

INTRODUCTION

Figure I-1

Planning Boundaries

[VIEW MAP \(430 KB\)](#)

I. INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE OF THE GENERAL PLAN

A General Plan is a statement of long-range public policy to guide the use of private and public lands within a community's boundaries. The General Plan reflects the aspirations and values of its residents and is adopted by the elected representatives. The policies within the Plan are intended to become the basis for decisions by elected and appointed officials. By this means, the values reflected in the General Plan policies shape the community and the quality of life sought by its residents.

The Plan is both general and comprehensive in that it provides broad guidelines for development in the City, while addressing a wide range of issues that will affect the City's desirability as a place to live and work. The General Plan represents both an evaluation and vision of the future, typically 15-20 years, and beyond. The goals and policies are aimed at guiding growth and development in that direction.

It is an internally consistent document in that the goals, objectives, policies, principles, and standards present a comprehensive, unified program for development. California planning law requires consistency between the General Plan and its implementation programs—zoning and subdivision ordinances, growth management policies, capital improvements programming, specific plans, environmental review procedures, building and housing codes, and redevelopment plans. Thus, there is a strong connection between a community's policies and its regulatory system, with the General Plan serving as the City's "constitution."

The General Plan should not be viewed as a final statement of the City's vision. With time, its population will change, its goals may be redefined, and the physical environment in which its residents live and work will be altered. The Plan simply represents a depiction at this particular point of planning policies applied to the future. As a result, the General Plan may periodically be revised to respond to and reflect changing conditions subject to full public participation as required by state law and to the criteria identified in the "Implementation" section of this General Plan.

B. VISION STATEMENT

Escondido has rapidly transformed from a rural agricultural town into a vibrant urbanizing community with a 1990 population of approximately 104,500. The growing process has brought thoroughfares and freeways; major shopping centers; a downtown revitalization effort, including streetscape and facade improvements, a beautiful new city hall; a transit center; and a regional cultural and performing arts center in the near future.

Like throughout Southern California, substantial growth has also resulted in challenges concerning public facilities and services, air quality, traffic, water availability, environmental protection and open space. Therefore, the General Plan includes Quality of Life Standards and a Growth Management Element to assist in sustaining these standards.

The General Plan has a buildout population goal of 150,000-165,000. With the Land Use designations, environmental policies, and Growth Management System, it is anticipated that the population of Escondido will be approximately 150,000 in the year 2010. The General Plan is a comprehensive document with policies not only directed at land use and private development, but also public facilities and services. Furthermore, it in-

cludes community goals regarding human needs, such as child care and housing, as well as our cultural enhancement.

The implementation of the General Plan will not only result in land use ordinances directing development, but will also attempt to coordinate programs which complement each other rather than compete with each other. With implementation of the goals and policies of the General Plan, the following is envisioned for Escondido:

1. Downtown

A City's identity is reflected in its downtown area. As a result of the Downtown Specific Plan and projects approved by the Community Development Commission, the downtown will be the activity center for the City. Anchored by City Hall and Civic Center, the downtown area will continue to be revitalized as an attractive place to work, shop, and reside. The pedestrian-oriented retail core will complement the attraction of the Civic Center, resulting in daytime and nighttime activity.

Facade improvement programs, street improvements and high quality design standards have been adopted and will result in a downtown that is a source of pride for Escondido residents.

2. Urbanized Core

The urbanized core area essentially surrounds the Downtown Specific Planning Area. It includes industrial and commercial development along the I-15 and Highway 78 corridors and existing commercial along Escondido Boulevard and East Valley Parkway.

New retail uses will be established only after careful consideration of the economic and fiscal impacts upon existing retail. New industrial development in the Quail Hills Specific Plan will be less intensive than much of the existing industrial uses in the City and will reflect quality design standards.

Revitalization efforts similar to the downtown area will be applied to existing commercial and industrial areas, especially where there is high visibility. Existing residential areas will be preserved where single-family neighborhoods are well established and new housing opportunities will occur where substandard housing stock and infrastructure deficiencies exist in existing residentially zoned areas, such as the area south of downtown between Escondido Boulevard and Centre City Parkway.

3. Developing Areas

Surrounding the urbanized core area are many established neighborhoods with vacant or underdeveloped properties still available for growth. As a result of the growth management policies, detailed plans will be adopted to ensure that adequate schools, infrastructure, services and open space are provided in a timely manner.

Coordinated efforts of City government, private development, existing residents, and other agencies providing facilities and services will result in strategic planning to ensure acceptable quality of life standards for new and existing development.

The developing areas include land use designations which generally reflect topographic constraints, the need for environmental protection and the preservation of

the character of established neighborhoods. With implementation of the General Plan through public and private endeavors, growth will be managed to ensure compatibility, sensitivity to the environment and adequate public services.

4. Perimeter Areas

The natural setting of Escondido is that of a “hidden valley” surrounded by prominent hills and ridgelines to the north, east, and southwest, Lake Hodges to the south, and the City of San Marcos to the west along the Highway 78 corridor. Therefore, the potential of urban sprawl “consuming” the identity of Escondido is limited.

However, ridgeline and hillside development has occurred in some areas. To avoid further loss of our natural terrain, policies in the open space and land use elements call for strong measures to protect ridgelines, steep slopes and environmentally sensitive habitats. Rural land use designations have been applied to these areas to reduce the potential of conflict with these policies.

New communities are reflected in some of the Specific Planning Areas (SPA’s). Development activities have commenced in a few of these SPA’s, including the Palos Vista, Cloverdale, and Lomas Del Lago areas. A new community in Valley View in the east is also envisioned.

SPA policies for these new communities will result in high-quality development sensitive to environmental resources, such as ridgelines, slopes, and community viewsheds.

The remainder of the perimeter areas will remain in estate and rural neighborhoods or large areas of open space, such as the area around Lake Wohlford, where hiking and multi-use trails and recreational activities will be predominant.

5. Transportation

Since over 70 percent of the General Plan area has been built out in terms of population objectives, many of our street segments and intersections will continue to operate at congested levels, especially during peak hours. This will occur primarily at freeway interchanges and in the urbanized core where regional and local traffic cannot be readily accommodated, due to existing development and the higher trip generation of commercial and industrial uses.

In addition, extensive road widening may not be desirable along critical streets, such as Centre City parkway and Bear Valley Parkway, due to environmental considerations. Both of these thoroughfares have mature trees, which are considered valuable visual resources for the city. Streamcourses also exist along some of the streets listed in the circulation element, which require preservation or substantial mitigation.

These environmental considerations may outweigh the need for smoother traffic flow. However, every effort will be made to ensure adequate and safe traffic circulation.

Even in the impacted urbanized areas, efforts will be made through the support of regional transportation, such as the Escondido-Oceanside light rail and a proposed rail line between the Escondido Transit Center and North County Fair.

Transportation System Management (TSM) measures will be implemented through the development process, capital improvement program and regional programs. The consolidation of access driveways and the installation of raised medians will reduce potential traffic conflicts. Park-and-ride facilities will be coordinated with Caltrans, as well as transit stations with North County Transit District.

Bus turnouts and shelters will be required where requested by NCTD. Sidewalks, pedestrian crossings and street lighting will be enhanced for pedestrian safety.

6. Open Space

In addition to hillside and ridgeline protection policies, the City will emphasize the preservation of open space in local and regional programs. A hiking trail system is envisioned around the perimeter of the City with connections to City parks. Particular attention will be given to trail connections and visual protection for the San Dieguito River Regional Open Space Park, which is being implemented along the southern boundaries of the General Plan area, and connecting with other regional trail systems.

City parks will continue to be developed with an emphasis on neighborhood parks which are pedestrian oriented. The City's regional parks will be maintained as recreational centers sensitive to existing water features and natural resources in the parks. Community parks and centers will continue to provide the more intensive recreational facilities.

7. Community Identity

With the implementation of this General Plan, Escondido will serve as a regional cultural, commercial and transportation center for North San Diego County. The downtown will highlight this regional identity. Preservation and rehabilitation of the urbanized core will provide affordable housing opportunities in a livable manner.

Increased attention to adequate community facilities and services through the Growth Management Element will maintain and improve the quality of life in Escondido. Preservation and revitalization of existing neighborhoods will further enhance the community identity. Planning will be coordinated on a continuous basis between City departments, the school districts, service districts, the County and regional entities to ensure realization of the Goals and Objectives of the General Plan.

Community involvement in these planning and implementation processes will continue to grow, due to the nature of the many programs necessitated by the General Plan. A strong sense of community pride and participation is anticipated as a result of fulfilling the goals of this plan.

C. COMMUNITY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Escondido City Council has fully supported the need to solicit widespread community input on the goals that should direct the community's future. Two Council-appointed General Plan Committees were charged to listen to and interpret community opinions about matters pertinent to the General Plan. A series of five community workshops were held in late spring and summer of 1987 to discuss citywide and neighborhood issues, community assets, liabilities, and land-use options. The culmination of these meetings resulted in a set of community goals and objectives which would provide a framework for establishing policies, standards, and guidelines for future growth in the City's Planning Area and provide certainty in the General Plan's implementation. These goals and objectives were refined through the Growth Management Oversight Committee process in 1989 and subsequently adopted as part of this General Plan.

GOAL 1: Plan For Quality, Managed Growth

Objectives:

- a. Establish a growth management system which develops facilities and services plans both communitywide and for specific neighborhoods based upon identified quality of life standards.
- b. Adopt policies encouraging compatible in-fill development which will improve existing neighborhoods.
- c. Allow new development to occur only when facilities and services plans are adopted for the area for which the development is proposed.
- d. Improve coordination with the county and surrounding cities regarding planning for areas beyond the city limits to address regional issues and to protect the goals and objectives of the General Plan.
- e. The City shall notify and coordinate with surrounding property owners and resident groups when conducting land use studies affecting residents of unincorporated communities. Notification and coordination will include surrounding property owners, as well as any resident groups, homeowner's associations, or planning advisory groups that make their presence known to the City. Neighborhood meetings may be utilized to notify interested parties to gather information and solicit input for recommendation to various decision-makers.

GOAL 2: Improve Circulation And Safety For Vehicles And Pedestrians

Objectives:

- a. Establish feasible levels of service for intersections and street segments which will be incorporated into facilities plans.
- b. Enhance carrying capacity of existing streets and intersections in the urbanized core through transportation management systems, support for public transportation and carpooling, and coordination of improvements through the overall capital improvement program and neighborhood facilities plans.

- c. Develop a circulation impact model which will determine the impacts of development and implement mitigation measures to ensure consistency with facilities plans.
- d. Improve bicycle and pedestrian safety through the installation or improvement of sidewalks, a trail system in coordination with the Open-Space Element, and intersection controls.
- e. Support the restoration of school bus service and other means of improving student safety.
- f. Participate in regional transportation efforts including but not limited to park-and-ride facilities, Transportation System Management efforts, and public transit.

GOAL 3: Preserve And Enhance Existing Neighborhoods

Objectives:

- a. Establish objective guidelines for controlling density increases in existing residential neighborhoods.
- b. Limit the conversion of predominantly residential neighborhoods to nonresidential uses, and require effective buffers and mitigation measures through Conditional Use Permits when appropriate nonresidential uses are proposed.
- c. Establish land-use designations which reflect the character of existing neighborhoods.
- d. Adopt and implement area plans to preserve and/or improve existing neighborhoods.
- e. Continue property maintenance programs through public information and code enforcement.

GOAL 4: Provide A Range Of Housing Opportunities For All Income Groups

Objectives:

- a. Establish and maintain a current housing needs assessment through the Housing Element.
- b. Adopt land-use designations which will allow for housing opportunities for all income levels.
- c. Establish strategies for low- and moderate-income housing opportunities, including neighborhood area plans, senior housing, and specialized housing needs.
- d. Continue support for housing rehabilitation.
- e. Promote well-planned and well-designed affordable housing.
- f. Support the continued operation of mobile home parks and develop strategies for mobile home resident ownership.

GOAL 5: Encourage more high quality industrial, retail, manufacturing and service-oriented businesses that create and maintain a strong economic base and provide an environment for the full employment of a diverse set of skills.

Objectives:

Develop multiple core employment use areas with quality design and development standards that allow sufficient area for general, light, high technology and office industrial; research and development; and professional office uses.

- a. Continue to evaluate economic development strategies and policies, that effect evolving commercial, industrial, office, retail, and tourist-oriented land uses.
- b. Continue to restrict encroachment of non-related commercial or residential uses in industrial areas and consider adaptive reuse zoning for over-saturated retail zoned areas.
- c. Promote Escondido's role as the cultural, financial, medical, governmental, commercial and transportation center of Inland North County.
- d. Continue to streamline and provide effective administration and review processes.
- e. Make business retention and expansion a primary component of Escondido's economic development strategy.
- f. When appropriate, provide incentives for the attraction and retention of businesses giving special consideration to businesses that provide well to high paying jobs, are healthy and non-polluting, and use recycled materials in their production or service provision process.
- g. Encourage partnerships, collaborative relationships, and interaction among the City, educational institutions, outside agencies and industry to achieve common goals, economic growth, and beautification objectives, and bring a jobs/housing balance.
- h. Take an active role in forums that involve activities having regional economic effects.
- i. Support the following concepts as important aspects of the industrial sector in Escondido:
 - value high technology, research and development, and various industrial uses as important integral part of a sustainable economic base.
 - maintain a variety of industrial lot sizes.
 - support urban renewal of older industrial areas by the private sector.
 - support projects that enhance City gateways.
 - support quality business park development.

GOAL 6: Create a Viable Urban Downtown

Objectives:

- a. Create a distinct identity for the downtown by encouraging activities that traditionally locate in a pedestrian-oriented downtown area, including offices, restaurants, and specialty retail shops.

- b. Implement the Downtown Revitalization Plan through the adoption of a Specific Plan.
- c. Promote residential development in specified areas within the Downtown Specific Plan to enhance revitalization effort.
- d. Identify compatible uses in the Downtown Specific Plan which will attract a high daytime and nighttime population to the area.

GOAL 7: Create an Aesthetically Pleasing and Culturally Diverse Community

Objectives:

- a. Adopt design guidelines and development standards to be the basis for design review of architectural, landscaping, signage outdoor storage, and other visual impacts of development projects.
- b. Establish landscaping guidelines for all areas of the city.
- c. Preserve significant historic and cultural features through ordinances and incentive programs.
- d. Preserve natural resources such as creeks, steep slopes and ridge lines as visual amenities.
- e. Develop a system of open-space corridors and trails throughout the city.
- f. Develop a strong community identity through urban design standards, downtown revitalization, cultural activities, visual gateways to the city.
- g. Encourage rehabilitation and beautification of commercial and industrial areas.
- h. Refine design guidelines and provide staff assistance to encourage individual industries to upgrade the visual appearance of their properties.
- i. Develop procedures for expedient review, and clear standards for approval of the location and nature of outdoor storage in a manner which maintains the character of the area, and which is not unduly obtrusive.
- j. Aesthetic improvement shall be accomplished by implementation of landscaping, screening, and programs which encourage property maintenance and upgrades.

GOAL 8: Preserve Escondido's Natural and Scenic Resources

Objectives:

- a. Establish policies to preserve visually prominent vegetation, including existing street trees and mature ornamental trees in existing neighborhoods.
- b. Support environmental protection policies in this General Plan to protect or adequately replace sensitive habitat areas such as wetlands and oak woodlands, including coordination with state and federal agencies having jurisdiction over such areas.

- c. Maintain a rural residential and open-space environment around the perimeter of Escondido to serve as a buffer from urbanizing surrounding areas.
- d. Establish criteria for measuring the impacts of development on air quality and participate in efforts to attain state and federal air quality standards through appropriate mitigation measures.
- e. Establish density and development standards designed to protect existing terrain, steep slopes, floodways, habitat areas, and ridge lines, and to minimize visual impacts.
- f. Develop and implement communitywide resource conservation programs.

GOAL 9: Support Agriculture While Planning for Possible Land Transition to Urban Uses

Objectives:

- a. Maintain large-lot residential land uses with appropriate zoning designations in agricultural areas that are compatible with preserving agricultural productivity.
- b. Buffer agriculture from more intensive urban uses with intermediate land uses which are mutually compatible.

GOAL 10: Provide Continued Community and Social Services for a High Quality of Life

Objectives:

- a. Adopt basic quality of life standard to guide the development of communitywide and neighborhood facilities plans.
- b. Continue to support public and privately operated community services programs to serve the entire community.
- c. Provide incentives for development to provide facilities which exceed minimum standards and correct existing deficiencies.
- d. Continue strong support of recreational programs for all age groups and emphasize the development of neighborhood and “pocket” parks especially in existing neighborhoods.

GOAL 11: Provide a Safe and Healthy Environment for all Escondido Residents

Objectives:

- a. Establish service levels for police and fire protection which will be maintained with new development without adversely affecting service levels for existing developments.
- b. Continue coordination with county and state officials to deal with issues involving toxic materials and adopt ordinances to implement the County Hazardous Waste Management Plan or equivalent.

- c. Establish grading drainage and erosion control standards which control surface runoff associated with new development while preserving natural resources.
- d. Participate in local and regional programs to meet state and federal air and water quality standards.

GOAL 12: Provide Certainty in Implementing the General Plan

Objectives:

- a. Observe the stringent and consistent objective criteria located in the Implementation Chapter which must be satisfied before the General Plan can be amended.
- b. Revise zoning, grading, and subdivision ordinances and adopt other ordinances including the requirement of facilities plans which will implement the goals and objectives of the General Plan.
- c. Adopt performance criteria within appropriate ordinances to ensure land-use compatibility, environmental protection, and improvement of neighborhoods identified in the Land Use Element of the General Plan.

D. QUALITY OF LIFE STANDARDS

In conjunction with the Goals and Objectives included in the General Plan, a series of Quality of Life Standards have been developed to establish minimum thresholds of service levels for various public improvements and facilities. In developing Subarea Facilities Plans consistent with the policies set forth in the Growth Management Element (see Chapter VI), the existing facilities will be evaluated and measures taken to ensure that adequate service levels are maintained.

The timing of development in the Tier 2 and 3 areas (see Growth Management Element) will be dependent upon the provision of facilities and services based upon these standards. Although development in the Urbanized Tier 1 will not be restricted from a timing perspective by the Quality of Life Standards, they will be used as the basis for capital improvement programs, impact fees and other financing mechanisms established to provide facilities and services for Tier 1 and for Citywide needs.

Quality of Life Standard 1: Traffic And Transportation

Circulation Element streets and intersections shall be planned and developed to achieve a minimum level of service “C” as defined by the Highway Capacity Manual as amended or updated or such other national standard deemed appropriate by the City. Level of service “C” represents stable traffic flow that is at the beginning range of conditions where individual users become significantly affected by the interaction of others in the traffic stream. Due to physical design characteristics, environmental resource considerations, existing development, freeway interchange impacts and incomplete system improvements, level of service “C” may not be feasible in all areas at all times. However, level of service “C” should be pursued in the ultimate implementation of the circulation system.

Where existing street or intersection capacities are below level of service “C,” street, operational or Transportation System Management improvements shall be required or

planned to improve the service level to “C” when ever feasible based upon impacts of future development. Such requirements or plans may be incremental to accommodate future development or the recycling of existing development. Feasibility of level of service “C” shall be based on impacts upon existing development or environmental constraints along street segments or intersections.

Capital improvement programs and/or facility plans for all growth management tiers shall include Transportation System Management measures designed to maintain or improve levels of service at existing or developed intersections where these locations may be impacted by further development or traffic volume growth.

The City shall support public transportation facilities through such measures as requiring right-of-way for commuter rail or park-and-ride facilities, transit stops or facilities, or for other transportation needs. The City shall establish Transportation System Management measures and shall cooperate with agencies and coordinate with regional transportation plans and transportation agencies involving the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) Vision 2020 population model to determine Quality of Life compliance.

Quality of Life Standard 2: Schools

The community shall have sufficient classroom space to meet state-mandated space requirements and teacher/student ratios with student attendance calculated on prescribed state and/or local school board standards. Implementation of this standard shall be the responsibility of the school districts, and other appropriate agencies.

Quality of Life Standard 3: Fire Service

In urbanized areas of the City, an initial response time of seven and one-half (7½) minutes for all structure fire and emergency Advanced Life Support (ALS) calls and a maximum response time of ten (10) minutes for supporting companies shall be maintained. A minimum of seven (7) total fire stations each staffed with an ALS engine company shall be in place prior to General Plan buildout. For outlying areas beyond a five (5) minute travel time or further than three (3) miles from the nearest fire station, all new structures shall be protected by fire sprinkler systems or an equivalent system as approved by the Fire Chief. Travel time is the elapsed time from a verbal or computerized acknowledgment of the dispatch by the responding unit at the moment of departure from the station to its arrival at the scene. Response time is the elapsed time from receiving a call for service to the responding unit’s arrival at the scene. The Fire Department intends to meet these times for no less than 90 percent of all emergency responses by engine companies.

Quality of Life Standard 4: Police

The City shall maintain a personnel staffing levels based on community-generated workloads and officer availability. Resources will be adjusted to maintain an initial response time for priority 1 calls (crimes in progress or life threatening) of no more than five (5) minutes and an initial response time for priority 2 calls (serious calls requiring rapid response but not life threatening incidents) of no more than six and one-

half (6 1/2) minutes. Resources will be allocated to organize patrol areas and involve community members where appropriate to achieve Community Oriented Problem Solving efforts. To the maximum economic extent feasible, the Police Department will take aggressive enforcement action against crime trends, including maintenance procedures and incorporating community involvement and education as a means to deter potential incidents.

Quality of Life Standard 5: Sewer System

The City sewer system shall have adequate trunkline, pumping facilities, outfall capacities and secondary treatment to meet both normal and emergency demand and to avoid sewage spills affecting stream courses and reservoirs and shall provide sewage capacity able to treat a minimum of 250 gallons per day for each residence on said system in urban areas or as established in the City's Sewer Master Plan.

Quality of Life Standard 6: Parks

The City shall provide a minimum of 5.9 acres of developed active neighborhood and community parks per 1,000 dwelling units in addition to 5.9 acres of passive park land and/or open space for habitat preservation and additional recreational opportunities totaling 11.8 active and passive acres per 1,000 dwelling units. Priority shall be given to acquiring and developing neighborhood parks in urban areas with the greatest need. School playground areas may be included as park acreage, provided, however, that neighborhood park amenities and facilities are provided and open to the public as determined by the City Council. Prior to buildout, the City shall provide a minimum of two (2) community centers and other specialized recreation facilities shall be incorporated into area-wide community facility plans.

Quality of Life Standard 7: Library Service

The public library system shall maintain a stock and staffing to meet the minimum standards set by the American Library Association of three (3) volumes per capita, which for Quality of Life standards shall be measured as 8 items per dwelling unit. The City shall provide appropriate library facilities with a minimum of 1.6 square feet of library facility floor area per dwelling unit of the City of Escondido prior to buildout of the General Plan.

Quality of Life Standard 8: Open Space

A system of open-space corridors, easement and acquisition programs and trails shall be established in the open-space, conservation and community facilities elements. Sensitive lands including permanent bodies of water, floodways, and slopes over 35 percent inclination shall be preserved. Significant wetlands, riparian or woodland and habitat or habitat for rare or endangered species shall be protected in coordination with state and/or federal agencies having jurisdiction over such areas. Density transfers shall be permitted to preserve such lands as established in the land-use designation.

Quality of Life Standard 9: Air Quality

The City shall implement feasible measures within the jurisdiction of the City to meet standards established by state and federal laws regulating air quality including, but not

limited to, the reduction of the number of vehicular miles traveled, supporting public transportation, participating in the development of park-and-ride facilities, coordinating land-use approvals and occupancies with the Air Pollution Control District regulations, increasing landscaping standards and promoting landscaping programs, and encouraging non-polluting alternative energy systems.

Quality of Life Standard 10: Water System

The City shall maintain provisions for adequate water supply, pipeline capacity and storage capacity to meet normal and emergency situations and shall have the capacity to provide a minimum of 600 gallons per day per household or as established by the City's Water Master Plan. Federal and state drinking water quality standards shall be maintained. The City shall continue efforts to implement water reclamation and water conservation programs.

Quality of Life Standard 11: Economic Prosperity

The City shall increase Escondido's median household income and per capita wage compared to the region by actively recruiting new businesses and expanding existing businesses that increase employment densities and retain skilled workers whose wage exceeds that of workers who earn a wage comparable to the San Diego Region's median household income, and bring new dollars into the local economy.