

Chapter 1: Introduction



1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this Los Osos Community Plan is to establish a vision for the future of Los Osos that will guide growth and development over the next 20 years. The vision described in this plan reflects the desires of the community, and the plan contains the policies, programs and standards to help achieve that vision. This plan is intended to be the community's plan and was developed with substantial community participation. Continued community involvement is needed to achieve the vision.

1.2 Organization of the Plan

This plan is part of the County's Local Coastal Plan and General Plan; the Community Plan provides a greater level of specificity for the community of Los Osos. The Community Plan identifies planning issues specific to the community, describes land use and transportation within the plan area (see Figure 1-1), establishes policy direction to address planning issues, and sets specific actions and standards to implement policy direction.

Figure 1-1: Los Osos Community Plan Area



The organization of the plan is as follows:

Chapter 1	Introduction. This chapter discusses the setting of the community of Los Osos. It also describes the relationship between the Los Osos Community Plan and the General Plan and Local Coastal Program.
Chapter 2	Community Plan Policies. This chapter contains the community's vision and goals for the future of Los Osos and an analysis of issues to be addressed in the community plan. The chapter concludes with policies and programs.
Chapter 3	Land Use. This chapter discusses land use patterns, with a focus on residential neighborhoods, retail commercial areas, and critical sites for future development.
Chapter 4	Environmental Resources. This chapter discusses important environmental resources including biological resources, cultural resources, and water. This chapter also discusses habitat conservation and combining designations—special overlay categories applied in areas of the county with hazardous conditions or special resources.
Chapter 5	Circulation. This chapter focuses on transportation and circulation. Circulation needs are considered not only for automobiles, but also for pedestrians and bicyclists.
Chapter 6	Coastal Access. This chapter discusses preservation of existing coastal access points and development of new access points and related infrastructure.
Chapter 7	Planning Area Standards. This chapter contains standards that apply to new development projects in the community of Los Osos.
Chapter 8	Public Facility Financing Plan. This chapter identifies tentative costs and specifies financing strategies for major public facilities needed to support the community.

1.3 The Planning Process

Planning for the community of Los Osos started in the early 1990s as part of the update to the Estero Area Plan for the communities of Los Osos and Cayucos and outlying rural areas. Before a draft plan was prepared, several background reports and issues reports were prepared by staff and reviewed by the Los Osos Community Advisory Council (LOCAC). The reports included numerous responses to comments.

An integral part of the update process was involvement by LOCAC, the original purpose of which was to advise the County on preparation of the Los Osos portion of the area plan update. The importance of LOCAC's role in the update was underscored by the Board of Supervisors, who directed that staff achieve consensus with the advisory council on the update's recommendations before bringing the update to the Planning Commission for public hearings. There was extensive participation by LOCAC in the update process since the official start of the update, including review of several draft versions of the update, as well as review of many background reports and issues papers.

The Estero Area Plan was approved by the Board of Supervisors on November 2, 2004 for submittal to the California Coastal Commission. However, the County subsequently modified the submittal of the area plan update to the Coastal Commission by removing the Los Osos urban area from the update. This was due to lack of an approved communitywide Habitat Conservation Plan for Los Osos to deal with widespread environmentally sensitive habitat, uncertainty about whether the projected build-out would be in line with long-term groundwater supply, and at that time (mid 2000's), uncertainty about a communitywide sewer system.

Construction of the communitywide sewer project began in 2012 and was completed in 2016. Additionally, efforts toward a communitywide Habitat Conservation Plan and a Basin Plan for groundwater are well underway. The County re-started efforts to update the Los Osos Urban area of the Estero Area Plan, now known as the Los Osos Community Plan, in late 2012. The previous efforts to update the Estero Area Plan (Los Osos urban area) are the foundation of this update to the Community Plan.

Community meetings were held from June 2013 through January 2015 to solicit input from the community and determine if the past efforts still reflect the community's desires. In addition, a community survey was released in February 2014 to gain more insight into the community's needs. Understandably, the community is still mostly concerned about water and growth, given the current constraints on water resources.

1.4 Community Plan Area and Setting

The unincorporated community of Los Osos is home to about 13,944 residents (2010 U.S. Census). The natural setting of Los Osos is a place of unique beauty. The Los Osos urban area lies at the westerly end of the picturesque and agriculturally productive Los Osos Valley. Los Osos is bounded by the Los Osos Creek riparian corridor to the east and southeast, and the older coastal dunes to the north, south, and southwest. The Morro Bay estuary, one of the largest and most important wetland systems in the Central Coast, borders the community on the north, northwest, and west. The community contains a wealth of natural resources and environmental assets that define its character and contribute to its high quality of life; they are vital to the local economy.

In addition to the area's valuable natural resources, its human resources are essential to its future. The community of Los Osos is fortunate to have an active and effective community advisory committee, as well as many involved and talented people who care deeply about the future of their community.

Los Osos possesses scenic beauty, a mild coastal climate, and natural resources that contribute to a high quality of life. These assets also present opportunities to improve jobs and services for local residents and to improve recreation and tourist-oriented uses for both locals and visitors.

Notably, the shoreline access in the Baywood area is a unique coastal recreational amenity in the vicinity of Morro Bay and the Central Coast in general, offering calm water access free from hazards such as strong currents, motorboat traffic, and boat moorings.

Following are examples of some opportunities for the future:

- Focus on infill and mixed use development, while maintaining the greenbelt around the community to protect scenic qualities and environmentally sensitive habitat.
- Improve job opportunities for local residents by encouraging environmentally-friendly businesses.
- Improve the road system and promote alternative transportation such as walking and bicycling, especially in attractively redeveloped commercial areas.
- Develop a community that is more able to be sustained by the local environment, resources and economy.

- Improve recreation and tourist-oriented uses, considering the area's natural assets and existing tourist presence.

1.5 Relationship to Local Coastal Program and General Plan

The Los Osos Community Plan is a component of both the San Luis Obispo County General Plan and Local Coastal Program (LCP). These relationships are illustrated in Figure 1-2 and Figure 1-3, respectively. This plan is consistent with the intent and policies of the California Coastal Act and the San Luis Obispo County Local Coastal Program (LCP). All other County plans, policies and programs that involve Los Osos and are subject to the LCP are to be consistent with and implement this plan. In addition, where applicable, all public and private development in Los Osos is to be consistent with this plan. It should be recognized, however, that this plan is also subject to other authority, for example, federal and state statutes, case law, and regulations.

The following table (Table 1-1) summarizes the relationship of the Los Osos Community Plan to the San Luis Obispo County General Plan and Local Coastal Program.

Table 1-1: General Plan Components	
Document or Plan	Relationship to Los Osos Community Plan
San Luis Obispo County General Plan	The General Plan contains several parts known as “elements.” The Los Osos Community Plan is a portion of the Land Use and Circulation Elements of the General Plan. Each element of the General Plan must be consistent with one another.
San Luis Obispo County Local Coastal Program	Within California’s Coastal Zone, a jurisdiction may only issue Coastal Development Permits if it has prepared a Local Coastal Program for certification by the California Coastal Commission. A Local Coastal Program includes both a land use plan (e.g. the Land Use and Circulation Element) and an implementation plan (e.g. Planning Area Standards and the Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance). The Los Osos Community Plan is a component of the Local Coastal Program.
Coastal Zone Framework for Planning	The Coastal Zone Framework for Planning document is part of both the General Plan and Local Coastal Program. It contains general land use and circulation policies that are applicable throughout the County’s Coastal Zone. The Los Osos Community Plan must be consistent with the Coastal Zone Framework.
Coastal Plan Policies	The Coastal Plan Policies document is part of both the General Plan and the Local Coastal Program. It contains policies to ensure that the County’s Local Coastal Program will be consistent with the California Coastal Act. The Los Osos Community Plan must be consistent with the Coastal Plan Policies.

Table 1-1: General Plan Components

Document or Plan	Relationship to Los Osos Community Plan
Estero Area Plan	The Coastal Zone portion of the County is broken down into four regional areas: South County, San Luis Bay, Estero, and North Coast. Each area has an Area Plan that addresses land use and circulation issues unique to that area. The community of Los Osos is part of the larger Estero Planning Area and its Estero Area Plan. The Area Plan deals with the communities of Los Osos and Cayucos and the rural areas outside of the Los Osos and Cayucos Urban Reserve Lines. While the Los Osos Community Plan is considered part of the Estero Area Plan, they are two separate documents.

Figure 1-2: Relationship of the Los Osos Community Plan to the General Plan

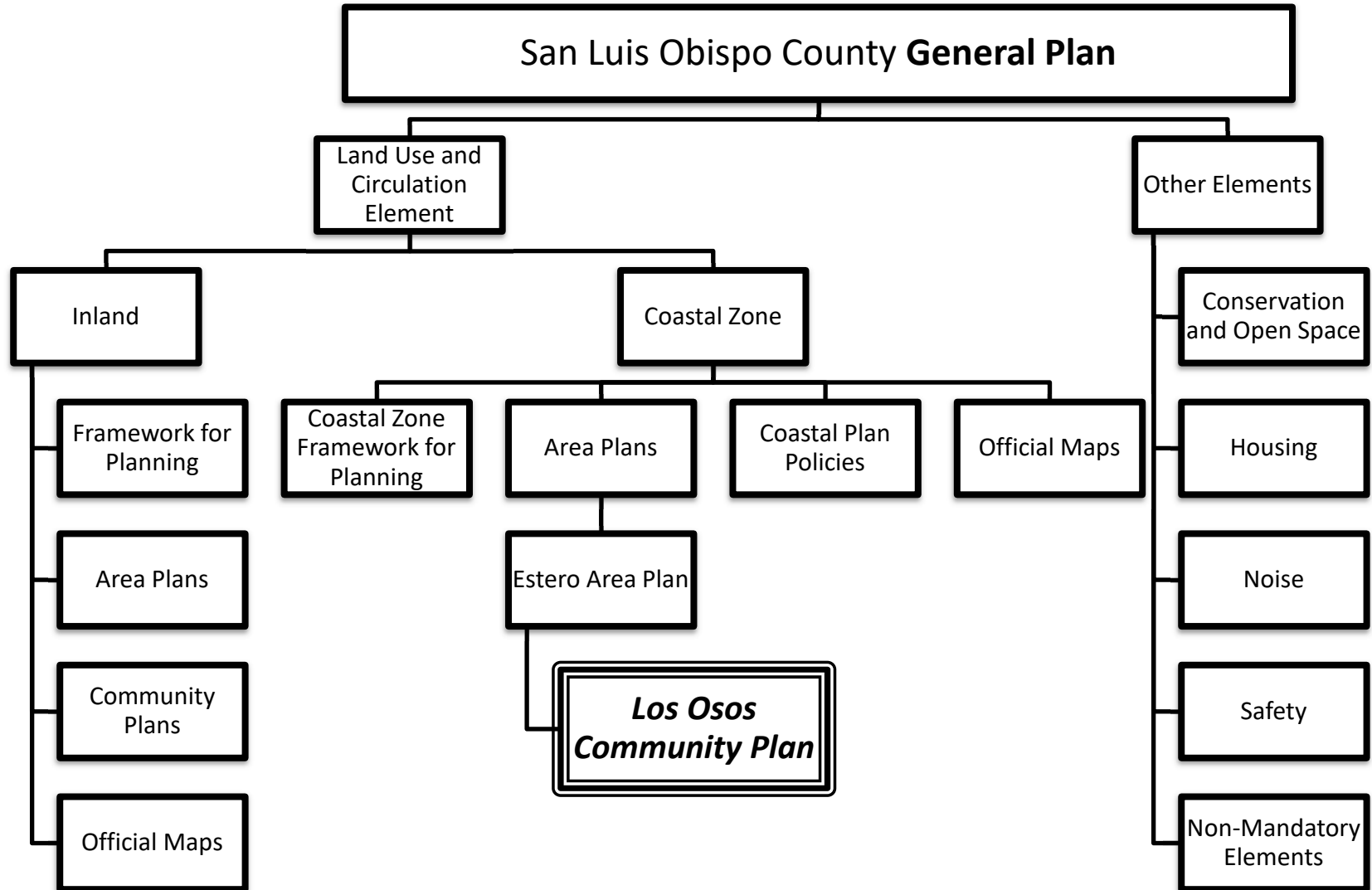


Figure 1-3: Relationship of the Los Osos Community Plan to the Local Coastal Program

