

## 1.6 THE PLANNING PROCESS

---

The City's planning process includes monitoring and updating the General Plan and implementing Plan policies, updating the Zoning Ordinance, preparing other implementing ordinances, specific plans, design guidelines, and other studies called for in the General Plan. An annual General Plan Report will provide an overview of the status of the General Plan and its implementation.

Ordinances and documents the City must update or prepare upon adoption of the General Plan include:

- *Zoning Ordinance.* The Zoning Ordinance is one of the primary implementation tools of the General Plan, and it is required to be consistent with the General Plan by State law. The Land Use and Growth Management Element, as well as the Community Design Element, call for specific revisions to the Zoning Ordinance. A comprehensive update of the Zoning Ordinance will be necessary in order to implement the new General Plan Diagram and land use classifications, land use policies, and policies relating to the intensity, bulk, and character of new development.
- *Specific Plans.* The City has already prepared a specific plan for the Wilfred-Dowdell area, located on the westside. To provide additional direction for new development, policies in the Land Use and Growth Management Element call for preparation of specific plans for all new development areas and identify the boundaries of the new specific plan areas. Requirements for specific plans are laid out in the State's Government Code.
- *Neighborhood and Special Area Plans.* A concept plan for the City Center was prepared in early 1999. The City may consider establishing neighborhood and special area plans for additional areas with unique planning needs. Neighborhood and special area plans need not necessarily address all the topics required by State law for specific plans. All specific plans and neighborhoods and special area plans must be consistent with the General Plan. The City retains the authority to require specific plans for areas in addition to the ones included in the General Plan.
- *Redevelopment Plans.* The City's Community Development Area is the City's redevelopment area, as authorized by the State's community redevelopment law, and includes most sites in the city that were vacant as of 1999. In redevelopment areas, the property tax increment from new development is reinvested into the redevelopment area, whether through public improvements, economic development strategies, or other measures. Redevelopment plans are required to be consistent with a city's general plan.
- *Growth Management Ordinance.* A Growth Management Ordinance is called for, in order to establish a comprehensive growth management program. The ordinance would establish conditions of approval for new development, annual "trigger" caps

on development, requirements for adequate public facilities, and other relevant provisions.

- *Subdivision Regulations.* Revisions to the City’s subdivision regulations may be necessary in conjunction with establishment of the Growth Management Ordinance. Conditions on approval of tentative subdivision maps would need to be established in order to reflect the goals and policies of the growth management program.
- *Capital Improvements Program.* A Capital Improvement Program would need to be established to review and program public facility needs within the city, in conjunction with new development. The program is established through policies in the Land Use and Growth Management Element, as part of an overall growth management strategy.

## **AMENDMENTS TO THE GENERAL PLAN**

As the city's guide for development, the General Plan is the heart of the planning process. It is intended to be a living document and, as such, will be subject to more site-specific and comprehensive amendments over time. Amendments also may be needed from time to time to conform to State or federal law passed after adoption, and to eliminate or modify policies that may become obsolete or unrealistic due to changed conditions (such as completion of a task or project, development on a site, or adoption of an ordinance or plan).

State law limits the number of times a jurisdiction can amend its general plan. Generally, no jurisdiction can amend any mandatory element of its general plan more than four times in one year, although each amendment may include more than one change to the general plan. This restriction, however, does not apply to amendments to:

- Optional elements (such as the Community Design Element);
- Allow development of affordable housing; or
- Comply with a court decision.

## **ANNUAL REPORT**

The California Government Code requires City staff to “provide an annual report to the legislative body on the status of the General Plan and progress in its implementation” (Government Code § 65400(b)). This report must also be submitted to the Governor's Office of Planning and Research and the Department of Housing and Community Development. It must include an analysis of the progress in meeting the city's share of regional housing needs and local efforts to remove governmental constraints to maintenance, improvement, and development of affordable housing (Government Code § 65583, 65584).

In addition, any mitigation monitoring and reporting requirements prescribed by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) identified in the General Plan environmental impact report (EIR) should be addressed in the annual report because they are closely tied to

plan implementation. Finally, the annual report should include a summary of all general plan amendments adopted during the preceding year and an outline of upcoming projects and general plan issues to be addressed in the coming year, along with a work program.

The Rohnert Park General Plan Annual Report will be prepared by City staff during the early stages of the budget process and submitted for review to the Planning Commission, which will make a recommendation to the City Council. Public comments on the Annual Report may be submitted in writing to the Planning and Community Development Department. The Planning Commission and the City Council also will hear public comments on the Annual Report at duly noticed public hearings.

## **PERIODIC REVIEW**

The City will prepare an Implementation Plan within six months of the General Plan's adoption. That Implementation Plan shall contain language that allows for technical changes to be made in the General Plan. Furthermore, implementing ordinances required by the policies of this General Plan shall be adopted as soon as appropriate.

The City will undertake a periodic review of the General Plan, to determine how well the General Plan has performed, that is, whether policies related to development and conservation have been effective. This review will include:

- Analysis of the effectiveness of implementation programs and strategies initiated to carry out the Plan;
- Assessment of the City's job/housing balance;
- Review of growth trends since Plan adoption, assessment of future urban land needs, and review of growth phasing; and
- Review of Performance Indicators, which reflect progress towards implementation of the General Plan.

The first review of the plan will start five years after adoption of the Plan. As part of the review, a target date for a comprehensive update of the General Plan will be established. A report summarizing City staff's findings and recommendations will be circulated for public comment and then presented to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission will review the report and make a recommendation to the City Council. The Planning Commission and the City Council also will hear comments on the report at duly noticed public hearings.