



DATE: January 28, 2026

TO: Orange County Planning Commission

FROM: OC Development Services/Planning

SUBJECT: Study Session for Comprehensive General Plan Update (GPA 24-01)

PROPOSAL: Staff will present information on the updates to the Comprehensive General Plan Update (GPA 24-01)

GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION: N/A

ZONING DISTRICT: N/A

LOCATION: Unincorporated Areas of Orange County

APPLICANT: OC Development Services/Planning

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RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

OC Development Services/Planning recommends the Planning Commission:

1. Receive staff report and public testimony; and
2. Provide feedback to staff as appropriate on Public Draft Comprehensive General Plan Update.

BACKGROUND

The County is undergoing a Comprehensive General Plan (GP) update. This process formally began with the authorization from Planning Commission to initiate the Comprehensive GP Update (GPA 24-01) on February 14, 2024. Staff provided an update to the Planning Commission on September 25, 2024. Since 2024, the County focused on collecting and analyzing existing conditions and evaluating its current General Plan document and reviewing public input from the public outreach efforts. Throughout 2025, the County prepared the Draft General Plan policy document (Attachment 1).

BACKGROUND

The Comprehensive GP Update is divided into two primary documents: 1) the Existing Conditions Report and 2) the General Plan Policy Document. The Existing Conditions Report provides a background summary of the County's existing (as of 2025) physical, environmental, economic, and demographic setting. The General Plan Policy Document contains the State-mandated and optional Elements. It contains the goals and policies that will guide future decisions within the unincorporated areas and identifies action items to ensure the vision and goals of the General Plan are carried out.

The goals of the Comprehensive GP Update are as follows: (1) examine General Plan goals, objectives, and policies to ensure that a high quality of life is maintained as the community matures and evolves; (2) incorporate changes required by state law; (3) reformat the document to be user-friendly.

General Plan goals, objectives, and policies

The County’s existing General Plan was last comprehensively updated in 2005. Subsequent updates to individual elements have occurred since; however, there has been no comprehensive update to modernize the rest of the document.

The Comprehensive GP Update includes goals, policies, and actions to provide guidance to the County on how to direct change, manage growth, and conserve resources over the 20-year life of the General Plan. To ensure that the goals and policies in the General Plan are effectively implemented, a series of actions, or implementation measures, have been developed, and are presented in each Element alongside the goals and policies they implement. The revisions do not propose any land use changes (no changes in General Plan designation for any area) and no changes are being proposed in the recently adopted Housing Element.

Updates required by State law

The Comprehensive GP Update is being prepared to address the updated requirements of State law and the relevant items addressed in Government Code Section 65300 et seq. Examples of recent State legislation that have been addressed through this General Plan Update include:

- Senate Bill (SB) 1425, which requires updating the open space plans to address equitable access to open space, climate resilience and rewilding opportunities;
- Assembly Bill (AB) 1889, which requires the conservation element of general plans to consider the impact of development on wildlife movement and habitat connectivity; and
- SB 1000, which added to the required elements of the General Plan an environmental justice element that identifies disadvantaged communities within the area covered by the general plan and requires the general plan to identify objectives and policies to reduce the unique or compounded health risks in disadvantaged communities, promote civil engagement in the public decision-making process, and prioritize improvements and programs that address the needs of disadvantaged communities.

User Friendly

As part of the Comprehensive GP Update, the elements are renamed and reorganized, or replaced, including combining topical areas, with the exception of the Housing Element, as described, and summarized below.

Orange County Existing and Updated General Plan Elements

Existing General Plan Elements	Updated General Plan Elements
Land Use	Land Use
Transportation	Mobility
Resources	Resource Management
Recreation	

Existing General Plan Elements	Updated General Plan Elements
Noise	Public Safety
Safety	
Public Services and Facilities	Public Services and Facilities
Growth Management	Growth Management
Housing*	Housing*
	Environmental Justice (New)

* No updates to the recently adopted Housing Element are included as part of the comprehensive update.

The updates include revisions to style, language, tables, and figures to update existing conditions and to better reflect the existing regulatory environment relative to more recent updates to the 6th Cycle Housing Element and Comprehensive Zoning Code. Overall, the goals, policies, and actions in each General Plan Element (excluding the Housing Element) are updated.

The Comprehensive GP Update proposes technical revisions that revise and reorganize existing objectives, policies, and implementation programs into a set of new goals, policies, and actions. The proposed goals, policies, and actions provide additional clarity and policy direction, consistent with State laws, policy documents, and guidance that have occurred since the adoption of the existing General Plan.

The Comprehensive GP Update proposes to identify and organize each unincorporated community into one of four Community Area classifications, including:

- (1) Unincorporated Islands;
- (2) Planned Communities, Specific Plans and Suburban Communities;
- (3) Rural Communities; and
- (4) Open Space.

The Community Area classifications are an organizational tool intended to group unincorporated areas into similar typologies that are reflective of the area's community and planning identity.

In addition, the Comprehensive GP Update proposes revisions to the land use designations and overlays to provide organizational consistency with the existing Zoning Map and better reflect existing on-the-ground conditions. The revisions do not propose any land use changes – meaning changes to the Land Use designation for any particular property or area.

The update proposes a new Mixed-Use (MX) land use designation to implement the Mixed-Use (MX) zoning district that was added to the Zoning Code as part of the implementation of the 6th Cycle Housing Element. The update proposes a new Specific Plan/Planned Community (SP/PC) land use designation to implement the existing Specific Plan (SP) and Planned Community (PC) zoning districts. It also proposes to replace the existing Landfill Site (LS) and Open Space Reserve (OSR) land use designations with a Landfill Sites Overlay (LS) and Open Space Reserve Overlay (OSR), respectively. Finally, the update includes the Housing Opportunities Overlay (H) land use designation to implement the existing Housing Opportunities Overlay Zoning District (HOO). Inclusion of the land use designations and overlays are to provide clarity and consistency between

the General Plan Land Use Designations and the existing Zoning Districts and do not propose any land use changes to areas or properties.

In addition, the Comprehensive GP Update proposes to remove the population and employee estimates from the land use designations. The Comprehensive GP Update does not increase density or intensity relative to existing land use designations – even if the name of the land use designation is changed, the density remains the same. The update does not make changes that would accommodate new growth relative to the existing General Plan Land Use Map.

Drafts of these documents are available for public review and comment through February 27, 2026. A virtual workshop will be held on February 11, 2026 at 6:00pm. Public hearings with the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors are expected to occur in later Spring/early Summer 2026.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA

This action is not a project within the meaning of CEQA Guidelines Section 15378 and is therefore not subject to CEQA, since it does not have the potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment. The approval of this item does not commit the County to a definite course of action regarding a project since the action is a status update of the Comprehensive GP Update. This proposed activity is therefore not subject to CEQA. Any future action connected to this approval that constitutes a project will be reviewed in compliance with CEQA.

Submitted by:

DocuSigned by:



Cindy Salazar, Division Manager
OC Development Services/Planning

Concurred by:

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Justin Kirk, Deputy Director
OC Development Services/Planning

ATTACHMENT:

1. Comprehensive General Plan (Public Review Draft January 2026) and Existing Conditions Report
<https://planoc.generalplan.org/documents-maps>