interest/unincorporated communities boundaries; linkages with other areas; potential CETAP, MSHCP impacts; and growth predictions.

All of the policies contained in the Community Plans were reviewed, and if found relevant and applicable, were reassigned either to Area Plans or to the General Plan.

General Plan Development and Revision: Three land use alternatives were pursued in the preparation of the General Plan and Area Plans: a Trends alternative reflecting Riverside County's approved community plans, specific plans and zoning; a Spheres alternative reflecting cities' designations for their spheres of influence, where those designations differed from Riverside County's designations; and a Vision alternative reflecting land use patterns more consistent with the goals and principles of the Vision and General Plan principles.

The proposed General Plan Land Use Alternatives were presented to the Board of Supervisors in March of 2000, and direction was given to pursue the Vision alternative for further refinement. This latter alternative also contained many features derived from the first two alternatives.

The Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

In addition to this General Plan document, a comprehensive EIR has been published as a companion document. It should be referred to for more

extensive information about the impacts of the Plan and how they will be mitigated (offset or reduced), as well as background information that aided the development of the EIR.

The Result: Plan Features

Vision-Driven Plan

The General Plan is grounded in the RCIP Vision, sets the direction for Riverside County's land use and development in strategic locations, as well as the development of its economic base, the framework of its transportation system, and the preservation of the extremely valuable natural and cultural resources it contains. The Riverside County General Plan serves as a "guidebook" containing direction that will enable achievement of its Vision Statement.

A set of General Plan Principles has been developed as an outgrowth of the Consensus Planning Principles and Vision. One section of those Principles, relating to the General Plan Certainty System, is introduced in this section and contained in the General Plan. The remaining sections of that document are contained in Appendix B to the General Plan. Together, the Consensus Planning Principles, the Vision, and the General Planning Principles contain a number of significant new directions, embodied in the Plan, which are intended to chart Riverside County a new course for the 21st century.

Significant new General Plan features include:

Clarity in Land Use Guidance

Completely Mapped Policy: Land use mapping at the General Plan level (see Chapter 3, Land Use Element) depicts four "Foundation" Components, while Area Plans use a streamlined, consistent set of land use designations that fall under the umbrella of the Foundation Components.

The Foundation Components: The RCIP Vision calls for the land uses in Riverside County to be clearly mapped, and areas suitable for development or agriculture to be easily distinguishable from those to be permanently conserved, either for habitat or to accommodate natural resources or open space. As a result, the land use designations used in this General Plan fall under the umbrella of ~~four~~ *five* Foundation Components, or major categories of Riverside County land use: Community Development, Rural, *Rural Community*, Agriculture, and Multipurpose Open Space. The countywide map of land use delineates only those ~~four~~ *five* Foundation Components (see Chapter 3, Land Use Element).

As detailed in the description of the General Plan Certainty System (see general description below and Chapter ~~4011~~, Administration), the significance of these foundation components is that General Plan Amendments proposing a change of land use designation from one Foundation Component to another will only be entertained by the County of Riverside at eight-year intervals.

1. Amendments to, but not from, the Open Space Foundation Component and the corresponding change from any other Foundation Component.
2. Agriculture Foundation amendments.

3. Extraordinary circumstances.
4. Foundation Component lands expressly exempted by a provision of this General Plan from the procedural provisions generally applicable to Foundation Component amendments.

Area Plans: Nineteen Area Plans replace the previously adopted set of Community Plans as well as the Riverside Extended Mountain Area Plan and the Southwest Area Plan. Area Plan boundaries have been adjusted to include most of the unincorporated area of Western Riverside County, as well as the Coachella Valley, Desert Center and the Palo Verde Valley. Area Plans are comprised of a land use map and other illustrative materials relevant to the area, as well as specific policy direction required to provide guidance unique to each area. The Area Plans incorporate a streamlined land use designation system representing a full spectrum of categories that relate to the natural or economic characteristics of the land in Riverside County. This system consolidates and replaces over 200 classifications in the previous General Plan.

Hazards Mapping: The General Plan incorporates a comprehensive set of natural hazards maps identifying physical development constraints within Riverside County, including floodplains and dam inundation areas, areas of seismic activity or faulting, liquefaction and landslide areas, and high fire hazard areas. These maps provide clearer and more comprehensive direction regarding development constraints than had previously been available.

Contemporary Policies and Standards

The General Plan also provides updated policy direction and standards related to land use, housing, safety, circulation, open space and conservation, air quality, and noise that is relevant countywide.

Preserving Stability and Flexibility in the Plan Over Time: The Certainty System

The Riverside County General Plan Certainty System provides clarity regarding the interpretation and use of the General Plan in ongoing decision making, and seeks to sustain the Plan's policy direction over time (see Chapter 10, Administration). It recognizes that circumstances will change, imperfections in the Plan will be discovered, and events will occur that require changes in the Plan. The overriding consideration, however, is the absolute necessity to maintain a high level of confidence in the Plan and enable people affected by it to have reasonable expectations regarding how the Plan will impact them. The Certainty System serves the needs of those who value a rural lifestyle, farmers who have invested in their operations, and developers who want to ensure return on their investments. The System also ensures that open space is preserved in Riverside County for the benefit of all.

State law limits amendments to the General Plan to four times per year. Each one can include multiple areas of change. The Certainty System takes the state guidelines a step further by identifying specific amendment categories and a time frame within which each can be considered for amendment to the General Plan. It is essential to the integrated character of this plan that changes made to it do not create inconsistencies with other parts of the Plan.

Tracking Progress

Carrying out the adopted General Plan requires numerous individual actions and ongoing programs involving almost every Riverside County department, as well as many other public agencies and private organizations. Implementing Actions for General Plan policies are referenced within each General Plan element and compiled into an Implementation Program contained in Appendix K of this Plan.

The General Plan implementation database is intended to be a responsive, highly automated system for monitoring and assessing cumulative effects of implementation of the Plan, including documentation of development, land preservation, and transportation activities. Reference to this monitoring information is an essential ingredient in the consideration of any change in the Plan, especially regarding land use designations. The information in this system will be maintained in such a way that basic development activity can be summarized at any time for use in reporting mechanisms, including an annual General Plan progress report.

Integrating Realistic Mobility Options

The CETAP incorporates three levels of effort: identification of transportation corridors, development of the General Plan Circulation Element (Chapter 4), and exploration of options for transit system development in Riverside County. Further, guidance for the implementation of the four CETAP corridors and the transit system concepts identified, is incorporated into the General Plan's policies and Implementation Plan.

A transit concept, known as the Oasis Transit System, has been developed to fit the unique needs of Riverside County (see Chapter 4). It entails localized transit loops centered around focal points of relatively compact development, tied in with regional transit corridors and, in turn, connected to Riverside County's burgeoning Metrolink system. For the foreseeable future, the system would consist of rubber-tired vehicles resembling small rail cars, and would connect to neighborhoods through transit stations highly integrated into development concentrations at key locations. These nodes of development would contain a mix of uses normally required to serve each community, but would be designed to reinforce and/or benefit from transit service.

The Structure: a Reader's Guide to the General Plan Document

Plan Organization and Use

The Riverside County General Plan is organized in the following manner:

Preface: Introduces the General Plan document and incorporates the summary Vision statement, "Riverside County is a family of special communities in a remarkable environmental setting."

- 1. Introduction:** Describes the background, development process, features and structure of the General Plan.
- 2. Vision:** Contains the full version of the Vision Statement.
- 3. Land Use Element:** Designates the general distribution and intensity of all uses of the land in Riverside County. This includes residential, commercial, industrial, public facilities, and open space uses. Also provides development standards related to each land use category, and general policy level direction for an array of land use-related issues such as hillside development and community design.

State General Plan law mandates seven required elements of the General Plan and allows optional additional elements. State law also requires that these elements must be internally consistent with one another, though it does not mandate either the format or structure of each element. For example, policies in the Land Use element must be consistent with policies in the Noise Element.

Throughout the General Plan, special features have been included to enhance the readability and practicality of the information provided. Look for these elements:



Quotes: quotations from the RCIP Vision or individuals involved or concerned with Riverside County.



Factoids: interesting information about Riverside County that is related to the element



References: contacts and resources that can be consulted for additional information



Definitions: clarification of terms and vocabulary used in certain policies or text.

4. **Circulation Element:** Identifies the general location and extent of existing and proposed major transportation facilities, including major roadways, rail, transit systems, and airports. The Circulation Element for the Riverside County General Plan also identifies and provides policy direction for the implementation of the CETAP Corridors.
5. **Multipurpose Open Space Element:** In this General Plan, the Conservation and Open Space elements have been combined into the Multipurpose Open Space Element. Addresses the conservation, development, and use of natural resources including water, soils, rivers, and mineral deposits. Details plans and measures for preserving open space for: protection of natural resources such as wildlife habitat; the managed availability of space for parks, trails, and scenic vistas; and protection of public health and safety through protection of areas subject to geologic hazards, flooding, and fires.
6. **Safety Element:** Establishes policies and programs to protect the community from risks associated with seismic, geologic, flood, and wildfire hazards.
7. **Noise Element:** Identifies and appraises noise problems and includes policies to protect Riverside County from excessive noise.
8. **Housing Element:** Assesses current and projected housing needs, and sets out policies and proposals for the improvement of housing and the provision of adequate sites for housing to meet the needs of all economic segments of Riverside County.
9. **Air Quality Element:** This General Plan includes an optional Air Quality element that identifies and appraises air quality problems and includes policies to improve air quality.
10. **Healthy Communities Element:** This General Plan includes an optional, Healthy Communities Element that establishes policies to address primary health issues such as high rates of obesity, chronic illness, air pollution, lack of access to healthy foods, unsafe environments, and lack of access to health care and mental health services.

11. **Administration:** Incorporates policies and procedures for administering the General Plan.

Appendices: The following Appendices to the General Plan are also available:

- A-1. Glossary of Acronyms and Terms
- B-1. General Planning Principles
- C. Public Opinion Survey

- D. Summary of Community Workshops
- E-1. General Plan: Socioeconomic Buildout ~~Projections~~, Assumptions and Methodology
- F-1. Riverside County Population and Employment Forecasts
- G. Fiscal Analysis
- H. Geotechnical Report
- I-1. Noise Element Data
- J. Community Center Guidelines
- K-1. Implementation Program
- L-1. Airport Land Use Compatibility Plans
- M. Health Indicators
- N. *Air Quality Study*
- O. *Major Investment Study*

Each element of the General Plan contains the following internal structure and reference system:

Policy Structure and Reference System

The General Plan expresses the broad direction of the Consensus Planning Principles, Vision, and General Plan Principles in the form of policies. Policies are statements that guide the course of action the County of Riverside must take to achieve the goals outlined in the three guidance documents mentioned above. It is important to note that policies are guides for decision makers, not decisions themselves. The policies themselves are organized by topical area or issue. For instance, policies related to “land use compatibility” can be found under that topical area.

In order for these policies to be successfully implemented, they must be related to specific courses of action. The key questions that need to be answered for policy in the General Plan are:

1. Who is responsible for implementing the policy?
2. When is it to be carried out?
3. ~~How much is will it cost?~~



The General Plan policy and implementation item reference system:

LU 1.3: Identifies which element contains the Policy, in this case the Land Use Element, and the sequential number.

AI 1 and AI 4: Reference to the relevant Action Items contained in the Implementation Program found in Appendix K.

Details for implementing policies in the General Plan are contained in the Implementation Program in the form of action items (See Appendix K). An action item describes the specific steps necessary to achieve an objective, and defines the level of commitment to be executed.

An Example of references system: Identifies which element contains the Policy, in this case the Land Use Element, and the sequential number. LU 1.3- Neighborhood Commercial uses should be located near residential uses. (AI 1 and AI 4) Reference to the relevant Action Items contained in the implementation Program



The policies for each element of the General Plan are organized in the following simple structure:

- Topic (Example “Land Use Compatibility”)
 - Policy (Example: “Locate neighborhood commercial uses should near residential uses.”)
 - Action Item (Example: “Establish and maintain a set of community profile maps”)
- In order to allow easy reference, a numbering system has been established. Each policy is identified by both its element and a sequential number (see the example in the box at left). For instance, the first policy in the Land Use Element is identified as LU 1.1. Policies can also be followed by a set of numbers in parenthesis. This would be a reference to the action item related to the policy.
- ### Policy Interpretation
- For a policy to be useful, it must be clear. However, not all policies are the same; they differ in terms of expected results, commitment of resources, and indication of importance or urgency. Therefore, it is important to simplify the language used in the General Plan and understand the distinctions between the different levels of policy. The following definitions of terms provide guidance in interpreting the policy language of the General Plan:
- *Shall*: Policies containing the word “shall” indicate that an action must be taken in all cases. This represents absolute commitment to the policy, and the expectation is that the policy will always be carried out.
 - *Should*: Policies containing the word “should” indicate that an action will be taken in most cases, but exceptions are acceptable for good reason.
 - *Allow*: Policies containing the word “allow” indicate that a proposed action will be supported within certain parameters and following certain guidelines.
 - *Coordinate*: Policies containing the word “coordinate” indicate that an action will occur along with some other entity, and Riverside County will carry its share of the burden or responsibility.
 - *Explore*: Policies containing the word “explore” indicate that an action will be taken to investigate the subject at hand to discover whether or not some further commitment is in order.
 - *Consider*: Policies containing the word “consider” indicate that an action may or may not be taken, depending upon the results of analysis that remain to be completed.
 - *Limit*: Policies containing the word “limit” indicate that an action will be taken to keep the subject within certain limits, or at least operate to make undesired change more difficult.

- *Restrict*: Policies containing the word “restrict” indicate that an action will be taken to actively keep the undesired action to a minimum.

Where other action terms are used that are not specified here, they are to be equated to the closest applicable term described above.

General Plan and Area Plans Relationship to Other Plans and Regulations

A number of plans and ordinances implement or are impacted by Riverside County’s General Plan:

Zoning Ordinance - The County of Riverside administers its General Plan primarily through its Zoning Ordinance. While the General Plan identifies land use designations in the long-term, zoning identifies specific, immediate uses of land. The General Plan’s successful implementation can only occur if the County of Riverside Zoning Ordinance is updated and consistent with it (state law mandates General Plan-Zoning consistency), and is able to implement the long-term intent of the Plan.

Subdivision Ordinance - State law mandates local approval of land subdivision via the Subdivision Map Act. Local review of proposed subdivisions and parcel maps includes assessment of consistency with, and implementation of, General Plan objectives and policies.

Specific Plans - Specific plans are customized regulatory documents in lieu of standard zoning that are used to plan projects and delineate land uses, infrastructure, development standards and criteria, and implementation measures. Specific plans must address consistency with the jurisdiction’s General Plan, and can be used to implement the General Plan within a limited area.

Development Agreements - Development agreements are entered into by developers and local governments. These agreements define permitted uses of property, density and intensity of uses, development criteria, and provisions for the reservation or dedication of land for public purposes. They are in effect for predetermined periods of time and identify vested development rights that apply to the specific development project they govern. Development agreements assure that General Plan objectives and policies are carried as development occurs; however, unincorporated territory can be governed by development agreements with cities, subject to annexation, if the property is within the city’s sphere of influence.

Transit Village Plans - The Transit Village Planning Act of 1994 authorizes cities and counties to prepare Transit Village Plans to encourage compact, mixed use development in close vicinity to transit stations. A transit village plan must be consistent with the county general plan. A county adopting a transit village plan is eligible for State transportation funds, will receive priority help from the Office of Permit Assistance in establishing a streamlined permitting process, and may be excluded from conformance with county Congestion Management Plan level-of-service standards with the approval of the Congestion Management Agency.

Jurisdictional System

The following types of plans and designations, though administered by other jurisdictions, can also impact Riverside County’s General Plan:

City General Plans - City General Plans have authority over territory within city limits. This General Plan only has jurisdiction over unincorporated territory within the County of Riverside that is under the authority of the Board of Supervisors. Land within a city’s sphere of influence (see definition below) can be given land use

designations by both the city and the county. The city’s designation applies if the land is annexed into the city, otherwise the county’s designation prevails.

City Spheres of Influence - Spheres of influence are established by the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) and are intended to reflect “the probable physical boundaries and service area” of cities. LAFCO is directed by state law (the Cortese/Knox Local Government Reorganization Act of 1985, as amended) to establish and periodically review the spheres of influence for each agency under its jurisdiction.

Communities of Interest (COI) - The Riverside County LAFCO may designate Community of Interest study areas within the County of Riverside unincorporated territory. Proponents of the designation are given two years to evaluate long-term jurisdictional alternatives and submit a summary report to the Commission. Alternative courses of action within this time frame could include annexation to one or more cities or special districts, incorporation as a new city, or the long-term designation of Unincorporated Community. During the study period, piecemeal annexations are strongly discouraged.

Unincorporated Communities (UC) - The Riverside County LAFCO may designate Unincorporated Communities within the County of Riverside unincorporated territory. A UC designation by LAFCO recognizes the Commission’s intent that the area designated remains unincorporated for the foreseeable future. Designation of an area as a UC may require removal from a municipal sphere of influence, since the two designations are mutually exclusive. The UC designation for a community is to be reviewed every five years.