

4.12 POPULATION and HOUSING

This section analyzes the draft General Plan Update’s potential environmental impacts related to population and housing.

4.12.1 Setting

a. Population, Housing, and Employment. The population of the unincorporated area of Tuolumne County grew by 44.4% during the 1980’s and slowed to 13.0% during the 1990’s. Between 2000 and 2010 population growth slowed to 0.8% with a net gain of 384 people over the ten-year period. The population of Tuolumne County increased by 1.6% for the entire County including the City of Sonora or 864 persons between 2000 and 2010. As compared to the six surrounding counties of Calaveras, Amador, Mariposa, Stanislaus, Alpine and Mono; Tuolumne County had the second lowest percentage of population growth since 2000. The highest percentage of growth occurred in Stanislaus County, 15.1%, followed by Calaveras County, 12.4%. Since 2010, the population of the unincorporated area has decreased by 2% (as of 2015).

Table 4.12-1 shows the existing population and dwelling unit count for the unincorporated area, City of Sonora, and county total. According to the California Department of Finance, the existing population of Tuolumne County is 54,337 and there are approximately 23,700 total dwelling units as of 2015. The unincorporated area of Tuolumne County represents approximately 91-92% of the total County population, while the City of Sonora makes up approximately 8-9%. The average household size is 2.28 persons, while vacancy rate is 30.7 percent (Department of Finance, 2015) in the unincorporated are of the County. The higher vacancy rate of the unincorporated area is due to the unique housing nature of the unincorporated area, where there are numerous vacation homes and recreational rental units.

**Table 4.12-1
Existing Population and Dwelling Unit Count**

County/City	Population	Percentage of County	Dwelling Units	Percentage of County	Vacancy Rate
Unincorporated	49,458	91%	21,240	90%	30.7%
City of Sonora (Incorporated)	4,879	9%	2,460	10%	10.7%
County Total	54,337	100%	23,700	100%	29.1%

Source – California Department of Finance, E-5 City/County Population and Housing Estimates, 1/1/2015, 2015 Unincorporated Dwelling Units number from Wood Rodgers, Tuolumne County GP and RTP Update EIR Traffic Study

According to the General Plan’s Housing Element, Tuolumne County has a large senior population. Between 2000 and 2010, the percentage of the population aged 65 or over has increased from 18.3% of the population to 21%. In comparison, seniors comprise 11% of the population statewide.

In 2010, 73% of households owned their home and 27% rented. In comparison, in the year 2000, 75% were homeowners and 25% renters. During that 10-year period there was a 2% decrease in



homeownership. However, median home prices in the County dropped from a high of \$332,000 in 2006 down to a low of \$159,000 in 2011 and are at \$195,000 as of the end of 2013 (County Recorder's Office and Tuolumne County Association of Realtors 2013). With a substantial decrease in home prices and interest rates, homeownership became more affordable. As of the end of 2013, a home costing \$196,000 is determined to be affordable to households earning \$53,100 per year, which is 80% of the area median income.

The U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS) for Tuolumne County for the period of 2007 - 2011 indicates that 18,423 civilians 16 years of age or older were employed in the unincorporated area of Tuolumne County. The Labor Market Division of the California Employment Development Department statistics reported that 20,036 civilians were employed in 2006. Thus, between 2006 and 2011, civilian employment decreased by 1,613 which represents an 8% decrease in jobs. Note that this was in large part due to the national economic recession. In 2011, education, health care and social services sectors combined represented 22.1% of employment followed by arts and entertainment, accommodation and food service industries which represent 14.3% of jobs. Retail is the third largest industry with 11.9% of jobs. In 2007, these three sectors were also the largest three sectors. Construction jobs decreased by 3.4%, retail trade decreased by 2.3%, jobs in the education, health care and social assistance sectors increased by 2.5% and jobs in arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food service increased by 2.4% from 2007 to 2011.

b. Regulatory Setting. The following section summarizes regulations that pertain to population and housing.

Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA). California's Housing Element law requires that each county and city develop local housing programs to meet their "fair share" of future housing growth needs for all income groups, as determined by the State Department of Housing and Community Development. The regional councils of government are then tasked with distributing the State-projected housing growth need for their region among their city and county jurisdictions by income category. This fair share allocation is referred to as the RHNA process. The RHNA represents the minimum number of housing units each community is required to plan for through a combination of: 1) zoning "adequate sites" at suitable densities to provide affordability; and 2) housing programs to support production of below-market rate units. According to the General Plan Housing Element, between January 1, 2009, and December 31, 2013, Tuolumne County issued Building Permits for 294 new dwelling units which is an average of approximately 59 dwelling units per year. This figure does not include Building Permits issued for replacement mobile homes in mobile home parks. It does include Building Permits issued for demolition of residential units which averaged 22 per year. Building Permits were issued for 228 single family homes, 6 attached units and 60 mobile homes not in rental parks. Tuolumne County RHNA allocation for unincorporated County areas is shown in Table 4.12-2.



Table 4.12-2. Regional Housing Needs Allocation for Unincorporated Tuolumne County 2014-2019

Income Group	RHNA Allocation (units)	% of Total
Extremely Low	45	10%
Very Low	57	13%
Low	74	16%
Moderate	81	18%
Above Moderate	193	43%
Total	450	100%

Source: 2014 Tuolumne County General Plan Housing Element Update

State Housing Element Statutes. State housing element statutes (Government Code Sections 65580-65589.9) mandate that local governments adequately plan to meet the existing and projected housing needs of all economic segments of the community. The law recognizes that for the private market to adequately address housing needs and demand, local governments must adopt land use plans and regulatory systems that provide opportunities for, and do not unduly constrain, housing development. As a result, State housing policy rests largely upon the effective implementation of local general plans and in particular, housing elements. Additionally, Government Code §65588 dictates that the housing elements must be updated at least once every five years. The Tuolumne County 5th Cycle 2014-2019 Housing Element Update was adopted in June 2014 and determined by the state to be in compliance with California State Housing Law.

Tuolumne Tomorrow, 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 has been formulated to reflect this preferred growth scenario.

4.12.2 Impact Analysis

a. Methodology and Significance Thresholds. Impacts relating to population and housing are considered significant if implementation of the General Plan Update would:

- *Induce substantial population growth either directly or indirectly*
- *Displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere*



- *Displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere*

For purposes of this analysis, “substantial” population growth is defined as a population projection that exceeds the Department of Finance 2040 population projections for Tuolumne County of 59,281 total residents (California Department of Finance, 2014). A “Substantial” displacement may occur if allowed land uses displace more residences than what is accommodated through the General Plan.

b. Project and Cumulative Impacts.

Impact PH-1 The General Plan Update would facilitate the development of new housing in accordance with state and local housing requirements. However, future development projects could displace residents temporarily during construction activities if redevelopment of existing residential structures occurs. Impacts would be Class II, significant but mitigable.

As discussed above, the existing population of Tuolumne County is 54,337 and there are approximately 21,240 dwelling units total as of 2015. Therefore, the existing population would increase by 8,906 new residents under maximum buildout conditions for the General Plan Update. In addition, as discussed in Section 2.0, *Project Description*, based on the growth forecasts according to the proposed change in land uses, buildout of the General Plan Update would result in a net increase of 5,159 dwelling units.

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:

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| <i>Policy 1.A.4</i> | <i>Promote infill and clustered patterns of development that facilitate the efficient and timely provision of urban infrastructure and services.</i> |
| <i>Policy 1.A.5</i> | <i>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.</i> |
| <i>Policy 1.A.6</i> | <i>Encourage defined communities to be comprehensively planned and developed as well balanced, independent communities.</i> |

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, impacts related to substantial displacement of housing would be less than significant.

While development of the draft General Plan Update would not result in long-term displacement of residents, future development projects could displace residents temporarily if redevelopment of existing residential structures occurs. The intention of infill development projects is to develop on vacant or highly under-utilized properties. As a result, significant numbers of people are not expected to be displaced. Nonetheless, it is possible that some people may be displaced as a result of development under the General Plan Update. Access and disruption impacts associated with construction activity would occur to varying degrees with all construction projects, but would be most acute in urban areas with high volumes and traffic and businesses that depend upon ease of vehicular access. Impacts would be potentially significant.

Mitigation Measures. The following suggested policies are recommended as a mitigation measure for development related to the General Plan Update.

PH-1 Temporary Residence or Business Displacement. The County shall include the following policy and programs in its Land Use Element to address applicable projects that result in temporary resident displacement. Project-specific environmental impacts may require these mitigation measures be revised or expanded in response to site-specific conditions:

Policy 1.A.14 *The County shall establish criteria for projects that may have the potential to displace residences or businesses to minimize impacts.*

Program 1.A.q *The County shall assure that for projects with the potential to displace residences or businesses, project-specific environmental reviews consider alternative alignments and developments that avoid or minimize impacts to nearby residences and businesses.*

Program 1.A.r *Where project-specific reviews identify displacement or relocation impacts that are unavoidable, the County should ensure that all applicable local, state, and federal relocation programs are used to assist eligible persons to relocate. In addition, the County shall review the proposed construction schedules to ensure that adequate time is provided to allow affected businesses to find and relocate to other sites.*

Program 1.A.s *For projects that could result in temporary lane closures or access blockage during construction, a temporary*



access plan should be implemented to ensure continued access to affected cyclists, businesses, and homes. Appropriate signs and safe access shall be guaranteed during project construction to ensure that businesses remain open.

Significance after Mitigation. Implementation of recommended measures would mitigate impacts relating to temporary disturbance or displacement of residences or businesses.

Impact PH-2 Implementation of the General Plan Update would facilitate new residential development in Tuolumne County, which would accommodate an increase in the population to approximately 63,243 by the year 2040, which is the population growth projection adopted by the Tuolumne County Transportation Council based on consideration of the General Plan and RTP update. Because implementation of the General Plan Update would result in population growth consistent with regional population projections, impacts would be Class III, less than significant.

As discussed in Section 2.0, *Project Description*, the existing population of Tuolumne County is 54,337 and there are approximately 21,240 dwelling units total as of 2015. 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, based on land use designation changes, it does not directly 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 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.

Furthermore, the physical environmental impacts associated with the growth that could occur under the General Plan Update have been analyzed and disclosed in Sections 4.1 through 4.16 of this document. Therefore, impacts related to population growth would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures. No significant impacts were identified.

Significance after Mitigation. Impacts would be less than significant without mitigation.

