

# The County of Yuba

## Community Development & Services Agency

**Kevin Mallen, Director**

Phone - (530) 749-5430 • Fax - (530) 749-5434

915 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 123  
Marysville, California 95901

www.co.yuba.ca.us



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**TO:** Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Kevin Mallen, CDSA Director   
Wendy Hartman, Planning Director 

**DATE:** October 14, 2008

**SUBJECT:** Yuba County General Plan Update 2030  
Board of Supervisors Study Session – Land Use Alternatives

**RECOMMENDATION:** Receive information on General Plan Update related activities and provide direction on the following questions:

1. *What are the key vision principles staff should utilize when developing the two refined alternatives?*
2. *What is the appropriate growth projection framework staff should utilize when developing the two refined alternatives?*

### SUMMARY

This is the first of two scheduled workshops/study sessions that the Board is holding for the purpose of ultimate selection of a “Preferred Alternative” for the General Plan Update. The staff is seeking guidance and direction in order to proceed with the preparation of two more detailed alternatives that can be analyzed further to provide the Board with the information necessary to make its ultimate selection. This session will look at some historical background information and context to assist the Board in developing a framework for the development of the two refined alternatives.

A second session is scheduled for October 21<sup>st</sup> to explain the five current alternatives, provide a summary of community feedback, and address any remaining questions the Board may have. The Board will then provide further direction on developing the two refined alternatives. Once developed, those two alternatives will be brought back to the Board for final selection of the “Preferred Alternative.”

### BACKGROUND

The General Plan plays an important role in the future of local jurisdictions. It is the outward manifestation of the collective desires of a community. While it is a legal document which provides for significant authority by the governing body, ultimately, it serves as a written

contract with the rest of the public that speaks to the priorities of the local populace. In layman's terms, it speaks to who we are, where we see ourselves in the future, and how we plan to make that happen. In light of this, following these principles provides the community, and those who come to work with us to meet those goals, with consistency, certainty, and the coordination of efforts. So to understand where we want to be, it's essential to understand where we are starting from.

1996 GENERAL PLAN GUIDING VISION: Every General Plan provides for a discussion section which provides a written description of the guiding vision which describes the framework for goals, policies, and implementation strategies which follow. The Yuba County 1996 General Plan is no exception. The vision statement speaks to a number of issues including future growth, agriculture, quality of life, and the economy. In order to provide a flavor of the 1996 vision, staff has selected some key statements expressed on these topics:

Future Growth & Development:

"The growth which will occur will be managed in such a fashion that present residents of Yuba County will also benefit from the economic activity generated, rather than allowing the benefits to impact only newcomers or geographic areas outside Yuba County."

"Scattered, unplanned development will be avoided with locales set aside for each lifestyle, in accordance with an overall plan."

Transportation:

"Transportation planning and land use planning will be carefully coordinated, assuring that roadways and other forms of transportation are adequate to handle projected needs, as determined by established thresholds and levels of service."

"Development patterns will be focused on reducing automobile trips, placing shopping and homes in proximity to one another, as well as maintaining a relationship between housing development and jobs availability. Through proper design and use of public transit, a measurable positive impact on air quality will be created."

Intergovernmental Coordination:

"The County and two cities will work closely together to devise plans for growth and development around the cities that do not pose future problems of service, access, and integration of development with city areas."

"Emphasis will be placed on retention of the benefits of growth within the region, rather than serving as a bedroom community to other regions."

Agriculture:

"The best agricultural lands, including those along the Feather River, Bear River and in Reclamation District 10, will be preserved, and the County will continue to give protection of agricultural land a high priority."

“The timber industry will remain a valuable part of the county’s agricultural mix and appropriate measures will continue to be taken to assure its long-term presence in the county.”

Water:

“Yuba County will carefully manage its water resource in accordance with a plan to assure its judicious and beneficial use.”

“Because Yuba County receives too much water at times, the County will improve its levees and drainage systems to assure 100 year protection for all areas planned for growth and development. Developers will be called upon to contribute their fair share to solutions.”

Environment:

“The Yuba River will be viewed as an asset to be showcased and promoted, and will be restored to a more natural condition with adequate public access.”

“Foothill oak woodlands, the quintessential California landscape, will be preserved as development occurs, in recognition of their value as open space, watershed, wildlife habitat, and livestock grazing areas.”

Quality of Life:

“Residents of Yuba County will attain a higher quality of life through an expanded economy, brought about by the growth the county will experience.”

“Housing development will include a mix of housing types, assuring affordability to all economic groups, including housing affordable to agricultural labor.”

“The focus of the County’s efforts will continue to be on improving conditions for existing residents of the county and providing greater job opportunities and choice for them.”

Economy:

“As the economy becomes more diverse and regional in nature, Yuba County will balance growth in a manner conducive to creating jobs and commerce in the county.”

“Although emphasis will be placed on diversifying the local economy, the importance of retaining and supporting existing local business will not be lost.”

“The County and [Beale Air Force] Base will continue to work cooperatively to protect this valuable asset and to assure its long-term viability and ability to take on new and expanded missions.”

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EVALUATION OF 1996 GENERAL PLAN VISION: A quick review of the vision statements allows us to see that some priorities have been achieved or are in progress such as flood protection and preservation of farmlands north of Marysville. Looking a little closer offers the opportunity to consider an important question that needs to be answered. For those priorities that haven’t been achieved or have had minimal progress, do we still value that priority, and if so, is

it time to consider a different approach? In order to make such a determination many and varied opportunities were had by the community and the Board to provide for ideas on what the vision of Yuba County is today. The following represents a sampling of the kinds of ideas/concerns/goals staff was able to gather. The comments were received from the Summer, 2007 town hall meetings and General Plan Update Advisory Committee (GPUAC) meetings:

### **Community**

- For future urban growth, avoid flood plain;
- Agriculture is our greatest asset and has to be maintained and is a priority;
- Avoid habitat damage – stay away from sensitive areas for biological preservation;
- Finish the growth in the existing areas before we start developing new areas;
- There has been insufficient infrastructure (highways, water/sewer) to serve projected growth;
- We should build around existing infrastructure;
- Need more commercial services for county residents, including restaurants, grocery stores, and general merchandise;
- The general plan needs to address the need for local job creation within the County to greatly reduce the need to commute to Sacramento or Chico for work;
- We need to ensure Beale AFB stays and is maintained as a job center for Yuba County;
- The less development in the foothills, the better. If it must be developed, the prime open space and natural habitat should be preserved;
- There needs to be enough concentration of growth to support business growth including home based businesses;
- Development needs to be walkable, handicap friendly, and socially oriented; and,
- No planning has happened for public transit; need to establish plan for transit and make residential plan to accommodate transit options.

### **General Plan Update Advisory Committee**

- Need to encourage infill development as part of the strategy to remove blight in existing developed areas;
- We don't want growth all over county, but in existing areas and in areas that will enhance cities and future cities;
- County should look at setting up land use patterns, service provision, and governance so that areas can more easily incorporate one day;
- Must mitigate for any loss of prime agricultural land;
- Wildlife diversity and biological resource preservation are quality of life issues for Yuba County;
- The County needs to ensure transit provision as a viable transportation option;
- The County should focus growth, higher density housing, in areas w/ infrastructure already;
- Linda, Olivehurst, other areas need improvements so that they don't deteriorate beyond repair, such as sidewalks, lighting, potholes, drainage;
- Take advantage of the existing economic assets like Beale AFB;
- The trend of being a bedroom community could continue unless Yuba County develops an economic base of its own;
- Include findings and recommendations of Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) as a part of GPU;

- Conservation of oak woodlands should be addressed;
- Preservation of open lands, resources adds value. Over time, fiscal benefits too;
- In foothills, we should cluster development into small parcels and save open space on large parts;
- Need organized way to protect habitat such as public wildlife areas, but must be balanced with private property rights;
- Redundancy in transportation connectivity is good for public health. It promotes walking and also good air quality. This is important. Also, people can save money not having to buy so much gas when their community is designed so that people can walk, bike, take transit;
- Should have higher-density housing options focused around small commercial nodes with good pedestrian and bicycle access; and,
- Olivehurst represents a good opportunity to make improvements and create a more traditional or neo traditional model with compact development, mixed land uses, connectivity, and other features of community accessibility.

A series of workshops were also held with the Board from December, 2007 through April, 2008. Direction was given on a whole host of issues facing the county and a sampling of those comments can be found below:

### **Board of Supervisors**

- Look at protecting prime agricultural lands. Consider importance of grazing lands to County's quality of life, especially in the foothills;
- Look at areas where floodplain protection, habitat and agricultural land protection can occur together. To north of Marysville and along setback levee are areas where this can occur;
- Balance new development with buildout and infill of existing developed areas;
- Yuba County should work closely with Sutter County and other regional partners to convince the state and SACOG to contribute funding for major regional transportation improvement projects in a timely way;
- The General Plan needs to encourage retail, service, and jobs conveniently located for residents in order to reduce travel demand;
- It is worth considering the consolidation and/or regionalization of some sewer, water and fire services where it makes sense;
- The General Plan needs to look at new commercial and industrial development to balance the recent residential development, generate revenues, and create local jobs and services for residents;
- The County needs to encourage a greater balance without inhibiting development that may ultimately enable the County to attract jobs and services that will improve the current imbalance;
- 'Quality of Life' is an important part of the 'jobs/housing' equation. Quality schools, services, and a variety of housing are necessary for creating communities where people that work here also want to live here;
- Within the County's legal authority to consider changes to current plans and in conjunction with community input regarding possible changes, improvements should be considered through the General Plan process;

- A review of existing plans should evaluate the ability of those areas to incorporate/annex in the future;
- The Board did not comment specifically on the community boundaries. However, there was discussion about the unrealistic nature of the holding capacity in the foothills due to sewer, water and transportation infrastructure constraints in the area;
- The Spring Valley and River Highlands plans may no longer be appropriate for the area and should be re-evaluated in light of current information regarding water availability, interests of the community, location of planned transportation routes, etc. Based on public sentiment, the River Highlands area should be completely examined. Any such evaluation of the Spring Valley plan should consider whether certain aspects of that plan are subject to a legally valid development agreement;
- It was recognized that open space, grazing lands, deer herds and oak woodlands define the rural character of the foothills and that continued subdivision into five acre parcels was probably not appropriate over the long term due to the interests of the foothill residents, the lack of water in some areas, and the community’s desire to maintain open space and the rural character of the areas; and,
- The problem of providing sewer and water services in the foothills was recognized. Minimum parcel sizes and densities should be based upon sewage disposal and water supply issues.

It is clear that many of the same values and vision are being repeated. There is a strong indication of the desires to protect agriculture, work cooperatively with surrounding agencies, promote economic vitality and sufficiency, protect Beale AFB, provide for efficiency in public services, and maintain and enhance the ‘quality of life’ that is uniquely Yuba County. However, there is some indication of the desire to look for new strategies to help to achieve some of those goals. As we move forward towards the next step of developing two refined alternatives staff will need direction on how best to incorporate elements which address the vision expressed by the community.

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**1996 GENERAL PLAN GROWTH PROJECTIONS:** Another important factor in the review of the current General Plan is the amount of anticipated growth designed into it. There were two different growth scenarios established in the plan. The first is the growth which was projected by the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG). It anticipated a relatively moderate growth scenario.

SACOG Projections from 1996 General Plan

Population by Year	Marysville	Wheatland	Unincorporated	Yuba County
1990	12,324	1,631	44,273	58,228
1995	11,648	2,128	46,924	60,700
2000	11,804	2,223	49,173	63,200
2005	11,704	2,234	50,962	64,900
2010	11,552	2,314	52,734	66,600

However, Yuba County established its own growth projection scenario which was much more aggressive.

Yuba County Projections from 1996 General Plan

Population by Year	Marysville	Wheatland	Unincorporated	Yuba County
1990	12,324	1,631	44,273	58,228
1995	14,287	1,890	51,325	67,502
2000	18,234	2,413	65,505	86,152
2005	22,184	2,933	79,700	104,817
2010	25,717	3,403	92,392	121,512

Using the Yuba County growth figures, the General Plan rested on an assumption of a population total for the unincorporated areas of Yuba County to be approximately 95,000 in 2015, an effective doubling of the population in the unincorporated County. As a policy decision, Yuba County established a growth scenario which would accommodate approximately 150% of the projected population as “a rule of thumb commonly used to judge flexibility needed to provide choice and preserve a competitive environment during the development process.” The full buildout that was established is as follows:

1996 General Plan Growth Plan Buildout

Population by Year	Marysville/ Wheatland	Unincorporated	Yuba County
2015	24,000	145,043	169,043

**EVALUATION OF 1996 GENERAL PLAN GROWTH PROJECTIONS:** Since one of the major roles of a General Plan is the management of growth, it is important to evaluate how the plans and projections have measured up to the realities of time and experience. The following is a chart illustrating the U.S. Census data for Yuba County. More details on this issue can be found in the Yuba County Demographics and Housing Background Report (October 2007).

U.S. Census 2007 Growth Statistics

Population by Year	Marysville	Wheatland	Unincorporated	Yuba County
1990	12,324	1,631	44,273	58,228
2000	12,268	2,272	45,679	60,219
2007	12,713	3,513	54,519	70,745

Using these figures we can also establish the relative remaining capacity of the major growth areas in the County.

Remaining Capacity of Major Growth Areas from 1996 General Plan

Linda/ Olivehurst	Loma Rica/ Browns Valley	RHCP	Other Unincorporated Areas	Total Unincorporated Yuba County
49,875	8,125	23,958	8,566	90,524

As the chart indicates, there is a significant amount of growth capacity left in the 1996 Yuba County General Plan. In fact, only about 8% of the population growth in the current plan has been realized so far.

Actual Population Growth Since 1996 General Plan

	Actual Increase in Population	Planned Increase in Population	Percentage of Growth Capacity Realized
Unincorporated Yuba County	7,595	93,718	8.1%

**DISCUSSION**

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS OF 1996 GENERAL PLAN REVIEW: When factored together, the vision from 1996 and the issues and priorities from today are telling a story. In general, the overall vision is somewhat consistent from 1996 through today. This consistency, however, illustrates that many priorities described in the vision for Yuba County have still not been achieved. There seems to be a gap between the desired outcomes and the implementation strategy to achieve them. This necessitates staff’s need to look for direction on evaluating current strategies to determine if they just need more time to develop or be modified for effectiveness. There will also likely be a need for the development of new strategies that can assist in bridging this gap. The Board, by providing staff direction on key principles that should form the basis of the updated General Plan, can fashion a framework to accomplish this task.

Question: *What are the key vision principles staff should utilize when developing the two refined alternatives?*

GROWTH PROJECTION FRAMEWORK FOR ALTERNATIVES: Understandably, different alternatives provide different snapshots of possible growth projections. But, while each may provide for more or less future growth, the reality of market constraints such as environmental, infrastructure needs, and absorption tends to make each more or less feasible. These realities also tend to make the need to plan for a certain amount of growth beyond the anticipated growth scenario an efficient way to be adaptable to a future marketplace. This practice offers a chance to account for unforeseen pressures and pitfalls without the need to make major changes to the overall plan. In the 1996 General Plan, it was the county’s policy to plan for 150% of the

projected growth. This is not a rule however. For example, Yuba City in its 2025 General Plan anticipates accommodating only 2.4% more than their projected growth.

Both methods provide their advantages and disadvantages. By planning for significantly more growth than projected provides for the ability to adjust to unexpected growth pressures and make more areas available to adapt to constraints. The downside to this approach is the need to plan for the infrastructure and services necessary to manage the larger growth potential, likely creating the need for additional fees and the potential for more significant infrastructure investment. The more conservative approach, on the other hand, allows for a more focused effort, can assist in reaching targeted goals, and can keep infrastructure to a minimum. However, if growth pressure increases beyond expectations, infrastructure could be constrained, opportunities could be missed, and the need to entertain major revisions to the plan increase. The following chart is provided below to assist in providing a jumping-off point for this discussion.

SACOG/Dept. of Finance Growth Projections

	2007	2010	2020	2030	2040
Yuba County Population	70,745	80,411	109,216	137,322	168,040

Based on SACOG projections, there is an anticipated increase of 66,577 new residents within the 2030 time horizon of the General Plan Update.

*Question: What is the appropriate growth projection framework staff should utilize when developing the two refined alternatives?*