



CITY OF IONE PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT



FOR THE MEETING OF: MARCH 10, 2009

DATE: MARCH 6, 2009

TO: HONORABLE PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM: CHRISTOPHER JORDAN, AICP, CITY PLANNER

SUBJECT: 2008 GENERAL PLAN ANNUAL REPORT

STAFF RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission review the 2008 General Plan Annual Report included in the body of this staff report and direct staff to submit it to the City Council and the State Office of Planning and Research (OPR) and Housing and Community Development (HCD), as provided by State law.

BACKGROUND:

Purpose of the General Plan Annual Report

California law requires each city to adopt a comprehensive, long-term General Plan to guide the physical development of the incorporated city and land outside city boundaries that bears a relationship to its planning activities. The General Plan serves as a blueprint for future growth and development; it is the blueprint to “Build a City.” As such, the plan contains policies and programs designed to provide decision makers with a solid foundation for land use and development decisions.

State law further requires each city to complete an annual review of the General Plan to ensure that the goals, policies, and plans of the General Plan are being implemented. This report must:

- Identify compliance with the State General Plan Guidelines;
- Identify status of the General Plan and the process towards its implementation;
- Describe the City’s progress in meeting its Regional Housing Needs Allocation; and
- Describe progress in addressing/removing governmental constraints to the maintenance, improvement, and development of housing.

State law requires that the General Plan Annual Report be completed and submitted to the State by April of each year. The report would cover the previous calendar year for which it is being completed. This Annual Report looks at the City’s progress towards implementing its General Plan during the 2008 planning year and is completed for the April 2009 deadline.

2008 GENERAL PLAN ANNUAL REPORT:

Introduction to the General Plan

The General Plan serves as a community's constitution for future development. It is a long range policy document that establishes a vision and provides parameters for day-to-day decision making based upon objectives and policies meant to attain that vision. California law requires each jurisdiction to adopt a General Plan that contains at least the following seven elements: land use, circulation, housing, noise, safety, conservation, and open space. Each element has equal legal status. Furthermore, all elements must be internally consistent and consistent with one another. All goals, policies, and implementation programs must complement and be consistent with one another. The policies of the General Plan are implemented through the regulations provided in the Zoning Code. Each City and County must also adopt a Zoning Code; the Zoning Code is subordinate to and implements the General Plan; hence, the Zoning Code must be consistent with the General Plan.

Administration and Status of the General Plan

Existing General Plan

The City's existing General Plan was created in 1982 as a composite General Plan and Environmental Impact Report. As such, it includes an environmental inventory of the City; a comprehensive environmental assessment; environmental thresholds; mitigation measures; and the goals, policies, and implementation measures of the seven mandated General Plan elements. The General Plan has been amended numerous times in the past 27 years, including amendments to the Land Use Map in 1989, 1991, and 1992. Additionally, the Circulation Element was amended in 2003 and the Housing Element was amended in 2005.

General Plan Update

The City is currently conducting a comprehensive General Plan update. This updated General Plan will provide policy direction for roughly the next 20 years of development. Unlike the existing General Plan, the new General Plan will be a separate document from the accompanying Environmental Impact Report. The General Plan update began with a project kick-off in May 2008, and is scheduled for adoption in August 2009. The City is undertaking an intensive update process that is being driven by public workshops, local and regional collaborative meetings, public hearings, and joint study sessions with the Planning Commission and City Council. Through this process, the vision and desires of the public and decision-makers are shaping the blueprint to build the future City.

The updated General Plan will include not only the seven mandated elements as required by State law, but also additional topics of special and unique concern to the community, including economic development and public facilities. Although these are optional elements, once adopted, they hold the same legal weight as the seven mandated elements. As the basis for local government decision-making, the General Plan includes goals and policies by which all projects are analyzed against, in addition to the actions that are to be taken by the City that are necessary to achieving the overall vision for the community.

Departmental Responsibilities

Implementation of the General Plan is the responsibility of the numerous departments and teams in the City. City departments responsible for implementation of the General Plan include the following:

- City Manager's Office;
- City Planning Department;
- Building Department;
- City Engineer's Office;
- City Wastewater Department;
- Finance Department;
- Fire Department; and
- Police Department.

There are several other government agencies that provide services within the City's corporate boundary. While these agencies are not part of the City's operational structure and not directly responsible for implementation of the General Plan, the City does coordinate its activities with these other agencies and relies upon their assistance for full General Plan implementation. These additional agencies include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Amador County Transportation Commission;
- Amador Water Agency;
- Amador Regional Sewer Agency;
- Amador County Air Pollution Control District; and
- Amador Unified School District.

Administration and Status of the General Plan

Element Summary

The General Plan for Ione was originally developed in 1982 and as such is based upon the State General Plan Guidelines of 1980. These Guidelines and the State law that they are based upon have been updated several times since then. The contents of the Plan cover the required elements mandated in 1980 through five categories of policies: Environmental Management, Community Development, Public Safety, Circulation, and Housing. Table 1 lists these elements and shows how they relate to the most recent State requirements - the 2003 General Plan Guidelines. The contents of these five categories are summarized below. The contents of the General Plan are consistent with the latest edition of the State General Plan Guidelines (2003) for content and scope. The compatibility of the General Plan with the latest General Plan Guidelines is one reason the City is in the process of updating the Plan.

**Table 1:
“Elements” of the General Plan and Relationship to State Law
and 2003 General Plan Guidelines)**

		Topics Required by State Law							Optional Topic
		Land Use	Circulation	Housing	Conservation	Open Space	Noise	Safety	
Categories of the General Plan	Environmental Management	X			X	X	O	O	
	Community Development	O				X			X
	Public Safety				O			X	
	Circulation	O	X		O	O	X		
	Housing	O		X					
<i>Notes:</i> <i>X – Indicates that this category directly addresses the State required topic.</i> <i>O – Indicates that information in this element is related to the State required topic.</i>									

Environmental Management: This is an integrated section that explicitly includes policies addressing the requirements of the Land Use Element, Conservation Element, and Open Space Element. An overview of each of these topics is provided below. It also discusses subjects that indirectly address the Noise and Safety Elements.

The Land Use Element provides the central framework for the General Plan and serves as a compass to guide planners, the general public, and decision makers on the desired pattern of development in Ione. It describes both existing and future land use activity, the latter of which was designed to achieve the City’s long-range goals for physical development. It also identifies the distribution, location, and intensity of all land uses types throughout the City. Text, maps, and diagrams establish the blueprint for future land uses within the City and describe how these uses are integrated with the other General Plan elements and policies.

The Conservation Element serves to conserve, develop, and utilize natural resources such as stream, soils, and minerals. In Ione, related goals and policies pertain primarily to the maintenance of air and water quality, the control and minimization of erosion and sedimentation, the preservation of rare and endangered species, and the appropriate utilization of mineral resources.

The Open Space Element addresses the preservation of lands for the managed production of resources, the preservation of natural resources, outdoor recreation, and the protection of public health and safety. For Ione, primary open space issues include: the limitation of development in the flood plain to protect citizens and open space habitat, the preservation of agricultural lands, and the utilization of open space for parks and recreation. Text and maps are provided to establish the City’s open space networks.

Community Development: This section addresses the delivery of public services, allocation of costs for public services, the designation of land uses, and the improvement of residential neighborhoods and commercial areas. Like the Environmental Management

section, this section also addresses the distribution of land uses and the requirements of the Land Use Element.

Public Facilities: This is an integrated section that addresses the provision of public safety services and the prevention of disasters. It addresses the requirements of the Safety Element. The Safety Element seeks to recognize and remedy both present and anticipated concerns about the on-going well being of City residents, employees, and visitors. The goals, policies, and actions identify viable solutions to minimize the potential risk of death, injuries, property damage, and economic hardship and social displacement resulting from fires, floods, earthquakes, landslides, and other hazards.

Circulation Element: The Circulation Element describes existing and future transportation conditions and systems. The Element establishes goals, policies, and actions that will guide the City's circulation system, including the roadway network, transit facilities and services, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The text, maps, and diagrams are a basis for the development of the City's transportation network. The Circulation Element was updated in 2003 and is generally consistent with the requirements for such an element under the State General Plan Guidelines.

Housing Element: The purpose of the Housing Element is to identify housing solutions that solve local housing problems and to meet or exceed the regional housing needs allocation. The City recognizes that housing is a need that is met through many resources and interest groups. This Element establishes the local goals, policies, and actions (programs) the City will implement and/or facilitate to solve identified housing issues. This Element was adopted in 2005 and is consistent with the latest General Plan Guidelines. An update to the Element is necessary in 2009 (and is included in the pending comprehensive update) to address the latest Regional Housing Needs Assessment and Regional Housing Needs Plan.

Status of Implementation Actions of the General Plan and Accomplishments

The City undertook and/or completed several major milestones and projects during the 2008 planning year, including:

1. Creation of the *Framework for Planning, Entitlement Review, and Development*. This comprehensive document serves as a one-stop resource that outlines the City's development and planning process. It assists City staff, the Planning Commission, City Council, and the general public in understanding and working with the parameters established by the City's municipal code, General Plan, and Zoning Code.
2. Initiation of a comprehensive update to the Zoning Code. A public draft of the Zoning Code was released on February 10, 2009, and it is scheduled for adoption in April 2009. The amended Zoning Code will better implement the land use policies of the General Plan.
3. Continued work on the Sewer Master Plan update and work towards completion of the Sewer Master Plan Environmental Impact Report. The new Master Plan will provide a plan for services through 2030.
4. Completed numerous infrastructure projects including sidewalks and drainage improvements on East Main Street and Shakeley Lane.

5. Completed environmental review and design for a new Park and Ride lot in the Downtown.
6. Initiated construction on Fire Station #2. The facility will open in Spring 2009.
7. Draft of the Parks Master Plan. Environmental review of the Plan will be completed in 2009.
8. Initiation of a comprehensive update to the General Plan, which is scheduled for adoption in August 2009. The revised General Plan will chart a new course of development and refined vision for the City, providing clear directives for staff to implement.

Regional Housing Needs and Removal of Governmental Constraints to Housing

Overview

In an effort to address state-wide housing needs, the State of California requires regions to address housing issues and needs based on future growth projections for the area. The Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) allocates regional housing needs numbers to regional planning councils and councils of governments throughout the State. The Regional Housing Needs Plan (RHNP) for the Central Sierra area is developed by the Central Sierra Planning Council and Economic Development District. The RHNP allocates to cities and the unincorporated counties their “fair share” of the region’s projected housing needs, or the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA). The needs plan distributes the needs allocation based on household income groupings over the planning period.

The intent of the RHNP is to ensure that local jurisdictions address not only the needs of their immediate areas but also fill the housing needs for the entire region. Additionally, a major goal of the RHNP is to assure that every community provides an opportunity for a mix of affordable housing to all economic segments of its population.

State law requires the City to identify its progress in meeting its share of the regional housing needs allocation and to identify local efforts to remove governmental constraints to housing. The City’s General Plan Housing Element identifies solutions to meeting these objectives and reflects the existing 2001-2008 RHNP and RHNA for the Central Sierra region. A new RHNP for the 2007-2014 timeframe was adopted by the Central Sierra Planning Council on October 1, 2008; as part of the General Plan update, the City is in the process of updating its Housing Element to accommodate the new allocation.

2007-2014 Regional Housing Needs Allocation

The Central Sierra Planning Council and Economic Development District, along with the City and the other jurisdictions in the region, has prepared a new RHNP for the 2007-2014 planning period. The plan was adopted October 1, 2008. The 2007-2014 RHNP for the Central Sierra region identified a total of dwelling units as the City’s “fair share” of the regional needs total. Table 2 identifies the breakdown of this number for each of the four income categories addressed by the RHNP for the City.

Table 2: Ione's Share of the Regional Housing Needs Allocation for 2007-2014

Income Category	Number of Units	Percent of Total
Extremely Low	25	11.0%
Very Low	25	11.0%
Low	36	15.8%
Moderate	43	18.9%
Above Moderate	99	43.4%
TOTAL	228	100.0%

The RHNP and RHNA only require the City to provide a suitable amount of land needed to build the number of units allocated to the City under the RHNA.

The Housing Element is being updated as part of the General Plan update to accommodate the 2007-2014 RHNA. Once the draft Housing Element is completed, it will be submitted to the HCD for review. After comments from the HCD are received, the City will respond and update the Housing Element accordingly. As part of the Housing Element update, the City is conducting the process of identifying appropriate areas of land and housing types to accommodate the 2007-2014 RHNA. Meeting the 2007-2014 RHNA will be designated as a City action item or completed as part of the Housing Element update. After adoption of the Housing Element, the Zoning Code will be updated accordingly and rezones conducted to ensure that adequate land is zoned to meet the needs established by the RHNA and the policies and programs established by the Housing Element.

Table 3 summarizes the cumulative total number of units permitted in the City during the current RHNP planning period. All numbers are based on issuance of building permits from January 1 to December 31 of the given year.

**Table 3: Regional Housing Needs Allocation Progress
Permitted Units Issued by Affordability**

Calendar Year starting with the first year of the RHNA allocation period.		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total Units Built to Date all years	Total Remaining RHNA Allocation by Income Level
Income Level	RHNA Allocation by Income Level	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8		
Extremely Low	25									0	25
Very Low	25									0	25
Low	36									0	36
Moderate	43									0	43
Above Moderate	99	21	2							23	76
Total RHNA.	228									23	
Total Units	▶ ▶ ▶	21	22								205
Remaining Need for RHNA Period		▶	▶	▶	▶	▶					

Removal of Governmental Constraints to Housing

As part of the Housing Element update, the City will work to identify and address governmental constraints to housing. Once the Housing Element is adopted, the goals and policies of the Housing Element will direct the City in addressing and removing any governmental constraints to housing. Further, the Zoning Code will be updated for consistency with the Housing Element and to ensure that regulations and land use allocations satisfy the RHNA and reduce barriers to housing.

The City is currently in the process of conducting an update the Zoning Code. This update includes addressing a number of 2003-2008 Housing Element programs, including:

- Reducing parking standards for multiple family residential;
- Adopting a local Density Bonus Ordinance consistent with State law; and
- Increasing the height maximum for development in the R-3 Zoning District

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

Staff has reviewed the Annual Report to determine the required level of review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). According to Section 15378 (c) of the CEQA Guidelines, organizational or political activities of governments that do not result in physical impacts on the environment are not defined as projects, and, therefore, are not subject to CEQA review. CEQA does not apply to activities that leave the environment physically unchanged. The Annual Report is a political activity that will not result in physical impacts on the environment; therefore, no further environmental review is required.

SUMMARY:

In summary, State law requires each city to adopt a long-term, comprehensive General Plan to guide the growth of the community. Each city is required to submit a General Plan Annual Report that identifies compliance with State General Plan Guidelines; identifies the implementation status of the General Plan; describes the City's progress in meeting its Regional Housing Needs Allocation; and describes progress in addressing governmental constraints to the maintenance, improvement, and development of housing. This staff report includes Ione's 2008 General Plan Report. The Report outlines the current General Plan's compliance with State General Plan Guidelines and describes the current General Plan update process. For the 2007-2014 Regional Housing Needs Allocation, Ione must provide sufficient land for 25 extremely low income units, 25 very low income units, 36 low income units, 43 moderate income units, and 99 above moderate income units. Since January 2007, the City has permitted 23 moderate income units. The update of the Housing Element, which is being completed as part of the General Plan update, will address the 2007-2014 Regional Housing Needs Allocation and identify strategies to provide sufficient land for the remaining Regional Housing Needs Allocation. The Housing Element update will also identify any governmental constraints to housing and provide strategies for addressing them. The Annual report is a political activity that will not change the physical environment, therefore it is not a project and exempt from environmental review requirements established by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

RECOMMENDED MOTIONS:

If the Planning Commission supports staff's recommendation, the following motion is recommended:

I move that the Planning Commission direct staff to submit the 2008 General Plan Report to the City Council and the State Office of Planning and Research (OPR) and Housing and Community Development (HCD), as provided by State law.