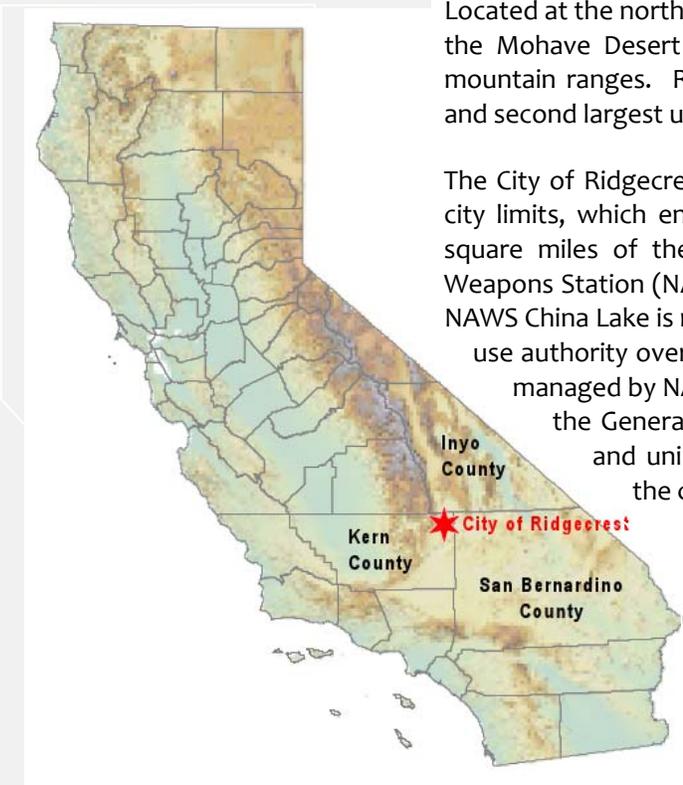


# 1

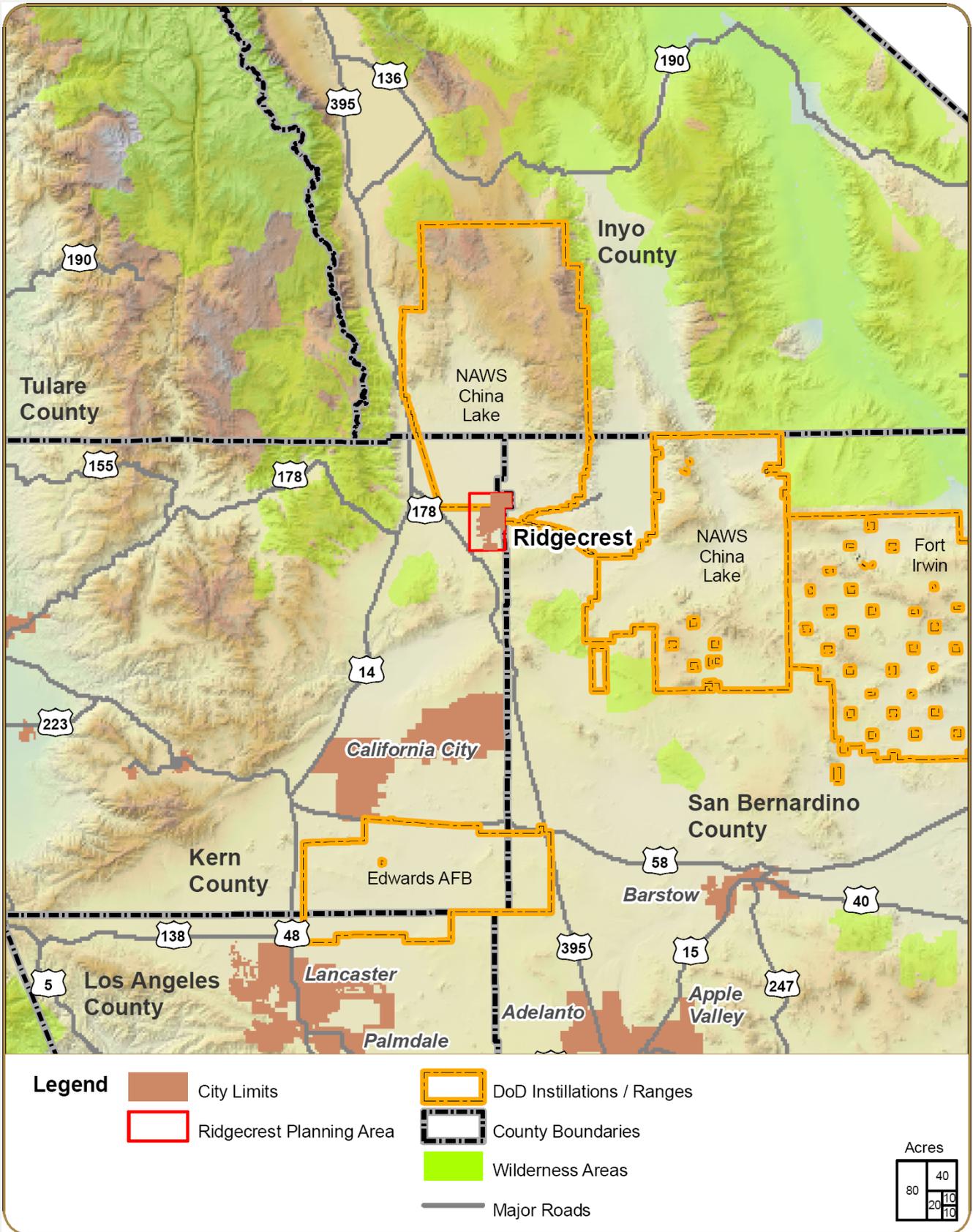
## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 City of Ridgecrest



Located at the northeast corner of Kern County, Ridgecrest sits at the edge of the Mohave Desert in the Indian Wells Valley, and is surrounded by four mountain ranges. Ridgecrest is the county's third largest incorporated city and second largest urban area (see Figure 1-1).

The City of Ridgecrest has direct land use jurisdiction over the incorporated city limits, which encompass about 21.4 square miles. Approximately nine square miles of the city limits lie within the boundary of the Naval Air Weapons Station (NAWS) China Lake. Although in the city limits, the area on NAWS China Lake is managed by the Navy, and the City does not exercise land use authority over this area. Development and planning within this area is managed by NAWS China Lake and the U.S. Navy. The Planning Area for the General Plan (see Section 1.2 for details), include the city limits and unincorporated areas that bear relation to the planning of the community.



0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles
**Regional Location | Figure 1-1**

Because of the City's convenient accessibility by two major highways, it is a central location for shopping and business for the eastern region of Kern County. The City's accessibility also renders it an ideal area for industry. Ridgecrest serves the Northeastern Kern and Eastern Sierra Region with commercial services, entertainment, recreation, filming, and tourism.

## 1.2 Planning Area

As stated in the General Plan Guidelines, a general plan must "cover the territory within the boundaries of the adopting city or county as well as 'any land outside its boundaries which in the planning agency's judgment bears relation to its planning' (§65300)." For purposes of developing this General Plan, the City established a Planning Area early in the update process as part of the public involvement process.

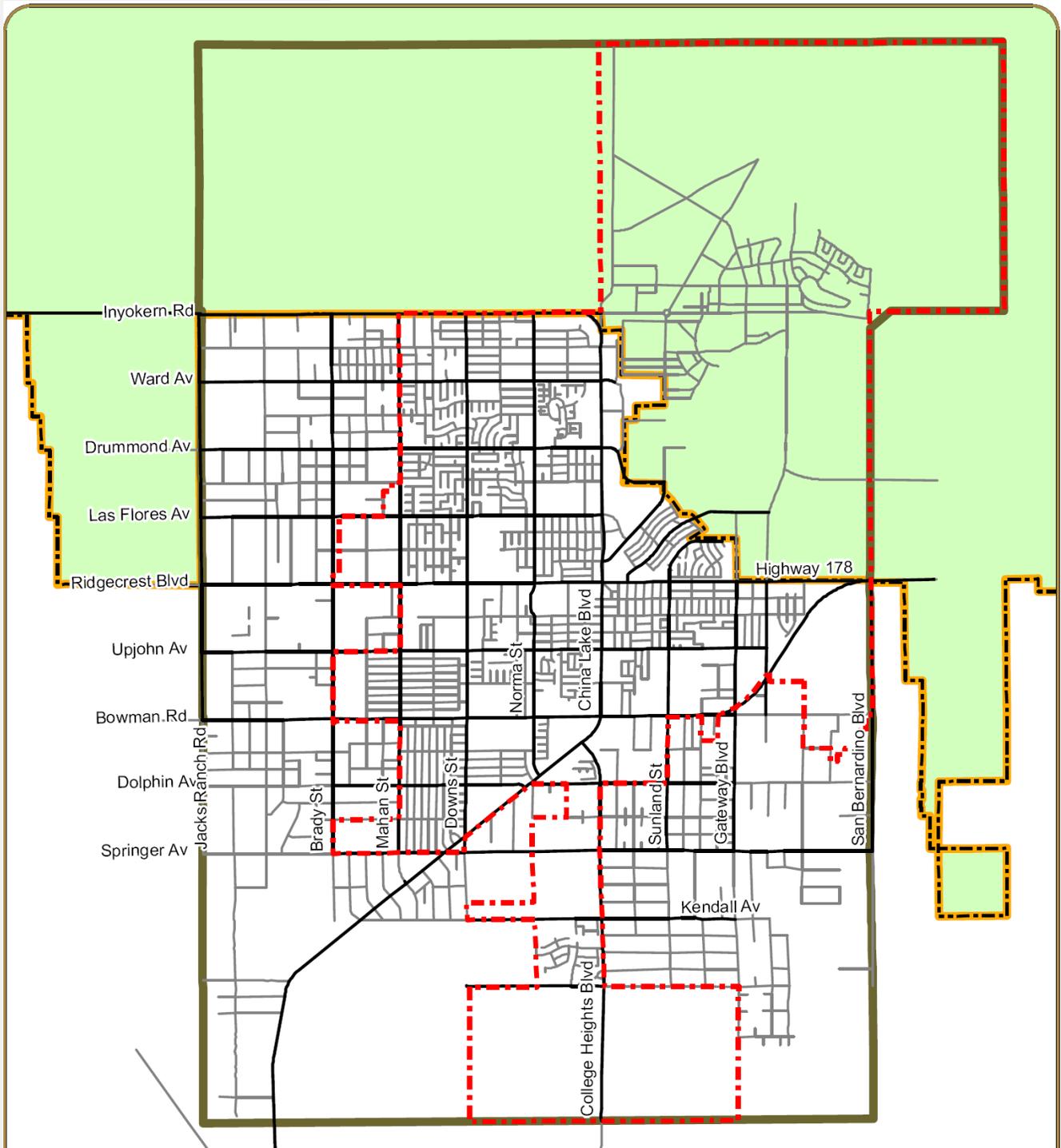
The Planning Area established for the Ridgecrest General Plan is shown on Figure 1-1. A unique aspect of the Planning Area is that it incorporates lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and lands held by the Department of Defense as part of China Lake. The Planning Area covers a land area of approximately 40 square miles.

## 1.3 General Plans in California

Every city and county in California is required by State law to prepare and maintain a planning document called a general plan (Government Code Section 65300). A general plan is designed to serve as the jurisdiction's "constitution" or "blueprint" for future decisions concerning land use, infrastructure, public services, and resource conservation. All specific plans, subdivisions, public works projects, and zoning decisions made by the City must be consistent with the general plan.

A general plan must address the seven topics (referred to as "elements") of land use, circulation, housing, open-space, conservation, safety, and noise as identified in state law (Government Code Section 65302), to the extent that the topics are locally relevant. It may also include other topics of local interest, as chosen by the City (Government Code Section 65303).

- The **land use element** designates the general distribution and intensity of land uses within the planning area.
- The **circulation element** identifies the general location and extent of existing and proposed transportation facilities and utilities.
- The housing element is a comprehensive assessment of current and future housing needs for all segments of the City population, as well as a program for meeting those needs. The housing element is subject to state statutory requirements for periodic updates. To meet mandated state timelines, the housing element will be prepared on a separate schedule.



**Legend**

- City Limits
- NAWS China Lake
- Planning Area
- Major Roadways
- Collector & Local Roads

Acres

80	40
20	10



Planning Area | Figure 1-2

- The **open-space element** describes measures for the preservation of open space for the protection of natural resources, the managed production of resources, and for public health and safety.
- The **conservation element** addresses the conservation, development, and use of natural resources.
- The **safety element** establishes policies to protect the community from risks associated with natural and man-made hazards such as seismic, geologic, flooding, wildfire hazards, and air quality.
- The **noise element** identifies major noise sources and contains policies intended to protect the community from exposure to excessive noise levels.

The City may adopt a general plan in the format that best fits its unique circumstances (Government Code Section 65300.5). In doing so, the City must ensure that the general plan and its component parts comprise an integrated, internally consistent, and compatible statement of development policies. The City of Ridgecrest has chosen to adopt a General Plan that consolidates some of the mandatory elements. The conservation and open space elements are combined into a single element and the noise and safety elements are consolidated into a Public Health and Safety element. The City has also included two optional elements to reflect the specific needs of the community (Military Sustainability and Community Design).

The elements included in the Ridgecrest General Plan are described in further detail in the following section.

In addition to the mandatory and optional elements, the Ridgecrest General Plan has the following three defining features:

- **General.** As the name implies, the general plan provides general guidance that will be used to direct future land use and resource decisions.
- **Comprehensive.** The general plan covers a wide range of social, economic, infrastructure, and natural resource factors. These include topics such as land use, housing, circulation, utilities, public services, recreation, agriculture, biological resources, and many other topics.
- **Long-range.** General plans provide guidance on reaching a future envisioned 20 or more years in the future (this General Plan update will look out over 20 years to the year 2030). To reach this envisioned future, the General Plan will include policies and actions that address both immediate and long-term needs.

## 1.4 Ridgecrest General Plan

The Ridgecrest General Plan update program was founded on the following guiding principles:

- Provide the public opportunities for meaningful participation in the planning and decision-making process;
- Provide a description of current conditions and trends shaping the City of Ridgecrest;
- Identify planning issues, opportunities, and challenges that should be addressed in the General Plan;
- Explore land use and policy alternatives;
- Ensure the General Plan is current, internally consistent, and easy to use;
- Provide guidance in the planning and evaluation of future land and resource decisions; and
- Provide a vision and framework for the future growth of the City.

### General Plan Documents

The Ridgecrest General Plan update includes the preparation of a number of major documents. These documents can be divided into two sets: General Plan documents (adopted), and General Plan supporting documents used to assist in the decision making process, but are not part of the adopted General Plan.

#### GENERAL PLAN DOCUMENTS

- **Goals and Policies Report.** This report is the essence of the General Plan. It contains the goals and policies that will guide future development within the City and its Planning Area (see Section 1.2). It also identifies a full set of implementation measures that will ensure the policies of the General Plan are carried out.

The Goals and Policies Report also contains a number of diagrams that show the distribution of land use designations, circulation features, and other planned facilities in the Planning Area.

#### GENERAL PLAN SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- **Map Atlas.** To provide the community with a good foundation for planning the future, a “Map Atlas” was prepared. This document replaces a lengthy text write up with a graphic format that makes use of maps, charts, and illustrations to convey a picture of the City of Ridgecrest at the start of this General Plan update in 2007. This Map Atlas is an illustrated summary of the key findings from the background research conducted.

- **Policy Directions and Choices Report.** Based on input from workshops held with the community and the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC), and direction from the Planning Commission and City Council, this document provided a summary of the critical policy and program issues to be addressed in the General Plan and provided a look at the direction to be pursued by the community in planning for the future.
- **Environmental Impact Report (EIR).** An EIR will be prepared to meet the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Planning Commission and City Council will rely on the information contained in the EIR to understand the potential impacts associated with implementation of the General Plan and will use the EIR to support the decision making process.
- **Zoning Ordinance Update.** In conjunction with the development of the updated General Plan, the Project Team will update the City's Zoning Ordinance. This revision will utilize the current form of the document with additional illustrations and examples included to make the code easier to use. The updated Zoning Ordinance will be one of the key methods of implementing the General Plan update.

## Elements Included in the Ridgecrest General Plan

The Ridgecrest General Plan contains six elements. The following paragraphs display the name of each element, the chapter number for each element, and a discussion of the contents and purpose of each element.

In each element, goals and policies are numbered according to the topic they address. In the following discussion, a one-, two-, or three-letter acronym will be given for each element. This acronym is used to identify all goals and policies in a given element and is used to identify which policy and implementation measures go together. For example, goals and policies for Land Use have the acronym "LU".

<b>LU</b>	<b>Land Use</b> <b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>Land Use Element</b>  This element establishes goals and policies for residential, commercial, industrial, and other land uses in the City.
<b>MIL</b>	<b>Military Sustainability</b> <b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>Military Sustainability Element</b>  This element identifies the goals, policies, and implementation measures needed to ensure the City’s dual objective of achieving growth while protecting the flight corridors and military missions associated with China Lake.
<b>CD</b>	<b>Community Design</b> <b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>Community Design Element</b>  This element establishes the goals, policies, and implementation measures to guide evaluation of city structure and design.
<b>C</b>	<b>Circulation</b> <b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>Circulation Element</b>  This element identifies the goals, policies, and implementation measures needed to ensure an adequate and functional transportation and circulation system. This element addresses automobile travel (roads and highways), public transit, aviation, and trails for bicyclists and pedestrians.
<b>OSC</b>	<b>Open Space and Conservation</b> <b>Chapter 7</b>	<b>Open Space and Conservation Element</b>  This element identifies the goals, policies, and implementation measures needed to ensure the appropriate use, enjoyment, and protection of natural resources within the City.
<b>HS</b>	<b>Health and Safety</b> <b>Chapter 8</b>	<b>Health and Safety Element</b>  This element identifies the goals, policies, and implementation measures needed to ensure the public health, safety, and welfare related to both natural and man-made hazards.

Table 1-1 illustrates how the elements of the Ridgecrest General Plan relate to the seven mandatory elements set out in state law. A solid square (■) indicates that the issues identified in a state-mandated element are covered in the City element identified in the left column.

**Table 1-1. Relationship between City’s General Plan and the State-Mandated Elements**

	Land Use	Circulation	Conservation	Open Space	Noise	Safety	Housing
Land Use	■			■			The housing element will be prepared on a separate schedule and is not included in this document.
Military Sustainability	■		■		■	■	
Community Design			■				
Circulation		■			■		
Open Space/ Conservation			■	■			
Health and Safety					■	■	

## Zoning Ordinance Update

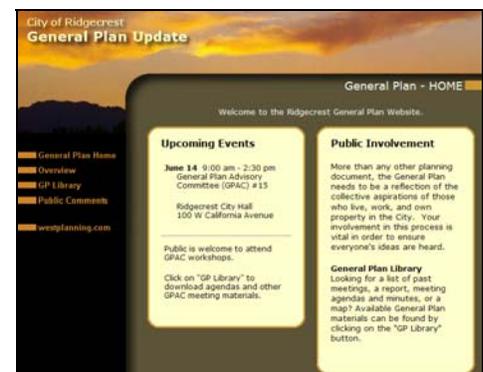
In conjunction with the development of the updated General Plan, the City will also update the City’s Zoning Ordinance. This revision will utilize the current form of the document, with additional illustrations and examples included to make the code easier to use. The Zoning Ordinance update will be one of the key tools used to implement the new General Plan.

## 1.5 Public Involvement

In preparing the updated Ridgecrest General Plan, the City conducted an extensive community involvement process which involved the components discussed in the following paragraphs.

### Website

A dedicated General Plan website was maintained during preparation of the General Plan ([www.westplanning.com](http://www.westplanning.com)). This site contains schedules for future meetings and provides a location to download documents prepared during the General Plan update program.



## Newsletters



Newsletter #1

As part of the General Plan’s community involvement process, a two newsletters were prepared to provide updates on the progress of the General Plan.

March 2007 Defining the Future

This newsletter provided an overview of the General Plan program and information on how to stay involved in the development of the plan.

Summer 2008 Draft General Plan & EIR

This newsletter will provide a summary of the General Plan and EIR. This newsletter will be used to review the plan during public workshops, GPAC meetings, and public hearings with the Planning Commission and City Council.

## General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC)



GPAC Workshop

To provide guidance in the General Plan update, the City created an advisory committee – the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC). The GPAC is made up of 14 individuals selected from the community and is designed to provide additional community input to the Planning Commission and City Council. The GPAC was also a vital resource to City staff and the General Plan consulting team as the General Plan was developed.

During preparation of the General Plan, 16 meetings were held with the GPAC. GPAC meetings were typically held on a monthly basis, with all meetings being open to the public.

## Community Workshops



Workshop #1

Three community workshops were held to gain input on issues and opportunities, alternative futures, and the General Plan documents:

March 28, 2007 Issues and Opportunities

On March 28, 2007, over 50 people met at the City Hall and participated in the first of two community workshops designed to give the community opportunities to be involved in shaping the City of Ridgecrest General Plan. The purpose of the first workshop was to provide participants with an overview of the General Plan update process and give everyone an opportunity to offer their thoughts on the future of Ridgecrest.

Following the General Plan overview, the workshop participants broke into five break-out groups and discussed the following two questions:

- List the top three challenges/issues facing the City.
- List the top three opportunities the City should pursue.



Workshop #2

March 29, 2007

On March 29, 2007, over 50 people met at City Hall and participated in the second of two community workshops designed to give the community opportunities to be involved in shaping the City of Ridgecrest General Plan. The purpose of the second workshop was to explore policy choices related to future land use concepts for the City of Ridgecrest. At the beginning of the workshop, participants were asked to join the same group they were with for Workshop #1. New attendees were divided into the five groups. Working as members of these groups, participants developed concepts for Ridgecrest's future. Their charge was to map out a future for the City that addresses the issues and opportunities identified in Workshop #1.

Summer 2008

Prior to the start of public hearings, a third workshop focused on the Draft General Plan will be held. This workshop will be set up using a combination of group workshop and open house formatted segments. The open house component will allow participants to move between "booths" set up on specific topic areas. At each area, participants can ask questions and provide input on the major directional items contained in the General Plan.

## City Council / Planning Commission Joint Workshops

During preparation of the draft General Plan, the Planning Commission held 21 workshops that were open to the public. Dates and topics for these workshops are as follows:

April 2008

Policy Choices / Direction

From the start of the General Plan update, the project team has been working with the GPAC and the community on the identification of the key issues to be addressed in the General Plan. Using the key issues identified, a number of broad policy directions were discussed with the GPAC and presented to the City Council and Planning Commission. The purpose of this exercise was to gain an understanding of the overall direction that the General Plan should take. This understanding will help ensure that the draft General Plan meets the expectations of the community.



Policy Choices / Direction Report

The results of this input are reflected in the Policy Choices / Direction report.

## 1.6 Environmental Analysis

As required under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA, Public Resources Code Section 21000, et seq.), the City Council will consider the findings of an environmental impact report (EIR) prior to adopting the General Plan. In order to minimize redundancy, the General Plan and EIR will be prepared as a combined document, as allowed under Section 15166 of the State CEQA Guidelines. Linking the General Plan documents by common organization and numbering will help organize the EIR as well. The components of the General Plan taken together will meet the CEQA requirements for EIR content and analysis. The Goals and Policies Report provides some of the environmental setting and embodies the project description and environmental mitigation.

All feasible mitigation measures recommended to reduce the potential environmental impacts of the General Plan below a level of significance will be integrated into the policies of the General Plan. Mitigation monitoring, as required under CEQA, will be done by compliance with the General Plan and through annual reports to the Planning Commission and City Council on the status of General Plan implementation.

## 1.7 Using This General Plan

### Organization

As stated above, this General Plan includes six elements, many of which are further divided into related topic areas. To make the elements easier to use and reference, each element is set up with the same structure.

#### GOAL

Each element contains the goals and policies that will be used by the City to guide future land use decisions. A goal is a statement that describes in general terms a desired future condition or “end” state. A goal serves as a general direction-setter. In this General Plan, goal statements will be formatted like the following example. In the brown box is the goal’s reference number. In the example, “C” refers to the Circulation Element and the “1” means this is the first goal in this element. Each element will have one or more goals for each topic area covered by that element.

*Example*

**Goal  
C-1**

Develop an integrated transportation through regional coordination and the development of sustainable financing mechanisms. [New Policy].

**POLICY**

A policy is a statement that guides a specific course of action for decision-makers to use to achieve a desired goal. A policy must be clear and unambiguous; it indicates a commitment of the local legislative body to a particular course of action. The example below shows what a policy statement looks like. In this General Plan, every goal has one or more policies associated with it. The letters and first number (e.g., “LU-1”) shows what goal this policy supports. The final number in the identifier (e.g., “.1”), shows that this is the first policy that supports Goal LU-1.

*Example*

**C-1.1 Circulation Diagram**

The City shall utilize and maintain the Circulation Diagram to designate the classification of all major roadways, transit facilities, and bicycle facilities. [New Policy]

Similar to the goal statements, the information in the brackets for each policy shows if it was based on a modification of an existing policy, or if this is a new policy statement.

**IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES**

In order to ensure that appropriate actions are taken to implement the General Plan, a set of implementation measures are provided. An implementation measure is a specific measure, program, procedure, or technique that carries out plan policies. Following the goals and policies for each topic area, a table is provided that shows the implementation measures. This table lists the implementation, states which policy(ies) this implementation supports, states what City departments or outside agencies are responsible to see this implementation gets done, and provides a timeline for when this implementation will be done.

*Example*

**Table 6-1. Circulation Implementation Measures**

Implementation Measure	Policy	Who is Responsible	Timeframe			
			2008-2010	2010-2015	2015-2030	On-going
1.0 The City shall develop a Circulation Master Plan that will include Bicycle and Pedestrian circulation as well as Vehicular. [Source: Policy 2.1.2, Circulation Element	C-1.1 C-6.3	Public Services (Community Development & Planning)	■			■



**MILITARY COMPATIBILITY PLANNING POLICIES**

Although the City has incorporated a Military Sustainability element into the General Plan, there are a number of policies that support military compatibility planning concepts included in other elements. Many of these policies were the result of the City’s participation in the R-2508 Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) completed in May 2008 (more information on the JLUS process is provided in Section 4). To assist in locating compatibility planning policies related to the recommendations in the JLUS, these are highlighted with JLUS icon, as shown to the left of this paragraph.