

Yolo County General Plan Vision/Principles/Policy Definition

Summary

Yolo County, through Board of Supervisors hearings, community workshops, staff knowledge of local planning issues, and State general plan requirements, prepared a preliminary vision statement and summary of planning issues to be addressed by the updated General Plan. The County has also solicited, and will continue to solicit, public input to identify additional planning issues and concerns that have surfaced since the last General Plan update in 1983. The first round of General Plan workshops concluded in August 2004 and revealed many issues of concern to County residents.

Public efforts to define planning issues and alternatives also occurred through the Sacramento Area Council of Governments “Regional Blueprint,” a six-county model of anticipated development over the next 50 years. As a part of this effort, Yolo County hosted a workshop in which four alternative scenarios for future countywide growth were presented. The alternatives varied according to growth rates, density of development, and location of development. Two-thirds of the workshop participants preferred alternatives that focused on lower growth rates, accommodated through higher residential densities within or immediately adjacent to existing cities and towns – thereby preserving agricultural and natural resource lands.

Although recent public outreach has revealed a significant number of concerns and planning issues, many of these issues were previously identified and addressed by the 1983 General Plan. However, the public feels that the County must undertake greater efforts as a part of the current General Plan update to fully address current issues of concern, even those identified in 1983. Other issues are new since 1983, or their context has changed since then.

The purpose of this report is to:

- Describe the 1983 General Plan and the differences between today's issues and those confronting the County twenty years ago;
- Review the vision and fundamental principles that guide the present General Plan update;
- Summarize the comments received during the public workshops and combine with themes previously identified by staff to develop a list of current planning issues; and
- Identify policy questions to be addressed during the General Plan update.

1983 General Plan

As noted by County staff during community workshops in the summer of 2004, the vision of the 1983 General Plan (and even the 1958 Master Plan) could still be applicable today and could serve as guiding principles for the current General Plan update. The overarching goals and concepts embodied in the 1958 and 1983 Plans are summarized below:

- Guidance of the development of the area toward the most desirable future possible.
- Best development is thought to be minimum urbanization.
- Preservation of rich Yolo farm resources and the amenities of open space is, in the long run, the highest and best use of this land.
- As a metropolitan area grows, uncontrolled spread of development can have disastrous effects on the outlying areas.
- Community facilities and utilities will not efficiently serve scattered development and remaining land is chopped up so that it cannot be economically farmed and has no public value as open space.
- Yolo County can avoid these difficulties even as it absorbs its share of growth of the Sacramento Metropolitan Area.

Many of the issues facing the community in the past continue to challenge planners and decision makers, but there are differences too. The regulatory environment is more complex. The public's expectations of local government have significantly increased, while funding levels have not kept pace. The need for regional cooperation and partnerships has never been more important. The pressures of population growth strain the environment, the available infrastructure, and social institutions. The context within which planning issues are expressed by the public and the methods for resolving certain planning issues may have changed, but the issues themselves remain relevant nonetheless.

1983 Vision

Implicit in the 1983 General Plan is the guiding principle: "structure and manage our environment to be safe, pleasant, functional, and efficient for the least cost and with the least interference with private rights." The details of this broad statement are clarified with a reading of the goals, issues, and policies within each of the General Plan elements.

1983 Goals

The 1983 General Plan contains goals for each of the elements and overarching goals for the entire General Plan that define the County's desired accomplishments during the Plan's timeframe. A theme throughout the 1983 General Plan is achieving a balance between the urban and rural environments in the County and between economic, social, and environmental goals. In achieving this balance, the County wishes to direct urban development to the cities of the County, already developed areas, and areas without prime agricultural soils.

In many communities, regulation of private land use change is among the most important activity through which most public policy is implemented. The 1983 General Plan is not an exception. Aside from regulatory responsibilities, the 1983 General Plan also identifies a range of public service and infrastructure priorities for the County, as well as goals for expediency and efficiency in governance.

The cultural and aesthetics aspects of rural life – quiet, rural landscapes – are also emphasized by the 1983 General Plan, with the intent of preserving these aspects of the environment as new development occurs. For example, one General Plan goal is to “improve the beauty, peace, and quiet of the County.”

Among the overarching goals contained in the 1983 General Plan are:

- Encourage energy, open space, and materials conservation
- Reduce air, water, and other types of pollution
- Discourage urban sprawl
- Discourage segregation in neighborhoods
- Preservation of historic, cultural, and natural resources
- Control erosion and encourage soil management
- Avoid, mitigate, or eliminate hazards and nuisances
- Control and avoid the effects of flooding
- Ensure that the cost of development is borne by beneficiaries of such development
- Ensure provision of decent and affordable housing
- Provide services for elderly and handicapped
- Health services
- Management of water resources
- Public facilities and utilities emphasized include:
 - Roads and alternative transportation modes
 - Urban open spaces, green belts, and scenic highways
 - Landscaping
 - Flood control
- Provide cost efficient and speedy government services

1983 Issues

The 1983 General Plan contains a section following the introduction that summarizes planning issues facing the County at the time the Plan was prepared. The General Plan identifies “basic” issues – those that cut across many of the General Plan elements – which include community appearance, peace and quiet, high quality and efficient public services, safe and convenient transportation networks, safety, adequate and affordable housing, preservation of natural resources, viability of agriculture and protection of agricultural land, property rights and values, and other general aspects of the quality of life.

- Among the land use issues called out in the 1983 General Plan are the protection of agriculture, flooding (which is also a safety issue), growth of cities into the unincorporated area, and attending to the differences among unincorporated communities.
- Circulation issues include integration of transportation and circulation policies with planning decisions regarding land use patterns, mitigation of transportation noise, and protection of scenic opportunities along roadways.
- Airport-related issues focus on the capacity of, compared to the demand for, airport facilities and services, as well as compatibility issues between airports and encroaching urban development.
- Conservation issues include those related to oak woodlands, soils, rivers, lakes, harbors, fisheries, wildlife, and minerals. Open space issues address the multitude of functions served by open spaces, including scientific study, resource production, recreation, hazard management, water quality and supply, and enhancement of air quality. The County also considers the conservation of energy by both private and public users.
- Noise issues include the ability to provide useful planning intelligence to establish and enforce noise controls. Safety issues address risks related to fire, flood, and geologic conditions.
- The County’s role in providing decent, safe, affordable, and energy efficient homes for all of its citizens while also protecting prime agricultural lands is an important existing General Plan issue.
- The need for landfill expansion was an important issue in 1983.
- Providing recreational opportunity to meet a growing demand is an important issue of the existing General Plan, though the County had not, historically, been a primary provider of recreational and park facilities and services.

- Finally, the General Plan specifically addresses the Delta in the issues section, with the goal of ensuring “the achievement of reasonable multiple uses of water quality maintenance, agriculture, recreation, wildlife, water, and habitat conservation, and urban/suburban uses” in this portion of the County.

County Progress on 1983 Issues

The County has successfully implemented many of the policies contained in the 1983 the General Plan, and has carried through on many of the implementation measures specified in the Plan. On urban containment and agricultural preservation, the two primary goals of the existing General Plan, the County has enjoyed success. Yolo County has had the lowest absolute loss of prime farmland compared to other California counties (refer to the Open Space Element, page 2-13) and is second to Kings County in lowest percentage loss of prime farmland in periods measured by the Department of Conservation since 1983. Yolo Land Trust has preserved more than 3,500 acres of important open space since inception in 1988 (refer to page 2-14 of the Open Space Element). Almost half of the County’s total land area is Prime Farmland, despite development pressures in a fast growing region, as a result of the County’s and cities’ efforts to protect farmland by directing urban development to the cities. Pass-through agreements have helped the County to address certain fiscal problems that may otherwise arise from directing growth away from unincorporated areas.

On the other hand, there are areas that have not yet been accomplished. The 1983 General Plan called for the creation of architectural and design review standards to provide specific guidelines for planning and construction. All County roads have not been constructed to established standards. Public trail systems have not been established along the tops of Reclamation District levees. A tree preservation ordinance has not been adopted. The A-1 (General Agricultural) Zone has not been utilized as an urban reserve zone around existing towns and cities. A noise ordinance has not been adopted. Efforts are currently underway to address several of these prior directives. Other existing policies may require review to see if they are still appropriate and/or desirable to retain in the General Plan Update.

2004 General Plan Update Vision and Principles

The vision that has guided planning decisions in Yolo County for nearly 50 years is best described by the following summary of the 1958 Yolo County Master Plan, the 1983 General Plan, and subsequent planning efforts:

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

The vision of Yolo County is to provide an active and productive buffer of farmland and open space separating the Bay Area from Sacramento. Both traditional and innovative agricultural practices will continue to flourish in the countryside, while accommodating the recreational and tourism needs of residents and visitors. Our communities will be kept separated and individual through the use of green spaces, while remaining connected by a network of riparian hiking trails, bike paths, and mass transit.

While more families will call our cities and towns home, they will live in compact neighborhoods that are friendly to pedestrians and bicyclists, and are located within easy commute to stores and work. New growth will be complemented by in-fill and increased density development within older developed areas, bringing improved infrastructure (e.g., roads, sewer, water, drainage) to rural small communities where service does not presently exist.

To further this vision for Yolo County, the Board of Supervisors has adopted the following guiding principles:

1. The planning process will strongly rely on public involvement, cooperative efforts with interested parties and organizations, and openness in communications.
2. All those participating in the planning process will be treated with respect, dignity, courtesy, and responsiveness and the same will be expected from them.
3. Open space, including both agriculture and wildlife habitat, is fundamental to the economy and quality of life in Yolo County and shall be protected.
4. Environmental impacts will be reduced to the greatest extent feasible.
5. A diversity of housing densities and land uses will be included to meet the needs of our diverse population.
6. New development will benefit the community in which it is located.
7. Specific opportunities for economic development and tourism will be provided, to ensure that communities have access to jobs and investment.
8. Zoning will be designated to accommodate projected growth located within and around existing cities and towns to reduce sprawl.
9. Projects will be located and designed to enhance public safety and to reduce potential losses of property and life.

10. Projects will be designed to ensure that services can be provided in a cost-effective and efficient manner for all segments of the public.
11. Vital public infrastructure, including but not limited to airports, sewer and water systems, and landfills will be protected from encroachment by incompatible uses.
12. Non-vehicular transportation will be provided through bicycle lanes, bus stops, rail stations, pedestrian-oriented development, and other alternative measures.
13. The maintenance and improvement of roads and bridges will be prioritized to ensure the most economical use of scarce funding.

2004 General Plan Update Issues

Issues Raised at 2004 Public Workshops

In July and August of 2004, the County conducted the first round of public workshops so that the citizens of Yolo County could help staff and consultants identify the key issues for the General Plan update. The advertised workshop topics included transportation, land use, urban growth, and natural resource protection, but public comments addressed additional issues, as well. We have summarized public workshop comments under several categories, which have some overlap: agriculture, land use, housing, economy, transportation and circulation, public infrastructure and services, and natural and cultural resources. Comments that proposed specific solutions to a planning issue will be used in the policy development portion of the update, and are not presented below.

Comments that addressed a particular piece of property or particular locale will be used in integrating the community plans into the General Plan and for the policy development portion of the update, and are not presented below.

Agriculture

Agricultural issues were on the forefront of citizens' minds during public workshops, as would be expected for a County with such a strong and vibrant agricultural economy and history. There was general consensus about the need for the County to be an active player in ensuring the viability of agriculture in Yolo County in the future, but there was some divergence regarding which tools should be used to achieve this end. Some of the issues include:

- Maintain the economic viability of continuing agricultural operations.
- Address land costs and development pressure to sell agricultural land.

- Prevent the encroachment of regional infrastructure serving urban areas into agricultural areas.
- Consider different classifications of prime farmland, taking into account that “poor” soils may be suitable for certain crop types.
- Use a range of tools to protect farmland.
- Reduce minimum parcel sizes for farmland.
- Allow home sites so that they can be compatible in agricultural areas.
- Develop an agricultural education program.
- Respond to intergenerational farming issues by allowing separate home sites and more flexibility in land and contract divisions.
- Create more opportunities for agricultural tourism.
- Ensure that eco-tourism or agriculture tourism doesn’t conflict with adjoining farm operations.
- Provide more economic incentives for farming.
- Recruit agricultural-related industries to ensure the viability of local farmers.
- Promote value-added agricultural practices.
- Protect agricultural infrastructure, such as roads, spray buffers, and irrigation ditches.

Land Use

The second category of focus for the first round of public workshops is land use. This rather broad category deals with the location, density, and type of future development. There was general consensus that growth should be limited to existing cities and towns, through higher residential densities and mixed-use development, but there was disagreement regarding whether to allow further rural residential uses. Issues included:

- Promote community separators, such as green buffers and urban limit lines.
- Ensure that urban development protects existing natural resources and contributes to the benefit of society.
- Incorporate smart growth principles for new development.

- Provide for the continued compatibility of the Yolo Airport and surrounding land uses.
- Coordinate with adjoining counties to mitigate the impacts of development in their jurisdictions on Yolo County.
- Require development to contribute to the benefit of the communities in which they are located.
- Make efficient use of land by requiring smaller lot sizes.
- Allow lot splits of 80- to 100-acre pieces of property.
- Limit urban growth to the cities.
- Create a new city, as long as it isn't located on prime farmland.
- Encourage commercial development and industry to provide good-paying jobs.
- Take a more active role in solving flooding issues.
- Encourage towns to diversify the range of commerce and services.
- Remove antiquated subdivisions.
- Adopt design standards to ensure the development complements the existing towns.
- Protect private property rights.
- Recognize the unique land use issues occurring in the Delta area.
- Allow for the creation of small parcel sizes at major intersections to accommodate commercial development.
- Enforce ordinances requiring landowners to maintain their property.
- Commit to sustainable, renewable energy
- Achieve urban growth through in-fill, rather than sprawl.
- Provide gateways and visual element at the entrances to unincorporated communities.

Housing

Housing policy is the subject of the recently updated Yolo County Housing Element, which will be integrated into the General Plan update and is designed to ensure the provision of adequate housing for all residents. There was general agreement for expanding the pool of quality affordable housing. Other priority housing issues expressed during the first round of public workshops include the following:

- Increase the variety of housing types.
- Build more farm worker housing.
- Support housing, education, and childcare for migrant workers.
- Avoid the undue concentration/distribution of affordable housing projects.
- Create affordable housing in the unincorporated area, not just in the cities.

Economy

The public identified several economic issues, in addition to those related to maintain the economic viability of agriculture as an economic development tool (see the previous section on agricultural issues). Certain types of commercial development, such as small business and tourist-oriented operations, are preferred to other types of commercial development, such as big box retail. Other participants expressed the desire for the cities in the County to diversify their commercial base to avoid having to travel to Sacramento and other areas for retail and services. Another important consideration as the Land Use and Economic Development elements are prepared is the appropriate jobs-housing balance, both countywide and in individual communities. Economic issues are summarized as follows:

- Encourage small businesses over big box stores.
- Promote businesses and services in the rural areas.
- Create an economic development fee similar to school and recreation development fees.
- Plan so that economic and community development occur concurrently with housing development.
- Reduce the loss of economic benefit to the County due to its policy of directing urban growth to the cities.
- Expand efforts to increase tourism.

- Locate housing near jobs and employment centers.
- Port of Sacramento's future
- Provide better paying jobs.
- Develop natural resource and ecotourism education programs.
- Revitalize existing unincorporated communities, especially downtown areas.

Transportation and Circulation

Many members of the public recognize the close link between land use and circulation policies, and that most of the transportation/circulation system is currently comprised of County roads, State highways, and interstate highways. A large portion of the public is interested in promoting alternative forms of transportation. Others are concerned about the effects that major generators of automobile traffic are already having in the unincorporated area. Among transportation and circulation issues raised during the 2004 public workshops were:

- Improve and maintain existing County roads.
- Increase opportunities for public transportation in the outlying areas, serving both employment centers and residential areas, and designed to serve the elderly, disabled, and other special needs populations.
- Preserve scenic highways.
- Plant more trees on the streets to provide shade for pedestrians.
- Reduce roadway flooding.
- Increase alternative transportation such as hiking and biking trails.
- Place landscaping and amenities at the entrance to towns and communities.
- Install landscaped median strips with native vegetation.
- Address circulation in the rural communities
- Construct bicycle paths and hiking trails throughout County.
- Improve road safety.
- Fix existing County roads and increase road capacity to accommodate growth.

- Develop a rails-to-trails program.
- Create long-term trail plans that connect towns with parks, by following sloughs and rivers.
- Protect transportation corridors for agricultural farm equipment.

Public Infrastructure and Services

The public expressed concerns about the County's ability to provide adequate infrastructure and services for a growing population. The provision of sewer and water was of particular concern. Other issues raised include the ongoing effects of development on flood control and drainage, the quality of local schools, and emergency services in rural areas of the County. Among the specific infrastructure and service related issues mentioned most by public were:

- Develop public schools and parks concurrently with residential growth.
- Control flooding and storm water drainage that affects much of the unincorporated area.
- Improve emergency response services in rural areas.
- Maintain flood control levees.
- Remove silt from the Yolo Bypass to maintain capacity.
- Provide support services for our aging population.
- Improve the communication infrastructure in rural areas.
- Support the County library system.
- Expand law enforcement and fire protection services to accommodate new growth.
- Clean out and increase the capacity of sloughs to control flooding.
- Plan to construct infrastructure concurrent with new development.
- Analyze and address the impact of upstream development on flooding in downstream communities.
- Integrate the Parks Master Park Plan into the General Plan.

Natural and Cultural Resources

With the updates of the Open Space, Recreation, and Agricultural Elements, and with forthcoming work on the Yolo County Natural Communities Conservation Plan/Habitat Conservation Plan, important policy work has occurred or is occurring under the topic of natural resource preservation. Water resource issues, both supply and quality, are an important concern to the public. Biological resources, including species and habitat, continue to be important issues. The protection of natural and cultural resources is viewed as a means to attract visitors and improve economic opportunities in the County. The following is a summarized list of natural and cultural resources issues from the first round of public workshops:

- Preserve native oaks and heritage trees.
- Evaluate the importance to the region of agricultural easements, environmental easements, and flood easements located in Yolo County.
- Promote higher density development to accommodate future growth while preserving open spaces.
- Create a strategy for providing fisheries and a comprehensive flood control strategy, particularly regarding Cache Creek and the Yolo Bypass.
- Designate Wild and Scenic Rivers.
- Ensure an adequate water supply for the future.
- Protect wildlife habitat and species.
- Protect and restore riparian areas.
- Designate areas for permanent open space.
- Recognize the environmental and habitat value of farmland.
- Strengthen open space policies and implementation measures.
- Provide for both artificial and natural groundwater recharge.
- Include measures to address maintenance and historic preservation in the Scenic Highway Element.
- Address reliable energy alternatives, such as wind and distributed generation.
- Prevent water overdraft.
- Protect water quality.

- Protect air quality.
- Preserve historic landmarks and structures.

Issues Identified by County Staff at the Start of the 2004 General Plan Update

Potential General Plan issues were also identified by Yolo County staff in a report previously accepted by the Board of Supervisors. These issues appear in the “Project Description” link on the Yolo County General Plan web site. Additional issues have also been identified from state general plan requirements, as described in the California Office of Planning and Research’s General Plan Guidelines. These issues are listed below.

Circulation Element

1. Incorporate the Bicycle Master Plan into the General Plan update.
2. Increase access to YoloBus service.
3. Develop multi-modal transit terminals.
4. Investigate the potential for commuter rail.
5. Designate truck routes.
6. Protect the continued operation of local airports (Yolo County, Watts-Woodland, UC Davis, and Sacramento International).
7. Identify navigable waterways and consider adjoining recreational uses.
8. Coordinate industrial uses with freight rail access and support facilities.
9. Review parking standards.
10. Consider criteria for the location of power plants and transmission facilities.
11. Plan to support alternative transportation, such as Para-transit.
12. Incorporate traffic-calming measures where appropriate.

Conservation Element

1. Review the Williamson Act and Farmland Security Zone to see if alternative approaches to regulate land use may be required.

2. Preserve agricultural soils and adopt policies that support the local agricultural economy.
3. Incorporate the Natural Communities Conservation Plan into the General Plan.
4. Discourage urban development near Mineral Resource Zones.
5. Review standards for allowing the extraction of gas and oil resources.
6. Control invasive, non-native species.
7. Identify vernal pools and wetlands.
8. Protect and improve water quality.
9. Adopt erosion control measures.
10. Enhance fisheries.
11. Consider Wild and Scenic River proposals.
12. Encourage and protect groundwater recharge areas.
13. Promote the use of native and drought-tolerant landscaping.

Land Use Element

1. Adopt rural design guidelines.
2. Encourage increased population and building density.
3. Plan for expansion of the landfill and the establishment of buffers.
4. Establish urban reserves for existing unincorporated communities.
5. Consider annual growth limits.
6. Update the Urban Area Plans (Davis, West Sacramento, Winters, Woodland).
7. Define the range of rural recreation uses to be allowed.
8. Evaluate whether rural residential development should be used as a transition zone around existing communities.
9. Adopt a ordinance to allow the Transfer of Development Rights.
10. Plan for the possibility of future casino expansion.

11. Encourage development of an agricultural business park.
12. Expand industrial zoning opportunities.
13. Incorporate the Parks Master Plan into the General Plan.
14. Account for the UC Davis Long Range Development Plan in the General Plan.
15. Inventory surplus County land.
16. Develop community storm water detention plans.
17. Establish and upgrade sewer and water service within unincorporated towns.
18. Consider known pending and foreseeable General Plan Amendments applications.
19. Ensure consistency with State-adopted Historic Preservation policies.
20. Protect airports from residential growth pressures.

Noise Element

1. Avoid urban development within identified noise contours generated by local airports (Yolo County, Watts-Woodland, UC Davis, Borges-Clarksburg, and Sacramento International).
2. Estimate the noise contours for highways, freeways, and major arterials.
3. Evaluate the noise contours for railroad lines.
4. Separate industry and surface mining from noise sensitive land uses.
5. Identify the location of sensitive noise receptors (e.g., hospitals, schools, convalescent homes, habitat).
6. Provide guidelines for noise evaluation.
7. Develop a list of preferred noise reduction measures.

Safety Element

1. Identify emergency evacuation routes.
2. Describe the extent of areas of potential dam inundation.
3. Require appropriate building standards in Seismic Hazard Zones.

4. Map areas prone to landslides.
5. Evaluate areas of subsidence.
6. Adopt standards for development to address wild land fire hazards within the State Responsibility Area.
7. Incorporate fire prevention development standards.
8. Develop crime safe community design guidelines.
9. Inventory known hazardous waste sites.

2004 Issues Not Addressed in the 1983 General Plan

Though the General Plan will be comprehensively updated, staff and citizens have identified that the guiding principles of the 1983 Plan and subsequent element updates, and even the 1958 Master Plan, continue to address current planning issues. However, certain issues were raised, either through the public outreach effort or through staff or decision maker comments accompanying the ongoing General Plan update, that were not addressed by the 1983 General Plan (or were not addressed by the existing General Plan in an appropriate context for today):

- Public transit for outlying areas.
- New city development.
- Economic incentives to support the continuation of agriculture.
- Development pressure on agriculture for residential subdivision.
- Locate employment centers and housing in close proximity and/or mixed-use development, i.e., local jobs and housing balance.

Policy Questions for General Plan Update

Recent efforts planning efforts and public outreach, including Board workshops; public workshops; the SACOG Blueprint Project; and the updated Housing, Open Space, Recreation, and Agricultural elements address many of the planning issues articulated by the public since 1983, when the General Plan was last updated. Where the existing General Plan may need to be re-examined in light of today's trends and the context of local concerns, we have identified some of the key policy issues to be considered in the development of general plan policies and in the selection of alternatives. These issues are framed as questions for consideration in the coming phases of general plan development.

Many of the issues identified by public workshop participants in 2004 are the same, or very similar, to the key issues listed in the 1983 General Plan. Agricultural preservation and urban containment, the two principal goals of the existing plan, were primary points of emphasis during the workshops. However there are some subtle differences in the way issues were expressed, as well as new issues to reconcile during the current update.

The following describes the extent to which the existing General Plan, including the recently updated Housing Element, Open Space Element, Recreation Element, and Agricultural Element addresses current planning issues. Where the existing General Plan needs to be re-examined in light of today's trends and context of local concerns, we have identified some of the key policy issues, framed as questions.

Agriculture

Policies of the Agricultural Element of the General Plan describe the land uses that are, and are not permitted in agricultural areas of the County, and outlines standards for determining compatibility of certain agriculture related or agriculture supportive land uses in agricultural areas of the County. The Element describes development standards for non-agricultural land uses built within and adjacent to agricultural areas, including public infrastructure. Policies in the Element indicate the County's commitment to promoting biotechnology, agricultural industry, sustainable agriculture, agri-tourism, value-added agricultural practices, agricultural education programs, small and organic farming, and other agriculture related practices, as well as discussing the relative priority of agriculture in issues of water supply. Finally, the Element describes the tools that will be used by the County to regulate land use in designated agricultural areas.

- Should permanent urban limit lines be adopted for cities and towns?
- Should the County provide additional economic incentives to ensure the viability of continuing agricultural operations and allow farmers to hold off development pressure?
- Should the County designate an area to develop an agricultural business and industry park?
- Should the County strengthen current agricultural mitigation requirements?
- Should the County develop an alternative to the Williamson Act?
- Should the zoning ordinance be amended to allow for more rural residential development?

Land Use

The Land Use Element addresses many of the most important current issues in the County. However, there is a need to coordinate new policies in the Recreation, Agriculture, Housing, and Open Space elements with the updated

Land Use Element. To promote urban-rural separation, ongoing agricultural operations, community buffers, and other ends, the County has established urban boundaries which represent the extent of proposed development for the towns of Capay, Clarksburg, Dunnigan, Esparto, Guinda, Knight's Landing, Madison, Rumsey, Yolo, and Zamora. All cities have an urban limit line also (Agricultural Element, page 1-4). Important outstanding land use policy issues include:

- Should new population growth be accommodated through increased residential density and mixed-use development?
- Should regulations be adopted to eliminate antiquated subdivisions outside of the existing towns and limit rural residential development?
- Should a new city be considered to provide for significant urban development opportunities where none currently exist?
- Should the County promote development of visual gateways or aesthetic themes for points of entrance in the unincorporated communities?

Housing

Since the Housing Element was updated in 2003, most current issues are considered. However, with the increasing cost of homes, the issue of inclusionary affordable housing may need to be revisited to ensure a sufficient pool of entry-level residences. In addition, it will be important to analyze any changes to the County's land use diagram relative to the impacts on the availability of residential land.

The Housing Element identifies several tasks for the County, including identification of any deficiencies in land zoned for specific types of housing, that will be relevant for consideration in updating the Land Use Element and zoning code. Changes in planning and zoning law, including regulation of manufactured housing, mobile homes, group homes, secondary units, density bonus, and farm worker housing, will also affect the subsequent zoning code update. Important questions for the public and decision makers regarding housing include:

- Should additional measures be taken to increase the amount of affordable housing?
- Should requirements be expanded to ensure that affordable housing is not concentrated within any one community or neighborhood?
- Should design guidelines be adopted to provide minimum thresholds for development? E.g architecture, safety, accessibility, energy compliance

Economy

The 1983 General Plan does not include an economy element or economic development element, as in many California communities. However, many policies of the existing General Plan, especially Administration policies 17 through 26 and Land Use Element policies 29 through 49, address current economic development concerns. Important economic questions remain, such as:

- Should efforts to promote tourism and recreation development be enhanced?
- Should additional opportunities be provided to allow for the direct sales of value-added agricultural products?
- Should more be done to redevelop the downtown areas in existing communities?
- Should a portion of tax revenue be invested back into the communities where it is generated?

Public Infrastructure and Services

The public has identified several needs for infrastructure improvements and enhancements to public services as a part of General Plan public outreach:

- Should the County become more actively involved in resolving regional flooding problems with other partners?
- Should a regional hiking and bicycling trail be established throughout the County?
- Should sewer and water systems be developed in communities where they are either inadequate or non-existent?
- Should the number and amounts of fees be increased to ensure that new development pays the cost of providing new services and improvements?
- Should the County increase its coordination with other agencies to provide more services to rural residents?
- Should the land use policies be enhanced to ensure the continued operation of the County Airport and Landfill?

Transportation and Circulation

The existing General Plan is promotional of alternative forms of transportation, but current concerns address prioritization of transportation spending and other

ways of actually implementing transportation policy in the County. Some of the most important current issues are:

- Should multi-modal transportation centers be developed near mixed urban uses?
- Should transportation alternatives be expanded?
- Should the County increase its maintenance and improvement of County roads?
- Should important agricultural equipment traffic corridors be identified and protected?

Natural and Cultural Resources

The recently updated Open Space Element addresses many current issues dealing with natural resource preservation and protection. The Open Space Element, for example, contains policies requiring that any growth be directed away from important open space in Yolo County, including riparian areas, agricultural lands, hazardous areas, archaeologically important areas, and others. The Historic Preservation Element of the General Plan deals with cultural and historic resource identification and preservation. Ongoing work on the County Habitat/Natural Communities Conservation Plan, being prepared through a Joint Power Agreement that includes the County as signatory, is also addressing several issues related to natural resource preservation. Some important issues for consideration include:

- Should standards and guidelines be developed for historic tree preservation?
- Should programs be adopted to reduce subsidence through groundwater recharge, conservation, and increased use of surface water supplies?
- Should conservation easements be structured so that they do not effect existing and/or planned land uses?
- Should programs be developed by the County to acquire and maintain agricultural and habitat conservation easements?

Energy Resources and Conservation

The General Plan currently includes an Energy Element, which was adopted in 1982. The goals and policies focus on conservation and alternative energy sources, but does not account for the significant technological innovation that has occurred over the past twenty years. Similarly, there have been additional changes in how energy is regulated in California, an increasing use of natural gas and other diverse energy generation sources, as well as a growing dependence upon computer and telecommunications systems that depend upon reliable energy. Some issue for consideration include:

- Should the Energy Element be consolidated into the Conservation Element?
- Should measures to promote more energy conservation and encourage alternative energy generation technology be adopted?
- Should annexation be pursued of all or a part of the County into the Sacramento Municipal Utility District?