

1. INTRODUCTION

The Peoria General Plan strives to build a synchronous vision of the City's future from the visions of a diverse population. It integrates the aspirations of the City's residents, businesses and officials into a strategy for managing change. The General Plan is the primary tool for guiding the future development of the City. It provides a framework for making decisions by describing long-term goals for the City's future as well as policies to guide day-to-day decisions.

The City of Peoria General Plan Introduction chapter is organized in the following manner:

- 1.a. Peoria's Roots
- 1.b. Purpose of the General Plan
- 1.c. Legislative Framework
- 1.d. Goals, Objectives and Policies
- 1.e. Implementation Program
- 1.f. Major Themes of the General Plan
- 1.g. Use and Organization of the General Plan
- 1.h. Other Components of the General Plan

1.A. PEORIA'S ROOTS

Peoria was established in the 1880s when William J. Murphy's vision of fertile farm lands fed by water from the Salt River became reality with the completion of the Arizona Canal in 1885. Once this canal was completed, Murphy went East to interest people in settling in this new community. Mr. Murphy was successful in catching people's attention - over 5,000 acres of land in the new district was purchased by citizens from Peoria, Illinois. Four families from Peoria, Illinois were among the first to move to Arizona to occupy and work their land.

Residences in the new community sprang up and a school and Post Office were established by 1889. More people followed the original families and Peoria continued to grow as a farming community. The farmlands were fertile and the people made a good living, despite having to battle swarms of red ants and the occasional rattlesnake in the kitchen.

Peoria was incorporated in 1954, with boundaries covering one square mile of land. The warm climate and small-town atmosphere of Peoria continued to attract people, and still do today. Currently, Peoria covers nearly 178 square miles and is home to over 155,000 residents. Peoria is currently Arizona's 9th largest city in terms of population.

1.B. PURPOSE OF THE GENERAL PLAN

The Peoria General Plan is the fundamental policy document guiding future growth and development in the City and its planning area. It is a plan defined and driven by extensive community participation among its citizens, business interests, community leaders, technical staff and advisors. The Plan is dynamic and intended to be periodically updated to keep pace with the community's changing values and goals regarding growth and development.

The Plan is used by the City Council and Planning & Zoning Commission to evaluate land use changes. It is used by City Staff in reviewing building and development regulations and preparing recommendations

on projects. It is often used by citizens and neighborhood groups to understand the City's long-range plans and proposals for different areas. The General Plan also provides the basis for the City's development regulations and its Capital Improvements Plan.

1.C. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

Arizona State Statutes require that all cities prepare a General Plan. Cities with a population exceeding 50,000, such as Peoria, are required to prepare additional elements not required of smaller cities. State Statutes have also initiated a comprehensive review process incorporating the City's legislative body, the county planning agency, each contiguous community, the regional planning agency, the State Department of Commerce, and any individual submitting a written request.

Additionally, the legislation now requires land use decisions to 'conform' to the General Plan. This requirement places a greater standard and linkage with the General Plan than the former 'consistency' guideline.

The General Plan and its subsequent 10-year update must be approved by the City's electorate in a general election. All proposed 'major amendments' to the General Plan must be considered at a single-public hearing (during the calendar year proposed) and receive a two-thirds affirmative vote by the City Council.

1.D. GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

The following definitions explain the functional relevancy of the terms used to present the City's planning policy in the General Plan. They will provide the basis for the City's evaluation of future development proposals.

Goal: A concise statement that describes a desired condition to be achieved. A goal is a target or end which planning is directed. A goal is not quantifiable, time dependent or suggestive of specific actions for achievement.

Objective: A concise statement or method of action which addresses a goal, and if pursued and accomplished, will ultimately result in achievement of the goal to which it is related. An objective should be achievable and, when possible, measurable and time specific.

Policy: A specific statement that guides decision-making to achieve plan implementation. A policy is clearly stated and is formulated in response to the goals and objectives. Where a Policy states that the City "shall" take some action, the City is using "shall" in the directory, as opposed to mandatory, sense. This means that the City is stating a desirable or preferential outcome. The City's failure to follow a specific Policy in no way will invalidate the relevance, intent or applicability of the General Plan, or of the Goals, Objectives and Policies in the General Plan.

1.E. IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Closely related to the Goals, Objectives and Policies found in the General Plan is the Implementation Program. This program provides the City with a comprehensive list of tasks used as benchmarks for progress toward the ultimate vision of the City and the General Plan. The implementation tasks have been compiled in Table 14-3 in the Chapter 14 Plan Administration of the General Plan. Implementation tasks are broadly described in the table and assigned to a City department or a group of departments, since many tasks involve multiple disciplines. Lastly, these tasks are assigned a priority, which range from 'On-going' to 'High' depending on urgency or timing of other related events.

1.F. MAJOR THEMES OF THE GENERAL PLAN

PROVIDING A BALANCE OF RESIDENTIAL AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Peoria strives to achieve a balance of commercial and high-paying employment opportunities to foster community sustainability, reduce commute times and improve air quality.

PROTECTING NATURAL RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER

However, this land use balance should not be achieved at the expense or without regard to natural habitats, the pristine desert character and other environmentally significant systems. Policies and programs introduced in the Desert Lands Conservation Ordinance, the Trails Master Plan and the Rivers Master Plan have been woven into the General Plan.

DEVELOPING QUALITY ACCESS WITHIN THE CITY

Upgrades and design aspects of Lake Pleasant Parkway and State Route 74, coordinating access and opportunities with the proposed Loop 303 freeway and existing Loop 101 freeway, as well as improving the visual quality of Grand Avenue are important circulation considerations for the City.

PROVIDE A RESIDENTIAL-ORIENTED STREET SYSTEM

This includes addressing truck traffic in residential areas, restricting high traffic generating development in areas with limited access, retaining appropriate travel speeds in regard to safety and congestion, providing access to bus transit and providing bicycle lanes, as well as access to parks and recreation facilities.

MEETING THE RECREATIONAL NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY

Peoria is fortunate to have an abundance of river corridors and natural landforms. The community has stressed the importance of leveraging these resources with a comprehensive system of trails, bike routes and recreational corridors with regional context and connections to adjoining cities.

ENHANCING PEORIA'S OLD TOWN

Old Town is the heart of the City and provides a window into its early development. The Plan continues to promote the investment and revitalization of this area continuing with efforts identified in the Old Town Revitalization Plan.

PROVIDING A DIVERSITY OF HOUSING OPTIONS

As a City located on the fringe of the Phoenix Metropolitan Area, Peoria has predominantly developed with an emphasis on single-family residential home ownership. The Plan recognizes that as the community continues to mature and employment base increases, it will be important to provide a diversity of proximate housing types and sizes.

FACILITATING FISCALLY-BALANCED DEVELOPMENT

As the City continues to grow, development should continue to pay for its share of community resources impacted from the development.

CELEBRATING THE CITY'S HERITAGE

The City maintains its commitment to supporting the arts and to the preservation of its natural and cultural resources for the enrichment of current and future generations.

1.G. USE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE GENERAL PLAN

Peoria’s General Plan is intended to be used by all segments of the community as well as other individuals interested in the future of the City. A key concept embodied within the Plan is the Vision for Peoria. The vision, though not a short-term binding goal, provides the community the necessary focus and direction it needs in order to grow in a healthy, sustainable manner.

As mentioned previously, State law requires several mandatory sections or “elements.” In preparing the Plan, the City recognized that some elements had overlapping issues and may be better served in a combined format. The table below illustrates the State mandated element and its counterpart in the Peoria General Plan.

TABLE 1-1 Corresponding General Plan Elements

State-Mandated Element	Corresponding Peoria General Plan Element
Land Use	Land Use
Growth Areas	Growth Areas
Circulation	Circulation
Bicycling	
*Transit (optional)	
Open Space Recreation	Recreation and Open Space
Water Resources	Water Resources
Cost of Development	Cost of Development
Housing	Housing
Safety	Safety
Public Services and Facilities	Public Services and Facilities
Public Buildings	
Conservation, Rehabilitation & Redevelopment	Revitalization and Redevelopment
Environmental Planning	Environmental Resources
Conservation	
Energy	
	Economic Development

As you use the General Plan, keep in mind that the goals, objectives and policies are just as important as the various maps in making land use and development decisions. To conform to the Plan, a project must not only be permitted on the Land Use Map, but must also meet the intent of the Plan’s policies.

1.H. OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE GENERAL PLAN

The Land Use Map and Circulation Map are probably the most familiar parts of the Plan. These maps identify the land use designations and the envisioned roadway system for Peoria and its planning area.

One of the products from the Circulation Map will be the development of a more detailed Street Classification Map. This map is both a planning and engineering tool that identifies specific road widths, number of lanes, intersection configurations and other future right-of-way needs.

The Plan Administration section outlines the process and measures for updating the General Plan. Contained within this section are the criteria for determining if an action constitutes a major amendment to the General Plan. Such proposals may only be considered once annually and must be affirmed by a 2/3 vote of the City Council.