



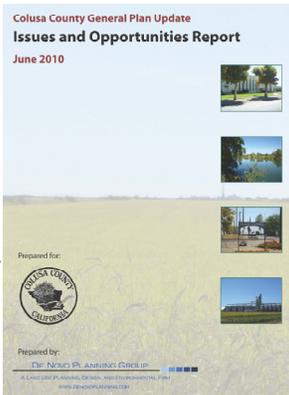
General Plan Update

What is a General Plan?

A general plan is designed to serve as the jurisdiction's "constitution" or "blueprint" for future decisions concerning land use, infrastructure, public services, and resource conservation. All specific plans, subdivisions, public works projects, and zoning decisions made by the County must be consistent with the General Plan. The General Plan provides guidance on reaching a future envisioned over a 20-year time horizon, through 2030.

Progress Overview

Colusa County is about 1/3 of the way through the General Plan Update. Public outreach so far has included 5 Visioning workshops, 1 stakeholder's workshop, one study session with the Board of Supervisors, one study session with the Planning Commission, and various consultations with local agencies. The General Plan Update has produced the following documents to date, which are all available on the General Plan Update website:



- *Issues and Opportunities Report;*
- *Land Use Map Alternatives;*
- *Draft Fiscal Impact of Alternatives Report;*
- *Draft Housing Element; and*
- *General Plan Update Background Report.*

Public Review Opportunities

The public is encouraged to review the available documents. The Issues and Opportunities Report, Land Use Map Alternatives, and Draft Housing Element will result in policy guidance that will affect the future of the County. Please attend a meeting (see right sidebar) to comment or submit comments in writing to Stephen Hackney, Director of Planning and Building, at 220 12th Street, Colusa CA 95932 or e-mail to: tcloudon@countyofcolusa.org.

Website: www.countyofcolusageneralplan.org



Keep Up to Date!

Upcoming Meetings

The following meetings will be held at the Board Chambers in the Historic Courthouse, 547 Market Street, Colusa.

June 15, 2010, 11:00 am - Presentation of Issues & Opportunities Report to the Board of Supervisors

June 21, 2010, 1:30 pm - Planning Commission Recommendation regarding the Issues & Opportunities Report and Land Use Map Alternatives

June 29, 2010 - Board of Supervisors Direction to Staff and Consultants regarding the Issues & Opportunities Report and Preferred Land Use Map

July 12, 2010, 1:30 pm - Planning Commission Recommendation regarding the Draft Housing Element

July 27, 2010 - Board of Supervisors Direction regarding submittal of the Draft Housing Element to the State

General Plan Steering Committee

The Board of Supervisors appointed a steering committee to work with County staff and the consulting team on the new General Plan. While not a decision making body, the steering committee's input is vital to preparing a plan that will work for the County. Meetings are open to the public and dates will be posted on the website.

General Plan Update Mailing List

Contact Tana Loudon, Colusa County Planning Department at (530) 458-0480 or tcloudon@countyofcolusa.org or 220 12th Street, Colusa CA 95932.



Colusa County General Plan Update

Main Issues

Protection of Agricultural Lands

Loss of agricultural land from conversion to non-ag uses has been a longstanding concern of decision-makers and those involved in farming and related industries. Development of both urban uses and “ranchettes” results in the irreplaceable loss of farmland and introduces conflicts between ag and urban uses. Conversion to habitat protection or wetlands can also remove farmland from productive use. The General Plan provides an opportunity for the County to establish buffers, larger agricultural transition areas, or other mechanisms to provide long-term protection for farmland. When viewing the land use alternative maps, it should be considered whether adequate protection is provided for agricultural lands.



Location & Amount of Growth

County residents and stakeholders have expressed that growth should only occur within or adjacent to existing communities and that the County should not become a “bedroom community.” The land use map alternatives were developed to place growth in and around the existing communities, with Alternative 3 also providing the potential for a new community at the south County line. The amount and location of future urban residential and commercial growth is crucial in ensuring that growth occurs in a well-planned manner that discourages sprawl and leapfrog development.

Weak Economic Indicators

Communities with an economy based primarily around a single industry type tend to be more vulnerable to downturns in the economy than communities with a more diversified economy. The County has higher unemployment rates and lower incomes than state and national averages. To reduce employment volatility, the County’s economic base will need to diversify to provide more year-round employment options as well as better-paying jobs for skilled workers.



Highlight on Housing Element

Due to requirements of state law, this element will be completed in advance of the Draft General Plan. *The Draft Housing Element is available for public review through July 27, 2010.*

The Housing Element is the blueprint for future housing viability, through development of new housing and upkeep of existing housing. It includes goals, policies, and programs that direct decision-making for housing issues.

Community Identity & Design

Maintaining the rural character of the County and the quality of life of existing communities is an important concern raised throughout the Visioning process. The need to provide improved park, recreation, and community-based facilities in existing communities was also identified. The General Plan Update provides a venue to identify additional parks and recreation sites in the communities and to establish mechanisms, such as design standards, to help each of the County’s communities maintain its distinctive character.



Flooding

Flooding is the most likely natural hazard to occur in the County. The topography combined with the presence of the Sacramento River and local waterways have resulted in large portions of the central and western areas of the County being designated as flood hazard zones. As part of the General Plan Update, the County can determine the types and amount of development allowed within the 100-year floodplain, determine appropriate steps to improve flood control, and decide whether to participate in various federal programs.

Infrastructure

Colusa County’s wastewater, water and energy infrastructure is owned and operated by various water districts, sewer districts, and corporations such as PG&E and the Del Oro Water Company. As the County plans for its future, it must also provide for adequate infrastructure. Considerations include coordination with service providers to ensure that fee mechanisms are sufficient to construct and operate necessary facilities, identifying land use patterns that optimize available infrastructure, and establishing appropriate standards for development of rural areas served by wells and septic systems.

Leading Opportunities

Industry Diversification

Throughout the Visioning process, County residents and stakeholders stated that additional industries and job growth are essential for the long-term health of the County's economy, but economic growth should not interfere with existing agricultural uses. As part of the General Plan Update, the County can consider focusing on a range of industries that complement the intensive agricultural practices in the County. Opportunities for diversification include research and development, creation of an agricultural demonstration center, clean energy (biomass and cogeneration facilities powered by agricultural waste), industrial uses such as manufacturing goods with agricultural by-products, and travel-oriented commercial. The County must consider which industry sectors it wishes to attract, which job-generating uses are appropriate in agricultural areas, and the appropriate amount of commercial and industrial growth.



Countywide Traffic Impact Program



A primary impediment to the improvement and maintenance of the County's roads is lack of adequate funding. As part of the General Plan Update, the County can determine if it is appropriate to pass on costs of improving and maintaining County roads

to development projects. The County can decide to implement a Countywide traffic impact program or to develop traffic programs at the community level.

Telecommunications & Technology

High-speed broadband access is a foundation of 21st century infrastructure. Access to technology is a common economic development issue for rural areas, and is necessary to attract many high-tech

Recreation & Tourism Industry

The County's tremendous natural resources can provide the basis for new or expanded agritourism, wildlife viewing, wilderness experience, off-highway vehicle, hunting, and water-oriented tourism opportunities. The County can also take advantage of its unique natural resources, including unique plant and animal species, and large managed wetland and habitat preserves by aggressively promoting these assets to attract tourists and researchers from around the state. Improved access to remote areas of the County would be necessary to increase opportunities for recreation and tourism.



Sites Reservoir

The Sites Reservoir project provides the County with an opportunity to plan for recreation-oriented growth and to stimulate the local economy through construction, operation, and recreation jobs. Coordinating with state agencies to plan for the reservoir may allow the County to leverage its assets to ensure long-term water supplies and to plan for access and operation facilities that would benefit the County's existing communities.

Redevelopment

Redevelopment is a tool to encourage public and private investment in distressed areas, which may be characterized by deferred maintenance, high vacancy rates, and abandoned or dilapidated buildings. In redevelopment areas, the County can receive a larger portion of the property tax (tax increment) and use these funds to rehabilitate property, improve infrastructure, and attract employers in order to reduce blight and spur economic development. The General Plan can address formation of a redevelopment agency.



Colusa County General Plan Update

General Plan Update Process

Phases 1 and 2 are complete as of June 2010.

Existing Conditions Report

Information on current conditions and trends.

1

Issues and Opportunities Report

Describe issues, opportunities, and land use alternatives based on community outreach and Visioning Workshops.

2

General Plan Goals, Policies, and Programs

Develop goals, policies, and programs to address identified issues and achieve desired land uses.

3

Draft General Plan

Design a plan to reach the preferred vision of the County's future.

4

Environmental Impact Report

Analyze the environmental effects of implementing the General Plan.

5

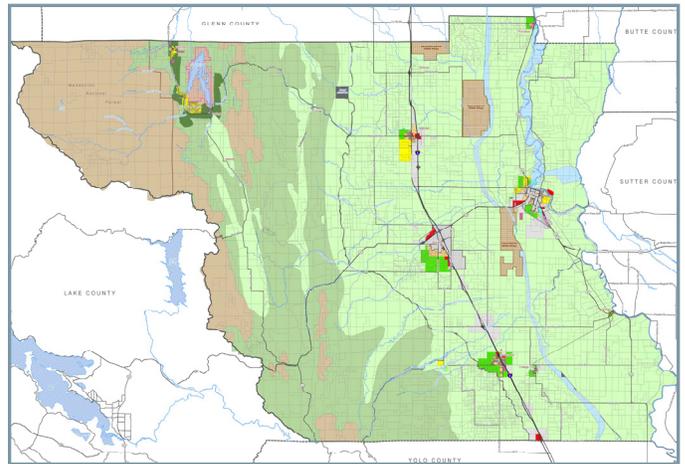
General Plan Adoption

The Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors will consider the General Plan at a series of public hearings.

6

Land Use Map Alternatives

The General Plan Update process includes the development of a new land use map that identifies areas planned for development, agricultural activities, and other uses. Based on input from the Visioning process, decision-makers, residents, and stakeholders, three land use map alternatives have been drafted and are included in the Issues and Opportunities Report. The report will be presented to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors for consideration on the dates identified on the front page (right sidebar). You are encouraged to review the Issues and Opportunities Report and to comment on the various questions posed in the report as well as the land use alternatives, which are summarized below.



Alternative 1 - Economic Development

Alternative 1 emphasizes industrial and commercial growth and has less of an emphasis on residential growth. This alternative would allow for creation of jobs in excess of new housing. Growth is concentrated around existing communities, with industrial uses also planned along the I-5, SR 20, and SR 20/45 corridors.

Alternative 2 - Balanced Growth

Alternative 2 provides for a balance of job-creating and residential development land uses in each of the major developed communities in the County.

Alternative 3 - High Growth/Public Input

Alternative 3 includes all of the land use change requests made by County land owners and reflects the areas identified for new development during the Visioning process which results in a high growth scenario. Residential growth would occur at a higher ratio than job-generating uses. A new community would be allowed along I-5 at the south County line.