

## Authority of the General Plan

This La Habra Heights General Plan will serve as the cornerstone for future planning and development in the City. This General Plan describes the City's vision for the future through the policies and plans contained herein that are designed to shape the physical development of the community. Public and private decision-makers will refer to this General Plan to identify the needs and desires of the community in decision-making related to land use and development. In essence, this General Plan will serve as the City's constitution.<sup>1</sup> This General Plan acknowledges the City's previous planning efforts, the established land use patterns in the community, and the adopted development policies. However, this General Plan is also unique in a number of respects:

- This General Plan will guide the City's development as the 21st century progresses; a century that promises both new opportunities as well as unforeseen challenges.
- The City is located in the midst of a heavily urbanized area and continued growth in the neighboring communities will have an impact on La Habra Heights.
- The City's history and development patterns have been shaped, in large measure, by resident activism, as well as the City's topography and location and by the vigilance and efforts of the residents who were determined to preserve the City's rural character.
- This General Plan establishes patterns of land use and development that promote the maintenance of the City's rural character.

- This General Plan supports regional efforts towards the development of a conservation area within the Puente/Chino Hills.

California planning law requires every City and County to prepare and adopt a comprehensive General Plan to guide future development.<sup>2</sup> The citizens of the City of La Habra Heights have played an active and important role in the development and evolution of this General Plan. The City Council authorized the creation of a General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) to update the City's original General Plan prepared in the late 1970's and early 1980's following incorporation.

The GPAC was organized into a number of separate subcommittees that were responsible for the preparation of the individual Plan Elements. A total of 25 GPAC meetings were held, as well as a number of subcommittee workshops. Community workshops were also held at key intervals of the work program to further expand the opportunity for public participation. A total of 25 Planning Commission public hearings/study sessions were also held. In addition, a community survey was completed to identify the key issues. This General Plan is a direct outgrowth of this community-based planning effort.

### Long-Range Planning in the City

Planning case law has placed the General Plan atop the hierarchy of local government laws that regulate land use and development. Consequently, state planning law mandates consistency between the General Plan and all other land use plans and regulations. The zoning ordinance, specific plans, and individual development proposals must all be consistent with the goals, policies, plans, and standards contained in this General Plan.

<sup>1</sup> State of California Government Code Section 65300

<sup>2</sup> The La Habra Heights General Plan has been prepared pursuant to Government Code Section 65300, et. seq., which requires the City to adopt a comprehensive, long-range General Plan to guide the physical development of the community.

## History of the of the City

The area that is now known as La Habra Heights was first developed by Edwin Hart in the 1920's. Early efforts towards preventing increased density resulted in Los Angeles County establishing one-acre zoning for the area in 1949. Through the years, residents have defeated subsequent efforts to increase development density. Busloads of residents repeatedly journeyed to the Los Angeles County Hall of Administration to let the County Supervisors know that the loss of the rural character of "The Heights" was unacceptable.

In 1970, the residents were once again galvanized in opposition to a proposed widening and realignment of Highway 39 that would have resulted in significant impacts on the community. The residents were ultimately successful in defeating the proposed roadway project.

Both La Habra and Whittier undertook efforts to annex portions of the City and these efforts also failed due to vigorous community opposition. Local residents also filed suit against Whittier to prevent condominiums from being constructed near the western border of La Habra Heights.

The City of La Habra Heights was incorporated in 1978 so that the residents could control their destiny and preserve the minimum one-acre zoning, the rural character, the volunteer Fire Department, and to obtain better law enforcement.

The City of La Habra Heights last updated its General Plan in 1980, two years after incorporation; Ronald Reagan was in the White House and the population of Los Angeles County was 7,032,075 persons. Our County's population is now 11,419,212, larger than that of many countries and California's economy is the fifth largest in the world. The surrounding region has experienced dramatic growth in population along with the attendant impacts of this growth, including new development, traffic, increased noise, and air pollution, to name a

few. This growth has had a direct impact on the City.

The previous General Plan addressed issues and aspirations of a previous generation of residents and property owners in the City. Over the intervening years, many changes have been realized, both within the City and in the surrounding region. As part of the development of this General Plan, it was necessary to take an inventory of both the "unfinished business" of the original General Plan as well as of those challenges that face the community in this new century. Some of the issues and challenges the City will face in the coming years are shared with our neighboring communities, while others are unique to La Habra Heights.

### Organization of the General Plan

General Plans prepared by local governments contain a set of chapters, or Elements, that address a wide range of issues that are relevant to future land use planning and development. All General Plans must include a Land Use Element, Circulation Element, Housing Element, Noise Element, Safety Element, Conservation Element, and Open Space Element. These Elements may be reorganized or expanded, as long as the relevant issues are addressed.

## Scope & Content of the General Plan

The scope and content of a General Plan prepared by a local government, as well as the process that must be followed in its adoption and amendment, is governed by the State of California planning laws.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the courts have further refined the interpretation of the legislature's intent with respect to the scope and content of local General Plans over the past decades.

The General Plan represents the foundation in the long-range planning for land use and development. The importance of the General

<sup>3</sup> Government Code Section 65302

Plan is emphasized in the Government Code that states the General Plan “serves as the constitution of the local government for which it has been prepared.” The foundation of the United States Constitution rests on the Bill of Rights and its Amendments. As with the United States Constitution, the foundation of the La Habra Heights General Plan rests on its goals and policies. With respect to General Plan policies, the State of California General Plan Guidelines state the following:

*“The General Plan shall consist of a statement of development policies and shall include a diagram or diagrams and text setting forth objectives, principles, standards, and plan proposals. A development policy is a general plan statement that guides action. Development policies include goals, objectives, principles, plan proposals, and standards. Therefore, with regard to General Plans, “policy” has both a specific and general meaning.”*

### Organization of the General Plan

The La Habra Heights General Plan consists of an integrated and internally consistent set of goals, policies and programs that address the seven issue areas that the State requires local General Plans to consider: land use, circulation, housing, noise, safety, conservation, and open space.<sup>4</sup> The La Habra Heights General Plan consists of seven elements that comply with the requirements of California Government Code Section 65300, et. seq. The Elements that comprise this General Plan include the following:

- The **Land Use Element** indicates the general distribution and intensity of land use and development contemplated within the land area governed by the General Plan. This Element complies with the state requirements for a Land Use Element.
- The **Housing Element** details plans and programs for the maintenance of existing neighborhoods and the development of new housing to accommodate future demand. The

Housing Element was prepared and adopted prior to the other elements and complies with state requirements for a Housing Element.

- The **Circulation Element** identifies the location and extent of roadways and other infrastructure in the City. This element complies with specific state requirements for a Circulation Element.
- The **Environmental Resource Management Element**, or **ERME**, indicates the City's policies with respect to the conservation and preservation of important natural and man-made resources. This Element complies with the state requirements for both a Conservation Element and an Open Space Element.
- The **Safety Element** identifies the City's policies relative to the reduction and mitigation of natural and man-made hazards. This Element complies with the specific state requirements for a Safety Element.
- The **Noise Element** indicates the nature and extent of environmental noise and establishes City policy to control noise. This Element complies with the requirements for a Noise Element.
- The **Air Quality Element** establishes City policy with respect to air pollution and the improvement of air quality in the City and region. This Element is an optional element not specifically required under the State law.

In addition to the aforementioned Element, the Implementation Program identifies those programs that will be effective in ensuring that the policies and plans contained in the City of La Habra Heights General Plan become a reality.

<sup>4</sup> Government Code Section 65302

Table 1 indicates the relationship of those elements that comprise the La Habra Heights General Plan with those required by the State of California.

Table 1 The La Habra Heights General Plan Format							
La Habra Heights General Plan Elements	State Required Elements						
	Land Use	Housing	Circulation	Open Space	Conservation	Safety	Noise
Land Use	■						
Circulation			■				
Environmental Resource Management				■	■		
Safety						■	
Noise							■
Air Quality							
Housing		■					
Implementation	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

## Format of General Plan Elements

Each Element is both internally consistent and consistent with all other Elements so that the General Plan provides clear, consistent, and unified policy direction. Each of the Elements that comprise this General Plan are organized in the following manner:

- The **Introduction** provides an overview of objectives and key issues germane to the Element, and discusses its relationship to the other Elements that comprise the City of La Habra Heights General Plan.
- The **Issues and Policies** section provides a detailed identification of those issues facing the City and policies designed to address those issues.

- Each Element includes a **Plan** that indicates standards and programs that will be effective in the implementation of the Element's goals and policies. Each "plan" includes maps and diagrams to assist in the understanding of the policies' intent.

## Overview of the City of La Habra Heights

The City of La Habra Heights is located within the eastern portion of Los Angeles County within the geographic center of the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area. Even though the community is located within the second largest urban population center in the United States, the topography and setting contributes to the City's rural character. Compared to other communities located in Southern California,

## Introduction

there are few areas located further from the regional freeway network.

The City, with just over 6 square miles in total land area, is a community of singular natural beauty. The views of the local hills and the abundant open space lands, with their trees, shrubs, grasslands and thriving wildlife, stand in sharp contrast to the dense suburban development found within the neighboring cities. Maintaining that contrast and protecting the City's natural and rural environment is a major focus of this General Plan.

In 2000 there were 1,951 housing units in La Habra Heights according to the U.S. Census. The La Habra Heights Housing Element estimates that a maximum of 386 additional housing units may be added to the City's housing stock based on buildable acreage available for development. An additional 200 units are more realistic given the significant development constraints found within these remaining parcels. Based on existing land use designations and development, the City is now over 90% developed. In response to this developmental maturity, this General Plan establishes guiding principles related to the maintenance, preservation, and improvement of the City, as it now exists.

La Habra Heights is bounded on the north by the unincorporated communities of Rowland Heights and Hacienda Heights, on the east by unincorporated Los Angeles County, on the south by the City of La Habra, and on the west by the City of Whittier.

### La Habra Rancho - 1839

The first inhabitants of the area were the ancestors of the Gabrieleno people that migrated into Southern California during the last ice age more than 10,000 years ago. The European presence in the area was marked with the establishment of the local missions in San Fernando, San Gabriel, and San Juan Capistrano. In fact, the first European owner of the land that now comprises La Habra Heights was the Mission San Gabriel.

Marino Roldan obtained a 6,698-acre land grant from the government of Mexico on October 22, 1839. This land grant, the *Rancho Canada de la Habra*, included all of La Habra Heights and most of what is now the City of La Habra. Roldan subsequently sold the rancho to Andres Pico, the brother of Pio Pico, the last Mexican governor of California.

La Habra Heights location in a regional context is illustrated in Exhibit 1-1. A detailed topographic map of the City is shown in Exhibit 1-2. Finally, an aerial view of the City is provided in Exhibit 1-3.

Throughout this General Plan, tidbits of local history and other relevant information are provided for the reader's enjoyment. This information was taken from a number of sources that are identified in the reference section of this General Plan.

## The City's Vision for the 21st Century

The GPAC developed a set of goals for the future of La Habra Heights. These goals will serve as the planning policy framework for the City of La Habra Heights well into the 21st Century. These goals focus on the maintenance and preservation of those amenities that are unique to La Habra Heights.

**Goal 1.** Protect, preserve and enhance the residential rural character and individualistic lifestyle of La Habra Heights.

**Goal 2.** Minimize alteration of the natural terrain.

**Goal 3.** Preserve scenic views.

**Goal 4.** Preserve existing watercourses, scenic beauty, mature trees and vegetation.

**Goal 5.** Protect, preserve, and encourage open space within the City to ensure the maintenance of wildlife habitats, wildlife corridors, natural drainage courses, and passive recreational resources.

**Goal 6.** Encourage the expansion and use of the existing trail system for horseback riding, bicycling, and hiking.

**Goal 7.** Require that future residential development continues the present variety and diversity of structural design and appearance, maintains residents' privacy with large distances between houses, and is harmonious with natural settings.

**Goal 8.** Allow and encourage agricultural uses, including but not limited to, citrus and avocado groves, and tree farms.

**Goal 9.** Allow and encourage animal husbandry, including keeping of horses, animals used for 4-H projects, and other livestock as allowed by local ordinance

**Goal 10.** Assure that local and regional traffic demands are accommodated in a manner consistent with the unique rural environment of La Habra Heights.

**Goal 11.** Resist and discourage urban features such as curbs, gutters, sidewalks, and streetlights.

**Goal 12.** Reduce potential fire hazards and recognize geological hazards.

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