

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

CERRITOS - "A CITY WITH VISION"

This document represents our vision of Cerritos. Whether or not you are a resident of our City, this General Plan provides you with an understanding of who we are as a community, our vision of the future and the steps we will take to achieve this vision.

Our General Plan was originally adopted in 1971. Responding to changes in our community, we revised our General Plan again in 1988. Since that time, many things have changed in our City. Many of the visions and goals we hoped to accomplish in our previous General Plans have come to be realized. Our community must now reflect on our past accomplishments, evaluate new challenges and begin looking forward again to ensure our future provides the same quality of life that we enjoy in 2003.

REFLECTING ON OUR PAST

Our history provides a glimpse into who we are as a community. We value our rich history and we understand that our past tells us many things about our present, and can influence our future.

We became a City on April 24, 1956. As a reflection of our agricultural heritage, the name Dairy Valley was chosen. The extent of this agricultural heritage was clear – more than 400 dairies and a cow population that outnumbered residents twenty-nine to one. Dairy Valley was located in the southern portion of Los Angeles County, in an area that that was generally known as the Artesia Zoned District. Our neighboring communities were Hawaiian Gardens, Artesia, and Monterey Acres, which is now known as Lakewood. As shown on Exhibit I-1, *Regional Location Map*, our geographic location was ideal - centrally located between the region's primary economic centers of downtown Los Angeles and Orange County.

A CITY WITH VISION

C E R R I T O S G E N E R A L P L A N

[Link to Exhibit I-1, *Regional Location Map*](#)

We began to experience significant change in our community by the early 1960s. The value of land and increased property taxes began to make dairy operations difficult, and less profitable. Responding to this change, our City voted in 1963 to allow the development of residences on lots smaller than five acres. This decision allowed more traditional residential development to occur within our City for the first time.

As the physical features of our community changed, so did our name. On January 10, 1967, we officially named our community Cerritos, paying homage to our historic connection with our Spanish heritage and the Rancho Los Cerritos Spanish land grant that bears our City's name.

The 1960s were a period of growth for our community. By 1970, our population had blossomed to 15,865 residents. Understanding growth was inevitable, our City wanted to ensure we developed in a well-planned manner with a balance of residential, commercial and industrial development. Creating a well-planned community included being grounded in a respect for the environment and the provision of a lush, park-like setting that contributed to a high-quality of life.

On October 27, 1971 we adopted the City's first General Plan. This Plan's purpose was to provide a positive program of urban development that reflected our values as a community. The General Plan designated almost 50 percent of our community for residential development.

Through the next decade, our community began to mature into the Cerritos we see today. In 1978, we dedicated our City Hall, which was the first solar-heated City Hall complex in the Country – a testament to our forward vision.

The Cerritos of today is a thriving community. [Exhibit I-2, Aerial Photograph](#), provides an aerial view of our community. We've become one of the most ethnically diverse communities of its size in the United States. We've seen our commercial centers grow and diversify. We've seen our urban landscape mature and contribute to the aesthetic quality of our community. We've seen our schools rank as some of the best in the country. We've also seen our City become a regional attraction. Our state-of-the-art performing arts center, sheriff's station and Cerritos Library express our community pride and the importance we place in providing for our citizenry.

LOOKING TO OUR FUTURE

So, today we stand in our present, looking eagerly to our future. We understand that progressing to the future requires us to evaluate new challenges and seek solutions to those challenges. We understand that our community is almost completely developed and we must think of new and

A CITY WITH VISION

C E R R I T O S G E N E R A L P L A N

[Link to Exhibit I-2, Aerial Photograph](#)

creative ways to continue to provide for the changing economic and social needs of our community. We also recognize that as times change, so does our vision. Many of the goals we had hoped to achieve have been accomplished. Now we must refine our vision, so that it reflects our community today and what we want for it tomorrow. Our General Plan helps us to do this. The General Plan clarifies our vision of Cerritos' future and provides the road map to take us there.

HOW DOES OUR GENERAL PLAN WORK?

We use our General Plan as a tool that takes our ultimate vision of Cerritos and provides the policy framework that enables our values, visions and objectives to become reality.

We are required by California State law to adopt a General Plan that provides the policy framework for the long-term physical development of our community. Our General Plan expresses our community's development goals and provides specific public policy relative to the public and private uses of land in our community. Our General Plan links our community values, visions and objectives with the way we utilize our public and private land and other community resources. It is comprehensive and long-term, and provides the primary guidance for specific projects, policy actions or programs that may occur in the future.

Our General Plan contains ten Elements. State law requires us to include seven mandatory Elements, including: Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Conservation, Open Space, Noise, and Safety. State law also allows us to include optional Elements. We have included three optional Elements as part of this General Plan, including: Growth Management, Air Quality and Community Design. The ten Elements of this General Plan are described in detail below.

Land Use Element

Our Land Use Element serves as a long-range planning guide for development within the City. It provides us with an indication of the location and extent of development to be allowed over the next 20 years. Our Land Use Element also identifies the goals and policies that will guide development. This Element contains a Land Use Policy Map which serves as a visual tool to assist with the implementation of the guidelines that are established in this and other sections of the General Plan.

Community Design Element

Our Community Design Element will help guide future development in the City, so that overall public and private development will

contribute to a high-quality visual environment. This Element addresses design issues related to community image, development within the public right-of-way and development on private property relative to architectural design, site planning and signage.

Circulation Element

Our Circulation Element provides programs and policies to establish a roadway system that adequately accommodates future growth consistent with the Land Use Element. Our Circulation Element seeks to provide for a safe, convenient and efficient transportation system allowing for the movement of people and goods throughout the City and the region. Additionally, the Circulation Element includes policies for bike lanes, street improvements and other transportation-related issues.

Housing Element

Our Housing Element provides programs and policies that assist our community, region and state in meeting the goal of providing housing affordable to all socioeconomic segments of the population. The Element addresses citywide housing and population demographics, regional fair-share housing allocations and implementation strategies to assist our City in providing a full range of housing opportunities.

Safety Element

Our Safety Element is intended to reduce the potential risk of death, injuries, property damage, and the economic and social dislocation resulting from hazards such as fires, floods, earthquakes, landslides, and other hazards. It serves as a guide for our City government and the general public in understanding the hazards facing the City of Cerritos and how we can reduce the impacts of these hazards.

Conservation Element

Our Conservation Element provides an inventory of water resources, energy resources, solid waste generation and reduction and historic and cultural resources in the City. This Element provides direction regarding the conservation, development and utilization of natural resources within our City and the policies and programs to achieve them.

Open Space/Recreation Element

Our Open Space/Recreation Element outlines strategies and actions to preserve, and enhance open space areas in Cerritos to meet the recreational needs of our residents. Open space in the City includes neighborhood, community and regional parks, as well as community centers, trailways, golf courses and open space easements.

Air Quality Element

Our Air Quality Element is intended to protect the public's health and welfare by implementing measures that allow the South Coast Air Basin to attain federal and state air quality standards. To achieve this, the Element sets forth a number of programs to reduce current pollution emissions and to require new development to include measures to comply with air quality standards. In addition, this Element contains provisions to address new air quality requirements.

Noise Element

Our Noise Element describes the existing noise environment within the City and its relationship with Federal, State and City noise regulations. This Element also provides a framework to limit noise exposure within the City that considers both the existing and future noise environments and the compatibility of land uses.

Growth Management Element

Our Growth Management Element focuses on the City's ability to accommodate growth and development, while providing an adequate infrastructure and circulation systems. This Element also focuses on ways for the City to enhance long-term revenue sources, so that the City can continue to provide its residents and businesses with the highest level and quality of services.

HOW WE IMPLEMENT OUR GENERAL PLAN

Our General Plan is a policy document that clearly states our community's development policy. To further this, our City Council formally adopts our General Plan as the primary development guidance tool. All future programs and projects will seek policy guidance from the General Plan.

To further the policies contained in our General Plan, we develop ordinances and regulations and secure the staffing and financial resources to carry out programs that implement our policy goals.

In order to assure our General Plan truly works as a tool to implement our community's vision, we periodically review our policies and programs. State law requires our City Community Development Department to provide an annual report to our City Council about the General Plan and our progress in its implementation. We also periodically seek comment or conduct surveys of our residents, business owners and community groups to ensure our community's needs and concerns are being addressed adequately.

Our City is a Charter City and therefore is not expressly required by State law to provide consistency between our Land Use Element of the General Plan and the Zoning Ordinance. As a matter of good planning procedure, we make every effort to provide consistency between these two documents.