

# INTRODUCTION

## ***1.1 What is a General Plan?***

California state law requires each city and county to adopt “a comprehensive, long-term general plan for the physical development of the county or city, and any land outside its boundaries which bears relation to its planning” (Government Code section 65300). The general plan has been called the local land use “constitution” and Monterey County’s General Plan is designed to govern the future physical development of Monterey County. As described by the State Office of Planning and Research, “the general plan expresses the community’s development goals and embodies public policy relative to the distribution of future land uses, both public and private” (State of California General Plan Guidelines, Governor’s Office of Planning and Research, 2003).

The policies of the general plan underlie most land use decisions. The county’s zoning ordinance and any specific plans are required to be consistent with the general plan. In addition, subdivisions, development projects, capital improvements, development agreements, and many other land use actions must conform to the adopted general plan.

## ***1.2 Requirements for a General Plan***

The county’s general plan must address all unincorporated areas of the county and should consider the general plans of all cities within the county to allow for cooperative planning. State law requires that the Plan cover a large range of topics, consisting of seven mandatory elements (land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety) that set forth the goals and policies to guide future decisions that relate to the physical development of Monterey County. The general plan may be in a format deemed appropriate by the County Board of Supervisors, including a format that combines the elements and adds other elements or subjects relating to the physical development of the county. The Plan and its elements must comprise “an integrated, internally consistent and compatible statement” of land use policies for the county (Government Code section 65300.5). These and other requirements for the general plan are set out in state planning law (Government Code section 65300 et seq.).

In addition, pursuant to the state Coastal Act (Public Resources Code section 30000 et seq.), each local government within the state coastal zone must prepare a Local Coastal Program (LCP) for the portion of the coastal zone within its jurisdiction. The LCP must be certified by the California Coastal Commission. The LCP includes a land use plan and implementing ordinances and actions. The land use plan that is part of the LCP indicates the kind, location, and intensity of land uses and applicable resource protection and development policies in the coastal zone.

## ***1.3 Introduction to Monterey County***

As one of the largest counties in the State of California, Monterey County covers more than 3,300 square miles and is comprised of diverse natural habitats and residential communities. Monterey County is bordered by (*Figure 1*):

- Santa Cruz County (North),

- San Benito, Fresno and King Counties (East),
- San Luis Obispo County (South), and
- the Pacific Ocean (West)

This diversity ranges from rich farmland located within the Salinas Valley to the tall peaks of the Santa Lucia Mountains whose fast steep incline helps make up the dramatic Big Sur coastline along the Pacific Ocean. The rich agricultural land, mild climate, and spectacular coastline have made Monterey County famous throughout the world.

There are 12 incorporated cities that make up 75% of the County population and about 15% of the total land area (*Figure 2*). These cities can be generally grouped into two classifications (valley and peninsula):

- a. Five (5) valley cities consist of: Gonzales, Greenfield, King City, Salinas (Monterey County seat), and Soledad.
- b. Seven (7) peninsula cities consist of: Carmel, Del Rey Oaks, Marina, Monterey, Pacific Grove, Sand City, and Seaside.

Although there are 12 planning areas (inland and coastal), only three area plans (Greater Monterey Peninsula, Greater Salinas, and Central Salinas Valley) contain cities within their boundaries. The rest of the unincorporated County includes communities that range from a small cluster of homes to small towns.

Historically, there has been a strong military presence in the area with Fort Ord along the coast and Camp Roberts at the southern end of the County. More recent base closures have resulted in reducing the military presence and the reuse of major portions of the former Fort Ord. This reuse has resulted in expanding the cities of Marina, Monterey, Del Rey Oaks, and Seaside, creating a new State University (California State University, Monterey Bay), and adding area to be developed by Monterey County.

#### ***1.4 Monterey County Planning Efforts***

Planning in Monterey County began in 1930 when the Planning Commission was created. The Planning Department was established in the 1950s and the first comprehensive general plan was completed in 1968. Although various elements were added in response to changes in state law, the 1982 general plan was the first comprehensive update since the first plan was adopted in 1968.

Past planning efforts have resulted in growth primarily in or around existing population areas and cities. The main objectives, past and present, are to provide direction for growth that supports continued viability of agricultural production and preserves as much of the County's scenic and environmental resources as possible.

#### ***1.5 Overview of Monterey County General Plan***

The Monterey County General Plan must include policies that address the existing and future land use for the large rural areas that are used predominately for agricultural purposes as well as for the diversity of unincorporated communities. One of the challenges is that the better

farmlands are located in the lower flatter area, the area where cities have also established. On the other hand, foothills lining the valleys present scenic and environmental qualities that are unique to Monterey County. These conditions complicate planning for future growth in Monterey County.

Monterey County’s General Plan Update, which started in 1999, includes all of the mandatory elements, combining some elements as deemed appropriate by the Board of Supervisors, plus agriculture and economic development elements. In November, 2007, the Board formalized direction to staff to revise the unadopted 2006 General Plan Update (GPU4) using the 2006 General Plan Update as the template. This 2010 General Plan Update contains policy changes that are based upon the recommendations of the Planning Commission and direction of the Board of Supervisors. Monterey County’s General Plan Update consists of a total of eight (8) elements. The 2010 General Plan Update (GPU5) follows the same format. Table 1.1 compares the format of the 2010 plan with the 1982 General Plan and state law requirements.

<b>TABLE 1.1; GP ELEMENTS</b>		
<b>STATE MANDATED ELEMENT</b>	<b>GENERAL PLAN 1982</b>	<b>GENERAL PLAN 2010</b>
Land Use	Area Development	Land Use
Circulation	Area Development	Circulation
Housing	Area Development Human Resources	Housing (adopted separately)
Conservation (Natural Resources)	Natural Resources Environmental Constraints	Conservation and Open Space Public Services
Open Space	Natural Resources Environmental Constraints	Conservation and Open Space Public Services
Noise	Open Space	Natural Resources Environmental Constraints
Public Safety	Area Development	Safety
Optional		Agriculture
Optional		Economic Development

Land use designations in the 2010 General Plan provide a density range, with the density to be more specifically established by the implementing ordinances.

Due to the diversity of Monterey County, geographically smaller plans were created to provide more specific policies unique to particular geographical areas (*Figure 3*):

- a. Area Plans. The inland portion of unincorporated Monterey County is divided into seven (7) Area Plans (Cachagua, Central Salinas Valley, Greater Monterey Peninsula including the non-coastal portion of the Del Monte Forest, Greater Salinas, North County, South County and Toro). All of these Plans are being updated and included as sections in the 2010 Monterey County General Plan Update. Amendments to the Area Plans involve deleting policies that are addressed on a county-wide level in the General Plan and focusing only on provisions that are unique to each area. Area Plan policies may refine General Plan policies or provide unique policies specific to the particular geographic area.

- b. Master Plans. This 2010 General Plan contains two Master Plans, the Carmel Valley Master Plan (CVMP) and the Fort Ord Master Plan. The Monterey County Board of Supervisors adopted the CVMP on December 16, 1986 and has periodically amended the plan. The CVMP is being updated and included in the Area Plan section of this General Plan to serve as an Area Plan for the particular geographical area that it covers. The Fort Ord Master Plan was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in November 2001. It is included in the Area Plan section of this General Plan and will serve as the Community Plan for the Fort Ord Community Area, as further explained in *Policy LU-2.25* in the Land Use Element.
- c. Agricultural and Winery Corridor Plan. An Agricultural and Winery Corridor Plan that implements General Plan policies is also included. This Plan extends across three Area Plans (Central Salinas Valley, Toro, and South County).
- d. Land Use Plans. Pursuant to the California Coastal Act (Public Resources Code Section 30000 et seq.), a portion of Monterey County is designated as a “coastal zone.” The coastal zone of the County is divided into four areas governed by Land Use Plans (LUP) and Coastal Implementation Plans (CIP), which together comprise the Local Coastal Program (LCP) for Monterey County. The four Land Use Plans include Big Sur Coast, Carmel Area, Del Monte Forest (coastal portion), and North County Coastal (which also includes the Moss Landing Community Plan). These plans were certified by the California Coastal Commission in 1986, 1983, 1984, and 1982, respectively. Monterey County retains land use jurisdiction in these areas, with the Coastal Commission having appeal authority over certain issues and areas.

This General Plan does not amend and is not intended to amend the existing Monterey County Local Coastal Program (LCP). The County will review the LCP after adoption of the General Plan Update. If any of the goals, policies, and standards of the General Plan are to be incorporated into the LCP, such proposals would be subject to all appropriate public review procedures, including noticed public hearings, separate action by the County Board of Supervisors, and submission of major LCP amendments to the Coastal Commission for certification.

In the interim period between adoption of the General Plan and update of the LCP Land Use Plans, the certified Land Use Plans will continue to govern in their respective areas within the coastal zone. To the extent that the LCP relies on the 1982 General Plan, the 2010 General Plan adoption is not intended to change that reliance. Accordingly, adoption of this 2010 General Plan does not rescind the 1982 General Plan as applied in the coastal zone, and the 1982 General Plan would remain in effect in the coastal zone until the LCP is amended and such amendments are certified. The Castroville Community Area proposed in this General Plan is for the inland area of the County; extension of the Castroville Community Area into the coastal zone would require an amendment to the North County Coastal Land Use Plan to be certified by the Coastal Commission. (See *Policy LU-2.22*)

In accordance with the state Coastal Act, this approach recognizes that the coastal zone is a distinct and valuable natural resource which requires unique planning considerations and may

require different standards and policies than may apply in the non-coastal areas of the County. This approach also recognizes the unique procedural requirements for amending the Local Coastal Program. The Coastal Commission must certify major amendments to the Local Coastal Program, and the Coastal Commission may also recommend amendments to the LCP as part of its periodic review of the LCP, subject to all appropriate public review procedures.

Housing Elements are mandated by state law to be updated approximately every five (5) years – recently extended to every 8 years in certain circumstances, whereas the general plan covers approximately a 20-year time period. The 2010 draft General Plan is not intended to amend the certified Housing Element. At the time of the release of the draft 2010 General Plan, Monterey County had a certified Housing Element for the 2002-2008 planning period, which was extended by the state through August 2009, and the County was undertaking a separate process in accordance with procedures required by state law to update the Housing Element for the 2009-2014 planning period. On June 15, 2010, the Board of Supervisors adopted the Housing Element 2009-2014, amending the 1982 General Plan to replace Housing Element 2002-2008 with the new Housing Element. The Housing Element, as adopted and amended, will be included as Chapter 8 of the General Plan. Housing Element updates will be reviewed for consistency with the General Plan and Land Use Plan policies.

### ***1.6 Program EIR for Monterey County's General Plan***

An environmental impact report (EIR) was prepared in conjunction with the Monterey County General Plan Update. This EIR includes background data that supplements the General Plan. It describes County conditions at a specific point in time and is not to be considered policy that would require periodic review like the general plan itself. The EIR provides a programmatic analysis of potential impacts resulting from implementation of the Plan based on existing conditions and suggests measures to offset and reduce potential environmental impacts. Mitigation measures identified in the EIR have been incorporated as policy language in the General Plan.

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Figure 2- Cities Map to be inserted  
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Figure 3-Planning Areas to be inserted  
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