



## MEMORANDUM

TO: Steve Hackney, Planning Director

FROM: Ben Ritchie/Beth Thompson

SUBJECT: Staff Report to the Planning Commission re: 2030 General Plan Adoption and Final EIR Certification

DATE: February 21, 2012

---

Mr. Hackney:

This letter represents the staff report to the Planning Commission regarding the Colusa County 2030 General Plan Update and Environmental Impact Report (EIR) following the 60-day public review and comment period for these documents.

De Novo Planning Group will give a presentation to the Planning Commission that summarizes the content of this staff report, including the following:

- A summary of the recommended actions to be taken by the Planning Commission at this hearing.
- An overview of the public review process and timeline for receiving comments on the Public Draft 2030 General Plan and Draft General Plan EIR.
- A summary of the proposed changes to the Draft 2030 General Plan Goals, Objectives, Policies and Actions.
- A summary of the comments received on the Draft 2030 General Plan and Draft EIR from interested agencies and members of the public.

### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION

1. Receive an update on the comments received during the public review period for the Draft 2030 General Plan and the Draft General Plan EIR.
2. Review and consider the information provided in the Draft EIR and Final EIR.
3. Review and consider proposed changes to the Draft 2030 General Plan Goals, Objectives, Policies and Actions.
4. Make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors to certify the Final EIR for the General Plan.

5. Make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors to approve the 2030 General Plan, as amended herein.
6. Make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors to adopt the Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Consideration prepared for the General Plan EIR.

## GENERAL PLAN PREPARATION BACKGROUND

In the summer of 2009, Colusa County began a multi-year process to update the County's 1989 General Plan. 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 development of a county or city. As part of the Colusa County 2030 General Plan Update process, a General Plan Background Report was prepared to establish a baseline of existing conditions in the county. Additionally, an Issues and Opportunities Report was prepared to identify the challenges facing the community and to provide an opportunity for citizens and policymakers to come together in a process of developing a common vision for the future.

The General Plan update includes a framework of goals, objectives, policies, and actions that will guide the community toward their common vision. The General Plan is supported with a variety of maps including a Land Use Map and Circulation Diagram.

### VISIONING WORKSHOPS

Between September and November 2009, the General Plan Update team held five public visioning workshops to help kick-off the General Plan Update process. A diverse group of County residents and stakeholders attended workshops in Stonyford, Maxwell, Arbuckle, Colusa and Williams. The workshops provided an opportunity for the public to offer their thoughts on what they like and don't like about their communities and the County, and what important issues should be addressed in preparing the General Plan Update.

### STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Between September 2009 and March 2010, the General Plan Consultants conducted interviews and outreach efforts with several key stakeholders and organizations throughout the County. These interviews and outreach efforts helped the General Plan consultants gain perspectives and insights into the issues to be addressed by the General Plan Update.

### LAND USE MAP CHANGE REQUESTS

Between November 2009 and October 2010, property owners in Colusa County were given the opportunity to submit General Plan land use designation change requests for their parcels to the Planning Department. Changes in existing General Plan designations were requested for approximately 27 sites throughout the County. These requested changes were all considered by the General Plan Steering Committee, Planning Commission, and the Board of Supervisors during the development of the Draft 2030 General Plan Land Use Map.

## GENERAL PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

The Board of Supervisors appointed approximately 20 County residents and local agency representatives to the General Plan Steering Committee. The Steering Committee worked with staff and the consultant team to develop the goals, objectives, policies and action items to be included in the 2030 General Plan, and also worked to develop and refine the Draft General Plan Land Use Map. The Steering Committee met a total of eight times between September 2010 and February 2011.

## PUBLIC OUTREACH

For all public workshops and meetings, the Colusa County Department of Planning and Building conducted extensive outreach, using a wide variety of methods and tools, to inform and encourage the community to participate in the General Plan update process. Where appropriate, meeting notices were also translated into Spanish in order to reach out to a broad spectrum of County residents. General Plan Update outreach methods include the General Plan website ([www.countyofcolusageneralplan.org](http://www.countyofcolusageneralplan.org)), General Plan newsletters, notices, press releases, and public service announcements in local newspapers, and an e-mail database used to notify residents, businesses, and organizations that expressed interest in the General Plan of upcoming meetings and availability of documents. Additionally, in compliance with the requirements of Senate Bill 18, the County provided written notification to all potentially affected Native American Tribes of the General Plan Update, and invited interested Tribes to meet with County staff in-person to discuss the General Plan.

## PUBLIC REVIEW OF THE DRAFT 2030 GENERAL PLAN AND DRAFT EIR

In November 2011, staff and the consultant team completed the Public Draft 2030 General Plan and Draft EIR. Both of these documents were released for a 60-day public review and comment period that ran from November 17, 2011 through January 16, 2012. These documents were made available to the public and interested agencies via multiple methods, including: posting the documents to the County's General Plan Update website, distribution to the General Plan Update mailing list via email, and direct mailings to key State and Regional agencies. Additionally, printed copies were made available for public review at the Department of Planning and Buildings and library branches throughout the County.

The Public Draft 2030 General Plan document contains the following Elements:

- The **Agricultural Element** (optional element) establishes goals, objectives, policies, and actions designed to maintain and enhance the viability of agriculture in Colusa County. Policies address issues such as accommodating a range of agricultural uses and supporting operations, the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses, farmworker housing, and urban-agricultural land use conflicts.
- The **Circulation Element** correlates closely with the Land Use Element, and identifies the general locations and extent of existing and proposed major thoroughfares, transportation routes, and alternative transportation facilities necessary to support a multi-modal transportation system.

This element is intended to facilitate mobility of people and goods throughout unincorporated Colusa County by a variety of transportation modes, including bicycle, pedestrian, air and rail

- The **Community Character Element** (optional element) addresses community form, community design, and community character for the unincorporated County, including individual communities within the County.
- The **Conservation Element** addresses the conservation, development, and use of natural resources, riparian environments, native plant and animal species, soils, mineral deposits, cultural/historical resources, air quality, and alternative energy. It also details plans and measures for preserving open space for natural resources and the managed production of resources.
- The **Economic Development Element** (optional element) Designed to support and enhance the County's economy, through programs through programs to create jobs and business opportunities, to help maintain the existing workforce, and to improve the business climate.
- The **Land Use Element** designates the general distribution and intensity of residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, open space, public/quasi-public, and other categories of public and private land uses. The element's primary focus is to guide growth within and around the existing urban centers in Colusa County and conserve agricultural, open space, and natural resource lands. The Land Use Element includes the Land Use Map, which identifies land use designations for each parcel in the unincorporated County.
- The **Noise Element** establishes standards and policies to protect the community from the harmful and annoying effects of exposure to excessive noise levels. This element includes strategies to reduce land use conflicts that may result in exposure to unacceptable noise levels.
- The **Open Space and Recreation Element** addresses the preservation of open space for the managed production of resources, conservation of natural resources, and public health and safety related to open space and recreational opportunities. This element also includes provisions for improved and unimproved parks and recreational facilities throughout the County.
- The **Public Services and Facilities Element** sets forth standards for public service and utility systems including water, wastewater, solid waste, schools, medical facilities, libraries, parks, recreation, and historic preservation.
- The **Safety Element** establishes policies and programs to protect the community from risk associated with geologic, flood, and fire hazards, as well as setting standards for emergency preparedness.
- The **Implementation Element** identifies all of the action items and associated timing for implementation by various County departments or agencies during the life of the General Plan.

Each element of the Colusa County 2030 General Plan contains a series of goals, objectives, policies and action items. The goals, objectives, policies and action items provide guidance to the County on how to direct change, manage growth, and manage resources over the 20-year life of the General Plan. The following provides a description of each and explains the relationship of each:

- A **goal** is a description of the general desired result that the County seeks to create through the implementation of the 2030 General Plan.
- An **objective** further refines a goal and provides additional specificity on how a goal may be achieved by the General Plan. Each goal may have one or more objectives.
- A **policy** is a specific statement that guides decision-making as the County works to achieve its goals and objectives. Once adopted, policies represent statements of County regulations. The General Plan's policies set out the standards that will be used by County staff, the Planning Commission, and Board of Supervisors in its review of land development projects, resource protection activities, infrastructure improvements, and other County actions. Policies are on-going and require no specific action on behalf of the County.
- An **action** is an implementation measure, procedure, technique or specific program to be undertaken by the County to help achieve a specified goal or implement an adopted policy. The County must take additional steps to implement each action item in the General Plan. An action item is something that can and will be completed.

## DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

The County of Colusa, as lead agency, determined that the Colusa County 2030 General Plan is a "project" within the definition of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). CEQA requires the preparation of an environmental impact report (EIR) prior to approving any project that may have a significant impact on the environment. For the purposes of CEQA, the term "project" refers to the whole of an action, which has the potential for resulting in a direct physical change or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment (CEQA Guidelines Section 15378[a]).

An EIR must disclose the expected direct and indirect environmental impacts associated with a project, including impacts that cannot be avoided, growth-inducing effects, impacts found not to be significant, and significant cumulative impacts, as well as identify mitigation measures and alternatives to the proposed project that could reduce or avoid its adverse environmental impacts. CEQA requires government agencies to consider and, where feasible, minimize environmental impacts of proposed development, and an obligation to balance a variety of public objectives, including economic, environmental, and social factors.

The Draft EIR was prepared according to CEQA requirements to evaluate the potential environmental impacts associated with the implementation of the General Plan for the unincorporated portion of Colusa County. The Draft EIR also discusses alternatives to the General Plan, and proposes mitigation measures that will offset, minimize, or otherwise avoid significant environmental impacts. The Draft EIR

has been prepared in accordance with CEQA, California Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.; the Guidelines for the California Environmental Quality Act (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3); and the rules, regulations, and procedures for implementing CEQA as adopted by the County of Colusa.

## COMMENTS RECEIVED ON THE DRAFT 2030 GENERAL PLAN

A total of five (5) comment letters were received that addressed the content of the 2030 General Plan. Comments were received from the following agencies and individuals:

1. Colusa County Resource Conservation District
2. California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)
3. City of Colusa
4. Colusa Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO)
5. Dennis Cook

As noted above, some of the comments received on the Draft 2030 General Plan resulted in proposed changes to the General Plan, which are shown in Appendix A.

Appendix B of this staff report includes a copy of each of the comment letters received, followed by a written response to each of the comments raised in each letter. All of the comments received on the Draft 2030 General Plan are provided herein from the Planning Commission's review and consideration.

## COMMENTS RECEIVED ON THE DRAFT EIR AND PREPARATION OF THE FINAL EIR

During the public comment period for the Public Draft 2030 General Plan and Draft EIR, a total of six (6) comment letters were received that addressed the content of the Draft EIR. Comments were received from the following agencies (note: the letters received from Caltrans and LAFCO included comments on both the General Plan and the Draft EIR).

1. Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board
2. California Department of Transportation- Division of Aeronautics
3. Central Valley Flood Protection Board
4. California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)
5. Colusa LAFCO
6. City of Colusa

None of the comments received on the Draft EIR challenged the adequacy of the environmental analysis. All of the comments received on the Draft EIR are included in the Final EIR, along with written responses to all comments.

## PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE DRAFT 2030 GENERAL PLAN

In light of the comments received on the Public Draft 2030 General Plan and Draft EIR from interested agencies and members of the public, staff and the consultant team have prepared a series of minor changes proposed for the Goals, Objectives, Policies, and Actions contained in the Draft General Plan. Overall, these proposed changes are minor, and do not change the purpose or intent of the General Plan. In most cases, changes simply provide additional clarity to the intent of the General Plan. In other cases, changes were made to eliminate redundancy within the General Plan. None of the revisions proposed to the Draft General Plan would change the environmental analysis and conclusions in the Draft and Final EIR nor would any of the changes result in new significant environmental impacts not disclosed in the Draft EIR.

Appendix A of this staff report includes a summary of all changes proposed to the Draft 2030 General Plan. As explained further in this appendix, new or additional text added to the General Plan is shown in underline format, while deleted or removed text is shown in ~~striketrough format~~.

## FINAL EIR

The Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the Colusa County 2030 General Plan project has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and State CEQA Guidelines. State CEQA Guidelines Section 15132 requires that an FEIR consist of the following:

- the Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) or a revision of the draft;
- comments and recommendations received on the Draft EIR, either verbatim or in summary;
- a list of persons, organizations, and public agencies commenting on the Draft EIR;
- the responses of the lead agency to significant environmental concerns raised in the review and consultation process; and
- any other information added by the lead agency.

In accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15132(a), the Draft EIR is incorporated by reference into the Final EIR.

The Colusa County Board of Supervisors will review and consider the Final EIR. If the County finds that the Final EIR is "adequate and complete", the Board of Supervisors may certify the Final EIR in accordance with CEQA. The rule of adequacy generally holds that an EIR can be certified if:

- 1) The EIR shows a good faith effort at full disclosure of environmental information; and
- 2) The EIR provides sufficient analysis to allow decisions to be made regarding the proposed project in contemplation of environmental considerations.

To: Steve Hackney, Planning Director  
Subject: Planning Commission Staff Report on the Public Draft General Plan Comments  
Date: February 21, 2012  
Page: 8 of 8

Upon review and consideration of the Final EIR, the Colusa County Board of Supervisors may take action to approve, revise, or reject the project. A decision to approve the Colusa County 2030 General Plan, for which this EIR identifies significant environmental effects, must be accompanied by written findings in accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15091 and 15093. A Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program would also be adopted in accordance with Public Resources Code Section 21081.6(a) and CEQA Guidelines Section 15097 for mitigation measures that have been incorporated into or imposed upon the project to reduce or avoid significant effects on the environment. This Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program has been designed to ensure that these measures are carried out during project implementation, in a manner that is consistent with the EIR.

#### MITIGATION MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRAM

The Draft General Plan has been prepared to be a self-mitigating document. The policies and actions provided in the Draft General Plan provide mitigation for potentially significant and significant environmental impacts, to the extent feasible. No additional mitigation is available, as described in the Findings of Fact. The annual report on general plan status required pursuant to the Government Code will serve as the monitoring and reporting program for the project.

#### FINDINGS OF FACT AND STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATION

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires Colusa County, as the CEQA lead agency to: 1) make written findings when it approves a project for which an environmental impact report was certified, and 2) identify overriding considerations for significant and unavoidable impacts identified in the EIR.

The findings explain how the County, as the lead agency, approached the significant and potentially significant impacts identified in the environmental impact report prepared for the Colusa County 2030 General Plan (the Project). The statement of overriding considerations identifies economic, social, technological, and other benefits of the Project that override any significant environmental impacts that would result from the Project.