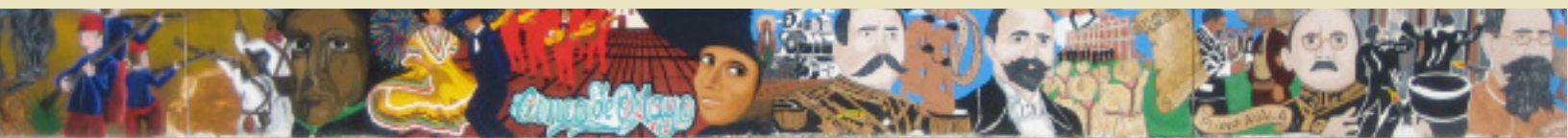




GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

CITY OF COACHELLA, CALIFORNIA

Adopted April 22, 2015



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01 | INTRODUCTION

SETTING THE STAGE – A MOMENT IN TIME

The City is at the threshold of establishing its new identity, an identity that will be realized during the next growth cycle. With the current economic slowdown, the City must take a breath and consider who and what it wants to be. The last 10 years have been frenetic and chaotic, with the housing boom promising great opportunity to communities, much of which was not realized as boom became bust and the recession set Coachella was not spared the housing bust, experiencing high unemployment, high foreclosure rates and abandoned subdivisions.

During this time of economic uncertainty, California has made great strides in addressing the looming threat of global climate change and energy security, passing landmark legislation that commits the state to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions, become more energy efficient and strive toward more sustainable land use patterns. While these macro trends will affect Coachella, environmental challenges are not limited to global trends. Like many agricultural communities, Coachella faces water quality challenges that could affect the health of its residents. And, like so many other Riverside County communities, Coachella suffers from poor air quality. It is not surprising, then, that public health has moved to the forefront of public consciousness. As this awareness has grown, the role of city planning in affecting public health has also grown as has the demand for healthy, walkable, equitable communities.

These trends have had an enormous impact on Coachella, and present a tremendous opportunity. In the near future, governments will be operating in a state of austerity, with limitations on tax revenue and dependable financial support from the state and federal governments. Coachella's median household income is 41% lower than the state average, its retail sales are 42% lower than the state average and nearly a quarter of its residents are living below the poverty level. The City is in great need of economic development that will provide the community with better paying jobs and more tax revenue. While local economic development can be a mercurial effort that is strongly influenced by larger external market forces, efficiency of infrastructure and land development economics are key fiscal health goals. The City is also picking up the pieces of failed developments, struggling to deal with incomplete subdivisions with incomplete infrastructure. But Coachella is a community of resilient, optimistic people and the City is taking advantage of inexpensive land and state and federal programs to bring new amenities, such as new parks and improved pedestrian infrastructure.

Coachella's resiliency and optimism stem from its social cohesion. Coachella is a tightly knit community, and this characteristic is one of the most valuable resources the City has. The social cohesion has created great community leaders and provides immeasurable benefit. Maintaining this cohesion and sense of identity, ensuring that it is not lost as the City grows, is critically important as this community grows into a bustling city that is three times more populous than it is today.

As the last growth cycle waned, there was much interest in development opportunities in Coachella. While the City's current population is around 40,000, it is likely to be 155,000 by 2035. Including the

land within its sphere of influence area, the City could accommodate over 250,000 people. Further, the population in southeastern Coachella Valley is expected to increase to between 300,000 and 500,000 people within a generation or two. This significant growth creates both challenges as well as tremendous opportunities and possibilities.

As the economy begins to recover, the community has had a period of time to stop and consider its future. Decisions on growth and development made now – decisions about where roads are built, how neighborhoods are designed, and the type of jobs to pursue – will have a lasting impact on the City. These decisions can make Coachella unique and different from its neighbors, charting a new course for the future.

This General Plan is the community's statement of the community's values and its vision for its future. Like the creative, adaptive and resilient people that make up Coachella, this General Plan establishes Coachella to be a unique City within the Valley. Coachella is embracing its roots as a walkable, authentic desert town and, as such, establishes a departure from the conventional, automobile-oriented development patterns have burdened so many California communities. Most of the development in California after World War II was automobile-oriented, with roadway and neighborhood designs that emphasized the efficient operation of the automobile. Such design priorities can be seen in the wide roadways, large block sizes, narrow sidewalks, and large street setbacks of so many communities.

Instead, Coachella has chosen to approach its growth in a people-oriented fashion, calling for vibrant, equitable neighborhoods, human-scale corridors and protection of its natural resources. Coachella desires to move forward, emphasizing community designs that prioritize active transportation modes such as walking and bicycling, encourage social interaction and create traditional neighborhoods. And, it is this approach that puts Coachella on a path to becoming a healthier, more sustainable community.

LOCATION AND PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY

Coachella is a desert community of approximately 40,000 people located at the eastern end of the Coachella Valley, in Riverside County, California. The City was founded in 1876 and later incorporated in 1946. Coachella is located southeast of the San Geronio Pass, east of the San Jacinto and Santa Rosa Mountains, north of the Salton Sea 68 feet below sea level. Interstate 10 runs the length of the Coachella Valley, connecting the Coachella with nearby cities and the Southern California region. Figure 1-1: Regional Location Map shows Coachella's location within Riverside County.

The current City limits encompass 18,564 acres and the sphere of influence encompasses 14,755 additional acres around the City. Figure 1-2: Jurisdictional Limits Map shows the geographic extent of these various areas.



Figure 1-1: Regional Location Map

ROLE OF THE GENERAL PLAN

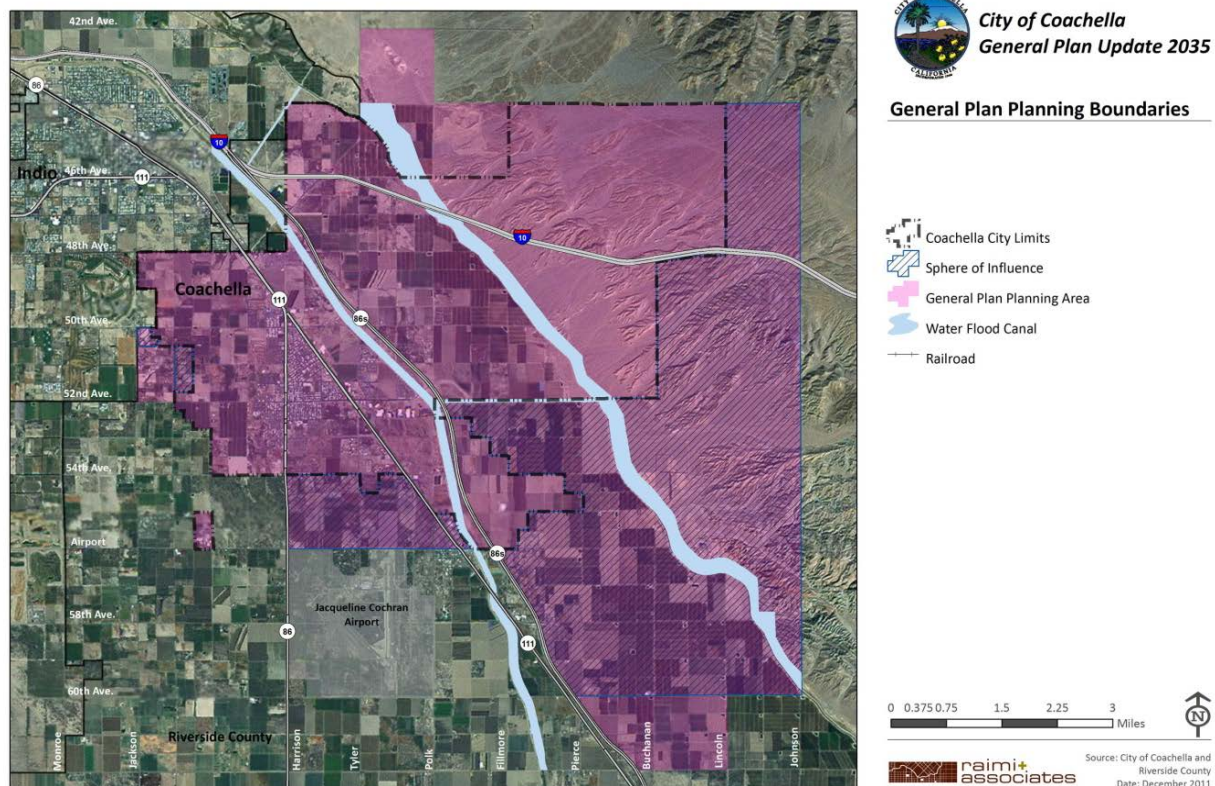
The Coachella General Plan is the primary legal document to guide long-term growth, development and conservation in the City and the Sphere of Influence. The General Plan is the articulation for the City's vision of growth for the next 80-100 years with specific steps to guide development toward that vision between now and 2035. As such, the General Plan identifies the goals, policies and actions that will enable the City to achieve this vision.

Its purpose is:

- To identify long-term goals
- Provide a basis for decision-making
- Provide citizens a forum for input on their community's direction
- Inform citizens, developers, decision-makers, and other cities of the ground rules for development within the City.

Much of its content was developed through a conversation with the community that has taken place over the last five years. The people of Coachella are extremely interested in how the design of the City affects their health and the health of future residents. As such, this General Plan addresses many topics that connect public health and the built environment and the General Plan contains one element, the Health Element, which is dedicated to health. Additionally, it is important to the community and the

Figure 1-1: Jurisdictional Limits Map



City that health topics be integrated within the General Plan, thus, many health-related topics can be found throughout the remainder of the elements. The Land Use Element contains topics on healthy community design and universal access. The Transportation and Circulation Element contains the goals and policies that address active transportation and transportation safety. The Sustainability and Natural Resources Element contains goals and policies on park, trails and the impact of climate change as well as extreme weather. Finally, the Safety Element contains goals and policies on environmental health.

The General Plan also represents current thinking about Smart Growth planning, such as using land use designations that rely on “Place Types” instead of conventional designations that are limited to the use that occupies the land, revitalizing corridors and districts with mixed use development and activity nodes, an emphasis on connectivity and walkability, and preserving and enhancing existing neighborhoods. As Coachella continues to evolve, this General Plan aims to carefully guide the character of its growth and development in order to realize a healthier community.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS/AUTHORITY

Legally, the State of California requires that “each planning agency shall prepare and the legislative body of each county and city shall adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan for the physical development of the county or city.” (Gov’t Code § 65300). Within this general requirement, some aspects of the general plan are tightly prescribed, while others are left to the discretion of individual cities or counties. In sum, the general plan:

- Must set forth a “statement of development policies” that includes “objectives, principles, standards, and plan proposals,” and must include seven mandatory elements – land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise and safety – as well as any optional elements the City chooses. (Gov’t Code § 65302).
- Must be an “internally consistent and compatible statements of policies.” (Gov’t Code § 65300.5).
- “. . . may include any other subjects which, in the judgment of the legislative body, relate to the physical development of the county or city.” (Gov’t Code § 65303).
- Should “accommodate local conditions and circumstances” (Gov’t Code § 65300.7)
- “. . . may be adopted in any format deemed appropriate or convenient by the legislative body, including the combining of elements,” provided it meets other minimum requirements (Gov’t Code § 65301).

This General Plan meets the above legal requirements and also introduces some discretionary elements the City has deemed appropriate (i.e. the Infrastructure and Public Services, Health and Wellness Element, as well as discretionary sections of elements such as the Green Building and Climate Change sections of the Sustainability and Natural Environment Element).

APPLICABILITY

This General Plan applies to all property within the existing City limits and the adopted Coachella Sphere of Influence (Figure O-2) This plan will be administered by the Coachella Community Development Department, the Coachella Planning Commission and the Coachella City Council according to the procedures and requirements set forth in the Municipal Code.

MAINTENANCE AND UPDATE OF PLAN

The General Plan will be implemented over an extended period of time (20+ years, with a time horizon of 2035). During this time, the long-range planning efforts for Coachella will continue using the goals and objectives as a guide. However, the General Plan is a living document, and presents the outcomes desired by the community based on their current goals and local conditions. As the City grows and changes, it may become necessary to amend specific policies and implementation actions as economic and demographic conditions change while new ideas about growth and conservation are formed. In fact, state law encourages annual reviews of implementation actions and recommends that the entire General Plan be thoroughly reviewed every five years to ensure it is still consistent with the community's goals.

Any part of a general plan may be amended to accommodate changing conditions. Property owners, the Planning Commission, the City Council, or City staff may propose amendments. Proposed changes must be reviewed by the Planning Commission and the City Council at public hearings and the potential of environmental difficulties must be evaluated in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act.

PLAN ORGANIZATION

The General Plan is organized into the following chapters:

INTRODUCTION

The Introduction provides a summary of the impetus for the update of the General Plan, including a brief synopsis of the trends facing the City. This section of the General Plan also describes the role of the General Plan in Coachella, how it is intended to be used and administered and an overview of the Plan.

VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Vision establishes the ideal city Coachella is striving to become. The Vision is long term in nature and is intended to be reached over the course of one or two generations of thoughtful growth and development. This chapter of the General Plan also includes Guiding Principles that help explain the nature of new development that is sought within Coachella. It is expected that the Vision will help guide decisions about community growth as new development and updates of the City's various plans and ordinances are considered.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Existing Conditions section provides an overview of the physical, social and economic conditions at the time the General Plan was developed. Descriptions of the City's various resources and conditions are summarized for the relevance to the topics addressed in the various elements of the General Plan and includes the City's history, natural environment, regional geology and natural hazards, agriculture, water resources, health conditions, circulation network and demographics.

TOPICAL ELEMENTS

This General Plan is comprised of the state-mandated elements, an additional element addressing community health, and the previously prepared and adopted Housing Element. These elements serve as chapters that address related topics and issues. The General Plan contains the following elements:

- **LAND USE + COMMUNITY CHARACTER**

This element presents the approach to land use and urban design. Within this element are the General Plan land use designations, the designation map along with goals and policies that indicate the community's preferences and priorities for the character and performance of new development.

- **MOBILITY**

This element presents the approach to transportation, addressing access and mobility within Coachella. Included in this element are descriptions of street types, the circulation network map as well as goals and policies addressing existing and future transportation facilities in Coachella.

- **COMMUNITY HEALTH + WELLNESS**

This element presents the community's priorities for realizing a healthy community. It includes goals and policies that address existing community health concerns as well approaches to managing new development to prevent future health issues.

- **SUSTAINABILITY + THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

This element presents the community's approach for dealing with open space, conservation of natural resources, pollution prevention, climate change and green design.

- **SAFETY**

This element contains the community's approach in reducing the potential risk of death, injuries and property damage resulting from natural disasters and hazards such as earthquakes, floods, fire and extreme weather. The element contains goals and policies that will help guide the City's decisions related to new development and the risks to the health, safety, and welfare of local hazards.

- **INFRASTRUCTURE + PUBLIC SERVICES**

This element presents the community's intent for the development of its water, wastewater, stormwater, and energy networks. The element also includes goals and policies that address the provision of public services such as police, fire and education.

- **NOISE**

This element addresses the approach for minimizing the community's exposure to harmful noise levels. The element analyzes and quantifies future noise levels. It includes a map summarizing the results, and presents goals and policies for managing exposure to excessive noise.

- **HOUSING**

The City's Housing Element was prepared before the General Plan update and is undergoing a separate update process. The current Housing Element will remain a component of the City's General Plan until the Housing Element update process is complete, at which the updated Housing Element will be adopted by the City and become a part of this General Plan.

IMPLEMENTATION

The General Plan provides a vision for the future of Coachella and guidance about how to attain that future. City staff, the city council, the planning commission, and other boards and commissions, as part of their duties to the City, will carry out the goals and policies of the plan. Plan implementation will be achieved through the adoption, implementation and revision of the municipal code, annual budget, capital improvements program, and through on-going decisions about development proposals. Indeed, all City programs, policies and actions must and will be made consistent with this General Plan to meet state requirements.

To assist with the effort of implementing this General Plan, the final chapter, Implementation, provides a list of actions that the City will undertake to carry out the vision. Each action includes a description, a level of priority, a timeframe for accomplishing the tasks the responsible parties for each action, and a list of relevant goals implemented by the action.

Community members, neighborhood groups and local organizations are encouraged to get involved in the on-going planning efforts of the City and to participate in the implementation of the General Plan. By active, thoughtful involvement, City residents can be part of the process of shaping and growing Coachella to make it an even more active, prosperous and welcoming city than it is today.

ELEMENT STRUCTURE

Each new element of the General Plan (not including the existing Housing Element) is organized with the following sections:

- **Introduction.** Each element has a summary introducing the element's purpose and intent, describing the community's desired future outcomes on the topics covered by that element.
- **Our Community's Goals.** Following each element vision is a summary of the topics covered, providing quick reference and easy understanding of the community's plan for achieving its vision for the future.
- **Goals and Policies.** Each element contains a series of goals and policies responding to the key opportunities and issues associated with achieving the community's vision, and are intended to provide clear direction in how the City will implement the overall vision of this plan.

The policies in this General Plan use language that reflects the following principles:

- **Mandatory** – Certain policies are critical and must be implemented. Thus, compliance with the policy or action is mandatory. Language used to describe this intent includes require, prohibit, conduct, maintain and implement.
- **Advisory** – Many policies are strongly encouraged by the City but total implementation may not be possible for a variety of reasons, thus compliance is not mandatory. Language used to describe this intent includes encourage, consider, explore, allow, discourage and promote.

COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLNESS ELEMENT PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Health is a critical value for the Coachella community. Coachella residents define health very broadly to include physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual health. Accordingly, residents expressed a desire for the City's General Plan update to integrate and highlight community health as a key value central to the City.

Through a generous grant from the California Endowment and the dedicated efforts of the local community based organizations, the Riverside County Public Health Department, local businesses, community members, and City Staff, the community dedicated their time to be part of a rich participatory planning process to help guide the creation of the Community Health and Wellness Element (Health Element). The process unified numerous groups around the common goal of improving health, equity and quality of life in Coachella. This process combined qualitative and quantitative research to understand Coachella's health issues and opportunities and to set policy priorities.

To understand numerous different aspects of the community's health, the general plan update team conducted numerous stakeholder interviews, produced an existing health conditions report, used a community outreach toolkit to conduct focus groups with special population groups, and hosted public community workshops.

Additionally, this process would not have been possible without the Wellness Advisory Committee (WAC). The WAC members met seven times between July 2011 and March 2013 to provide feedback to the City on policy and to support community outreach efforts. With the help of the WAC, the City hosted three energetic, well attended, and productive Fiestas de la Salud (or Community Health and Wellness Element public workshops).



Figure 1-3: Health Element Public Engagement Summary

While the Health Element was the centerpiece of this process, the input collected informed the direction of some of the more traditional general plan topics. The Health Element process input informed the entire element as well as the development of goals and policies throughout other elements.



Throughout the general plan, the icon to the left appears next to goals and policies that came directly from the Health Element community process. Numerous other goals, policies and actions in this plan did not come from the Health Element process, but will likely have indirect health benefits to the community over time. While the supportive goals and policies are potentially beneficial to the overall health and wellness of the community, this icon is used strictly for identifying results of the Health Element process.