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# Introduction

This Introduction to the 2045 Solvang General Plan begins with the purpose and use of the General Plan; explains how the General Plan was prepared; states the vision and guiding principles of the General Plan; describes the different analyses that informed the General Plan; gives an overview of the City of Solvang; explains the organization of the General Plan; and lastly, provides a guide on how to read the General Plan.



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# Purpose and Use of the General Plan

## What is a General Plan?

Every jurisdiction in California must have a General Plan, which is the local government's long-term framework or "constitution" for future growth and development. The General Plan is prepared with extensive community engagement to create a plan that expresses the community's vision for its future. California State law requires that each town, city, and county must adopt a General Plan for the physical development of the jurisdiction and any land outside its boundaries that bears relation to its planning. Typically, a General Plan is designed to address the issues facing the jurisdiction for the next 25 years. A General Plan typically has four defining features:

- **General.** A General Plan provides general policy guidance that will be used to direct future land use and resource decisions.
- **Comprehensive.** A General Plan consists of various Elements that are comprehensive, covering topics such as land use; housing; mobility/circulation economic development; sustainability and resiliency; public safety; recreation; natural resources; racial, social, and environmental justice ;and much more.
- **Long-Range.** A General Plan provides guidance on reaching a future envisioned 20 or more years in the future. To achieve the vision, a General Plan includes goals, policies, and implementation programs that address both immediate and long-term needs.
- **Integrated and Coherent.** The goals, policies, and implementation programs in a General Plan present a comprehensive, unified program for development, resource conservation, and other issues that impact the community. A General Plan uses a consistent set of assumptions and projections to assess future demands for housing, employment, and public services (e.g., infrastructure). A General Plan has a coherent set of policies and implementation programs that enables citizens to understand the vision of the General Plan, and enables landowners, businesses, and industry to be more certain about how policies will be implemented.

A General Plan is made up of a collection of "elements" that cover mandatory topics as well as topics important to the community. Eight elements are



required to be included in the General Plan by the State. These are: land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, safety, and environmental justice. Though the required topics must be addressed in the General Plan, communities can organize their General Plan anyway they choose. Communities may also include other optional elements that address issues of local interest, such as Community Design and Economic Development for Solvang.

The General Plan is not to be confused with zoning. Although both the General Plan and the zoning ordinance designate how land may be developed, they do so in different ways. The General Plan has a long-term outlook. It identifies the types of development that will be allowed, the spatial relationships among land uses, and the general pattern of future development. Zoning regulates development through specific standards such as lot size, building setbacks, and allowable uses. However, the land uses shown on the General Plan diagrams will typically be reflected in the local zoning maps as well, as they are both required to be consistent per State law. Development must not only meet the specific requirements of the zoning ordinance, but also the broader policies set forth in the General Plan.

The 2045 Solvang General Plan meets the requirements of State law by containing the required elements and two optional elements as described in more detail later in this chapter under “Organization of the General Plan.” Some of the required elements address additional issues of local interest. Each element contains goals and policies that will guide future decisions within the City. They each also identify a set of implementation programs that will be used to ensure the goals and policies in the General Plan are carried out.

## Using the General Plan

The General Plan is used by the City Council, Planning Commission, and City staff to make decisions with direct or indirect land use implications. It also provides a framework for inter-jurisdictional coordination of planning efforts among officials and staff of the City and other Federal, State, county, and local agencies. City residents, property owners, and businesses use the General Plan for guidance on City policies for particular geographic areas or for particular subjects of interest to them.

The General Plan is the basis for a variety of regulatory measures and administrative procedures. California planning law requires consistency between the General Plan and its implementing programs, such as zoning and subdivision ordinances, capital improvement programs, specific plans, environmental impact procedures, and building and housing codes. The

specific roles of the City Council, Planning Commission, and City Departments with respect to the approval and use of the General Plan are described below.

### City Council

The City Council is the political body which adopts policies in Solvang. It is the City Council, through its decision-making authority, that affirms the policy direction and priorities contained within this General Plan. The City Council is ultimately responsible for adoption of the General Plan, as well as the regulations, capital improvement programs, and financing mechanisms that implement the General Plan.

### Planning Commission

The Planning Commission is responsible for conducting public hearings on the General Plan and Zoning Code modifications, considering the input of the public, and making recommendations to the City Council on these matters. After the General Plan is adopted, the Planning Commission must ensure that all following land use ordinances, policies, guidelines, and development applications are consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies in the General Plan.

### Other City Departments

All City Departments use the General Plan for policy guidance as it pertains to their operations, service delivery, and planning for future capital projects and potential service level changes. The City's Planning staff ensure that that the General Plan is implemented on an everyday basis so that: the right land uses are proposed in the right locations, the right levels of service are provided, proposed land uses conform to development regulations, and the environment has been adequately protected. The General Plan is a resource for all City services and provides an internally consistent checkpoint for assessing alternatives for the future of Solvang.

## Maintaining the General Plan

Over time, the City's population will probably increase, its goals will develop, and the physical environment in which its residents live, and work will change. In order for the General Plan to be a helpful document, it must be monitored and periodically revised to respond to and reflect changing conditions and needs over time.

The General Plan should be reviewed every year, with a more comprehensive and thorough review and revision done every ten to twenty years, as needed, to



reflect changes in local conditions, new local priorities, or State law. State law permits the General Plan to be amended up to four times in any calendar year, unless special conditions apply as defined by Government Code Sections 65358(c) and (d). Each amendment may contain more than one change to the General Plan.

General Plan Amendments can be initiated by the City or at the request of a property owner. Each General Plan Amendment goes through a public review process, including hearings with the Planning Commission and City Council. Each Amendment is also subject to review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

## Preparing the 2045 General Plan

The development of the General Plan began in October 2020. The 2045 General Plan was shaped over a three-year period by an extensive public outreach process that engaged residents, businesses, developers, and decision-makers (see Community Engagement section later in this chapter).

Through the update process, the City and its consultants (General Plan Team), with input from the public and stakeholders, considered new, pertinent topics, such as climate change and resiliency, environmental justice, and public health, to ensure that Solvang is positioned to achieve its vision for the future.

## Community Engagement

The update process involved multiple opportunities for the public to engage in the development of the 2045 General Plan. The City gathered community input through the following methods:

- In-person and virtual community workshops;
- General Plan Update website – [www.plansolvang.com](http://www.plansolvang.com);
- eBlasts;
- General Plan Advisory Committee meetings;
- Design Review Committee meetings; and
- Planning Commission and City Council meetings, study sessions, and public hearings.

## Community Workshops

The City hosted five community workshops for residents and stakeholders to share their ideas on how to shape the future of Solvang.

- On **February 6, 2021**, the City hosted (via Zoom) their first workshop. The purpose of the workshop was to provide an overview of the General Plan Update (PlanSolvang), relay opportunities to get involved in the process, collect input on issues and opportunities that should be addressed through the Plan, and receive initial feedback on a citywide vision for Solvang through 2045. The first workshop also included a series of interactive online activities to assist in identifying overarching challenges and opportunities, establishing a clear vision for the future of the city, and assist in setting expectations for the project.
- On **April 8 and 9, 2021**, the City held three identical workshops, two of which were held on the same day, at the Solvang Veterans Memorial Hall and via Zoom simultaneously. The purpose of these workshops was to provide an overview of the General Plan update process, present information on the existing conditions and trends that influences the future of Solvang and provide an opportunity for the public to provide input and ideas on the issue and opportunities that are addressed in the General Plan. During the workshops, we also gathered community input to help establish a long-term vision for Solvang's future. In-person attendees were asked to participate in five workshop activity stations, whereas virtual attendees were encouraged to take part in the online workshop exercises.
- On **January 13, 2022**, the City hosted (via Zoom) their third workshop. The purpose of the workshop was for the community to learn about the General Plan and provide their input on the City's future, specifically related to future land use choices/mobility options and findings presented in the Land use Alternatives Report.
- On **March 24, 2022**, the City hosted (via Zoom) their fourth workshop. The purpose of this workshop was to introduce the Housing Element and new State requirements, as well as an opportunity for the public to provide comments on housing concerns in the community.
- On **May 11, 2022**, the City hosted (via Zoom) their fifth workshop. This workshop had the same purpose as the fourth workshop, however there was a discussion on potential housing sites with residential capacity.



- On **July 18, 2022**, the City hosted their sixth workshop, which was an in-person. The workshop focused on the whether the City should consider development of a pedestrian-oriented European Plaza in Downtown.

## General Plan Update Website

To help expand the outreach efforts of the General Plan, this project included a project website ([www.plansolvang.com](http://www.plansolvang.com)) to provide information on the process including information on the General Plan, meeting dates and locations, and related documents. The City used regular updates to the project website throughout the update process to keep community members informed and involved.

## eBlasts

Throughout the update process, the City sent timely eBlasts announcing every workshop, all Planning commission and city council meetings, and announcing the availability on the Project Website of new publications. to the General Plan contact list, which included elected and appointed officials, City Staff, stakeholders, and engaged community members. People could join the contact list through a link on the project website, by signing-in at a General Plan community workshop or public meeting, or by directly contacting the City of Solvang.

## General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) Meetings

To help City staff and the consulting team develop the update to the General Plan, the City formed a General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC). The GPAC serves as a sounding board for the discussion of issues, opportunities, and the development of the General Plan that will guide the community's future.

## Design Review Committee Meetings

To help preserve and enhance historical Danish and northern European architectural styles and the streetscape and the inherent qualities of a livable community that Solvang has, the Design Review Committee gave the City staff and the consulting team guidance on community design.

## Planning Commission and City Council Meetings, Study Sessions, and Public Hearings

The City held various Planning Commission and City Council meetings, study sessions, and public hearings throughout the update process to inform decision-makers and the public, discuss key milestones, and provide direction for the next steps.

# General Plan Guiding Principles

On August 23, 2021, at a Joint Study Session, the City Council and Planning Commission adopted a set of General Plan Guiding Principles for the Solvang General Plan Update.

## Guiding Principles

### Heritage and Identity

We welcome visitors while maintaining our small-town character and honoring our multi-cultural heritage. Although originally established as a Danish community, we honor the positive traditions and values modeled by those who preceded our founders and their successors.

### The Village

The Village is a small charming, safe, and walkable environment modeled on an Old World Danish village that attracts visitors while supporting the social interaction, community events, and commerce of residents.

### Economic Vitality

Our resilient, diverse, and sustainable economy supports both existing and new locally-owned businesses, including community-supported tourism. Residents and visitors continue to enjoy the benefits of a healthy business environment.

### Neighborhoods

Our diverse residential neighborhoods are safe and quiet, buffered from the impacts of traffic, overflow visitor parking, and events. Residents enjoy the quality of life and social interaction provided by our multi-generational neighborhoods.

### Cultural Resources

Residents and visitors value the unique character of our historic and cultural assets. The Danish Village, library, museums, art venues, theaters, and historic structures provide social, educational, and emotional richness.



## Natural Environment

Our entire community values and champions the natural beauty of the Santa Ynez Valley and its agricultural traditions. The Santa Ynez River is recognized as a life-sustaining resource to be valued and protected. Our tree-lined streets, open spaces, parks, and landscaping continue to connect us to the natural environment and provide healthy living spaces and recreational opportunities despite the challenge of a changing climate.

## Mobility and Access

Safe and accessible streets, multi-purpose trails, and sustainable multimodal transportation options conveniently connect people and places throughout town and to surrounding destinations in the broader Santa Ynez Valley while reducing the impacts of traffic on the community.

## Regional Cooperation

Our community continues to avail itself of opportunities provided by regional planning and partnership to support the quality of life and safety of residents, and the experience of visitors.

## Infrastructure and Amenities

Solvang maintains sustainable, efficient, equitable, site-appropriate, and resilient infrastructure and public amenities. We prioritize conserving all natural resources.

## Resident Services

We provide a range of public services that support a diverse and multigenerational community.

## Jobs and Housing

A wide range of housing options and living wage jobs provide a high quality of life. Solvang is committed to providing a variety of obtainable amenity-rich housing and sustainable neighborhoods for its residents.

## Good Governance

Our government is transparent, supportive, and collaborative. It responds to the needs of all segments of the population with fair and equal protection.

# Analyses Informing the 2045 General Plan

As part of the City of Solvang General Plan update process, the City prepared the following General Plan supporting documents:

- **Existing Conditions and Trends Workbook.** The Existing Conditions and Trends Workbook tells the story of Solvang – where it has been, where it is today, and the trends that will shape its future and focuses on providing the foundational information about the physical, natural, cultural, and economic conditions and trends that set the stage for updating the General Plan.
- **Land Use Alternatives Report.** The Land Use Alternatives Report contains a series of potential land use alternatives, specifically related to future land use choices (alternatives) and circulation/mobility options. The potential land use alternatives are based on community feedback collected at the beginning of the project. This Report outlines a range of scenarios and the impact of each for the community's consideration.
- **Environmental Impact Report.** The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) responds to the requirements of the CEQA as set forth in Sections 15126, 15175, and 15176 of the CEQA Guidelines Act. The Planning Commission and City Council will use the EIR during the General Plan update process to consider potential environmental implications associated with implementing the General Plan and to identify feasible mitigation measures for significant impacts. The General Plan EIR may also be used in the environmental evaluation of future projects. Future projects may be able to build (tier) their environmental review on the General Plan EIR if they are consistent with the General Plan.

## The Solvang Community

In 1910, three Danish immigrants (Reverend Benedict Nordentoft, Reverend J. M. Gregersen, and Professor P. P. Hornsyld), established the Danish-American Colony Corporation in hopes of creating the first Californian Danish-American colony. In January 1911, the Corporation purchased approximately 9,000 acres from the Santa Ynez Development Company, which had been instrumental in



founding the towns of Santa Ynez and Los Olivos. The three founders named the colony Solvang, meaning “Sunny Fields” in Danish.

Early settlers in Solvang moved fast to create a strong and independent community. By 1914, Solvang constructed a hotel, multiple schools, a general store, a bank, and a vehicle repair shop to service vehicles on their way to southern California. During this period, Solvang established itself as a self-reliant agricultural community, in which many of the early settlers founded dairies and creameries.

With the arrival of electricity and the automobile in the 1920s, Solvang continued to grow. As its economy grew, so did its population. To meet the needs of the community, more homes and businesses were constructed. This growth ultimately shaped Solvang into the city it is today. Many businesses were located on Main Street (today’s Copenhagen Drive) and Gaviota Road (today’s Alisal Road). Most of the residences were built along Lompoc Road, which is today’s Mission Drive (Highway 246).

By the 1930s, Solvang had become the largest town in the Santa Ynez Valley. Lumber yards, drugstores, feed stores, meat markets, and car dealerships were all added to serve the growing population. In 1936, the 25th anniversary of Solvang’s founding, the residents held a three-day celebration honoring their Danish heritage. The celebration (June 5-7) included a torch-light procession, plays, pageants, a parade, and folk dancing and singing. In 1937, Solvang organized another communitywide celebration tied to its Danish history and the tradition of Danish Days was created.

By the mid to late 1940s, Solvang was losing its economic base. With World War II in full swing, many residents either joined the war effort or moved out of the area to find better job opportunities. After being named the “Danish Capital of America” by the Saturday Evening Post magazine in 1947, Solvang decided to fully embrace the concept of tourism. Businesses remodeled their storefronts and new buildings were constructed in the traditional Danish provincial style. Danish style windmills, thatched roofs, and Danish street names became commonplace.

Solvang residents voted to incorporate May 1, 1985. The driving factors in the successful incorporation effort was independence from Santa Barbara County, making decisions locally, and control of the community’s finances. The first Mayor was Willi Campbell, and the first city Administrator was Leo Mathieson.

Today, Solvang is much like it has been for the past several decades. Most neighborhoods consist of single-family homes. Solvang has evolved into a widely recognized tourist destination due to its unique architecture, surrounding wine country, and its proximity to Mission Santa Inés. The city’s

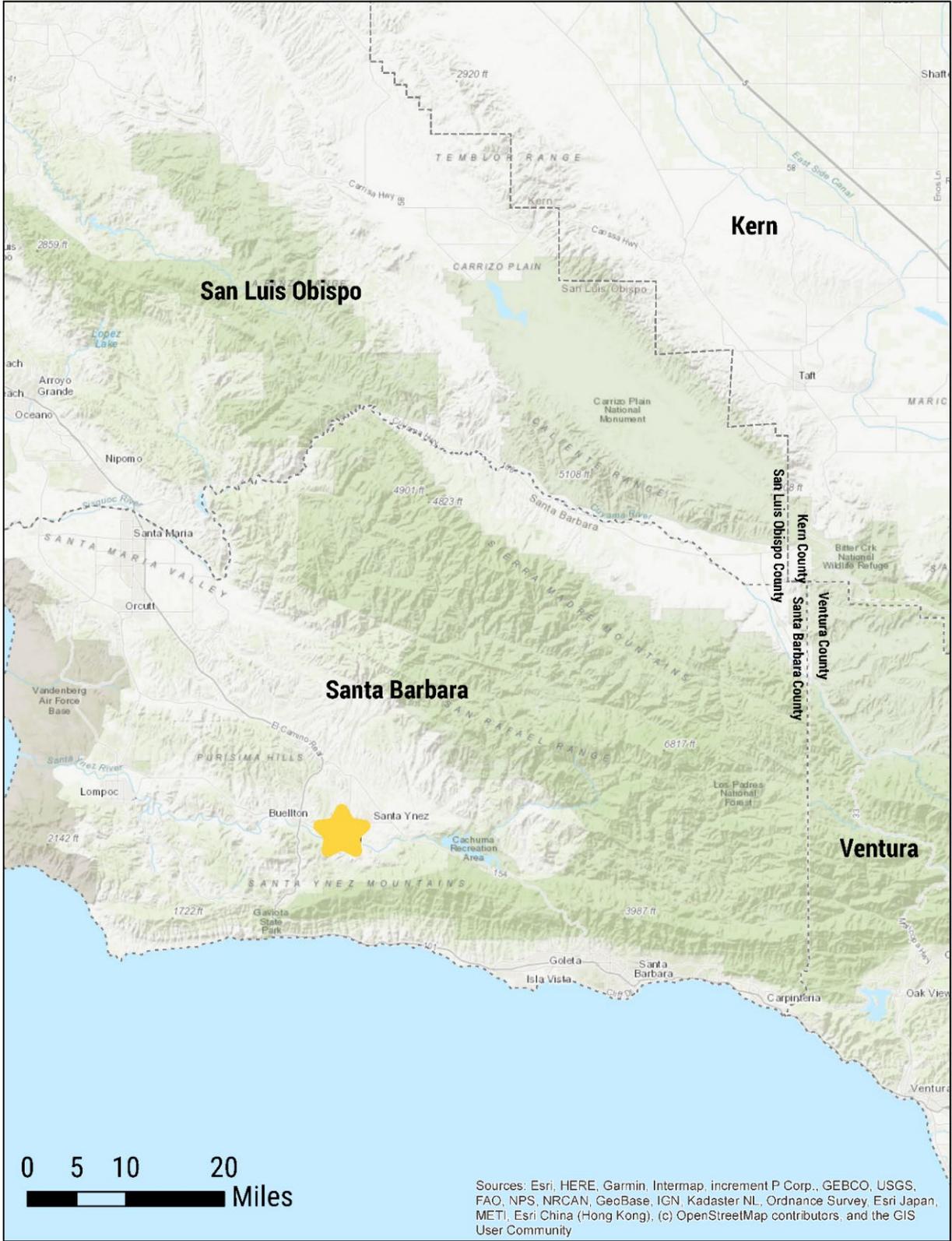
economy and approximately 5,800 residents rely heavily on tourism. The city's architecture and setting are well known throughout California and the nation, and the city's identity and economic vitality are aligned closely to the aesthetic character of the community. The city's compact development contributes to its charm and pedestrian-friendly atmosphere.

### Regional Setting

The city is located in Santa Barbara County, approximately 35 miles northwest of Santa Barbara and 15 miles north of the Pacific coast as shown in Figure I-1. The city of Buellton is located to the west, the town of Santa Ynez to the east, and the communities of Los Olivos and Ballard to the north. Solvang is located in the Santa Ynez Valley in the central part of Santa Barbara County. The city is surrounded by the Purisima Hills to the north, the upper Santa Ynez Valley to the east, the Santa Ynez Mountains to the south, and the lower Santa Ynez Valley to the west. Solvang is situated primarily along an alluvial plain formed by the Santa Ynez River and on the southeastern edge of the Purisima Hills. State Route 246 bisects Solvang and provides a key regional east-west link between Highway 101 and State Route 154.



Figure 1: Regional Context



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## Solvang Planning Boundaries

Established as a General law city in 1985, and approved by the voters in November 2006 as a charter City, Solvang encompasses approximately 2.4 square miles. Existing land uses in the city consist primarily of the Village commercial, single-family homes, and open space. The area surrounding the city consists primarily of low density residential, open space, and agricultural uses.

The Solvang General Plan uses several terms to describe the city and its planning boundaries:

- **City Boundary.** The political boundary that defines land that has been incorporated into a city. Solvang has land use authority over all land within its city boundary.
- **Sphere of Influence.** A sphere of influence (SOI) is the probable physical boundary and service area of the city, as adopted by a Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). An SOI typically includes both incorporated and unincorporated areas within which the City will have primary responsibility for the provision of public facilities and services.
- **Planning Area.** A General Plan, pursuant to State law, must address all areas within the jurisdiction's Planning Area. The Planning Area encompasses all incorporated and unincorporated territory that bears a relationship to the long-term physical planning of the city.
- **Urban Growth Boundary.** Cities use urban growth boundaries (UGBs) to establish where they intend to encourage and discourage land development through public-infrastructure investments, land-use regulations, land acquisitions, and other actions. Within the UGB, cities typically adopt land use policies that encourage urban development. Solvang adopted its UGB in June 2020. The UGB is the same boundary as the Solvang city boundary.

# Organization of the General Plan

The Solvang 2045 General Plan addresses the mandatory elements and includes several optional elements. Table 1 lists the elements of the Solvang 2045 General Plan and shows how the elements are organized to meet the mandatory requirements of State law.

**Table 1: Elements of The Solvang 2045 General Plan**

Solvang Elements	State-Mandated Elements								Optional
	Land Use	Circulation	Housing	Conservation	Noise	Open Space	Safety	Air Quality	
Land Use	■								
Community Design									■
Economic Development									■
Mobility		■							
Public Facilities, Services, and Infrastructure									■
Environment and Sustainability				■		■		■	
Safety					■		■		
Housing			■						



The 2045 General Plan is organized into 11 chapters (an introductory chapter, eight elements, a glossary, and an administration chapter), allowing users to find topics or sections that interest them. The policies throughout all elements work together and users must consider them comprehensively when making planning decisions. The chapters of the General Plan are as follows.

## 1. Introduction

The Introduction to the 2045 Solvang General Plan begins with the purpose and use of the General Plan; explains how the General Plan was prepared; states the vision and guiding principles of the General Plan; describes the different analyses that informed the General Plan; gives an overview of the City of Solvang; explains the organization of the General Plan; and lastly, provides a guide on how to read the General Plan.

## 2. Land Use (LU)

The Land Use Element establishes the pattern and intensity of land use in the city and sets forth policies and standards to guide future development. This Element serves as the primary vehicle for ensuring that new land uses are logically organized and developed in a way that preserves Solvang's small-town charm.

## 3. Community Design (CD)

The Community Design Element looks at the key components of the City's unique Danish style architecture as well as the overall physical environment and describes the features that, together, contribute to the distinct community character of Solvang.

## 4. Economic Development (ED)

The Economic Development Element focuses on supporting traditional employment sectors, including tourism, retail and service industries, manufacturing, construction, transportation, and warehousing, while ensuring the City is responsive to cost pressures, shifting consumer demands, and competition.

## 5. Mobility/Circulation (MOB)

The Mobility Element is designed to address all aspects of safely moving people and goods. This Element serves to meet the requirements of the Circulation Element as required for a General Plan. Mobility in tandem with land use

patterns, infrastructure, and access to active transportation options influence the character of neighborhoods, the location of specific land uses, and the overall form of the city.

## 6. Public Facilities, Services, and Infrastructure (PFS)

The Public Facilities, Services, and Infrastructure Element guides decision-making concerning public and private infrastructure, utilities, and services.

## 7. Environment and Sustainability (E&S)

The Environment Element aims to preserve, protect, and enhance the natural and historical resources that make Solvang a unique place.

## 8. Safety (SAF)

The Safety Element establishes a policy framework for protecting people and property from unreasonable risks from natural disasters, noise, and other events. It also focuses on disaster and emergency response.

## 9. Housing (HE)

The Housing Element ensures that there is adequate land in place to accommodate Solvang's fair share of new residents. The Housing Element focuses on a pre-determined eight-year cycle extending from 2023-2031. The Housing Element will identify and address housing needs in the city in compliance with State housing law.

## 10. Glossary

This chapter provides a definition of the key terms and acronyms used in the Solvang 2045 General Plan.

## 11. Administration

This chapter contains a consolidated list of all implementation programs.

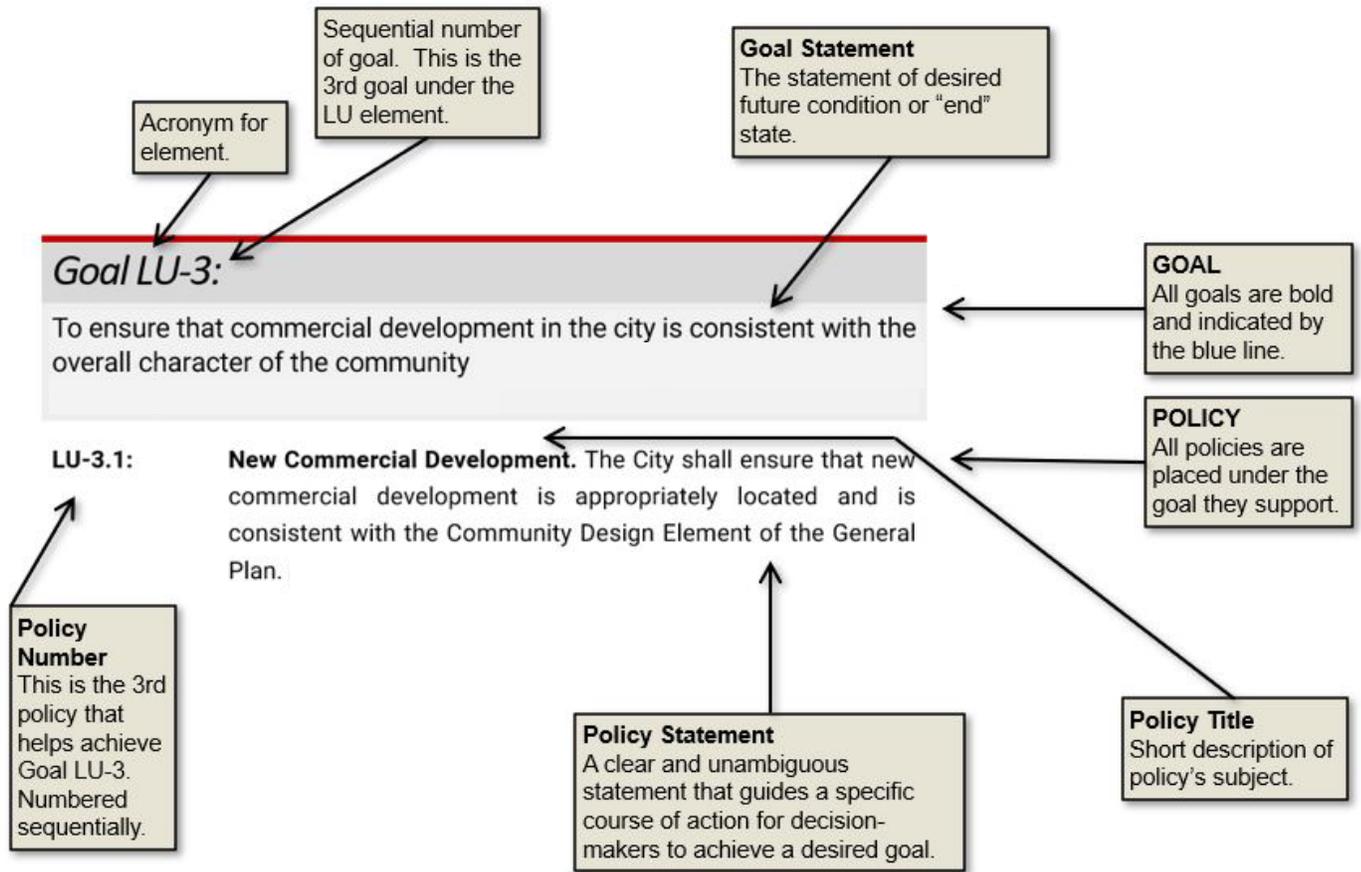


# Readers' Guide

## Goals and Policies

Each element contains the goals and policies that the City will use to guide future land use, development, resource management, and environmental protection decisions. Figure 2 explains the standard format for goals and policies, using a sample goal and policy.

**Figure 2: How to Read Goals and Policies**



### Goal

A goal is a statement that describes in general terms a desired future condition or "end" state. Goals describe ideal future conditions for a topic and tend to be very general and broad.

### Policy

A policy is a clear and unambiguous statement that guides a specific course of action for decision-makers to achieve a desired goal.

“Policies and implementation measures throughout the General Plan use terms such as “shall” and “should” to define the intentions of the City relative to these components. These modifiers are used as follows in the General Plan:

“Must” or “shall” or “required” are used to signify a mandatory requirement that the City will follow. For example, Policy SAF-4.2 says: “The City shall require new development and redevelopment to incorporate flood reduction measures into the project design in areas known to be prone to flooding.”

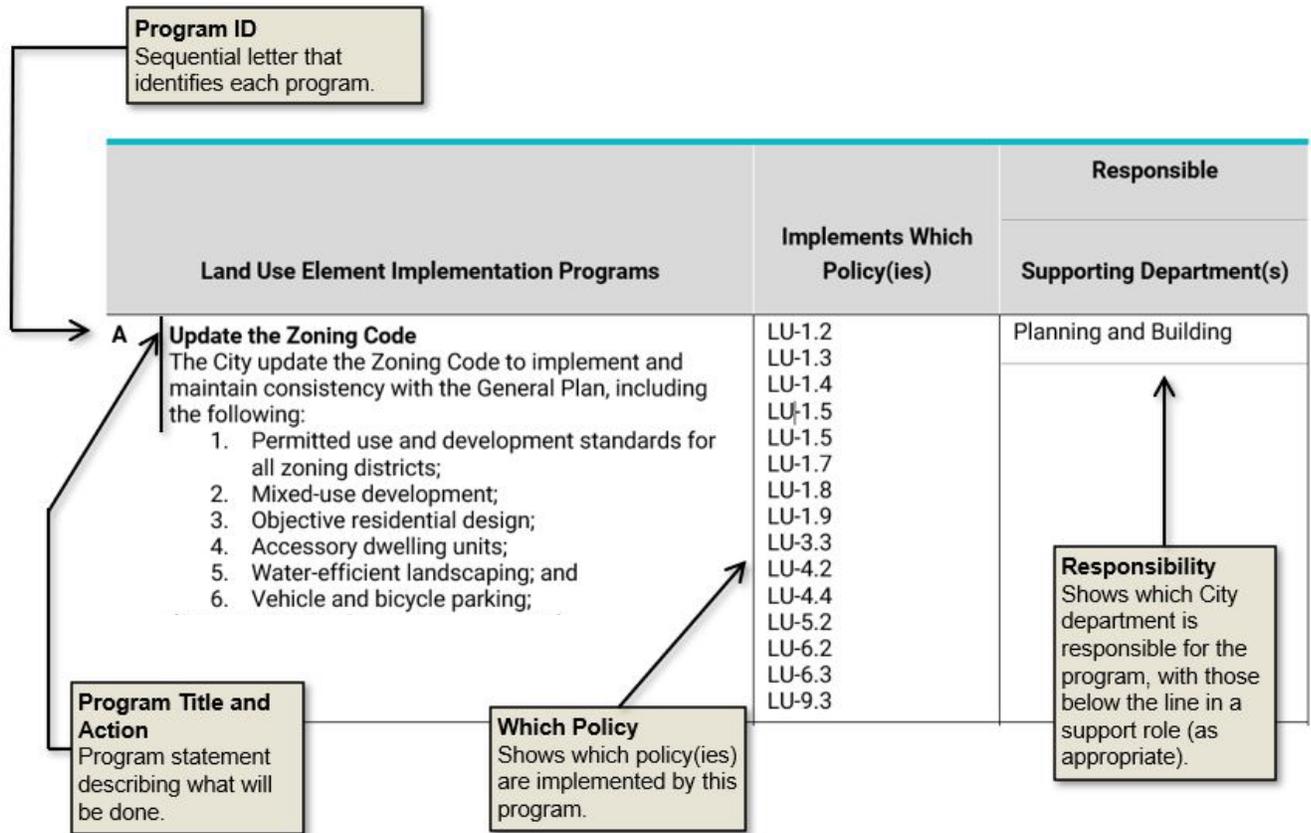
Words such as “should” or “may” are used to signify a less rigid directive, that will be honored in the absence of compelling or contravening considerations. For example, Policy ENV-14.5 says: “The City should promote and encourage co-generation projects for commercial and industrial facilities, provided they meet all applicable air quality standards and provide a net reduction in GHG emissions associated with energy production.” This provides flexibility in addressing the policy in the context of the project or proposal.



# Implementation Programs

While many policies can be implemented as part of standard City operations, some policies require specific programs to ensure their implementation. The last section of each element includes a table of implementation programs in a format illustrated on Figure 3. Similar to policies, implementation programs that address one or both of the cross-cutting topics include an icon to highlight the implementation program’s relationship to these topics, as applicable.

**Figure 3: How to Read Implementation Programs**



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