

Introduction



The City of La Puente has changed dramatically since the 1930's, when the area was famous for fruit and walnut groves. Today, La Puente is a culturally diverse and dynamic community of over 42,000 residents. La Puente combines the characteristics of a community with a firm link to its heritage, broad vision for the future, and a commitment to action. The City offers residents and the business community important cultural, economic, and educational opportunities that continue to define and shape La Puente's "place" in the San Gabriel Valley. The City, community residents, and the business community are committed to implementing a long-range plan that enhances the physical, economic, and human resources of the community. This General Plan has been crafted to achieve these objectives.

Important planning issues facing the City include:

- What commercial and residential opportunities can be realized in La Puente?
- How can the City reinforce a unique identity along its commercial corridors?
- As local and regional growth occurs, what improvements to the local circulation system can be made to ensure smooth and safe travel for residents, employees, and visitors?
- What tools are appropriate to preserve the character of residential neighborhoods and allow for new housing opportunities?
- Given limited vacant land resources remaining in the City, what flexible land use regulations can be used to accommodate a range of development types and intensities and enhance the economic viability of its commercial base?
- What incentives can be used enhance the quality of life in the City's neighborhoods and to attract modern commercial business, including light manufacturing and high technology industries?

The General Plan establishes the framework for moving from the La Puente of today toward the desired community of the future. This Plan guides the City to the year 2025 by establishing goals and policies that address land use, circulation, economic development, and related issues. Each of these issues affects quality of life in La Puente and the economic



health of the community. Incorporating input from residents, City leaders and businesses in La Puente, the General Plan works to retain the qualities that make the City unique, responds to the dynamics of regional growth, and meets changing community needs. Implementation of the General Plan will ensure that future development projects are consistent with the community's goals and that adequate urban services are available to meet the needs of new development.

Community Participation

Because the General Plan reflects the community's goals and objectives, citizen input has contributed significantly to identifying this Plan's issues and goals. Public participation and education in the General Plan preparation process occurred through the following methods.

The City held two *community workshops* on November 9 and 13, 2002 to allow residents to identify key issues important to La Puente's future. Information collected at each meeting was mapped, tallied, and used to develop a community vision statement and questionnaire to be distributed at subsequent neighborhood meetings.

Following the November workshops, six *neighborhood workshops* were held throughout La Puente to discuss planning issues affecting residents and businesses. Workshops were held in the following neighborhoods:

- *East La Puente* (Hurley Elementary School, January 23, 2002)
- *Downtown La Puente* (La Puente Women's Club, February 6, 2002)
- *California Ave, Stimson Ave, Cadwell-Larimore-Hayland and 5th Street* (Del Haven Community Center, February 20, 2002)
- *Temple/Tonopah Neighborhood* (Sunset Wesleyan Christian School, March 6, 2003)
- *Hacienda Boulevard* (La Puente Senior Center, March 13, 2003)
- *Glendora Avenue and E. Amar Road* (Willow Adult School, March 19, 2003)

On July 15, 2003, a joint *Planning Commission and City Council study session* was held to review issues, goals and policies distilled from the community meetings. The meeting was open to public comments and approximately 45 residents were present.

Additional outreach activities included a second *Planning Commission and City Council study session*, two additional *community workshops*, and *public hearings* before the Planning Commission and City Council.

La Puente Planning Area

Located 20 miles east of downtown Los Angeles in the San Gabriel Valley, the predominantly residential city of La Puente is home to more than 42,000 people. One of the City's strongest assets is location. Freeway access is readily available from Interstate 10 and State Route 60. La Puente is centrally located relative to the region's large employment centers.

State planning law gives a city the authority to undertake long-range planning not just for properties within the corporate limits, but also for lands within the city's sphere of influence. La Puente's sphere of influence encompasses lands outside the City which are not in any other city's jurisdiction and which may influence the decisions and planning activities related to properties within the City. The Planning Area for the General Plan (Figure I-1) includes all properties within the City limits, as well as properties within La Puente's sphere of influence.

The sphere of influence consists of two areas located north of the City. The first, commonly known as Valinda, is bounded by Francisquito Avenue, Echelon Avenue, and Amar Road. The second - West Puente Valley - is bounded by Puente Avenue, Fairgrove Avenue, and California Avenue. The entire planning area encompasses 2,462 acres, with approximately 1,720 acres within the City's corporate limits and an additional 742 acres within the sphere of influence. Although the City has no plans to incorporate these areas, they bear a critical relationship to La Puente's future planning activities.

History of the Community

In 1769, the Gaspar de Portola expedition, the first European land exploration party in the Los Angeles area, built a bridge (or *punte* in Spanish) over San Jose Creek while camped nearby. The current City of La Puente is still platted as a part of Rancho La Puente, a portion of Mission San Gabriel, which was established in the 1770s. In 1842, following 72 years of solely Mexican land control and ownership, John Rowland and William Workman were granted preliminary title to Rancho La Puente by the Governor of the Prefect of the Second District of California. By 1850, Rancho La Puente had developed into an almost self-supporting independent community. The Town of Puente was first platted and the map recorded in 1886. During this 36-year period, signs of urbanization began to appear. With the construction of the first railroad through the area in 1875, the Town of Puente took on an urban form while agricultural uses began to dominate other portions of the



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Figure I-1
Planning Area

large ranches. Centrally located, the Town of Puente was primarily a commercial center for farming implements and related supplies, and provided accompanying social activities and merchant housing.



Orange groves near the Town of Puente in the 1920s.

By the early twentieth century the region was known for an abundance of citrus, walnut, and avocado crops, and maintained its agricultural character while mixed with growing industrial development of oil, banking, and communications through the middle of the twentieth century. After World War II, the region experienced a dramatic building boom that eventually edged out crops in favor of development. Today, the community is largely residential in nature, with commercial land uses located primarily along major highways and streets. Industrial land makes up less than 5 percent of the City's 3.5-square-mile land area.

Community Vision

Building upon the City's history, the *Community Vision* sets the foundation for the entire General Plan. The vision expresses La Puente residents' strongest values for the future and guides development of the community. The following principles convey the community's desires for the future:

La Puente desires to be:

- A family-oriented community providing a range of public services
- An attractive community of homes and neighborhoods
- A community that provides opportunities for businesses to be successful
- A safe place to live, work, and shop
- A balanced community that promotes varied housing options
- A mobile and accessible community

These guiding principles are expressed throughout the General Plan elements and will guide all decisions made to implement the General Plan. Working together with civic leaders, community organizations, and residents, we can pursue our common values and enjoy a community that achieves our goals and instills pride. The key community desires that underlie each principle are detailed on the following pages.

Guiding Principle: A Family-Oriented Community Providing a Range of Public Services

La Puente desires to be a family-oriented community that offers a variety of cultural, recreational, educational, and social activities. The City's Senior Center and libraries will be enhanced and maintained as valuable resources for residents. La Puente Park will provide recreational and community-oriented events for families. The City's Community Center will provide activities for our children and opportunities for volunteer service. Building upon this foundation, La Puente will strive to develop a Youth Learning Activity Center, and explore the possibility of expanding recreational opportunities by providing mini-parks and shared-school facilities, and providing other enriching outlets for our families and youth.



La Puente families enjoying a tot lot.

Guiding Principle: An Attractive Community of Homes and Neighborhoods

La Puente desires to promote community pride and identity by providing residents with quality living conditions in a community of desirable neighborhoods. A tradition of Puente Pride, combined with City enforcement of property maintenance standards and building codes, will result in clean, attractive homes. Neighborhoods will be maintained, and the City will support the maintenance and provision of infrastructure, landscaped amenities, community services and public facilities. The City will explore the possibility of establishing mini-parks in various

neighborhoods. Working together with City leaders, community organizations, and residents, our efforts will achieve safe and attractive neighborhoods that instill pride and community identity.



La Puente desires to be characterized by well-maintained single-family homes.

Guiding Principle: A Community that Provides Opportunities for Businesses to be Successful

La Puente desires to offer a diversity of business opportunities in a business-friendly community. Commercial areas will be clean and well-maintained, providing an attractive environment for businesses to succeed. The City will support our business community through programs to repair buildings, encourage the provision of attractive landscaping, create an attractive environment for shoppers and clients, and coordinate marketing efforts. Enhanced business opportunities that generate tax revenues to support community services will be encouraged throughout the City. As the historic center of La Puente, Downtown will continue to provide a diversity of shopping, new housing, and a place for community activities and civic functions. Upgraded shopping centers will better serve residents.



Downtown La Puente merchants.

Guiding Principle: A Safe Place to Live, Work, and Shop

As a family-oriented community, La Puente desires to be a safe place to live, work, and shop. City residents will be protected from natural and human-caused hazards, excessive noise, and criminal activity. Law enforcement and fire services will continue to be provided at appropriate levels. Traffic safety will be enhanced through the improvement of street intersections, turn lanes and stop lights, as well as neighborhood-level efforts to reduce cut-through traffic and noise. City leaders, law enforcement, residents, and community organizations will work together to find alternative solutions to gang activity, including opportunities for learning, employment, and community service. Land use planning will allow a diversity of residential, business, recreational, and other uses within a safe environment.



Traffic and pedestrian safety is an important component of La Puente's vision.

Guiding Principle: A Balanced Community that Promotes Housing Options

La Puente desires to be a balanced community providing varied housing opportunities, while preserving established neighborhoods. Providing a variety of housing types allows persons and families of all ages and income levels to live in La



La Puente provides a variety of housing options, including older single-family homes.

Puente as housing needs change with life circumstances. New houses, townhomes, well-designed apartments, mixed use in the Downtown La Puente, and landscape amenities will complement established

neighborhoods. City programs and policies will enhance housing opportunities, protect the character of single-family neighborhoods, and improve the quality of life.

Guiding Principle: A Mobile and Accessible Community

La Puente desires to be a mobile and accessible community. The local street system will provide accessible, attractive, and viable mobility options for residents, visitors, and the business community. Traffic and pedestrian safety remains a priority, particularly improving safety in residential neighborhoods, near schools, and other public gathering places. Enforcing traffic laws and maintaining the street system will improve mobility and protect pedestrians. The installation of sidewalks and bike paths will be pursued where feasible so that pedestrians and cyclists will be able to travel quickly throughout La Puente. The City will continue to support MTA, Foothill Transit, and other regional public transit providers and promote alternative modes of local transportation in efforts to reduce automobile dependency and reinforce connections to all of Southern California.

General Plan Purpose and Scope

La Puente's General Plan is a document required by State law that serves as a guide to the long-term physical development of a community. A city's general plan can be thought of as a *pattern* or *blueprint* for future growth and development.

Per State regulations, a general plan must address at least the following issues: land use, circulation, housing, noise, safety, conservation, and open space (California Government Code, Section 65302). However, a jurisdiction can vary the contents of the general plan to deal with any issue which decision makers, staff, residents, business owners, and other stakeholders deem important within the community. The La Puente General Plan discusses these issues in five chapters, called *elements*. These elements are:

- Community Development
- Circulation and Infrastructure
- Community Resources
- Community Safety
- Housing

Community development weaves together three important themes: land use, community design, and economic development. The Circulation and Infrastructure Element addresses how people, goods, and services move in and through La Puente. The Community Resources Element provides flexible consideration of community resources that combines the City’s physical assets with cultural and social assets. The Community Safety Element addresses hazards in the physical, built, and social environments and presents goals and policies to reduce the potential risk of death, injuries, property damage, and economic and social impacts associated with hazards.

The Housing Element identifies current and future housing needs and sets forth an integrated set of goals, policies, and programs to assist in the preservation, improvement, and development of housing to meet the needs of the community. Pursuant to State law, La Puente’s Housing Element is updated every five years.

Table I-1 shows the relationship between the five elements of the La Puente General Plan and the State mandated elements.

Table I-1
State Mandated Element Consistency

La Puente General Plan Elements	State Mandated General Plan Elements							Optional Elements	
	Land Use	Circulation	Housing	Noise	Safety	Conservation	Open Space	Community Design	Economic Development
Community Development	▲							▲	▲
Circulation and Infrastructure		▲							
Community Resources						▲	▲		
Community Safety				▲	▲				
Housing			▲						

Each General Plan element also includes an Implementation Program, identifying the specific actions the City will undertake to implement goals and policies. Ongoing review of these Implementation Programs allows the City to adjust programs and planned actions to respond to new or



refocused priorities, to address annual budget constraints and/or opportunities, and to account for changes in the physical conditions or economic circumstances of the community (for example, occurrence of a natural disaster).

Related Plans and Programs

The scope and content of the General Plan is primarily governed by the General Plan Law and Guidelines, and the Planning, Zoning and Development Laws of the State of California. In addition, a number of other relevant plans and programs play an important role in the formulation of General Plan issues, goals, and policies. These programs are grouped into the following categories: land use, circulation, conservation and safety.

Land Use

La Puente Zoning Ordinance

The City's Zoning Ordinance, which is part of the Municipal Code, divides La Puente into areas, called zoning districts, and establishes regulations for each district with respect to permitted uses, allowable density, building height, development character, etc. The Zoning Ordinance consists of a map delineating zone district boundaries, plus text that explains the purposes of each district, specifies permitted and conditional uses, and establishes development and performance standards. The Zoning Ordinance serves as the primary tool to achieve the goals, policies and development expectations established in La Puente's Land Use Plan. Under California law, the Zoning Ordinance must be consistent with the General Plan.

Downtown Business District Specific Plan

Under California law, a specific plan can be prepared for any defined geographic area which might benefit from special land use regulations and development standards. Specific plans can be used to concentrate (or prohibit) particular types of land uses, establish distinctive design themes, provide for phased development, or provide incentives for privately initiated redevelopment activity. In 1994, La Puente adopted a Downtown Business District Specific Plan. The plan set forth land use policies, design standards, and development incentives for the intensification and redevelopment of Downtown La Puente. The Community Development Element discusses these plans.

Circulation

Regional Transportation Plan

The *Regional Transportation Plan* is a component of the *Regional Comprehensive Plan and Guide* prepared by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) to address regional issues, goals, objectives, and policies for the Southern California region into the early part of the 21st century. The Plan, which SCAG periodically updates to address changing conditions in the southland, has been developed with active participation from local agencies throughout the region, elected officials, the business community, community groups, private institutions, and private citizens. The Plan sets broad goals for the region and provides strategies to reduce problems related to congestion and mobility. Goals of the Plan relevant to La Puente include:

- Improving levels of service for the movement of people and goods;
- Ensuring that transportation investment provides the greatest possible mobility benefit;
- Serving the transportation needs of everyone; and
- Developing regional transportation solutions that complement subregional transportation systems and serve the needs of cities and communities.

Congestion Management Plan

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) is responsible for planning and operating regional transit facilities and services in Los Angeles County. As required by State law, MTA prepares a *Congestion Management Plan (CMP)* for Los Angeles County. The CMP identifies the future regional transportation network, establishes acceptable service levels for network routes and identifies strategies to reduce congestion. Local jurisdictions within the County are responsible for implementing the CMP. The intersection of Azusa Avenue and Main Street is classified as a CMP arterial monitoring station and Azusa Avenue is classified as a principal arterial in the CMP System. The CMP roadway network also includes the following freeways that serve La Puente:

- San Bernardino Freeway (Interstate 10)
- Pomona Freeway (State Route 60)
- San Gabriel River Freeway (Interstate 605)

Air Quality Management Plan

The federal Clean Air Act requires preparation of plans to improve air quality in any region designated as a non-attainment area. (A non-attainment area is a geographic area identified by the Environmental Protection Agency and/or California Air Resources Board as not meeting State or federal standards for a given pollutant). The plan must outline specific programs, strategies, and timelines for bringing the area into compliance with air quality standards. The *Air Quality Management Plan* prepared by the South Coast Air Quality Management District, first adopted in 1994 and updated on a three-year cycle, contains policies and measures designed to achieve federal and State standards for healthier air quality in the South Coast Air Basin. Many of the programs address circulation improvements, since fossil-fuel-powered vehicles account for more than 60 percent of the nitrogen oxide emissions and 70 percent of the carbon monoxide emissions within the Basin.

Conservation

National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System

As part of a comprehensive effort to improve the quality of the nation's water resources, the federal government authorizes the State Regional Water Quality Control Board, Los Angeles Region to set up programs to implement National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) goals. Under the NPDES Stormwater Permit issued to the County of Los Angeles and La Puente as co-permittees, most new development projects in the City are required to incorporate measures that minimize pollutant levels within storm water runoff. Compliance is required at the time construction permits are issued, as well as over the long term through periodic inspections. The Community Resources Element discusses the NPDES program.

Safety

National Flood Insurance Program

The Federal Emergency Management Agency administers the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Participating jurisdictions must exercise land use controls and purchase flood insurance as a prerequisite for receiving funds to purchase or build a structure in a flood hazard area. The NFIP provides federal flood insurance subsidies and federally financed loans for eligible property owners in flood-prone areas. La



Puente is identified on the National Flood Insurance Program's Flood Insurance Rate Maps as being within Zone X, an area outside the 100- and 500-year flood zones, subject to minimal flooding.

Seismic Hazards Mapping Act

California's 1990 Seismic Hazards Mapping Act requires the State Geologist to compile maps identifying and describing seismic hazard zones throughout California. Guidelines prepared by the State Mining and Geology Board identify the responsibilities of State and local agencies in the review of development within seismic hazard zones. Development on a site that has been designated as a seismic hazard zone requires a geotechnical report and local agency consideration of the policies and criteria established by the Mining and Geology Board. Over the years, the program has expanded to include mapping of seismic-related hazards such as liquefaction- and landslide-prone areas. The Community Safety Element discusses seismic hazards associated with faults and those identified on State seismic hazard maps.