



# GENERAL PLAN INTRODUCTION

## Inyo County

Inyo County is a land of contrasts, formed by the diverse and abundant natural riches located here. The County includes the lowest elevation in the Western Hemisphere (-282 feet in Death Valley), the highest point in the continental United States (14,497 feet at Mount Whitney, within the Sierra Nevada Mountains), and one of the deepest valleys in the world (Owens Valley).

Although Inyo County is the second largest county in the most populous state in the nation, the countywide population was estimated to be only 18,546 people in the 2010 Census. This is at least partly due to its unusually low supply of privately owned land. The federal government, by way of Inyo National Forest, Death Valley National Park, Naval Air Weapons Station (NAWS) - China Lake, and Bureau of Land Management, hold and manage approximately 92 percent of all land within the County. The City of Los Angeles, as part of the Owens Valley aqueduct and associated lands, owns nearly 4 percent of the land within the County, and the State of California controls nearly 2-1/2 percent. As a result of this pattern of public land ownership, Inyo County is largely rural in character.

## The Inyo County General Plan

This General Plan updates the County's 2001 General Plan. Objectives of the current update of the General Plan document are the following:

- Reflect the various amendments made to the General Plan document since it was last updated in 2001, which include:
  - Housing Element: this element of the General Plan was updated in 2009.
  - Government Element: this element of the General Plan was updated in 2010.
  - Floor Area Ratio (F.A.R.): the FAR was amended for the General Industrial (GI), Light Industrial (LI), Heavy Commercial (HC), and Retail Commercial (RC) zone districts.
  - Natural Hazards (NH): this land use designation was amended.
  - Rural Protection (RP): this land use designation was created, to replace parcels previously designated either as Natural Resource (NR) or Open Space & Recreation (OSR) then changed to the new RP designation; new maps reflect these changes.
  
- Adding modifications required by State law:



- Island, Fringe, or Legacy Communities analysis, focusing specifically on potential service deficiencies within such communities (SB 244).
- Flood Control Management analysis, requiring that three General Plan elements (i.e., the Land Use, Conservation & Safety Elements) include provisions for managing floods (AB 162).
- Emergency Shelter analysis, requiring that such shelters are allowed in at least one zone district (SB 2).
- Environmental Justice analysis, recommending that issues relating to environmental justice be addressed within General Plans, as recommended by the Governor’s Office of Planning & Research (OPR) (AB 1553).
- “Complete Streets Act,” requiring integration of multi-modal transportation components into the Circulation Element of a General Plan (AB 1358).
- Military Compatibility analysis, outlines the land use compatibility responsibilities the County has with respect to surrounding military installations (SB 1468 & SB 1462).
- Healthy Communities analysis, recommending ways in which health issues can be incorporated into the General Plan (AB 441).

## General Plan Documents

This General Plan replaces and updates the 2001 General Plan. Below is a summary of the six component documents that comprised the 2001 Inyo County General Plan. These documents are available for reference in the Planning Department.

- **General Plan Summary.** This document provides an overview of the General Plan and its component documents. It describes the Planning Area, summarizes the General Plan’s goals and policies, provides an overview of existing conditions, summarizes the issues raised during the preparation of the General Plan, and identifies the environmental impacts associated with the General Plan.
- **Goals & Policies Report.** This report is the essence of the General Plan. It contains the goals and policies that will guide future development within the County. It also identifies a full set of implementation measures that will ensure the policies of the Plan are carried out.
- **Land Use Circulation Diagrams.** For land use, this booklet contains diagrams of the communities within the County and the land use designations applied to properties in these communities and other areas in the County. For circulation, these diagrams show the designation and general location of current and proposed roadway/highway and bicycle/trails system components.



- **Background Report.** This report provides a detailed description of the conditions that existed within the Planning Area prior to adoption of the General Plan.
- **Issues & Alternatives Report.** This report discusses the major planning issues facing the County and alternative approaches to address those issues. The report distills the input of advisory committees, members of the Inyo County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, County staff, and private individuals.
- **Environmental Impact Report.** The environmental impact report (EIR) prepared for the General Plan meets the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors relied upon the EIR during the process of considering the draft General Plan in order to understand the potential impacts associated with this General Plan.

Background information for this document, as well as the previous Housing Element and Government, is also available in the Planning Department.

## Elements Included in the Inyo County General Plan

The Inyo General Plan contains seven elements. The following information notes the name and chapter of each element and discusses the contents and purpose of each element. If the element is further divided into topic areas (identified with an acronym), then those are also identified along with their section numbers.

**Chapter 1 - Government Element:** Much of the land area in Inyo County is managed by federal and state agencies and the major circulation systems are managed by Caltrans. The purpose of this element is to express the expectations of the County in how plans and decisions made by these agencies are developed and carried out.

**Chapter 2 - Land Use Element:** The Land Use Element establishes goals and policies for residential, commercial, industrial, public services and utilities, and other land uses in the County. In addition, this element also includes a set of land use diagrams (attached as an Appendix to the General Plan) that show the land use designations applied to properties in the County. The second sub-element is Public Services and Utilities. This sub-element presents County goals, policies, and implementations as they apply to water (domestic), solid waste, electricity, fire protection, communications, law enforcement, and schools. Land Use Element topics:

- LU Land Use Section 2.0
- PSU Public Services & Utilities Section 2.1



**Chapter 3 - Economic Development Element:** This element establishes goals, policies, and implementation measures intended to encourage and guide economic development within the County. Major topic areas covered in this element include tourism, local retail and service commercial, and industrial.

**Chapter 4 - Housing Element:** This element complies with the housing element requirements of state law in identifying housing needs and providing programs to meet these needs. This element covers the maintenance and preservation of housing, provision of adequate sites, housing opportunities, home ownership, removal of constraints on housing development, and accessibility of housing.

**Chapter 5 - Circulation Element:** This element identifies the goals, policies, and implementation measures needed to ensure an adequate and functional circulation system. This element covers the systems needed to move people, products, and materials in and through the County using a variety of conveyances, from roads to aircraft, bicycles to transmission lines. Circulation Element topics:

- RH Roadways & Highways Section 5.1
- SH Scenic Highways Section 5.2
- PT Public Transportation Section 5.3
- BT Bicycles & Trails Section 5.4
- RR Railroads Section 5.5
- AVI Aviation Section 5.6
- CPT Canals, Pipelines & Transmission Cables Section 5.7
- OCT Other Circulation Topics Section 5.8

**Chapter 6 - Conservation/Open Space Element:** This element identifies the goals, policies, and implementation measures needed to ensure the appropriate use, enjoyment, and protection of natural resources within the County. Conservation/Open Space Element topics:

- S Soils Section 6.1
- AG Agricultural Resources Section 6.2
- MER Minerals & Energy Resources Section 6.3
- WR Water Resources Section 6.4
- BIO Biological Resources Section 6.5
- CUL Cultural Resources Section 6.6
- VR Visual Resources Section 6.7
- REC Recreation Section 6.8

**Chapter 7 - Public Safety Element:** This element identifies the goals, policies, and implementation measures needed to ensure the public health, safety, and welfare related to both natural and man-made hazards. Public Safety Element topics:

- AQ Air Quality Section 7.1



- FLD Flood Hazards Section 7.2
- AVL Avalanches Section 7.3
- WF Wildfires Section 7.4
- GEO Geologic & Seismic Hazards Section 7.5
- NOI Noise Section 7.6

## Using This General Plan

As noted above, the General Plan includes seven elements, which contain one or more topic areas. Generally, each topic area covered in a given element has five major parts, as follow:

- **Definitions.** This section provides a set of definitions for terms used in the discussion of this topic.
- **Existing Setting.** This section provides a brief summary of the existing conditions in the planning area for a given topic.
- **Goals and Policies.** This section contains the goals and policies that will be used by the County to guide future land use decisions. Implementation measures are generally listed after the goals and policies.