

## **Chapter II.**

# **INTRODUCTION AND ADMINISTRATION**

## **INTRODUCTION AND ADMINISTRATION**

---

All incorporated towns, cities, and counties are required by the California Government Code to prepare comprehensive, long-term general plans, which direct development of the community. As an official document of the City of Banning, the Comprehensive General Plan provides the goals, policies and programs to guide the development of the City and to preserve its valued assets, resources and quality of life. In addition to goals and policies, the General Plan includes issues discussions, exhibits, and tables that provide direction for the rational and thoughtful management of existing and future development.

The makeup and composition of the City of Banning are briefly described below. The study area, which includes the City limits, the City Sphere-of-Influence and a broader planning area are described, as are the regional context and long-term perspective taken by the City in developing this document. Finally, this brief discussion provides an overview of the Comprehensive General Plan and the Environmental Impact Report, and their roles as the principal development guides for community development.

### **BACKGROUND**

The City of Banning is a growing residential community in west-central Riverside County. The City is located in the San Geronio Pass area and is well served by major transportation routes. The US Interstate-10 corridor includes a significant portion of the City's developed acreage, with vacant lands and lower density development generally located towards the northern and southern portions of the City. The City of Banning corporate limits encompass about 23.2 square miles. The City's Sphere-of-Influence (SOI), County managed lands over which the City has an advisory role, includes 8.5 square miles in non-contiguous lands located both north and south of US Interstate-10. An additional 5.2 square miles have been considered in this General Plan, and are identified as the City Planning Area. The total study area includes approximately 36.9 square miles.

The City is situated across a variety of geographic and geologic conditions, including the San Bernardino Mountains to the north and the San Jacinto Mountains to the south. The adjacent mountain canyons form the alluvial plains on which portions of the City have developed. The mountains provide dramatic and valuable viewsheds. The City is located in a transitional zone where coastal climates transition to desert, resulting in significantly differing landscape and geology.

## **The Comprehensive General Plan and Environmental Impact Report**

The Comprehensive General Plan and associated Environmental Impact Report (EIR) have been developed to serve as a framework for decision-making regarding the appropriate type and intensity of development in the City. The process of preparing these documents has included extensive community participation, resulting in the identification of issues, and the development of goals, policies, and programs. This process has also involved the consideration of alternatives to the proposed General Plan, the consensus selection of preferred courses of action, and finally, the development of strategies to implement the Comprehensive General Plan.

The General Plan identifies the environmental, social and economic goals, and sets forth policies and programs for existing and future development. The General Plan also provides the framework to analyze and respond to changing circumstances as the City continues to grow and evolve. The background information and issues summarized in the General Plan are analyzed in depth in the General Plan EIR. Therefore, both documents provide City officials and the general public with vital information necessary to make informed decisions. The Comprehensive General Plan and the EIR also serve as the basis for subsequent planning efforts, including the preparation of Specific Plans and site-specific environmental and planning studies.

### **The General Plan Process**

The City's previous General Plan was last comprehensively updated in the mid-1980s. Since that time, there have been numerous amendments to individual elements of the plan but no comprehensive update. Based upon a need to respond to current social, economic, physical and political conditions, the City Council determined that a comprehensive update to the General Plan was necessary.

#### General Plan Advisory Committee

The City Council appointed a twenty-eight (28) member General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) to serve as the primary means of citizen involvement in the formulation of the draft General Plan. The GPAC review process began in March of 2003 and ended in January of 2005. The GPAC met twice a month at public meetings to discuss and review draft General Plan elements and their goals, policies and programs. The GPAC document was developed through discussion, amendment and ultimate consensus by the committee members on what they believe to be the best course for the future of the City. At the end of this process, the GPAC recommended a draft document to the Planning Commission and City Council.

### **General Plan Format**

The General Plan is organized into five major chapters: Administration, Community Development, Environmental Resources, Environmental Hazards, and Public Services and Facilities. Within each chapter are the various General Plan elements and their accompanying background information, goals, policies and programs.

### General Plan Elements

This General Plan includes all the elements mandated by Government Code Section 65302, including Land Use, Traffic and Circulation, Housing, Conservation, Open Space, Safety and Noise. As allowed under state law, the organization of the mandated elements has been altered to best fit the City's needs. In addition to the mandated elements, optional elements have been included in this General Plan, including Economic Development and Cultural Resources. Each element includes a background, or existing conditions section, a section addressing buildout of the land use plan, and goals, policies and programs.

### Goals, Policies and Programs

Each element contains at least one goal statement and related policy statements and programs. A goal in the General Plan is the most general statement of community values and is expressed as a desirable end-state condition to be achieved now or in the future. The core of the General Plan is contained within its policy statements. Policies refine the goal statements and provide a clear direction for decision-making. Policies frequently include "shall" statements to provide clear directives. Decision-making criteria, major development standards and funding priorities are best established by clear General Plan policies. General Plan programs are included as implementation measures needed to carry out related policy statements. Programs provide the basis for scheduling and assigning staff and other City resources to specific actions to implement certain directives of the Plan.

### Maps and Graphics

The maps and graphics are included throughout the General Plan to illustrate existing conditions and policies. For example, the land use map represents a series of policies for the type and intensity of future development throughout the City and the planning area, and the cultural resources map illustrates areas that require special studies due to the level of sensitive resources that may occur in a particular area.

### **Use of the General Plan**

All development proposals must be reviewed for consistency with this General Plan. This consistency includes not only the land use designation assigned to the property on which any development proposal is located, but also the goals, policies and programs contained throughout the document.

The Zoning Ordinance, prepared and adopted concurrently with this General Plan, must remain consistent with this document, as must Specific Plans adopted for individual properties or development proposals. Amendments to either the Zoning Ordinance or to existing Specific Plans must be found to be consistent with this General Plan.

### **Interpreting the General Plan**

Should the boundary of a land use designation, the location of a roadway alignment, the identification of a public facility symbol, or other boundary or alignment be unclear, the following criteria shall apply.

1. Boundaries shown to follow the City's corporate limits shall be interpreted to follow these limits.
2. Boundaries shown to follow a section, half section or quarter section line shall be interpreted to follow these lines.
3. Land use boundaries shown to abut a public street or alley shall be interpreted to extend to the centerline of the abutting street or alley.
4. Land use boundaries shown to extend to the mid-point of a city block shall be interpreted to extend to the closest property line occurring at the mid-point, or to the mid-point of a property, should such a property extend from street to street.

### **The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)**

The CEQA Guidelines require that all Initial Studies consider the conformance of a development proposal with the General Plan. Should the Planning Commission or City Council determine that a development proposal would have a potentially significant impact due to its inconsistency with the General Plan, the project proponent shall be required to prepare an Environmental Impact Report to support a determination by the Planning Commission and/or City Council that findings of overriding considerations can be made.

### **General Plan Amendments**

The City will review its General Plan on an annual basis, to determine if short term policies have been achieved and can be eliminated, to assess whether conditions have changed in the community as described in the General Plan, and to address budgetary priorities. The results of this review may require amendment to the General Plan. In addition, individual land owners, or their authorized agents, may request amendments to the General Plan land use map, or to policies and programs. City staff, appointed or elected officials, and citizens of Banning may also request General Plan amendments. As a general law City, Banning may amend the General Plan up to four times per calendar year.

The state legislature has identified two exceptions to the quarterly schedules for General Plan amendments, as follows:

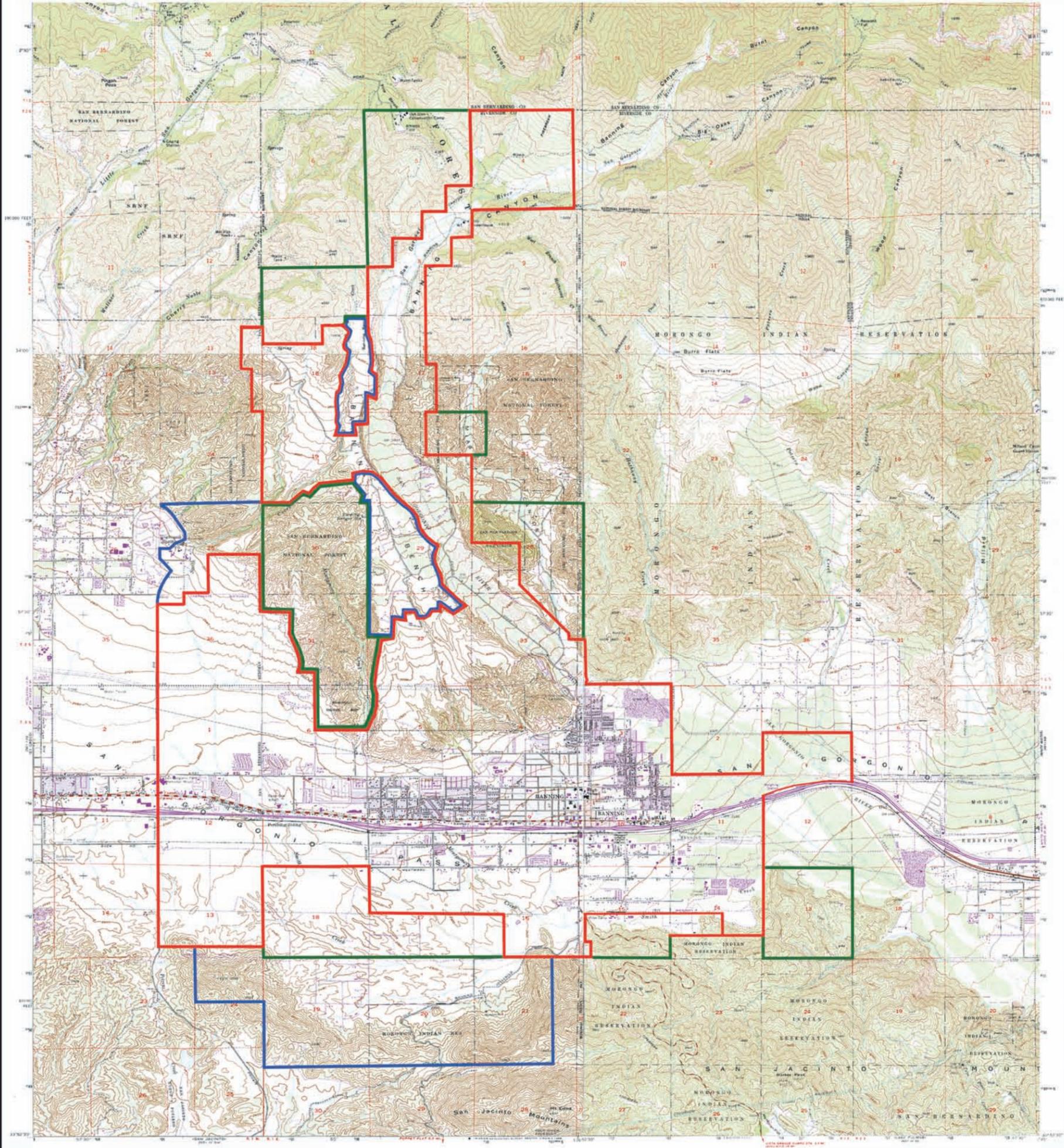
1. Amendments determined necessary for the development of housing projects which will provide a minimum of 25% of their units to low and moderate income households (Government Code Sections 65361(b) and 65358(d)); and
2. Amendments necessary to comply with a court decision involving the adequacy of the General Plan (Government Code Sections 65361 and 65358(d)(1)).

The procedures for amendments to the General Plan shall be maintained in the Zoning Ordinance.

## **Specific Plans of Land Use**

The Specific Plan document provides important refinements of the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance to particular parcels of land proposed for master planning. Specific Plans often provide detailed design and analysis of complex mixed-use projects, and include precise land use locations and design guidelines. Specific Plans contain text, tables and exhibits illustrating the distribution, location, and intensity of proposed land uses and the necessary public and private services and facilities, including streets, utilities and drainage facilities.

The standards and criteria by which development and, where applicable, conservation will proceed on the property are also defined in the Specific Plan. Additionally, a Specific Plan provides a program of implementation measures and financing necessary to carry out the project. It must also be consistent with all elements of the General Plan. In turn, zoning, subdivision, and public works projects must be consistent with an existing Specific Plan (Government Code Section 65455).



### Legend

- █ City Limits
- █ Sphere of Influence
- █ Planning Area



Sources: 7.5 Minute USGS Maps:  
 Beaumont, CA 1953, Photorevised 1988  
 Cabazon, CA 1956, Photorevised 1972  
 Forest Falls, CA 1970, Photorevised 1988  
 San Gorgonio Mtn., CA 1970

