

# 1. INTRODUCTION

The County of Colusa General Plan (General Plan) identifies the County's vision for the future and provides a framework that will guide decisions on growth, development, and conservation of open space and resources in a manner consistent with the quality of life desired by the County's residents and businesses. The General Plan supersedes and replaces the 1989 General Plan. This plan carries forward much of the major goal and policy framework of the 1989 General Plan, but has been reorganized to make the document more user-friendly and straightforward.

## **Scope and Content of the General Plan**

State law requires Colusa County to adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan for the physical development of its planning area. The General Plan must include land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety elements, as specified in Government Code Section 65302, to the extent that the issues identified by State law exist in the County's planning area. Additional elements that relate to the physical development of the County may also be addressed in the General Plan. The degree of specificity and level of detail of the discussion of each General Plan element need only reflect local conditions and circumstances. This General Plan has been prepared consistent with the requirements of State law and addresses the relevant items addressed in Government Code Section 65300 et seq.

This General Plan includes the following chapters:

- Introduction
- Agriculture Element
- Circulation Element
- Community Character Element
- Conservation Element
- Economic Development Element
- Housing Element
- Land Use Element
- Noise Element
- Open Space Element
- Public Services and Facilities Element
- Safety Element
- Implementation

### **Background Report and Environmental Impact Report**

Two important documents support the General Plan. The Background Report and the General Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR) are both intended to be used in conjunction with this General Plan and to serve as companions to this policy document.

### **Public Participation**

This General Plan was developed with extensive participation from the County's residents, businesses, local agencies, and other stakeholders. A series of public Visioning Workshops were held to identify the principles that would guide the General Plan update. The Board of Supervisors appointed a 25-member Steering Committee which held eight workshops, each open to the public. The Steering Committee considered the goals and policies of the 1989 General Plan and provided advice on how the County could achieve its goals and address current issues.

### **Guiding Principles**

Through the Visioning process, a distinct set of guiding principles were identified to guide the General Plan update.

- Maintain the County's rural character and quality of life;
- Focus new development in and around existing communities;
- Ensure that growth is orderly;
- Preserve and enhance the County's agricultural heritage;
- Provide opportunities for the expansion of existing businesses and attraction of a diverse range of businesses that provide high-quality jobs;
- Promote a broader range of industries that support the County's agricultural uses;
- Provide the young people in the County a future, in terms of employment and housing opportunities; and
- Ensure that adequate infrastructure is available to serve existing and new development.

### **Applying the General Plan**

The General Plan is intended for use by a broad range of persons, including:

- The Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission in decision-making activities;
- County staff in developing and reviewing programs and projects;
- The development community in preparing development proposals; and
- Residents and citizens interested in the future of Colusa County and the County's policies.

The General Plan applies to lands in the unincorporated area of the County, to the extent allowed by Federal and State law. Under State law, many actions, such as development projects, specific plans, master plans, community plans, zoning, subdivisions, public agency projects and other decisions must be consistent with the General Plan. State law requires that the County's ordinances regulating land use be consistent with the General Plan. The Zoning Code, individual project proposals, and other related plans and ordinances must be consistent with the goals and policies in this General Plan.

### **Interpreting the General Plan**

In reading the provisions of the General Plan, one should infer that the goals, objectives, policies, and actions are limited to the extent that it is financially feasible and appropriate for the County to carry out various actions and to the extent legally permitted by state and federal law. For example, policies and actions that indicate that the County will “provide,” “support,” “ensure,” or otherwise require or carry out various policies do not indicate an irreversible commitment of County funds or staff resources to those activities, but rather, that the County will support such actions when the County deems that it is financially feasible and appropriate. In some cases, the County will carry out various policies and actions by requiring development, infrastructure, and other projects to be consistent with the policies and actions of the General Plan. In other cases, the County may include General Plan items in the Capital Improvement Program, annual budget, or other implementation mechanisms, as the County deems appropriate.

### **Amending the General Plan**

Since policies in the General Plan reflect a range of competing interests, the decision-makers have broad discretion in interpreting the General Plan and its purposes and are allowed to weigh and balance its goals, objectives, and policies when applying them. Recognizing the need for the General Plan to remain up-to-date and reflective of local issues and policies, state law allows the County to amend the General Plan to ensure that it is consistent with the conditions, values, expectations, and needs of its residents, businesses, and other stakeholders. The General Plan may be amended only by action of the Board of Supervisors or by voter-approved initiative.

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