

4.10 LAND USE and PLANNING

This section analyzes the proposed General Plan Update's consistency with applicable local, regional, and state land use policies.

4.10.1 Setting

According to the existing 1996 General Plan Land Use Designations, the majority of the unincorporated area of Tuolumne County (77.14% of total acreage) is designated Public Space, which includes parks and recreational facilities run by various state, federal, regional and local agencies. Agricultural land makes up 10.80% and timber production makes up 5.89%. Thus, a small minority of Tuolumne County is dedicated for residential and commercial development, while a large majority of the unincorporated area remains mostly undeveloped. Tuolumne County is subject to the land use regulatory policies of various state, federal and regional agencies. These agencies and the corresponding policy documents that affect land use planning in Tuolumne County are discussed below.

a. Regulatory Agencies. The County of Tuolumne retains land use authority and jurisdiction over all territory within the County, except for land located within its sole incorporated city (Sonora) and State and Federal lands. The City of Sonora is not subject to the County's land use regulations, and is therefore outside the jurisdiction of the proposed General Plan Update. City and federal policy documents will therefore not be discussed herein.

Multiple agencies have jurisdiction over parks and other recreational facilities within Tuolumne County: the United States Forest Service, Bureau of Reclamation, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, California State Parks and Recreation, California Department of Fish & Wildlife.

Tuolumne County Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC). The Airport Land Use Commission is responsible for reviewing airport and adjacent land use proposals on and near Columbia Airport and Pine Mountain Lake Airport. The criteria and affected areas in proximity to the airports are defined in the Tuolumne County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP), which was approved in 2003. The goal of the plan is to promote compatibility between the public-use airports within Tuolumne County and the land uses which surround them. The Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan serves as the primary tool for use by the Tuolumne County Airport Land Use Commission in its review of land development proposals at county airports and on surrounding land. The Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan contains policies regarding noise, safety, airspace protection, and aircraft overflights which apply primarily to property located within the airport influence area boundaries associated with the two county public-use airports.

b. Applicable Plans and Policies. Plans, regulations, and policies of the County and the above agencies that are relevant to the draft General Plan Update are described below.

Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). TCTC's RTP is designed to comply with the RTP Guidelines adopted by the California Transportation Commission (CTC) in December 1996. The RTP is intended to serve many purposes, including:



- *Provide the foundation for transportation decisions by local, regional, and state officials.*
- *Document the region's mobility needs and issues.*
- *Identify and attempt to resolve regional issues and provide policy direction for local plans.*
- *Document the region's goals, policies, and objectives for meeting current and future transportation mobility needs.*
- *Set forth an action plan to address transportation issues and needs consistent with Regional and state policies.*
- *Identify transportation improvements in sufficient detail to aid in the development of the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) and to be useful in making decisions related to the development and growth of the region.*
- *Identify those agencies responsible for implementing the action plans.*
- *Document the region's financial resources needed to meet mobility needs.*

Tuolumne Tomorrow Regional Blueprint - Distinctive Communities Alternative Growth Scenario. Tuolumne Tomorrow is 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. The Distinctive Communities Growth Scenario would encourage mixed-use and infill development within the vicinity or near existing urbanized areas, transportation networks, and public services. Tuolumne County's General Plan Update has been formulated to reflect this preferred growth scenario, which is further described in Section 2.4. In accordance with the Distinctive Communities Growth Scenario, the draft General Plan Land Use Element identifies new areas for growth and limits growth in areas that are either "saturated" with development or have limited growth potential due to the lack of adequate public services and facilities and/or are constrained by natural characteristics that do not lend themselves to development, such as steep slopes.

Tuolumne County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan. The basic function of the Tuolumne County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan is to promote compatibility between the airports in Tuolumne County and the land uses which surround them. As adopted by the Tuolumne County Airport Land Use Commission, the plan serves as a tool for use by the Commission in fulfilling its duty to review airport and adjacent land development proposals. Additionally, the plan sets compatibility criteria applicable to local agencies in their preparation or amendment of land use plans and ordinances to land owners in their design of new development.

The plan is primarily concerned with land uses within a roughly 2- to 3-mile vicinity of the two public-use airports in Tuolumne County: Columbia Airport and Pine Mountain Lake Airport. Certain elements of the plan, though, apply countywide to development actions which may have aviation-related compatibility implications.



4.10.2 Impact Analysis

a. Methodology and Significance Thresholds. The discussion of land use impacts analyzes the draft General Plan Update's consistency with applicable policies of various regional and local plans for the purposes of assessing the proposed General Plan Update's environmental impacts related to land use. An impact is considered significant if physical changes that could be facilitated by buildout of the General Plan Update would result in one or more of the following conditions, which are based upon the environmental checklist in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines:

- *Physically divide an established community;*
- *Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect*
- *Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan.*

In addition, because a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) is not in place in Tuolumne County, an update to the Tuolumne County General Plan would not be expected to conflict with any HCP. On July 2, 2013, the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors established the Biological Resources Ad Hoc Committee to prepare for consideration by the Board revisions to the Biological Resources Section of the Conservation and Open Space Element of the Tuolumne County General Plan to modify Policy 4.J.2 and Implementation Program 4.J.a to eliminate the use of the Tuolumne County Wildlife Handbook and program for preparation of a Biological Resources Conservation Handbook and to modify other policies and programs to reflect decisions by the Board to mitigate impacts to biological resources from land development projects. Specific impacts to biological resources, including sensitive habitats, are discussed in Section 4.4, *Biological Resources*.

Although the following analysis evaluates consistency with various regulatory policies, it should be noted that each individual agency (TCTC, LAFCo of Tuolumne County, and ALUC) ultimately has the discretion to determine consistency of the General Plan Update with the policies, plans, and/or programs that fall within that agency's purview.

b. Project and Cumulative Impacts.

Impact LU-1 The General Plan Update would be consistent with the Tuolumne Tomorrow Regional Blueprint. Impacts would be Class III, less than significant.

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 contained in the Tuolumne Tomorrow Regional Blueprint (the Distinctive Communities Growth Scenario). Within the Distinctive Communities Alternative Growth Scenario each community contains 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 a locally defined urban development boundary area as well as a defined community boundary. The existing urban development boundaries may be expanded to allow dense growth to occur near existing community nodes. Infill and mixed-use are encouraged to take advantage of existing public infrastructure and services. Residential and commercial areas become more compact within new urban development boundaries promoting mixed-use and higher density residential development to supply housing demand. With compact neighborhoods, auto dependency and new roads are reduced and transportation options are increased.

The Tuolumne County Transportation Council adopted a population projection of 63,243 residents in Tuolumne County by the year 2040 after considering the State Department of Finance Forecasts, Census population projections and past Tuolumne County Transportation Council adopted population projections. Although the General Plan Update 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 the General Plan Update is that the County will be prepared and able to accommodate projected growth, while adhering to policies that define where and how development will occur.

The chief purpose of the TCTC RTP is to demonstrate ways that transportation can complement regional goals and objectives. Therefore the TCTC RTP (to be updated in the year 2016) would also be prepared to be consistent with the overall vision of the General Plan Update and thus also the Tuolumne Tomorrow Regional Blueprint. The overall focus of the RTP is directed at developing a coordinated and balanced multi-modal transportation system. The RTP focuses on considering short-range (0-10 years) and long range (11-20 years) transportation investment and improvements for all modes, including highways, transit facilities, bicycle facilities, pedestrian facilities, railroad facilities, aviation facilities, and goods movement within a financially constrained environment. The General Plan Update's Circulation Element is intended to complement the improvements envisioned by the RTP. The environmental impacts of the General Plan Update Circulation Element are addressed throughout Section 4.0 of this EIR. Specifically, impacts relating to air quality, energy use, and noise are addressed in Sections 4.3, Air Quality, and 4.11, Noise. In addition, although overall traffic levels are likely to increase under buildout of the draft General Plan Update, the General Plan Update includes goals, policies, and objectives that would reduce likely increases in traffic. In general, infill development reduces vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and associated air pollutant emissions and traffic related noise as compared to development on sites in the periphery of metropolitan areas.

New development in accordance with the proposed General Plan Update would be subject to various General Plan Land Use Element policies and actions aimed at strengthening and balancing vehicle, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit connections in the County. With implementation of applicable General Plan Update Land Use Element goals, and policies (outlined below), future development under the General Plan Update would be consistent with the Tuolumne Tomorrow Regional Blueprint:

Policy 1.A.4 Promote infill and clustered patterns of development that facilitate the efficient and timely provision of urban infrastructure and services.

Policy 1.A.5 Establish target growth areas to serve community needs and enhance the quality of life by providing for economic, housing and cultural opportunities



within existing and new defined communities. Where possible, these target growth areas should be placed near transit stops, commercial centers, and other services.

- Policy 1.A.14 Encourage economic development and a mix of uses in unincorporated urban service areas that minimize the need for nearby residents to travel greater distances to access goods and services.*
- Policy 1.D.3 Encourage urban residential development projects located within ¼ mile of a transit stop.*
- Policy 1.D.4 Utilize planning tools and incentives to encourage transit oriented development.*
- Policy 1.D.5 Promote the provision of multi-modal access to activity centers such as public facilities, commercial centers and corridors, employment centers, transit stops, schools, parks, recreation areas, and tourist attractions.*

As shown, the primary objectives of the changes in land use policies are to promote mixed-use and infill development, orient growth areas near transit stops and stations, and to develop alternate methods of transportation. The General Plan Update 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. Therefore, buildout under the General Plan Update could be found to be consistent with the Tuolumne Tomorrow Regional Blueprint.

Mitigation Measures. With implementation of General Plan Update policies, future development under the draft General Plan Update would be consistent with the Tuolumne Tomorrow Regional Blueprint. No mitigation is required.

Significance After Mitigation. Future development under the draft General Plan Update would be consistent with the Tuolumne Tomorrow Regional Blueprint. Impacts would be less than significant.

Impact LU-2 The General Plan Update would be consistent with the Tuolumne County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP). Impacts would be Class III, less than significant.

The General Plan Update would facilitate and promote development within the influence areas of the Columbia Airport and Pine Mountain Lake Airport. However, any development within the influence areas of the two airports would be subject to review and approval by the Tuolumne County Airport Land Use Commission for consistency with policies set forth by the Tuolumne County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan. As discussed above, the ALUCP contains policies regarding noise, safety, airspace protection, and aircraft overflights which apply primarily to property located within the airport influence area boundaries associated with the two county public-use airports.



Furthermore, the General Plan Update Land Use Element would include the following policies and programs that would ensure that development of land around the County's airports are consistent with the Tuolumne County ALUCP:

Policy 1.B.2 *Protect public facilities, such as the County's airports, from the infringement of incompatible land uses.*

*Implementation
Program 1.B.b* *Designate land around the County's airports for uses that are consistent with the Tuolumne County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan and airport master plans.*

As shown, the primary objectives of the changes in land use policies are to promote mixed-use and infill development, orient growth areas near transit stops and stations, and to develop alternate methods of transportation. The General Plan Update provides guidance in determining the appropriate or desirable locations for this growth, thereby preventing an unnecessarily scattered pattern of development, and also preventing development located in areas where hazards may be present (such as in close proximity to an airport). Therefore, buildout under the General Plan Update could be found to be consistent with the ALUCP.

Mitigation Measures. No mitigation is required.

Significance After Mitigation. With implementation of General Plan Update policies, future development under the draft General Plan Update would not conflict with any ALUCP.

Impact LU-3 Development under the General Plan Update would not physically divide any established communities. Instead, policies and land use changes under the General Plan Update would facilitate and direct growth and expansion of existing communities in an efficient and orderly manner. Impacts would be Class III, less than significant.

An intention of the General Plan Update is to facilitate development under the Distinctive Communities Alternative Growth Scenario, which would promote infill and mixed-use development near existing public infrastructure and services, especially around defined communities. Development of new housing would be included as part of new infill and mixed-use development and facilitated by the following draft General Plan Land Use Element policies:

Policy 1.A.4 *Promote infill and clustered patterns of development that facilitate the efficient and timely provision of urban infrastructure and services.*

Policy 1.A.5 *Establish target growth areas to serve community needs and enhance the quality of life by providing for economic, housing and cultural opportunities within existing and new defined communities. Where possible, these target growth areas should be placed near transit stops, commercial centers, and other services.*



Policy 1.A.6 Encourage defined communities to be comprehensively planned and developed as well balanced, independent communities.

Under the Distinctive Communities Alternative Growth Scenario, no changes would be made to land use designations that would reduce allowable density on any parcel. Rather, land use changes under the General Plan Update would increase the overall acreage and percentage of Low, Medium, High, Estate, and Rural Residential land use designations, while decreasing Large Lot and Homestead Residential land uses. These land use changes would allow for increased density of dwelling units to be developed where the land use changes would occur, which would generally be in existing urbanized areas or distinguished communities. Therefore, established communities would not be physical divided, but instead; growth and expansion would be facilitated and organized in an efficient manner. Impacts would less than significant.

Mitigation Measures. With implementation of General Plan Update policies, future development under the draft General Plan Update would not physically divide any established communities. No mitigation is required.

Significance After Mitigation. Future development under the draft General Plan Update would not physically divide any established communities. Impacts would be less than significant.



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