The City of Lake Forest General Plan identifies the community’s vision for the future and provides a framework to guide decisions on growth, development, and conservation of open space and resources in a manner consistent with the quality of life desired by residents and businesses.

This General Plan Existing Conditions Report provides an overview of Lake Forest’s physical, environmental, economic, and demographic setting, as of mid-2018.

City staff, the General Plan Update consultant (De Novo Planning Group), and its team of subconsultants have worked together to ensure that this is an accurate and reliable source of information. This document is intended to serve as a comprehensive reference for community members, policymakers, staff, the City’s General Plan Advisory Committee, and the consultant team throughout the General Plan Update process.

The City of Lake Forest’s General Plan Update is a multi-year process that will include a comprehensive review and revision of the City’s existing General Plan, which establishes a vision for the future of the City. This process also includes the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR), which investigates the possible impacts of the General Plan Update policy changes to the surrounding physical environment. This Existing Conditions Report document provides information about these components and establishes the existing setting for the EIR.
1.1 EXISTING CONDITIONS REPORT CONTENTS

To prepare a meaningful General Plan, existing conditions must be understood and documented. The Existing Conditions Report identifies development patterns, natural resources, socioeconomic conditions, and environmental constraints in the City and identifies the regulatory environment for each topic. This report will be a resource for the City Council, Planning Commission, General Plan Advisory Committee, City staff, and the De Novo Planning Group team throughout the process of preparing the General Plan Update and Environmental Impact Report. The Existing Conditions Report makes extensive use of maps, graphics, and user-friendly non-technical terms to help make it accessible to the general public.

The Existing Conditions Report provides background data and will serve as a technical framework, while the General Plan will focus on goals, policies, and implementation programs. The information collected for the Existing Conditions Report will also be used as the basis for the “existing setting” sections of the General Plan EIR.

The following topic areas are addressed in the Existing Conditions Report:

Chapter 2 Land Use and Community Character

The Land Use Chapter addresses land use planning topics, including issues related to current General Plan land use patterns, existing (on-the-ground) land uses, and placemaking/community character. The information in this Chapter provides both a historical and current perspective on land use and is intended to assist the General Plan Update process by providing both historical context and a baseline of existing land use information. This information will be used when formulating and considering amendments to the City's current land use pattern, or when considering alternate growth and land use scenarios for the City.

Chapter 3 Demographic and Market Trends

The Demographic and Market Trends discussion provides information about the City's residents and commercial real estate market trends and conditions. The purpose of this information is to describe the City, its residents, and business activity from an economic market perspective. This section discusses the current economic base of the City, business in industrial and commercial core areas, and local employment conditions. This section identifies the employment and industry sectors present in the City, jobs by employment and industry sector, and employment trends. It also addresses fiscal considerations in the City, especially as they relate to the City's current General Fund expenditures and revenues.

Chapter 4 Mobility

The Mobility Chapter describes the circulation network serving the City. Existing conditions are described for roadway operations, pedestrian-bicycle facilities, transit service, and multimodal operations. This Chapter includes a review of relevant transportation planning documents describing the Lake Forest area including the current Transportation Element, Lake Forest's current Capital Improvement Program, and the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS). Federal, State, regional, and local regulations pertaining to traffic and circulation in Lake Forest are also described.

Chapter 5 Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas, and Climate Change

This Chapter discusses the regulatory setting, regional climate, topography, air pollution potential, and existing ambient air quality for criteria air pollutants, toxic air contaminants, odors, and dust. This section also discusses the applicable Federal and State ambient air quality standards and attainment statuses, recent trends in ambient air quality, and the nature and location of existing sensitive receptors. Information presented in this section is based in part on information gathered from the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) and the California Air Resources Board (CARB).

Various gases in the Earth's atmosphere, classified as atmospheric GHGs, play a critical role in determining the Earth's surface temperature. Solar radiation enters Earth's atmosphere from space, and a portion of the radiation is absorbed by the Earth's surface. The Earth emits this radiation back toward space, but the properties of the radiation change from high-frequency solar radiation to lower-frequency infrared radiation. The City of Lake Forest must carefully consider the impact of GHGs on the local environment and develop plans and policies to address climate change and plan for a more resilient future. These topics are explored in this Chapter.
Chapter 6  Environmental Justice

The Environmental Justice Chapter analyzes the role of disadvantaged communities (DACs) and addresses a wide range of topics related to the health and well-being of city residents and workers. A community’s overall health depends on many factors, including the environment in which people live and work. A healthy living environment reduces risks and facilitates healthy lifestyles. Critical determinants of healthy living environments, which will be used to develop a community health baseline, include:

- Public health indicators – vulnerable populations, asthma, obesity, diabetes, and chronic disease;
- Active lifestyle opportunities – walking and bicycling to services, and availability of recreational facilities;
- Community design – safe neighborhoods and public spaces, affordable housing, and sustainable development;
- Healthy lifestyle determinants – local foods, healthy shopping options, number of fast food restaurants, medical and mental health services; and
- Environmental quality – clean air and water.

The context of each determinant in promoting healthy communities is described and supporting information that describes existing conditions in Lake Forest is provided, based on available information and reports. This section also includes a summary description of current efforts that the City is undertaking to promote sustainability and healthy community strategies.

Chapter 7  Community Services and Facilities

The Community Services and Facilities Chapter describes the existing conditions and regulatory context regarding community services and utilities, including water, wastewater, drainage and flood control, education, public safety services, schools, and parks and recreational resources within the City. These facilities and services provide a framework that supports growth and development in the City. This Chapter describes existing service levels, available resources, and planned expansion of services and infrastructure.

Chapter 8  Hazards, Safety, and Noise

The Hazards, Safety, and Noise Chapter includes a listing of key significant issues that will ultimately guide the preparation of the Safety Element of the General Plan. This Chapter provides a summary of the existing setting and conditions associated with natural and man-made hazards that may pose a danger to city residents, employees, and visitors including: dangers from hazardous materials sites (i.e., landfills, superfund sites, pipelines and sites with the potential for chemical explosion); fire hazards; emergency response; aircraft hazards; and flood hazards. Known hazardous conditions listed in available State and County databases are also described.

Additionally, this Chapter includes descriptions of the characteristics of sound and noise and a description of transportation, stationary, and construction noise sources within the City’s Planning Area. A description of the noise monitoring survey results, tabularized noise exposure contours, and an existing conditions noise contour map that reflects traffic and stationary noise sources are included. This section also summarizes current information on ground vibration thresholds and summarizes the existing vibration environment.

Noise measurement locations were selected to quantify noise levels along major thoroughfares, near significant stationary noise sources, in developing areas, and in other areas that have been problematic in the past. Based on the results of the noise monitoring and the traffic data, noise contours associated with major roadways have been mapped based on the U.S. Federal Highway Traffic Noise Prediction Model. Noise levels associated with stationary and railroad sources were identified in tabular format, and background noise levels within the community are quantified. A summary of the regulatory framework related to noise, including Federal, State, and City laws, ordinances, plans, policies, and standards is also provided.

Chapter 9  Conservation

The Conservation Chapter discusses conservation issues related to biological resources, geologic and mineral resources, hydrology and water quality, and cultural and visual resources in and around the City. This Chapter also discusses open space as it relates to the preservation of natural resources as part of the biological resources discussion, open space associated with managed production of surface water and groundwater resources as part of the hydrology discussion, and open space associated with public health related to geologic and hydrologic hazards as part of the geologic resources and hydrology discussions, respectively. Federal, State, and local regulations that pertain to each of these topics are also described.
1.2 GENERAL PLAN OVERVIEW

State law requires every city and county in California to prepare and maintain a planning document called a General Plan. A General Plan is a "constitution" or "blueprint" for the future physical and economic development of a county or city. All future planning decisions and project approvals must be consistent with the General Plan, including, but not limited to: Area Plans, Master Plans, subdivisions, public works projects, public services, and zoning decisions. A General Plan has four defining features:

**General.** As the name implies, a General Plan provides general guidance for future land use, transportation, infrastructure, environmental, and resource decisions.

**Comprehensive.** A General Plan covers a wide range of social, economic, infrastructure, and natural resource issues. There are seven State mandated topics that General Plans must cover including: land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, safety, and noise. The Lake Forest General Plan Update will include goals, policies and implementation programs to address the seven state mandated topics. The City also intends to prepare stand-alone elements to address three optional topics: economic development, fiscal sustainability, and community health and wellness. While the final format is subject to change, the Lake Forest General Plan is expected to include the following elements:

1. Land Use and Community Design
2. Housing (**no changes to the adopted 2013 housing element**)  
3. Mobility
4. Safety and Noise
5. Public Facilities and Growth Management
6. Recreation and Resources
7. Economic Development
8. Fiscal Sustainability
9. Community Health and Wellness

**Long-Range.** A General Plan provides guidance on achieving a long-range vision of the future for a city or county. To reach this envisioned future, the General Plan includes goals, policies, and implementation programs that address both near-term and long-term needs. The City of Lake Forest General Plan Update will look ahead approximately 20 years, while also recognizing that things can change over time and the City be able to adapt.

**Integrated and Coherent.** The goals, policies, and implementation programs in a General Plan must present a comprehensive, unified program for development and resource conservation. A General Plan uses a consistent set of assumptions and projections to assess future demands for housing, employment, public services, and infrastructure. A General Plan has a coherent set of policies and implementation programs that enables citizens to understand the vision of the General Plan, and enables landowners, businesses, and industry to be more certain about how future planning decisions will be made and implemented.

1.3 USING THE GENERAL PLAN

The General Plan is used by the City Council, appointed Boards, Commissions, and Committees, and City staff on a regular basis to make decisions with direct and indirect land use implications. It also provides a framework for inter-jurisdictional coordination of planning efforts among officials and staff of the City and other government agencies such as the County, State and Federal agencies.

The General Plan is the basis for a variety of regulatory mechanisms and administrative procedures. California planning law requires consistency between the General Plan and its implementation programs. Implementation programs and regulatory systems of the General Plan include zoning and subdivision ordinances, capital improvement programs, specific plans, environmental impact procedures, and building and housing codes.

Over time, the City’s population will change, its goals will be redefined, and the physical environment in which its residents live and work will be altered. In order for the General Plan to be a useful document, it must be monitored and periodically revised to respond to and reflect changing conditions and needs. As such, a General Plan should be comprehensively updated approximately every 15-20 years to reflect current conditions and emerging trends.

The City’s General Plan should also be user-friendly. To this end, the Lake Forest General Plan Update will be divided into two primary documents: the Existing Conditions Report and the Goals and Policies Report.

As described above, this Existing Conditions Report provides a summary of a range of conditions in Lake Forest as they exist in 2018, and provides the baseline framework for the development of the General Plan’s goals, policies, and implementation programs.

The Goals and Policies Report is the essence of the General Plan. It contains the goals and policies that will guide future decisions within the City. It also identifies a full set of implementation programs that will ensure the goals and policies in the General Plan are carried out.