

# GENERAL PLAN AND GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT

## AN INFORMATIONAL GUIDE



## PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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## WHAT IS A GENERAL PLAN?

A General Plan is a state-mandated comprehensive, long-range document, which, when adopted by a city council, comprises the official statement of a city toward the future character, quality of development within its planning area, and serves as the blueprint for a city's growth.

Under the State law (Government Code Section 65300) the General Plan addresses, at a minimum, the following elements: Land Use Element, Circulation Element, Housing Element, Conservation Element, Open Space Element, Noise Element, and Safety Element.

The decision-makers use the goals and policies of the General Plan as a basis on which to make their land use, circulation, safety, housing, open space and conservation, and environmental decisions.

The General Plan projects conditions and needs into the future in order to determine the long-term goals and policies that would provide the basis for decision-making related to the growth and development of a city.

## CALIFORNIA CITY'S GENERAL PLAN

The City of California City's General Plan is guided by a Vision Statement and represents the community's view of the future within its existing coterminous sphere of influence for a planning horizon of twenty (20) years.

**Vision Statement: The creation of a livable, viable, and visually attractive community through efficient and effective continued growth and sustainable development that will result in a model City within eastern Kern County.**

The General Plan implements the City's vision through its goals, policies, and implementation measures outlined in the seven mandatory elements: Land Use Element, Circulation Element, Housing Element (separate document updated every 5 years), Conservation/Open Space Element (combined), Noise Element, and Safety Element.

California City's 2009-2028 General Plan was approved by City Council on October 6, 2009. You may view the City's General Plan at the Planning Department's web page at <http://www.CaliforniaCity.com>

## THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSISTENCY

Consistency with and within the General Plan is one of the most important considerations related to the General Plan. In 1972, the California Legislature enacted the law requiring that development projects must be consistent with the local General Plan and also mandated consistency among the contents of the General Plan.

The concept of consistency consists of two dimensions: 1) internal consistency within the General Plan itself; and 2) consistency of public improvement projects and private development projects with provisions of the General Plan. The following describes these:

### Internal Consistency

The question related to internal consistency is whether the provisions of the General Plan are aligned in a common direction on behalf of the community and not in conflict. This alignment of policies must occur across all elements and among the vision, goals, policies, and implementation measures throughout the General Plan.

There is a built-in relationship between the different policy topics under the law. There is an expectation that the General Plan will promote housing and open space; provide for jobs; accommodate traffic and vehicle movement; and reduced noise and air pollution. This requires the balancing of these and many other expectations that drive the General Plan.

This is a major area in which the City's vision comes into play. The test of commonality is whether or not a particular goal, policy, or implementation measure in the General Plan contributes to or conflicts with the achievement of the vision.

### External Consistency

This aspect of consistency is a measure of the extent to which private development projects and public improvement projects advance the purposes of the General Plan rather than impose obstacles or

conflict with their achievement. As with internal consistency, this determination requires a degree of judgement, although some situations are more straightforward than others.

Determination of project consistency are reflected in staff reports and may result in project approval, project modification as a condition of approval, or outright disapproval. In the latter case, the remedy is to seek a General Plan amendment as appropriate, for consideration by the City's decision-makers.

### **Administration and Implementation**

The State recognizes the dynamic nature of the General Plan and provides for periodic review of the documents to ensure that it reflects contemporary conditions and values. This is necessary because all development proposed within the community must be consistent with the General Plan and that is a key part of the project's analysis.

### **AMENDMENT OF GENERAL PLAN**

State law allows the City to consider General Plan Amendments four times per year. Section 65358 of the California Government Code prohibits the City from making more than four amendments to each of the mandated General Plan element during calendar year. Amendment requests are grouped in four General Plan "windows" conducted by the City Council each year.

The General Plan may be amended throughout this time frame to address policy adjustments required by existing conditions, changing public attitudes, and proposed future development. Amending the General Plan must be amended in the same manner as its original adoption; by resolution of the City Council upon recommendation by the Planning Commission. However, each amendment can include a package of changes and is not limited to a single item.

### **WHAT ARE THE CITY'S INTERVALS**

The City's quarterly general plan amendment intervals are January, April, July and October.

### **HOW DO I APPLY?**

To apply for a General Plan Amendment you need to file an application with the Planning Department and pay the appropriate fees. You may visit the Planning Department to pick up the application, have one mailed to you or email your request. Email requests will receive a pdf version that you may print out. General Plan Amendments are usually associated with other planning actions such as, a zone change, tentative tract map, planned unit development, or annexation/detachment.

The application form allows you to apply for several planning actions on one application. Along with this information guide or brochure you would select other applicable information guides or brochures that pertain to your development project.

To learn more about this and other planning application processes, see other brochures and information guides available in the City's Planning Department. You can also visit the City's website at <http://www.CaliforniaCity.com> click on Planning Department for a list of available topics. However, all projects involving large apartment complex, commercial, industrial or land subdivision development, requires a Concept Plan Review (Development Review Committee (DRC) or site plan review).

Once an application is submitted to the City's Planning Department, it will be reviewed to determine if it is complete.

Once the application is deemed complete and formally accepted, the DRC meeting occurs within approximately thirty (30) days. A public hearing is normally held within fifty (50) calendar days to conditionally approve or deny the general plan amendment. However, if an environmental study is required, this processing time is lengthened considerably. (Typically, ninety [90] to one hundred and twenty [120] days are added onto the process.)

### **APPLICATION FEES**

- 1) DRC is required: \$750.00.
- 2) General Plan Amendment fee is \$1,000.00. Filed quarterly.

3) Payment by cash, credit card (VISA, MASTER CARD or DISCOVER) or check made payable to the City of California City.

4) Additional costs depends on the extent of the General Plan Amendment and other planning processes associated with the proposed development. Return completed application and fees to the Planning Department.

5) California Environment Quality Act (CEQA) and a Kern County document handling fees will apply.

**CEQA and Kern County Fees.** Environmental filing fees (Pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 711.4, the Department shall impose and collect a filing fee to defray the costs of managing and protecting California's vast fish and wildlife resources. SB 1535 was passed increasing the amounts of filing fees collected by the Department, and requires the Department to adjust the fees annually pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 713.)

### **CEQA FEES EFFECTIVE**

**JANUARY 1, 2010**

Negative Declaration (ND) or Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) fee **\$2,010.25**

Environmental Impact Report (EIR) fee **\$2,792.25**

Environmental Document pursuant to a Certified Regulatory Program (CRP) fee **\$949.50**

### **KERN COUNTY FEES**

A Kern County fee of **\$50.00** applies to the recording and processing of the document(s). All CEQA and Kern County fees are to be paid by money order or cashiers check, made **payable to the Kern County Clerk**. The County Clerk no longer accepts personal checks. Once the documents are signed by the appropriate City Official, the money order or cashiers check will be attached and forwarded to the County Clerk for processing.