
Chapter 2. Public Guide

2.1 Purpose

This chapter provides a guide for reading and using the Plan. It describes the organization of the Plan, the layout of a typical chapter, and the relationship of this document to other planning documents.

2.2 Background

The State of California requires a general plan to address specified provisions of each of seven mandated elements—Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Conservation, Open Space, Noise, and Safety—to the extent that the provisions are locally relevant. State law offers considerable flexibility to go beyond the mandatory elements of the general plan. To minimize redundancies, the elements of this Plan have been combined and organized along functional lines, and include legally mandated elements, and optional elements.

2.3 Overall Plan Organization

This Plan is divided into the following five principal parts:

Part 1—Setting. Part 1 describes the planning area, the purpose and use of the Plan, and how the Plan relates to other documents. Also included are policies regarding public participation and governance, which includes maintenance and amendments to the Plan as well as inter-governmental coordination.

Part 2—Building Communities. Part 2 addresses urban and rural lands and focuses on the built environment, such as the general location, appropriate mix, timing, and extent of land uses, and supporting infrastructure. This part of the Plan includes the state required Land Use and Circulation elements and a summary of the Housing Element, which is updated on a different schedule than the rest of the Plan. Elements included in this part that also address the built environment are the Community Infrastructure and Services, Telecommunications, and Economic Development elements.

Part 3—Resource Management. Part 3 focuses on the natural environment and how land use activities interact with it. The state-required Conservation and Open Space elements are combined in this part of the Plan including sections on waste management, cultural, scenic, mineral, and biological resources. Also included are the Water Resources and the Energy elements.

Part 4—Health and Safety. Part 4 includes policies and programs to protect people, property, and the environment from risks associated with seismic, geologic, noise, flood, air quality, and wildfire hazards. This part of the Plan contains the state required Noise and Safety elements, as well as the Air Quality Element.

Part 5—Appendices. Part 5 includes the Implementation Action Plan, Glossary and Definitions, Acronyms, Reference List, Community Area Plans Policy Extract, and Coastal Plans.

2.4 Chapter Structure

Individual chapters in this Plan are structured according to the following divisions:

Element Organization and Combined Element Organization: Provides additional guidance about chapter organization. The Land Use and Conservation and Open Space elements are large elements with multiple sections and, in the case of Conservation and Open Space, consolidated elements. The complexity of these chapters warranted additional explanation and they are the only elements containing this section.

Purpose: Presents the purpose of the chapter.

Relationship to Other Elements: Explains the chapter's relationship to other elements of the Plan.

Background: Discusses key findings from the technical background studies and other research supporting the proposed policy direction. Depending on the complexity of the particular topic, this section may be broken into subsections.

Goals and Policies: Presents goals and policies to set direction and guide decisions associated with the topic.

Standards: Identifies the standards that will be used to apply policies to a given situation.

Implementation Measures: Identifies measures that will be taken to implement the Plan.

2.5 Key Terms

As suggested above, the core of this Plan focuses on goals, policies, standards, and implementation measures. Because of the frequency of use and relative importance in the Plan, these terms are explained briefly below.

Goal: "A goal is a general expression of community values and, therefore, may be abstract in nature" (2003 General Plan Guidelines, Governor's Office of Planning and Research). Goals should be expressed as ends not action; they set the direction towards an ideal future. Goals are not necessarily quantifiable or time dependent.

Policy: A policy is a specific statement that must be followed when making decisions. It indicates an unambiguous commitment of the County to a particular course of action designed to achieve a specific goal.

Standard: A standard is a specific, often quantified rule or measure that helps define how a policy will be enacted. Standards define the abstract terms of goals and policies with concrete specifications.

Implementation Measure: An implementation measure is an action, procedure, program, plan, or technique used to carry out General Plan policy.

2.6 Maps

The General Plan includes official and background maps. Official maps show the geographic application of the Plan policies, while background maps (referenced as figures in the main text) provide support information. The official maps consist of the following map sets:

Land Use. These maps show planned land uses using General Plan land use designations. These maps do not always reflect existing land use, but rather the planned use. They indicate the kind and intensity of planned land uses, such as rural residential, 5 to 20 acres per dwelling unit.

Biological Resources. These maps show identified sensitive biological resources. The level of detail and accuracy is highly variable so project-specific mapping is usually necessary to determine the actual location and extent of such resources. These maps are useful for regional planning and to flag the need for specific on-site review to determine the nature and extent of the resources present.

Flood Hazard. This map series shows areas subject to periodic flooding, based on computer versions (Q3) of the 100-year floodplain. The hardcopy FEMA FIRM and floodway maps, which are referenced by this General Plan, provide specific regulatory implementation of floodplain management.

Geologic. These maps show relative slope stability, major faults, and areas subject to liquefaction. The level of detail and accuracy of these maps is also variable so, again, more specific on-site review is often necessary.

Circulation/Public Facilities. This map series show the general location and extent of existing and proposed major transportation routes, airports, port terminals, and other utilities and facilities.

The County now uses a Geographic Information System (GIS) to generate its maps so the above maps are actually individual layers in a unified comprehensive base map and are available in virtually any scale. Official versions of these maps will be produced as hardcopies at set scales and be generated as PDF files for digital distribution.

There are inherent limitations on the accuracy associated with any countywide map set. State planning law, in fact, refers to "diagrams" rather than maps to emphasize this point. It is clear, however, that local governments need to be able to administer their plans with substantial certainty, and be clear about which land use designations and policies apply to any given parcel of land.

The linework on the General Plan map sets should be interpreted according to the following rule:

Where a line is intended to follow an administrative boundary such as a city limit or parcel line or a natural or manmade feature such as a river or road, the actual

location of the administrative boundary or feature is the intended location of the General Plan line.

2.7 Relationship to Other Documents

This Plan supersedes the Humboldt County Framework Plan that was adopted in 1984. It also consolidates and supercedes the following documents:

- o Jacoby Creek Community Plan (1982)
- o Freshwater Community Plan (1985)
- o Fortuna Community Plan (1985)
- o Willow Creek Community Plan (1986)
- o Hydesville-Carlotta Community Plan (1986)
- o Garberville-Benbow-Redway-Alderpoint Community Plan (1987)
- o Avenue of the Giants Community Plan (2000)
- o Orick Community Plan (1985)
- o Northern Humboldt County General Plan (1965) (covering Orleans, Trinidad-Westhaven (inland), Fieldbrook-Glendale, and Blue Lake unincorporated area)
- o Arcata General Plan (1966) (unincorporated area around Arcata not in the coastal zone or Jacoby Creek)
- o Southern Humboldt General Plan (1968) (unincorporated Rio Dell and the inland portion of Shelter Cove)

Local Coastal Plans. Within the Coastal Zone, this Plan will supersede the following Local Coastal Program land use plans once the coastal related portions of this document are effectively certified through the California Coastal Commission:

- o North Coast Area Plan
- o Trinidad Area Plan
- o McKinleyville Area Plan
- o Humboldt Bay Area Plan
- o Eel River Area Plan
- o South Coast Area Plan

Companion Documents

These are documents that are bound separately but are part of the General Plan. They include the following:

Housing Element Technical Report – 2002-2008. The Housing Element (2004) is bound as a separate document and serves as the housing element portion of the General Plan for unincorporated areas.

McKinleyville and Eureka Community Plans. The McKinleyville (2002) and Eureka (1995) community plans, because of their complexity, will remain standalone separately bound documents, and serve as the applicable general plans for those areas. Their land use designations and policies are subject to amendment as part of this General Plan.

Documents Related to this Plan

Environmental Impact Report. This document should be referred to for more extensive information on existing conditions, potential impacts of the Plan, and how impacts will be mitigated. A range of alternatives to the Plan are also discussed in the EIR.

County Regulations. Various County regulations are affected by this Plan and are important vehicles for carrying out policy directives. They are not part of the General Plan but must be consistent with it.

The Zoning Regulations. Sections 311–319 of Title III, Division 1 of the Humboldt County Code, provide zoning implementation for this General Plan. These ordinances have been revised to reflect the policies of this General Plan. The structure of the Zoning Ordinance parallels that of the Land Use Element in that they both contain maps depicting the distribution of land uses throughout the county and descriptions of development standards for various designations identified on the maps. However, while the General Plan embodies a long-term perspective the Zoning Ordinance is immediate in its application.

Subdivision Regulations. Title III, Division 2, of the Humboldt County Code governs subdivisions of lands and has been appropriately revised so that it is consistent with this Plan.

Building Regulations. Division 3, of the Humboldt County Code governs construction, grading, and flood plain management and is also an important tool for the implementation of this Plan and is referenced where appropriate.

Background Reports

Numerous technical background reports were prepared to provide a range of information and detail necessary to complete the Plan. Technical data found in this Plan originated from these reports unless otherwise noted and referenced in Appendix D. Although not part of the Plan, these reports can be found on the County website. Some of the key reports are listed below.

- o Building Communities (February 2002)
- o Natural Resources and Hazards (September 2002)
- o Moving Goods and People (October 2002)
- o Agricultural Resources and Policies (August 2003)
- o Community Design Toolkit (October 2003)
- o Forest Resources and Policies (October 2003, revised April 2006)
- o Residential Land Availability Survey (February 2004)
- o Sketch Plan Alternatives (June 2004)
- o Draft General Plan Energy Element Technical Report (October 2005)
- o Living in a Networked World – Telecommunications (December 2004)
- o Water Resources Technical Report
- o Community Infrastructure and Services Technical Report
- o Humboldt County Master Fire Protection Plan (August 2006)
- o Related Studies:
 - Harbor Revitalization Plan and Rail Study
 - Airport Master Plan
 - Prosperity! Update
 - District Sphere Reports (LAFCO)