

DEFINING THE FUTURE

Newsletter One
March 2007



What is a General Plan?

Every city and county in California is required by state law to prepare and maintain a planning document called a general plan. A general plan is designed to serve as the jurisdiction's "constitution" or "blueprint" for future decisions concerning land use, infrastructure, public services, and resource conservation. All specific plans, subdivisions, public works projects, and zoning decisions made by the City must be consistent with the General Plan.

The current program is designed to update the City's 1991 General Plan. The General Plan update program will:

- Provide the public opportunities for meaningful participation in the planning and decision-making process;
- Provide a description of current conditions and trends shaping the City of Ridgecrest;
- Identify planning issues, opportunities, and challenges that should be addressed in the General Plan;
- Explore land use and policy alternatives;
- Ensure that the General Plan is current, internally consistent, and easy to use;
- Provide guidance in the planning and evaluation of future land and resource decisions; and
- Provide a vision and framework for the future growth of the City.

A general plan typically has three defining features:

- **General.** As the name implies, a general plan provides general guidance that will be used to direct future land use and resource decisions.
- **Comprehensive.** A general plan covers a wide range of social, economic, infrastructure, and natural resource factors. These include topics such as land use, housing, circulation, utilities, public services, recreation, agriculture, biological resources, and many other topics.

- **Long-range.** General plans provide guidance on reaching a future envisioned 20 or more years in the future (the proposed General Plan will look out to the year 2030). To reach this envisioned future, the updated General Plan will include policies and actions that address both immediate and long-term needs.



How Can You Help?

Website (www.westplanning.com)

The General Plan website contains information on future meetings and provides a location to download documents prepared during the project.

Newsletters

During the General Plan update, a series of newsletters will be prepared to provide an overview of the progress being made and the direction being pursued.

Community Workshops

A number of community workshops will be held to gain input on issues and opportunities, alternative futures, and the General Plan documents. Dates will be posted on the website as they are identified.

General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC)

The City has set up an advisory committee to help in the development of the General Plan. This advisory committee is designed to work with City staff and the General Plan consulting team on refining the new General Plan. While not a decision making body, the GPAC's input is vital to preparing a plan that will work for the City. These meetings are open to the public. Dates for each will be posted on the website.

Workshops / Hearings

Workshops will be held with the Planning Commission and the City Council throughout the development of the General Plan. At the end of the process, formal public hearings will also be held to consider the General Plan and environmental impact report.



General Plan Documents

The General Plan update process will culminate in approximately one and a half years, wrapping up late in the Summer of 2008. As the General Plan is prepared, a number of major documents will be available for public review and comment. These documents are described below.

Map Atlas. To plan for the future, it is important to understand current conditions and trends. To provide the community with a good foundation for planning the future, a "Map Atlas" will be prepared. This document will replace a lengthy text write up with a graphic format that will use maps, charts, and illustrations to convey a picture of Ridgecrest today. This Map Atlas will be an illustrated summary of the key findings from the background research conducted.

Policy Directions Report. Based on input from the workshops held with the community and the General Plan Advisory Committee (see information on the top of next page), and direction from the Planning Commission and City Council, this document will provide a summary of the critical policy

and program issues to be addressed in the General Plan and provide a look at the alternative solutions that can be pursued by the community.

General Plan Policy Report. This report is the essence of the General Plan. It contains the goals, policies, and implementation measures that will guide future development within the City.

Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The EIR prepared for the General Plan will meet the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Planning Commission and City Council will use the EIR during their consideration of the draft General Plan to understand the potential environmental implications associated with the General Plan.

Zoning Ordinance Update. In conjunction with the development of the updated General Plan, the Project Team will update the City's Zoning Ordinance. This revision will utilize the current form of the document, with additional illustrations and examples included to make the code easier to use.

What is Covered in the General Plan?

The City of Ridgecrest General Plan will be organized into the following topic areas, called "elements."

Land Use. This element covers issues including regional planning, growth management, land use (including types, distribution, and intensity), and economic development. It also provides a land use diagram that will direct future land uses within the community. The focus of this element is on the future growth and physical development of the City.

Circulation. The Circulation element provides guidance on the movement of people and goods in and through the City. It addresses roads and highways, transit, airports, bicycles, pedestrians, and the movement of goods.

Conservation. This element explores the managed production of resources and the protection of archaeological resources, cultural and historic resources; water resources (groundwater, rivers, creeks, wetlands); biological resources (flora, fauna, habitat, and endangered or threatened species); and soil resources.

Open Space, Parks and Recreation. The element establishes a well rounded set of recreational facilities and programs for the City that are designed to meet the needs of all residents and visitors.

Noise. The Noise Element addresses all types of noise, including transportation related noise (roadway, rail, and air) and industrial and commercial noise sources.

Safety. This element addresses a number of natural and man-made hazards including geologic and seismic hazards, flooding, wildfire hazards, aircraft operations, crime, and general emergency preparedness.

Community Design. This element seeks to preserve the City's small town character and provide for quality design that is appropriate for the City.

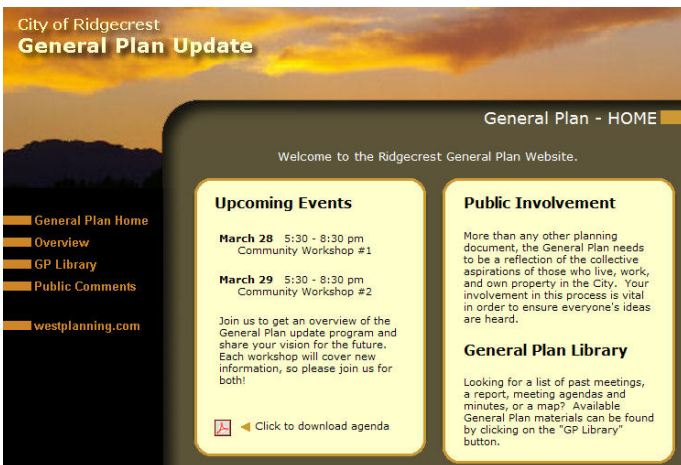
Military Sustainability. This element considers the impact of new growth on military readiness activities, in particular, those occurring at NAWA China Lake. It addresses the City's dual objective of achieving growth, while protecting the flight corridors and military missions associated with the installation.

General Plan Advisory Committee

To assist with the update of the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance, the City formed the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC). Comprised of individuals representing a cross-section of the community, the GPAC is designed to be a sounding board for ideas generated during the development of the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance. This committee will be involved in each step in the process. The GPAC will typically meet on the 4th Tuesday of each month in the City Council Chambers at City Hall.

General Plan Website

The General Plan website provides a one-stop location to get the latest information on the General Plan program. The website will provide up to date information on upcoming events and will allow anyone to download copies of meeting agendas, minutes, and documents / reports prepared for the General Plan.



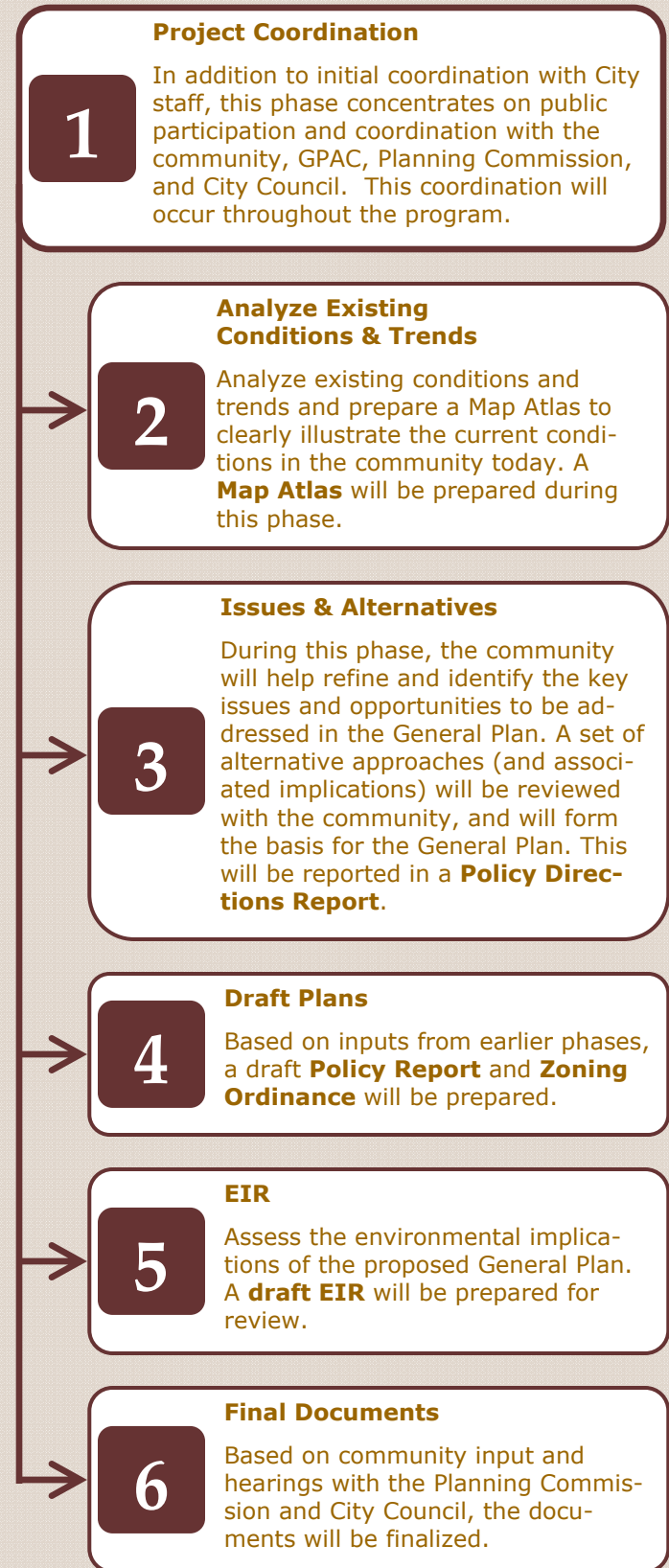
www.westplanning.com

Keeping Up To Date

During the General Plan update process, the City will maintain a mailing list of individuals who want to be kept informed on the latest program events. If you would like to be added to this list, please call, write, fax, or e-mail your request to:

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Update Program Process



Ridgecrest General Plan

Planning Department
City of Ridgecrest
100 W. California Ave.
Ridgecrest, CA 93555



General Plan Consulting Team

To help prepare a comprehensive update to the City's General Plan and Zoning Ordinance, the City hired a consulting team lead by MDG and ESA. The team dedicated to updating the General Plan includes expertise in general plan updates, planning and land use law, housing, transportation, environmental resources, economic development and fiscal assessment, and project management. A brief summary of the qualifications offered by the Project Team is provided below.

MDG. MDG is an interdisciplinary planning and engineering firm specializing in professional technical services for municipalities, private sector entities, and other agencies/organizations. MDG is a leader in providing planning, engineering, and environmental services to communities throughout the western United States, with particular emphasis on California general plans.

MDG's growing staff is currently over 110 persons with expertise in community planning, infrastructure engineering, environmental compliance, geographic information system (GIS) analysis, urban design, and graphics/administrative support. From plans for specific areas to comprehensive general plans for a growing city, MDG understands the challenges faced by communities and the complex interrelationships between issues.

ESA. Environmental Science Associates (ESA) is an environmental planning and consulting firm offering services in research, planning, and environmental analysis of a wide range of plans and projects for both public and private clients. Since 1969, ESA has successfully carried out over 5,000 environmental and planning reports and studies for clients, and have developed an outstanding reputation for the quality of their services.

Visit the following website for up-to-date General Plan information:

www.westplanning.com