



Chapter 1: Introduction

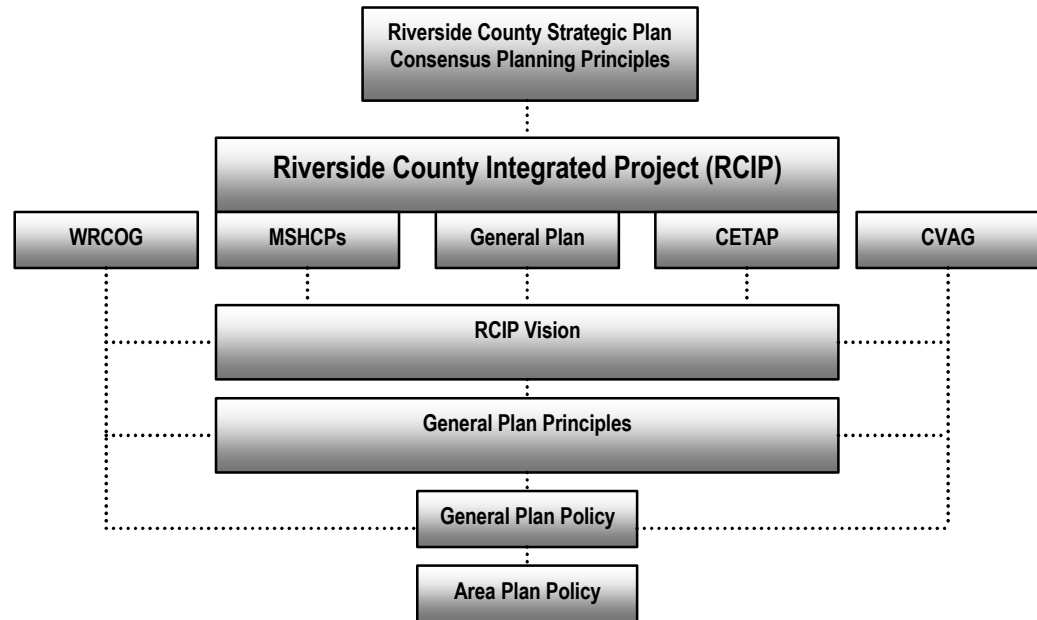
The Origin: Setting the Stage for the General Plan

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. The County's *Strategic Vision*, adopted in October of 1998, incorporates a set of 15 Consensus Planning Principles drafted and endorsed by a coalition of 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 and is augmented by 19 more detailed Area Plans covering the County's territory with the exception of the undeveloped desert areas and the March Air 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 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 this County. These themes are:

Quality of Life: Securing a high quality of life for 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. This is the key to bringing jobs and housing into better balance in the 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. This involves strategies that enable the County 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 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. Many General Plan-level issues are not the County's alone; they are regional. Solutions, in relation to transportation systems development, for example, must be collaborative.