Reading the General Plan

It is very common, and quite easy, to confuse the meaning of the myriad terms used in developing a general plan. The primary terms— Vision, Values, Goals, Policies, and Implementation Actions—all have specific definitions, but are not always applied correctly. To avoid confusion and better clarify how the components of the Menifee General Plan will operate, please review the following definitions.

Vision statements describe the desired, positive future of a community, city, county, or other geographic area created by conceiving important desired characteristics. A vision provides a picture of how growth should occur in Menifee over time—but it does not mandate how much growth should be accommodated.

Values express what really matters to the community—the beliefs about basic considerations that should apply to whatever the city does. Examples of values that are important to Menifee include: small town rural character, balanced growth, circulation, natural resources, etc. These values, along with others identified by the Planning Commission and City Council, are the underpinning of the General Plan's goals and policies.

Goals are statements of desired future conditions, regarding a particular topic in the community, toward which effort and use of resources are directed. For example, a goal related to open space and conservation is: "A comprehensive system of high quality parks and recreation programs that meets the diverse needs of the community." Both the city government and the community (e.g., developers and builders) will need to devote resources to achieve this goal.

Policies are statements that guide decision making and specify an intended level of public commitment on a subject. If you are faced with a decision on this subject, here is the policy you are to follow. For example, a policy related to circulation may be: "Provide off-street multipurpose trails and on-street bike lanes as our primary paths of citywide travel, and explore the shared use of low speed roadways for connectivity wherever it is safe to do so." When a development project is being evaluated, this is what should be considered in its design.

Implementation Actions are individual steps taken to implement one or more policies. Developing a park master plan, installing bike racks and storage facilities, and administering a housing rehabilitation grant and loan program are all examples of discrete actions that support city policies. General plan implementation consists of shorter-term actions and programs to carry out longer-term general plan goals and policies. This includes one-time initiatives by the City (e.g., zoning code update to reflect changes in a general plan), decisions on public and private development projects, municipal operational programs, capital improvements, and partnerships with other jurisdictions or agencies.

General Plan Background Documents and Definitions are supplemental, stand-alone documents that have been prepared to support the goals and policies of each general plan element. The background documents provide an additional level of detail on the topics covered in the general plan elements and are summaries derived from detailed technical studies prepared in conjunction with the General Plan Elements and Environmental Impact Report. The background documents and definitions will not be adopted as part of the general plan and any changes to the background documents or definitions will not require a general plan amendment. The background documents (and any related background exhibits) are available via a web-link on each general plan element webpage.

An example demonstrating how the hierarchy works is provided on the following page.

VALUE: We value that our City comprises a collection of distinctive communities and neighborhoods.

GOAL: A unified and attractive community identity that complements the character of the City's distinctive communities.

POLICY: Strengthen the identity of individual neighborhoods or communities with entry monuments, flags, street signs, and/or special tree streets, landscaping, and lighting.

IMPLEMENTATION ACTION: Identify specific locations for community gateways and install landscaping, signage, lighting, and other design features to announce arrival.