

General Plan Status in Major U.S. Western Cities

Los Angeles Stands Alone in Abandoning the Use of a Modern General Plan to Guide the City's Livability, Sustainability and Growth

General Plan Status of 15 Key Cities in the Western U.S.:

- **San Francisco:** Updated all plan Elements between 2004 and 2015
- **San Diego:** Updated General Plan in 2008 plus key plan Element updates between 2010 and 2015
- **San Jose:** An update was completed Dec. 2016, replacing the General Plan update of four years earlier
- **Phoenix:** Updated the General Plan in March 2015 and, as required by Arizona law, submitted it for voter approval, winning by 76% in August 2015
- **Seattle:** Updated the Comprehensive Plan in 2016
- **Portland:** Adopted the 2035 Comprehensive Plan in 2016
- **Denver:** Started its update in 2016 – they estimate 2 years to complete the city's “Blueprint”
- **Sacramento:** Adopted the Sacramento 2035 General Plan in 2015
- **Salt Lake City:** Adopted "Plan Salt Lake," in 2015
- **Irvine:** Updating of its General Plan began in 2017
- **Riverside:** Adopted "General Plan 2025" in 2007
- **Las Vegas:** Adopted Master Plan update, 2016
- **Anaheim:** Adopted General Plan 2025 in 2004 and updated its Housing Element in 2015
- **Fresno:** Its 2002 General Plan was fully updated in 2016
- **Los Angeles:** *No Modern General Plan; Fragmented Updates completed in past five years; Infrastructure Element of General Plan is circa 1968, Parks Element is from 1970s.*

RECENT BACKGROUND OF L.A. CITY PLANNING

The Los Angeles City Council has updated some Elements of the General Plan since 2001, but most of its General Plan Elements *date from the 1990s*. Key General Plan Elements - for example, Public Parks - have not been updated since the 70s. Today, L.A. is the most park-poor of America's 65 biggest cities.

The [Framework Element](#), a strategy for long-term growth, dates from 2001. The Infrastructure Element *was last updated in 1968*. Today, L.A.'s roads, sewers and water infrastructure are in decay.

Although the state requires updates to the Air Quality Element, Public Safety Element, and Conservation Element, *L.A. operates without the required updates to these crucial Elements*.

Only fragmented efforts were made to update L.A.'s General Plan in the past decade: The Mobility Plan 2035, the Plan for a Healthy L.A., and the Housing Element.

California law requires that cities continually update the General Plan — San Jose updates its General Plan every 4 years. But in October of 2005, the L.A. City Council voted to repeal the Municipal Code that required itself to update the General Plan. The City Council's unusual vote — possibly unique among major U.S. City Councils — went unnoticed: It was described on the Sept. 12, 2005 Council agenda as repairing "typographical errors," and making "clarifying and technical changes," to the Municipal Code. It was described as "11.5.8 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code is repealed."

Community Plans are detailed blueprints born of extensive public involvement in spelling out the broader vision, dreams and policies of each General Plan Element. In 2007, Mayor Villaraigosa and Director of Planning Gail Goldberg made updating the Community Plans a cornerstone of L.A.'s future: 35 Community Plans would be updated within 8 years.

But just 3 were updated — Hollywood, Sylmar and Granada Hills — before the Hollywood Community Plan badly backfired. Raucous hearings over that Plan focused on efforts led by Mayor Villaraigosa and Councilman Eric Garcetti to bring skyscrapers to Hollywood. CityWatch reported that "extensive data showing that City Officials were exaggerating the population growth" was ignored.

In 2013, [Superior Court Judge Alan Goodman ruled that City officials had exaggerated the growth data. Goodman chastised L.A. officials, and ruled the Hollywood Community Plan Update, its dramatic "up-zoning" and its Environmental Impact Report illegal.](#)

The surviving Hollywood Community Plan is instructive. It dates from 1988 and was created during a more give-and-take planning era in L.A. - historic preservation of hundreds of Golden Era and Old World buildings and bungalow blocks, and the nuanced scaling of height, were key principles. (The planner who oversaw the 1980s Plan later helped craft Pasadena's admired, cooperative, General Plan.)

Now, in response to mounting criticism that L.A. has no plan, city leaders have pledged to finally update the L.A. General Plan and numerous Community Plans in a trust-building, transparent manner.

But to assure that their visions for a livable L.A. are included, residents must become directly involved, and city planning must become far more transparent. Today, *closed-door City Hall meetings are underway to determine key Elements and visions for the General Plan and key concepts for the Community Plans.* Instead, this is must be a ground-up, completely public process.

KEY WESTERN CITIES FAR OUTPACE L.A. IN VISION AND PLANNING

Consider the situation in 14 other key Western cities, including San Francisco, San Diego, San Jose, Seattle, Portland, Phoenix, Denver, Sacramento, Salt Lake City, Irvine, Riverside and Las Vegas and others. Each of them completed full updates of their General Plans in the past decade.

California law requires that a city's General Plan address seven crucial issues: Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Conservation, Open Space, Noise and Safety. The cities in this report all explored their particular needs and created their own visions and major policies around them.

Cities often adopted Elements beyond those required by the state (Sacramento devised a Flood Plain Element to guide its planning. San Diego created a Historic Preservation Element), and each city took steps to make resident input a major component of planning.

The Los Angeles City Council stands alone, among major cities in the West, in abandoning the use of a modern General Plan and updated Community Plans.

DRILLING DOWN IN THE COMPARISON CITIES

San Francisco General Plan

General Plan -- The 10 General Plan Elements in San Francisco's General Plan have all been updated within the last 7 years.

COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY - 2011
RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE major
update 2014 including **Urban Forest Plan**
TRANSPORTATION - 2010
URBAN DESIGN - 2010

2004 and 2011
COMMUNITY FACILITIES - 2011
COMMUNITY SAFETY - 2012
ARTS - 2004
AIR QUALITY - 2004

San Diego General Plan

San Diego comprehensively updated its General Plan in 2008 *following extensive public and community-level debate*. The Update did not include land-use or zoning, which is the purview of the City's 20 Community (Area) Plans. San Diego again updated key General Elements in 2015.

[Land Use & Community Planning Element](#) -Updated 06/29/2015

[Housing Element](#)

[Mobility Element](#) -Updated 06/29/2015

[Urban Design Element](#)

[Economic Prosperity Element](#) -Updated 06/29/2015

[Public Facilities, Services & Safety Element](#) - Updated 06/29/2015

[Recreation Element](#) -Updated 06/29/201

[Conservation Element](#)

[Noise Element](#) -Updated 06/29/2015

[Historic Preservation Element](#)

San Jose General Plan

The Envision San Jose 2040 General Plan was adopted by in November 2011, and then a new 4-year General Plan update was completed Dec. 2016. San Jose, the second-largest city in the West, is on course for its next update again in 4 years.

San Jose established four year review cycle to evaluate, with the public, the achievement of key goals and mid-course adjustments. In November 2015, the Envision San Jose 2040 Task Force including community members and organizations evaluated the City's achievement of planned job goals, implementation of the Urban Village concept, environmental indicators, and affordable housing needs.

The Envision San Jose 2040 Task Force approved new recommendations for the City Council approved in December 2016. The vision sets forth *seven guiding community values* to reach its vision, which is: "San Jose embodies the energy and vitality of its unique human, natural and economic resources."

The seven Community Values that drive the General Plan Elements are:

Innovative Economy – San Jose thrives on innovation and job opportunities for all.

Environmental Leadership – San Jose is a model environmentally sustainable and healthy city, a leader in green technology and a vigilant steward of its resources for present and future generations.

Diversity and Social Equity – San Jose celebrates, embraces and involves a diverse blend of cultures and achieves social, cultural and economic equity.

Interconnected City – Activities of daily life are in close proximity and easily accessible by walking, bicycling and public transit.

Healthy Neighborhoods – Neighborhoods are attractive, affordable, and safe, with residents engaged.

Quality Education and Services – San Jose's residents and businesses receive a broad range of high quality services and enjoy excellent educational opportunities for all.

Vibrant Arts and Culture – San Jose is a center for multi-faceted arts and cultural programs.

Phoenix General Plan

Approved in 2015 by the city's voters, as required under Arizona law, this Plan embraces Five Core Values hammered out by the public and city leaders:

Celebrate our Diverse Communities and Neighborhood Cores

Strengthen Our Local Economy Cores, Centers & Corridors

Certainty & Character

Build the Sustainable Desert City

Create an Even More Vibrant Downtown

Phoenix decided to reach these goals through these key methods:

Build on What's Working: Incorporate the parts of the old 2002 General Plan that served Phoenix well, ensuring that the plan preserves best planning practices and policies.

Get Back to Planning: Village Planning Committees (like a Community Plan) and staff get back to practicing long-range planning in each village, reviewing existing plans and analyzing how each village's unique character and assets contributes to the "Connected Oasis."

Certainty & Character: Guiding principles for every neighborhood gives residents greater certainty about their quality of life and protections to ensure their neighborhood remains unique and livable.

Clarity and Compliance: Reorganize all required planning elements under the Five Core Values.

Seattle Comprehensive Plan

On October 28, 2016, the Mayor approved the new Comprehensive Plan. One significant change was the addition of a long-sought Community Involvement Element.

Each year, policy amendments are considered to the Comprehensive Plan. In 2017, Seattle is reviewing potential changes to Future Land Use maps identified in 2016, as well as changes that could emerge from public outreach on a citywide [Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda](#).

The Four Core Values of Seattle's Comprehensive Plan are:

Community- developing strong connections between a diverse range of people and places

Environmental Stewardship- protect and improve our global and local natural environment

Economic Opportunity and Security- a strong economy and a pathway to employment is fundamental

Race and Social Equity- limited resources and opportunities must be shared; and the inclusion of under-represented communities in decision-making processes is necessary.

Portland Comprehensive Plan

Portland's 2035 Comprehensive Plan was adopted on June 15, 2016. It is the most significant update of since the original plan in 1980.

Portland's Elements are:

Economic Prosperity

Human Health

**Environmental Health
Equity
Resilience**

Denver Blueprint

In 2000, Denver developed a Comprehensive Plan. A core component was the call for a separate document, “Blueprint Denver”, that identified in detail how Denver would grow and adapt.

Blueprint Denver was adopted by the Denver City Council in 2002 as a supplement to the Comprehensive Plan. In 2010, Denver updated its entire zoning code. In 2016 the city launched Denverright, a community-driven process that examined four areas:

**Land use,
Mobility,
Parks,
Recreational resources**

The city has a website to keep track of the plans: denvergov.org/denverright.
<http://www.denverpost.com/2016/05/18/denver-residents-will-get-a-say-in-new-plans-for-development-parks/>

Sacramento General Plan

The Sacramento 2035 General Plan update was adopted on March 3, 2015 in a 3-year process. Public outreach and planning focused on workshops, community meetings, open houses, public review and stakeholder meetings.

The General Plan is based on its 2004 foundation of “Smart Growth” Principles. In 2005, Sacramento adopted Vision and Guiding Principles, creating a publicly-driven framework for the new General Plan. In 2013 the City embarked on a technical review and update of the 2030 General Plan, consistent with adopted policy. Sacramento updates every five years.

The General Plan includes the following Elements:

**Land Use and Urban Design
Historic and Cultural Resources
Economic Development
Housing
Mobility
Utilities
Education, Recreation, and Culture
Public Health and Safety
Environmental Resources
Environmental Constraints**

The 2035 General Plan retains the overall land use and policy direction established in the 2030 Plan. The new General Plan did not need major change, so this technical update focused on topical areas:

- Updating the planning timeframe through 2035;
- Integrating the 2012 Climate Action Plan (CAP) into the General Plan;
- Addressing State-mandated flood risk and flood protection requirements;
- Updating City traffic levels of service; and incorporating urban agriculture policies.

Salt Lake City Plan

Salt Lake City adopted Plan Salt Lake on December 2015. Plan Salt Lake sets a citywide Vision for 25 years. The Plan is based on existing City policies and input gathered from thousands of people.

During 2012 and 2013, the Plan Salt Lake team undertook a public engagement to identify what residents and visitors value. The team attended 81 events at locations across the City and gathered thousands of comments. Key themes emerged.

The purpose of Plan Salt Lake is to:

**Establish and articulate a Citywide Vision;
Identify the commonly held Values;
Establish a framework for community master plans and element plans to carry out the Vision;
Set targets and identify metrics to help measure our Success over time.**

Timeline of General Plan Updates:

- [Plan Salt Lake](#)// Adopted 2015
- [Creating Tomorrow Together – Commission Report/ Prepared 1998](#)
- [Community Preservation Plan](#) // Adopted 2012
- [Master Plans Map](#) // Prepared December 2005
- [Open Space Master Plan](#) // Adopted 1992
- [Salt Lake City Strategic Plan](#) // Prepared December 1993
- [Salt Lake City Urban Design Element](#)// Prepared 1990

Irvine General Plan

Irvine’s General Plan was initially adopted in 1972. The last Comprehensive Update occurred in 1999, and a new two-year update is now underway. The Irvine Housing Element was updated (2013) so it will not be part of the new General Plan Update.

The General Plan Update began in 2016. The City conducted initial outreach to the community, including public workshops, community events, and a city-wide survey, to identify major issues. Results are being presented to City decision makers in early 2017 as part of a planning framework for the General Plan Update process.

Key amendments to the General Plan since the 1990 comprehensive update:

Northern Sphere Project (2002)
Orange County Great Park & Neighborhoods (2003)
Spectrum Housing (2003)
IBC Vision Plan (2010)

Great Park Neighborhoods GPA/ZC (2013) Updated Housing Element (2013)

Anaheim General Plan

Adopted General Plan 2025 in 2004. Updated its Housing Element in 2015

Riverside General Plan

Riverside adopted The General Plan 2025 on November 2007. This citywide vision document is comprised of five themes:

HOW WE WORK (Economic and Workforce Development): .

HOW WE PLAY (Arts/Culture/Entertainment/Parks/Recreation/Libraries/Physical Amenities):

HOW WE LIVE (Housing):

HOW WE GET AROUND (Transportation and Land Use):

HOW WE LEARN (K-12 Education: Parental, Community and Business Involvement):

Fresno General Plan

The 2002 General Plan was fully updated in 2016. Communities and city leaders agreed on a theme of Resilience to address the city's challenges and capitalize on its assets. The five principles of resilience that guide the Plan goals, objectives, and implementing policies and provide a framework are:

**Quality-of-Life and Basic Services in All Neighborhoods;
A Prosperous City - Centered on a Vibrant Downtown;
Ample Industrial and Employment Land Ready for Job Creation;
Care for the Built and Natural Environment; and
Fiscally Responsible and Sustainable Land Use Policies and Practices.**

Fresno's guiding policy is: "While it is general and long-range in scope, the Plan includes many near-term actions, laying out policies and implementation strategies from adoption to 2035 and beyond. Broad objectives such as "economic development," "quality of life," and "neighborhood character" are meaningful only if translated into actions that are tangible and can be implemented. State law requires that many GENERAL PLAN regulations, requirements, and actions be consistent with the Plan, so regular ongoing use and updating of the Plan is essential."

Las Vegas Centennial Plan

Initially adopted in July 2000 celebration, the Downtown Centennial Plan (DCP) established fundamental planning concepts and urban design standards for the Downtown core. The City Council on June 15, 2016 formally adopted a new 30-year vision. The **master plan** took two years to complete, involving input from city planners, community leaders and residents. The **355-page document**, offers a blueprint guiding development for the next three decades and replaces the 2000 Plan.

Key themes include: (1) Promoting Gaming and Tourism in Downtown First, (2) Providing Housing/Community Amenities, (3) Emphasizing Education, (4) Rebranding and Marketing Downtown, (5) Providing Options around Mobility, (6) Creating Standards for Renewable Energy, (7) Creating More Parks and Green Streets, (8) Expanding Retail and Entertainment offering, and (9) Better Coordination of Social Services.