
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. Public Participation 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 132,300 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 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.

Growing Smarter and Growing Smarter Plus are legislative statutes requiring increased planning efforts by cities and counties.

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

The Growing Smarter legislation added the Open Space, Cost of Development, Environmental Planning, Growth Areas and Water Resources elements to the General Plan.

See Objective 2.1.Q and Chapter 14 for Major Amendment criteria.

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 clear and unambiguous, and is formulated in response to the goals and objectives, as well as the results of the data collection and analysis. Where a Policy states that the City “shall” take some action, the City’s 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. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROGRAM

The General Plan is the product of an extensive public outreach effort that involved hundreds of Peoria residents and other interested parties. Early in the process, the City Council adopted a citizen participation program to follow in developing the new plan. The program was designed to maximize public participation in the process through citizen questionnaires, town hall meetings, periodic announcements and newsletters and broader advertising methods. The project team maintained a web site with announcements and draft elements and maps from the General Plan.

Additionally, 32 persons representing diverse interests were appointed to two advisory committees formed early in the process. The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) consisted of representatives from several City departments and the Peoria Economic Development Group (PEDG), a private non-profit agency charged with economic development responsibilities for the City. The broader Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) included interested citizens, local business interests, the City of Surprise,

Maricopa County, BLM, Arizona State Land Department, MCDOT, Arizona Game and Fish, the Peoria and Deer Valley School Districts and the Peoria Chamber of Commerce.

Early public participation efforts were instrumental in developing a ‘*vision*’ for the City. The *Vision* is an overarching statement that defines the desired condition or state of the City in terms that are meaningful to its citizens. The *Vision* for the City of Peoria is defined below.

Peoria, Arizona is an outstanding place to live, work and play with superior recreational facilities, municipal services, and transportation accessibility to local and regional attractions. Peoria is an advantageous City for commerce and business with superior schools, outstanding residential neighborhoods and a thriving economy. It is a big City, with small town friendliness and charm, attracting visitors, both near and far, for business, recreation and tourism.

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.

See Goal 2.1.

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 Master Plan, the Trails Master Plan and the Rivers Master Plan have been woven into the General Plan.

See Chapter 9, Recreation and Open Spaces Element and Chapter 10, Environmental Resources Element.

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, and 75 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 Central Peoria 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 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 and expand, development should continue to pay towards its "fair" share of community resources impacted from the development.

See Chapter 3, Circulation Element.

See Chapter 9, Recreation and Open Space Element and Chapter 11, Environmental Resources Element.

See Chapter 2, Land Use Element and Chapter 6, Revitalization and Redevelopment Element.

See Chapter 2, Land Use Element and Chapter 7, Housing Element.

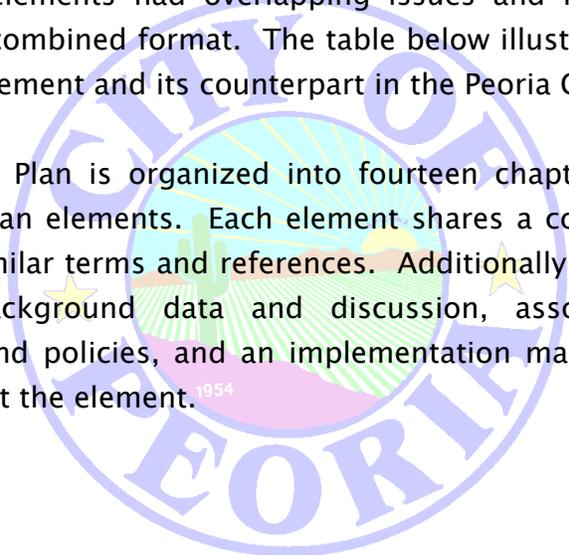
See Chapter 12, Cost of Development Element.

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 is not a binding goal and may not be achievable in the near future. However, it does provide community focus and the direction it desires to proceed.

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.

The General Plan is organized into fourteen chapters, twelve of which are plan elements. Each element shares a common format and uses similar terms and references. Additionally, each element contains background data and discussion, associated goals, objectives and policies, and an implementation matrix of actions to implement the element.



**TABLE 1-1
CORRESPONDING GENERAL PLAN ELEMENTS**

State-Mandated Element	Corresponding Peoria General Plan Element
Land Use	Land Use
Circulation	Circulation
Bicycling	
*Transit (optional)	
Open Space	Recreation and Open Space
Recreation	
Water Resources	Water Resources
Growth Areas	Growth Areas
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.

Each element contains an **Implementation Matrix** which describes the action tasks or activities to be accomplished. The matrix also specifies the lead City Department, the projected timeframe for accomplishing the task and potential funding sources.

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.

The supportive figures and statistics of the General Plan are contained within a separate **background report** edition.