

What is a general plan?

A general plan is a policy document that establishes what the residents, business owners, property owners and other stakeholders would like to see in the future of the county. The general plan establishes a framework through the community's values to define the direction the County Council should guide the county.

The general plan does not change or create any regulations or requirements, but it may recommend new policies and regulations as implementation strategies. The plan identifies and analyses growth and development issues and indicates how the local residents and their elected officials envision the community developing in the next couple decades.

Five factors make a plan *general*:

1. The plan covers the entire geography of the county.
2. The plan integrates authentic and diverse community participation that includes people across the geography of the county and spans the full-range of interest groups.
3. The time horizon considered in the plan is long-range, extending one or two decades into the future and well beyond the pressing concerns of today.
4. The plan provides general guidance on where and how growth and various land uses should take place.
5. The plan clarifies relationships between physical development goals, such as land use and infrastructure, with social and economic goals, such as economic development.

What is in the general plan?

The general plan will be organized into three components. The community **vision** is a series of statements encapsulating the common ground for the future that reflects the aspirations of the residents. **Goals** describe broad public purposes to achieve the vision, toward which policies and programs are directed. They express the broad desired results of the Plan. **Strategies** are statements that outline the approach and/or the specific accomplishments required to implement a goal. The **future land use plan** provides jurisdiction-wide land use classifications and mapping that tie the vision, goals, and strategies to the land. The future land use plan includes subarea plans for the unique geographies in the county.

Is the general plan regulatory?

A general plan is an advisory policy document. It is not the same as the Land Use Code which contains zoning and subdivision regulations. However, the comprehensive plan should inform the ordinances in the development code.

How are general plans used?

Citizens use general plans to protect the qualities that brought them to their community, such as open space, views, and historical character. By participating in the creation of the plan, citizens can be a part of the planning process and help decide the location and intensity of future development. **The county** uses the general plan as a policy guide for big-picture decisions including: re-zoning or land use classification map changes, infrastructure investments, and coordination with municipalities on annexation. **Property owners and developers** use the general plan as a guide to predict what uses could occur both on and near their properties, allowing them to make informed land-use planning decisions.