

8 | IMPLEMENTING THE VISION

This chapter describes steps the City can take to implement the Vision Plan. Some of these steps are regulatory procedures the City could undertake to codify the Vision, while others are tools that City staff can use to implement the Vision.



Financing Strategy

In order to fully implement the Vision Plan, the City will need to prepare a Financing Strategy prior to any development approvals for parcels in the Plan Area. The Financing Strategy can be developed upon completion of the Vision Plan prior to the issuing of any entitlements, or as part of a Specific Plan that would be subsequently developed for the area. A Financing Strategy will allow for an allocation of costs for new improvements, including streets, parks and open space, and public facilities, among the various beneficiaries in the Plan Area. It will allow property owners to recover a fair cost for land that would be used for public improvements under the Vision Plan and subsequent development.

Assessment of Development Proposals

Coachella's current General Plan calls for developers to prepare Specific Plans before they build in any portion of the Entertainment Commercial District. As Coachella continues to attract developers to the Vision Plan Area, the City can work with them to ensure that each Specific Plan reflects the goals of the Vision Plan as well as the requirements of the existing

General Plan. In particular, the City can verify that each project will meet the General Plan's requirements for the provision and funding of adequate infrastructure.

The City can also encourage developers to think of public facilities and services as an integral part of new neighborhoods, so that the Plan Area's new parks and schools can serve as true neighborhood centers. Developers should work with the Coachella Valley Unified School District (CVUSD), the Desert Sands Unified School District (DSUSD) and the Coachella Valley Recreation and Park District (CVRPD) to knit new schools and parks into the fabric of each neighborhood.

General Plan Amendment

Coachella's General Plan includes many requirements for development in the Entertainment Commercial District, which makes up most of the Vision Plan Area. However, the General Plan's requirements do not reflect the recommendations made in the Vision Plan. The General Plan's assumptions about the appropriate land uses, economic development strate-

gies and development intensities for the Entertainment Commercial District should be revised to reflect the Vision Plan’s recommendations. The General Plan’s requirements for street design, including required rights-of-way and lane configurations, also need to be modified so the circulation network described in the Vision Plan can be implemented. The City plans to make a General Plan Amendment to address those issues as soon as this Vision Plan is accepted by the Council.

As required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and SB-18, the City would consult with affected tribes and evaluate potential environmental impacts, including potential impacts on traffic and air quality, before adopting an amendment to its General Plan.

Ordinance and Zoning Map Revisions

After it completes the necessary General Plan amendments, the City would need to revise its Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map to include new zoning districts that are compatible with the Vision Plan’s Community Districts. Any new zoning districts

should reflect the combination of land uses shown in Chapter 4, and they should provide appropriate requirements for building heights and setbacks, parking locations and design review.

Development standards for the new zoning districts should accommodate the mixing of residential, commercial, civic and other uses in a single district, horizontally and vertically. They should also provide minimum densities for residential development, to ensure that development provides a sufficient number of units to fund public improvements.

The City should also add affordable housing requirements, including a density bonus, to the Zoning Ordinance. This change will ensure that new development includes housing that Coachella’s current residents can afford.

Finally, the City should revise its Subdivision Ordinance to include appropriate requirements for the design of new subdivisions in the Plan Area. In particular, the standards for the design of street networks and the configuration of individual streets should be revised to reflect the Vision Plan’s direction.

As with a General Plan Amendment, the City would evaluate potential environmental impacts before revising its ordinances and Zoning Map.

Specific Plans

Coachella's General Plan recommends that a single Specific Plan be prepared for the entire CE District. However, either the City or private developers could prepare one or more Specific Plans according to the standards and goals in this Vision Plan.

In addition to providing more detailed requirements for design and infrastructure, Specific Plans would describe strategies for ensuring that land in the Open Space Community District is not developed in the future. For example, conservation easements could be purchased so that parcels in this District could not be developed, or development rights could be transferred from the parcels in this District to nearby parcels zoned for residential development. Specific Plans would include evaluations of potential environmental impacts, including potential impacts on traffic and air quality.

Affordable Housing Strategy

To ensure that Coachella's existing residents benefit from new housing development in the Vision Plan Area, the City should provide incentives and requirements for developers to build affordable housing units.

State-Mandated Incentives

California already requires all cities to offer a density bonus to developers that provide a given amount of housing for low income or very low income households. The density bonus enables developers to build housing at higher densities than a city's General Plan would otherwise allow. It also makes it possible for the City to grant additional incentives to developers that provide affordable housing, including modified development standards, lowered fees and other concessions that would reduce the developer's costs.

The density bonus is a voluntary program for developers; they are not required to build affordable housing units unless they choose to request a density

bonus. As a result, offering a density bonus does not guarantee that any affordable housing will be built.

Inclusionary Zoning and Alternative Requirements

In addition to the density bonus, the City could adopt an inclusionary zoning policy, which would require that developers provide a minimum percentage of affordable units in market-rate housing developments. Developers who are building a small number of units could be allowed to meet the requirement through an in-lieu fee, described below.

All developers could be allowed to meet the requirement through one of the alternative methods listed below, but only when the other method would create a greater number of affordable units or make the units even more affordable.

Land Dedication

Market-rate housing developers could be allowed to secure all of the necessary entitlements for a site near the project area, then dedicate the site and its entitlements to a nonprofit housing developer. If the dedicated site would impose unusually high expenses on

the nonprofit developer—for example, if the site required the nonprofit developer to use podium development or steel-frame construction rather than standard wood-frame construction—the market-rate developer would be required to bear those additional expenses.

In-Lieu Fees

Market-rate housing developers could be allowed to pay into a fund, administered by the City, that provides financing for nonprofit affordable housing developers. The City could hire additional staff to administer the fund, or it could work with a nonprofit group that has experience providing oversight for affordable housing programs.

Off-Site Construction

Instead of building affordable units in the same neighborhood as other units, market-rate developers could be allowed to build the affordable units on another nearby site. The City would need to ensure that the affordable units meet high standards of design and construction; that equally favorable sites and site plans are chosen for both types of units; and that the affordable units are built at the same time as the market-rate units.

