

CITY *of* CALABASAS
2030 General Plan

I – Introduction



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2030 General Plan

I. INTRODUCTION

The Calabasas General Plan represents the City's comprehensive effort to define what makes Calabasas a special place, delineate a vision for its future, and formulate action-oriented programs to achieve that future. The Plan functions as a blueprint that defines not only how the City will evolve through 2030, but the steps the community will take to make this vision a reality.

Calabasas is located in western Los Angeles County along the heavily traveled Ventura Freeway, approximately 25 miles from downtown Los Angeles. Neighboring cities include Los Angeles, Agoura Hills, and Hidden Hills. A portion of the City's northern boundary also borders Ventura County. As of 2014, the City of Calabasas' corporate boundaries encompassed approximately 13.8 square miles, or 8,804 acres of land. The City's 2013 population is estimated at 23,802. In addition, the General Plan addresses unincorporated areas surrounding the City that may be considered for future annexation. As of 2014, these unincorporated areas total about 3.2 square miles (2,022 acres) and include residential neighborhoods, commercial areas, open space, and a public school. Planning boundaries are shown on Figure I-1.

I.A General Plan Background

History of Planning in Calabasas

Prior to incorporation, Calabasas was an unincorporated community governed by the County of Los Angeles. The formation of the city in 1991 represented an effort by local residents to exercise local control of the community's future. Among the original goals of incorporation were placement of greater emphasis on environmental protection and design compatibility, and creation of transitions between urban and rural land uses.

Calabasas adopted its first General Plan in 1995. That plan, which was the result of a four-year planning effort, established three dominant themes for the community: (1) environmental responsibility; (2) local management and control; and (3) community image. The plan included all elements required by California General Plan law, but



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organized the elements in a somewhat non-traditional format. In addition, unlike most general plans, the document was accompanied by a General Plan Implementation Guide that included specific performance standards for new development in the community. This guide was needed at the time because the City did not yet have its own development code.

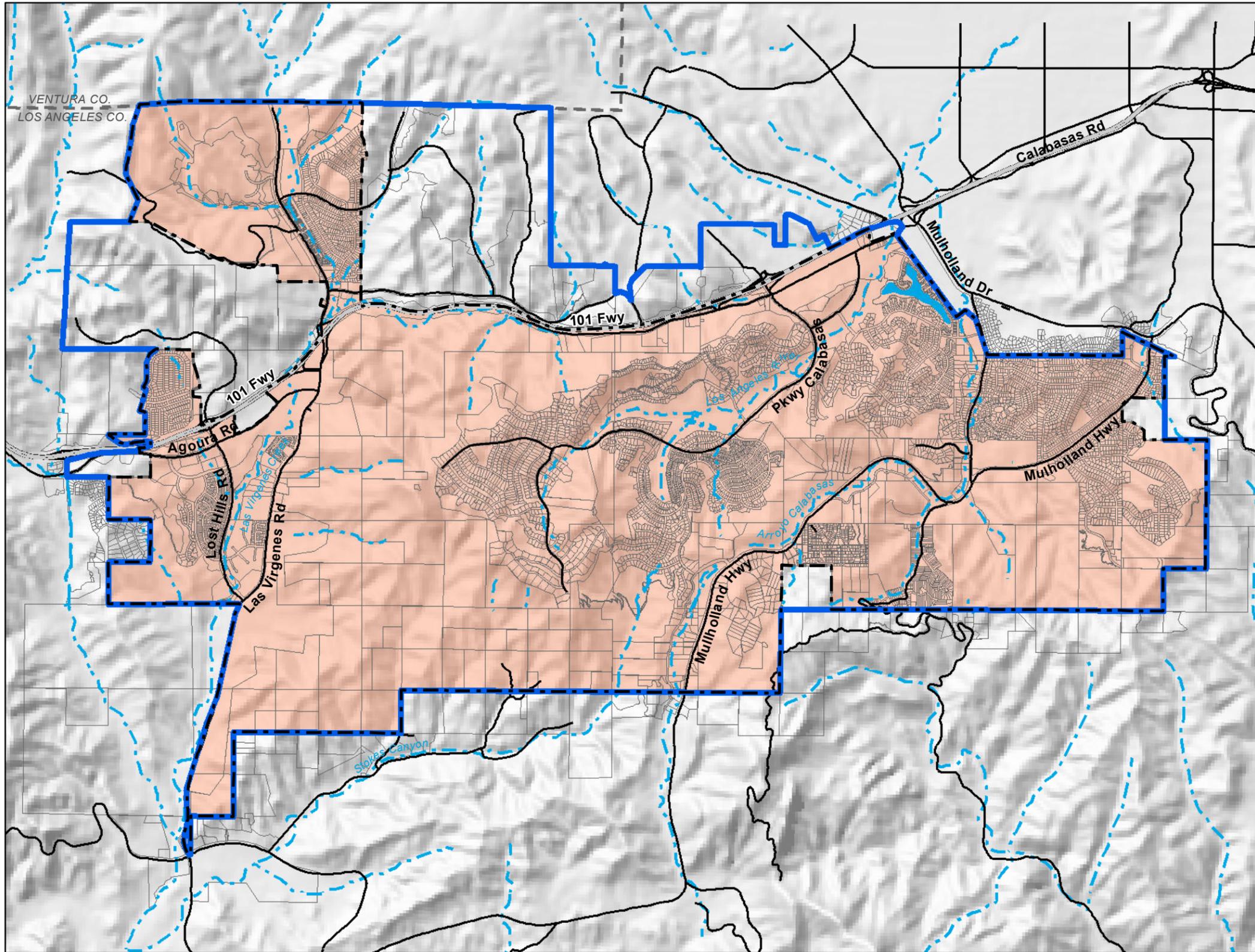
The City subsequently adopted a municipal code in 1998. At that point, the City had two documents containing development standards with which to implement the General Plan – the General Plan Implementation Guide and the Calabasas Development Code. The two documents were generally in agreement, but certain inconsistencies between the two documents created uncertainties as to how General Plan policies were to be implemented. Therefore, a goal of the 2030 General Plan is to eliminate the Implementation Guide and incorporate the principles and standards from the Implementation Guide into an updated development code.

Genesis of the 2030 General Plan

The preparation of the 2030 General Plan involved an approximately 21-month process involving the City Council and Planning Commission, a General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) made up of 20 individuals representing broad segments of the community, key community stakeholders, City and consultant staff, and the public at large. The extensive public involvement process for developing the General Plan included:

- *Establishment of the GPAC by the City Council*
- *A series of 17 meetings with the GPAC to obtain input on the issues of concern and preferred approaches to resolving these issues*
- *Two public workshops to gather input from the community on the direction of the plan*
- *A two-day visioning charrette where public input was gathered and a series of concepts for land use and parks were developed for key areas of the community*
- *A communitywide telephone survey to gauge community opinion regarding a range of issues relevant to the General Plan*
- *A 4th of July booth providing information about the General Plan update and gathering community input on the General Plan*
- *Development and maintenance of a web page providing information to the community about the General Plan process and work products*





LEGEND

- Calabasas City Boundary
- Plan Area Boundary
- Major Roads
- Drainages
- County Boundaries

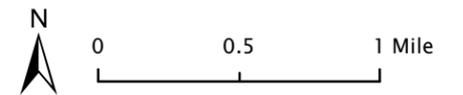


Figure I-1
Municipal and
Plan Area Boundaries

Imagery provided by USGS, 2002. Additional data layers from City of Calabasas, 2007, and Rincon Consultants, 2009. Updated March 2014.



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I.B Nature and Purpose of the General Plan

The Calabasas General Plan functions as a guide to the type of community that Calabasas citizens desire for their future and provides the means by which that desired future can be achieved. The General Plan is a "constitution" for local decision making that addresses the range of immediate, mid-, and long-term issues with which the community is concerned, including but not limited to environmental sensitivity and preservation, public services, and economic vitality. The Plan is intended to allow land use and policy determinations to be made within a comprehensive framework that incorporates public health, safety, and "quality of life" considerations in a manner that recognizes the resource limitations and the fragility of the community's natural environment.

According to the State guidelines for the preparation of general plans, the role of the General Plan is to establish a document that will "...act as a 'constitution' for development, the foundation upon which all land use decisions are to be based. It expresses community development goals and embodies public policy relative to the distribution of future land use, both public and private" (General Plan Guidelines, 2003). As further mandated by the State, the General Plan must serve to:

- *Identify land use, circulation, environmental, economic, and social goals and policies for the City and its surrounding planning area as they relate to land use and development;*
- *Provide a framework within which the City's Planning Commission and City Council can make land use decisions;*
- *Provide citizens the opportunity to participate in the planning and decision-making process affecting the City and its surrounding planning area; and*
- *Inform citizens, developers, decision-makers, and other agencies, as appropriate, of the City's basic rules which will guide both environmental protection and land development decisions within the City and surrounding planning area.*

State law requires that the General Plan include seven mandatory elements, but allows flexibility in how each local jurisdiction structures these elements. The general contents of the seven state-mandated elements are described on the following page.



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Mandated General Plan Elements

- ◆ *The **LAND USE ELEMENT** designates the general distribution and intensity of uses of the land for housing, business, industry, open space, education, public buildings and grounds, waste disposal facilities, and other categories of public and private use.*
- ◆ *The **CIRCULATION ELEMENT** is correlated with the land use element, and identifies the general location and extent of existing and proposed major thorough-fares, transportation routes, terminals, and other local public utilities and facilities.*
- ◆ *The **HOUSING ELEMENT** is a comprehensive assessment of current and projected housing needs for all economic segments of the community. It embodies policy for providing adequate housing and includes action programs.*
- ◆ *The **CONSERVATION ELEMENT** addresses the conservation, management, and use of natural resources, including water, soils, biological habitats, and mineral deposits.*
- ◆ *The **OPEN SPACE ELEMENT** details programs for preserving open space for natural resource protection, the managed production of resources, outdoor recreation, and protection of public healthy and safety.*
- ◆ *The **NOISE ELEMENT** identifies and appraised noise problems within the community and forms the basis for land use distribution.*
- ◆ *The **SAFETY ELEMENT** establishes policies and programs to protect the community from risk associated with seismic, geologic, flood, and fire hazards.*

The Calabasas General Plan also includes four elements beyond those required by State law. These include:

- **Community Design:** This element establishes policies and programs relating to the overall design of the community, including guidelines relating to architectural design, building height and massing, and landscaping.
- **Parks, Recreation, and Trails:** This element establishes policies and programs for the maintenance and enhancement of municipal parks, recreational services, and trails.



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- ***Cultural Resources:*** This element establishes policies and programs relating to the preservation of existing cultural resources within the community and development of cultural amenities that community residents desire.
- ***Services, Infrastructure, and Technology:*** This element establishes policies and programs relating to municipal and education services, water, sewer, and storm drain facilities, and technological infrastructure and development.

Though not mandated by State law, these General Plan elements have the same force and effect as the elements required by the State.

I.C Internal General Plan Consistency: Competing Objectives

In addition to providing a comprehensive view of the community's future physical, social, and economic environments, general plans must be internally consistent. In order to function as a useful statement of local policy, the various components of the General Plan need to "comprise an integrated, internally consistent and compatible statement of policies for the adopting agency" (Government Code, Section 65300.5). The following factors must be considered with respect to internal consistency:

- ***Equal Status Among General Plan Elements*** – All elements of the General Plan have equal legal status. Because no element is legally subordinate to another, the General Plan must resolve potential conflicts between or among the elements through clear language and policy consistency.
- ***Consistency Between Elements and Within Individual Elements*** – All General Plan elements must be consistent with one other. Any individual provision of the General Plan should not require the City to take an action prohibited by another General Plan provision. In addition, the assumptions and vision used to create individual portions of the General Plan need to be uniform and consistent.
- ***General Plan Text and Diagram Consistency*** – Because General Plan text and diagrams are both integral parts of the General Plan, they must be consistent with each other. Thus, the diagrams of the General Plan are intended to be a graphic reflection of the General Plan text.
- ***Competing Objectives*** – Although the General Plan must be internally consistent, it is important to recognize that community objectives are sometimes inherently in conflict. Therefore, blind pursuit of one objective may, in some cases, inhibit the achievement of other community objectives.



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For example, the Calabasas General Plan recognizes the need to minimize water consumption in light of limited water resources. However, to eliminate watering of sites being graded for permitted development or eliminate landscape irrigation may conflict with objectives relating to maintenance of air quality or community design and beautification. Thus, when implementing the General Plan, decisionmakers must strike a balance between competing objectives, recognizing that all objectives cannot be fully implemented all the time.

I.D General Plan Format & Organization

The Calabasas General Plan is organized into 13 chapters, which include this Introduction, 11 General Plan elements, and a chapter describing General Plan implementation programs. An appendix describing policy terms used in the Plan is also included, as is a glossary. The 11 General Plan elements encompass all of the elements required by California General Plan law as well as several optional elements. The content of each of the 13 General Plan chapters is summarized below.

The **Introduction** (Chapter I) provides an introduction to the community of Calabasas, the overall General Plan document, and an overview of Calabasas' vision for the future.

The **Land Use Element** (Chapter II) details Calabasas' program to manage its physical environment, and meets State requirements for the Land Use Element. Land use objectives, general plan approaches, and policies are presented. In addition, Chapter II delineates the land use districts presented on the General Plan Land Use Map. The land use districts define acceptable land uses throughout the General Plan study area as well as allowable development intensities for each defined use.

The **Open Space Element** (Chapter III) details Calabasas' commitment to preserving open space in and around the City. It also identifies additional areas that the City may wish to set aside as open space and describes methods by which the City will manage hillside areas and associated resources.

The **Conservation Element** (Chapter IV) describes Calabasas' program to manage its natural environment. The primary objective of this element is to define environmental features within the plan area and provide each feature with an appropriate level of protection. With the exception of cultural resources (covered in the Cultural Resources Element in Chapter XI), this element meets State requirements for conservation elements. Specifically, the Conservation Element covers the following issues:



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- *Biotic Resources*
- *Air Quality*
- *Water Resources*
- *Soil Conservation and Preservation*
- *Energy Resources*
- *Solid Waste Management*
- *Mineral Resources*

The **Housing Element** (Chapter V) presents Calabasas' commitment to provide housing opportunities to meet the needs of all economic segments of the community, and to ensure the continued high quality of the City's housing stock. This element contains the following components.

- ***Housing Needs*** – summarizes existing and projected needs for housing for all economic segments of the community, including new construction needs and particularly the needs of such groups as the handicapped, the elderly, large families, female-headed households, and the homeless
- ***Opportunities for the Creation of New Housing*** – examines the inventory of land that is available to meet identified needs for new housing construction
- ***Constraints on the Production of Housing*** – explores governmental and non-governmental obstacles that need to be overcome if the City of Calabasas is to meet its housing needs
- ***Housing Goals, Quantified Objectives, Programs, and Specific Actions*** – outlines the specifics of Calabasas' housing improvement program for the years 2014 to 2021

The **Circulation Element** (Chapter VI) outlines the City's program to provide mobility within the General Plan study area. This element addresses motor vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian circulation, as well as parking issues. A major thrust of this element is to ensure that roadways and transportation facilities support, rather than lead, the type of community which Calabasas wishes to maintain. Thus, environmental considerations have been incorporated into the Circulation Element and recommendations to increase the traffic carrying capacity of the area's roadway system were designed to recognize and protect significant environmental features.

The **Safety Element** (Chapter VII) addresses the relationship between natural and manmade hazards and existing and future development. Key features of this element are the definition of "acceptable risk" and identification of the extent to which natural and manmade hazards will be managed in order to protect public health and safety. The Safety Element meets State requirements and addresses the following specific topics:



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- *Geology and Seismicity*
- *Stormwater Management and Flooding*
- *Fire Hazards*
- *Hazardous Materials*
- *Disaster Response*

The **Noise Element** (Chapter VIII) identifies existing and projected future noise sources and levels throughout the City. It also provides policies and standards to limit noise exposure. The Noise Element meets the requirements of State General Plan law.

The **Community Design Element** (Chapter IX) establishes policies and programs relating to the overall design of the community, including guidelines relating to architectural design, building height and massing, and landscaping. This is an optional element that is not mandated by State General Plan law.

The **Parks, Recreation, & Trails Element** (Chapter X) identifies recreational needs and establishes policies and programs for the maintenance and enhancement of municipal parks, recreational services, and trails. This is an optional element that is not mandated by State General Plan law.

The **Cultural Resources Element** (Chapter XI) identifies community cultural resources and establishes policies and programs relating to the preservation of existing cultural resources within the community as well as development of cultural amenities that community residents desire. This is an optional element that is not mandated by State General Plan law.

The **Services, Infrastructure, and Technology Element** (Chapter XII) establishes policies and programs relating to municipal and education services, water, sewer, and storm drain facilities, and technological infrastructure and development. This is an optional element that is not mandated by State General Plan law.

General Plan Implementation Programs (Chapter XIII) defines the specific programs and actions that the City will undertake to ensure implementation of its General Plan goals, objectives, approach, and policies.

I.E Community Vision

The Calabasas General Plan is intended to provide a vehicle for maintaining the community qualities that make Calabasas a desirable place to live while facilitating



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limited changes that will further enhance the quality of life that Calabasas residents enjoy. Keys to maintaining the desirability of Calabasas are:

- *Protection of the natural environment that attracted many residents to the area;*
- *Managing municipal affairs in a manner that is consistent with local social values; and*
- *Enhancing the physical appearance of the community's built environment.*

Calabasas is located in a beautiful natural setting that the community intends to protect for the enjoyment of future generations. The current density of population within the community is low to moderate and continuation of this characteristic is a key part of Calabasas' vision. In recognition of the importance of retaining the characteristics that make Calabasas a special place, the General Plan is strongly oriented toward protecting the natural environment and managing the manmade environment, thereby ensuring that future development occurs in a manner that is consistent with local community values.

The General Plan provides a long-term action agenda to follow in achieving the vision of Calabasas residents, which is expressed in three dominant themes:

- ***Environmental Responsibility*** – *preservation/enhancement of natural resources and living within the limits imposed by available resources*
- ***Community Character*** – *protection of Calabasas' special character*
- ***Quality of Life*** – *maintaining an outstanding quality of life for Calabasas residents*

Environmental Responsibility

Maintenance of a high quality of life is dependent upon a high quality environment. Thus, the area's natural environment is invariably cited as the key to Calabasas' desirability and preservation of open space is generally cited as the community's number one priority. Protecting the area's remaining natural hillsides, ridgelines, and significant habitat areas, as well as preserving remaining open lands in their natural state, are important concerns of area residents.

Calabasas' view of environmental issues is broad, extending beyond the City's immediate physical environment to such issues as water resource conservation, solid



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waste management, night sky and glare considerations, air quality, and energy conservation. This broad view of the environment also extends geographically, and is reflected in the community's participation in regional planning and visioning programs, including programs that only indirectly affect the City of Calabasas.

Environmental Responsibility Goals

1. Recognize that the area's natural environment is a critical community asset.
2. Place the highest priority on protection and stewardship of designated open space and acquisition of additional land for designation as open space.
3. Minimize the environmental impacts of development, including impacts to landscape and viewsheds, through excellent community and project design.
4. Minimize the environmental impacts of City activities by making environmental sensitivity a key consideration in the provision of municipal services and facilities.
5. Become a municipal role model in addressing global environmental issues.

Community Character

Because no two sites or neighborhoods are exactly alike, working with nature does more than protect the inherent environmental or visual value of natural resources. It can also give developers and site planners greater opportunities to create built environments of a higher quality, with a more distinctive local identity, and with reduced impacts on the region as a whole. As such, working with nature is an important complement to another priority – ensuring that the built environments themselves are of the highest possible quality. This is the focus of the community character theme.

The community character theme in Calabasas has many components. Foremost is the community's identification with the area's natural environment and remaining open lands, which is also discussed as part of the environmental responsibility theme. Other components involve the maintenance of existing established neighborhoods and enhancement of specific local areas to improve the overall image of the community.

Community Character Goals

1. Provide guidelines for public and private development that recognize, maintain, and enhance the scenic beauty afforded by Calabasas' natural environment.
2. Define and preserve the character of established residential neighborhoods.
3. Facilitate appropriately-scaled infill development in existing commercial districts.
4. Facilitate design that provides neighborhood and communitywide meeting places and encourages public interaction.



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5. Provide a balanced transportation system that facilitates a variety of ways to move through the community and emphasizes neighborhood and environmental protection.

Quality of Life

No single definition of “quality of life” applies universally as the term means very different things to different people. Nevertheless, the citizens of Calabasas have defined a number of specific goals for enhancing the overall quality of life in the community. These goals complement the environmental responsibility and community character goals listed above to identify the keys to maintaining a high quality of life in Calabasas.

Quality of Life Goals

1. Encourage a high level of citizen involvement in shaping the community’s future.
2. Provide municipal infrastructure and services that are responsive to the community’s needs and priorities.
3. Preserve and enhance areas of visual, cultural, historical, archaeological, and urban design significance.
4. Provide recreational and cultural activities and facilities that meet community needs and preferences.
5. Provide for a variety of housing types that meet the needs of Calabasas citizens in a manner consistent with the City’s environmental responsibility and community character goals.
6. Facilitate high quality economic development that meets the community’s employment and service needs in a manner consistent with the City’s environmental responsibility and community character goals.

I.F Comparison of California General Plan Requirements to the Organization of the Calabasas General Plan

Table I-1 lists the various issues defined by the California General Plan Guidelines and identifies where in the Calabasas General Plan these issues are addressed.



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**Table I-1
Index to Location of State-Mandated General Plan Issues**

Issues	General Plan Elements										
	Land Use	Open Space	Conser- vation	Housing	Circu- lation	Safety	Noise	Com- munity Design	Parks, Recreation & Trails	Cultural Resources	Services, Infrastructure & Technology
Land Use											
Distribution of housing, business, industry	■			■							
Distribution of open space	■	■									
Distribution of mineral resources	■		■								
Distribution of recreation facilities	■								■		
Location of educational facilities	■										■
Location of public buildings	■							■			
Location of future solid and liquid waste facilities	■		■								■
Identification of areas subject to flooding			■			■					
Circulation											
Major thoroughfares					■						
Transportation routes					■						
Terminals					■						



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Table I-1
Index to Location of State-Mandated General Plan Issues

Issues	General Plan Elements										
	Land Use	Open Space	Conservation	Housing	Circulation	Safety	Noise	Community Design	Parks, Recreation & Trails	Cultural Resources	Services, Infrastructure & Technology
Other local public utilities & facilities	■				■						■
Housing											
Preservation of housing				■							
Maintenance of housing				■							
Improvement and conservation of housing				■							
Development of housing				■							
Adequate sites for housing	■			■							
Adequate provision of housing for projected needs				■							
Promotion of equal housing opportunities				■							
Conservation											
Water			■								
Soils			■								
Rivers and other waters			■								
Wildlife			■								



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**Table I-1
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Issues	General Plan Elements										
	Land Use	Open Space	Conser- vation	Housing	Circu- lation	Safety	Noise	Com- munity Design	Parks, Recreation & Trails	Cultural Resources	Services, Infrastructure & Technology
Minerals			■								
Other natural resources			■								
Water program			■								
Reclamation of land and waters			■								
Prevention of pollution of streams and other waters			■								
Regulation of land in stream channels	■		■								
Protection of watersheds	■		■								
Flood control			■			■					■
<i>Open Space</i>											
Open space for preservation of natural resources	■	■	■								
Open space for managed production of resources	■	■	■								
Open space for outdoor recreation	■	■							■		
Open space for public health and	■	■				■					



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Table I-1
Index to Location of State-Mandated General Plan Issues

Issues	General Plan Elements										
	Land Use	Open Space	Conser- vation	Housing	Circu- lation	Safety	Noise	Com- munity Design	Parks, Recreation & Trails	Cultural Resources	Services, Infrastructure & Technology
safety											
Trail-or iented recreational uses	■	■							■		
Noise											
Major noise sources							■				
Existing and projected noise contours							■				
Determination of noise problems							■				
Noise attenuation							■				
Safety											
Seismic hazards						■					
Slope instability and mudslides	■					■					
Subsidence and geologic hazards						■					
Flooding						■					■
Wildland and urban fires			■			■					
Evacuation routes					■	■					
Water supply requirements			■			■					■
Emergency road widths					■	■					
Clearance around structures						■					



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