



Administration

2-1 Introduction

As general plans in different communities can vary significantly due to differing values and needs, it is important to explain how this plan is arranged and how it is intended to be used. This section of the West Valley City General Plan contains the data and policies that direct the oversight, application and updates of this General Plan. This element describes how the West Valley City General Plan is intended to be used and where it fits in the land use planning process.

2-2 West Valley City Vision West 2035 Update

Since the last major update in 2009, the General Plan has received several minor amendments. In 2010, the Hunter Town Center Small Area Plan was adopted to address the area around the intersection of 3500 South and 5600 West. Several sections of the Plan were updated with 2010 Census data and a new Moderate Income Housing Plan was adopted in 2014. In 2012, the Fairbourne Vision was adopted to replace the City Center Vision. At this time a number of text sections were updated to reflect completed transportation and transit projects, and to incorporate transportation and transit projects from the Wasatch Front Regional Council's (WFRC) newly updated 2040 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

In 2013, Planning staff developed a plan for a five year minor update to the General Plan. The idea was that the update would be something in between a major overhaul/rewrite and a touch-up of facts and figures. Specifically, staff recommended a revision to this document that would:

- Update the General Plan Map to include several new land use categories and reevaluate land use along all opportunity corridors.
- Review land use designations for parcels along and closely related to all opportunity corridors, and make changes as necessary.
- Review the issues/goals/actions for all chapters of the General Plan, to determine if there were completed actions that should be removed from the list, if goals were still relevant, and to determine whether new issues ought to be included.

Staff reevaluated opportunity areas based on events since the last General Plan update. Based on this evaluation, the following opportunity areas for the 2015-2035 Plan have been reviewed and revised. Opportunity areas are areas of the City considered most likely to change, and include the Metro River Trail light rail station area, 4100 South, the Decker Lake area, the Northwest area, 3500 South, 5600 West, and Redwood Road.

The approach taken for the 2015 to 2035 Update is described below:

Step 1: Research the Opportunity Areas

- Staff collected demographic and economic data and projections from the Census Bureau, Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget, Utah State Tax Commission, Commerce Real Estate Solutions, Wasatch Front Regional Council, and ESRI Business Analyst Online.
- Traffic data and projections, as well as long term project plans, were gathered from the Utah Department of Transportation, Utah Transit Authority, and traffic engineering consultants.
- City staff conducted physical and land use analysis in house, with assistance from other departments, including Police, Fire, Business Licensing, and Public Works.
- An outside consultant, Brook Hontz with Daly Summit Consultants, was contracted to provide independent analysis of opportunity area data, formulate the public presentation plan, provide feedback on land use alternatives, conduct the public meetings, and provide final input on the land use recommendations for each opportunity area and the General Plan Map.

Step 2: Develop Land Use Alternatives for Public Review

- The data from Step 1 was used to craft two land use options with feedback from Daly Summit Consulting. One was generally a lower density and land use intensity scenario, and the other was a higher density and land use intensity scenario.
- Seven public meetings (one for each opportunity area) were held to gain input on the land use alternatives. Over 1700 invitation letters were mailed out to residents, business owners, and concerned public agencies such as UDOT and UTA. Over 200 people offered input at public meetings, representing a wide range of interests. Participants included residents, business owners, and members of UDOT and UTA.
- Participants were asked to comment on the future land uses alternatives, as well as voice any other concerns they had.

Step 3: Develop a Preferred Land Use Recommendation

- Based on citizen input during the public meetings, staff and the consultant developed a preferred land use recommendation for each opportunity area.

Step 4: Update all other Chapters of the Plan

- Staff updated each chapter for timeliness of data and relevance of key issues.
- Revisions were made to the issues/goals/actions for each section of the General Plan.

Step 5: Adoption

- The adoption process outlined in State code was followed by having the Planning Commission recommend the General Plan for adoption by the City Council.

2-3 Purpose and Nature of the General Plan

The General Plan provides a broad overview of a city's path into the future regarding housing, employment, recreation, transportation and land use decisions. It is used by residents, landowners, developers, and employers, as well as City staff, the Planning Commission, Mayor and City Council to understand the anticipated direction of the community and to make preparations to realize the vision of the City. The General Plan is "a tangible representation of what a community wants to be in the future"¹, and a document that helps ensure orderly growth and high quality developments. It is often considered to be the 'Constitution' of future land use.

Residents, workers and employers often share a core set of values which will shape the City as it develops, changes, experiences challenges and shifts priorities. These values are the foundation of the General Plan, and this plan is a formally adopted statement of City leaders of the collective vision of future City priorities and patterns of growth. From the General Plan come specific plans providing greater detail and more specificity to either particular areas or certain systems such as transportation.

In summary, the West Valley City General Plan serves as a:

- Guide for residents, City staff, landowners, and developers
- Physical plan for land use preservation or changes
- "Big picture" view of City systems and their interdependence on one another
- Compass to help City staff and appointed and elected officials resolve difficult issues
- Comprehensive look at all areas within the City's jurisdiction
- Long-range (twenty year) perspective, focusing on residential, economic, transportation, environmental, and other important community issues.

Though the General Plan addresses a variety of issues and covers the entire City, it does not provide specific regulations, directives or incentives. The City uses many other tools to apply the principles contained in the General plan. These include specific area or issue plans, zoning and other parts of the City Code, as well as City Council resolutions. While many issues are presented in the vision of the General Plan, sometimes more time, more research or perhaps more funding is needed to achieve these objectives, and it could take several years to meet some of the more complex, costly, or in some cases risky objectives. However, every five to ten years the pertinent issues in the existing plan should be evaluated against new priorities raised by City residents, the Planning Commission and the City Council in the General Plan Update so that a new vision is set for another twenty years.

The West Valley City General Plan is a comprehensive and advisory document. As such it is important to note that piecemeal application of some parts of this plan to specific projects, while disregarding other elements, will be discouraged by the City. The City will encourage applications of this General Plan that reflect the broader vision and goals of the City and its residents.

¹ Kelley, Eric Damian and Barbara Becker (2000). Community Planning: An Introduction to the Comprehensive Plan. Island Press, Washington D.C., 2000.

2-4 Authority of the General Plan

The State of Utah has required every municipality to develop and maintain a General Plan for their community. This General Plan is required to plan for “present and future needs of the municipality” as well as “growth and development of all or any part of the land within the municipality.”² A host of possible elements may be included to achieve these purposes including housing, economic development, recreation and cultural opportunities, water and sewage services, energy, historical preservation and transportation. West Valley City gets to decide, for the most part, what will be covered in the General Plan as the State of Utah has provided in code that “the municipality may determine the comprehensiveness, extent, and format of the general plan” (USC 10-9a-401).

Though there is flexibility in what goes into the General Plan and how it is organized, there are a few requirements set out by the State of Utah. A land use element is required by State law, which provides for the establishment of long-term goals as well as the extent, distribution and location of “housing, business, industry, agriculture, recreation, education, public buildings and grounds, open space, and other categories of public and private uses of land as appropriate.”³ Also required is a transportation element, which illustrates the general locations and extent of a variety of road and transit types, as well as a moderate-income housing element that estimates and provides realistic opportunities to meet the projected moderate-income housing need. The General Plan is intended to be an advisory document, supported by both state and municipal code, and while some land-use decisions may stray from the General Plan, it is strongly encouraged that this plan be followed as closely as possible.⁴

2-5 Changes to the General Plan

The West Valley City General Plan is advisory in nature; however, it is most effective when it is followed closely and referenced in land use and other planning policy decisions. This plan should be updated periodically to ensure that it continues to represent the will of the public and that it addresses new circumstances.

A distinction needs to be made between General Plan updates and amendments. A General Plan amendment is usually a relatively minor change or series of changes applied to the existing General Plan to make sure it continues to meet the needs of the City and its residents. Sometimes amendments reflect changes in zoning classifications, which should be consistent with the General Plan map. These amendments are made through a formal public process, which encourages public input to help the Planning Commission and City Council make their decision to approve or deny the amendment. In many cases, General Plan amendments are initiated by individual property owners or by the Planning Commission.

2 Utah State Code, 10-9a-401, <http://le.utah.gov/~code/code.htm>, accessed September 2014.

3 Utah State Code, 10-9a-403, <http://le.utah.gov/~code/code.htm>, accessed September 2014.

4 For Utah State Code excerpts, current as of September 2014, see the Appendices of this document.

In order to be certain of the best use of the amendment process, proposals should address the following questions:

- 1 - What is the public purpose for the proposed change?
- 2 - Is the public purpose best met by the proposed change?
- 3 - Is the proposed amendment supported by other General Plan principles and vision?
- 4 - Does the proposed change encumber other General Plan goals or actions?
- 5 - What is the extent of the impact to adjacent and other affected landowners?

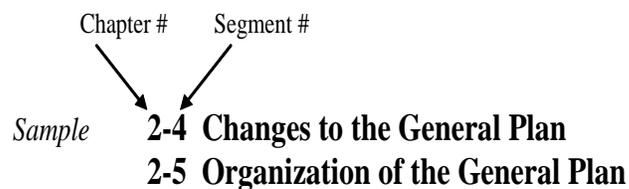
When making a General Plan amendment application, additional information will be needed including identification of adjacent land uses, population(s) served, transportation impacts, and public facilities impacts (water, sewer, storm water, parks, schools, etc.). Importantly, a firm justification must be made for proposing a change on a particular site.

A General Plan update refers to the process of essentially starting over and rewriting the document. This process involves a significant amount of time and energy in assembling the many thoughts, concerns and ideas of residents, employers and workers regarding the direction they would like the City to take. This process is challenging, sometimes costly, and imperfect, but critical to ensuring that this document reflects the City's greater vision of the future.

2-6 Organization of the General Plan

There are many forms that General Plans can take, from a single multiple-layered Comprehensive Plan Map, to lengthy and greatly detailed policy and technical manuals for city development. This plan falls near the middle with many policy suggestions and the provision of a General Plan Map. This format is intended to provide flexibility and guidance to decision makers given the difficulty in anticipating future circumstances. The West Valley City General Plan is divided into several different elements or broad topical areas with each detailing several goals addressing significant issues to the City and residents. These goals help to illustrate the direction the City wishes to proceed regarding the identified issues. Supporting each of these goals, a number of more specific actions are proposed. A complete table of all of the goals and actions contained in this plan is available in Chapter 11 of this document.

Each chapter in this document, with the exception of Chapter 1 and Chapter 11, cover unique elements, each with several descriptive segments numbered as Chapter-Segment to aid the location of segments and therefore communication and discussion of the plan.



A separate numbering system is used to identify ‘Goals’ and ‘Actions’ throughout this document. This is done also to facilitate the location of items and to compose a more legible and organized General Plan.



2-7 Issues, Goals and Actions

Issue: Consistency of General Plan Application in Land Use Decisions

For the West Valley City General Plan to be most effective, it should be considered in all land use decisions. It is important to note that this Plan attempts to encompass many different issues and topics and to peer well into the future, so it may not clearly address some issues that arise or take into account rapidly changing circumstances. Therefore, it may not be appropriate to always follow the guidance of this Plan, but following its intent as closely as possible will ensure its longevity and validity in ongoing decisions.

2.1 Goal: Follow the General Plan as closely as possible.

2.1.1 Action: The General Plan should be referenced in the City Council and Planning Commission’s land use recommendations and decisions.

2.1.2 Action: Appropriate justification should be offered in the event that a land use decision is inconsistent with the General Plan.

2.2 Goal: Maintain consistency between the General Plan and land use decisions.

2.2.1 Action: In the event that land use decisions and the General Plan do not align or are inconsistent, the Planning Commission and City Council should process an amendment or update to the General Plan to resolve the discrepancy.

Issue: General Plan Relevance

Though long range plans, including this General Plan, endeavor to plan for a relatively distant future, it should nonetheless be regularly updated to incorporate broader public opinion and address changing circumstances. A current General Plan will better assist property owners, developers and elected officials in finding the best land-use and policy solutions.

2.3 Goal: Keep the General Plan timely and applicable to new circumstances.

2.3.1 Action: Initiate a review, analysis, and update of the Moderate-Income Housing element every two years per State of Utah requirement.

2.3.2 Action: Prepare a General Plan update approximately every five years.

2.3.3 Action: Establish a biennial informal Planning Commission review of the General Plan map and goal/action items. This review should identify completed actions, as well as opportunities to change goals/actions or identify concepts for new issues, goals and/or actions. Recommendations for changes and amendments should be reviewed and approved by the City Council.

2.3.4 Action: Initiate amendments to the General Plan, as necessary, to address issues of broad significance to the City and its future, including significant changes to public services and safety as well as area annexation.

2.4 Goal: The West Valley City General Plan should provide the basis out of which more specific and detailed short term priorities may be identified.

2.4.1 Action: Use the West Valley City General Plan to assist in the West Valley City Strategic Plan development. The City Strategic Plan is developed annually by the City Council, and it should identify immediate priorities drawing from the General Plan.

Issue: Involvement in Regional Planning Initiatives and Concerns

At one time residents in this area were relatively isolated from the influences of the growing and bustling cities of the region. Today, West Valley City is the second largest city in the State and is in an increasingly interconnected metropolitan community. This means that the City's decisions increasingly impact, and in turn are impacted by, neighboring cities, townships and Salt Lake County. It will be even more important in the coming years to be a better regional partner in the development of regional plans. As well, it will become more essential for the City to consider the impacts of its decisions beyond its boundaries.

2.5 Goal: Adopt a Valley-wide conscience and be a good regional neighbor.

2.5.1 Action: Enact a 'Good Neighbor' policy that encourages the participation of residents, business owners and other affected entities from adjoining communities in public meetings that may affect them. West Valley City should be proactive in its efforts to acquire public input, and work to avoid the inadvertent exclusion of any who may be impacted by its policy or development decisions.

2.5.2 Action: Provide ongoing support for the engagement of city officials in broad discussions, workshops and conferences on local and regional issues.

2.6 Goal: Stay apprised of the activities of neighboring communities and regional entities.

2.6.1 Action: Participate in regional planning studies and efforts such as the Salt Lake County Cooperative County Plan, coordinate with regional groups such as the Wasatch Front Regional Council Regional Growth Committee, the Utah American Planning Association, and Envision Utah. Consult with Utah State agencies such as the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT), Utah Transit Authority (UTA), and the Governor’s Office of Economic Development (GOED).