

# Planning Zoning &

HANDBOOK

## THE MUNICIPAL GENERAL PLAN

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## **THE MUNICIPAL GENERAL PLAN**

Local government planning in Arizona (as in most other states) is carried out through specific powers and authority delegated to the local governments from the State by planning enabling legislation. Urban planning has occurred in Arizona since at least the 1920's under enabling legislation that was modeled on the Standard Planning and Zoning Enabling Acts, which were developed by the U.S. Department of Commerce in the 1920's. In August 1973, the Urban Environment Management Act was passed and specifically authorized cities and towns to prepare general plans. Enabling legislation for counties has developed in a more piecemeal manner. Growing Smarter and Growing Smarter Plus legislation, passed in 1998 and 2000 respectively, significantly changed the requirements to amend and prepare a general or comprehensive plan.

The plan-making process is first described for municipalities in the following sections. Portions of this discussion are referenced in the next chapter covering county planning because, despite differences in enabling laws, the process is largely the same for city, town, or county.

## 6.1 FUNCTIONS OF THE PLAN

Arizona law refers to municipal plans as general plans and to county plans as comprehensive plans. The plan contains a community's goals and policies on development, its aspirations for the future, strategies for implementation to achieve future goals, and a proposed map of the jurisdiction that typically includes land use, transportation, and public facilities and services. Growing Smarter/Plus legislation requires the inclusion of elements to address areas such as open space, environmental planning, growth areas, cost of development, and water resources. Communities may opt to include additional elements to address issues of local significance, such as an economic development element. (Elements are covered in more detail in Section 6.2.)

**The Plan as a Statement of Policy** ■ As a statement of policy, the plan serves as a guide to elected bodies responsible for adopting land use controls and to the courts that must judge their fairness and reasonableness. Throughout the planning process, conflicts among the goals of competing interest groups must be resolved to adequately represent the community as a whole; yet goals and objectives must be measurable and specific enough to be implementable. This requires an effective public participation program to gain community support for the final plan goals, objectives, and policies. Policy outlined in the plan can provide stability and consistency through political and administrative changes.

**The Plan as Part of a Process** ■ Planning is a continual process. No plan can be the "last word" on a community's future development. A single planning document cannot provide solutions to all the economic and social problems facing a changing community. Conditions, resources, and goals could change, making it necessary to amend the plan.

An important purpose of developing a plan is to work through the process – to create a basis for

continuing activity designed to produce the best possible decisions about the community's future. Planning processes should be participatory, and provide the opportunity to bring the public and other stakeholders into a common forum to talk about a community vision and goals.

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**The essence of the plan is that it is a statement of policy, and an expression of community intentions and aspirations.**

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An effective process will ensure that the plan is an accurate and complete summary of the community's vision at a particular time, and the stakeholders will be familiar with and supportive of its goals due to their participation.

**Policy as Strategy** ■ The plan will contain policies on land use, transportation, public services, housing, environmental or resource conservation, and whatever else is important in the community. These policies should support the community's overall development goals and their priority. In growing cities, policy may be directed to maintaining, stimulating, or managing new development, or to controlling the location and type of development occurring. In cities with stable or declining populations, policy may focus on infill development, effective use of public resources, and maintenance of existing facilities and services. Large cities, and counties with substantial regional differences, may prepare their plan incrementally. Another benefit to planning is to coordinate policy and priorities among the various elements (such as land use, circulation, etc.) so that decisions made by different government entities are mutually supportive and not conflicting.

**The Plan as a Guide to Decision-Making** ■ Clear, concise policies provide the means for implementing the general plan. A capital improvements program (CIP) and municipal or county budget provide the schedule and

resources for the jurisdiction's part in accomplishing these goals. The most common way in which the land use element of the plan is used for decision-making is through the zoning process. The zoning map and proposed land use map are graphic depictions of land use policy. Subdivision regulations, like the zoning ordinance, also should be designed and administered in accordance with the development policies outlined in the plan.

## 6.2 LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE GENERAL PLAN

By law, the plan should be developed, updated, or readopted at least every ten years. A.R.S. § 9-461.05 contains the requirements for municipal general plans, and states:

- ▶ Each planning agency shall prepare and the legislative body of each municipality shall adopt a comprehensive, long-range general plan for the development of the municipality. The planning agency shall coordinate the production of its general plan with the creation of the state land department conceptual land use plans under title 37, chapter 2, article 5.1 and shall cooperate with the state land department regarding integrating the conceptual state land use plans into the municipality's general land use plan. The general plan shall include provisions that identify changes or modifications to the plan that constitute amendments and major amendments. The plan shall be adopted and readopted in the manner prescribed by Section 9-461.06.
- ▶ The general plan shall be so prepared that all or individual elements of it may be adopted by the legislative body and that it may be made applicable to all or part of the territory of the municipality.
- ▶ The general plan shall consist of a statement of community goals and development policies. It

shall include maps, any necessary diagrams and text setting forth objectives, principles, standards and plan proposals.

The statutes also describe the contents for each of the required elements, which are summarized in the sections below. Appendix E is a flow chart of the required general plan elements relative to population size and growth rate.

### 6.2.1 General Plan Elements for All Communities

The statutes require that each municipal plan include land use and circulation elements with certain components.

**Land Use Element** ■ This element is typically the basis for the remainder of the plan, and would include a planned land use map. The statutes require that the land use element:

- ▶ Designates the proposed general distribution, location, and extent of such land uses as housing, business, industry, agriculture, recreation, education, public buildings and grounds, open space, and such other categories of public and private uses of land as may be appropriate to the municipality
- ▶ Include a statement of the standards of population density and building intensity recommended for the various land use categories covered by the plan
- ▶ Include consideration of access to incident solar energy for all general categories of land use
- ▶ Include policies to address maintaining a broad variety of land uses including the range of uses existing in the municipality when the plan is adopted, readopted, or amended
- ▶ For cities and towns with territory in the vicinity of a military airport (as defined by A.R.S. § 28-8461), include consideration of military airport operations

- ▶ For large and fast growing municipalities, the general plan must be ratified by a vote of the public to become effective. (See page 31 under “Ratification” heading.)

**Circulation Element** ■ This element should include the general location and extent of existing and proposed freeways, arterial and collector streets, bicycle routes, jogging paths, and any other modes of transportation as may be appropriate, all correlated with the land use element of the plan.

### 6.2.2 General Plan Elements for Large and Fast Growing Communities

The following elements are required for all communities with populations greater than 10,000, and communities with populations between 2,500 and 10,000 AND a population growth rate that exceeded an average of 2% for the previous ten-year period. In calculating population totals and growth rates, the statutes direct communities to use the most recent U.S. decennial census.

**Open Space Element** ■ This element addresses open space and recreational resources in the community, and typically is closely tied to the land use element. State Statutes require the following be included in this element:

- ▶ A comprehensive inventory of open space areas, recreational resources, and designations of access points to open space areas and resources
- ▶ An analysis of forecasted needs, policies for managing and protecting open space areas, and resources and implementation strategies to acquire additional open space areas and further establish recreational resources
- ▶ Policies and implementation strategies designed to promote a regional system of integrated open space and recreational

resources, and consideration of any existing regional open space plans

**Growth Area Element** ■ This element should also be closely tied to the land use element, and is intended to identify areas (if any) that are particularly suitable for planned multimodal transportation and infrastructure expansion and improvements designed to support a planned concentration of a variety of land uses. The statutes direct that this element should include policies and implementation strategies that are designed to:

- ▶ Make automobile, transit and other multimodal circulation more efficient, make infrastructure expansion more economical, and provide for a rational pattern of land development
- ▶ Conserve significant natural resources and open space areas in the growth area and coordinate their location to similar areas outside the growth area's boundaries
- ▶ Promote the public and private construction of timely and financially sound infrastructure expansion through the use of infrastructure funding and financing planning that is coordinated with development activity

**Environmental Planning Element** ■ This element contains analysis, policies and strategies to address anticipated effects, if any, of plan elements on air quality, water quality and natural resources associated with proposed development under the general plan. The policies and strategies to be developed under this element shall be designed to have community-wide applicability and shall not require the production of an additional environmental impact statement or similar analysis beyond the requirements of state and federal law.

**Cost of Development Element** ■ This element should include policies and strategies that the municipality will use to require development to pay its fair share toward the cost of additional

public service needs generated by new development, with appropriate exceptions when in the public interest. Per the statutes, this element shall include:

- ▶ A component that identifies various mechanisms that are allowed by law and that can be used to fund and finance additional public services necessary to serve the development, including bonding, special taxing districts, development fees, in lieu fees, facility construction, dedications and service privatization
- ▶ A component that identifies policies to ensure that any mechanisms that are adopted by the municipality under this element result in a beneficial use to the development, bear a reasonable relationship to the burden imposed on the municipality to provide additional necessary public services to the development and otherwise are imposed according to law

In developing this element, it is recommended that each community define “fair share” and identify all the services that would require expansion and therefore incur costs as a result of new development (i.e. roads, water and sewer systems, parks, police and fire protection, etc.).

**Water Resources Element** ■ To address the connection between water resources and development, this element should include discussion of:

- ▶ The known legally and physically available surface water, groundwater and effluent supplies
- ▶ The demand for water that will result from future growth projected in the general plan, added to existing uses
- ▶ An analysis of how the demand for water that will result from the future growth projected in the general plan will be served by the currently available water supplies, or a plan to obtain additional necessary water supplies

### 6.2.3 Additional General Plan Elements for Communities over 50,000 in Population

The following additional elements are required for large communities – with populations over 50,000 – but other communities may opt to include one or more of the elements below as needed to address important local issues.

**Conservation Element** ■ This element is intended to address the conservation, development, and utilization of natural resources, including forests, soils, rivers, and other waters, harbors, fisheries, wildlife, minerals and other natural resources. The conservation element may also cover:

- ✓ Reclamation of land
- ✓ Flood control
- ✓ Prevention and control of the pollution of streams and other waters
- ✓ Regulation of the use of land in stream channels and other areas required for the accomplishment of the conservation plan
- ✓ Prevention, control, and correction of the erosion of soils, beaches and shores (the last two are for after “the big one,” when California tumbles into the sea)
- ✓ Protection of watersheds

**Recreation Element** ■ This element should show a comprehensive system of areas and public sites for recreation including the following and, if practicable, their locations and proposed development:

- ✓ Natural reservations
- ✓ Parks
- ✓ Playgrounds and playing fields
- ✓ Parkways and scenic drives
- ✓ Beaches

- ✓ Open space
- ✓ Bicycle routes
- ✓ Other recreation areas

**Circulation Element** ■ In addition to the requirements described in Section 6.2.1, for larger communities this element shall also include recommendations concerning parking facilities, building setback requirements and the delineation of such systems on the land, a system of street naming, house and building numbering and such other matters as may be related to the improvement of traffic circulation. The circulation element may also include:

- ▶ A **Transportation Element** showing a comprehensive transportation system, including locations of rights-of-way, terminals, viaducts and grade separations. This element of the plan may also include aviation and related facilities.
- ▶ A **Transit Element** showing a proposed system of rail or transit lines or such other mode of transportation as may be appropriate.

**Public Services and Facilities Element** ■ This element must show general plans for police, fire, emergency services, sewage, refuse disposal, drainage, local utilities, rights-of-way, easements and facilities for them.

**Public Buildings Element** ■ This element must show locations that have civic and community centers, public schools, libraries, police and fire stations, and other public buildings.

**Housing Element** ■ This element shall consist of standards and programs for the elimination of substandard dwelling conditions, for the improvement of housing quality, variety, and affordability, and for provision of adequate sites for housing. This element shall contain an identification and analysis of existing and

forecasted housing needs, and be designed to make equal provision for the housing needs of all segments of the community regardless of race, color, creed or economic level.

### **Conservation, Rehabilitation and**

**Redevelopment Element** ■ This element shall consist of plans and programs for:

- ▶ The elimination of slums and blighted areas
- ▶ Community redevelopment, including housing sites, business and industrial sites, and public building sites
- ▶ Neighborhood preservation and revitalization
- ▶ Other purposes authorized by law

**Safety Element** ■ This element provides for the protection of the community from natural and manmade hazards including features necessary for such protection as evacuation routes, peak load water supply requirements, minimum road widths according to function, clearances around structures and mapping in areas of known geologic hazards.

**Bicycling Element** ■ This element shall consist of proposed bicycle facilities such as bicycle routes, bicycle parking areas and designated bicycle street crossing areas. It is recommended that this element be tied to the circulation element.

Although these elements are required by Arizona Statutes, please note that it is not an exhaustive list of possible elements for a general plan. If some topic is especially important in a community, it may make sense to devote a specific element to it. Additional elements that have been included in Arizona general plans include economic development, historic preservation, and arts and cultural resources.

### 6.2.4 Public Participation Requirements

Arizona Statutes do address the public participation that should accompany the general plan process. These are discussed in more detail in Section 4.2.1 in Chapter 4. Overall, the law indicates that, in developing a general plan, the community must consult with, advise, and provide an opportunity for official comment to at least the following groups: public officials and agencies, the county, school districts, associations of governments, public land management agencies, the military airport if the municipality has territory in the vicinity of a military airport as defined in A.R.S. § 28-8461, other appropriate government jurisdictions, public utility companies, civic, educational, professional and other organizations, property owners and citizens generally [A.R.S. § 9-461.06(B)(2)]. As discussed in Chapter 4, written procedures for a public involvement program to accompany general plan development must be adopted by the legislative body.

At least sixty days before the planning commission hearing on the general plan (or a major amendment) is noticed, a review copy of the proposed plan or amendment must be transmitted to the planning commission, governing body, and the following entities for further review and comment:

- The planning agency of the county in which the municipality is located
- Each county or municipality that is contiguous to the corporate limits of the municipality or its area of extraterritorial jurisdiction
- The regional planning agency within which the municipality is located
- The Arizona Department of Commerce or any other state agency that is

subsequently designated as the general planning agency for the state

- The Arizona Department of Water Resources for review and comment on the water resources element, if a water resources element is required
- If the general plan or a portion, element or amendment of the general plan is applicable to territory in the vicinity of a military airport as defined in A.R.S. § 28-8461, the military airport.
- Any person or entity that requests in writing to receive a review copy of the proposal

After considering the recommendations from the review period described above, public hearings before the planning commission and governing body are required to be held on the proposed general plan update, or major amendment as described in Chapter 4 (Section 4.2.1) and in accordance with the Open Meeting Law (Section 4.1). More information on major and minor amendments is provided below in Section 6.2.5.

### 6.2.5 Major and Minor Amendments

State Statutes require that communities identify criteria to determine major and minor amendments to the general plan. In general, a major amendment may be defined as “a substantial alteration of the municipality’s land use mixture or balance as established in the municipality’s existing general plan land use element.” [A.R.S. § 9-461.06(G)] Each city or town must identify the specific criteria for defining a major amendment; often communities will use a combination of characteristics such as acreage of the proposed amendment area, proposed density change, or type of proposed land use change (i.e., from residential to commercial).

Proposed major amendments can only be considered for adoption by the governing body once a year, at a single public hearing to be held within the same calendar year as the proposal is made. It is suggested that a schedule for the annual hearing be determined and followed consistently, so that a schedule of annual deadlines for necessary steps in the application process can be established for applicants and staff.

There are also hearing requirements associated with the consideration and adoption of major amendments that are very similar to those for the adoption of the general plan (see Section 4.2.1 for this information). In addition, major amendments are subject to the same 60-day review as general plans (see Section 6.2.4).

### 6.3 THE PLANNING PROCESS

**Who Initiates The Process?** ■ The local public authority most often initiates the development of a general or comprehensive plan: the city council, board of supervisors, planning commission, city or county manager, or community development/planning director. The initiation of a comprehensive planning effort in response to public concern over the future of the community is an ideal circumstance for this undertaking. One of the most important ingredients to a successful process is to have a public participation plan that encourages a variety of techniques to include residents and other stakeholders.

**Who Directs The Work? And Who Else Should Be Involved?** ■ While a comprehensive planning effort may be financed and directed wholly outside the public sector, this is the exception and not the rule. Many Arizona municipalities and counties have planning departments or commissions whose task is to prepare plans for their communities. The responsibility for planning will vary from one community to another. The city manager's role in the planning function is especially prominent

in smaller cities and towns, where the manager is most likely to have a major responsibility due to small planning staffs.

If the plan is to be effective, it is essential that those expected to use it be involved in its preparation. Elected and appointed officials deciding on land use issues should be familiar with how the land use element of the plan was developed, population trends, housing patterns, and key development issues. Likewise, officials responsible for developing and adopting the capital improvements program should be familiar with the community's long-range public facilities goals. Finally, community residents are the most important investors in the plan and must be involved in its preparation and implementation, however difficult and time-consuming this task may become.

#### **Relationship To Metropolitan And Regional Planning**

■ Most communities are affected by changes occurring in surrounding areas: annexations, economic cycles, and development patterns. Municipal plans should identify the city's role in the region relative to economic growth or decline. Communities may be members of councils of governments (COGs), or enter into intergovernmental agreements for the provision of services. Issues of regional importance include transportation, transit, wildlife and nature conservation, tourism, recreation, air quality, water quality and supply, solid waste disposal, and flood control/drainage.

#### **Who Does The Technical Work In Plan Preparation?**

■ A professional planning staff is often responsible for preparing the plan. However, given the diverse technical skills necessary to adequately address environmental, transportation, utilities, and other needs, most planning staffs will require input and assistance from other departments such as public works or engineering. Consultants are frequently used for preparation of some components of the plan, or the entire plan.

In small communities or rural counties, consultants may be employed to undertake all of the technical work under the direction of the planning staff, planning commission, or city or county manager. When consultants are used, it is important that staff and policy-makers remain closely involved in development of the plan to examine data, formulate policy, and review alternatives (see Section 6.3.3 for more information on hiring consultants).

**How Much Money Is Needed?** ■ The cost of a plan generally depends on the number and types of elements in the plan, the number of meetings and public presentations held, the level of detail demanded, and the final products desired. Because the payoffs from planning are not seen as immediate and tangible, the planning budget may be a low priority. However, planning is a vital component of resource management, and will assist the administration in determining the most effective use of funds and their projected impact.

**Deadlines Should Be Set** ■ At the outset of the planning process, a schedule should be set specifying the completion of particular work products, team meetings, and public meetings. A schedule should be developed for the planning process that incorporates the adopted public participation procedures, sufficient time for data collection efforts, the mandated 60-day review period, hearing notification requirements, and any other local considerations. Many communities require between twelve to twenty-four months to develop a plan.

**What Should The Plan Look Like?** ■ Plans come in various sizes and shapes because of the budget and needs of a particular community. General and comprehensive plans may be printed as a series of documents for easy use or summarized in short pamphlets for public distribution. Loose-leaf notebooks are popular because individual plan components may be added or deleted as they are completed or updated. Many plans are published in summary

versions for mass distribution and complete versions for those wanting all the background data, standards, etc.

**Should Maps Be Used?** ■ Maps are indispensable to good planning, and provide a method to communicate the spatial relationships of land use categories. Maps also provide a means to illustrate other planning goals such as future circulation systems and future public facilities and services, especially when they are shared regionally.

### 6.3.1 Preparing the General Plan

One of the suggested first steps to begin work on the general plan is to put together an advisory team. The makeup of the team depends on whether a consultant is involved and the willingness and experience of staff, public officials, and others. A good mix might include the consultant, planning staff, one or two planning commissioners, one or two council members, a major landowner representing the interests of property owners, a local merchant representing business concerns, and representatives for the local utilities, schools, or public land holdings. This team will be responsible for initiating the project, coordinating information from concurrent activities, and providing direction to those ultimately responsible for writing the text and preparing supporting maps. The team should strive for consensus; however, it is not the responsibility for team members to make final decisions. The governing body ultimately adopts the plan through a public process.

## 6.3.1.1

## Phase I

**Discovery and Analysis**

Phase I focuses on data gathering, so that the community can inventory existing resources and understand current opportunities and challenges. Necessary data typically will include:

- ✓ Population statistics and projections
- ✓ Economic characteristics and statistics
- ✓ Existing land uses
- ✓ Environmental characteristics
- ✓ Existing public facilities
- ✓ Existing transportation network

Housing, recreation, resource conservation, downtown redevelopment, etc. may require additional studies, depending on data gaps identified and what is needed.

**Population Studies** ■ Two types of population studies are usually employed in the planning process. Current population studies describe the existing population of the planning area in terms of its stratification and composition. The U.S. Bureau of the Census collects population figures each decade, which provide a good starting point from which to estimate the local population during non-census years. Councils of government (COGs) also may have estimates for non-census years.

Population projections forecast future population levels in order to predict land use requirements, public facilities needs, and the general composition of the city or county in the years to come. The validity of long-range planning depends partly on the accuracy of the population forecasts. As much as planning deals with providing community services and facilities,

significant fluctuations in population size and composition can render the plan obsolete if changes are unforeseen. Determining the size of the study area (the area to be planned) will depend upon the growth expectations of the community. The Arizona Department of Economic Security “Arizona Workforce Informer” website, [www.workforce.az.gov](http://www.workforce.az.gov), can be helpful here. Some communities in Arizona experience seasonal populations. Organizations to assist in forecasting these populations include tourism offices and the local chamber of commerce.

**Economic Studies** ■ Economists have developed numerous strategies for economic analyses of urban areas. Economic base studies, the determination of the size and segment of local industry and commerce devoted to “exports” from the community, are perhaps the most commonly used. Excellent techniques have also been developed for gathering data on employment, occupations, income, value added by manufacturing, volume of production, and other useful information. This provides an understanding of the economic composition of the community and forms a basis for projecting future demands on both the public and private sectors. Much of this information is documented in the Arizona Community Profiles and the Arizona Economic Base Studies, which are prepared by the Arizona Department of Commerce (see [www.azcommerce.com](http://www.azcommerce.com)).

**Physical and Natural Resource Inventory** ■ An inventory and analysis of soils, topography and slope, geology, drainage patterns, vegetation, lakes, rivers, and wetlands is necessary to understand the environmental setting and identify sensitive areas.

**Existing Land Use Surveys** ■ A land use survey is conducted to identify the variety of land uses existing in the community. Data collected from this inventory is tabulated and analyzed statistically with regard to location, size, frequency, and density. The information can be summarized to include the amount of land

devoted to specific uses, a table depicting frequency of lot sizes, and an analysis of major impacts associated with certain land uses. The data is evaluated along with projected community needs and serve as a framework for preparing long-range plans.

**Transportation and Circulation Studies** ■ The existing level of service of all (public and private) modes of transportation within the planning area should be benchmarked to assist with prioritizing short- and long-range capital improvements. Information on projected traffic volumes, the size, location, and capacity of existing and planned facilities, efficiency of circulation patterns, and other relevant data should be included.

**Public Facilities** ■ A community's growth policies may be translated through the capital improvements plan (CIP). The timing, location, and availability of public facilities, utilities, and services shape urban development patterns. The extension of water and sewer service, construction of major roads, schools, parks, and a host of other physical improvements determine when and where development will occur.

### 6.3.1.2

#### Phase II

### Goals and Policy Formulation

Perhaps the most important, and yet most difficult, stage of the planning process is the establishment of goals, objectives, and policies for future development. The need for revision of existing goals and policies, or identification of new ones will emerge during the data evaluation and public input. An important point to remember is that objectives must be measurable so that progress towards meeting community goals can be monitored. The importance of including the community throughout the process via a public information and participation program is essential to the identification and acceptance of goals and policy by community

members. The value of public input to the planning process cannot be underestimated.

### 6.3.1.3

#### Phase III

### Alternatives Development

Based on the data inventory and community goals, alternative land use scenarios may be generated to present to the community. Often these alternatives will provide for different growth rates or different policy emphases to illustrate the various outcomes that might result. The alternatives may be a tool for provoking community discussion about its vision of the future, and often one of the alternatives will be the basis for the land use map that is included in the general plan. During this period, the elements of the plan may be drafted. In addition, public involvement activities may be occurring as prescribed in the public participation program.

### 6.3.1.4

#### Phase IV

### Review, Revisions, and Adoption

During this phase, a draft review copy of the plan is completed and distributed for 60-day review. In accordance with the statutes, certain agencies and groups must receive the draft (see Section 6.2.4) and this may also be a good time to continue a public information program or other activities that may be included in the public participation program.

Upon completion of any revisions, the hearings for the planning commission and council to recommend and adopt the plan may occur in accordance with the Open Meeting Law and any other statutory requirements (see Chapter 4).

## 6.3.1.5

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**Phase V**


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**Implementation**

Any effective plan must include accepted and feasible implementation measures. Common tools for implementation include land use regulations, a capital improvements program, and special funding programs. Land use regulations may take the form of:

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 Building codes
 

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 Zoning and subdivision ordinances
 

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 Permitting procedures
 

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 Public review processes
 

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 Development agreements
 

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After setting the goals and policies, the plan should identify “next steps” – ideally, the priorities, timelines, and responsible parties for the efforts and projects that are discussed in the plan. In addition, a method for monitoring or reporting back to council on progress toward plan goals could be outlined. Some ideas for the role of various entities in implementation may include:

***The Staff...***

- Recommend to the council ways of implementing the plan that may include zoning code or other ordinance updates, design guidelines, a sign ordinance, or specific plans.

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- May make an annual report to the council on the status of the plan and its implementation.

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- May consult with public and private organizations on the implementation of the plan.

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- Shall, on orders from the council, prepare specific plans and regulations.

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- Recommend that projects and priorities in the plan be reflected in the capital improvements plan (CIP) and municipal budgets.

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***The Council...***

- May direct the planning agency to prepare specific plans and regulations.

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- Adopt other measures to implement the general plan including procedures to administer the specific plans and regulations. Please note: the jurisdiction’s attorney should review all proposed regulations before they are enacted.

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- Ensure that projects and priorities in the plan are reflected in the capital improvements plan (CIP) and municipal budgets.

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***The Planning Commission...***

- Participate in the development of and hold public hearings for specific plans or regulations.

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- Continue to discuss progress toward plan goals and emerging planning issues in worksessions with staff and in joint sessions with council.

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### 6.3.2 Keeping the Plan Current

The development of a plan is only the beginning of a continual planning process; the plan must be examined and probably revised periodically. Frequent amendments to the general plan, a specific plan, or to development ordinances may indicate the need for revision of these documents.

When revising a plan, official maps, the zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, etc., the following procedure is suggested:

- ✓ Analyze and review the goals, policies and programs in the plan and determine specific areas in need of revision.
- ✓ Rewrite appropriate areas of the plan to incorporate any changes. Since the elements of a plan should be interrelated, be aware that changes to one part may require changes in others.
- ✓ Rewrite appropriate sections of the development ordinances to be adopted at the same time that the plan is amended.

### 6.3.3 Choosing a Consultant

Communities often retain the services of a consultant to draft or update their general plans. Typically, this process would begin with the development of a Request for Proposals (RFP) or Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to generate responses from interested firms. For assistance in developing these documents, please contact the Community Planning Office of the Arizona Department of Commerce (602-771-1191). A database of professional consultants in Arizona is also available on the Commerce website at [www.azcommerce.com](http://www.azcommerce.com).

To select a consultant, a community may opt to convene a selection panel to review and discuss the proposals and interview candidate firms. The

panel could include the planning director, a planning commissioner, a council member or county supervisor, interested citizens, representatives of different departments that will be participating in plan development and non-staff individuals with planning knowledge and experience. When reviewing proposals submitted by consultants, consider the following criteria:

- 1 Does the consultant appear to be well qualified and experienced in the particular field you need help with? Do the people assigned to the project, not just the firm, have the necessary experience and qualifications?
- 2 How does the firm propose to deal with your particular concerns? Does the firm propose a realistic time schedule and budget? How well does this consultant understand your community's situation?
- 3 Does the proposal respond directly to your needs in a clear, well-thought-out fashion?
- 4 What techniques will be used to gather input and receive community support?

The two or three firms with the best proposals should be called for a face-to-face interview with the selection panel. Each interview should be held with the proposed project manager and team leaders from each consulting firm that has made the "short-list".

The consultants should be asked to elaborate on:



What knowledge does the consultant have of the town?

What special qualifications can the project team provide?



Are team members experts in the necessary fields and disciplines?

How will the work be done?

What is the proposed schedule of activities?

How will public input be solicited?

How will the final product be implemented to benefit the community?

In selecting a consultant for the project, one of the most important things a community can do is **check references**. Call at least three of the consultant's most recent clients of similar projects to the one you are contemplating, and ask at a minimum the following questions:



Has the consultant's work been useful?

How well did the consultant work with the public, staff, and public officials?

Did the consultant's services meet your expectations?

Would you hire this consultant again?

Did they complete the project on time and within the budget?

Inquiries to other jurisdictions also can help to establish a range of costs for the desired consulting services. Consultants should know the amount of money budgeted for the project before they prepare a proposal. If the consultant's proposal exceeds your budget, they should be prepared to present a strong case as to

why more money will be needed. A consultant should be chosen on the basis of who will do the best job, however, not just who will charge the least.

Further negotiation typically occurs after the consultant is tentatively selected and prior to contract finalization to make sure both sides understand what will, and will not, be completed as part of the project. Your goal is to choose the consultant who seems most suited to working with your community; the one you feel can understand your problems and offer realistic, workable, imaginative alternatives to help your community decide where it wants to go and how to get there.

## 6.4 SPECIFIC PLANS

A specific plan may be prepared for a specific geographic area which:

- ✓ Has special site characteristics (i.e. historic, recreational, natural resources) that may be targeted for development or preservation
- ✓ Is experiencing rapid growth or economic change
- ✓ Has the potential for development of new or expanded economic activities
- ✓ Requires special planning for other reasons

A.R.S. § 9-461.08 states:

The planning agency may, or if so directed by the legislative body shall, prepare specific plans based on the general plan or drafts of such regulations, programs and legislation as may in the judgment of the agency be required for the systematic execution of the general plan. The planning agency may recommend such plans and measures to the elected officials for adoption.

In addition to zoning ordinance and subdivision regulation amendments, specific plans may include:

- ✓ Regulations determining the location of buildings and other improvements with respect to existing rights-of-way, floodplains, and public facilities.
- ✓ Regulations for the use of land, buildings and structures, the height and bulk of buildings and structures, and the open spaces surrounding buildings and structures.
- ✓ Street and highway naming and number plans in order to establish the official names of streets and highways, which will remove conflicts, duplication and uncertainty among such names, and provide an orderly system for the addressing of buildings and properties.
- ✓ Measures required to ensure the execution of the general plan.
- ✓ Other matters which will accomplish these purposes including procedures for the administration of such regulations.

Municipalities lacking the resources may request that an applicant prepare, or fund the preparation of, a specific plan that would encompass their project. The procedure for adoption of specific plans is similar to that for general plans. The city council may establish administrative procedures for the application and enforcement of specific plans and regulations, assigning these functions to the planning agency.