

# 1. INTRODUCTION

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## A. What Is a General Plan?

Every city and county in California is required by State law to have a General Plan. A General Plan is a legal document that serves as the community's "constitution" for land use, development and conservation. A General Plan must be comprehensive and long term, outlining proposals for the physical development of the city and any land outside its boundaries which in the City's judgment bears relation to its planning.

State law specifically requires that the General Plan address seven topics or "elements." These are land use, circulation (transportation), housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety. Additionally, jurisdictions with lands located within the coastal zone must adopt a coastal land use plan. The General Plan may also address other topics the community feels are relevant to its development. The City of Fort Bragg Inland General Plan also addresses community design, sustainability and public facilities.

All of the City's land use regulations, including zoning and subdivision regulations, specific plans, and Citywide Design Guidelines must conform with the General Plan.

The General Plan serves the following functions:

- Expresses the community's vision of the future physical development of Fort Bragg.
- Enables the Planning Commission and the City Council to establish long-range conservation and development policies.
- Provides the basis for judging whether specific private development proposals and public projects are consistent with these policies.
- Informs the residents, developers, decision makers, and other jurisdictions of the ground rules that will guide development and conservation in the City of Fort Bragg.

This Inland General Plan is an update of the 2002 General Plan, and applies only to the non-coastal zone areas of the City of Fort Bragg. By contrast the Coastal General Plan applies to all projects in the Coastal Zone. There is significant overlap and similarities between the two General Plans; however, due to the unique requirements of the Coastal Act, the Coastal General Plan has additional regulations that are not included in the Inland General Plan. The policy framework for the Inland General Plan has a long-range perspective and is intended to address development concerns for the next ten years (2022). Throughout this document the term "General Plan" is used interchangeably with the term "Inland General Plan" and both terms refer to this document.

## **B. Mission and Vision**

The mission of the Inland General Plan is to preserve and enhance the small town character and natural beauty that make the city a place where people want to live and visit, and to improve the economic diversity of the city to ensure that it has a strong and resilient economy which supports its residents. The following concepts articulate a vision of Fort Bragg that embraces its past and prepares for the future. Fort Bragg is:

- A friendly city with a small town character and a strong sense of community.
- A city which seeks to preserve its natural beauty and to provide access to the scenic and recreational resources of its natural setting.
- A city that values its roots in the fishing and timber industries and seeks to maintain a connection to its past, while preparing for the future.
- A city with strong connections to its heritage and a commitment to the preservation of historic resources.
- A city which strives to create an environment where business and commerce can grow and flourish.
- A city that embraces its role as the primary commercial and service center on the Mendocino coast.
- A city which promotes itself as a tourist destination and which provides the necessary infrastructure and services to support a growing population of visitors.
- A city that supports efforts to preserve and strengthen the vitality of commerce in its central business district.
- A city that fosters a business climate which sustains and nourishes the growth and expansion of local businesses and cottage industries.
- A city that attracts and supports high-quality environmentally-friendly jobs.
- A tolerant city that welcomes and values the cultural diversity of its residents.
- A city that values its youth and considers their needs in the planning of public spaces and facilities.
- A safe city that emphasizes community-oriented policing and crime prevention.
- A city that strives to provides housing opportunities for all income groups.
- A city that provides an adequate road system and public infrastructure to serve its residents, businesses, and future growth.

## C. Goals, Policies and Programs

The City's mission and vision form the foundation for the goals, policies, and programs included in each element of the Inland General Plan. Goals, policies, and programs are the essence of the General Plan and are defined below:

- **Goal:** A general, overall, ultimate purpose, aim or end toward which the City will direct effort. Goals are a general expression of community values and, therefore, are abstract in nature. Consequently, a goal is not quantifiable, time-dependent, or suggestive of specific actions for its achievement. Examples of goals include: "Maintain the small-town atmosphere" or "Diversify the economic base of the City."
- **Policy:** A specific statement of principle or guiding action that implies a clear commitment but is not mandatory, a general direction that the City elects to follow in order to meet its goals. Policies must be clear. Policies are used to determine whether land use decisions, zoning changes or other actions are consistent with the Inland General Plan. An example of a policy is: "Establish a comprehensive system of bicycle trails connecting all parts of the City."
- **Program:** An action, activity, or strategy carried out in response to adopted policy to achieve a specific goal. An example of a program to implement the above policy is: "Complete the bicycle and pedestrian trail system as indicated in Map C-2: Bicycle Paths."

## D. Organization and Content of the General Plan

The *Inland General Plan* contains the goals, policies, and programs which are adopted by resolution of the City Council. A program-level Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was prepared for the 2002 General Plan which determines the extent of environmental impacts related to implementation of the General Plan. An EIR addendum was prepared for this 2012 update of the Inland General Plan, for the required CEQA review.

The Inland General Plan consists of narrative text and maps, along with goals, policies, and programs. It is organized into the seven elements required by State law, and includes three optional elements dealing with Community Design, Sustainability and Public Facilities.<sup>1</sup>

The nine elements of the Inland General Plan are summarized below:

1. **Land Use:** Establishes land use designations with types and intensities of land use, including open space and parks, and policies and programs regarding annexation, redevelopment, and the boundaries of the Sphere of Influence.
2. **Public Facilities:** Establishes the essential public facilities and services to ensure that the existing and future population of Fort Bragg is provided with the highest feasible level of public services.
3. **Circulation:** Contains policies and Levels of Service standards for the roadway system, as well as policies for public transit, bicycle facilities, parking and transportation for the

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<sup>1</sup> The City has only nine elements because two required components Open Space and Parks and Conservation are combined into one element.

mobility impaired, taking into account the relationship between land use and transportation needs of the community.

4. **Conservation, Open Space, and Parks:** Contains the State-mandated open space and conservation elements. Emphasis is placed on protecting the City's natural resources, protecting and enhancing sensitive resource areas, and providing open space and parks to meet the community's recreational needs.
5. **Community Design:** This optional element establishes policies and programs dealing with the appearance of the community. It includes urban design guidelines to ensure that development contributes to the community's identity and unique sense of place, and policies to preserve historic sites and buildings.
6. **Safety:** Contains policies and programs to reduce the risk of injury, loss of life, and property damage resulting from natural disasters and hazardous conditions and materials.
7. **Noise:** Contains policies and programs to reduce the community's exposure to excessive noise.
8. **Sustainability:** Includes policies and programs to reduce energy use, the production of green house gasses, and improve the sustainability of commercial and residential development through policies and programs that encourage green building design, materials and techniques in new construction.
9. **Housing:** Includes policies and programs to meet the housing needs of all economic segments of the community, emphasizing increased mixed use housing, more effective utilization of infill sites, and providing additional housing for special needs groups such as seniors.

## **E. The Area Covered by the Inland General Plan**

The Inland General Plan establishes policies for all land within the Fort Bragg City limits and its existing Sphere of Influence, except for those areas within the Coastal Zone, which are regulated by the Local Coastal Program (comprised of the Coastal General Plan and Coastal Land Use and Development Code). The area within the City and its Sphere of Influence are also called the Plan Area.<sup>2</sup>

California law requires that each City have a Sphere of Influence to represent the ultimate physical boundary of its development and to indicate where City services would be extended in the future. The boundary of the Sphere of Influence is determined by the Mendocino County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). Mendocino County controls land uses and development in the Fort Bragg Sphere of Influence until it is annexed to the City. This General Plan incorporates a reduction to the City's Sphere of Influence as approved by LAFCO in August 2008.

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<sup>2</sup> This document uses Plan Area and Inland Area interchangeably. Both terms include the lands within the City of Fort Bragg that are bound by the City Limits to the north and east and the Coastal Zone to the south (Walnut Street) and west (Highway 1).

## **F. Internal Consistency of the Plan**

State law requires that all parts of the General Plan comprise an integrated, internally consistent and compatible statement of policies. This standard, as well as court cases which have interpreted it, implies that all elements of the General Plan have equal status, that all goals and policies must be internally consistent, and that programs must follow logically from the Plan's goals and policies. This General Plan meets these standards.

## **G. The General Plan Process**

The City initially decided to update its General Plan in 1994. An extensive public participation process took place to ensure that the revised Plan reflects the concerns and views of the community.

Key milestones of the public participation process include the following:

- The Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) was established in 1994 and conducted public workshops on the General Plan Vision Statement and various elements. The CAC and the Planning Commission conducted public workshops on the goals and policies in 1995. Joint Planning Commission/City Council public workshops were held in 1996 to review an Administrative Draft General Plan. After these workshops, work on the General Plan was interrupted for more than two years.
- In 1999, an insert describing the General Plan and Coastal Element update process was placed in the local newspaper, the *Fort Bragg Advocate-News*. The City Council and Planning Commission conducted a joint workshop to review the 1996 Administrative Draft and provide direction to staff and the consultants regarding additional work necessary to complete the General Plan. In 2000, a Background Report was prepared on land use, environmental resources, transportation, and on the Local Coastal Program. The Background Report presented information about the City, the issues and constraints related to the General Plan, and alternative policy options.
- Joint Planning Commission/City Council public workshops were held during 2000 and 2001 on General Plan issues and alternatives. Public workshops were held by the Planning Commission and the City Council during late 2001. Public hearings were held by the Planning Commission and the City Council in August through December 2002 to review the Draft General Plan and the Environmental Impact Report. The General Plan was adopted by the City Council in December 2002.
- In 2007 and 2008, The City of Fort Bragg worked with the California Coastal Commission to revise the General Plan into a Coastal General Plan to become the Land Use Plan for the City's Local Coastal Program. This process included six public workshops.
- City's General Plan was subsequently revised into this Inland General Plan to: cover the portions of the City that are not in the Coastal Zone; remove language that applies to the coastal zone; correct ambiguities and inconsistencies; include policies that address climate change, sustainability, and green building; remove programs that have been implemented; and update the Housing Element as required by law. As part of this work, numerous public

hearings were held in 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2012 to identify appropriate changes to policies and programs for the Inland General Plan.

The result of this multi-year process is an Inland General Plan which reflects the concerns and values of Fort Bragg residents and businesses. It is a Plan that seeks a balance among the environmental, social, and economic needs of the community.

## **H. Administering the Plan**

Although the Inland General Plan covers a ten-year time frame, it is not intended to be cast in stone. This Inland General Plan is based on estimates of future growth and development. As time passes, certain assumptions made in the General Plan may no longer be valid, due to changing circumstances or new information.

The City will monitor the relevance of the Inland General Plan to ensure that it remains in touch with the evolving community. The California Government Code (Section 65400[b]) requires that the planning department report annually to the City Council "on the status of its plan and progress in its implementation, including the progress in meeting its share of regional housing needs." The report on housing is also provided to the Office of Planning and Research and to the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD).

Approximately every five years, the City should review the Inland General Plan to determine whether it still reflects community concerns and goals. The Housing Element is required to be reviewed every five years and the Housing Element has most recently updated in 2009. It must be updated again in 2014.

## **I. Amending the Plan**

State law generally permits up to four General Plan amendments per year (Government Code Section 65358[b]). The City's procedures for filing a General Plan amendment are available at the City's Community Development Department.