Placer County
General Plan

COUNTYWIDE GENERAL PLAN POLICY DOCUMENT

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PLACER COUNTY GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

Countywide General Plan
POLICY DOCUMENT

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE AND NATURE OF THE GENERAL PLAN

A general plan is a legal document, required by state law, that serves as a community's "constitution" for land use and development. The plan must be a comprehensive, long-term document, detailing proposals for the "physical development of the county or city, and of any land outside its boundaries which in the planning agency's judgment bears relation to its planning" (*Government Code* §65300 et seq.). Time horizons vary, but the typical general plan looks 10 to 20 years into the future.

The law specifically requires that the general plan address seven topics or "elements." These are land use, circulation (transportation), housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety. The plan must analyze issues of importance to the community, set forth policies in text and diagrams for conservation and development, and outline specific programs for implementing these policies.

Preparing the general plan can be viewed as an activity that sharpens and focuses the many concerns of citizens within the community 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 community as a complex and evolving system--a living entity that grows and responds to problems and opportunities--and it helps to guide the community along an agreed-upon course.

More specifically, preparing, adopting, and maintaining a general plan serves the following purposes:

- To expand the capacity of local government to analyze local and regional conditions and needs in order to respond effectively to the problems and opportunities facing the community;
- To define the community's environmental, social, and economic goals;
- To record the local government's policies and standards for the maintenance and improvement of existing development and the location and characteristics of future development;
- To provide citizens with information about their community and with opportunities to participate in setting goals and determining policies and standards for the community's development;
- To foster the coordination of community 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 local government that are necessary to developing and protecting the community;
- To provide local decision makers and the community 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 powers. 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, streets, water systems, sewage disposal facilities, drainage facilities, 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 zoning, subdivision approvals, and public works projects must be consistent with the general plan.

STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE GENERAL PLAN

The *Placer County General Plan* consists of two types of documents: this *Countywide General Plan* (which consists of a policy document and land use diagram) and a set of more detailed *community plans* (including one "area" plan) covering specific areas of the unincorporated county.

The *Countywide General Plan* provides an overall framework for development of the county and protection of its natural and cultural resources. The goals and policies contained in the *Countywide General Plan* are applicable throughout the county, except to the extent that County authority is preempted by cities within their corporate limits.

Community and *area plans* (hereafter referred to as community plans), adopted in the same manner as the *Countywide General Plan*, provide a more detailed focus on specific geographic areas within the unincorporated county. The goals and policies contained in the *community plans* supplement and elaborate upon, but do not supersede, the goals and policies of the *Countywide General Plan.*

For each part of the unincorporated county, there is only one applicable land use diagram and circulation plan diagram. Unincorporated territory not covered by an adopted *community plan* is subject to the specifications of the *Land Use Diagram* and *Circulation Plan Diagram* contained in this *Countywide General Plan*. Unincorporated territory covered by a *community plan* is subject to the specifications of the land use and circulation plan diagram contained in the applicable *community plan*. Territory within incorporated city limits is, of course, subject to land use and circulation plan diagrams of the applicable city general plan.

The *Countywide General Plan* consists of two documents: the *General Plan Background Report* and the *General Plan Policy Document*. The *Background Report* inventories and analyzes existing conditions and trends in Placer County. It provides the formal supporting documentation for general plan policy, addressing 11 subject areas: land use; housing; population; economic conditions and fiscal considerations; transportation and circulation; public facilities; public services; recreational and cultural resources; natural resources; safety; and noise.

This *General Plan Policy Document* includes the goals, policies, standards, implementation programs, quantified objectives, the *Land Use Diagram*, and the *Circulation Plan Diagram* that constitute Placer County's formal policies for land use, development, and environmental quality.

In addition to the General Plan land use diagram, and community and area plans, the County has also adopted specific plans which provide goals and policies, land development standards, the distribution of land uses and other aspects of govern the land development pursuant to the requirements of Government Code Section 65450-35457.

The following definitions describe the nature of the statements of goals, policies, standards, implementation programs, and quantified objectives as they are used in this *Countywide General Plan Policy Document:*

> **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.*
>
> **Standard**: *A specific, often quantified guideline, incorporated in a policy or implementation program, defining the relationship between two or more variables. Standards can often translate directly into regulatory controls.*

Implementation Program: *An action, procedure, program, or technique that carries out general plan policy. Implementation programs also specify primary responsibility for carrying out the action and a time frame for its accomplishment.*

Quantified Objective (Housing only): *The number of housing units that the County expects to be constructed and the number of households the County expects will be assisted through Housing Element programs and based on general market conditions during the time frame of the Housing Element.*

The *General Plan Policy Document* is divided into two main parts. Part I describes the *Countywide Land Use Diagram* and allowable uses and standards for each of the designations appearing on the diagram. Part I then describes standards for land use buffer zones. Finally, Part I describes the *Countywide Circulation Plan Diagram*, standards for the roadway classification system on the diagram, and standards for *transit corridors*.

Part II contains explicit statements of goals, policies, standards, implementation programs, and quantified objectives. Part II is divided into the following ten sections, which roughly correspond to the organization of issues addressed in the *General Plan Background Report*. These are as follows:

1. Land Use
2. Housing (adopted separately May 12, 2009)
3. Transportation and Circulation
4. Public Facilities and Services
5. Recreational and Cultural Resources
6. Natural Resources
7. Agricultural and Forestry Resources
8. Health and Safety
9. Noise
10. Administration and Implementation

Each section includes several goal statements relating to different sub-issues or different aspects of the issue addressed in the section. For each goal statement there are several policies which amplify the goal statement and a set of related implementation programs describing briefly the proposed action, the agencies or departments with primary responsibility for carrying out the program, the time frame for accomplishing the program, and the funding source.

As noted above, the County adopted its *Housing Element* on May 12, 2009 in order to comply with unique statutory requirements for the preparation and adoption of housing elements. The housing section also includes statements of quantified housing objectives, required by state law as part of the housing element.

Part III of the *Policy Document* consists of general standards for the consideration of future amendments to the General Plan.

Finally, the *Policy Document* includes four appendices. Appendix A summarizes the holding capacity of the *General Plan*, Appendix B consists of a glossary of terms used in the *General Plan Policy Document*, Appendix C contains the Resolution of Adoption and Ordinance amending the Zoning Ordinance, and Appendix D contains a list of Amendments made to the General Plan since 1994.

In addition to the *General Plan Background Report* and *General Plan Policy Document*, an *Environmental Impact Report* (EIR) analyzing the impacts and implications of the *Countywide General Plan* has been prepared. The *EIR*, prepared to meet the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act, is not a formal part of the *General Plan*.

Community Plans

Over the years, Placer County has adopted seventeen *community plans* (including the one area plan for the Sunset Industrial Area) to provide a more detailed focus on specific geographic areas within the unincorporated county. These plans are periodically reviewed and updated. Although formats vary, the *community plans*, like the *Countywide General Plan,* include goals, policies, implementation programs, land use and circulation plan diagrams, and supporting background material. The *community plans* generally address the same topics or issues addressed in the *Countywide General Plan.* In some cases, however, a *community plan* addresses local issues not discussed in the *Countywide General Plan*, and in other cases a *community plan* covers a narrower range of discussion than does the *Countywide General Plan*.

The goals and policies contained in the *community plans* are intended to supplement and elaborate upon the goals and policies of the *Countywide General Plan;* they do not supersede them. In the case of the *Land Use Diagram*, there is no overlap--a *community plan* land use diagram is the only applicable diagram within a *community plan* area.

The areas covered by *community plans* adopted as part of the *Placer County General Plan* are shown in Figure 1. These plans include the following:

- Alpine Meadows
- Auburn/Bowman
- Colfax
- Dry Creek/West Placer
- Foresthill
- Granite Bay
- Horseshoe Bar/Penryn
- Martis Valley
- Meadow Vista
- North Tahoe
- Ophir
- Sheridan
- Squaw Valley
- Sunset Industrial Area
- Tahoe City Area
- Weimar/Applegate/Clipper Gap
- West Shore Area

COUNTYWIDE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE PROCESS

Placer County initiated a comprehensive update of its *Countywide General Plan* in November 1990. The update program was structured according to the following ten phases:

Phases 1 and 2:	General Plan Update Startup
Phase 3:	Update Initiation and Framework
Phase 4:	Draft General Plan Background Report
Phase 5:	Issues and Options Report
Phase 6:	Draft General Plan Policy Document
Phase 7:	Draft Environmental Impact Report
Phase 8:	Public Review of Draft General Plan/EIR
Phase 9:	Final General Plan/EIR
Phase 10:	Final Documents

The following paragraphs describe the activities undertaken and meetings conducted during each of these phases.

Phases 1, 2 and 3: Plan Update Startup and Update Initiation Framework

Phases 1 and 2, which ran from November 1990 through October 1991, involved three tasks. The first was to solicit initial direction from the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission regarding the scope, content, format, and process to be followed during the General Plan update process. The second task was to establish a draft general plan outline and a work program and schedule. The third task was to select technical consultants to assist the County in preparing the updated general plan. For assistance with these tasks, the County retained J. Laurence Mintier & Associates to act as the General Plan Coordinator.

During Phase 3, the County worked with the Consultant Team to establish a program foundation for preparation of the General Plan. This included a series of meetings among the consultants to coordinate their respective efforts and the preparation of base maps for the project. Most importantly, however, during Phase 3 the County conducted a series of four town hall meetings to explain the update process, describe opportunities for public participation, and solicit early input from the public regarding issues to be addressed in the General Plan.

Phase 4: Draft General Plan Background Report

Phase 4 focused on the preparation of the first major report published as part of the Update program: the *Draft General Plan Background Report*. This report, which was released for public review in October 1992, provided background information on all issues to be addressed in the General Plan, focusing particularly on existing conditions and trends in Placer County. It also served as the environmental setting discussion for the *Draft Environmental Impact Report*.

Phase 5: Issues and Options Report

During Phase 5 of the Update program, the County worked with the Consultants to prepare the *Issues and Options Report*. The purpose of the report was to solicit policy direction from the Board of Supervisors on key issues to be addressed in the General Plan Update. This direction provided the framework for the development of the goals, policies, implementation programs, and land use and circulation plans contained in the *Draft General Plan Policy Document*. In preparing the *Issues and Options Report*, County Staff and Consultants identified the most critical policy issues to be addressed in the General Plan Update based on the findings of the *Draft General Plan Background Report* and other work undertaken in conjunction with the Update, including the series of town hall meetings conducted during Phase 3 in November 1991. Staff and Consultants then identified two or more options for addressing these critical issues and analyzed the options for their potential implications.

The issues discussed in the *Issues and Options Report* were of two types. First, to address specific growth and environmental issues, the report discussed and posed options for several sets of policy/programmatic issues under the following headings: Land Use and Housing; Transportation and Circulation; Natural Resources; Infrastructure; and Fiscal and Financial Issues. The second part of the *Issues and Options Report* addressed conceptual land use alternatives representing broadly-defined choices for the overall pattern of future growth in Placer County.

The *Issues and Options Report* was presented to the public in a series of six town hall meetings in January and February 1993 and was the subject of seven public meetings of the Board of Supervisors between February and July 1993. The result of these meetings was a set of directions to County Staff and Consultants regarding the issues addressed in the *Issues and Options Report*. These directions provided the overall framework for the goals, policies, implementation programs, and land use and circulation plan diagrams contained in the *Draft Policy Document*.

Phase 6 and 7: Draft Policy Document and Environmental Impact Report

During Phases 6 and 7, County Staff and Consultants prepared the *Draft General Plan Policy Document* and *Draft EIR* following the direction provided by the Board of Supervisors in Phase 5. The *Draft Policy Document and EIR* were published on October 1, 1993.

Phase 8: Public Review of Draft General Plan

Phase 8 was arguably the most critical phase of the entire General Plan Update Program. During that phase, the County conducted four town hall meetings (in October 1993) to review the *Draft Policy Document and Draft EIR*. More importantly, both the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors conducted public hearings to review the reports and accept public comments on them.

Between October 1993 and February 1994, the Planning Commission conducted nine meetings to review the draft reports, seven of which included formal opportunities for public input. These meetings were held on the following dates: October 14, 28, and 29, 1993; November 11 and 18, 1993; January 13 and 19, 1994; and February 2, 1994. The result of these meetings was a set of recommendations to the Board of Supervisors regarding the full range of issues discussed in the *Draft Policy Document*.

Based on the Planning Commission's recommendations, County Staff and Consultants prepared another version of the *Draft Policy Document* for review by the Board of Supervisors. This version, which showed the Commission's recommended revisions in highlight/strikeout form, was published on February 18, 1994. The Board of Supervisors then held public hearings on March 22, 1994, and April 5, 1994. At the latter meeting, the Board accepted the Commission's recommendations and provided County Staff and Consultants with several other important directions. The Board then held additional hearings on May 3, 1994; June 7, 1994; and June 21, 1994, at which it elaborated on its earlier directions and approved various modifications to the *Draft Plan*.

Phase 9: Final General Plan/EIR

During Phase 9, County Staff and Consultants revised the *Policy Document* according to the Board of Supervisors' directions from Phase 8. The Consultants then revised the *Draft EIR* to reflect changes made to the *Draft Policy Document* and to respond to comments received during the course of public review. In addition, County Staff worked with the Consultants to revise the *Draft Background Report*.

The Board conducted its final public hearing on August 16, 1994. At the meeting, the Board adopted the new *Countywide General Plan*, including the *Policy Document* and *Background Report*, and certified the *Final EIR*.

Phase 10: Final Documents

Phase 10 consisted simply of publishing all final documents (*Background Report, Policy Document,* and *EIR*) and printing them for public distribution.

REVIEW AND UPDATE

Placer County initiated a targeted update of its *Countywide General Plan* in January 2012 which included ministerial changes and incorporation of Board of Supervisors adopted resolutions. The update was intended to identify and revise language throughout the document that was out-of-date.

Based on annual General Plan implementation monitoring reports, implementation program schedules were updated. Changes mostly consisted of edits, corrections, and new figures. Policies and implementation programs were revised to reflect current County policy and practice and changes in State and Federal laws since 1994. It did not include any specific development projects, does not modify General Plan land use designations, the land use map or capital improvement program.

HOUSING ELEMENT UPDATE

As required by State law, the County updated its 1992 Housing Element in FY 01-02 and again in 08-09. The updated Housing Element, which addressed Placer County's "fair share" of the region's housing needs, was adopted by the Board of Supervisors on March 13, 2003. It was updated and superseded by an amended Housing Element on May 12, 2009, and certified by the State in June 10, 2009. Another update of the County's Housing Element is being prepared, and is anticipated to be completed by October 2013. The planning period for the new Housing Element is for January 1, 2013 to October 31, 2021.

COMMUNITY PLAN UPDATES

As of December 2012, the County has been involved in updates of the following community plans:

- Auburn Bowman Community Plan. Adopted in 1994 and updated in 1999.
- Dry Creek-West Placer Community Plan. Adopted in May 1990. Amended by Resolution No. 94-238 in August 1994 to include the West Placer Specific Plan Area and updated in 2012.
- Foresthill Divide Community Plan. Replaced the Foresthill General Plan. Adopted on December 9, 2008.
- Granite Bay Community Plan. Update adopted on February 28, 2012.
- Horseshoe Bar/Penryn Community Plan. Adopted August 16, 1994. Amended March 19, 1996 and updated June 28, 2005.
- Martis Valley Community Plan. Replaced 1975 Martis Valley General Plan. Adopted December 16, 2003.
- Sunset Industrial Area Plan. Adopted 1997 and amended in May 2005.
- Tahoe Basin Community Plans. The three plans are currently being updated.
- Sheridan General Plan. Adopted in 1976. Currently being revised.

PLACER COUNTY COMMUNITY PLANS ADOPTED SINCE 1994

- Tahoe City General Plan, March 7, 1994
  Tahoe City Community Plan, March 7, 1994
- North Tahoe Area General Plan, April 30, 1996
  Tahoe Vista Community Plan, April 30, 1996
  North Tahoe Community Plan, April 1, 1996
  North Community Plans Appendix Documents, April 30, 1996
  North Stateline Community Plan, April 1996
  Kings Beach Industrial Community Plan, April 30, 1996
  Kings Beach Community Plan, April 30, 1996
  Carnelian Bay Community Plan, April 30, 1996
- West Shore Area (Lake Tahoe and Ward Valley) General Plan, October 19, 1998
- Meadow Vista Community Plan, May 21, 1996

DESIGN GUIDELINES

- Design Guidelines Manual, Revised May 21, 1996.
- Landscape Design Guidelines, Revised September 1994. New document currently in draft form.
- North Auburn Design Guidelines Modification, September 24, 2003.
- North Tahoe Design Guidelines (appendix document to the Community Plans).
- Rural Design Guidelines, July 8, 1997.

OTHER DOCUMENTS

- Bickford Ranch (Boulder Ridge area) Specific Plan adopted December 18, 2002.
- Community Wildfire Protection Plan (2007)
- Dry Creek Greenway Regional Vision, November 8, 2011.
- Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP), 2005.
- Placer County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (adopted by Airport Land Use Commission) October 24, 2000.
- Placer County Zoning Ordinance, adopted July 25, 1995, Edition #7, Printed December 2002, Updated in September 2011 as Edition #10.
- Placer Legacy Open Space and Agricultural Conservation Program, Implementation Report, June 2000.
- Placer Vineyards Specific Plan adopted June 2007.
- Regional University Specific Plan adopted September 10, 2008.
- Riolo Vineyards Specific Plan adopted August 2008.
- Tahoe Basin Stormwater Management Plan adopted May 1, 2007.
- Truckee River Basin Stormwater Management Program adopted December 14, 2007.
- West Placer Stormwater Management Plan adopted June 29, 2004.