CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Arcadia General Plan

Introduction

The City of Arcadia defines itself as a "Community of Homes." From large estate lots to quality townhomes and apartments, the choices for living in Arcadia are diverse. Arcadia has attractive neighborhoods, well-maintained parks, an outstanding public school system, shopping and entertainment, high levels of City services, businesses that provide jobs for people of many education and skill levels, a street network that allows people to move easily throughout the City, Santa Anita Park (a world-class and historic horse racing facility), and the Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanical Garden.

In 2009, Arcadia was home to 56,547 residents. By the year 2035, the population is expected to grow to about 61,994. As the City continues into the 21st century, the positive influence of its rich tradition will also continue, and the diverse character of the community will contribute toward Arcadia's future successes.

Arcadia's first General Plan was adopted in 1972 and has been amended now and then over the years. In 2008, the City initiated an update to the General Plan to affirm City leaders' commitment to protect the many features and characteristics that make Arcadia such a desirable place to

The peacock atop the fountain at Arcadia Park proudly represents the many peafowl that live in Arcadia. Imported to the City by Elias J. "Lucky" Baldwin, they are the official bird of Arcadia and part of the City's landscape and identity.

live, to gain a new understanding of community goals, to address evolving issues of the 21st century such as continued growth pressures in the San Gabriel Valley and demand for more diverse mobility and housing choices, and to respond to regional issues. This General Plan reflects the community's desire to maintain those features that continue to attract new residents and businesses—and that keep people here—but to make focused changes where needed.

Our Beginnings

Arcadia's beginnings date to the late 1800s, when the ranchos that dominated the San Gabriel Valley came into the hands of landowners who saw value in subdividing the lands for smaller farms and orchards, substantial home sites, and as locations for railroad depots. Elias J. "Lucky" Baldwin was responsible for dividing up properties that eventually incorporated in 1903 as the City of Arcadia, with Baldwin as the City's first mayor.

The Cultural Resources and Preservation section of the Parks, Recreation, and Community Resources Element provides more information about Arcadia's history.

The early economy was built on tourism and entertainment, including Arcadia's first horse racing track in 1907 on the site of the current Santa Anita Golf Course located in Arcadia Park. Santa Anita Park found its current home on Huntington Drive in 1934.

Downtown Arcadia was established in the 1880s, when railways began to enter the City. The first of these was the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Valley Railroad, which made it possible to travel from Los Angeles to Arcadia in less than an hour. The City's first school was located at the northeast corner of Huntington and Santa Anita Avenue. City Hall moved from the Hotel Oakwood (which burned in 1911) in downtown to the McCoy Building, which housed a large general store at the street level and offices on a second floor. After 1912, when the sale of liquor was outlawed in the City, many other "respectable" businesses joined Arcadia's downtown business community, including a dry goods store, a garage, cobbler, and hardware store. By the beginning of World War I, Arcadia's downtown was well established; it remains the historical heart of the City today.

Arcadia's first school house

Photo courtesy of Arcadia: Where Ranch and City Meet, *Pat McAdam and Sandy Snider.*

The street network has grown along with the City. The circulation system was well developed before Arcadia incorporated. Having a location near the railway was, in the late 1800s, the equivalent of easy freeway access today, and Arcadia grew up largely around the original rail configurations

that connected it to Los Angeles and eastern areas farther inland. In 1887, the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Valley Railroad began daily service from Los Angeles to Monrovia. The Arcadia stop was an easy 30-minute ride from downtown Los Angeles, and many city dwellers were happy to make this brief trip into the beautiful, open country of the San Gabriel Valley. A good number of these visitors decided to stay, buying homes in Sierra Madre and Monrovia, as well as in Arcadia.

By 1900, electric railways were replacing steam engines as the travel mode of choice for passengers, and the Pacific Electric line was brought to Arcadia. The unusual configuration of Huntington Drive in Arcadia today follows the original layout of the Pacific Electric line tracks that traversed the City.

Arcadia's identity as a "Community of Homes" can be traced to the 1930s when the first residential subdivisions began to appear, replacing what previously had been agricultural lands. The northernmost portion of the Baldwin Ranch, owned by Lucky Baldwin, made way for the first residential subdivisions. These included the estate home neighborhoods that are now part of the Rancho Santa Anita and Santa Anita Oaks Property Owners' Associations. Areas in the southern portion of the City transitioned rapidly from small poultry and produce farms to subdivisions of moderately priced homes.

Through the 1940s and 1950s, the nationwide post-war boom led to phenomenal growth throughout Southern California. Arcadia's population more than quadrupled between 1940 and 1960, and over 10,000 homes were constructed in those 20 years.

In addition to the quality residential neighborhoods that comprise much of the City, Arcadia has many unique features that set it apart from other San Gabriel Valley communities. These include the downtown, Santa Anita Park, the Los Angeles County Arboretum, regional shopping and entertainment destinations, and Arcadia County Park. These uses attract visitors to the community year-round. Although attendance at the racetrack during racing season has declined in recent years, Santa Anita Park still draws crowds of more than 50,000 visitors for large race days or to the Breeder' Cup and stands as a significant landmark in the community.

Looking Ahead

Arcadia has grown to be a mature, full-service City. The quality of homes, proximity to regional employment centers, shopping and entertainment choices, and quality community facilities and parks have helped Arcadia retain its desirability as a community. Arcadia no longer has undeveloped land; its primary management issues revolve around maintenance and recycling of uses on properties. Given this built-out condition, planning efforts will now focus on creating a more vibrant Downtown around the planned Gold Line Station, revitalizing aging commercial areas, allowing for modest density increases in multifamily residential neighborhoods, accommodating alternative travel modes, and maintaining the City's infrastructure and community facilities.

The Arcadia General Plan reflects the community's shared values of what Arcadia is today and plans to be in future years. Often referred to as the community's "blueprint," the General Plan establishes the basis for zoning and other land use regulations, and provides guidance in the evaluation of development proposals. Additionally, it creates the framework for economic development, transportation improvements, and balancing residents' desires with regard to sustainability, City services, parks, and historic preservation. The Arcadia General Plan guides:

- What the City will look and feel like
- Where and how we live
- How we will get around
- What we do for enlightenment, entertainment, and fun
- How we will live with and preserve natural resources
- Ways we will improve our quality of life

All issues are addressed within the context of seven chapters, or elements, with interrelationships among the elements.

The General Plan addresses all lands within the City's corporate limits, as well as unincorporated Los Angeles County properties surrounding Arcadia within its designated Sphere of Influence (see Figure I-1). As of 2009, the corporate limits encompassed approximately 11 square miles, and properties within the Sphere of Influence totaled 1.26 square miles. In this General Plan, the combined City area and Sphere of Influence are termed the "planning area." While properties within the Sphere of Influence are under the jurisdiction of Los Angeles County agencies, these properties bear a critical relationship to Arcadia's planning activities. One day, some of these properties may become part of the City proper, so planning for service extensions, integrated infrastructure, and high-quality design is prudent.
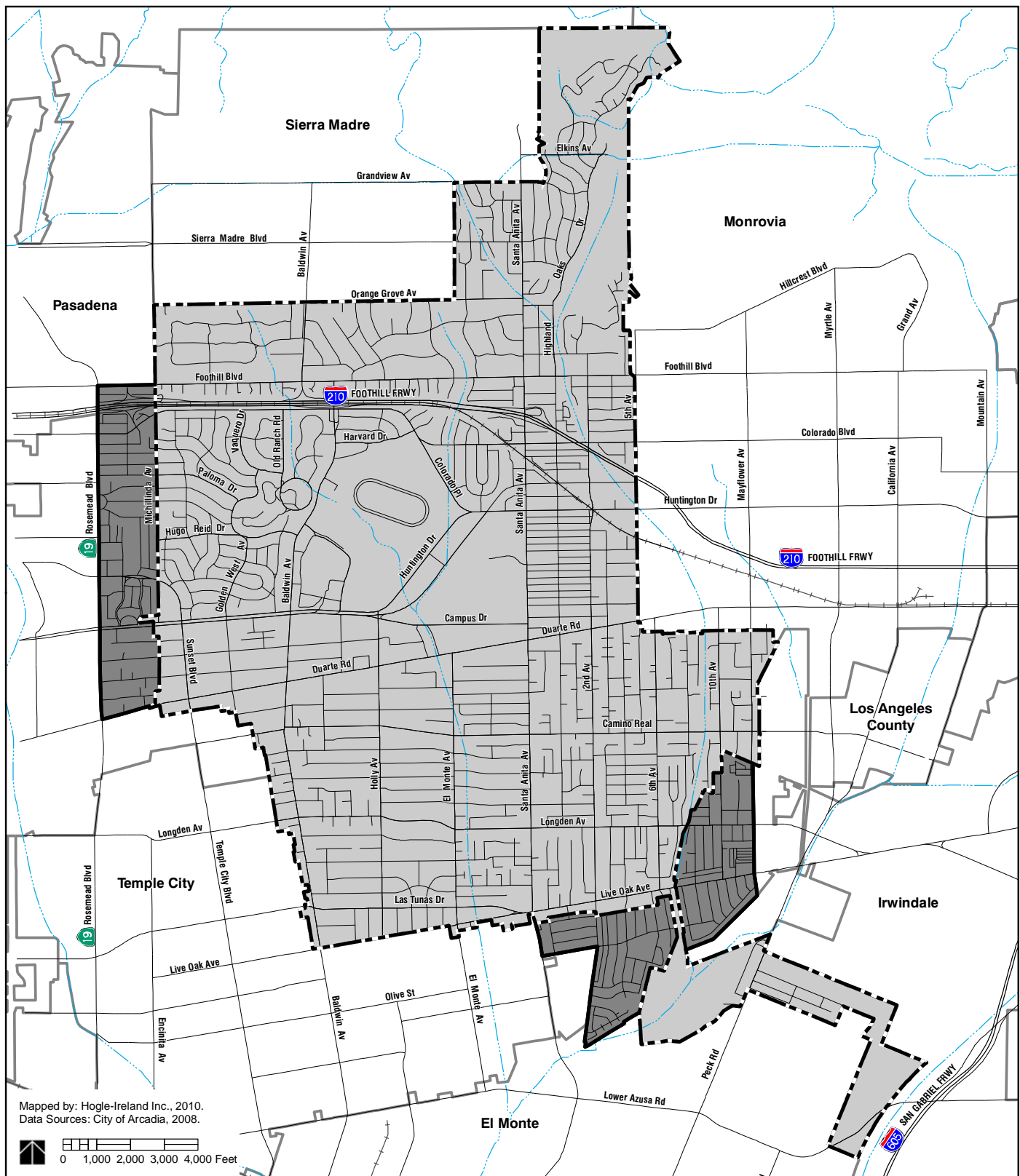
What is a General Plan?

State law requires every city and county in California to adopt a comprehensive, long-term General Plan. The General Plan represents the community's view of its future; it is a blueprint for growth and development.

The General Plan is comprehensive because it addresses all physical aspects of community life. Cities and counties are encouraged to tailor their General Plans to address not only the required seven elements—land use, circulation, housing, open space, conservation, safety, and noise—but issues of particular interest or distinct relevance to the community. Many General Plans include economic development or historic preservation elements, and increasingly, sustainability has been the focus of new elements.

The General Plan is considered "long term" since the document looks 20 to 25 years into the future. Individual jurisdictions determine a time horizon that serves their individual needs. Adjustments or amendments to the Plan can be made over time in response to changing community values, to address new State laws, or to reflect evolving economic conditions.

Planning Areas

- ▪▪▪ Arcadia City Boundary
- ▬ Sphere of Influence
- — Freeway
- — Major Road
- ┼┼┼ Railroad
- —·— Water Feature

FIGURE I-1: PLANNING AREA

Mapped by: Hogle-Ireland Inc., 2010.
Data Sources: City of Arcadia, 2008.

0   1,000 2,000 3,000 4,000 Feet

A Community Effort

The Arcadia General Plan reflects the ideas and inspirations of City leaders, staff, residents, and the business community. In developing this Plan, the City undertook an extensive community engagement process to understand the community's aspirations and to establish a foundation based on the vision for the future. The outreach program included the components described below.

Stakeholder Interviews

The General Plan team conducted a series of interviews with all members of the City Council and Planning Commission and representatives from many community organizations and interest groups. The interviews consisted of one-on-one discussions and group meetings to identify issues of concern to policy makers, residents, and the business community. Groups invited to and participating in the discussions included:

- Arcadia Association of Realtors
- Arcadia Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors
- Arcadia Chamber of Commerce Executive Committee
- Downtown Merchants
- Arcadia Wins!
- Arcadia High School Student Council and Student Body
- Arcadia School District Board
- Arcadia School District PTA (Elementary, Junior High, and High School)
- Arcadia School District PTA subgroups: Chinese, Hispanic
- Arcadia Interfaith Group
- American Red Cross
- Alpha Auxiliary (Methodist Hospital Foundation)
- Arcadia Host Lion Club
- Arcadia Masons
- Arcadia Women's Club
- Assistance League of Arcadia - Headquarters
- Elks Lodge
- Knights of Columbus – Council 3073
- Rotary Club of Arcadia
- Sunrise Rotary Club
- Arcadia Chinese Association
- Chinese Lions Club
- Chinese American booster club (schools)
- Arcadia Historical Society
- City of Arcadia Beautiful Commission
- Arcadia First!
- City of Arcadia Historical Museum Commission
- City of Arcadia Planning Commission
- City of Arcadia Human Resources Commission
- City of Arcadia Library Board of Trustees
- City of Arcadia Recreation and Parks Commission

- City of Arcadia Senior Citizen's Commission
- Anoakia Estate Homeowners Association
- Highland Oaks Homeowners Association
- Lower Rancho Homeowners Association
- Santa Anita Oaks Homeowners Association
- Santa Anita Village Homeowners Association
- Upper Rancho Homeowners Association
- Whispering Pines Homeowners Association

Community Workshops and Events

The community participated in several educational, informational, and interactive General Plan events to learn about existing and proposed development projects, redevelopment efforts, traffic, housing, and conservation. The City conducted a number of General Plan workshops:

1) an introductory workshop on May 31, 2008,
2) a focused workshop on Downtown Arcadia on October 11, 2008,
3) a joint workshop with the Chamber of Commerce for the Business Community on August 4, 2009
4) two community workshops to present the Draft General Plan to the public during the summer of 2010, and
5) workshops with the Planning Commission and City Council in the fall of 2010 prior to formal public hearings.
6) zoning code amendments with the Planning Commission on September 14, 2010.

In addition, in August of 2008 the General Plan team directed a workshop with the Arcadia Chinese Association, and the team presented or participated in events sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, including a business expo focused on local Chinese-American businesses, a Governmental Affairs Forum, and the annual Business Expo.

General Plan Advisory Committee

The General Plan Advisory Committee, or GPAC, comprised of 13 residents and members of the business community, held many meetings over a nearly two-year period to establish the General Plan framework and review draft elements prior to release of the draft General Plan to the public. The focus of the GPAC was to provide the varied perspectives of the community and represent opinions and concerns of residents, landowners, interest groups, homeowners' associations, and others interested in the General Plan

Update effort. The GPAC also made recommendations to staff prior to Planning Commission and City Council consideration.

Accomplishments of the GPAC included:

- Development of the Guiding Principles (see below)
- Participation in community workshops and joint City Council and Planning Commission workshops
- Definition and refinement of recommended land use focus areas
- Development of policies for focus areas
- Input on draft elements

City Council and Planning Commission

The City Council and Planning Commission held a series of study sessions throughout the General Plan process to review draft land use proposals. Land Use workshops were held with the Planning Commission on May 12 and June 9, 2009; land use workshops were also held with the City Council on July 7 and July 21, 2009. Additionally, the two bodies met in a joint session on February 24, 2009.

General Plan Website

The City maintained a General Plan website throughout the process to keep the public informed. Visitors could review summaries of interviews and workshops, comment on the Guiding Principles, read background reports, and review the draft General Plan.

Guiding Principles

The Guiding Principles provide the foundation for the goals, policies, and implementation actions included in this General Plan. Developed through an intensive process with the General Plan Advisory Committee, these Principles reflect community values. They establish a vision of future conditions in Arcadia. Each Principle provides clear direction to policy makers, City staff, residents, and the business community regarding decisions and actions that affect how the City functions and how development occurs. One Principle is not more important than another; they all work together. Decisions and actions related to land use, community design, circulation, infrastructure, housing, public safety, open space, resource sustainability, and community noise issues will be checked against these Guiding Principles to ensure that such decisions and actions respond to the community vision. While no proposal can be expected to embody all of the Principles, any that runs counter to any one Principle should not be pursued.

Balanced Growth and Development

The General Plan establishes a balance and mix of land uses that promote economic growth and maintain a high quality of life for Arcadia residents. Our development decisions reflect Smart Growth principles and strategies that move us toward enhanced mobility, more efficient use of resources and infrastructure, and healthier lifestyles.

Connectivity

Arcadia has a balanced, integrated, multi-modal circulation system—which includes streets, sidewalks, bikeways, and trails—that is efficient and safe, and that connects neighborhoods to jobs, shopping, services, parks, and open space areas.

Neighborhood Character

Arcadia's single-family and multifamily residential neighborhoods have given the City its identity as a "Community of Homes". The City protects and preserves the character and quality of its neighborhoods by requiring harmonious design, careful planning, and the integration of sustainable principles.

Schools

Our schools are a valuable community asset. The quality of the schools draw people to our City. We remain committed to working with the school district to achieve mutually beneficial goals.

Cultural Diversity

We embrace and celebrate the cultural diversity of Arcadia. Our lives are enriched by the many cultures that contribute their arts, food, values, and customs to our community. We promote activities and programs that strengthen these community bonds.

Environmental Sustainability

We are committed to environmental sustainability, which means meeting the needs of the present while conserving the ability of future generations to do the same. We take actions that work toward achieving regional environmental quality goals. Arcadia leads the way to a healthy environment by providing local government support, encouraging partnerships, and fostering innovation in sustainable principles.

City Services

The high quality services the City provides are a source of civic pride and bring us together as a community. We adjust service needs in response to demographic changes, and we take actions to provide funding to support these services.

Changing Housing Needs

The City encourages the retention, rehabilitation, and development of diverse housing that meets people's needs in all stages of their lives.

Economic Health

A healthy economy requires a diversified employment and fiscal base. Our priority is to create a resilient and thriving local economy, accessible to local residents and responsive to local needs, with a balance of regional-serving businesses that attract additional regional income. We are business friendly.

Preservation of Special Assets

Arcadia's quality of life is enhanced by special places and features such as Santa Anita Park, the Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanical Garden, a vibrant Downtown, the urban forest, attractive streetscapes, diverse parks, historic buildings and places, and nearby views of the mountains. These assets are preserved and enhanced so they continue to contribute to our City's character.

Plan Development and Key Objectives

The first step in updating the General Plan was to understand current conditions in Arcadia, including land use patterns and policies, development standards, traffic, infrastructure, and economic and fiscal conditions. The General Plan team conducted a series of background reports, which are available as separate technical appendices for reference, to establish the baseline. From this understanding, supplemented by input from the community, opportunities and constraints were identified for different areas of the City.

The second key step was to identify issues requiring focus. The GPAC was instrumental in distinguishing between Arcadia's stable neighborhoods and business districts—those areas where land use and aesthetic conditions reflect the City's objectives—and other areas that would benefit from focused attention to inject new economic life and create enhanced opportunities for new businesses and residences. These "change areas" are specifically addressed in the Land Use and Community Design, Economic Development, and Housing Elements. In addition, the GPAC and community at large defined the following key objectives to be pursued through General Plan goals and policies:

- Preserve single-family residential neighborhoods.

- Create a mixed-use district in Downtown Arcadia to complement the Gold Line light rail station.

- Revitalize Live Oak Avenue as a place for both businesses and residences.

- Anticipate new uses on a portion or all of the Santa Anita Park property over the long term, and require that any replacement uses create an outstanding, distinct, and world-renowned place comparable to the race track.

- Establish a linked system of bicycle travel ways throughout the City.

- Place increased emphasis on sustainable development practices and use of natural resources.

- Maintain the high levels of public services and community safety that residents appreciate.

- Celebrate Arcadia's diversity and culture.

General Plan Elements

Every jurisdiction in California is required by State law to have a general plan that covers at least seven topics: land use, circulation/transportation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety. In addition, cities may include optional elements that address issues of local importance. The Arcadia General Plan consists of eight elements that address the issues important to Arcadia, as indicated in Table I-1.

The **Land Use and Community Design Element** defines the distribution, intensity, character, and form of development. Policies emphasize preservation and enhancement of those features that distinguish Arcadia, and define focused efforts to be pursued to revitalize Downtown and the Live Oak Avenue Corridor.

The **Economic Development Element** addresses economic development, redevelopment, and the importance of fiscal balance between revenue and the provision of fundamental public services.

The **Circulation and Infrastructure Element** addresses the transportation network that allows people to move in and through Arcadia, and the utilities infrastructure that provides necessary urban services to residences, business, and institutions.

The **Housing Element** addresses issues, goals, and polices related to providing housing opportunities for people of all needs and income levels. Unlike the other elements, State law sets forth very specific regulations regarding the content of the Housing Element. Also unique to the Housing Element is the requirement that it be regularly updated per a schedule established by law.

The **Resource Sustainability Element** considers the effects of land use and development on natural resources, and specifically addresses air quality, water quality and water resource conservation, energy conservation, waste management and recycling, mineral resources, and the management of hillside areas.

The **Parks, Recreation, and Community Resources Element** addresses open space lands used for active recreation (parks) and enjoyment of nature, recreation programs, and the broad range of community, cultural, and educational resources and services Arcadia offers.

The **Safety Element** is concerned with identifying and avoiding or mitigating hazards present in the environment that may adversely affect property and lives.

The **Noise Element** identifies significant sources of noise in Arcadia and establishes policies and programs to protect people from excessive noise exposure.

TABLE I-1: SCOPE OF THE GENERAL PLAN

Issue	Element Addressing the Issue							
	Land Use and Community Design	Economic Development	Circulation and Infrastructure	Housing	Resource Sustainability	Parks, Recreation, and Community Resources	Safety	Noise
Land Use – Residential, Commercial, Industrial, Public, Open Space	♦					♦		
Land Use – Hillsides	♦				♦			
Parks						♦		
Economic Development	♦	♦						
Housing Needs	♦			♦				
Community Design	♦		♦					
Roadways and Traffic			♦					
Bikeways			♦					
Transit	♦		♦					
Water, Sewer, Flood Control, and Other Infrastructure			♦		♦		♦	
Water Resources, Including Recycled Water			♦		♦			
Waste Management and Recycling			♦		♦			
Air Quality					♦			
Energy Resources					♦			
Mineral Resources					♦			
Urban Forest (Trees)						♦		
Parks and Recreation						♦		
Historic and Cultural Resources						♦		
Environmental and Human-Caused Hazards, Including Threats to National Security							♦	
Emergency Preparedness and Response							♦	
Noise								♦
Planning for a Healthy Community	♦		♦	♦	♦	♦		♦

Using the General Plan

The Arcadia General Plan is a community document intended for use by all residents, business owners, and decision-makers in Arcadia. As such, the General Plan has been written and organized for ease of use. Tables, diagrams, and maps help readers understand planning concepts, and sidebar notes define terms and direct users to chapters addressing related topics or policies. A **glossary** provides further guidance and support to encourage a deeper understanding of all topic areas.

The organization of the Arcadia General Plan allows users to turn to the section that interests them and quickly obtain a perspective of City policies on the subject. However, General Plan users should realize that the goals, policies, and programs throughout all elements are interrelated and should be examined comprehensively. All of these policy components must be considered together when making planning decisions.

The Arcadia General Plan is intended to be both a long-term and a dynamic document, and should be periodically reviewed to respond to changing community needs. Requests for amendments may be submitted by property owners or initiated by the City. Amendments may involve a land use designation change for a particular property or policy/text changes applicable to larger areas or the entire City. All proposed amendments will be publicly reviewed to ensure consistency with all elements of the General Plan and the General Plan EIR. Per State law, General Plans may be amended up to four times per year. To facilitate a larger number of amendment requests, the City may group together a number of amendment requests to process together as one General Plan Amendment. However, the City is under no obligation to process General Plan amendments, as this constitutes a legislative act.

Key Terms Used

Goals and policies represent the General Plan's foundation. A **goal** is an overall statement of community desires and consists of a broad statement of purpose or direction. For each goal in this General Plan, associated and more definitive policy statements follow. A **policy** provides guidance to the City Council, other City commissions and boards, and City staff in their review of development proposals and other actions to be taken. Implementation **programs** provide further articulation regarding how the City will achieve its goals and policies. In particular, the Implementation Programs, contained in Chapter 10, are intended to be reviewed and updated periodically to allow decision-makers to adjust to changing community priorities and funding resources.