GENERAL PLANS, SPECIFIC PLANS, AND ZONING IMPLEMENTATION
GENERAL PLAN OVERVIEW
Nature of the General Plan

The general plan is often described as a **blueprint** or **constitution** for land use, development and resource decisions.

**A Vision for Cupertino**

Cupertino aspires to be a **balanced community** with quiet and attractive residential neighborhoods; exemplary parks and schools; accessible open space areas, hillsides and creeks; and a **vibrant, mixed-use “Heart of the City.”** Cupertino will be safe, friendly, healthy, connected, walkable, bikeable and inclusive for all residents and workers, with ample places and opportunities for people to interact, recreate, innovate and collaborate.
Minimum Requirements

- Comprehensive
- Long-term planning horizon (20-25 years)
- Identified planning area
- Internal consistency
Land Use Planning Hierarchy

- **Long-Term**: General Plan
- **Short-Term**: Subdivision Maps

**More General**

- Specific Plans
- Zoning (Discretionary/Legislative)

**More Detailed**

- Subdivision Maps
- Conditional Use Permits
- Variances (Discretionary/Quasi-Adjudicatory)

- Building Permits
- Grading Permits (Ministerial)
Required General Plan Elements

- **Land Use Element**: Identifies how land can be used and distributes those uses.
- **Conservation Element**: Addresses the conservation and development of natural resources.
- **Circulation Element**: Identifies transportation and mobility solutions for all modes of travel.
- **Safety Element**: Establishes programs to protect communities from natural hazards.
- **Housing Element**: Addresses housing issues and projects future housing needs.
- **Noise Element**: Identifies noise issues in the community and addresses their impacts on sensitive uses.
- **Open Space Element**: Details plans for open land preservation and parks.
- **Environmental Justice Element**: Ensures all people are treated fairly by land use decisions.
Basic Structure

Background Information

Policy (text + diagrams)

Implementation Programs
Consistency with the General Plan

- There are over **20 types of approvals and actions** that must be consistent with the General Plan

- CEQA review of projects **requires** a General Plan consistency analysis
Inadequate General Plan Consequences

- **Court order** to fix the General Plan
- **Limits** on future development
- **Vulnerability** of past approvals
- Attorney’s **fees**
GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENTS AND UPDATES
General Plan Amendments

- The State encourages general plans to be current and relevant
- However, cities and counties are limited to four amendment “cycles” per year
General Plan Updates

- While amendments are good, general plans typically require more comprehensive updates every 15 to 20 years.
- General plan updates are opportunities to engage the community, confirm the long-term vision and fully update, analyze and evaluate all parts of the document.
RECENT CONTENT REQUIREMENTS
Complete Streets (AB 1358)

Requires Circulation Elements to include a plan for a balanced, multi-modal transportation network to meet the needs of all modes of transportation and users.
Climate Change  (AB 32, SB 97, S-13-08)

Requires local jurisdictions to identify ways to **reduce greenhouse gas emissions** to 1990 levels by 2020 through land use and mobility policy and programs.
Sustainable Communities Strategies (SB 375)

Links land use, transportation and housing planning to greenhouse gas reductions strategies, and requires regional coordination.
Flooding (AB 170/SB 5)

Requires local jurisdictions to:

- **Identify** areas subject to flooding
- **Consider** the location of natural resources used for groundwater recharge and stormwater management
- **Include** flood hazard information
- **Exclude** housing from areas not adequately protected from flooding
Environmental Justice (SB 1000)

Requires the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures and incomes with respect to the development, adoption, implementation and enforcement of the general plan.

Includes specific requirements to address EJ when revising two or more General Plan elements and when disadvantage communities have been identified.
Healthy Communities

While not a legal requirement, addressing community health through the general plan is a growing trend:

- Walkable neighborhoods
- Access to healthy foods
- Parks and recreation
- Healthy schools and nutrition
- Health care access
- Worksite wellness
ZONING IMPLEMENTATION
Specific Plans and Sub-Area Plans

Has many **different names**

- Specific Plan
- Master Plan/Corridor Plan
- Overlay or Special District

A tool to create **special places** in your community

Often used for downtowns, growth areas, commercial corridors – **any distinct place**

**Tailored** land use standards to achieve your vision!

Includes **implementation**, including programs, infrastructure assessment, and financing
Your Zoning Code

- Is it **modern** and up to date?
- Does it address your **current needs**?
- Is it **easy** to use for the average citizen and decision makers?
- Does it **implement** your General Plan?
So Many Topics . . .

- Vacation Rentals
- Cannabis Dispensaries
- Urban Agriculture
- “Undesirable” uses (smoke shops, vape lounges)
- Mixed-Use Zones
- Historic Resources
Using Design Guidelines

- Urban design is the art of making places for people
- Considers site and architectural design for both the public and private realms
- Typically includes more “shoulds” than “shall”
- Part of discretionary review
- Not all jurisdictions have design guidelines
Contact Info

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