



GENERAL PLAN 2048

Quick Guide to the General Plan Update

What is a General Plan?

A general plan is a comprehensive planning document that establishes goals and policies to guide decision-makers and the community toward its vision to create a better Barstow for everyone. A general plan is also a long-term document, projecting conditions and needs 20 years into the future to inform and direct shorter-term decisions such as annual budgeting, improvements to public facilities, partnerships to spur economic growth, and investments to enhance safety.

Every city and county must adopt and periodically update a general plan per state law (Govt. Code §65300) that addresses the topics of land use, housing, circulation (mobility), conservation, open space, noise, and safety, climate adaptation and resiliency, and environmental justice (these are commonly referred to as “elements”).

At the heart of a general plan is a citywide land use map that works in tandem with other maps, diagrams, goals, and policies to communicate and visualize how Barstow should grow and develop, provides services, and improve the quality of life for local residents and businesses.

Why update Barstow’s General Plan?

The City of Barstow last updated its General Plan in 2015; however, the effort was a stopgap measure with a short planning horizon that only extended to 2020. Recent and forecasted changes in economic conditions and increased interest from both community stakeholders and local businesses have the potential to dramatically alter the Barstow landscape through the year 2048. As the community prepares for change, an updated General Plan will guide growth in a manner that supports a collective vision for the future, enabling the City to plan in advance of individual projects, attract well-paid job opportunities, create new housing choices, and promote a healthy community.



An aerial view at sunset looking west along Main Street, depicting just some of the wide range of places and spaces that make up Barstow’s past, present, and future.

What about the City's recent Element updates?

In 2020, the City initiated updates to General Plan to bring the City into compliance with state law and address the topics of safety, environmental justice, and housing. While the Environmental Justice and Safety Elements were updated in 2021 and the Housing Element update is nearly complete, the City will be taking another look at these elements as part of the larger General Plan update to ensure that they are consistent with new plans for the future.

How will the General Plan be implemented?

The General Plan is implemented through a variety of ongoing and periodic actions and programs, with the most common including decisions on proposals for development and zoning changes, adjustments to annual budgets, and the updating of master plans and strategic plans for roadways, infrastructure systems, and public services.

What City decisions need to be consistent with the General Plan?

In short, all of them. This is why the General Plan is sometimes referred to as the blueprints or constitution for the City. "Consistency" is one of the factors used in determining the legal adequacy of City decisions as well as the General Plan itself. This means:

- All elements of the General Plan must be consistent with one another, and all have equal legal status. No element legally takes priority over another. This includes all content: maps, tables, data, goals, policies, and implementation programs.
- All other City documents and projects must be consistent with the General Plan, including the Development Code, annual budgets, master plans, and even documents or designations that customize development standards for an individual area such as zoning overlays and specific plans.

Can the General Plan be changed or amended?

Yes, amendments to the General Plan are not only allowed but are expected as the City grows and develops over the next 20 years. Although amendments to the General Plan should be infrequent and respond to substantial changes in conditions or new opportunities, provided they are consistent with the City's long-term vision.

What is the difference between the General Plan and the Zoning/Development Code?

The General Plan identifies the broad types of development that will be allowed, the spatial relationships among land uses, and the general pattern of future development. The Zoning/Development Code implements general plan policies through detailed development regulations, such as specific use types and building standards. State law requires development to not only meet the specific requirements of Zoning, but also the broader policies and land use plan set forth in the General Plan.

What is an Environmental Impact Report (EIR)?

Under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the potential environmental impacts of all major development projects must be assessed, disclosed, and appropriately mitigated. For a General Plan update, which looks at the potential buildout of development throughout the entire City over the next 20 years, the results of this environmental review process are conveyed in the form of an environmental impact report (EIR).

The EIR will assess and, as necessary, include measures to mitigate potential impacts and project alternatives related a wide variety of required topics, such as air quality, biological and cultural resources, hydrology, public services, and transportation. A public draft of the EIR will also be available for public review and comment.

Why should I get Involved?

The General Plan process provides all residents and businesses with the chance to help guide the future of Barstow. A successful General Plan will reflect the community's vision and priorities. The City will be updating its website soon to post information about the General Plan update process and how to participate in upcoming outreach activities.