



To: Mayor and Town Council Members

From: Mark C. Meyers, Town Manager

Date: October 6, 2026

Subject: New General Plan

Background

At their August 11, 2026, regular meeting the Planning Commission voted to recommend the newly revised General Plan. Planning Commission Chair Darlene Pope presented the plan at the September 9, 2026, Town Council work meeting. Discussion of the plan is scheduled for the October 14, 2026, work meeting.

Recommendation

Staff recommends Town Council review the draft plan and consider formal approval at an upcoming regular council meeting.

VIRGIN TOWN GENERAL PLAN

August 2026

VISION STATEMENT

Virgin aims to remain the unique rural town that its residents and visitors cherish. It is one of the most desirable places in the country to live, for both its climate and the beauty of its surroundings. The Town is committed to maintaining its eclectic character and small-town atmosphere and will be proactive in balancing the desires of residents with appropriate business growth. This vision recognizes that new growth and development will occur and emphasizes the need to carefully guide such development to keep Virgin the charming and unique place it is today.

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INTRODUCTION

The Virgin General Plan is a guide for the present and future needs of the Town. This public document lays out goals and policies regarding land use and development. These goals and policies have been established by the Virgin Town Council and Planning Commission, with input from the community. It was adopted by the Virgin Town Council and will be used by the Virgin Town Council, the Planning Commission, and other Commissions and Committees, as they work together toward these development goals, consider future land use, and make other decisions for the Town. This plan has seven elements which address: Environmental, Land Use, Housing, Transportation and Circulation, Economic, Public Services and Facilities, and Water Use and Conservation. Several open houses were conducted where the public was able to express their concerns and desires. As part of the update of the General Plan, a community survey was conducted to gather input from as many community members as possible. This feedback was used to create this General Plan.

The goals and policies are based on the town's Vision Statement, which lays out the vision for the next 5-10 years for Virgin Town.

VISION STATEMENT

Virgin aims to remain the unique rural town that its residents and visitors cherish. It is one of the most desirable places in the country to live, for both its climate and the beauty of its surroundings. The Town is committed to maintaining its eclectic character and small-town atmosphere and will be proactive in balancing the desires of residents with appropriate business growth. This vision recognizes that new growth and development will occur and emphasizes the need to carefully guide such development to keep Virgin the charming and unique place it is today.

ENVIRONMENTAL ELEMENT

The natural environment and setting for Virgin is stunning and is often what attracts people to move to and stay in the area. The town is surrounded by public land including more than 4,290 acres of BLM land and over 280 acres of Washington County Water Conservation District land within the town boundaries. Combined, they account for nearly 60% of the land within the town boundaries. Additionally, a private land conservation organization owns more than 400 acres within the town boundaries along the Virgin River.

Current Conditions

Virgin Town sits at an elevation of 3,600 feet above sea level. The climate is semi-arid or steppe which means, precipitation ranges between 10-12 inches per year and temperatures can reach 115°F during the summer and below freezing in winter months. These temperatures level fall between those for desert and arid climates. Virgin receives approximately 12 inches of rainfall per year. This precipitation can come in sudden torrents, so the Town has suffered numerous damaging flood events even in the last ten years.

Floodways - creeks and washes, erodible soils are sensitive areas which require protection to avoid harm to public and private property and assure public safety. While envisioning responsible growth, Virgin understands environmentally friendly growth is essential and acknowledges these areas have not always been protected.

Preservation of the night sky and conserving water are among the top concerns of the community, and therefore continue to be a key aspect of Virgin's conservation focus.

Virgin sits on both sides of the Virgin River which is an important resource not just for Virgin but for the entire region. All development in the town currently is served by septic systems, and therefore density is limited to prevent contamination of the river. The river also provides recreation opportunities for the community, but access is currently limited. There is little public support for development south of the river.

Since the Town currently utilizes individual septic systems, soil limitations are important. Soil analysis shows some areas with slight limitations, with large areas rated as somewhat limited to very limited septic absorption ratings for septic systems. In 2024 Virgin Town became part of the Ash Creek

Special Service District. Being part of the district can lead to providing wastewater collection and treatment in the future, which could allow greater development density.

Desired Outcomes

Preservation~ During the public open houses, strong public desire of preserving the night sky was expressed. The importance of water conservation also became clear. It is also important to encourage energy efficiency. These desires can be reached through effective ordinances.

Sensitivity to the Environment~ Building designs, site plans and subdivisions need to be sensitive to environmental preservation. It is also desired to designate areas of restricted development due to highly sensitive natural characteristics, including significant ecological, archeological, visual, or water resources.

Goals and Policies

Goal: Preserve the Character and Integrity of the Environment

- Make as little environmental impact as possible when developing properties, including running power underground, using alternative energy sources and leaving floodways and drainage undisturbed as much as possible.
- Encourage sustainable development and building practices.

Goal: Promote Conservation

- Encourage reduction of overall water consumption with site design and landscaping plans.
- " Preserve natural drainage passages whenever possible, and use approved alternative diversions, where required, to avoid flooding. Require new development to maintain and enhance the floodways while keeping safety as a high priority.
- " Encourage conservation of sensitive lands including, but not limited to wetlands, hillsides, and cliff edges, mesa tops and drainage ways, through cooperation with private and public property owners.

Goal: Night Sky Preservation

- Continue to restrict lighting to low, downward, and efficient types that preserve the night sky while keeping safety and security in mind.

- Find ways, through events and publications, to educate residents and local businesses about best practice night sky protection and its rewards.
- Support innovative low-impact development techniques that enhance environmental quality that allow for compatible growth.
- Work toward the eventual designation of the Town as a Dark Sky Community.

Goal: Views Preservation

- Preserve viewsheds through thoughtful infrastructure and building construction.
- Ensure development standards respect the viewshed.
- Consider viewshed in any and all zoning changes.

LAND USE ELEMENT

The land use element outlines long-term goals, and policies related to the general distribution of land for housing, commercial uses, civic uses, and so forth. These will assist the town council, planning commission, and other committees as they help the town work towards these goals.

Virgin started as a typical settlement town in the West, with all the uses needed for a remote community within close proximity to, and intermixed with, each other. As the highway was built and automobiles became the main mode of transportation, many of the original commercial uses became less viable and are no longer available in town. However, the core of the original community remains, with some of the historic buildings surviving to the present day.

The original town, centered around Mill Street on the north side of the Virgin River and extended several blocks east and west. As the town has grown, it has extended further east and west along both sides of the highway. Areas of single land use have developed, such as residential only neighborhoods, and most commercial along the highway. A majority of town facilities are close to Mill Street, though there is a cemetery north of the highway.

Current Conditions

There are a variety of land uses throughout Virgin. Most of the existing housing is single-family development. Commercial development is centered on SR-9, with the majority being services related to tourism. Access to the Virgin River is through public lands and Falls Park which is on Bureau of Land Management land on the south side of the river. The town has easements which are planned to provide additional access to the river. Virgin recently acquired a church as the new town hall in the same block as the town park.

Desired Outcomes

Commercial Use -Based on input for commercial uses which would benefit residents, there is work on new zoning standards with the idea to entice village and neighborhood type commercial uses to come to town. The Economic Element looks at this area in greater detail.

Orderly Growth~ Orderly growth is expected where there is an availability of public facilities such as roads, water service, fire protection and other public services needed to support it. Commercial uses are more successful when they are near to each other. A variety of uses will attract more customers, so

developers should plan cross-access and interconnection between these uses. To the greatest extent possible, encourage attractive development that enhances the natural environment. Walkability is important, along with smooth traffic flow. A policy for parks, trails and open space will clearly indicate to developers that those amenities should be coordinated and built into their sites.

Trails, Trailhead Improvements, River Access~ A pedestrian friendly town that preserves Virgin Town's natural setting is a high priority. Connecting neighborhoods to trailheads with some river access is important and expected. See more information in the Transportation and Circulation element.

Economic Enhancements~ Encourage responsible economic activities that will benefit all residents of the Town while retaining the atmosphere of the area. Promote the revitalization and maintenance of remaining historic buildings.

Private Property Protection~ It is desired to continue the protection of constitutionally based private property rights while at the same time balancing these rights with the general welfare of the community, so mandates and changes do not unduly infringe on those lands and rights.

Public Land Use~ To the greatest extent possible maintain access to public lands.

Goals and Policies

Goal: Economically Sustainable Development

- Utilize development impact fees to provide adequate public facilities and services in a timely manner.
- Require that adequate infrastructure exists or is programmed for construction within a defined period of time as a condition of development.

Goal: Growth Management

- Allow for the development of higher density, lower cost housing adjacent to the commercial zones only where and when access to sewer and other public infrastructure is readily available.
- Encourage commercial uses which serve the needs of both residents and tourists.