



Man with Jackhammer by Alan Nowell

Governance Element

The Governance Element is about good government and outstanding customer service. It establishes policies that help ensure open, fair, and informed decision-making. It guides how City staff 1) communicates internally, with the public, and with business, 2) allocates resources, and 3) follows adopted policies to make decisions. Elected and appointed City leaders, citizens, business people, investors, and City staff will use this Element to understand how residents help shape policies and decisions that affect them. This Element also integrates the City's Mission Statement, Vision and Strategic Plan, Centennial General Plan, Specific Plans, and Master Plans* into a consistent planning, budgeting, and implementation framework. This procedural framework will be applied to everyday City operations, in addition to actions with long-range implications. This will help foster a predictable and transparent system of governance that delivers responsive and high-quality municipal services to benefit our community, economy, and quality-of-life.

PRIMARY GOAL:

To be a City that achieves its General Plan implementation measures and is guided by a clear system of decision-making policies and procedures.

GOAL AND POLICY SECTIONS:

1. [System for Governance and Management](#)
2. [Municipal Finance](#)

3. Communication
4. Implementation of the Centennial General Plan

GENERAL PLAN FIGURES

- Figure G-1, Decision-Making System

ADDITIONAL LINKS

- San Clemente’s Mission [<http://san-clemente.org/sc/standard.aspx?pageid=71>]
- San Clemente Vision and Strategic Plan [<http://san-clemente.org/sc/Services/Planning/VisionSanClemente/Final%20Vision%20and%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf>]
- Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP) [<http://san-clemente.org/sc/download.aspx?pageid=368>]
- Budget [<http://san-clemente.org/sc/download.aspx?pageid=364>]
- Capital Improvement Program (CIP) [<http://san-clemente.org/sc/download.aspx?pageid=366>]

**Master Plans refer to a variety of City plans intended to provide more detailed policy and implementation guidance than the Centennial General Plan. Examples include the Beaches, Parks and Recreation Master Plan, Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, and the Climate Action Plan.*

System for Governance and Management

The City of San Clemente is incorporated as a general law city with a Council-Manager form of government. General law cities follow governmental structures and powers specifically granted by state law. Publicly-elected City Council members and an appointed Mayor make decisions and set policy for implementation by a professional administrator, the City Manager. The City Manager hires staff, advises the Council and Mayor and is responsible for the City’s daily operations. The City Manager and administrative staff address key issues affecting the City—as identified by the City Council with input from staff, City commissions and committees and citizens—through the annual Budget. The Budget allocates funds to implement projects and programs. The Budget is, in turn, guided by the Long Term Financial Plan. The Long Term Financial Plan has proven effective in keeping the City fiscally strong and responsive to changing needs and circumstances. The Long Term Financial Plan and the resulting budget are in turn, shaped by policies in the General Plan and Master Plans.

GOAL:

Achieve an easily understood, open and transparent system of governance to guide the City, in a manner consistent with its Mission Statement, the City of San Clemente Vision and Strategic Plan, General Plan and other adopted plans.

POLICIES:

- G-1.01. ***Effective Governance.*** We practice effective governance by adhering to a planning, budgeting, and implementation process which is publicly accessible, understandable, predictable and timely.
- G-1.02. ***Consistency.*** We achieve and maintain consistency between policies in short- and long-term planning documents, the municipal code and implementation projects and programs.
- G-1.03. ***Role of the Mission Statement and Vision.*** City decision-making shall be guided by the City's Mission Statement and Vision.
- G-1.04. ***Role of the Centennial General Plan.*** City decisions shall follow the Centennial General Plan as the foundation of matters related to land use, circulation, environmental quality, and other aspects of the City's excellent quality of life.
- G-1.05. ***Role of Master Plans and Design Guidelines.*** We are guided by Master Plans and Design Guidelines, as these are more detailed policy and implementation documents than the General Plan. Hence, they serve as the foundation for informed decision making regarding development, specific infrastructure, services, and other public investments. Master Plans and Design Guidelines should be consistent with the Vision and Mission Statements, and shall be consistent with the Centennial General Plan and specific plans. If recommended decisions regarding Master Plans or Design Guidelines are deemed inconsistent with the Centennial General Plan, then a General Plan Amendment must be adopted by City Council to eliminate the inconsistency.
- G-1.06. ***Role of Long Term Financial Plan.*** In the preparation of an annual budget, we follow the Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP), a document that connects Council, staff and citizen priorities to available resources.
- G-1.07. ***Role of Public Comments.*** We actively seek public comment to ensure public accountability and to help the City Council, commissions, committees and staff make better, more informed decisions.
- G-1.08. ***Consistency in Staff Recommendations.*** We require that staff recommendations be consistent with adopted City policies and plans and state and federal law.
- G-1.09. ***Budget and Long-Term Financial Plan (LTFP) Process.*** We use the Budget and LTFP processes to implement General Plan policies and priorities and communicate this relationship to City leaders, staff and the public.
- G-1.10. ***Mayor, City Council and appointed Bodies.*** We require the Mayor, City Council and appointed bodies to consider the overall community's long-term best interests.
- G-1.11. ***Keeping the General Plan and Specific Plans Current.*** The City amends the General Plan to reflect new information, changing conditions, needs and community preferences. This may require updating one or more specific plans and other regulatory documents to maintain consistency.

G-1.12. ***Changes to Our Vision and Mission.*** If the City Council changes the City’s Vision Plan or Mission Statement, the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance must be updated, accordingly.

G-1.13. ***Continuing Education.*** We value and encourage continuing education for elected and appointed officials and staff in the areas of ethics, best governance practices and trends, fiscal health, and risk management.

GENERAL PLAN FIGURES

Figure G-1, Decision-Making System

Municipal Finance

Decisions concerning municipal finance are the clearest indicators of how community goals, values and priorities guide the City’s future. Municipal finance includes:

Annual Budgeting Process. The municipal finance system is shaped by the preparation, adoption, implementation, and evaluation of the annual budget and Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP). The LTFP establishes policies, allocates funds, guides operations, anticipates future financial circumstances and clearly communicates fiscal choices to residents, businesses and investors.

Capital Improvement Program. To address community needs for public facilities and infrastructure, the City annually prepares and adopts a Capital Improvement Program, a six-year schedule setting priorities and timing of engineering and design, land acquisition and construction for public works projects.

Cash Management. This is a set of Council-approved strategies that guide how the City invests short-term cash flow and longer-term reserves. The City also maintains an Investment Policy to comprehensively guide the responsible management of funds available for investment. These may include, but are not limited to, temporarily idle cash, reserve, trust, agency, and capital funds.

Fund Balance and Reserves. The City seeks to maintain certain levels of funds in reserve, including “emergency” and “sustainability” reserves for unforeseen cash flow disruptions and for specific purposes, such as post-retirement health care expenses. All reserves are established by a set of Council-adopted Fiscal Policies and are updated each year during the Long-Term Financial Plan process.

Revenue and Expenditure Forecasting. The City conservatively forecasts future revenues and expenditure needs and continuously tracks those forecasts. These steps are critical to our fiscal health and to ensure the City’s ability to provide quality services in the future.

Risk Management. The risk management program includes reserves to cover potential losses, risk control programs and activities, and self-insurance pools.

GOAL:

Establish and maintain an easily understood, transparent, and accountable municipal finance system that implements the Mission Statement, Vision and Centennial General Plan, safeguards the City's assets and maintains the public's trust.

POLICIES:

- G-2.01. **Consistent and Transparent Assessment.** We make fiscal decisions and carry out fiscal planning using a consistent and transparent process.
- G-2.02. **Finance and Administrative Services Department Responsibility.** We require the Finance and Administrative Services Department to review City Council agenda reports to identify potential fiscal impacts.
- G-2.03. **Transparency in Information.** We expect our City's budget and annual financial report documents to maintain the highest accounting standards for clarity and content.
- G-2.04. **Critical Factors for Finances.** On an ongoing basis, we identify critical factors which have, or are expected to have, an impact on the City's financial condition.
- G-2.05. **Financial Forecast.** We update the comprehensive five-year financial forecast for the General Fund, incorporating adopted City fiscal policies, expenditure patterns, revenue trends, General Plan implementation and other known financial impacts.
- G-2.06. **Reserve Analysis.** We analyze and recommend appropriate levels of reserves to (a) ensure they are adequate to provide for the needs of each fund program, (b) meet program needs without unnecessarily obligating scarce dollar resources and (c) ensure compliance with City fiscal policies and legal requirements by State, County or Local Ordinances.
- G-2.07. **Strategic Implementation Program and Capital Projects Analysis.** We provide an annual summary of the General Plan Strategic Implementation Program and capital projects with funding challenges and obligations for significant projects.
- G-2.08. **Maintenance and Replacement Costs-City Adopted Budget.** As needed, we will periodically project our equipment replacement and facility maintenance needs. A maintenance and replacement schedule will be developed and followed.
- G-2.09. **General Fund Purpose.** We pursue a strategy to allocate general fund resources toward the City's provision of basic municipal services.
- G-2.10. **Department Budget Limitation.** We will not commit to spending more than a conservative projection of recurring revenues for the City as a whole.

- G-2.11. **Departmental Budgeting Requests.** We require each department's annual budget request to be free from reliance on one-time or unsustainable revenues (except for specific grant funded projects) and from deficit spending.

Communication

In San Clemente, communication emphasizes public accessibility, clarity, predictability, accountability and accuracy. Citizens, businesses and decision-makers will have access to the public information they need to understand what is happening in their City, why it is happening and what it means to them.

GOAL:

Be a local government which, through its values and procedures, is accountable to its citizens and fosters an informed and involved citizenry that takes pride and participates in City government to help achieve General Plan goals.

POLICIES:

- G-3.01. **Quality.** We pursue a professional standard of clarity, accuracy, completeness and honesty in public communications.
- G-3.02. **Accessibility.** City communications shall be easily accessible to the public, including those with special needs, such as hearing or visually impaired persons, except for communications conducted under closed session, attorney-client privilege or other information that is required to be confidential under State or Federal law.
- G-3.03. **Format.** We will use a variety of methods and media to communicate effectively.
- G-3.04. **Coordination.** Communication among City departments shall be based on close collaboration and information sharing, and shall be internally consistent with information delivered to the end-users.
- G-3.05. **Connection.** City communications shall include contact information or other means that allow public feedback or questions.
- G-3.06. **Outside Data.** We partner with sources outside City government to obtain and share accurate data with residents, businesses and visitors to minimize City costs and promote information delivery through multiple sources.
- G-3.07. **Staying Current.** The City will follow best practices in the use of communication and information technology to inform and engage the community and will conduct City business in a timely manner.
- G-3.08. **Community Involvement.** We provide opportunities for meaningful community involvement in City decisions about matters of public importance.
- G-3.09. **Outreach.** We meet or exceed minimum or legal notification requirements to facilitate broad public participation in public decision-making.

Implementing the Centennial General Plan

The Centennial General Plan and Master Plans* shall be implemented so that public and private development projects, City budgets, City regulations and actions individually advance the Community's values and goals as expressed in the Centennial General Plan, the Mission Statement and Vision Plan.

GOAL:

Achieve continuous progress in implementing the Centennial General Plan by following the Plan's Five-Year "Strategic Implementation Program" and by the City's sustained commitment to its values and visions.

POLICIES

- G-4.01. **City Council Priorities.** In preparing the Long Term Financial Plan and in setting Strategic Priorities, the City Council shall prioritize actions for implementing the Centennial General Plan in a timely manner.
- G-4.02. **Organization.** We shall conduct the public's business using best professional practices and in a manner that respects the integrity and value of public awareness and participation in City government.
- G-4.03. **Interagency Cooperation.** The City should collaborate with other public agencies, non-profit organizations, business and civic organizations to help implement the Centennial General Plan, whenever necessary.
- G-4.04. **Monitoring Development and City Master Plans.** We will review development proposals and monitor construction and land use to ensure consistency with Master Plans such as the Beaches, Parks and Recreation Master Plan, City Facilities Plan, specific plans, the Climate Action Plan, and with the Centennial General Plan.
- G-4.05. **Tracking Our Progress.** The City shall monitor and report progress in achieving the goals of the Centennial General Plan by evaluating the effectiveness of the Strategic Implementation Program and by complying with State requirements to prepare an Annual Report on the status of the General Plan.

**Master Plans refer to a variety of City plans designed to provide more detailed policy and implementation guidance than the Centennial General Plan policy document. Examples include the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, Climate Action Plan, and the City's several specific plans.*

Implementation Measures

General Plan Implementation Measures are contained in the Strategic Implementation Program (SIP). The SIP contains Implementation Measures for one-time projects that end with a specific goal, and ongoing projects that requires routine activity with no specified end date. The SIP is updated by the City Council with the City budget and Long-Term Financial Plan (LTFP) to ensure the effective implementation of the Centennial General Plan. This coordination ensures that the General Plan remains a dynamic, up to date, responsive guide to public decision making and expenditures.

Click [here](#) to access Implementation Measures for this element in the latest Strategic Implementation Program.

