

# I

## Introduction & Overview

The General Plan describes a vision for the future of Yuba City. At the time of preparation of this plan, the City is at a crossroads – regional projections estimate that the population will increase by upwards of 50,000 persons over the next 20 years – effectively doubling the 2002 population. Currently, the residents of Yuba City enjoy the city’s small size, the availability and affordability of housing, it’s small town feeling, and the surrounding rural landscape. This plan, based on input from Yuba City citizens, business owners, elected officials, and City staff, strives to maintain what is good and desirable about Yuba City as it grows into the future. This plan builds on the quality of current planning work in the City – such as the Buttes Vista, Harter, and Central City Specific plans – and to carries through those city-building principles to the City as a whole. It also is coordinated with and supports ideas in the Sutter County General Plan.

The maps and policies presented in this plan are based on real need for accommodating a future population and employment base combined with a real vision for the future. The Plan is comprehensive and long-range in scope. It will be used on an on-going basis as many City regulations, requirements, and actions are required by State law to be consistent with the General Plan.

The plan draws its ideas and policies from the many citizens who participated formally and informally in making both difficult and easy choices. The plan envisions a growing community that preserves much of it’s small town feel and social fabric with an improved economy, new job opportunities, affordable housing, improved public services and facilities, new parks, an urban growth boundary that protects the much-prized rural agricultural landscape, and an overall improved quality of life.

### **I.1 PURPOSE OF THE GENERAL PLAN**

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The Yuba City General Plan is a document required by State law and adopted by the City Council that addresses issues related to physical development, growth, and conservation of City resources. The Plan:

- Outlines a vision of long-range physical planning and land uses in order to address the economic development and resource conservation aspirations of the community;
- Provides strategies and specific implementing actions that will allow this vision to be accomplished;
- Establishes Plan policies and standards to be used as a basis for judging whether specific development proposals are in concert with the goals of the community;
- Provides guidelines and policies by which City departments, public agencies, and private developers can design projects that will enhance the character of the community, preserve and enhance critical environmental resources, and minimize hazards; and

- Provides the basis for establishing and setting priorities for detailed plans and implementing programs, such as the Zoning Ordinance, specific plans, impact fee studies, and the Capital Improvement Program.

### **WHY HAS THIS PLAN BEEN PREPARED?**

General plans look out 20 years in the future and are typically revised every five to 10 years. Yuba City last adopted a General Plan in 1989 that covered a planning period through 2005. The plan has not been comprehensively updated since that time. Yuba City and Sutter County, through the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), have agreed on the current Sphere of Influence (SOI) boundary for Yuba City. The 1989 plan plans for a much smaller area than the 2002 SOI.

As of 2002, much of the Yuba City SOI remained undeveloped, with almost half the land in the Yuba City SOI either vacant or agricultural land. All of this land is available for development in order to accommodate projected population increases and the subsequent land demand. This General Plan suggests uses for the previously un-planned for areas.

Thus, this General Plan has been prepared to:

- Respond to the need of having policies to guide Yuba City's growth into previously un-planned for areas;
- Ensure that development remains within the agreed-upon SOI, thereby preserving agricultural land in the surrounding rural areas;
- Ensure that the General Plan reflects Yuba City's current planning efforts, and includes goals, policies, and desires of Yuba City citizens;
- Plan in a manner that meets future land needs based on the projected population and job growth; and
- Meet the City's jobs/housing balance objectives, the need for housing in the community, and State law requirements for Yuba City's allocation of regional housing needs.

### **PLAN PREPARATION PROCESS**

To help prepare this General Plan, a General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) was formed. This Committee was charged with serving as ambassadors to the community during the preparation of the new General Plan and with reviewing and commenting on interim products prepared by the project consultant. The committee included representation from the Yuba City Planning Commission and City Council, the Sutter County Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission, Caltrans, and local citizens from both the incorporated and unincorporated areas within the SOI.

The Committee met on a frequent basis to address concerns and guide the process. Two community workshops were held, one in August 2002 and one in



*Community workshops were held in order to obtain feedback from the Yuba City Community on the plan.*

November 2002. These workshops were attended by approximately 150 and 130 people, respectively. The first workshop gathered input and reactions to a Draft Land Use plan. The second workshop presented the refined land use plan and began the process of developing policies for the Plan. A wide variety of viewpoints were expressed by a mix of participants from all segments of the community. This plan is a result of the GPAC guidance and public input received at the Workshops. Special joint Planning Commission and City Council workshops were also held in order to keep those groups informed and to solicit feedback. Finally, newsletters on the General Plan Update were distributed to the citizens of Yuba City and surrounding areas in an effort to inform the public of the planning process and seek public comment.

## **1.2 PLANNING IN CONTEXT: A BRIEF HISTORY OF YUBA CITY**

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Before its founding, the land on which Yuba City is now located was a part of Rancho Nuevo Helvetia (the New Switzerland Ranch), a land grant owned by Swiss emigrant and Mexican citizen John Sutter. Samuel Brannan, Pierson Reading, and Henry Cheever purchased land from Sutter in 1849 to found a town primarily as a distribution center for Gold Rush supplies. Brannan, the Senior Partner, had the town laid out and lots sold. He is honored today as one of the town's founders and has a park named for him.

Yuba City was established as county seat in 1856. The early town was centered at Second Street and the Garden Highway, near the waterfront. The commercial district ran along Bridge Street, south of the present-day Downtown commercial corridor on Plumas Street. Apart from mining-oriented services, the City's industry also focused on agricultural production, with wheat, grains, and cattle being the dominant goods.

Incorporated on January 23, 1908, the City soon found ethnic diversity taking root. Mexican immigration to the Yuba-Sutter region began in the early Twentieth Century, followed by the arrival of traditionally agrarian Sikh Indian immigrants who have come in a small but steady flow since 1924. More than a quarter of City residents and 30 percent of people in the County now claim either Mexican or Indian heritage.

After World War II, Yuba City's population began to grow more quickly, owing to returning veterans, improved access from highway construction, and the constraints placed on development in its sister city across the river, Marysville, which is surrounded by flood-control levees. Growth has continued to be strong, with the population nearly doubling every twenty years since 1940. Pressure toward further expansion is most acute in agricultural areas to the west and south of the City, especially along highway corridors. More recently, with the growth of the Sacramento Capital region, Yuba City remains a fast-growing urban area. New jobs in Yuba City, Sacramento, and Sacramento suburbs such as Roseville and Rocklin combined with affordable home prices and transportation options in Yuba City have fueled the current boom.

## **1.3 GENERAL PLAN REQUIREMENTS**

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State law requires each California municipality to prepare a general plan. A general plan is defined as "a comprehensive, long-term general plan for the physical development of the county or city, and any land outside its boundaries which in the planning agency's judgment bears relation to its planning."

State requirements call for general plans that “comprise an integrated, internally consistent and compatible statement of policies for the adopting agency.”

A city's general plan has been described as its constitution for development – the framework within which decisions on how to grow, provide public services and facilities, and protect and enhance the environment must be made. California's tradition of allowing local authority over land use decisions means that the State's cities have considerable flexibility in preparing their general plans.

While allowing considerable flexibility, State planning laws do establish some requirements for the issues that general plans must address. The California Government Code establishes both the content of general plans and rules for their adoption and subsequent amendment. Together, State law and judicial decisions establish three overall guidelines for general plans:

- *The General Plan Must Be Comprehensive.* This requirement has two aspects. First, the general plan must be geographically comprehensive. That is, it must apply throughout the entire incorporated area and it should include other areas that the City determines are relevant to its planning. Second, the general plan must address the full range of issues that affect the City's physical development.
- *The General Plan Must Be Internally Consistent.* This requirement means that the general plan must fully integrate its separate parts and relate them to each other without conflict. “Horizontal” consistency applies both to figures and diagrams as well as general plan text. It also applies to data and analysis as well as policies. All adopted portions of the general plan, whether required by State law or not, have equal legal weight. None may supersede another, so the general plan must resolve conflicts among the provisions of each element.
- *The General Plan Must Be Long-Range.* Because anticipated development will affect the City and the people who live or work there for years to come, State law requires every general plan to take a long-term perspective.

## **I.4 REGIONAL LOCATION AND PLANNING BOUNDARIES**

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### **REGIONAL LOCATION**

Yuba City lies in the northern portion of California's flat, fertile Central Valley. It is situated in eastern Sutter County on the western bank of the Feather River. Marysville, Yuba City's sister City, is located opposite Yuba City on the eastern bank of the Feather River, and is in Yuba County. Primarily undeveloped agricultural land exists to the north, west, and south of the City. The Sutter Buttes are located to the northwest of the City and frame views in that direction. The primary transportation corridors are Routes 99 and Route 20. Route 99 leads due south to Sacramento and north to Oroville and Chico beyond; Route 20 links Yuba City to Colusa and I-5 to the west and Grass Valley and the Sierra Nevada range to the east. State Routes 70 and 65 lead south from Marysville, connecting the region to Sacramento and to Sacramento's northern suburbs – Roseville and Rockland.

### **PLANNING BOUNDARIES**

According to State law, the City must consider a Planning Area that consists of land within the City and “any land outside its boundaries which, in the planning agency's judgment, bears relation to its planning.”

Figure 1-1 illustrates the overall Planning Area, the Yuba City SOI (as agreed upon by the City with Sutter County), and, for the purposes of this plan, the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), which is essentially the SOI boundary, with minor exceptions. The area within the UGB includes approximately 24 square miles of land. It is assumed that all areas within the SOI will be annexed and become part of Yuba City.

## **I.5 OBJECTIVES & KEY INITIATIVES**

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### **GENERAL PLAN OBJECTIVES**

Several objectives for the General Plan were identified and considered by the GPAC, based on input by the public and from key stakeholders and City staff. In response to that input, the following six key planning objectives were developed:

- Maintain a cohesive city and protect surrounding rural areas by fostering a compact, rather than a scattered development pattern, with strong urban edges.
- Provide for new employment centers to support economic development.
- Build an interconnected street system with improved north-south and east-west connections into newly developing areas.
- Create livable neighborhoods, with convenient access to parks, schools and neighborhood commercial facilities.
- Locate new retail centers at accessible locations to serve both Yuba City residents and shoppers from other communities.
- Make new parks, schools and open space an integral part of new development, with linkages to existing parks and the planned Feather River park system.

### **KEY INITIATIVES**

Based on the planning objectives that were set forth, ten key initiatives emerged as the plan took shape. These initiatives are big picture ideas that address the planning objectives. The maps and policies in the General Plan are structured around these key initiatives.

- ***Clearly Defined Urban Edges.*** The General Plan offers proposals to create and maintain a contiguous and compact urban form amidst the rural landscape, with clearly defined urban edges. The urban limit boundary is established through three key roadways: Pease Road, Township Road, and Bogue Road as well as the Feather River. Proposals for clearly and appropriately defining and designing the urban edge are included in this plan. Clear edges also create the opportunity for “gateways” as travelers enter or leave the urban areas of Yuba City, adding character to both the City proper and the surrounding countryside. Agreements concerning buffering through landscaping programs and setbacks have been reached between Yuba City and Sutter County; this plan builds off of those agreements. Finally, clearly defining the boundaries of a City requires that projected population influxes be accommodated within those boundaries. This Plan puts forth a set of policies, most specifically with respect to residential densities, that accommodates future populations.

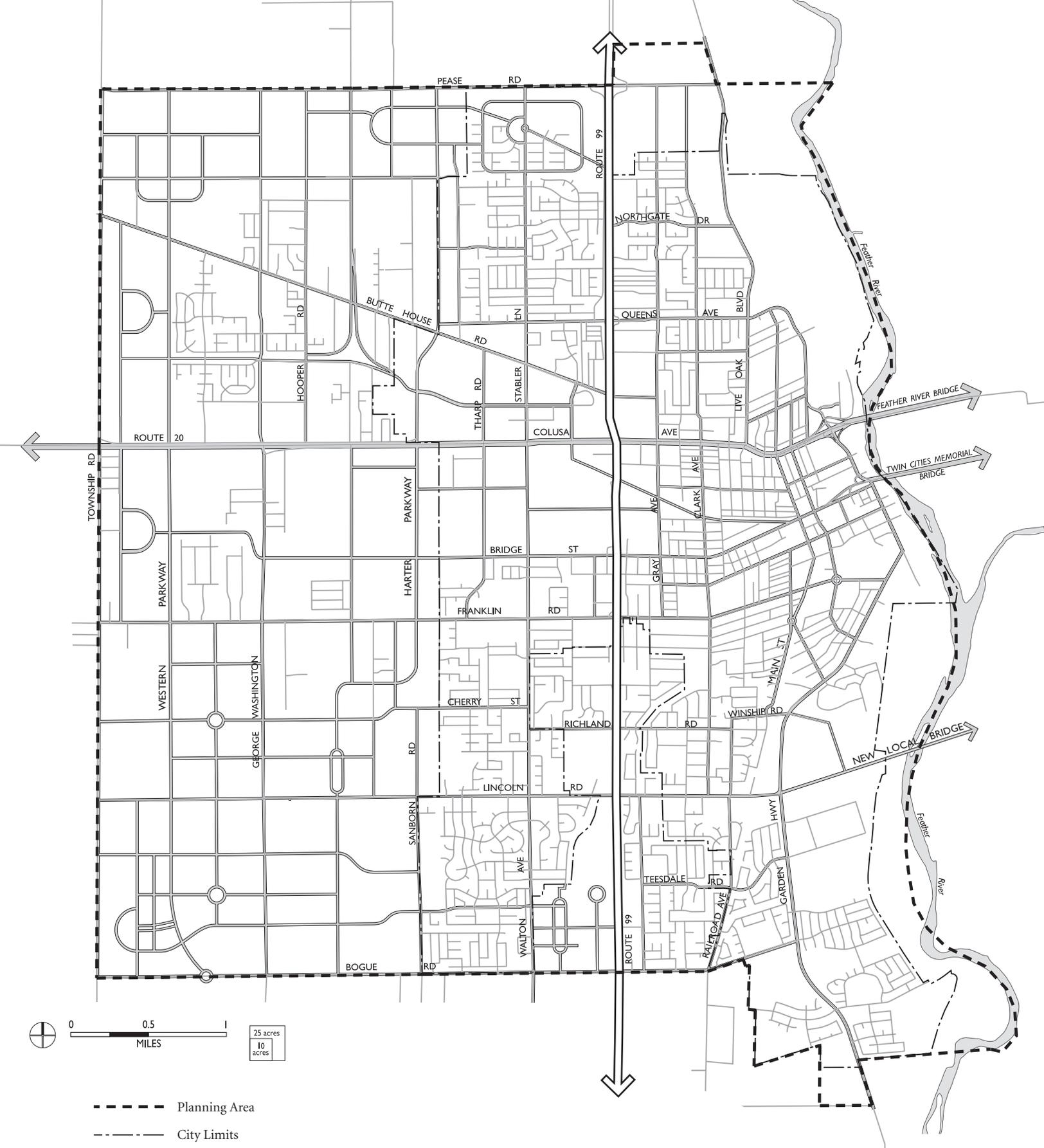


Figure 1-1  
 Planning Area

- **Economic Development & Jobs.** City officials and residents alike recognize that if Yuba City is to continue as a desirable and prosperous community, being simply a bedroom community to Sacramento and its suburbs is not an option. This plan strives for – at minimum – a 1 to 1 jobs/housing ratio. This means that for every household in Yuba City, a job will be available in Yuba City. With this in mind, strides have been taken in the General Plan to attract and maintain quality business and industry. Land has been set aside for businesses, roadway improvements have been designed to meet the needs and requirements of new industry, new educational facilities have been proposed to maintain an educated workforce, and most importantly, the overall upkeep and improvement of Yuba City as a desirable place to live and work has been promoted throughout the Plan.

- **Large Parks.** The General Plan uses parkland as a primary creator of community character with two large parks in the undeveloped southwest and northwest portions of the planning area. These parks, highly favored by the public at community meetings, offer several opportunities: they will insure that open space is preserved indefinitely in the Yuba City urban area; they will provide much needed parkland to offset the City's shortage of parkland; they will allow for the preservation of the agricultural history of Yuba City through agricultural-related exhibits and heritage centers; they will offer amenities to the Yuba City public; they will offer sites for cultural and civic institutions; and finally, their amenity value will appeal to both potential employers looking for a place to locate their business and regional residents looking for a place to spend their weekend days (and spend their weekend dollars). Coupled with the proposed Feather River Park, the overall park system in Yuba City will be significantly improved.



*The creation and preservation of parks and open space are a key component of the General Plan.*

- **A Network of Open Space.** In addition to the two large parks and the Feather River Park, the General Plan proposes an interconnected network of pathways and trails, as well as community and neighborhood parks. This system is envisioned to connect neighborhoods to one another and also to create pedestrian or bikeway linkages between parks, schools, neighborhood commercial centers, downtown, and the Feather River.
- **A Complete Roadway System.** Although the Yuba City urban area has developed on a super grid of roadways spaced north/south and east/west at one mile intervals, many of these roadways do not connect through to the limits of urban development. Also, many roadways are disconnected and new subdivision-style developments have been built with a minimum number of entrances onto collector streets or arterials. The lack of connectivity and a lack of adequate east/west and north/south roadways has resulted in higher than expected traffic volumes for a community the size of Yuba City. Also, streets and thoroughfares in Yuba City lack plantings, trees, berms, pedestrian facilities, and other amenities. These amenities add to the visual character of the most visible part of Yuba City – its roads – and effect the overall perception of the community. This plan proposes new roadway connections and introduces the “parkway” concept to Yuba City – roadways whose purpose is to function as both a visual corridor and a traffic artery.

- ***Integrated Neighborhoods & Neighborhood Centers.*** Another central idea in this General Plan is the concept of neighborhoods. Neighborhoods are the essential building blocks of good cities. Quality neighborhoods typically mean a quality urban environment. Balanced neighborhoods include a mix of residential opportunities and include activities and facilities that are used on a frequent basis – such as schools, stores and parks. Land uses are designated to ensure balanced neighborhood development with a mix of uses and housing types, provision of parks and schools, and easy access to commercial activity centers.
- ***Enhanced Community Character & Aesthetics.*** Implementation of the General Plan will result in enhanced community character, building on the foundation of work the City has begun in the Town Center Development and the Buttes Vista and Harter Specific Plans. The Plan establishes community design policies at a citywide, neighborhood, and street scale. Overall aesthetic excellence and tree plantings are strongly encouraged.
- ***A Mix of Housing Types.*** A wide demographic base currently populates Yuba City; the future is not expected to be any different. This plan proposes a wide and diverse variety of housing types in order to accommodate home owners and renters of differing housing needs and income categories.
- ***Adequate, Flexible School Sites.*** The growth of Yuba City means additional school age population and a need for additional schools. Developed in concert with the Yuba City Unified School District, the plan identifies new school sites for the school districts projected need and spaces them appropriately throughout the growing urbanized areas, and incorporates sites owned by the school district. The size of these sites is also compatible with the school district’s policy to build new schools for grades K-8 as combined elementary/middle school sites. Finally, the plan places schools in neighborhoods and communities, and, where possible, couples school sites with park sites.
- ***A Range of Commercial & Retail Opportunities.*** Quality communities are often gauged by the quality of retail outlets. With this in mind, combined with the jobs and sales tax revenue that commercial properties produce, the General Plan proposes a mix of retail and office types. These are intended to serve both local residents and a regional population and are to be accessible by both automobiles and pedestrians, depending on type and location.

## **I.6 PLAN ORGANIZATION**

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The Yuba City General Plan is organized into the following chapters:

1. ***Introduction & Overview.*** This includes General Plan objectives and key initiatives, State requirements, and requirements for administration of the Plan.
2. ***Growth & Economic Development.*** This Chapter establishes policies to promote economic expansion and job growth in the city.
3. ***Land Use.*** This chapter provides the physical framework for development in the City. It establishes policies related to the location and intensity of new development and citywide land use policies.

4. *Community Design*. This chapter outlines policies to ensure that new development protects and enhances the community character. Urban form, edges, neighborhoods, buildings, streets, and parks are all addressed.
5. *Transportation*. This chapter includes policies, programs, and standards to maintain efficient circulation. It identifies future street and bikeway improvements, and addresses alternative transportation modes and parking.
6. *Parks, Schools & Community Facilities*. This chapter outlines policies and standards relating to regional and local parks and recreational facilities and preserved open space.
7. *Public Utilities*. This chapter outlines policies and standards relating to schools, libraries, and institutions of higher learning. The chapter also addresses local utilities, such as water and wastewater.
8. *Environmental Conservation*. This chapter outlines policies relating to habitat and biological resources, water quality, air quality, and historic and archaeological resources.
9. *Noise & Safety*. This chapter includes policies to limit the impacts of noise sources throughout the city and addresses the risks posed by seismic and geologic hazards, flooding, as well as other topics, including solid waste management and recycling, hazardous materials, and emergency management.
10. *Implementation & Monitoring*. This chapter details the manner in which the plan is to be implemented.
11. *Housing*. This chapter, which addresses housing availability and affordability according to State requirements, is bound in a separate volume.

## **CORRESPONDENCE TO REQUIRED ELEMENTS**

The General Plan includes the seven elements required by State law (Land Use, Housing, Circulation, Open Space, Conservation, Safety, and Noise) and four other elements that address local concerns (Growth & Economic Development, Community Design, Public Utilities, and Parks, Schools & Community Facilities). Table 1-1 shows how the Yuba City General Plan elements correspond to State-required elements.

**Table I-1: Correspondence Between Required Elements & General Plan Elements**

| <i>Required Element</i> | <i>General Plan Element</i>                       |
|-------------------------|---|
| Land Use                | Chapter 3: Land Use                               |
| Circulation             | Chapter 5: Transportation                         |
| Open Space              | Chapter 6: Parks, Schools, & Community Facilities |
| Conservation            | Chapter 8: Environmental Conservation             |
| Safety                  | Chapter 9: Noise and Safety                       |
| Noise                   | Chapter 9: Noise and Safety                       |
| Housing                 | Chapter 11: Housing (separate volume)             |

**POLICY STRUCTURE**

Each chapter of the General Plan includes brief background information to establish the context for policies in the chapter. This background material is neither a comprehensive statement of existing conditions nor does it contain adopted information. Readers interested in a comprehensive understanding of issues related to a particular topic should refer to the *Existing Conditions and Future Prospects* working paper available at City offices and the library.

This background information is followed by two sets of policies:

- Guiding Policies are the City's statements of its goals and philosophy.
- Implementing Policies represent commitments to specific actions. They may refer to existing programs or call for establishment of new ones.

Together, the guiding and implementing policies articulate a vision for Yuba City that the General Plan seeks to achieve. They also provide protection for the City’s resources by establishing planning requirements, programs, standards, and criteria for project review. Explanatory material or commentary accompanies some policies. Commentary provides background information or is intended to guide Plan implementation. The use of "should" or "would" indicates that a statement is advisory, not binding; details will need to be resolved in General Plan implementation. Where the same topic is addressed in more than one chapter, sections and policies are cross-referred.

*Policy Numbering System*

Policies in the General Plan are organized using a two-part numbering system that is intended to give each goal and policy a discrete, easily referenced number. The first part refers to the chapter/element (and the subsection within the chapter), followed by a letter identifying the policy as either a Guiding Policy (G) or Implementing Policy (I), and finally by a second number referring to the specific policy. Thus, the first Guiding Policy in Chapter 4, Section 2, would be “4.2-G-1”. The subsequent Implementing Policies in Chapter 4, Section 2 would be “4.2-I-1,” “4.2-I-2”, etc.

**RELATED DOCUMENTS**

As part of General Plan preparation, several technical studies were conducted to document environmental conditions and analyze alternatives for development and conservation. While these background studies and environmental documents have guided Plan preparation, they do not represent adopted City policy. Documents include:

- Existing Conditions and Future Prospects Report, *December 2001*
- Sketch Plan Workbook, *April 2002*
- Evaluation of Plan Alternatives Report, *June 2002*
- August 22, 2002 Community Workshop Summary Workbook, *October 2002*
- Updated Draft Preferred Plan Report, *October 2002*
- Draft Environmental Impact Report, *October 2003; and*
- Final Environmental Impact Report, *February 2004 (certified on April 8, 2004 by the City Council).*

## **I.7 ADMINISTRATION OF THE GENERAL PLAN**

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The General Plan is intended to be a dynamic document. As such, it may be subject to more site-specific and comprehensive amendments over time, amendments that may be needed to conform to State or federal law passed after adoption, or to eliminate or modify policies that may become obsolete or unrealistic over time due to changed conditions, such as the completion of a task or project, development on a site, or adoption of an ordinance or plan.

### **AMENDMENTS TO THE GENERAL PLAN**

State law limits the number of times a jurisdiction can amend its general plan to generally no more than four times in one year for a mandatory element, although each amendment may include more than one change. This restriction does not apply to optional general plan elements (Growth and Economic Development, Community Design, Parks, Schools and Community Facilities, and Public Utilities), or if the amendment is necessary to allow for the development of workforce housing or to comply with a court decision.

### **ANNUAL REPORT**

The California Government Code requires city staff to “provide an annual report to the legislative body on the status of the general plan and progress in its implementation” (Government Code § 65400(b)). This report must also be submitted to the Governor's Office of Planning and Research and the Department of Housing and Community Development. It must include an analysis of the progress in meeting the city's share of regional housing needs and local efforts to remove governmental constraints to maintenance, improvement, and development of workforce housing (Government Code § 65583, 65584).

In addition, any mitigation monitoring and reporting requirements prescribed by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) identified in the general plan environmental impact report (EIR) should be addressed in the annual report because they are closely tied to plan implementation. Finally, the annual report should include a summary of all general plan amendments adopted during the preceding year and an outline of upcoming projects and general plan issues to be addressed in the coming year, along with a work program.

