



Introduction

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.



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.

The Western Coachella Valley Area Plan contains policies that guide the physical development and land uses in the unincorporated western portion of the Coachella Valley. The Area Plan is not a stand-alone document, but rather an extension of the General Plan and Vision Statement. The County of Riverside Vision Statement details the physical, environmental, and economic characteristics that the County aspires to achieve by the year 2020. Using the Vision Statement as the primary foundation, the General Plan establishes standards and policies for development within the entire unincorporated County territory, while the Area Plan details standards and policy direction relating specifically to the Western Coachella Valley.

The Western Coachella Valley 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 distinctive region to understand where the future is headed. 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 the Area Plan addresses critical issues facing Western Coachella Valley. Perhaps a description of these sections will help in understanding the organization of the Area Plan as well as appreciating the comprehensive nature of the planning process that led to it. The Location section explains where the Area Plan fits with what is around it and how it relates to the cities that impact it. Physical features are described in a section that highlights the 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 the unique features found only in the Western Coachella Valley, a number of special policies are still necessary to address unique situations. The Policy Areas section presents these policies. Land use related issues are addressed in the Land Use section.

The Area Plan also describes relevant transportation issues, routes, and modes of transportation in the Circulation section. The key to understanding our valued open space network is described in the Multipurpose Open Space section. There are, of course, both natural and man made hazards to consider, and they are spelled out in the Hazards section.

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.

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



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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 here.

To illustrate how the Vision has shaped the Western Coachella Valley 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.

Open Space, Conservation & Community Separators - The Western Coachella Valley area is characterized by a vast network of natural open space with tremendous habitat, rural and scenic value for both local residents and the region at large. With over three-fourths of the land designated for open space uses, the Area Plan seeks to preserve this unique natural setting while minimizing the impacts of encroaching urban uses.

Population Growth - This plan focuses growth in areas well served by public facilities and services or where they can readily be provided. Development is concentrated in key unincorporated areas located near existing development and major roadways. Residential land uses provide for a variety of densities, which in turn provide for a variety of housing choices. The rural and open space character of remote areas is protected through the use of appropriate rural and open space land use designations. These areas serve as natural boundaries between unincorporated communities, protect sensitive habitat areas, limit susceptibility to natural hazards, and serve as tremendous visual and passive recreational amenities.

Intergovernmental Cooperation - While any County land use plan requires some degree of coordination with other jurisdictions and responsible agencies, this plan identifies a key approach to addressing an area in the future development of Western Coachella Valley. The plan proposes a joint planning effort between the County, the City of Rancho Mirage and the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians for a strategic area located along Interstate 10.

Data in this area plan is current as of June 19, 2001. Any General Plan amendments approved subsequent to that date are not reflected in this area plan and must be supported by their own environmental documentation. A process for incorporating any applicable portion of these amendments into this area plan is part of the General Plan Implementation Program.