



2018 Tuolumne County General Plan

Volume I: General Plan Policy Document



December 2018

**Prepared by the
Tuolumne County Community Resources Agency**



This page intentionally left blank.



Tuolumne County General Plan
Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Introduction

Section A: The Tuolumne County Built Environment

Chapter 1	Community Development and Design
Chapter 2	Housing Element
Chapter 3	Utilities Element
Chapter 4	Transportation Element
Chapter 5	Noise Element

Section B: The Tuolumne County Economy

Chapter 6	Economic Development Element
Chapter 7	Managed Resources Element
Chapter 8	Agricultural Element

Section C: The Tuolumne County Community

Chapter 9	Public Safety Element
Chapter 10	Healthy Communities Element
Chapter 11	Parks and Recreation Element
Chapter 12	Education and Libraries Element
Chapter 13	Cultural Resources Element

Section D: The Tuolumne County Natural Environment

Chapter 14	Water Supply Element
Chapter 15	Air Quality Element
Chapter 16	Natural Resources Element
Chapter 17	Natural Hazards Element
Chapter 18	Climate Change Element



This page intentionally left blank.



Acknowledgements

Board of Supervisors

District 1, Sherri Brennan*
District 3, Evan Royce
District 5, Karl Rodefer*

District 2, Randy Hanvelt
District 4, John Gray
*General Plan Ad Hoc Committee Member

Board of Supervisors Planning Committee-Public Members

Jerry Baker	Mark Banks	Charlotte Frazier
Jim Garaventa	Ron Kopf	James Nagle
Ron Ringen	Bob Steele	

County Staff

Craig Pedro, County Administrative Officer
Tracie Riggs, Assistant County Administrative Officer
David Gonzalves, CBO, Community Resources Agency, Director
Quincy Yaley, AICP, Community Resources Agency, Assistant Director-Development
Sarah Carrillo, County Counsel
Carlyn Drivdahl, Deputy County Council

Gratitude towards Others

Bill King, Consultant
Madeline Amlin, Community Resources Agency, Geographic Information Services
Diana Beasley, Community Resources Agency, Geographic Information Services
Kim MacFarlane, Community Resources Agency, Public Works
Duke York, Community Resources Agency, Public Works
Darin Grossi, Tuolumne County Transportation Council
Steve Gregory, Tuolumne County Fire Department
Gary Stockel, Agricultural Commissioner/Air Pollution Control Officer
Bill Sandman, Deputy Air Pollution Control Officer
Jason Terry, County Administrative Office
Karen Willenberg, Community Resources Agency
Taryn Vanderpan, Community Resources Agency
Michelle Carney, Community Resources Agency
Larry Cope, Tuolumne County Economic Development Agency

Consultants

Ascent Environmental, Inc
Tanya Sundburg, Placeworks, Inc
Wood Rogers, Inc.
Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc.
Rincon Consultants, Inc
Remy, Moose, and Manley, LLP

A special acknowledgement is given to the previous CRA Leadership Team and the staff members in all departments who provided input and expertise to the Tuolumne County General Plan.



This page intentionally left blank.



Tuolumne County General Plan

INTRODUCTION

A place where all people enjoy opportunities to thrive in a safe, healthy, and productive community.
- The Tuolumne County Vision

Since 1937, the State of California has mandated that local jurisdictions "make big plans" to guide growth and physical development within their respective boundaries through the adoption of General Plans. Government Code Section 65300 et seq. requires each local jurisdiction to adopt a General Plan that is comprehensive, internally consistent and long-term. Although the General Plan is required by State law to address specific issues, the local jurisdiction has the authority to organize the plan in any way that suits its needs. The General Plan should be clearly written, available to all those concerned with the community's development and easy to administer. The planning horizon for a General Plan is typically 20 or more years. This General Plan Update is proposed to guide the growth and development of Tuolumne County until the year 2040.

Tuolumne County General Plan Update has three overarching vision statements. They are:

OAV1. Promote development in Tuolumne County that reflects the values and vision of the community and implements the latest legal, statutory, scientific, and technical changes and advances.

OAV2. Achieve, enable and preserve maximum flexibility within the constraints of state and federal law and an ever-evolving legal, cultural and environmental landscape.

OAV3. Recognize that the County has a unique role to collaborate with special districts/stakeholders within the County to promote the delivery of efficient and cost effective public services.

These vision statements are repeated throughout the General Plan Update to emphasize each element's links for the County's vision of the future for residents and visitors.



As a guide to this general plan, the Introduction has three components informing the reader on how to use the General Plan:

- Structure - An overview of the organizing principles behind the General Plan.
- Plan Foundations- A description of the efforts that resulted in the Tuolumne County General Plan.
- Legal Basis - A summary of how the General Plan relates to State law.

Tuolumne County General Plan Structure

The Tuolumne County General Plan consists of three components - the Countywide General Plan, Community Plans which relate to specific areas of the unincorporated area of the County, and a Technical Background Report with data and information to support the General Plan and Community Plans.

The Countywide General Plan provides an overall framework for development of the County and protection of its natural and cultural resources, rural character, and the rights of its residents and property owners. The goals and policies contained in the General Plan apply throughout the County, except within the boundaries of the incorporated City of Sonora, and are supplemented by the policies contained in the Community Plans.

The Community Plans provide a more detailed focus on specific geographical areas within the unincorporated County. The goals and policies contained in the community plans supplement and elaborate upon the goals and policies of the Countywide General Plan.

The land use designations for parcels within the respective Community Plans are the same as those in the Countywide General Plan; therefore, the density and intensity standards for each land use designation are the same regardless of whether a parcel lies within or outside the jurisdictional boundaries of a Community Plan. Parcels covered by a Community Plan are subject to the development standards contained in that plan, such as architectural design guidelines or residential development amenities as well as those in the Countywide plan. Parcels lying outside of Community Plan boundaries are subject only to the specifications of the Countywide policies and development standards.

This document includes statements of goals, policies, implementation programs, land use diagrams and circulation diagrams all of which constitute Tuolumne County's policies for land use, development and environmental quality. These statements are defined as follows:

- Goal - The ultimate purpose of an effort stated in a way that is general in nature and immeasurable.
- Policy - A specific statement in text or diagram guiding action and implying clear commitment.
- Implementation Program - An action, procedure, program, or technique that carries out General Plan policy.

Government Code Section 65302 states that, "The general plan shall consist of a statement of development policies and shall include a diagram or diagrams and text setting forth objectives, principles, standards, and plan proposals." These policies shall cover a variety of issues in seven (7) mandated elements. The Government Code authorizes the local jurisdictions to include an unlimited number of optional elements in their General Plans in addition to the mandatory elements described below.



Mandatory Elements

Community Development and Design Element - This element functions as the land use element and is the core of the General Plan because it essentially establishes what land uses can be conducted in which locations. The land use element must, at a minimum, include land use maps or diagrams as well as population density and building intensity standards.

This General Plan Update identifies new areas for growth and limits growth in areas that are either "saturated" with development or have limited growth potential due to environmental constraints and/or the lack of adequate public services and facilities.

Transportation Element - State law has required the inclusion of a circulation element since 1955. This element is not simply a transportation plan but is actually intended to be an infrastructure plan that addresses the circulation of people, goods, energy, water, sewage, storm drainage and communications. All of these issues are addressed in the Transportation Element or the Utilities Element, Public Safety Element, Natural Resources Element or Water Supply Element. The Transportation Element included in this General Plan reflects the goals, policies and programs of the Community Development and Design Element and the land use diagrams. This integration of the land use and circulation elements has been accomplished by identifying impacts from the growth and development proposed in the Land Use Element on the County's circulation system and formulating measures to mitigate that growth. Conversely, the growth projected in the Community Development and Design Element has been directed to areas that currently can, or have the potential to, accommodate increased demands on the circulation system.

Housing Element - Required since 1969, the Housing Element is the only element that is required by State law to be updated on a scheduled basis. Local jurisdictions have the authority to update all of the other elements at their discretion. The focus of the Housing Element is the provision of low and moderate income housing, group housing and shelters. However, the provision of housing for all income levels is also addressed in this General Plan's Housing Element. Under the State's mandate, Tuolumne County's Housing Element is required to be updated in 2018.

Natural Resources Element - Government Code Section 65302 requires a General Plan to have a conservation element and an open space element but also authorizes these elements to be combined. Due to the similar themes of these elements, they have been combined in this General Plan as the Natural Resources Element to minimize redundancy.

The Government Code requires the Conservation Element to address the conservation, development and utilization of natural resources. Pursuant to the Government Code, the purpose of the Natural Resources Element is to identify land that should remain unimproved for the purpose of preservation of natural resources.

Natural resources considered in this Element include forests, soils, fisheries, wildlife, plants, energy, minerals and viewsheds. Water resources are considered in the Water Supply Element in Chapter 14 of this General Plan.

Noise Element - The purpose of the Noise Element is to identify and appraise noise problems in the community. This element follows the guidelines adopted by the Office of Noise Control in the State Department of Health



Services and addresses, to the extent practical, current and projected noise levels for transportation and stationary noise sources which contribute to the County's noise environment.

California Government Code Section 65302 also requires that noise contours be identified for all of these sources and stated in terms of community noise equivalent level (CNEL) or day-night average sound level (Ldn). The noise contours must be prepared on the basis of noise monitoring or following generally accepted noise modeling techniques for various noise sources.

This Noise Element was developed using noise modeling instead of extensive noise monitoring. Based upon this modeling, standards for noise levels for land use compatibility have been formulated.

Natural Hazards Element - Section 65302(g) of the California Government Code requires that the General Plan include a safety element for the protection of the community from any unreasonable risks associated with the effects of seismically induced surface rupture, ground shaking, ground failure, tsunami, seiche, and dam failure; slope instability leading to mudslides and landslides; subsidence and other geologic hazards known to the legislative body; flooding, and wildland and urban hazards. The safety element is required to include mapping of known seismic and other geologic hazards. The Natural Hazards Element addresses the information required by Section 65302(g).

Optional Elements

In addition to the seven mandatory elements discussed above, the comprehensive update of Tuolumne County's General Plan includes the following optional elements:

Cultural Resources Element - In December 1992, in response to a recommendation in the Blue Ribbon Growth Management Report, the Board of Supervisors authorized the Historic Preservation Review Commission to prepare a Cultural Resource Element for the General Plan. This element includes a priority system for cultural resources based on significance criteria and policies for management of resources. This Element also identifies means of streamlining the review process when cultural resources are affected.

Economic Development Element - In 1990, the City of Sonoma and County of Tuolumne jointly adopted an Economic Development Policy. One of the measures included in that policy to implement the goals of the City and County was to develop and adopt an Economic Development Element for the General Plan. The purpose of the Economic Development Element is to outline a policy framework and implementation measures whereby economic development benefits local citizens, businesses, public, private and non-profit sectors and our quality of life while taking place in a region with important natural and cultural resources.

Agriculture Element - After the adoption of the County's Right-to-Farm Ordinance in 1992, the Tuolumne County Agricultural Advisory Committee began work on the Agriculture Element. This Element addresses the important agricultural industries in the County and identifies measures to protect agricultural lands from the encroachment of development and incentives to retain these lands in agricultural production.

Parks and Recreation Element - The Parks and Recreation Element contains an assessment of the recreational needs of residents and tourists of Tuolumne County. Goals and policies have been formulated to provide the needed recreational facilities identified through that assessment. Another important aspect of this Element is the



identification of sources of funding for acquisition, development and maintenance of new parks and recreational facilities.

Air Quality Element - The Air Quality Element was drafted in consultation with the Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control District and focuses on development standards to minimize pollution of the County's air. The key provisions of the Air Quality Element include reducing vehicular emissions and greenhouse gases through land use planning and transportation planning that promote public transit, pedestrian and bicycle access to homes, businesses, schools and civic centers; siting sources of industrial air pollutants away from residences and other sensitive receptors; and minimizing wood smoke from woodstoves and burning activities associated with fire hazard reduction and forest management practices.

Utilities Element - The purpose of the Utilities Element is to address the public facilities and services necessary to support the current and future residents and visitors of Tuolumne County. The focus of this Element is on those services provided by the County of Tuolumne and other local agencies related to public water, sewer, and solid waste, and how the need for those services relates to future growth.

Water Supply Element - The Tuolumne County Water Agency was reactivated on May 21, 2013 to ensure adequate safe water and sewer services for the citizens of Tuolumne County, now and in the future, and to protect, enhance and expand water resources throughout Tuolumne County. This Element incorporates and provides implementation of the goals of the Tuolumne County Water Agency which are to assure access to County water; diversification of the County water portfolio; achieve adequate water storage; and ensure secure, safe, and sustainable water and sewer infrastructure. The driving force is to ensure adequate water supplies to meet the diverse needs of a healthy and economically viable community. Such water supply needs include, but are not limited to: domestic consumption; fire protection; economic development; base industries, such as recreation and agriculture; and habitat protection.

Healthy Communities Element - Tuolumne County is committed to promoting the health and well-being of all its residents. Therefore this Element was created to address three public health and land use issues: physical activity, access to healthy foods and nutrition, and smoke-free living.

Education and Libraries Element – The purpose of the Education and Libraries Element is to address the public facilities and educational services necessary to support the current and future residents and visitors of Tuolumne County. This Element also identifies mechanisms for funding these important services for new and existing development.

Climate Change – The Climate Change Element will assist in the decision-making process for future growth in the County that can guide regional and local land use and transportation decisions toward sustainability, while meeting residents' needs and providing a high quality of life for all.

Managed Resources - The Managed Resources Element establishes policies and implementation programs to promote the stability and productivity of the County's managed resources, both mineral and timber, and related industries. This Element is intended to provide clear guidelines for land use decisions in renewable resource areas and express policies that promote and protect the current and future needs of Tuolumne County's mineral and timber resources.



Public Safety - The purpose of the Public Safety Element is to address public safety, facilities and services necessary to support the current and future residents and visitors of Tuolumne County. The focus of this Element is on those services provided by the County of Tuolumne and other local agencies and how the need for those services relate to future growth. The Public Safety Element also includes sections regarding law enforcement and emergency services.

Community Plans

Plans for five of Tuolumne County's individual communities, Jamestown, Columbia, East Sonora, Tuolumne and Mountain Springs, have been included in this General Plan to provide goals and policies to address the unique character of those communities. These plans address the issues discussed in the individual General Plan elements, such as land use, but on a community level. Each plan has been prepared to reflect the character of the respective community. For example, the Columbia plan emphasizes historic preservation while the East Sonora plan focuses on design standards and creating a sense of place. These "plans" are not intended to be stand alone documents but rather simply provide a close-up of the community within the context of the County-wide General Plan. Additional community plans may be formulated as individual communities seek specific development goals, policies and standards to guide the future growth of their unique areas. The formulation of these plans will be undertaken by the County in response to requests from the communities. The County will not initiate such plans without the support and participation of a community's residents, property owners and businesses. The Community Plan Volume starts with the **Community Identity Element**. The inclusion of the Community Identity Element in the General Plan was recommended by the County's Blue Ribbon Committee on Growth Management. This Element addresses quality-of-life issues, such as aesthetic values, rural character, community involvement and history. The Community Identity Element also integrates these intangible values into the development process.

Technical Background Report

The background information that provides the technical basis for the goals, policies, and programs is contained in a separate volume of this General Plan, titled the Technical Background Report. This includes expanded population and land use information, housing statistics, circulation information, and other relevant data. This Technical Background Report includes information required to be included in a general plan under state law and the 2017 General Plan Guidelines published by the Office of Planning and Research.

Foundations of the General Plan

This General Plan utilized the Tuolumne County Transportation Council's adopted a population projection of 63,243 residents in Tuolumne County by the year 2040 after considering the State Department of Finance population projections and other growth factors. Although this General Plan is based upon the assumption that Tuolumne County will reach this projected population, it does not promote the growth of the County's population to that level. The philosophy of this General Plan is to assume that the County will be prepared and able to accommodate the projected growth, while at the same time, it will adhere to policies that define where and how development will occur. The General Plan provides guidance in determining the appropriate or desirable locations for this growth, thereby preventing an unnecessarily scattered pattern of development, which often results in



extraordinary demands on public services, above average public service costs and unnecessary and avoidable destruction or degradation of valuable resources.

Since 2007, the County of Tuolumne has been participating in a Regional Blueprint planning process for directing future growth and enhancing the quality of life in the County over the next few decades. Through this coordinated effort, the City of Sonora, Tuolumne County, Tuolumne County Transportation Council, and community members developed Guiding Principles for growth and development, and studied the potential effects of the likely land use development pattern and possible alternative growth scenarios on the transportation system, housing, local economy, quality of life, natural resources, and the environment. As a result of this effort, the Distinctive Communities Growth Scenario was selected and adopted by the Board of Supervisors in August 2012 as the preferred growth scenario for Tuolumne County. Tuolumne County's General Plan has been formulated to reflect this preferred growth scenario. This scenario allows each identified community to have a well-defined, cohesive, and compact community built around an appropriately-scaled urban core and community gathering places. The size of each community is based on an identified community boundary.

The General Plan Update is intended to function as a policy document to guide land use decisions within Tuolumne County's planning area through the year 2040. As discussed above, Tuolumne County's General Plan Update has been formulated to reflect the preferred growth scenario (the Distinctive Communities Growth Scenario of the Tuolumne Tomorrow Blueprint). Based on the general philosophy and input from the community and County decision makers, the General Plan Update includes the following overall objectives:

- Adopt a County-wide General Plan that reflects the current values and vision of the communities in the County and reflects the latest legal, statutory, scientific, and technical changes and advancements.
- Update the County General Plan to achieve and enable maximum flexibility for development within the bounds of state and federal law as well as an ever-evolving legal, cultural and environmental landscape.
- Promote the delivery of efficient and cost-effective public services.
- Enhance the unique nature of identified communities while providing services and amenities for residents, businesses, and visitors on a County-wide basis.
- Minimize or eliminate restrictions and requirements that can increase delays and/or the cost to development.
- Promote development within the County that is designed to fit the needs of the County's residents, businesses, and visitors.
- Promote the stewardship of the County's natural resources, which includes providing for the productive use of natural resources, and management to reduce risks of wildland fires.
- Conserve the County's historic resources and recognize their unique value to the County's social and economic fabric.
- Allow residents and property owners to use their land to the maximum extent of the law, while respecting the values of the community.

As part of this General Plan growth scenario, future urban growth is directed towards identified communities. Urban growth is considered development greater than 1 unit per two acres, and is served by public water and sewer, where available. The table below summarizes the nineteen identified communities in Tuolumne County. The size of each community is based on an identified community boundary area, and for five identified



communities coincides with the Community Plan boundary. The identified community boundary areas include 60% of the population in Tuolumne County. Maps of the eighteen individual identified communities listed in Table 1 can be found in the Technical Background Report volume to this General Plan Update.

TABLE 1. TUOLUMNE COUNTY IDENTIFIED COMMUNITIES		
Community	Population	Acres
Big Oak Flat	150	357
Cedar Ridge	552	530
Chinese Camp	22	36
Columbia*	3,371	15,845
Crystal Falls/Mono Vista	3,212	1,461
East Sonora*	3,809	5,017
Groveland/Pine Mountain Lake	2,344	6,329
Jamestown*	3,122	3,121
Lake Don Pedro	793	7,058
Long Barn	57	105
Mountain Springs*	100	1,083
Sierra Village	194	124
Soulsbyville	1,063	873
Strawberry	69	459
Sugar Pine/Mi-Wuk	922	773
Tuolumne	3,709	6,103
Twain Harte	2,866	3,527
West Sonora	1,293	337
Total	32,554	55,204

*Identified communities with an adopted community plan

The identified community boundaries as shown on Page 11 are intended to direct growth to areas where current development exists, and future development is anticipated. Additional mapping of the identified communities can be found in Volume II: Technical Background Report of this General Plan. Infill, redevelopment and mixed-use areas take advantage of existing public infrastructure and services. Residential and commercial areas become more compact within the community boundaries which promotes mixed-use and higher density residential development to supply housing demand. The General Plan Update will provide a mixture of residential, retail,



entertainment, office and commercial uses near each other creating active communities. Development is centralized within the identified communities with rural development radiating outward to the community boundaries. Rural development will serve as buffers between communities and help meet the functional needs of the natural environment and nearby agriculture production. Rural development may be primarily located on the fringe of identified communities, but clustered or grouped together to make the best use of infrastructure and avoid disruption to agricultural lands and environmentally sensitive areas. Transportation investments are used to link communities and to support a wide range of mobility choices within individual communities. Local government policies and programs would work in concert to encourage more complete and economically self-sufficient communities, where residents can live, work, and shop in the same community.

Links to Previous Planning Efforts

The General Plan Update is preceded by previous planning efforts and documents completed by a variety of staff and stakeholders. These documents include:

- Tuolumne Tomorrow: Tuolumne County Regional Blueprint Project Report (2012)
- Tuolumne County Regional Blueprint Greenhouse Gas Study (2012)
- Tuolumne County General Plan and Regional Transportation Plan Evaluation and Analysis Report (2013)
- 2016 Regional Transportation Plan and Environmental Impact Report (adopted January 2017)

Community Participation

Community involvement in the General Plan Update process began prior to the official kickoff of the update. It began during the previous planning efforts identified above. However, in 2013 the County formally initiated the update process. Between 2013 and 2015, Community Resources Agency staff held numerous meetings across the County to solicit input on the General Plan. The Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors Planning Committee also regularly met to work on the various elements in the General Plan.

Beginning in 2017, County staff met with stakeholder groups and representatives, including the Tuolumne County Farm Bureau, Farms of Tuolumne County, Tuolumne County Business Council, Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians, Chicken Ranch Rancheria, Tuolumne Heritage Committee, Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center, Tuolumne-Stanislaus Integrated Regional Water Management Group, and other interested groups and individuals. In the spring of 2018, Community Resources Agency staff sent notices to over 4,000 property owners with parcels that may be impacted by land use changes as well as notifying them of a series of informational sessions that were planned for Board of Supervisors meetings. These sessions were also advertised on the General Plan website and in the newspaper. Those information sessions discussed the following topics:

- General Plan/EIR 101
- Community Plans
- General Plan Implementation
- How to comment on the General Plan/EIR

Community Resources Agency staff also made presentations at the Tuolumne Rural Action Coalition, the Tuolumne County Board of Realtors, and several town hall meetings.



Legal Basis for the Tuolumne County General Plan

Government Code Section 65300 requires every city and county to formulate and adopt "a comprehensive, long-term general plan for the physical development" of the community. This document represents a comprehensive update of Tuolumne County's General Plan following the Government Code and the State's General Plan Guidelines.

Preparing the General Plan can be viewed as an activity that sharpens and focuses the concerns of citizens within the County and provides a framework for forging these often conflicting concerns into a common vision of the future. By focusing attention on the issues facing the community and placing them in an expanded time frame, the General Plan helps citizens to see their County as a complex and evolving system - a living entity that grows and responds to problems and opportunities - and it helps to guide the County along an agreed-upon course.

Preparing, adopting and implementing the General Plan serves the following purposes:

- To expand the capacity of the County government to analyze local and regional conditions and needs in order to respond effectively to the problems and opportunities facing the County.
- To define the County's environmental, social and economic goals.
- To record the County's policies and programs for the maintenance and improvement of existing development and the location and characteristics of future development.
- To provide citizens with information about the County and with opportunities to participate in setting goals and determining policies and standards for the County's development.
- To foster the coordination of County development and environmental protection activities among local, regional, state and federal agencies.
- To guide and coordinate the many actions and day-to-day decisions of the County government that are necessary in developing and protecting the County.
- To provide local decision-makers and the County with a forum for resolving conflicts among competing interests and values.

While the General Plan sets out policies and identifies ways to put these policies into action, the actual implementation of the plan is a complex and lengthy process in its own right. As with piecing together a puzzle, local officials must take many separate, but interconnected, actions according to the direction set out in the General Plan. These various actions rest on two essential powers of local government - corporate and police. Using their "corporate power", local governments collect money through bonds, fees, assessments and taxes and spend it to provide services and facilities such as police and fire protection, roads and parks. Using their "police power", local governments regulate citizens' use of their property through zoning, subdivision and building regulations in order to promote the health, safety and welfare of the public. The General Plan provides the framework for the exercise of these powers by local officials. By virtue of State law and case law, all new development, initiated by both the public and private sectors, must be consistent with the General Plan.



This page intentionally left blank.



Environmental Review

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires all local and State governmental agencies to consider the environmental consequences of projects over which they have discretionary authority. Public Resources Code Section 21065 defines a project as “an activity which may cause either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment.” Therefore, Tuolumne County, as the lead agency was required to prepare and certify an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the General Plan.

The Tuolumne County General Plan EIR is a public document that assesses the overall environmental effects of the General Plan at a program level of detail and indicates ways to reduce or avoid reasonably foreseeable environmental damage. The Program EIR generally analyzes the broad environmental effects and provides a baseline against which future projects are evaluated. Where subsequent CEQA documentation is required for a future project, the County will implement the applicable mitigation measures developed in the Program EIR, and focus its analysis on site-specific issues that cannot otherwise be addressed at a program or policy level of analysis. The Program EIR is to be used as a companion document with the Tuolumne County General Plan.

In order to minimize the need to reanalyze a series of projects related to the General Plan, CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines encourage using a General Plan EIR to address subsequent discretionary projects, such as adopting zoning ordinances and specific plans and approving capital improvement or development projects that are consistent with the General Plan. This streamlined approach to environmental review is commonly called “tiering” (CEQA Guidelines §15152). By using a tiered approach, the environmental review for a subsequent project can be limited to those project-specific significant effects that either were not examined or not examined fully in the General Plan Program EIR. Later activities that have been described adequately under the Program EIR will not require additional environmental documents. Similarly, CEQA offers the ability for projects that are consistent with the development density established by General Plan policies for which an EIR was certified to evaluate only project-specific significant effects particular to the project or its site (CEQA Guidelines §15183).

Updating and Amending the Tuolumne County General Plan

This General Plan is intended to be a dynamic rather than a static document that can, and should, be updated and changed periodically to reflect the needs and desires of the people of Tuolumne County. There will always be a need to update and amend the General Plan over time to reflect changes in growth rates, changes in the demands for services and changes in planning philosophy. This General Plan is based upon analyses and assumptions concerning social, economic and physical conditions in Tuolumne County. This basic information is subject to change and refinement. It will therefore be necessary for the County to review the General Plan and to update its supporting data in light of new conditions that may occur over time. For example, this General Plan is based upon achieving a population of 63,243 by the year 2040. It is possible that this population level will not be achieved by that year and that this General Plan could therefore accommodate growth beyond that date. It is also possible that growth could occur faster than the projected rate, and, therefore, the General Plan would have to be re-evaluated at some point prior to 2040 to determine the extent and location of additional land which should be designated for growth.



The General Plan is also based upon land use, public service and physical data which were used to indicate lands suitable for both urban and rural development. This data represent the County's most up to date information. As this data and the General Plan are utilized, inaccuracies in the data may be identified. If an inaccuracy in the data is discovered to have resulted in the assignment of an inappropriate designation, the County will initiate an amendment to the General Plan.

General Plan Amendment Procedure

California Government Code Section 65358(b) authorizes the amendment of each of the General Plan's seven (7) mandatory elements to not more than four (4) times in one calendar year. This limitation on amending the General Plan does not include optional elements or amendments requested and necessary for affordable housing as provided by the Government Code. Additional exceptions to this limitation of General Plan amendments shall be in accordance with the California Government Code.

Amendments to the General Plan may be initiated by the County or by applications submitted to the Community Resources Agency. Each of the permitted amendments within a calendar year can encompass several different changes which shall be evaluated individually and their cumulative impacts shall be analyzed.

Since there is a need for flexibility in a General Plan through an amendment process, the process shall be available on a regularly scheduled basis and as needed. Where applications for General Plan amendments have been received, the Planning Commission will hold hearings on these amendments at its meetings in April and October of each year. Additional hearings may be held as necessary.