



Welcome to
INDIO



City of
Festivals



chapter two

INTRODUCTION

This updated General Plan represents a blueprint for the future of Indio and its residents. In preparing for the challenges and opportunities ahead, Indio has developed a General Plan that reflects the unique local identity, generation of new economic opportunities, and desire to continue lively festivals and preserve the desert habitat that extends beyond the City's boundaries. Economic investment, Downtown revitalization, and sustainability are centrally embedded in the General Plan goals, policies, and actions. This General Plan Update is partially funded by a Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Grant.

City of Indio Profile

Regional Context

Indio is located in Riverside County, approximately 120 miles east of Los Angeles and 20 miles east of Palm Springs (refer to Figure 2-1, Regional Location). It is bordered by the City of La Quinta to the west, unincorporated Riverside County land to the south and to the north, and the City of Coachella to the east. Indio's General Plan encompasses a planning area that includes the incorporated City limits as well as the sphere of influence (refer to Figure 2-2). Indio is now the largest and fastest growing city in eastern Riverside County.

City History

Indio is the oldest City within the Coachella Valley. Surveyed in 1872, it was chosen as a suitable location for a railroad depot because of its location halfway between Yuma, Arizona and Los Angeles, California. Originally named Indian Wells, the town was renamed Indio (Spanish for "Indian") to avoid confusion with other localities.¹ By 1876, the Southern Pacific Railroad began running trains from Los Angeles to Indio and the route was extended to Yuma the following year. In 1888, a formal Indio town site was surveyed and the plat was filed with the San Diego County Recorder. In 1893, Indio became one of the twelve judicial townships in the newly designated Riverside County. Most of the early settlement was by families attracted by the "Desert Entry" Homestead Act. Artesian wells and other available water sources likely influenced the placement of these homesteads. Early cultivated crops included melons, vegetables, and date palms. Date palms from Algeria were sent to the region in 1891.

Tourism played an important role in Indio's 20th Century growth. In 1901, the Riverside Press reported that Coachella Valley amusements consisted of "tennis, croquet, baseball, mountain climbing, and trails along the desert." In 1903, a tent health camp was opened just to the west of the Indio railroad depot, to take advantage of the highly-publicized health benefits of the desert. Golf courses were established in the region as early as 1926 and remain a tourist draw. Indio became an incorporated City on May 16, 1930.

In the early 1940s, Indio's business district consisted of more than 125 businesses, including the Indio branch of the Bank of America, two weekly newspapers, a movie theater, two hospitals, five hotels, auto camps, two department stores, and grocery stores.



Indio Train Station circa 1905-1907. Courtesy of CVWD.



Railroad worker cottages circa 1907. Courtesy of CVWD.

¹ Nordland, Ole. "Indian Wells." *The Periscope, A Collection of Stories and Recollections about the Coachella Valley* (1978).

In 1942, the U.S. War Department ordered Major General George Smith Patton, Jr., U.S. Army, to create, equip, and command a desert training center in California to prepare troops to fight in North Africa. General Patton's Desert Training Center was located near the present junction of I-10 and State Route 195. This desert training center became the largest Army post in the world in 1942. Indio local celebrity, Jacqueline Cochran, was named Director of Women Pilots of the U.S. Army Air Force. She trained women flyers to ferry Hudson bombers between the United States and England.

In the late 1950s, Indio was recognized as the hub of the Coachella Valley with a stable economy built on agriculture, distribution of goods and services, light manufacturing, and tourism. Indio emerged as a second seat of government for Riverside County with the 1968 opening of a \$2.3 million, four-story administrative building at the junction of Highway 111 and Oasis Street.

In 1966, Indio Community Hospital was rededicated as John F. Kennedy (JFK) Memorial Hospital. The Hospital became a Tenet Healthcare facility in 1979. Today, the hospital serves the community as a 162-bed, full-service, acute-care hospital with a 24-hour emergency room, surgical services, diagnostic testing, and preventive health programs. JFK Memorial Hospital delivers more than 3,500 babies each year.



JFK Memorial Hospital Indio, CA

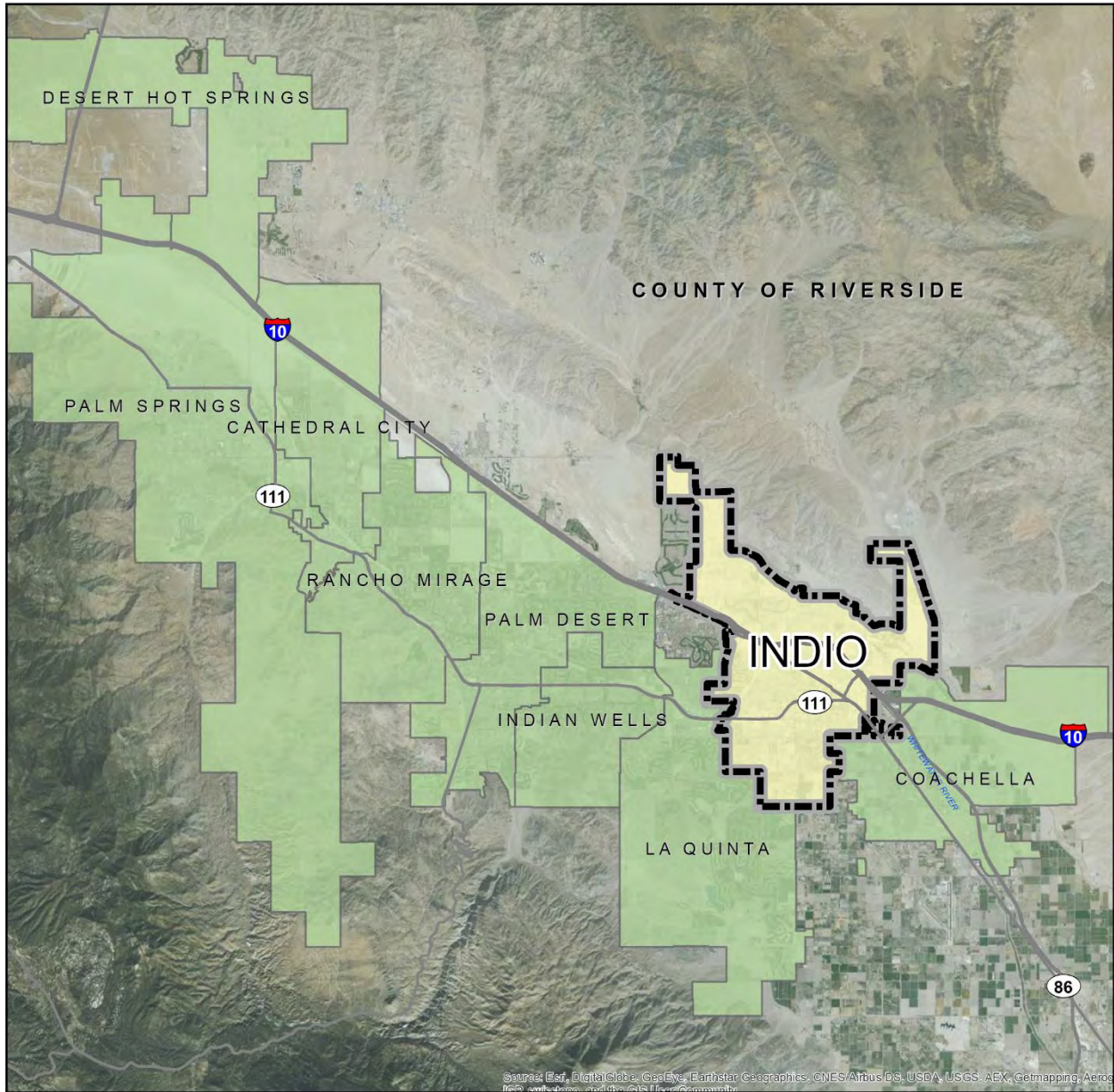
Today, Indio is known as the City of Festivals, which originated from a long history of celebrations. The Date Festival began as a celebration of the date harvest and was held in various Indio parks beginning as early as 1921. The National Date Festival was established in 1938. Present day fair attendance typically tops 270,000 people over the 10-day run.

With nearly 1.4 million visitors each year, the City is widely recognized as a cultural, music, sports, entertainment, and culinary events destination. From Native American Powwows to the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival, there's truly something for everyone in Indio.




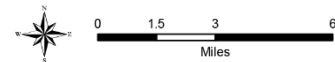
Riverside County Date Festival Indio, CA, 2017

Figure 2-1 Regional Location



Regional Location

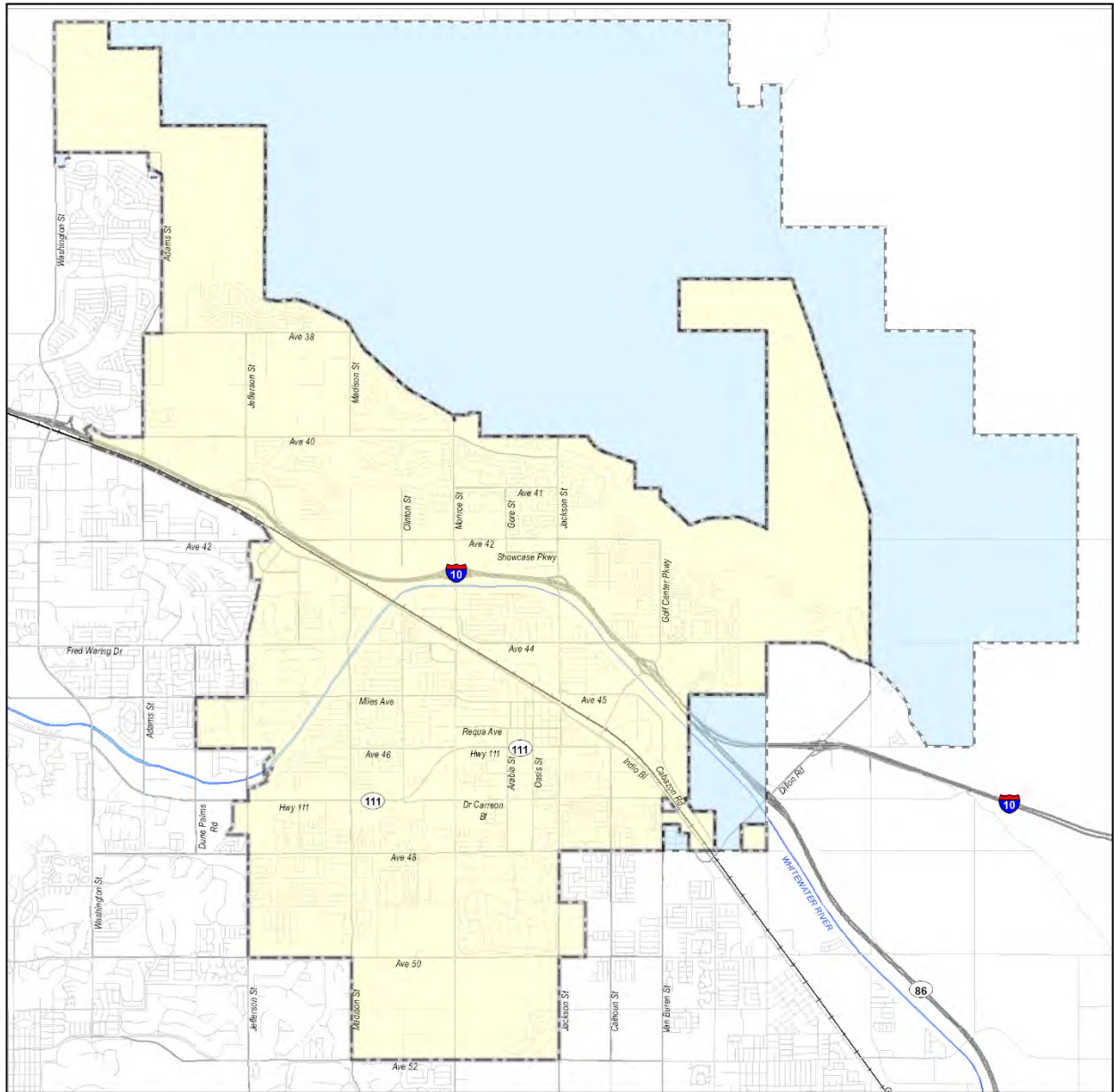
 City of Indio








Source: Riverside County/LAFCD (City Boundary, 2012; SGI, 2012)
Riverside County/TDMA (Roads, Railroads, Highways) Riverside County
(Rivers)

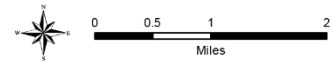
The information on this map was derived from various digital databases, sourced above. Care was taken in the creation of this map but it is provided "as is". PDC cannot accept any responsibility for any errors, omissions, or positional accuracy, and therefore, there are no warranties which accompany this product. Users are cautioned to field verify information on this product before making any decisions.

Figure 2-2 Planning Area



Planning Area

-  City Boundary
-  Sphere of Influence
-  Roads
-  Railroads
-  Highways



Source: Riverside County/LAFCO (City Boundary,2012; SOI,2012)
 Riverside County/TLMA (Roads,Railroads,Highways) Riverside County (River)

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Population and Growth Trends

Indio is the largest and most populated City in the Coachella Valley. According to the U.S. Census, Indio had an estimated population of 88,000 in 2018. Between 2010 and 2018, it was the 10th fastest growing city in California, adding approximately 12,000 new residents as shown in Table 2-1.

Indio is expected to continue to experience significant growth in the future. According to the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), Indio is expected to reach a population of approximately 123,000 by 2040, an increase of approximately 39%.² In addition to its permanent residents, thousands of people reside in the City during the winter months and festivals. It should be noted that, other special events attract nearly 1.4 million visitors annually to the City.

Indio has one of the younger populations in the Coachella Valley with a median age of 35.4 as of 2016.³ Approximately 30% of Indio’s residents were under age 19 in 2016, consistent with Riverside County. The City has more adults over 65 than Riverside County (approximately 15.7% compared to 13.2%).

Indio is expected to experience an influx of Millennials (typically those born between 1981 and 1997). Planning for the needs of this group is an important component of this General Plan.

Table 2-1 Indio Growth Projections

	Existing			Indio 2040 Growth Projections***		
	2010*	2018**	Incremental Growth (2018 - 2010)	2040	Incremental Growth (2040 - 2010)	Compound Annual Growth Rate
Population	76,036	87,883	11,847	119,857	43,821	1.6%
Households	23,378	26,234	2,856	38,203	14,825	1.7%
Household Size (Ave)	3.25	3.35	4.15	3.14	2.96	N/A
Employment	14,925	15,565	640	24,792	9,227	2.0%

*Existing 2010 data collected from the US Census (population, households, and household size) and Census LEHD for employment

**Existing 2018 data collected from the California Department of Finance (populations, households, household size) and Census LEHD for employment (2015)

*** Indio 2040 Projections developed by Metropolitan Research + Economics (average projection value) employment growth from 2015

² Southern California Association of Governments. 2016 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy Draft Dataset for Indio.

³ U.S. Census. Indio city, California. (2009–2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates).

What is a General Plan?

A General Plan is a city policy document required by California state law (Government Code Section 65300-65303.4) that provides a “long term, comprehensive, integrated, internally consistent and compatible statement” of goals and policies that reflect local conditions and the community vision. Within this general requirement, some aspects of the general plan are tightly prescribed, while others are left to the discretion of individual cities or counties.

Statutory Requirements

The plan serves as a basis for decisions that affect Indio’s future. The law requires that a General Plan address the following eight mandatory subject areas, or “elements:”

- + **Land Use.** The land use element identifies the location and intensity of land uses throughout the City.
- + **Circulation.** This element plans for the transportation system including roadways, transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities; it can also address sewer, gas, water, and other infrastructure conveyance systems.
- + **Housing.** The housing element seeks to accommodate housing needs for all incomes, groups with disabilities, and the homeless.
- + **Open Space.** The open space element identifies parks and open space throughout the City.
- + **Conservation.** This element guides the use and conservation of natural resources such as soils, wildlife, water, energy, and historic resources.
- + **Noise.** This element seeks to limit the community’s exposure to excessive noise.
- + **Safety.** The safety element seeks to reduce the risk of death, injuries, property damage, and economic and social dislocation from natural and human-made hazards.
- + **Environmental Justice.** This element seeks to reduce the unique or compounded health risks of disadvantaged communities.

State law also allows for optional “elements” and for elements to be organized or combined at the City’s discretion. This general plan includes four optional elements: Community Facilities and Infrastructure, Health and Equity (inclusive of Environmental Justice), Economic Development, and Implementation.

Relationship to Other Documents

The Zoning Code, Specific Plans, and other planning proposals and plans are tools used for the systematic implementation of the General Plan. As such, these documents must be consistent with the goals, policies, and standards of the General Plan. While summarized below and elsewhere in the General Plan, these plans have not been incorporated into the General Plan, and revisions to these documents shall not be considered an amendment to the General Plan.

Zoning

The General Plan is primarily implemented by the Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning Ordinance specifies detailed development regulations, such as permitted uses and building standards for the zoning classifications that implement the General Plan land use designations. State law requires that the Zoning Ordinance be consistent with the General Plan.

Subdivision Map Act

The Subdivision Map Act authorizes cities and counties to regulate and control the design and development of subdivisions including, but not limited to, public improvements, street design, drainage and sanitary facilities, and lot size configuration. California Government Code Section 66473.5 states that before any city or county approves a subdivision map (including parcel maps), the public agency must determine that the proposed subdivision is consistent with the policies and objectives of the General Plan. The City of Indio's Subdivision Ordinance sets forth the requirements for the subdivision of land and implements the General Plan and Subdivision Map Act.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

A general plan is considered a project under the CEQA. CEQA requires state and local agencies to identify the potential environmental impacts of a project and avoid or mitigate those impacts to the extent feasible. A Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) has been prepared to identify potential environmental impacts and feasible mitigation measures for Indio's General Plan Update. To the extent possible, mitigation measures have been integrated into the General Plan goals and policies such that the General Plan becomes a self-mitigating document. As a result, there are very few impacts that would occur solely on the basis of implementation of the General Plan.

The General Plan PEIR also streamlines the review of future development projects by allowing the CEQA documents for subsequent projects to "tier" off of the General Plan PEIR. "Tiering" refers to incorporating by reference the analysis of general matters contained in a broader EIR. This allows future development projects to concentrate on the issues specific to the particular project.

Maintenance and Update of the Plan

The Indio General Plan will be implemented over the next 20 years with a time horizon of 2040. During this time, the long-range planning efforts for Indio will continue using the goals, policies, and implementation programs in this General Plan to guide growth, development, and conservation. However, the General Plan is a living document. As the City grows and changes, it will be necessary to amend maps, specific policies, and implementation actions to address changing economic and demographic conditions. In fact, State law encourages annual reviews of implementation actions and recommends that the entire General Plan be thoroughly reviewed every five years to ensure it is still consistent with the community's goals. Any part of a general plan may be amended to accommodate changing conditions.

Property owners, the Planning Commission, the City Council, or City staff may propose amendments. Proposed changes must be reviewed by the Planning Commission and the City Council at public hearings and potential environmental impacts must be evaluated in accordance with the CEQA. Community members, neighborhood groups, and local organizations are encouraged to get involved in the ongoing planning efforts of the City and to participate in the implementation of the General Plan. By maintaining active engagement in the process, Indio's residents can be part of shaping the City to make it an even more inclusive, vital, and thriving City than it is today.

Plan Implementation

This plan should be interpreted with the following concepts in mind when making subsequent General Plan consistency conclusions and implementation decisions. As discussed by the Supreme Court in *Leshar Communications, Inc. v. City of Walnut Creek* (1990) 52 Cal.3d 531, a general plan is "simply a statement of policy to govern future regulations." "General plans ordinarily do not state specific mandates or prohibitions. Rather, they state policies, and set forth goals." (*Napa Citizens v. Citizens for Honest Government v. Napa County Board of Supervisors* (2001) 91 Cal.App.4th 342,378.) As also discussed in the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) General Plan Guidelines, "given the long-term nature of a general plan, its diagrams and text should be general enough to allow a degree of flexibility in decision-making as times change." (Office of Planning and Research 2017, page 380.) This General Plan attempts to balance a range of competing interests. It follows that it is nearly, if not absolutely impossible for a project to be in perfect conformity with each and every policy set forth in this General Plan. The City's decision-making bodies will have discretion to approve a project even if it is not consistent with every individual goal, policy, or implementation measure contained herein.

All general plans, including this one, must also address a host of concerns within a consistent, well-integrated policy framework. In implementing the Plan, it is the task of the City Council (or its delegates) to make policy determinations in a manner that promotes the overall goals of the Plan and the public welfare, in accordance with existing resources, staffing, and priorities available at the time. Policy and program implementation will require reasonable and thoughtful consideration of other Plan policies. In many instances the City's decision-makers will have to balance the policy consequences of approval versus the consequences associated with denial (E.g. Gov. Code Section 65589.5(a) and (b) [noting that denial of a project may itself result in adverse environmental consequences and policy implications]). Such

implementation decisions will come up on a case-by case basis as the City Council, Planning Commission, City staff, and others work to effectively implement the entire Plan.

Another overall principle to guide the reading, interpretation, and implementation of the Plan is that none of its provisions will be interpreted by the City in a manner that violates state or federal law. In reading every provision of the Plan, one should infer that it is limited by the principle, “to the extent legally permitted.”

The City’s General Plan includes implementation measures. The following principles guide Plan implementation. (1) Implementation can take time, especially when needed resources are limited and required for more than one program, (2) Because implementation can take time, the City Council, and those to whom the Council delegates, may need to prioritize programs. The Plan contemplates this ongoing process as part of the City’s policy-making function, (3) While the Plan identifies specific programs, implementation measures may be adjusted over time based on new information, changing circumstances, and evaluation of their effectiveness, so long as they remain consistent with the overall intent of the Plan, (4) It is important to note that by adopting Implementation Measures, which are not required to be included in a general plan, the City does not intend to establish additional general plan goals or policies. Because the Implementation Measures are intended only as an aid in implementation of the General Plan, they are included in the plan only for convenience and updates to these sections will not be considered amendments to the General Plan, (5) To the degree that these sections conflict with the language of the goals, policies, and land use designations they implement, the language of the goals, policies, and land use designations shall govern.

Plan Organization

This General Plan is comprised of the State-mandated elements and additional optional chapters as listed below. Government Code Section 65301 allows the general plan to “be adopted in any format deemed appropriate or convenient by the legislative body, including the combining of elements.” Consequently, some elements of this general plan rely upon policies or information in other chapters in fulfilling the individual element’s statutory requirements.

- ✦ The **Land Use and Community Design Element** designates the general distribution, location, and extent of residential, commercial, industrial, public facility, open space, and other public or private land uses. It establishes design criteria to contribute to a positive character for Indio while welcoming design innovation and flexibility. It also organizes Indio into distinct subareas and establishes policy guidance that will direct the development and conservation of those areas.
- ✦ The **Mobility Element** is closely correlated to the land use element and identifies the general location and extent of existing and proposed thoroughfares, transportation routes, terminals, airports, railroads, and other transportation facilities. It plans for a balanced, multi-modal transportation network that meets the needs of all users of streets, roads, and highways including bicyclists, children, persons with disabilities, motorists, movers of commercial goods, pedestrians, users of public transportation, and seniors.

- + The **Economic Development Element** provides a set of policies goals and objectives that are geared towards promoting sustainable, fair, and equitable economic growth in the City of Indio. The Element helps guide the City towards a more diverse local economy and improved quality of life.
- + The **Public Health and Equity Element** addresses public health considerations including access to healthy food sources, medical services, and opportunities to engage in healthy and active living, and addresses environmental justice by seeking opportunities to reduce disadvantaged communities associated and compounded health risks.
- + The **Parks and Recreation Element** details plans for Indio’s recreational open space network including parks, trails, civic plazas, community gardens and other urban agricultural activities, open space corridors that link recreation areas, and scenic resources, such as Indio Hills.
- + The **Conservation Element** addresses the preservation and conservation of natural resources including, water resources, energy resources, mineral resources, biological resources, wildlife habitats, and cultural, paleontological, and archaeological resources. It also addresses climate change.
- + The **Community Facilities and Infrastructure Element** provides goals and policies for the sustainability of the water supply and distribution system, sanitary sewer system, drainage and water quality facilities, and solid waste disposal.
- + The **Safety Element** establishes policies to protect the community from risks associated with natural and manmade hazards, such as seismic, geologic, flooding, and fire hazards as well as exposure to hazardous materials. It also addresses the potential impacts of climate change on Indio. Crime prevention and the availability of public safety services and facilities to support existing and future development are also addressed.
- + The **Noise Element** identifies current and potential future sources of noise and provides goals and strategies necessary to protect the community from excessive noise levels.
- + The **Implementation Element** houses all implementation actions for each Element within the General Plan. The Element includes a matrix of programs and physical improvements, specifying the priority, timing, and parties responsible for carrying out implementation.
- + The **Housing Element** (under separate cover) assesses current and projected housing needs and establishes policies and programs for improving housing and providing adequate housing for all income levels. The housing element is required to be updated every eight years.

How to Use This General Plan

Each element of the General Plan is organized with the following sections:

- + **Key Considerations, Strategies, and Context.** A summary of the key topics and issues facing the community. The issues serve as background for the goals and policies noting key issues, opportunities, and challenges in Indio.
- + **Goals, Policies, and Actions.** Each element contains goals, policies, and actions necessary to achieve the community's vision. They are intended to provide clear direction on how the City will implement the overall vision of this plan.

Together, the General Plan language creates a hierarchy of goals and policies that will be mandated, encouraged, or allowed by the City over the next 20 years.

Goals, Policies, and Actions

Each element of this General Plan contains goals, policies, and actions. Implementation actions are also included in the Implementation Chapter.

Goals are an overarching statement describing the overall vision and direction for the community. Goals are broad in both purpose and aim, but are designed to establish directions and outcomes. The following is an example of a goal:

- **Goal LU-2: Active Places.** Indio is a City with active and comfortable places that encourage social interaction and community gathering.

Specific position statements that support the achievement of goals and serve as guides to the City Council, Planning Commission, other City commissions and boards. City staff also use the policies when reviewing development proposals and making other decisions. Policies seek to achieve the goals by mandating, encouraging, or permitting certain actions. Certain policies are critical and must be implemented. Thus, compliance with the policy or action is mandatory. Language used to describe this intent includes will, must, require, prohibit, conduct, maintain, and implement. Other policies are strongly encouraged by the City, but total implementation may not be possible; thus compliance is not mandatory. Language used to describe this intent includes should, may, encourage, consider, explore, allow, discourage, and promote. The following are examples of policies in the Indio General Plan Land Use and Community Design Element:

- **LU-2.2 Balanced Land Uses.** Maintain a balanced land use pattern to support a broad range of housing choices, retail businesses, employment opportunities, educational and cultural institutions, entertainment spaces, and other supportive uses and within long-established Indio neighborhoods and new growth areas.
- **LU-2.4 New Gathering Spaces.** Require new developments to provide public parks, plazas, and squares that establish interesting gathering spaces in planned districts and neighborhoods.