



CITY OF IRVINE, CALIFORNIA

GENERAL PLAN

FAQS

What is a general plan?

A general plan is a state-required comprehensive planning document with required elements (*i.e.*, topical chapters) in text and map form for the physical development of a city and territory outside a city's boundaries that bears relation to its planning.

The City of Irvine General Plan guides the development, conservation, and enhancement of Irvine as it represents the long-range vision of the City of Irvine. The General Plan is a basis for land-use decision-making used by policymakers such as the Irvine City Council.

When was the Irvine General Plan adopted and when was it last updated?

The City adopted its first General Plan in December 1973, and the last comprehensive update occurred in 2000. Since the last comprehensive update, the City has approved a number of amendments primarily focused on the development of previously vacant areas in the north, south, and eastern portions of the City as follows:

- Northern Sphere: 2002
- Spectrum: 2003
- Great Park: 2007–2012
- Irvine Business Complex (IBC): 2010

How often is Irvine required to update its General Plan?

By statute, the General Plan is required to be updated periodically. While there is no requirement for how often to update the General Plan, the planning period has traditionally been 15–20 years. Some cities and counties update their general plans as often as every five years, while others update in portions over time mainly due to budgetary and staffing limitations.

The [Housing Element](#) is the only chapter of the General Plan that is required to be updated every

eight years by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD).

What is a Housing Element?

The Housing Element is Irvine’s strategic plan for housing and a required chapter in the General Plan. Irvine, along with all California cities and counties, is required to adequately plan and meet the housing needs of everyone in the community. The Housing Element identifies enough potentially developable land suitable for residential use (*i.e.*, site inventory — refer to Appendix D of the Housing Element) to meet its Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) allocation (*i.e.*, units by income level) developed and assigned by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG). All cities and counties are required to update their Housing Element every eight years for State certification.

Although the City does not build the housing, the Housing Element does create a plan and regulatory framework, which provides opportunities for the private sector to do so, where market conditions determine when and where housing is built.

What is the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)?

Founded in 1965, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is an association of local governments and agencies that voluntarily convene as a forum to address regional issues. Under federal law, SCAG is designated as a metropolitan planning organization (MPO) and under state law as a regional transportation planning agency and a council of governments.

The SCAG region encompasses six counties (Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura) and 191 cities in an area covering more than 38,000 square miles.

The agency develops long-range regional transportation plans (RTP) that include sustainable communities strategies (SCS) and growth forecasts (*aka*, Connect SoCal Plan or 2024 RTP/SCS), regional transportation improvement programs, RHNA methodology and jurisdictional allocations derived from HCD’s regional housing needs estimate, and a portion of the South Coast Air Quality management plans.

For additional information, please go to the [SCAG webpage](#).

Why update the General Plan?

This General Plan Update (Update), also referred to as Irvine 2045, represents the long-range vision and goals of the City. Circumstances and conditions have changed in the past two decades. Thus, this update is intended to address the following goals and priorities:

- Address necessary changes to the land-use plan and anticipated increases to the allowable development intensities and/or densities to accommodate the City Council adopted 2021–2029 Housing Element (*aka*, 6th Cycle Housing Element Update), which was certified by HCD

May 24, 2022. For more information, go to the [City of Irvine Housing Element Update webpage](#).

- Re-examine existing General Plan goals, objectives, and policies by refining (or removing if implementation is completed) to ensure a high quality of life is maintained as the community matures and evolves.
- Incorporate changes required by state law.
- Develop a new Environmental Protection and Climate Action element as directed by the City Council.
- Focus on health and wellness.
- Consolidate elements where possible to ensure internal consistency and enhance the document's user friendliness.

The Update will contain refined goals and policies to help the City reach its vision, ensuring Irvine's exceptional quality of life is preserved and enhanced. Once completed, the Update will enable policymakers to proactively guide the City through another long-term cycle of growth, change, and public and private investment opportunities.

How will circulation and mobility be addressed as a part of this Update?

City staff and its consultant will conduct a comprehensive review of the circulation element with emphasis on enhancing complete/multi-modal streets and active transportation, as well as developing vehicle trip reduction strategies. The Update will incorporate vehicle miles traveled (VMT) as an added measure of traffic impact to satisfy Senate Bill 743 (SB 743) and updated CEQA guidelines. Goals and objectives will be evaluated to address VMT mitigation measures and potential regional and local mitigation programs. The Update will evaluate innovative methods and technologies to improve mobility and enhance safety. Based on the relevant findings of the traffic study, policies and programs will be developed to address transportation-related improvements and potential impacts in and around areas where intensification of land uses are planned to accommodate the certified 2021–2029 Housing Element and its 6th Cycle RHNA-driven growth. The traffic study will analyze both VMT for potential environmental impacts in accordance with SB 743 as well as level of service (LOS) for potential LOS improvements, consistent with the adopted City Traffic Study Guidelines (updated in 2021).

City staff will continue collaborating with the Orange County Transit Authority (OCTA), the lead agency, in charge of matters related to public transit (*i.e.*, bus and Metrolink train service), commuter and employer ride-sharing programs, County bicycle trails, coordination of street light synchronization with neighboring jurisdictions, and improvement of local freeways.

Will school buses and routes be addressed as a part of this Update?

Irvine is served by four school districts: (1) Irvine Unified School District; (2) Tustin Unified School District; (3) Santa Ana Unified School District; and (4) Saddleback Valley Unified School District. Any school bus service and routes are determined and provided by the respective school district.

What are the required elements of the General Plan?

State law requires seven key elements in a general plan:

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

Irvine's General Plan also includes eight optional elements involving: Seismic, Energy, Integrated Waste Management, Parks and Recreation, Public Facilities and Services, Cultural Resources, Growth Management, and the Irvine Business Complex.

For reference, the current General Plan is available [here](#).

What is the difference between the General Plan and the Zoning Ordinance?

The General Plan contains long-term policies that guide future development. The Zoning Ordinance implements the General Plan policies through detailed development regulations. Development must be consistent with the specific requirements of the Zoning Ordinance and the broader policies in the General Plan.

Irvine's Zoning Ordinance generally consists of two parts: text and a map. The [zoning map](#) shows how the community is divided into different land-use districts or zones such as residential, commercial, industrial, and open space, and depicts boundaries for each zone by parcel. The accompanying [text](#) explains the requirements that apply in each zoning district and also includes various administrative procedures for applying the Zoning Ordinance.

As part of this Update, Irvine's Zoning Ordinance will be revised as necessary to ensure consistency with the updated General Plan.

What is the relationship between the General Plan and the Capital Improvement Program?

The City's General Plan is used as a foundation for establishing the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and is partly implemented by the construction of CIP projects. The City's CIP provides funding for public infrastructure and rehabilitation projects (such as updating public parks) and is planned as part of the two-year budget cycle, which is integrated within the five-year Strategic Business Plan cycle which, in turn, represents the City Council's priorities.

What are the proposed update areas included in the Irvine 2045 Update?

This focused update will include impacted elements: land use, circulation and mobility, safety, noise, as well as an associated Zoning Ordinance amendment to square-up everything with the certified 2021–2029 Housing Element and applicable state laws.

Additionally, in July 2019, the City Council directed staff to develop a new element focused on Environmental Protection and Climate Action, highlighting the City's ongoing efforts related to the environment.

Legally, the General Plan must be comprehensive, internally consistent, and long-range.

Will the Update address environmental justice issues?

In general, the Update (if necessary) will address environmental justice by providing information and raising awareness of environmental issues that potentially impact the community.

Will the Update address climate change adaptation?

In accordance with Senate Bill 379 (SB 379), general plans are required to include an analysis of climate change adaptation in the safety element of the General Plan. To comply with SB 379 and enhance the City's ability to thrive under a variety of likely future climate conditions, the Update consultant, in coordination with the City's Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP) consultant, will prepare a climate adaptation and resiliency strategies (CCARS) with vulnerability assessment, and incorporate relevant findings into the safety element that is separate and apart from the CAAP effort.

The safety element update will also incorporate relevant findings from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) certified Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (December 2020) to ensure continued eligibility for FEMA funding.

Will the Update address climate change (*i.e.*, greenhouse gas emissions)?

The General Plan is not required by statute to address greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). However, GHG are required to be addressed in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) analysis prepared in conjunction for the General Plan update, *i.e.*, the Environmental Impact Report (EIR). As part of the General Plan Update, GHG will also be broadly addressed at a high level. It is envisioned that all State requirements will be addressed through the Update policy development process and associated EIR work, which will primarily reside in the new Environmental Protection and Climate Action (EPCA) element.

Through a separate work effort by the Environmental Programs division within the City of Irvine Public Works & Transportation Department, Irvine will address GHG emissions in detail as part of the ongoing development of the CAAP. Relevant findings from the CAAP will be incorporated into the EPCA element where appropriate. For more information, please visit the [City of Irvine climate planning webpage](#).

Will the Update address health and wellness?

While health and wellness is optional, it is a topic that local jurisdictions are increasingly adopting as part of general plans. The Update will address health and wellness throughout the document where appropriate.

Have any policies been added to the General Plan to take into account Irvine's historic properties?

The cultural resources element of Irvine's General Plan addresses historic properties. The anticipated project scope of work does not include revisions to the cultural resources element.

What is an Environmental Impact Report (EIR)?

An EIR is a detailed analysis of the potential environmental effects of a plan (e.g., implementation of the General Plan Update) or development project. The EIR identifies project alternatives to the proposed project and presents ways to reduce or avoid environmental impacts.

Under CEQA, a General Plan update/Zoning Ordinance amendment is considered to be a project and thus requires an EIR be completed in conjunction with the Update.

Community members and stakeholders can provide input at two different phases in the EIR process: (1) in response to the Notice of Preparation, which declares an EIR is going to be prepared and asks the public to comment on what the EIR should analyze, and the related EIR public scoping meeting; and (2) in response to the Notice of Availability for the release of the Draft EIR for public comment prior to public hearings in consideration of adopting the Update and certifying the EIR.

What are the steps in amending the General Plan?

The first step in amending the General Plan is to establish baseline or existing conditions. Community participation will be relied upon to gather input on public opinions, recommendations, and perceptions. A draft Update will be crafted along with project alternatives that will be studied and analyzed through the preparation of an EIR. The City hired Harris & Associates as our Update consultant to ensure complete and thorough technical studies for analyzing the plan (i.e., EIR). Public input will be sought throughout the process during workshops, public meetings, and public hearings before the Update is considered for adoption.

Irvine is known for its master-planned communities with residential uses integrated with nearby neighborhood amenities (e.g., parks, trails, schools) and services (e.g., retail). How will this Update ensure that this tradition is continued, especially when planning for the Housing Element site inventory such as the Spectrum and Irvine Business Complex focus areas?

The City understands the challenges related to in-fill, redevelopment, mixed-use, and transit-oriented development, and will continue to look for opportunities to enhance park/recreational/trail and retail/service opportunities that may not fit the traditional suburban model.

All residential developments will need to comply with applicable development standards, affordable housing requirements, park dedication and development requirements, and are subject to applicable development impact fees (e.g., school fees, transportation corridor fees). The Update EIR will address infrastructure and utilities needed to potentially support the housing development and related square footage and population.

Actual housing development is implemented by the development community and is largely dependent on market factors (e.g., land values, construction material and labor costs, general economic climate, and access to project financing) generally outside the City's control.

Will the Update impact the Irvine Business Complex Development Intensity Value or 'DIV' system and maximum allowable intensities?

The City maintains a database for tracking development intensity within the Irvine Business Complex (IBC), *aka*, Planning Area 36. Each IBC property has a maximum Development Intensity Value (DIV) budget that is tracked through the IBC Database. These DIV budgets limit the size and intensity of land uses within the IBC to limit the potential negative impacts of traffic generated by the uses and translate into maximum amounts of square footage and/or dwelling units that may be developed as various land uses. The IBC DIV system that remains in place at this time may be re-examined as part of the Update process.

Additionally, increases beyond the allowable IBC intensities and densities approved by the 2010 IBC Vision Plan may be considered during the development of the Update. Note that maximum building heights in the IBC (except in the IBC Industrial zone) are subject to Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) height limits as determined in accordance with Part 77 of the FAA regulations.

For additional information on the IBC DIV system, please refer to the [IBC Information Sheet](#). For more information regarding the 2010 IBC Vision Plan, please go to the [IBC webpage](#).

Who is on the consulting team for the Update?

The General Plan Update consulting team consists of a core group of planners and technical specialists:

- Harris & Associates (lead consultant)
- Iteris (mobility)
- Recon (environmental)
- Farallon/Climate Resolve (safety/CCARS, EPCA)
- Fuscoe (infrastructure)
- Cogstone (cultural resources)
- Kearns & West (community outreach)

How will the General Plan Update affect my pending project?

Unless directed otherwise by the City Council, project applications will continue to be processed while the Update is underway.

Will individual requests for General Plan and/or Zoning Ordinance amendments be considered as part of this process?

Unless directed otherwise by the City Council, City staff will continue to process individual General Plan and/or Zoning Ordinance Amendments on a case-by-case basis while the Update is underway. For additional information, refer to the [General Plan Amendment](#) and [Zone Change Information Sheet](#).

Please contact the Development Assistance Center at 949-724-6308 or dac@cityofirvine.org if you have further questions or seek a General Plan/Zoning Ordinance amendment.

What is the deadline for completion?

The State deadline for rezoning required by an adopted housing element is October 15, 2024. However, the recent signing of Senate Bill 197 by Gov. Gavin Newsom extended the deadline to February 15, 2025.

It is anticipated that the Update process will take approximately two years to complete given the level of involvement anticipated by community stakeholders as well as required consultation with numerous public agencies. Additionally, the CEQA environmental review will involve significant EIR technical studies that cannot commence until after a draft of the updated General Plan is nearing completion. The scope of work for this Update is focused on elements impacted by the 2021–2029 Housing Element to ensure that the Update can meet the mandated deadline for rezoning.

How can I get involved and where can I find project information?

The Update is an opportunity for community members and stakeholders to discuss how the City will grow and evolve through 2045 and beyond.

All notices for public workshops and meetings, and copies of environmental documents and draft documents, will be posted on the City's General Plan Update website at irvine2045.org.

The City will hold public workshops, stakeholder interviews, and continuously take public comment on the Update. Information about these participation opportunities is posted at irvine2045.org, which also includes an [anonymous comment box](#) and sign-up for [email notifications](#). Please also follow the City of Irvine on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).

You may also contact the City Update team with any questions, comments, language preferences/interpretation requests, or to request a presentation for your organization via:

- Phone: 949-724-6581
- Email: gpupdate2045@cityofirvine.org
- Mail: City of Irvine Community Development Department, Attn: General Plan Update, P.O. Box 19575, Irvine, CA 92623-9575

Please include your contact information, including name and preferred method of contact such as a phone number with area code and/or email address.

How will my feedback be used?

All public input will be cataloged to ensure that City staff and decision-makers have a full understanding of public sentiment when drafting the Update.

The various City Commissions and City Council will consider all public feedback (including other agencies) as well as State General Plan policy guidance and laws; staff knowledge and experience in implementing the General Plan through codes, plans, and programs and services; and our consultant experience with developing general plans when making final Update revisions prior to adoption consideration.