

VISION AND PRINCIPLES

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This chapter summarizes the community land use values for Yolo County. These statements tie the County's long-term land use planning to its strategic operations and allow for integrated management of land use matters.

A. Introduction

The Vision Statement describes the desired future of Yolo County and is an integral part of the General Plan update. Over the next 20 years, it will guide the many changes that will take place in Yolo County. These changes are discussed in each General Plan element, as are the corresponding policy responses, which are based on this shared vision. This chapter presents both the County's vision statement and the principles that will guide decision-making in the County as the General Plan is implemented.

The Vision Statement was developed through a public process. County staff prepared a preliminary statement based on input gathered from community outreach, the Sacramento Area Council of Governments' "Preferred Blueprint Scenario," knowledge of local planning issues, the 1983 and 1958 General Plans, the Board of Supervisors' 2022 Strategic Plan and State General Plan requirements. The County then solicited input to identify additional planning issues and concerns to refine the Vision Statement accordingly.

B. Background Information

The general objective of the Yolo County General Plan is to guide decision-making in the unincorporated areas in the County toward the most desirable future possible. The highest and best use of land within Yolo County is one that combines minimum efficient urbanization with the preservation of productive farm resources and open space amenities.

Since its inception in 1850 as one of the original California counties, Yolo County has remained dedicated to this objective by protecting and enhancing its rich agricultural soils and farming economy. Over the past several decades, a similar sentiment has grown to preserve the diversity of its natural resources, from the peaks of the Blue Ridge Mountains, along the watersheds of Putah and Cache Creeks, to the shores of the Sacramento River and the Delta. These goals have been accomplished by directing residential growth to established cities and rural communities, combined with promoting the Williamson Act and targeted use of conservation easements. To date, this strategy has worked well and Yolo County has achieved widespread respect for its innovative policies and political commitment to maintaining farmland and open space. However,

there is also a growing understanding that the County needs to review its course to meet new challenges that, if left unmanaged, have the potential to affect the future of the community.

Yolo County is situated between rapidly growing metropolitan areas and faces increasing development pressure from both Sacramento and the Bay Area, especially along the Interstate 80 corridor that links the two. Yolo County is experiencing growth pressures internally as well, as the two largest employers, the University of California (UC) and the Cache Creek Casino Resort, undergo significant expansion. In addition, the quality of life that Yolo County has carefully cultivated is attractive to many homebuyers, both within and outside the county. These effects have combined to create long-term demands for residential development, which in turn is expected to restrain the supply of available and affordable housing. As the population expands and cities grow, the County is anticipating a corresponding increase in demand for new parks, schools, libraries, retail, employment, hospitals, government centers and infrastructure. As cities and towns grow in response to these pressures, the uncontrolled spread of development can have disastrous effects on outlying areas. Community facilities and utilities cannot efficiently serve scattered development. The remaining land becomes fragmented so that it cannot be economically farmed and has little public value as open space.

The vision of Yolo County is to remain an area of active and productive farmland and open space. Both traditional and innovative agricultural practices will continue to flourish in the countryside, while accommodating the recreational and tourism needs of residents and visitors. Communities will be kept separated and individual through the use of working agricultural landscapes, while remaining connected by a network of riparian hiking trails, bike paths and transit. While more families will call the cities and towns home, they will live in compact neighborhoods that are friendly to pedestrians and bicyclists and are located within easy access to stores and work. Some limited new growth will be allowed and infill and more dense development within older developed areas will be encouraged, bringing improved infrastructure (e.g. roads, sewer, water, drainage) to rural small communities where service does not presently exist or is inadequate. By implementing this vision, Yolo County can grow and prosper in a way that reflects our unique values.

Yolo County will continue to be a statewide leader in developing innovative solutions that provide comprehensive and balanced land use management. We welcome the opportunity to meet new challenges, such as reducing GHG emissions, and to set new standards that reflect our values and preserve our unique quality of life for future generations to enjoy. This Vision Statement provides an overall direction that was used as the basis for preparation of the update to the Yolo County General Plan.

To assist in achieving this vision, the following guiding principles have been established. Each principle is followed by a series of general objectives to guide the implementation of this General Plan.

C. Principles and Objectives

Principle 1: The success of Yolo County depends upon the success of agriculture.

Objectives

- 1.1 Family owned and operated farms.
- 1.2 Regional consumption of locally grown, safe food and value-added agricultural processing, such as wineries and olive oil presses.
- 1.3 Safe and efficient transportation system for moving products from farm to market.
- 1.4 Strong agricultural heritage.
- 1.5 Affordable, quality housing for farm workers and their families.
- 1.6 Protected farmland and farming practices through conservation easements, land use controls and regional collaboration.
- 1.7 Active marketing of Yolo County agricultural products.
- 1.8 Standards for the placement of farm dwellings in rural areas that minimize conflicts with on-site and adjoining agricultural operations and avoid impacts to natural resources including groundwater.
- 1.9 Farm practices that support the County's global climate change strategy.
- 1.10 Flood protection for agricultural lands and small communities, processing facilities, and support businesses.
- 1.11 Tourism that showcases agricultural products and heritage in a manner complimentary to the rural environment.
- 1.12 Regional coordination and marketing to directly connect local growers with potential customers.

Principle 2: The benefits of open space and natural areas are essential to our quality of life.

Objectives:

- 2.1 Unique and distinct cities and communities through the protection of agriculture and open space, combined with dense development in compact forms to reduce sprawl.
- 2.2 An expanded system of safe and well-maintained parks (both active and passive) throughout Yolo County connected by a network of bike paths and multi-use trails.
- 2.3 Protected waterways (e.g. rivers, creeks, lakes and sloughs), wildlife habitats and other sensitive resources on both public and private lands.
- 2.4 Public open space and parks designed and maintained to provide the public a positive outdoor experience.
- 2.5 Opportunities for ecotourism, including but not limited to boating, kayaking, canoeing, fishing, hunting, hiking and bird watching.
- 2.6 Convenient access to and use of designated open space and public natural areas.
- 2.7 Appropriate locations for alternative recreation.
- 2.8 Open space and natural area protection integrated into the County's global climate change strategy and other resource management strategies.
- 2.9 A diverse landscape that connects habitat and enhances ecological integrity.

Principle 3: Each community is distinctive, but all share the same values and a common vision for the future.

Objectives:

- 3.1 Unique, viable and sustainable communities (both incorporated and unincorporated) that provide a range of housing and lifestyles, including urban, university, small town and rural neighborhood.
- 3.2 A strong sense of community, where neighbors know and help their neighbors, there is a defined identity and character to the built environment and the uniqueness of each community is celebrated.
- 3.3 A range of housing types and price choices.

- 3.4 Efficient infrastructure and services provided to both existing and new development.
- 3.5 Places where the community can gather for celebrations, events and social contact.
- 3.6 Diverse communities that are welcome to all ages, cultures and socio-economic groups.
- 3.7 Sustainable design in new development, including but not limited to: bicycle and pedestrian-friendly streets with convenient access to public transportation; dense development that makes efficient use of infrastructure capacity and services, and reduces the number and distance of fossil-fuel burning automobile trips in the community; universal design features incorporated into new development; provisions for childcare and senior care; specific architectural guidelines for new construction; “green” materials in construction; locally available services and shopping; and sustainable long-term planning principles.
- 3.8 Enhancements to existing communities achieved through development agreements and/or other enforceable mechanisms that ensure timely implementation.
- 3.9 Redevelopment of existing community downtown areas.
- 3.10 Recognition of the role that historic structures and features play in community identity.

Principle 4: Safe and healthy communities allow residents to fulfill their individual potential.

Objectives:

- 4.1 Access to quality healthcare services for everyone.
- 4.2 Opportunities for people to lead productive lives, by planning for neighborhoods that include supportive housing, residential board and care, group homes and hospice.
- 4.3 A range of quality social services for families and individuals.
- 4.4 Protections for vulnerable populations including youth, the elderly and the disabled.
- 4.5 Communities designed to promote an active healthy lifestyle, personal fitness and access to healthy foods.

- 4.6 Economic opportunities that allow for individual and family self sufficiency, with decreased dependence on County programs and services.
- 4.7 Quality educational programs that facilitate life-long learning.
- 4.8 Appropriate infrastructure to ensure that minimum health standards are maintained.

Principle 5: The safest and most efficient way to move goods and people is through a variety of transportation alternatives.

Objectives:

- 5.1 Quality construction and regular maintenance for County roads and bridges.
- 5.2 An expanded network of bicycle paths and multi-use trails that connects communities and cities.
- 5.3 Opportunities for telecommuting, job sharing, alternative work schedules and similar programs to reduce both the number and distance of vehicle trips.
- 5.4 Seamless regional transit that serves cities and communities using a variety of transportation modes.
- 5.5 Expansion of the Port of West Sacramento as a commerce transportation hub, and increased waterway travel.
- 5.6 Use of alternative fuel vehicles and the infrastructure needed to support them.
- 5.7 Visitor services at the County Airport.
- 5.8 Expansion of existing rail access and alignments, and mass transit alternatives.
- 5.9 Transportation programs that support the county's global climate change strategy.
- 5.10 Efficient and safe circulation for agricultural equipment.
- 5.11 Efficient and safe routes to markets for transporting agricultural goods.

Principle 6: Technology, information and communications advance our communities.

Objectives:

- 6.1 Fixed and mobile connectivity throughout Yolo County.
- 6.2 Virtual county government services that improve Americans' with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility, customer convenience and access for populations that speak English as a second language.
- 6.3 Improved community access to information technology.
- 6.4 Technology that supports improved information access, emergency services, multi-agency communications and the exchange of information to and from the field.
- 6.5 Technology infrastructure to support a wide range of business, government and residential needs.
- 6.6 Cost effective and efficient County government through improved technology.

Principle 7: A strong economy is key to the long-term sustainability of our farms, towns, cities and governments.

Objectives:

- 7.1 New businesses locating in targeted areas that are consistent with the General Plan.
- 7.2 Opportunities for new and ongoing sources of tax revenue to the County.
- 7.3 Incentives to start and grow a business through programs that provide regulatory relief, fee structures and permit assistance.
- 7.4 A sound and diversified local economy.
- 7.5 A strong working relationship with the Rumsey Band of Wintun Indians and integration of the Cache Creek Casino Resort into the local economy.
- 7.6 An infrastructure that supports existing and attracts new local businesses.
- 7.7 Protection of farmland.
- 7.8 Successful agricultural businesses, including but not limited to processing facilities, wineries, biotechnological research and development, seed

- companies, eco- and agri-tourism, alternative energy technology and organic farming.
- 7.9 Coordination with UC Davis to accommodate joint business ventures and associated spin-off companies.
 - 7.10 Economic growth within each of the communities.
 - 7.11 Successful highway commercial development at appropriate intersections along Interstates 5 and 505.
 - 7.12 Communities and businesses working together in a positive environment through open communication.

Principle 8: Aggressive efforts are needed to secure an abundant and clean water supply.

Objectives

- 8.1 Ample water supply and storage for all of Yolo County's existing and future needs.
- 8.2 Cost-effective and energy efficient water supply and delivery system for agriculture.
- 8.3 Quality water supply for residential uses.
- 8.4 Strong water conservation programs.
- 8.5 Countywide water authority to address water conservation, flood control, water conveyance and water exports.
- 8.6 Sufficient water for habitat needs.
- 8.7 Coordinated efforts that effectively protect and conserve groundwater.
- 8.8 Programs and uses that replenish local aquifers.
- 8.9 Effective standards for wastewater treatment and stormwater management.
- 8.9 Effective climate change adaptations related to water management, supply, and storage.

Principle 9: Fundamental changes are needed to secure the health, safety, and prosperity of our communities against the potentially adverse effects of climate change.

Objectives:

- 9.1 Significant and measurable reductions in greenhouse gas emissions through adoption of a Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction/Climate Action Plan(s) that inventories emissions, establishes reduction targets, develops strategies for achieving the targets, and allocates resources for implementation.
- 9.2 Integration of greenhouse gas reduction into all aspects of County operations and activities.
- 9.3 Communities, businesses, and natural resources that have prepared for and successfully adapted to the potential opportunities and adverse effects of climate change.
- 9.4 "Green" building design in new and existing construction, through the increased use of energy efficiency, alternative energy, recycled materials, renewable resources, local materials, water efficiency, and pollution reduction.
- 9.5 Reduction of vehicle miles traveled by residents of developing communities through the use of increased density, mixed uses, compact development, pedestrian and bicycle friendly design, transit oriented development, and incentives to develop alternatives to fossil fuel-based transportation.
- 9.6 Expanded capacity and reliance on renewable energy resources such as solar, wind, biomass, and others.