



# **Introduction**

# INTRODUCTION

*The vision of the City: The creation of a livable and viable and visually attractive community through skilled planning and sustainable development as outlined in this General Plan.*

## What is a General Plan?

The General Plan is a state-mandated document that represents the long-range vision of the City. The community's relation to the region, along with local issues and trends are considered to determine service priorities and methods to guide development and conservation of resources. The plan, which is periodically updated, reflects the City's vision for the future. When evaluating proposals, decision-makers refer to the plan to see how the proposal achieves the desires of the community.

### *What is the role of the General Plan?*

The Irvine General Plan is a comprehensive, long-range statement of Irvine's development and preservation policies. The Plan is comprehensive because it addresses all geographic areas of the City and its sphere of influence and the relationships between social, financial, environmental and physical characteristics. While a specific buildout year is not determined, the plan is forward-looking by determining facilities and programs to support future land uses.

The City of Irvine General Plan is intended to be used by residents, business owners, City officials and all those interested in the direction of the City.

The General Plan guides the decision makers in determining whether or not land use proposals are consistent with the applicable goals, objectives and policies. It reflects the community's values and goals, and serves as the basis for all of the City's land planning policies.

The General Plan includes both the mandated elements of the Government Code Section 65302 as they apply to the local conditions and optional elements designed to address high priority topics of City interest.

The General Plan is kept up to date with current issues, trends, and community needs through periodic amendments. When an amendment occurs, special attention is given to make sure that all components work in harmony and the plan maintains its internal consistency as required by state law.

The City of Irvine's mission statement expresses a desire to maintain the highest quality of life through the following:

- Creative planning.
- Prosperous business atmosphere.
- Environmental quality.
- Unique neighborhoods connected into one community.
- Extraordinary amenities and infrastructure.
- Cultural diversity.
- Community involvement.
- Educational excellence.
- Quality and responsiveness in government.

The General Plan implements the City's vision through its goals, objectives and policies.

## **History of Irvine's General Plan**

Irvine's first General Plan was adopted in December, 1973. That plan reflected three options for long-term development: a low intensity, medium intensity and high intensity development plan.

In 1977, General Plan Amendment 4 constituted the first major amendment to the General Plan. This change converted the three land use options to a single land use (medium intensity) plan.

In 1989, General Plan Amendment 16 comprehensively addressed the City's needs for open space and incorporated a program to preserve approximately one-third of the City and sphere of influence, as open space.

## ***Organization Of The General Plan***

The General Plan is divided into three sections. The first section contains the elements. The second section consists of the Glossary of General Plan terms. The third section consists of an Appendix containing technical information which is not needed for daily planning activities but is important background information.

### ***Elements***

The General Plan is composed of elements which address a broad and evolving range of issues. Each element of the plan identifies and describes goals, objectives, and implementing actions which provide specific direction for decision making and formulation of public policy.

The General Plan contains seven elements required by the State Planning, Zoning and Development Laws. Conservation and Open Space have been combined into a single element. There are also eight optional elements which relate to the development of the City. They are as follows:

#### **Mandated Elements**

- Land Use
- Circulation
- Housing
- Conservation and Open Space
- Noise
- Safety

#### **Optional Elements:**

- Public Facilities
- Waste Management
- Energy
- Parks and Recreation
- Cultural Resources
- Growth Management
- Seismic
- Irvine Business Complex

## Organization of the General Plan

Each element of the General Plan contains the following:

- A stated goal.
- An introductory description.
- An explanation of existing conditions in the City.
- Trends.
- Objectives.
- Policies.
- Compliance regulations.
- Supplemental information.

The introductory section of each element provides an overview of the element and background information which lends understanding to the policies set forth in the goal section.

The goal section is comprised of:

- **Goal:** A general statement of vision pertaining to City policy. The goal is an ideal conditions which the community hopes to attain.
- **Objectives:** A specific statement of purpose relating directly to the goal.
- **Policy:** An action, activity or strategy to implement the related objective and goal.

Objectives and Policies guide day-to-day decision-making so there is continuing progress toward the Goal. These reflect actions that the City intends to follow to attain the stated goal. Some elements contain standards which are specific, quantified guidelines, which can translate into regulatory controls. Examples of standards are the level of service standards found in the Circulation

Element and the noise standards found in the Noise Element.

Because the General Plan is comprehensive, the subject matter addressed by each element provides a portion of a larger picture.

The goal of the City of Irvine is to develop and maintain a high quality environment and to ensure its long-term protection. To comprehensively address environmental issues, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is prepared for the General Plan in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The EIR is an informational document for the public, governmental agencies, and City officials to evaluate the environmental consequences of the proposed General Plan development and conservation policies. Specialized studies, addressing issues such as traffic and biotic impacts, are conducted for the EIR.

Mitigation measures to reduce impacts to the natural environment are recommended. Environmental impacts which cannot be avoided are discussed. Many of the mitigation measures are incorporated into the General Plan as ongoing policies. The EIR prepared for this General Plan is a "Master" EIR. A Master EIR may be used as the environmental documentation for proposed land use proposals that are consistent with the General Plan and will not create any additional environmental impacts. Using a Master EIR eliminates unnecessary, redundant studies and facilitates the review of land use proposals.

By evaluating alternative land use policies and recommending mitigation measures, the EIR is an integral component of the General Plan. The EIR for the General Plan is a

separate document. It is located in the Community Development Department and Office of Records and Information.

## **Administering The General Plan**

### *Consistency Provisions*

The charter of the City of Irvine requires the Zoning Ordinance to be consistent with the General Plan. Additional state and local statutes, while not mandating consistency, require findings or a report on whether proposed actions conform to the General Plan. The state's general rule for consistency determination is stated as:

“An action, program, or project is consistent with the General Plan if it, considering all aspects, will further the objectives and policies of the General Plan and not obstruct their attainment.”

A complete listing of consistency provisions can be found in the State of California's General Plan Guidelines, Chapter 5, Consistency in Implementation.

### *Amending and Updating The General Plan*

The City should periodically review the Plan to determine whether it is still in step with community values and conditions. In addition, the Housing Element is reviewed every five years according to a schedule determined by the State of California Housing and Community Development Department.

### *Amendment Process*

The City's original General Plan was adopted in 1973, and since that time, several amendments have been adopted. Amending the General Plan is a necessary process to maintain a current and responsive General Plan. Amendments to each element in the General Plan are limited by the City Council to six times per calendar year. Most amendments involve a change to the land use designation of a particular property. However, amendments to any part of the text, goals, objectives, or policies may also be appropriate.

A General Plan amendment may be initiated by private property owners, the City Council, the Planning Commission or Director of Community Development. Final approval is granted by the City Council, following a public hearing and review of recommendations from the community, Planning Commission, and staff.

*For further details on the General Plan amendment process, see City Council Resolution Numbers 87-108 and 90-133, and Chapter 2 of the Zoning Ordinance.*

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Supplement No. 1 November 2003  
Supplement No. 7 March 2009

## City of Irvine Profile

### *Location*

The City of Irvine is located approximately two miles inland from the Pacific Ocean and 40 miles south of the City of Los Angeles. The City of San Diego is 80 miles south of Irvine.



**City Hall Piazza**

Irvine is accessible by ground transportation along Interstates 5 and 405. State highways 55 and 133 also pass through the City. Air travel is available at John Wayne Airport, located immediately adjacent to the Irvine Business Complex. John Wayne airport currently offers direct service to major cities and handles seven million seven hundred thousand passengers annually.

Neighboring cities include Newport Beach and Laguna Beach to the south; Costa Mesa, Santa Ana and Tustin to the west; the future boundary of the City of Orange, unincorporated areas of the County of Orange to the north; and the Cities of Lake Forest and Laguna Hills to the east. The regional location is illustrated on Figure 1.

### *Community Profile*

Irvine was incorporated in 1971 and has developed into a strong, diverse community. The central Orange County location and attention to balanced planning have resulted in a city of regional importance. As of 1997, the City had a population of approximately 125,000 and is expected to have 140,000 residents by the year 2000. The City covers forty-five square miles. Annexation of the sphere of influence will increase the City area to seventy-four square miles. Businesses located in the Irvine Business Complex and Spectrum areas of the City employ more than 177,000 individuals.

The Irvine Unified School District is currently one of the top school districts in California. In addition, the Santa Ana Unified School District, Tustin Unified School District and the Newport-Mesa School District serve the City. Irvine is the location of the following colleges and universities: Irvine Valley Community College; Concordia University; National University; Pepperdine Graduate Business School; Webster University; University of Southern California extension facility, and the University of California, Irvine.

A 177-bed hospital is also within the City, as well as numerous medical offices. Shopping centers are within a short drive or walking distance from most homes.

The climate is Mediterranean with approximately 15 inches of rainfall per year, and year-round average temperatures range from 48 to 76 degrees.

### *History*

The City of Irvine is located on part of what is known as the Irvine Ranch. This area was first populated by Native Americans. During the subsequent period of Spanish control, three Mexican-Spanish land grants covered 110,000 acres which were devoted to sheep grazing. In 1876, the Irvine family acquired a portion of the land grants. Subsequently, ranch operations shifted from sheep grazing to agriculture. Crops were devoted to citrus, wheat, and lima beans. In 1894, James Irvine II incorporated the ranch into The Irvine Company.



**Orange Groves**

Later, his son, Myford Irvine, inherited the presidency of the company and began opening small sections of the ranch to urban development. In 1959, the University of California acquired 1,000 acres from The Irvine Company for a new campus.

Subsequently, the University purchased an additional 500 acres. The University's consulting architect, William Pereira, and The Irvine Company planners proposed a university-oriented community and prepared a master plan for the ranch. Irvine's General Plan has evolved from that original master plan.



**UC Irvine**

### *Topography*

The City of Irvine lies within the Trabuco Plain between the San Joaquin Hills along the coast, and inland foothills of the Santa Ana mountains, known as the Santiago Hills.

The Trabuco Plain is relatively flat, with a gradient of less than one percent, and was formed by materials that eroded from the hillsides. The surface soils consist of Class I and II agricultural soil as classified by the US Soils Conservation Service. The San Joaquin Hills consist of rolling terrain with moderately steep slopes, canyons and narrow ridges.

The Santiago Hills rise 1,700 feet above sea level, forming a prominent ridgeline along the northern edge of the City's sphere of

influence. Both chains of hillsides were formed by marine sediments deposited millions of years ago.

### *Planning Areas*

The General Plan divides Irvine into large neighborhood districts called "planning areas."

Each planning area includes a variety of land uses and is allocated a residential and/or nonresidential development potential. Policies in the General Plan identify public facilities standards for new development. Each planning area is intended to feature a distinct community character which results from the following components: road systems, architectural identity, density, parks, schools, greenbelts.

Planning areas are linked by streets and a series of off-road hiking, riding and bicycling paths. These linear parks are located along electrical transmission line easements, creeks and greenbelts which link the City in a north-south and east-west grid pattern.

The multi-use activity corridor links the City in an east-west axis along the parallel roads of Barranca Parkway and Alton Parkway. A mix of public and private recreational, commercial and worship facilities is found in this area.

Considered to be Orange County's most livable city, Irvine offers many recreational amenities with a wide variety of housing opportunities and a balance of employment opportunities.

### *Urban Design*

The General Plan provides the urban design framework for the City, both at the planning area level and at the site-specific level.

Components of the urban design theme consist of a mix of land uses with a unique image and character including natural (hills and flatlands) and manmade (architectural styles, landscape and open space spines) features.

Implementation of the General Plan's policies and standards creates a cohesive yet diversified image and identity for the community.



**Irvine City Hall**



## *Additional Information*

Additional information pertaining to the General Plan can be obtained by contacting the City's Community Development Department:

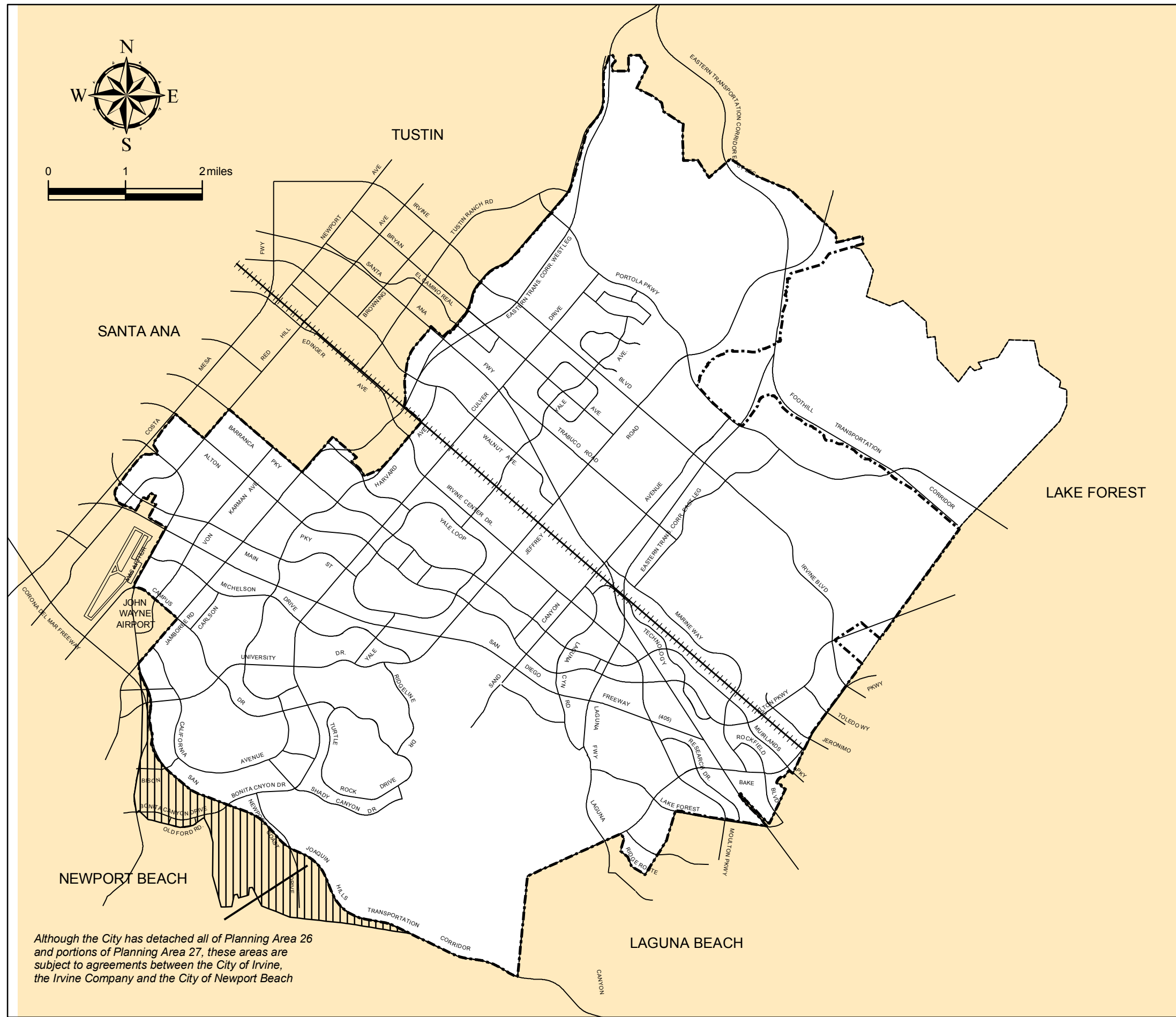
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*"Curiously, history records very few examples of regional master planning where not only the new towns but the interrelated land uses of the surrounding areas are planned together... The prospect of planning from scratch an entire complex within a major population center rather than hundreds of miles away from it - and to do it under private rather than governmental auspices - would seem to most planners an impossible dream. Well, we have that dream right here."*

*William Pereira, Architect, Pereira & Associates. Original designer of the Irvine Ranch Master Plan. Time Magazine, September 6, 1963.*

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CITY OF IRVINE

LEGEND

- City Sphere of Influence
- . - . - City Boundary