



The Result: Plan Features

VISION-DRIVEN 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;*
- *Incorporates the major conclusions from the CETAP and MSHCP studies;*
- *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.*

The General Plan is grounded in the RCIP Vision, sets the direction for the 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 the 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 Foundation Components, or major categories of County land use: Community Development, Rural, Agriculture, and Multipurpose Open Space. The countywide map of land use delineates only those four 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 10, 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 at five-year intervals, except in specific extraordinary circumstances.

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 the 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 the 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 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.