



Introduction

What first grabs the attention of a traveler as they approach the Southwest planning area from almost any direction is the sense of being in a broad and varied valley where nature and development have found a way to live together. Yes, there is a lot of development. And there is also an extensive system of hills, slopes, streams, lakes, vineyards, groves, and habitats that accent the view in every direction. This space reflects tradition, caring, and commitment.

The Southwest Area Plan guides the evolving character of the unincorporated land surrounding the Cities of Murrieta and Temecula. The Southwest Area Plan is not a stand-alone document, but rather an extension of the County of Riverside General Plan and Vision. The County of Riverside Vision details the physical, environmental, and economic qualities that the County aspires to achieve by the year 2020. Using that Vision as the primary foundation, the County of Riverside General Plan establishes policies for development and conservation within the entire unincorporated County territory. The Southwest Area Plan, on the other hand, provides customized direction specifically for the Southwest planning area.

The Southwest Area Plan doesn't just provide a description of the location, physical characteristics, and special features here. It contains a Land Use Plan, statistical summaries, policies, and accompanying exhibits that allow anyone interested in the continued prosperity of this unique area to understand the physical, environmental, and regulatory characteristics that make this such a unique area. Background information also provides insights that help in understanding the issues that require special focus here and the reasons for the more localized policy direction found in this document.

Each section of this plan addresses critical issues facing the Southwest planning area. Perhaps a description of these sections will help in understanding the organization of the plan as well as appreciating the comprehensive nature of the planning process that led to it. The Location section explains where the planning area fits with what surrounds it and how it relates to the cities that are part of it. Physical features are described in a section that highlights the Southwest planning area's communities, surrounding environment, and natural resources. This leads naturally to the Land Use Plan section, which describes the land use system guiding development at both the countywide and area plan levels.

While a number of these designations reflect unique features found only in the Southwest planning area, a number of special policies are still necessary to address unique portions of the Southwest planning area. The Policy Areas section presents these policies. Land use related issues are addressed in the Land Use section. Land use isn't the only key factor in developing and conserving land here. The Area Plan also describes relevant transportation issues in the Circulation section. A variety of routes and modes of travel are envisioned to serve this area. The key to understanding the area's valued open space network is described in the Multipurpose Open Space section. There are natural and man made hazards to consider and they are spelled out in the Hazards section.

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.



County of Riverside General Plan - *Hearing Draft*

Southwest Area Plan

Returning again to the physical character of the Southwest planning area, the rugged mountains, rock strewn hills, and sharp slopes that define the valley system in which most development occurs provide a striking backdrop for the cities and communities here. Some development stretches along the streams, but most of the hills and slopes are devoted to more rural and agricultural uses. Perhaps one of the most striking characteristics of the area is its unique micro-climate derived from the influence of coastal breezes that moderate the inland temperatures and dryness. This, in turn, makes possible one of the Southwest planning area's most unique features: a robust vineyard and wine industry. This is an attraction for not only residents and businesses, but a thriving tourism industry as well.

The Southwest planning area is in a gateway position between Riverside and San Diego counties. Consequently, it plays a pivotal role in the access, connections and impressions for Riverside County. The Southwest Area Plan seeks to capture and capitalize upon not only the special qualities of the land, but also its strategic location.

It is important to understand that the incorporated Cities of Murrieta and Temecula, located within the Southwest planning area, are not covered by this plan. They are governed by their own plans. Nevertheless, city/county coordination is a critical component of this plan. A key location factor is how this area relates to other planning areas within the vastness of Riverside County.

A Special Note on Implementing the Vision

The preface to this area plan is a summary version of the Riverside County Vision. That summary is, in turn, simply an overview of a much more extensive and detailed Vision of Riverside County two decades or more into the future. This area plan, as part of the Riverside County General Plan, is one of the major devices for making the Vision a reality.



Unincorporated land is all land within the County that is not within an incorporated city or an Indian Nation. Generally, it is subject to policy direction and under the land use authority of the Board of Supervisors. However, it may also contain state and federal properties that lie outside of Board authority.

No two area plans are the same. Each represents a unique portion of the incredibly diverse place known as Riverside County. While many share certain common features, each of the plans reflects the special characteristics that define its area's unique identity. These features include not only physical qualities, but also the particular boundaries used to define them, the stage of development they have reached, the dynamics of change expected to affect them, and the numerous decisions that shape development and conservation in each locale. That is why the Vision cannot and should not be reflected uniformly.

Policies at the General Plan and Area Plan levels implement the Riverside County Vision in a range of subject areas as diverse as the scope of the Vision itself. The land use pattern contained in this area plan is a further expression of the Vision as it is shaped to fit the terrain and the conditions in the Southwest planning area.

To illustrate how the Vision has shaped this area plan, the following highlights reflect certain strategies that link the Vision to the land. This is not a comprehensive enumeration; rather, it emphasizes a few of the most powerful and physically tangible examples.