



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

## PLAN ORGANIZATION & 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 the 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.
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 the 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 the 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. **Administration:** Incorporates policies and procedures for administering the General Plan.

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 Area 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.



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

- A. Glossary of Acronyms & Terms
- B. General Planning Principles
- C. Public Opinion Survey
- D. Summary of Community Workshops
- E. General Plan: Socioeconomic Build-Out Projections Assumptions & Methodology
- F. Riverside County Population & Employment Forecasts
- G. Fiscal Analysis
- H. Geotechnical Report
- I. Noise Element Data
- J. Community Center Guidelines
- K. Implementation Program

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 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:

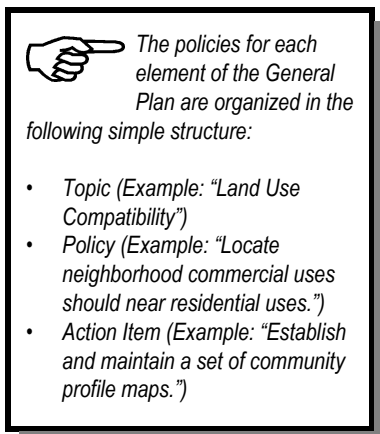
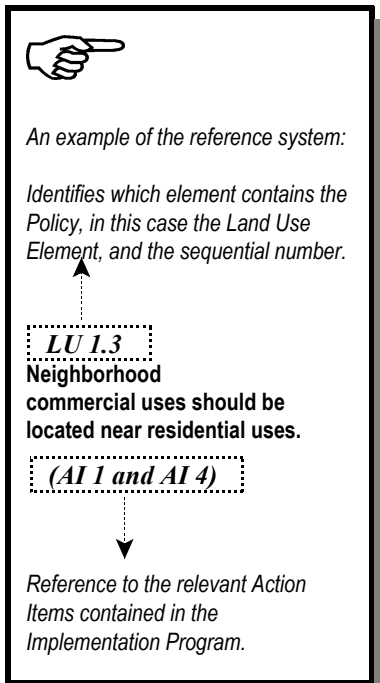
1. Who is responsible for implementing the policy?
2. When is it to be carried out?
3. How much is will it cost?

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.

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 the 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 & AREA PLANS RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS AND REGULATIONS**

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

***Zoning Ordinance*** - The County 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 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.