



GENERAL PLAN
City of Sierra Madre



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CITY DEPARTMENTS

Development Services
Community Services
Public Works
Fire Department
Police Department

Library

COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS

The City of Sierra Madre would also like to extend a special thanks to the many volunteers who generously donated their time in various capacities during preparation of the General Plan Update. These volunteers are listed below:

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Introduction

PURPOSE OF THE GENERAL PLAN



Source: Seth Hansen



Source: Seth Hansen

The City of Sierra Madre General Plan is a long-range policy document which lays out the framework for all future growth and development within the City. The General Plan is the blueprint that sets the basis for future policy decisions, in that it organizes the desires of the Sierra Madre community with respect to the physical, cultural, economic, and environmental character of the City.

Most importantly, the Sierra Madre General Plan is a community-based document that reflects the community values and character as expressed in its goals and policies, while also serving as a technical document which provides information about the City. The General Plan shall be used as a guide by the City's decision makers to achieve the community's vision and preserve the history, character and shared values of the community for future generations.

The General Plan is intended to be both a long-term and a dynamic document, and must be periodically updated to respond to changing community needs. Unlike the housing element, which is required by State law to be updated every five years, a General Plan does not expire and is not required to have a specific time frame. Updating the General Plan is done to ensure that the plan is a reflection of the community's values and goals. The update process also allows the City to reflect on challenges of the past years and use these experiences to shape new policy.

STATE REQUIREMENTS

California Government Code Section 65300 requires that each city and county within the state of California adopt a comprehensive, long-range plan to guide development. There are seven mandatory elements of a general plan – land use, housing, circulation, open

space, conservation, noise, and safety. The law does not require that these elements be organized in a particular fashion, and it allows local jurisdictions to include additional elements to address local needs and objectives.

The content of each element is prescribed in the “State of California General Plan Guidelines” published by the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research (OPR). Requirements for the Housing Element are defined by the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). Requirements for the Noise Element are defined by the Office of Noise Control of the California Department of Health.

State required sustainability and greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction goals and policies are denoted throughout the document by a green leaf. 

State law requires that the General Plan be internally consistent across all elements. It also requires that ordinances adopted pursuant to the General Plan, such as the zoning ordinance and subdivision ordinance, be consistent with the General Plan. The decisions of the City should be logically guided by the General Plan.

ORGANIZATION OF THE GENERAL PLAN

In accordance with State Government Code Section 65302, this General Plan contains all seven required elements organized in four chapters addressing City issues in a logical way. Each element of the General Plan contains background information and associated goals and policies. Goals and policies represent the General Plan’s foundation. A **goal** is an overall statement of community desires and consists of a broad statement of purpose or direction. For each goal in this General Plan, associated and more definitive policy statements follow. A **policy** provides guidance to the City Council, other City commissions and boards, and City staff in their review of development proposals and other actions taken. The Implementation Section is included at the end of the document, along with an Appendix including a glossary and references.

The Land Use Chapter addresses the City’s built environment, including land and economic development, historic preservation,

housing and circulation. Since Sierra Madre is developed on a foothill slope, as well as canyons and hillsides leading into the Angeles National Forest, the Resource Management and Land Use Chapters address hillside preservation. The Resource Management Chapter also addresses co-existence with wildlife, dark sky, and other conservation issues such as trees, water, waste management, and air quality. The Hazard Prevention Chapter recognizes the potential for wildfires, floods/landslides and seismic-related hazards associated with the City's location along the San Gabriel Mountains foothill. The Community Services Chapter reflects the independent character of Sierra Madre as a full-service city providing its own police, fire, park and recreation, library and public services, in addition to the numerous contributions made by volunteer organizations to the cultural life and social needs of the City.

The following chart shows the corresponding State-mandated Elements for each chapter/section of the General Plan document:

GENERAL PLAN CHAPTERS	STATE MANDATED ELEMENTS
Chapter One - Land Use	
1. Land Use Designations 2. Historic Preservation 3. Housing 4. Economic Development 5. Circulation and Parking	Land Use, Open Space Land Use Housing Circulation
Chapter Two - Resource Management	
1. Hillside Preservation 2. Co-existence with Wildlife 3. Dark Sky 4. Tree Preservation 5. Water Resources 6. Waste Management/Recycling 7. Air Quality	Conservation, Open Space Conservation Conservation Conservation Conservation Conservation
Chapter Three - Hazard Prevention	
1. Fire Safety 2. Flood/Landslide 3. Seismic Safety 4. Noise	Safety Safety Safety Noise
Chapter Four - Community Services	
1. Law Enforcement 2. Recreation Services 3. Library Services 4. Community Cultural and Special Events 5. Transit 6. Public Services	Safety Open Space Circulation Circulation

THE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

GENERAL PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

Sierra Madre's General Plan was last updated in 1996. In July 2009, the City Council initiated an update to reflect current community values and to provide a roadmap for future decision-making. The City Council appointed a 9-member General Plan Steering Committee as an advisory committee to the Planning Commission and City Council.

The General Plan Steering Committee (GPSC) held monthly public meetings from November 2009 to May 2013 to conduct a thorough review of the entire 1996 General Plan, conduct community outreach meetings and write the update to the General Plan, culminating in a recommendation of a draft General Plan update document for review by the Planning Commission and City Council.

The GPSC updated the document in-house and limited the services of a consultant to the preparation of the Technical Background Report and environmental documents as required by the California Environmental Quality Act. The role of the consultant also included incorporation of State legislative requirements, including climate change and greenhouse gas reduction policies, review of the goals, policies, and objectives for internal consistency, technical assistance to staff and the GPSC, volunteer coordination and best practices recommendations.

This document supersedes the 1996 General Plan, and its implementation will include actions to update other planning documents to ensure consistency with the vision outlined herein.

PLANNING COMMISSION AND CITY COUNCIL

Beginning in the Fall of 2013, a number of public hearings were conducted by the Planning Commission and City Council to review the Draft General Plan Update document, at which time the Sierra Madre community had the opportunity to provide feedback on all Elements of the document.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION



In addition to their monthly meetings, the GPSC recognized the importance of community outreach to engage the community and seek their input in the General Plan update. Over a three-year period, the GPSC involved the community and its decision-makers by hosting two town hall forums and an East Montecito Neighborhood meeting, conducted a General Plan survey and held an essay contest for Sierra Madre youth. Residents, employees, business owners, and other stakeholders were involved in sharing their ideas and desires for Sierra Madre which were incorporated by the GPSC in their preparation of the draft General Plan update document

The GPSC also reached out to stakeholders through a series of informal meetings in the community to educate them regarding the role and importance of the General Plan, and to obtain input into the General Plan update regarding the vision and the unique challenges for Sierra Madre in the next 20 years.

In addition, an extensive list of volunteers were involved in all aspects of the update process, including communications/public relations, a design contest to create a General Plan Update logo, advertising, conducting town hall meetings, surveying the community, photographing, data gathering, revising various General Plan sections, and assisting the consultant with various needs related to the preparation of the Technical Background Report. A variety of media, including press releases, e-blasts, fliers, Channel 3 broadcasts, a dedicated General Plan Update email, and the City's website and Facebook were used to disseminate information, recruit volunteers, and involve the community at every stage of the update process.



General Plan Update logo
Source: Friends of the Arts

VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Vision & Guiding Principles sets the tone for the General Plan Update. The purpose of identifying the Vision & Guiding Principles was to help develop a summary of general goals to be achieved by the updated General Plan. The vision provides the foundation for more specific guiding principles, goals, policies and programs to be developed during the update process. The visioning process is valuable in identifying issues important to the community and in providing early direction for alternatives development and analysis.

Community input from the General Plan outreach efforts were used as the basis for drafting the Vision and Guiding Principles. GPSC members compiled an extensive list of “vision statements” and guiding principles, and then focused this list into five vision and guiding principles, as follows:

1. Preserve and sustain Sierra Madre’s distinctive character as a historic small town nestled in the foothills, but within a major metropolitan area.
2. Ensure that Sierra Madre is a safe, vibrant place to live, work and visit by providing city services that match the needs of the community and promote community engagement.
3. Protect and be responsible stewards of the neighboring San Gabriel Mountain Foothills’ wildlife, forest, open space, watershed and all other natural resources.
4. Promote and develop a strong, diversified local economy and a thriving town center, consistent with the needs of the community.
5. Ensure development is done in harmony with its neighborhood, while maintaining the character of the town and without unduly burdening existing city services and infrastructure or impacting the environment.