
Chapter 1
Project Description and Impact Summary

CHAPTER 1

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND IMPACT SUMMARY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The subject of this *Environmental Impact Report* is a comprehensive update of the Placer County *Countywide General Plan*. This chapter of the *Final EIR* describes the project setting, defines the project, explains Placer County's General Plan Update process, and summarizes the significant environmental effects of the *General Plan*.

1.2 PROJECT SETTING

Placer County, located in northeastern California, covers approximately 1,500 square miles of diverse geography between Sacramento and the Nevada border. Figure 1-1 shows the county's regional location and Figure 1-2 shows the location of the county's incorporated cities and unincorporated communities.

The western part of Placer County, which is part of the Sacramento Valley, is generally flat and ranges in elevation from 45 to 1,000 feet. This part of the county, called South Placer, contains the cities of Roseville, Rocklin, Lincoln, and Loomis, as well as the unincorporated communities of Sheridan and Granite Bay. The South Placer area has experienced the county's most significant growth in recent years, in terms of both new housing and commercial and industrial development. Most of the county's major manufacturing facilities are located in this part of the county. South Placer County also supports the bulk of the county's agricultural activities, including over 86,000 acres of land enrolled in California Land Conservation Act (Williamson Act) contracts.

The central part of the Placer County consists of the Foothill region, which includes the cities of Auburn and Colfax, and the unincorporated communities of Foresthill, Penryn, Newcastle, Applegate, Weimar, Gold Run, Meadow Vista, Dutch Flat, Alta, and Baxter. The Foothills area is in the heart of what constituted Gold Rush Country in the 1800s. As in South Placer, many residents of the Foothills area commute to work in the Sacramento area.

The eastern part of Placer County is the High Sierra region. The High Sierra area includes the resort communities and ski areas around Lake Tahoe. This is an internationally-known resort area, with visitors coming to hike, fish, golf, enjoy the outdoors, visit nearby Nevada casinos in the summer, and ski at the many resorts in the winter. Tourism and recreation are the dominant industries in the region, providing jobs for the residents of the unincorporated communities of Tahoe City, Tahoe Vista, Carnelian Bay, Homewood, Kings Beach, Tahoma, Emigrant Gap, Soda Springs, and Squaw Valley.

A thorough description of the environmental setting of Placer County is contained in the *General Plan Background Report*, which is formally incorporated as part of this *Final EIR*. The *Background Report* was prepared in draft form during Phase 4 of the General Plan Update Program and released for public review in October 1992. Based on comments received since publication of the draft and on County Staff and Consultant review, the report was revised prior to final publication and adoption. The *Background Report* provides background information on all issues addressed in the *Countywide General Plan*, focusing particularly on existing conditions and trends in Placer County. It is organized according to the following 11 chapters:

1. Land Use
2. Housing
3. Population
4. Economic Conditions and Fiscal Considerations
5. Transportation and Circulation
6. Public Facilities
7. Public Services
8. Recreational and Cultural Resources
9. Natural Resources
10. Safety
11. Noise

While the *Background Report* serves as the primary environmental setting description for this *Final EIR*, each topical analysis section in Chapters 3 through 9 in this *Final EIR* begins with a brief setting summary that references the pertinent section(s) of the *Background Report* containing detailed descriptions.

1.3 1967 GENERAL PLAN

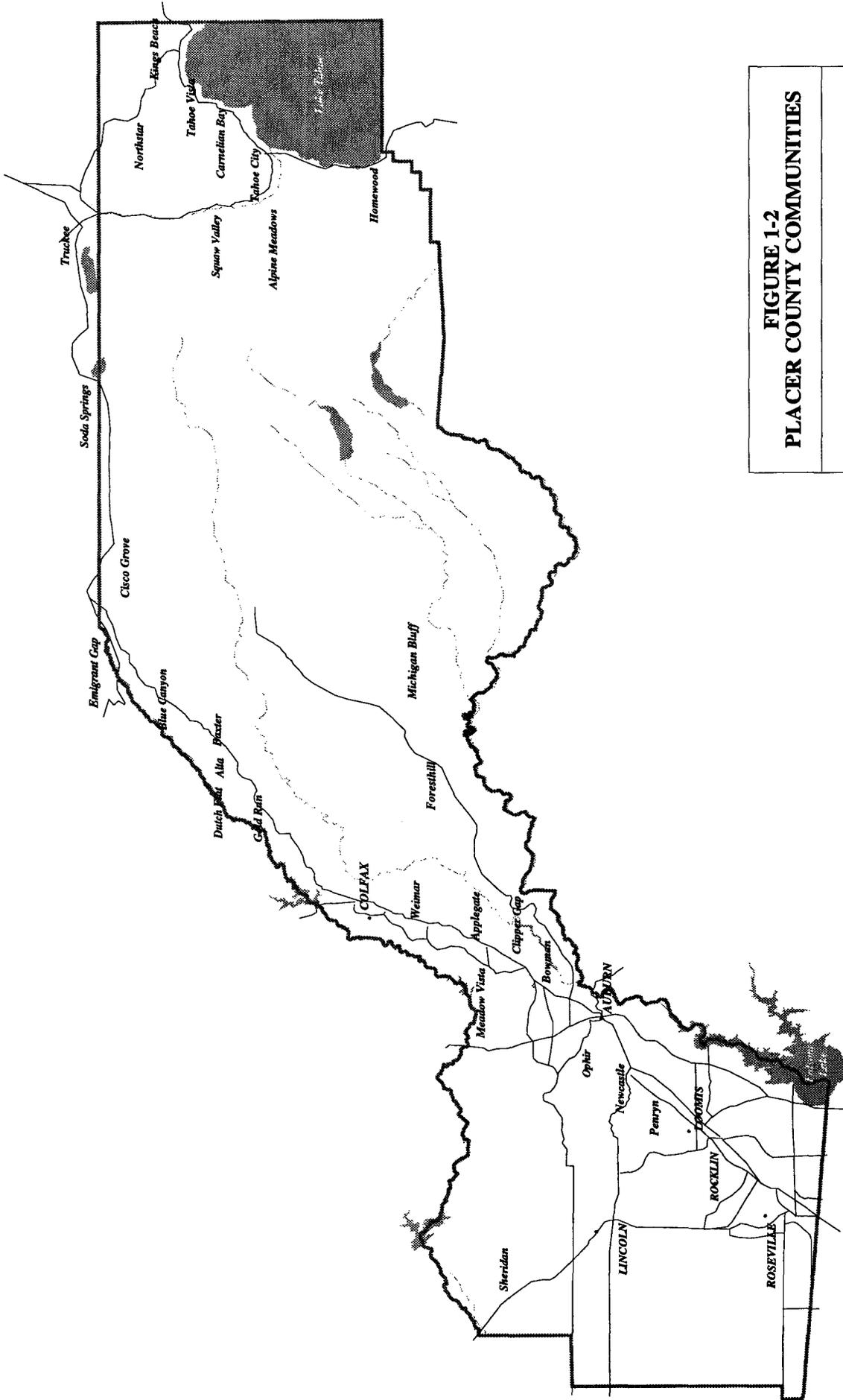
As noted above, the subject of this *Final EIR* is a comprehensive update of the Placer County *Countywide General Plan*. The project updates the County's existing General Plan, which was adopted in 1967, and subsequently supplemented with several community plans and various elements prepared as amendments to the original 1967 General Plan. The *1967 Plan* consists of the following countywide elements (listed in order of date of adoption):

Placer County General Plan (Land Use Plan)	December 1967
Economic Growth Analysis	1970
Aviation Plan	November 1971
Conservation and Recreation Plan	December 1971
Open Space and Conservation Plan	June 1973
Seismic Safety Element	April 1977
Scenic Highway Element	May 1977
Noise Element	June 1977
Housing Element	June 1984
Mineral Resource Conservation Plan	September 1984
Agricultural Element	March 1989

The County also adopted a new housing element in June 1992 as part of the General Plan Update Program to comply with a special statutory deadline.

In addition to amendments to the plan in the form of countywide elements, the *1967 Plan* has been supplemented by adoption of 21 "community plans" or new "area general plans" for different parts of the unincorporated county. These community plans are as follows (listed in order of adoption):

Tinker Knob General Plan	June 1967
Colfax General Plan	November 1967
Westville General Plan	December 1967
Alpine Meadows (Bear Valley) General Plan	October 1969
Lake Tahoe General Plan	1969
North Tahoe General Plan	March 1970



**FIGURE 1-2
PLACER COUNTY COMMUNITIES**

Date: 07-26-94
 Prepared by:
 J. Laurence Mintier & Associates

Ward Valley General Plan	July 1970
Lincoln Urban Area Comprehensive Plan	June 1971
Meadow Vista - West Applegate General Plan	January 1975
Martis Valley General Plan	August 1975
Loomis Basin General Plan	1975
Sheridan General Plan	January 1976
Weimar-Applegate-Clipper Gap General Plan	September 1980
Sunset General Plan	1980
Foresthill General Plan	April 1981
Ophir General Plan	June 1983
Squaw Valley General Plan	October 1983
Granite Bay Community Plan	May 1989
Dry Creek/West Placer Community Plan	May 1990
Tahoe City Community/General Plan	April 1994
Auburn/Bowman Community Plan	June 1994

Section 1.6, under "Disposition of Existing General Plan Components," describes how the adoption of the *Countywide General Plan* will affect the *1967 Plan* and the various community plans and area plans.

1.4 THE GENERAL PLAN PREPARATION PROCESS

Placer County initiated the comprehensive update of its countywide General Plan in January 1991. The primary goals of the update program were stated as follows:

1. To update and provide internally consistent general plan goals, policies, and implementation measures.
2. To ensure consistency between the *Countywide General Plan* and the numerous community plans and functional plans.
3. To provide a comprehensive assessment of impacts associated with growth and to define appropriate mitigation measures to reduce or eliminate significant effects.
4. To provide an analysis of infrastructure and service level requirements and a fiscal analysis of the *General Plan*.

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

Each of these phases is described in the following paragraphs.

Phases 1 and 2: General Plan Update Startup

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.

Phase 3: Update Initiation and Framework

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 efforts and the preparation of base maps for the project. Most importantly, however, during Phase 3 the County conducted a series of four townhall 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 *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 townhall 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 townhall 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*. Appendix A to this *Final EIR* is a detailed description of the *Issues and Options Report*, including a summary of the directions provided by the Board of Supervisors as a result of the report.

Phase 6: Draft General Plan Policy Document

During Phase 6, County Staff and Consultants prepared the *Draft General Plan Policy Document*, following the direction provided by the Board of Supervisors in Phase 6 and with input from the environmental analysis conducted in Phase 7. The *Draft Policy Document* was published on October 1, 1993.

Phase 7: Draft Environmental Impact Report

During this phase, which ran concurrently with Phase 6, County Staff and Consultants prepared the *Draft Environmental Impact Report*. As potentially-adverse impacts of the plan were identified through technical analysis, policies and programs to address these impacts were identified and incorporated into the *Draft Plan*. The *Draft EIR* was published along with the *Draft Policy Document* on October 1, 1993.

Phase 8: Public Review of Draft General Plan/EIR

Phase 8 was the most critical phase of the entire General Plan Update Program. Early in this phase, the County conducted four townhall meetings (in October 1993) to review the *Draft Policy Document* and *Draft EIR* for the public. Following the townhall meetings, 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 General Plan* and *Draft EIR*, 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;
February 2, 1994; and
May 12, 1994.

The result of these meetings was a set of recommendations to the Board of Supervisors regarding the full range of issues addressed 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 was published on February 18, 1994. The Board of Supervisors then held public hearings on March 22 and April 5, 1994. At the latter meeting, the Board endorsed most of the Commission's recommendations and provided County Staff and Consultants with several other important directions. The Board held additional meetings on May 3, June 7, and June 21, 1994, at which it elaborated its earlier directions.

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*.

Phase 9 also included public meetings of both the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors. The Planning Commission met on May 12, 1994, to review the Board's actions on the Commission's recommended changes to the *Draft Policy Document*. The Board then conducted its final public hearing on August 16, 1994. At that meeting, the Board adopted the new *Countywide General Plan*, including the *Policy Document* and *Background Report*, and certified this *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.

1.5 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

In providing direction to County Staff and Consultants on the *Issues and Options Report* during Phase 5 of the General Plan Update Program, the Placer County Board of Supervisors adopted the following statement of the "primary objectives" for their preferred land use alternative:

1. Provide direction to guide growth in the County so that the future Placer County residents and their families' are protected.
2. Specify that new growth must pay its own way and make other positive contributions which will protect the lifestyles of Placer County residents and minimize adverse impacts on the existing quality of life in the county.
3. Protect agricultural lands.
4. Balance growth by separating and individualizing population centers.
5. Plan to accommodate the County's share of statewide growth.

1.6 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The update of the Placer County *Countywide General Plan* entailed a set of several related actions, which combined constitute "the project" for purposes of this *Final EIR*. Following are brief descriptions of each aspect of "the project."

ADOPTION OF THE NEW COUNTYWIDE GENERAL PLAN

The primary action in the General Plan Update is the adoption of the new *Countywide General Plan*. The following summarizes the organization and content of the *Countywide General Plan* and the objectives of the 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. As noted earlier, 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, land use diagram, and circulation plan diagram that constitute Placer County's formal policies for land use, development, and environmental quality.

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

Part II of the *General Plan Policy Document* contains explicit statements of goals, policies, standards, implementation programs, and quantified objectives. Part II is divided into the following ten sections, roughly corresponding to the organization of issues in the *General Plan Background Report*:

1. Land Use
2. Housing (adopted June 22, 1992)
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 that amplify the goal statement and a set of 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* in June 1992 in order to comply with unique statutory requirements for the preparation and adoption of housing elements.

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

DISPOSITION OF EXISTING GENERAL PLAN COMPONENTS

In conjunction with the adoption of the new *Countywide General Plan*, the County is taking various actions on the documents that make up the existing General Plan. These actions take one of three forms: validation, modification, or rescission. Those "elements" of the existing plan that the County feels are still valid reflections of current community views and desires and are consistent with countywide interests are

being validated without change; the County is taking no formal action on these elements, which consist almost exclusively of *community plans*. Those "elements" that are essentially consistent with the new *Countywide General Plan*, but require some changes to maintain internal consistency, are being modified. Those that are superseded or rendered superfluous by adoption of the new *Countywide Plan* are being rescinded or "unadopted." Table 1-1 summarizes the County's action concerning all the elements that constitute the current countywide General Plan, and Table 1-2 summarizes the same information for the County's existing community plans.

TABLE 1-1

DISPOSITION OF EXISTING COUNTYWIDE ELEMENTS

Element or Plan	Disposition	Comment
Agricultural Element	Rescind	Policy content absorbed in new plan.
Aviation Plan	Rescind	
Conservation and Recreation Plan	Rescind	Policy content absorbed in new plan.
Economic Growth Analysis	Rescind	
Housing Element (adopted June 1992)	Validate	Element already adopted as part of update in order to comply with statutory deadline.
Mineral Resource Conservation Plan	Rescind	Policy content absorbed in new plan.
Noise Element	Rescind	Policy content absorbed in new plan.
Open Space and Conservation Plan	Rescind	Policy content absorbed in new plan.
Placer County General Plan (1967 Plan)	Rescind	
Scenic Highway Element	Rescind	Policy content absorbed in new plan.
Seismic Safety Element	Rescind	Policy content absorbed in new plan.

TABLE 1-2
DISPOSITION OF COMMUNITY PLANS

Plan	Disposition	Comment
Alpine Meadows General Plan	Validate	
Auburn/Bowman General Plan	Validate	
Colfax General Plan	Modify	Reduce size of planning area to remove areas within the American River canyon.
Dry Creek/West Placer Community Plan	Modify	The area south of Baseline Road, west of Watt Avenue, north of Sacramento County, and east of Sutter County will be designated as a specific plan area and addressed in an amendment to the plan.
Foresthill General Plan	Validate	
Granite Bay Community Plan	Validate	
Lake Tahoe General Plan	Validate	Acknowledge reduction in holding capacity to reflect development restrictions and conservancy purchases within the Tahoe Basin.
Lincoln Urban Area Comprehensive Plan	Rescind	Allow countywide plan to govern.
Loomis Basin General Plan	Validate	To be superseded by the adoption of the Horseshoe Bar/Penryn Community Plan.
Martis Valley General Plan	Validate	
Meadow Vista -West Applegate General Plan	Validate	
North Tahoe General Plan	Validate	Acknowledge reduction in holding capacity to reflect development restrictions and conservancy purchases within the Tahoe Basin. To be superseded by the North Tahoe Community Plan.
Ophir General Plan	Validate	
Sheridan General Plan	Validate	
Squaw Valley General Plan	Validate	
Sunset General Plan	Validate	
Tahoe City Community/General Plan	Validate	
Tinker Knob General Plan	Rescind	
Ward Valley General Plan	Validate	Acknowledge reduction in holding capacity to reflect development restrictions and conservancy purchases within the Tahoe Basin.
Weimar-Applegate-Clipper Gap General Plan	Validate	
Westville General Plan	Rescind	

IMPLEMENTING ZONING

In addition to adopting the *Countywide General Plan* and taking various actions on the *1967 Plan* and the existing community plans, the County will revise zoning in select areas to reflect the new *General Plan*. The most significant of these affect the eastern part of the Colfax General Plan Area.

1.7 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE DRAFT AND FINAL GENERAL PLAN/EIR

This *Final EIR* was prepared as a comprehensive revision of the *Draft EIR*. Revisions to the *Draft EIR* reflect two types of changes: (1) those made in response to land use and policy changes made by the Board of Supervisors to the *Draft General Plan* as a result of public review of the *Draft Policy Document*; and (2) editorial, substantive, and technical changes made in response to comments received on the *Draft EIR*. The changes to the *Policy Document* and *EIR* are summarized in Section 1.7 of Chapter 1 of this *EIR*, starting on page 1-10.

CHANGES TO THE DRAFT GENERAL PLAN

For purposes of this *EIR* analysis, the most significant changes to the *Draft General Plan* affected the *Land Use Diagram*, the *Circulation Diagram*, buffer standards, and standards concerning the consideration of future amendments to the *General Plan*. Following are summaries of these changes.

Land Use Diagram

The *Draft Countywide General Plan* identified four "new growth areas" to accommodate new urban and suburban development. In the *Policy Document* adopted by the Board of Supervisors, all references to these new growth areas were deleted and the Specific Plan Area (SP) designations for these new growth areas were removed from the *Land Use Diagram*. These changes are reflected in the elimination of the Stanford Ranch West and Placer Villages new growth areas and the reversion of these areas to the designations that appeared on the previous general plan land use map (a mix of industrial and agricultural designations for Stanford Ranch West and agricultural designations for Placer Villages). In addition, the Bickford Ranch new growth area was eliminated, but designated Rural Residential, and the Villages of Dry Creek new growth area was included as part of the *Dry Creek/West Placer Community Plan* (and accordingly removed from the *Countywide General Plan Land Use Diagram*).

During its review of the *Draft General Plan*, the Board of Supervisors also considered requests for changes to the *Draft Land Use Diagram* from approximately 80 landowners or coalitions of landowners. Collectively, these requests covered approximately 300 parcels totalling about 19,000 acres. Of these, the Board agreed to 31 changes affecting 146 parcels, most of which related to additional building sites in rural residential areas. Four of the changes, however, affected larger areas. They are as follows: (1) expansion of the existing Auburn Valley Country Club to accommodate an additional 200 homes; (2) increasing the development potential of a 780-acre parcel off of Mount Vernon Road from 29 to 156 dwelling units; (3) change in the development potential of 1,100 acres east of Sheridan from a 20-acre minimum to a 10-acre minimum; and (4) changing the designation of an area along the south side of Highway 193, east of Sierra College Boulevard, from Agriculture-10 acre to Rural Residential with a Farm Zone-5 acre minimum. The effects of these changes on overall development potential and the 2010 and 2040 growth scenarios used in this *EIR* are further explained below under the description of changes to the *EIR*.

Circulation Plan Diagram

Changes to the *Draft Land Use Diagram*, particularly in the Stanford Ranch West and Placer Villages areas, resulted in several associated changes to the *Draft Circulation Plan Diagram*. Primarily, these changes reflect a reduction in the number and size of roadways necessary north of Baseline Road and west of Fiddymont Road in the southwestern part of the county.

Buffers

To ensure that future development in Placer County does not result in conflicts between potentially incompatible types of development, the *Draft Policy Document* included a section called "Land Use Buffer Zone Standards." This section of the *Policy Document* was modified in several ways. First, the Sensitive Habitat Buffer standards were revised consistent with the direction provided by the Board of Supervisors during review of *Draft Plan* policies. Second, the Public Facility Buffer standards were modified to prohibit any new residential development entitlements within one mile of solid waste disposal sites. Finally, as a result of the removal of the new growth area designations from the *Draft Land Use Diagram*, the Urban Separator Buffer discussion that appeared in the *Draft Policy Document* was eliminated.

Standards for Consideration of Future General Plan Amendments

Part III of the *Draft Policy Document*, which described development standards for each of the new growth areas designated on the *Draft Land Use Diagram*, was replaced by a description of standards for consideration of future amendments to the *Countywide General Plan*. These standards apply to future requests for redesignation of land for urban and suburban development.

CHANGES TO THE EIR

Largely as a result of land use and policy changes in the *Policy Document*, the *Final EIR* differs from the *Draft EIR* in several respects. The most significant of the differences are as follows:

Development Potential

By far, the most significant change to the *Draft Policy Document* with respect to this environmental analysis was the removal of the new growth areas from the *Land Use Diagram*. That change resulted in the reversion of approximately 8,300 acres in the Stanford Ranch West and Placer Villages new growth areas to principally agricultural designations. The reversion of these two areas resulted in a reduction in residential development potential of approximately 24,000 dwelling units and a reduction in commercially- and industrially-designated land of approximately 1,300 acres. The Villages of Dry Creek new growth area was added to the development potential of the Dry Creek/West Placer community plan area, but the holding capacity of the area within the geographic boundaries of the Villages of Dry Creek was not affected by the change. The designation of the Bickford Ranch new growth area as Rural Residential resulted in a reduction of the residential holding capacity of the area by approximately 550 units.

In addition, as noted above, the Board of Supervisors approved several revisions to the *Draft Land Use Diagram* that affected rural residential areas. These changes, most of which consisted of minor density increases, affected approximately 4,700 acres and resulted in the potential for approximately 2,200 additional units in the unincorporated area of the county. As described above, most of this increased development potential resulted from four revisions to the *Land Use Diagram* (i.e., expansion of the existing Auburn Valley Country Club, increased development potential off of Mount Vernon Road, change

in development potential of 1,100 acres east of Sheridan, and changing the designation of an area along the south side of Highway 193, east of Sierra College Boulevard).

Between publication of the *Draft General Plan* and *Draft EIR* in October 1993 and the adoption of the *General Plan* and certification of the *Final EIR*, two other changes occurred that removed land from the purview of the *Countywide General Plan*. The first was the City of Lincoln's annexation of 2,800 acres of land to the south of the city. This annexation resulted in a reduction in *Countywide General Plan* holding capacity of 168 dwelling units. The second change resulted from the County's adoption of the *Tahoe City Community Plan*, which resulted in the shifting of 104 acres of Rural Residential land and 4,139 acres of Timberland 80 from the jurisdiction of the *Countywide General Plan* to the jurisdiction of the *Tahoe City Community Plan*. This change resulted in a 156-dwelling unit reduction in unincorporated holding capacity.

2010 and 2040 Growth Scenarios

The long-term planning scenarios used in the *Draft EIR* (see Chapter 2) were revised to reflect changes to the *Draft Land Use Diagram* described above. The scenarios of population and employment growth in Placer County prepared for the October 1993 *Draft EIR* reflected the large amount of development potential in the new growth areas. Changes to the *Land Use Diagram* required revisions to the scenarios of where growth and development in South Placer County might locate between 1990 and 2040. The revisions affecting the new growth areas resulted in changes to the development scenarios in South Placer County only. The other changes to the *Land Use Diagram*, considered cumulatively, are not significant enough to warrant revisions of the scenarios.

Because of the large development potential in South Placer cities and some community plan areas, the revisions to the *Land Use Diagram* are assumed not to change the total amount of growth that could occur in South Placer County by 2040. Analysis for this EIR indicates that the cities of Lincoln, Rocklin, and Roseville, in combination with the other unincorporated areas of South Placer County, could accommodate all the growth projected through the year 2040.

Compared to the scenarios prepared for the *Draft EIR*, more of the growth would occur in the cities, and less in the unincorporated areas, because of the changes in the *Land Use Diagram* removing the development potential that would have been possible in two major new growth areas in unincorporated South Placer County. Because that revision reduces the overall development potential of South Placer County, the cities and the community plan areas would be closer to "build-out" by 2040 than they were under the scenario presented in the *DEIR*.

Tables 1-1 and 1-2 compare the household population scenarios prepared for the *DEIR* and *FEIR*, highlighting the differences for the cities and the unincorporated areas of South Placer County. Under the revised household population scenario, South Placer unincorporated areas would absorb 20 percent of the growth expected between 1990 and 2040, while the cities of Lincoln, Rocklin, and Roseville would absorb 80 percent of the growth (see Table 1-1). Under the revised scenario, the percentage of the total population living in unincorporated South Placer County would decline slightly over time. By contrast, under the *DEIR* scenario, unincorporated South Placer would absorb about 40 percent of the population growth expected between 1990 and 2040. The share of the total South Placer population living in unincorporated areas would increase from about 25 percent in 1990 to almost 35 percent in 2040.

Table 1-2 compares the employment scenarios prepared for the *DEIR* and *FEIR*. Under the revised scenario unincorporated areas would absorb 16 percent of the South Placer employment growth expected

between 1991 and 2040. The percentage distribution of South Placer employment between unincorporated areas and the cities would remain constant over time. Under the *DEIR* scenario, unincorporated South Placer would absorb almost two times as much employment growth. The share of employment in unincorporated areas would increase significantly over time. The percentage distribution of employment in South Placer would shift from 45 percent in the unincorporated areas and 55 percent in the cities to 30 percent in the unincorporated areas and 70 percent in the cities.

TABLE 1-1
COMPARISON OF EIR HOUSEHOLD POPULATION SCENARIOS
1990, 2010, and 2040

	1990		2010		2040		1990 to 2040	
	Population	Percent of Total						
FEIR SCENARIO								
South Placer								
Unincorporated	21,319	23%	44,375	22%	70,800	21%	49,481	20%
Cities	70,170	77%	155,700	78%	266,000	79%	195,830	80%
Total	91,489	100%	200,075	100%	336,800	100%	245,311	100%
Rest of Placer County								
Unincorporated	61,620	78%	84,160	77%	102,000	76%	40,380	73%
Cities	17,343	22%	25,765	23%	32,100	24%	14,757	27%
Total	78,963	100%	109,925	100%	134,100	100%	55,137	100%
TOTAL COUNTY	170,452		310,000		470,900		300,448	
DEIR (OCTOBER 1993) SCENARIO								
South Placer								
Unincorporated	21,319	23%	58,075	29%	115,900	34%	94,581	39%
Cities	70,170	77%	142,000	71%	220,900	66%	150,730	61%
Total	91,489	100%	200,075	100%	336,800	100%	245,311	100%
Rest of Placer County								
Unincorporated	61,620	78%	84,160	76%	102,000	76%	40,380	73%
Cities	17,343	22%	25,765	24%	32,100	24%	14,757	27%
Total	78,963	100%	109,925	100%	134,100	100%	55,137	100%
TOTAL COUNTY	170,452		310,000		470,900		300,448	

Source: Recht Hausrath & Associates

**TABLE 1-2
COMPARISON OF EIR EMPLOYMENT SCENARIOS
1990, 2010, and 2040**

	1990		2010		2040		1990 to 2040	
	Employees	Percent of Total	Employees	Percent of Total	Employees	Percent of Total	Employment	Percent of Total
FEIR SCENARIO								
South Placer								
Unincorporated	5,653	15%	17,495	16%	25,420	15%	19,767	16%
Cities	31,830	85%	94,000	84%	138,100	85%	106,270	84%
Total	37,483	100%	111,495	100%	163,520	100%	126,037	100%
Rest of Placer County								
Unincorporated	20,487	72%	29,505	71%	35,030	71%	14,543	68%
Cities	7,830	28%	12,000	29%	14,450	29%	6,620	32%
Total	28,317	100%	41,505	100%	49,480	100%	21,163	100%
TOTAL COUNTY	65,800		153,000		213,000		147,200	
DEIR (OCTOBER 1993) SCENARIO								
South Placer								
Unincorporated	5,653	15%	23,495	21%	48,320	30%	42,667	34%
Cities	31,830	85%	88,000	79%	115,200	70%	83,370	66%
Total	37,483	100%	111,495	100%	163,520	100%	126,037	100%
Rest of Placer County								
Unincorporated	20,487	72%	29,505	71%	35,030	71%	14,543	69%
Cities	7,830	28%	12,000	29%	14,450	29%	6,620	31%
Total	28,317	100%	41,505	100%	49,480	100%	21,163	100%
TOTAL COUNTY	65,800		153,000		213,000		147,200	

Source: Recht Hausrath & Associates

Schools Analysis

The *Final EIR* includes an analysis of school impacts, responding to several commentors on the *Draft EIR*, including local school districts and the County Office of Education, who suggested that such an analysis would be helpful. The schools analysis was added to Chapter 5 of this *EIR*.

Format Modifications

In addition to the changes made necessary by revisions to the *General Plan Policy Document* and the addition of the schools analysis, this *Final EIR* differs from the *Draft EIR* in terms of several format and organizational changes, as well as some modifications in the emphasis of some of the analyses. Three of these changes are worthy of note.

The first is the revised format of the alternatives analysis. Primarily in response to comments on the *DEIR*, the discussion of the alternatives that the County considered during the General Plan Update process was expanded. This includes the addition of a comparative analysis of the alternatives considered during the process and an expanded description of how the process has addressed the *State CEQA Guidelines'* directions concerning alternatives analysis. This *Final EIR* also includes a matrix comparing the significant impacts of the *Countywide General Plan* with those that might have occurred under the alternatives considered.

The second noteworthy change is the reorganization of Chapter 5, which was titled *Infrastructure* in the *DEIR*, but has been retitled *Non-County Infrastructure and Services*. The *DEIR's* analysis attracted several comments during public review regarding its level of specificity and emphasis. In response to those comments, the analysis was edited to more closely resemble the other *FEIR* analyses, and the emphasis of the analysis was modified to focus more specifically on impacts resulting from development in 2010, with a de-emphasis on development in 2040 and at buildout. Similar, yet minor, modifications in the specificity and emphasis of other analyses were also made.

Third, Chapter 6, County Facilities and Services, was modified to reflect recently-completed revisions to the *County Facilities Needed to Serve Growth (Facilities Study)*, which served as the foundation for the analysis in the *Draft EIR* and also serves as the basis of the analysis in this *Final EIR*. The modifications to Chapter 6 in this *Final EIR* generally make the report more consistent with the updated *Facilities Study*. There are, however, some key differences, especially in the facility standard assumptions. Another key change is that the base year for the analysis in Chapter 6 is now 1994, rather than 1990, so the facility standards are now based on current (1994) inventories and reflect 1994 population and employment estimates. Accordingly, the revised Chapter 6 now presents facility requirements for the increment of growth for the 16-year period 1994 through 2010, which makes it consistent with the *Facilities Study*. The final key difference in Chapter 6 is the elimination of the assessment of facility needs for the period from 2010 to 2040. These longer-term estimates are simply not useful for facilities planning and financing analysis; it is more appropriate to rely on the *Facilities Study's* more focused analysis of shorter-term implications, which the County intends to update periodically so as to maintain a current perspective on ongoing facilities planning and financing needs.

1.8 IMPACT SUMMARY

This *EIR* assesses the impacts of the *General Plan* by considering the combined effects of the implications of the *Land Use Diagram* and the policies and programs of the *Countywide Policy Document*. The *EIR* assesses the impacts of the *General Plan* as a whole to reach a determination concerning the level of significance of impacts for CEQA purposes. As described earlier, the *General Plan* and *EIR* were prepared simultaneously in an effort to incorporate environmental impact mitigation into the plan. As the two documents were prepared and analyzed, policies and programs were identified and developed to address potential environmental problems and to mitigate potential adverse impacts. As these policies and programs were identified and developed, they were incorporated into the *General Plan Policy Document*. Actions that might otherwise have been identified as "mitigation measures" in an *EIR* have, therefore, been made a part of the project.

SIGNIFICANT AND POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

This *EIR* concludes that in eight major areas the *General Plan*, taken as a whole, will result in potentially-significant or significant adverse impacts.

1. Land Use
2. Traffic Congestion
3. Cultural Resources
4. Loss of Farmland
5. Loss of Agricultural Production
6. Habitat Conversion and Habitat Quality Reduction
7. Increase in Air Pollutant Emissions
8. Traffic Noise

These impacts are summarized in the following paragraphs. In addition, Chapter 10, Mandatory CEQA Sections, compares these impacts with those that might have occurred under the alternatives considered during the General Plan Update process.

Land Use

The *General Plan* will result in changes to existing land use in the unincorporated area of Placer County. According to the *State CEQA Guidelines*, a project can result in adverse environmental impacts relating to land use if it has the potential to substantially alter the existing or planned land use of an area. Since development under the *Land Use Diagram* would result in changes to the existing land use pattern, the *General Plan* would result in a potentially significant adverse impact. There are no available measures to mitigate this impact.

Traffic Congestion

Development under the *General Plan* with all roadway improvements identified under the "2010 Mitigated Transportation System" would result in traffic levels of service on some roadway segments that exceed the *Policy Document's* level of service standards. Assuming all the transportation improvements outlined under the "2010 Mitigated Transportation System" are implemented by 2010, the *General Plan's* level of service standards would be met on all the non-state highways in the unincorporated areas of the county. Projected 2010 population and employment levels under the *General Plan* (including estimated growth in the incorporated areas of the county and growth in the rest of the metropolitan area) would result, however, in traffic volumes that would exceed level of service standards on some state highways as well as on some roadways in the incorporated areas of the county. Exceedance of service levels adopted as County policy is considered a significant, adverse impact. About 4.8 percent of the "lane miles" on the county's roadway system would operate at LOS "F" conditions during peak hours on an average weekday, nearly all of which would occur on state highways.

The standards, policies, and programs of the *Policy Document* would provide acceptable levels of service in 2010 on the roadways that are under Placer County's jurisdiction. Additional mitigation, however, would be needed for some state highway segments and some roadways within incorporated areas to operate at acceptable levels of service. Potential mitigation measures to resolve the anticipated 2010 congestion levels, as well as accommodate travel growth beyond 2010, could involve a variety of multi-modal solutions in the I-80 corridor. This includes transit, high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, and/or transportation demand management (TDM) measures within Placer County as well as Sacramento County. The *General Plan* calls for the County to participate in a multi-modal study of the I-80 corridor that will explore improvements to passenger rail service and HOV facilities. It is unknown whether such a study could result in improvements that would mitigate the impacts of the *General Plan*. There are, therefore, no feasible mitigation measures that the County can undertake to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level.

Cultural Resources

The cumulative effect of increased development, and thus human population and associated activity, could result in occasional accidental disruption and adverse effects on unidentified important archaeological, historic, or paleontological sites, in spite of the County's best efforts, as expressed in the *General Plan* policies and programs. The cumulative impact of development permitted under the *General Plan* is, therefore, unavoidable. This impact is considered potentially significant.

No feasible mitigation measures beyond the policies and programs included in the *Policy Document* are available that would reduce the possibility of occasional accidental disruption of important archaeological, historic, or paleontological sites to a less-than-significant level.

Loss of Farmland

Development under the *General Plan* would result in the the direct conversion of 3 percent of the county's total farmland by 2010 and the potential conversion of an additional 13 percent. This includes the direct conversion of 5.3 percent of the county's prime farmland and farmland of statewide importance and the potential conversion of an additional 4.4 percent. The direct and potential conversion of prime farmland is considered a significant adverse impact. While the *Policy Document* includes numerous policies to preserve designated agricultural areas and to minimize conflicts with adjacent uses, there are no feasible measures that would mitigate for the loss of prime farmland to a less-than-significant level.

Loss of Agricultural Production

Direct conversion of farmland as a result of development under the *General Plan* could result in the decline in the annual gross agricultural production value in the county. This would include a loss of 64 percent of the annual gross production value of fruit and nut crops in the county by 2010. This impact would occur primarily as a result of conversion of land suitable for the production of these crops in the foothill region. While this impact would be reduced by implementation of the policies and programs of the *Policy Document*, there are no feasible measures that would mitigate this impact to a less-than-significant level.

Habitat Conversion and Habitat Quality Reduction

This *EIR* assesses vegetation and wildlife habitat impacts resulting from two types of development: urban and suburban/rural residential. In both cases, the assessment concludes that the impacts of development under the *Land Use Diagram* would be significant.

Development under the *General Plan* would cause substantial habitat conversion in areas of the unincorporated county designated for urban uses. Such development through the year 2010 would eliminate approximately 7,200 acres (5 percent) of the unincorporated county's Urban, Agricultural, and Rangeland (UAR) vegetation community and its associated natural habitat. Urban development would also eliminate approximately 3,000 acres (10 percent) of the unincorporated county's Grassland vegetation community and its associated natural habitat.

Development in designated suburban and rural residential areas under the *General Plan* would also cause substantial habitat conversion and habitat quality reduction. Such development through the year 2010 would affect approximately 42,000 acres (28 percent) of the unincorporated county's UAR vegetation community and its associated natural habitat, 2,000 acres (7 percent) of the Grassland vegetation community, 4,000 acres (14 percent) of the Oak Woodland vegetation community, and 47,000 acres (10 percent) of the Conifer Forest vegetation community.

The adverse impact to vegetation and wildlife associated with habitat conversion is significant because such conversion could substantially affect special-status species or affect state or federal threatened and endangered species, and could result in a substantial conversion of natural vegetation communities, a substantial reduction in the diversity or numbers of associated fish, wildlife, and plant species, and could have a significant effect on associated rare natural plant communities and significant natural areas in designated suburban and rural residential areas and within and around new urban development.

While policies and programs of the *Policy Document* would partially mitigate the effects of habitat loss, they would not reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Furthermore, no mitigation measures are available that would reduce the impact of development under the *General Plan* to a less-than-significant level.

Increase in Air Pollutant Emissions

Development under the *General Plan* would result in substantial increases in nitrogen oxide (ozone precursor) and PM10 emissions that would result in violations of ambient air quality standards. While the *Policy Document* includes numerous policies and programs to reduce the effects on air quality, there are no measures available that would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level.

Traffic Noise

Development under the *General Plan* would result in an increase in traffic noise levels. Increased noise levels associated with traffic could encroach upon existing noise-sensitive land uses that currently are not exposed to traffic noise levels in excess of *Policy Document* standards. No mitigation measures beyond the policies and programs included in the *Policy Document* are available that would reduce the potential future noise impacts on existing noise-sensitive uses to a less-than-significant level.