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General Plan Update

# Critical Choices Report

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## Introduction

This report compiles the public input received to date and makes recommendations for the next phase of the program. It reviews the public outreach efforts undertaken in the first phase of the program, and outlines the critical issues that need to be addressed for this update program to successfully respond to the major concerns of the citizenry.

***The first phase of the General Plan Update program has been primarily a public outreach effort*** to engage the public's interest, listen to major concerns, and scope out the most important policy areas.

Over 40 meetings were held, with more than 700 people and organizations contacted (See listing at the back of the report). The Planning Division developed a web site, published a newsletter, undertook a community survey, and created a variety of activities and information pieces to elicit public input.

Program staff did more listening than talking in this first phase. Many more questions were raised than answered. This broad ranging review was to be expected in these issue identification and scoping sessions. ***Phase II will include detailed background reports and public opportunities for more informed and in-depth discussions.***

This first phase successfully captured many key concerns on a broad range of topics. To highlight some key findings:

- There is a sense that we are at a critical phase in the growth and development of Humboldt County.
- Maintaining quality of life is of prime importance, even with respect to our economic well being.
- There is a strong interest in defining and maintaining community character.
- There is a strong desire for more proactive approaches to planning issues
- Loss of resource lands is a growing concern.
- There is a renewed interest in land use planning.

The input received during Phase I has been organized into four major themes:

- Building Communities
- Moving Goods and People
- Managing Natural Resources
- Planning for Hazards.

## **Executive Summary**

There is a strong need for solid background information upon which to build the policy framework. Many of the concerns people had during the initial phase revolved around having better information for decision making. The next phase should focus on delivering that information and discussing it with the involved public.

How much growth needs to be accommodated is a critical question. A demographic analysis reviewing population trends, past projections and their accuracy, and future range of growth is key.

A land use inventory that is systematic and dynamic should be a key component of the plan update. The Department is building a GIS database, and the parcel base layer will be completed in June. This will be a strong tool for analysis. Coordination with other agencies will help create a unified decision base.

Doing inventories will be common to most of the topics being addressed, including residential, commercial and industrial uses, circulation, agriculture and forest resources, etc.

A second common step across topics is analyses of the inventories, which discuss capacities, constraints, and issues raised. This can be coordinated with efforts such as LAFCO's master service element reviews, and state and federal watershed assessment studies.

A third common step is a policy review for each topic. In some cases the existing policies may need little revision, whereas other policy topics such as Community Design have had little prior treatment.

The Critical Choice Workshops provided ranges of treatment for about 30 policy topics. These ranges (shown in Appendix D) will serve as the decision-making framework for setting the workplan for the General Plan Update.

Based on comments which fell "outside the box", we are proposing to include a Governance section in the new general plan to establish a framework for public participation and inter-governmental relations, including tribal governments.

## Phase I Public Outreach Efforts

The General Plan bridges the gap between community values and decisions about how the County will grow and develop in the future. To get a sense of community values, you need to listen to the views of many people as possible.

The goal of the first six months of public participation program was to involve as broad a cross-section of the community in identifying the most important issues related to the General Plan. Input was received through:

- General Plan Update Newsletter
- Seven regional community meetings
- Meetings with twenty diverse organizations
- Workshops and discussions with cities and Community Service Districts
- Two Tribal Summits with representation from all federally recognized tribes
- Community survey with over 350 responses
- Up-to-date interactive website
- Five "Critical Choices" workshops
- Database of over 700 people who receive mailings
- Meetings with government agencies

The effort was initiated with a widely circulated informational newsletter designed to encourage involvement in the process. Community meetings were held across the county to obtain a cross-section of input. Meeting locations included:

Trinidad	Garberville	Willow Creek	Petrolia
Eureka	Blue Lake	Shelter Cove	

Meetings were held with organizations to obtain input representing organizational goals and objectives. Discussions were held with:

Sierra Club	Northern CA Homebuilders Assn.
Farm Bureau	Friends of Humboldt
Audobon Society	CA Licensed Foresters Assn.
Board of Realtors	Keep Eureka Beautiful
Planners Forum	Cattlemen's Assn.
Northern CA Growers Assn.	League of Women Voters
Economic Forum	WIN Forum
Advisory Group	Chambers & Visitors Bureau
Humboldt Watershed Council	Humboldt Community Network
Northcoast Environmental Center	Mattole Restoration Council

A series of workshops were conducted with the City Councils, Planning Commissions and staff of the incorporated cities. In addition, two workshops were held with representatives from federally recognized tribes. These meetings were intended to introduce the Plan Update, preliminarily identify issues and solicit long-term involvement in the process.

Cities:

Arcata  
Blue Lake  
Eureka  
Ferndale  
Trinidad

Represented Tribes:

Big Lagoon Rancheria  
Blue Lake Rancheria  
Hoopa Valley Tribe  
Rohnerville Rancheria-Bear River Band  
Table Bluff Reservation-Wiyot Tribe  
Trinidad Rancheria  
Yurok Tribe

Scoping meetings were held with staff of the following governmental agencies:

Department of Environmental Health	Health and Human Services
California Coastal Commission	Office of Emergency Services
United States Fish and Wildlife Service	North Coast Air Quality Management
Natural Resource Conservation Service	District

A community survey was conducted to get an idea of the reasons why people choose to live in Humboldt County, what they value about the area and what needs improvement. This survey was available at public meetings, on the website and at the counter of the Planning Division. While it is not statistically valid, it does offers a snapshot of the views of county residents interested in the General Plan.

Eighty-six percent (86%) of respondents felt that the surrounding natural environment was extremely important to the quality of life in Humboldt County. Fifty-seven percent (57%) of respondents said they were somewhat satisfied with Humboldt County as a place to live, and 32% felt that the county had become less desirable as a place to live in the last 5 years. The major reasons identified for deciding to live in Humboldt County included:

- the quality of life
- the quality of the natural environment
- to be part of a small community
- the beauty of the community
- to live in a rural area.

The response rate for these was more than 70% as a major reason when asked if it was a minor, major or moderate reason for choosing to live here.

In describing the current conditions in Humboldt County, many residents were generally satisfied with the county in terms of: a place to raise a family; local schools; public water and/or sewer systems; recreational facilities; open space and trails; senior citizen's programs and local shopping opportunities. In other areas, there was less satisfaction with current conditions, such as: the physical condition of streets and roads; availability of good jobs; opportunity to earn an adequate income; overall effectiveness of county government; planning and land use regulation and youth programs.

Respondents felt that the county should be putting the same, more or much more effort into all of the areas identified, with over 50% identifying permanently preserving open space and agriculture (54.6%) and conserving the natural environment (57.9%) as needing much more effort. The other areas needing effort were: promoting and expanding tourism, attracting new businesses, promoting/expanding agriculture, promoting/supporting farmers' markets; ensuring that new construction fits in with the character and scale of the community; restoring/expanding rail service; improving the availability of affordable housing, improving the quality of schools, providing walking/biking paths closer to existing communities and reducing drug and alcohol abuse.

The complete results of the survey, including all written comments, are available on the General Plan Update website ([www.planupdate.org](http://www.planupdate.org)) under the Public Input page.

A synthesis of input from the community and organizational meetings led to another series of workshops called the "Critical Choices" Workshops. These workshops focused on issues that had come up repeatedly in the earlier meetings. The workshops were organized into five broad themes:

Circulation  
Land Use  
Hazards

Building Communities  
Managing Natural Resources

Under each theme, options for the preparation of the General Plan Update, in terms of preliminary policy directions and level of effort, were reflected in draft "Critical Choices." People attending the workshops were asked to make Critical Choices as if they were a member of the Board of Supervisors setting the parameters for the General Plan Update. These dry runs tested draft Critical Choices. The final Critical Choices serve as the decision-making framework for the Board of Supervisors in setting the workplan for the General Plan Update.

The Land Use theme has been combined into the Building Communities section for this report.

In January, outreach meetings were held with staff of the following governmental agencies:

Department of Environmental Health

California Coastal Commission  
United States Fish and Wildlife Service  
Natural Resource Conservation Service  
Health and Human Services  
Office of Emergency Services  
North Coast Air Quality Management District  
California Department of Fish & Game  
County Assessor Office

The input gathered during this first Phase of the General Plan Update forms the basis of this Report. A complete list of participants and summary of comments received are included in the Appendices. Each comment includes a citation that indicates where the comment is considered in this report.

Public participation in subsequent stages of the Update will involve newsletters, public hearing and workshops, continued coordination with tribes and cities, an up-to-date website and other activities to ensure full public participation.

## **Major Themes:**

This report organizes the input received during Phase I into four major themes:

- Building Communities
- Moving Goods and People
- Managing Natural Resources
- Planning for Hazards.

The following sections review the topics covered, key findings and existing conditions, major questions raised and possible solutions offered, and recommended outlines for background study work to address the issues.

## Building Communities

### **-Topics Covered**

Land Use	Visual Resources
Residential	
Affordable Housing	Signage
Industrial & Commercial	
Home Based and Small Business	Light, Noise & Air Emissions
Big Box	
Development Patterns	Community Facilities
Rural Communities	

### Community Design

These topics are treated primarily in the Land Use and Housing Elements of California general plan law (Government Code § 65300). Community Design, Air Quality, and Public Facilities can be optional elements of a general plan or be integrated into other elements. Visual resource issues can be treated both in the built environment and the natural environment sections. (See also the Managing Natural Resources section of this report for additional discussion of visual resource issues associated with the Open Space Element). Noise issues are discussed here and the Planning for Hazards section.

### **-Key Findings and Existing Conditions**

These topics were the focus of two Critical Choice workshops, a Building Communities workshop held on 12/5/00, and a Land Use workshop held on 11/30/00. The discussions were fairly broad ranging, addressing issues such as how to accommodate new residential and commercial growth without losing community character and still maintaining open space around town sites.

A key issue in these discussions was how much growth needs to be accommodated - what is the expected population increase, and what affect do our choices we make now have on future growth?

Location	1998 Population	2010 Population	2020 Population
Eureka	27,750	28,870	29,830
Arcata	16,330	18,180	20,000
Fortuna	10,140	12,560	15,000
Humboldt County	124,000	131,600	140,000
Unincorporated	67,400	67,800	68,140

Source: State Department of Finance Population Projections, 1990 - 2040, December 1998

*The above population estimates, quoted in the Prosperity report, appear to suggest that only 740 additional people would be residing in unincorporated Humboldt County in 20 years. Such numbers indicate additional work is needed to develop more accurate sub-County projections.*

With respect to industrial lands, the issues of harbor and rail and Highway 101 development were recognized as complex inter-related issues that warranted further study and a coordinated approach.

The concept of "smart growth" - the idea that intelligent development can contribute to our well-being by being less wasteful and costly, by building on community character, and by respecting community values - was discussed.

Affordable housing was seen as more workable when done on a smaller scale that gave better attention to neighborhood compatibility and integration.

Home based and small businesses were seen as one of the most promising economic growth sectors. The potential for a negative drain by big box development was also discussed. Some questioned the need for economic development promotion when unemployment was at record lows. A better inventory of industrial and commercial lands was suggested.

The physical appearance of the built environment was surprisingly important, and was seen as a key indicator of community health and well-being.

### ***-Challenges: broad policy questions & Critical Choices: possible solutions***

#### **Residential Development Patterns**

##### Key Questions:

- How to preserve rural areas and open space – what defines these areas? How to identify resources, characteristics to preserve and priorities?
- Fostering infill: what is the right balance between controls vs. incentives?
- Establishing a rural-urban interface and growth strategy: what are the implications of allowing development under “planned conditions” vs. establishing growth boundaries and target “growth areas”
- Smart growth – how to apply to Humboldt County?
- Defining the urban-rural interface – on a community basis?
- Timber Production adjacent to residential areas

##### Possible Solutions:

- Develop overlay zones to apply resource, open space and infrastructure policies to specific areas.
- Develop new policies & review development for impacts to resource production, infrastructure, and open space.

- Re-plan & re-zone properties to concentrate development within urbanized areas and limit rural development.
- Implement smart growth and livable community tenets at community plan level; revised subdivision design ordinance, promote live-work townscapes.

### **Affordable Housing**

#### Key Questions:

- How to provide affordable housing: identify incentives and locations for affordable housing

#### Possible Solutions:

- Improve development standards to ensure construction and long-term availability of affordable housing in the private sector, e.g. inclusionary zoning.
- Actively seek funds & develop affordable housing infrastructure in unincorporated areas.
- Plan & zone changes to accommodate specific affordable housing needs.

### **Home-Based and Small Business Development**

#### Possible Solution:

- Develop plan policies to promote and assist the growth of home-based and small business development.

### **Big Box Development**

#### Possible Solution:

- Develop big box retail policies taking into consideration impacts on community character and economics.

### **Industrial Development**

#### Key Questions:

- What should the County role be in actively spurring industrial development?
- How and where to provide tele-commuting infrastructure and other support for new technology (business clusters County wants to attract)

#### Possible Solutions:

- County-wide siting analysis of commercial and industrial parcels.
- County-wide siting and development of commercial and industrial parcels.

### **Community Design:**

### **Development Of Rural Communities**

#### Key Questions:

- Identifying needs of rural communities – preventing deterioration as important as promoting them.

#### Possible Solution:

Develop land use policies and standards to prevent the continued deterioration of rural communities (promote economic well-being).

### **Landscape**

Possible Solutions:

- Prepare community-wide landscape plans for development and major roadways; implement thorough landscaping guidelines, design assistance and educational workshops.
- Develop Plan policies with implementing regulations for landscape requirements on major new commercial, residential and industrial development.

### **Visual Resources**

Key Questions:

- How and where to address visual impacts: identifying and protecting viewsheds – where are vulnerable hillsides and flat areas?

Possible Solutions:

- Develop comprehensive preservation program for high quality visual resources, implement through Plan policies, development standards, incentives, and transfer of development rights.

### **Light, Noise & Air Emissions**

- Comprehensive inventory of problem areas, active attenuation of existing sources.
- Develop comprehensive performance standards for each zone and apply to new development.

### **Signage**

Key Questions:

- Signage – need for guidelines and standards and issue of amortization

Possible Solutions:

- Continue to regulate size & height of signs; maintain liberal allowances for the number and location of attached and unattached signs throughout the County. 9 votes.

## ***-Recommendations: direction for future effort***

### **Population/Land Use Inventory**

- Prepare a demographic analysis reviewing population trends, past projections and their accuracy, and future ranges of growth.
- Complete a GIS parcel base map to assist in providing land use inventory, capacity and suitability analyses.
- Inventory existing residential, commercial, and industrial land use. Use 2000 Census data, HAF funded inventory, building permit info., Assessor's office records, etc.
- Assess local and regional housing needs based upon projected community growth

- trends and regional data and plans.
- Project needs for specific land uses including residential, commercial, and industrial development, based upon projections of future population and economic conditions. **1**
- Assess the capacity and availability of infrastructure necessary to support proposed land uses.
- Locational analysis for special uses.
- Land use analysis to ensure there is ample supply of developable land for residential, commercial, and industrial use. Screen the existing land use supply to identify areas suitable and desirable, including constraints, for future development or redevelopment. Three possible methodologies for conducting this analysis: land suitability analysis, carrying capacity analysis, or committed lands analysis.
- Coordinate with LAFCO master service element work and compile all available information on service district capacities and plans for future expansion.

### **Housing**

- Review timing of next available housing needs data from State Housing & Community Development and latest housing element revision schedule and defer to coincide with that schedule and availability of detailed 2000 Census information. Review existing housing goals and progress in meeting those goals.

### **Community Design**

Conduct a pilot study in selected areas to develop a community design toolkit for later application during Community Plan preparation. The pilot would address the following issues:

- *Transition Areas:* Identify areas in transition. These may include commercial or industrial areas which use is declining or has been abandoned. Consider implementing zoning and land use designations to allow for adaptive reuse. Analyze the possible causes of the loss of vitality.
- *Commercial and Industrial Sites:* Analyze criteria for measuring compatibility between proposed development and existing land uses. Formulate flexible development standards which promote solutions to common problems (i.e. unused parking, parking as dominate features, noise, incompatible uses etc.). Develop industrial performance standards to regulate noise, dust, odor, glare, hours of operation, and water quality impacts from new and existing industrial uses.
- *New Residential Development:* Residential design concepts should be developed and features of the undeveloped land identified which will provide continuity with and connections to the existing neighborhoods and other areas of new development. Develop hillside develop policies to protect terrain and vistas
- *Mix Use Development:* Develop policies and incentives that incorporate livable community design elements.
- *Landmarks:* Identify public places, buildings and open-spaces (including landmark trees) which distinguish the planning area and give it a sense-of-place. Encourage the

placement of art within areas used for public gatherings. Consider the use of area history and cultural background as defining factors for public art and displays.

- *Spatial Definition:* Identify community features which define space (i.e., building mass, landscaping, streets, walls, etc.). Identify those community spaces which are "attractive" (i.e., small shopping districts, parks, landscaping, etc.). Analyze how the good features may be duplicated through design requirements.
- *Continuity and Connection:* Identify existing features (i.e. creeks, trails, bike paths, streets) which
  - provide continuity and connection throughout the planning area. Identify neighborhood or community attributes which can be strengthened to establish connections to the entire planning area.
- *Landscape and Trees:* Analyze street landscaping and trees as well as the informal planting and types of landscaping on private residential and commercial lots for visual relief and shade effectiveness. Landscaping and trees provide energy conservation benefits as well as a sense of quality, distinctiveness, spatial definition, and focal breaks to otherwise monotonous streetscapes. Develop landscape policies for commercial, industrial, and multi-family development.
- *Historic Preservation:* Identify historic and architecturally significant buildings and evaluate their condition. Inventory those structures or landmarks which have been or should be designated as historic re-sources and establish policies for their preservation, protection, and maintenance.
- *Street Design:* Analyze the relationships between existing streets and the areas and uses which they serve. Streets are not only used for transportation but, when thoughtfully designed, also establish boundaries, provide focal relief, and contribute to the livability and safety of the community.
- *Public Art:* Identify existing public art, its location, and the public's reaction to its ability to enhance the community. Classify types of art and the suitable locations for its display. Public art may provide a focal point or social aspect to parks, public facilities, and structures enhancing the aesthetic environment.
- *Signage:* Inventory signs which are unique and reflective of the community. Size, shapes, and designs should be identified which are considered to be characteristic of the specific areas or commercial districts. For example, commercial strips may be characterized by neon signs whereas the downtown core may be synonymous with natural colors and wooden signs.

## Moving Goods and People

### **- Topics covered**

The following topics are covered in the Moving Goods and People grouping

#### Goods Movement

- Marine
- Rail (with potential passenger rail links to people movement)
- Truck

#### People Movement

- Roadways
- Public Transit
- Non- Motorized Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails
- Aviation (with freight aviation links to goods movement)

#### Technology (telecommunications)

- Information and Communications Technology Infrastructure

California general plan law (Government Code § 65300) discusses these issues in the Transportation Element Guidelines. These issues are closely linked with land use and air quality issues found in other elements of the General Plan. The general plan guidelines state that the roadway system proposed in a circulation element must be "closely, systematically and reciprocally related to the land use element."

### **-Key findings: public input and existing conditions**

The majority of public input on these topics came during the Circulation Critical Choice workshop held on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2000. Input covered all modes and methods of transportation, but focused on:

- Rural Roadways
- Relieving congestion on the Highway 101 Corridor
- Public transit services to rural areas
- Goods movement interrelationships between truck, freight, rail and aviation
- Trails development for non-motorized transportation and recreational use

Input on roadways focused primarily on areas where congestion, safety and maintenance were concerns. The Highway 101 corridor between Eureka and Arcata, and 101 through Eureka, were considered congested routes that will only get worse unless plans are made to relieve that congestion. Old Arcata Road and Highway 255, which connect Eureka, Arcata, and other smaller communities, were also identified as roadways with congestion and safety issues. It is understood that Caltrans has jurisdiction over these roadways and potential congestion and safety solutions would need to be agreed to and implemented by that agency.

Advocates for rail, aviation and marine transport voiced support for those modes of goods movement. There was general support for the re-establishment of rail service, but also an understanding that there are environmental costs associated with maintaining the rail link through the Eel River Canyon. There was also general agreement that rail and marine transport needed to be linked to function most efficiently, and that larger capacity aircraft

would benefit both goods and people movement. Opinion was divided on the State Highway improvements necessary for larger capacity trucks.

The condition and maintenance of rural roadways were concerns expressed during the critical choice workshop. Putting limitations on developing new rural roadways, and looking at privately funded maintenance for existing roads, were options that received support and appear to be policy directions that would be supported.

The extent and frequency of public transportation are important issues for persons with limited or no access to vehicles living in outlying areas of the County. In addition to extending bus service south, east and north, there is support for intra-County passenger rail service. Non-motorized transportation, primarily in the form of bike lanes, pedestrian paths, and multi-purpose trails, were identified as desirable transportation facilities as long as property rights were protected or compensated, and maintenance issues were addressed. There was support for a comprehensive non-motorized transportation system plan.

Advances in information services and communications technology are increasing the need for a new layer of transportation infrastructure. Wired and wireless communications require physical facilities, such as telecommunications towers and fiber-optic lines, in order to function. The potential proliferation of these facilities is already an issue in rural areas, and there is support for policy that guides placement, height, and screening of visible telecommunications facilities. This technology is already influencing where and how people work, and is another example of the important link between transportation and land use.

### ***Challenges: Broad Policy Questions***

- What are the critical goods movement needs for Humboldt County Industry?
- How alternative transportation modes for the rural employed, and those without vehicles, can be effectively developed and maintained?
- How to best manage (balance) safety, congestion, growth, and recreation travel issues related to the Highway 101 corridor. How should recreational travel and coastal access be provided in a way that minimizes environmental impacts, while accommodating tourism?
- What new bicycle, pedestrian and equestrian trail policies are needed, and how should the stated need for a comprehensive design plan and development standards be addressed?
- Should there be a rural road construction moratorium, or better definition of maintenance requirements and responsibilities in the different areas of the County. How will the County address the current \$100,000,000 backlog in road maintenance?

## ***Critical Choices: possible solutions***

### **Goods Movement**

- Actively support export/import business utilizing marine transport through public/private partnerships, cooperative jurisdictional agreements, research, development and marketing.
- Research railroad system's potential and benefits to the County. Actively support and lobby for rail service resumption and continued operation.
- Actively support and lobby for commercial airline services expansion for both people and goods movement

### **People Movement**

- Develop comprehensive infrastructure policies for maintaining the viability of existing rural roads, and construction of new roads, only where needed for the long-term growth of the county.
- Develop trails implementation policies and standards, e.g. dedications, acquisitions, security, compatibility with adjacent land uses, maintenance, design, etc.
- Actively pursue construction and maintenance funds for priority trail identified in updated Trails Plan.
- Work with Humboldt County Association of Governments, local cities, CalTrans and Public Works to develop a comprehensive plan to manage safety and congestion

### **Technology (telecommunications)**

- Actively support and lobby for information technology infrastructure for economic and rural development.
- Develop policies that guide placement of visible telecommunications facilities to minimize visual impacts.
- Develop policies that promote extension of telecommunication facilities in areas with greatest potential for employment and live-work situations.

## ***Recommendations: direction for future effort:***

The existing sections are organized by topic with bullets and arrows from the general plan guidelines. Applying the guidelines topics for Moving Goods and People follows:

## **Major Transportation Routes**

- Analyze existing County road and highway traffic conditions and capacities.
- Determine existing traffic volumes (using peak-rate flows).
- Determine the levels of service of existing County road and highways at critical locations.
- Analyze projected County road and highway traffic conditions.
- Estimate the number of trips generated by proposed land uses.
- Determine projected traffic volumes effects on existing County road and highway capacities.
- Review traffic projects proposed within neighboring jurisdictions pertinent to local planning.
- Review pertinent regional transportation plan and project funding priorities under the regional transportation improvement program and the planned 2000-02 RTP Update.
- Compare projected levels of service with desired levels.
- Identify existing constraints to development from County road conditions.
- Inventory the existing conditions of County roads and analyze the estimated maintenance and improvement needs to meet projected demand, and correlate with land use and fire risk.
- Evaluate the effectiveness and sustainability of private mechanisms to fund improvements and long-term maintenance.

## **Transit**

- Assess the needs of people who depend on public transit
- Assess the adequacy of existing routes, services and facilities and the need for expansion and improvements for transit, and private services.
- Examine trends in transit use and estimates of future demand.
- Determine existing and projected levels-of-service for transit.
- Review the regional transportation improvement program.
- Evaluate paratransit and private bus company services.

## **Non-Motorized Transportation**

### **Bicycle Facilities**

- Assess the adequacy of existing, and the need for new, bicycle facilities.
- Examine trends in bicycle ownership and use.

### **Pedestrian Facilities**

- Assess the level-of-service of pedestrian facilities (both current and future levels).
- Inventory trails and areas and an assessment of the demand for them.
- Inventory trails proposed in the 1978 California Recreational Trails Plan of
- Assess historical data and trends with regard to pedestrian accidents.
- Inventory points of public access to lakeshores, beaches, rivers and streams.

## **Goods Movement**

### **Truck Routes**

- Identify existing truck routes.
- Determine needed changes in truck routes.

### Navigable Harbors

- Assess the movement of goods through Humboldt Bay harbor facilities, including the need for expansion and improvements.
- Assess the adequacy of upland support.
- Review plans for improvements by harbor and port districts.

### Aviation

- Assess the adequacy of existing aviation facilities (general and commercial) and the need for expansion and improvements.
- Inventory potential safety hazards posed by airport activities and surrounding land uses.
- Assess the provisions of the County's recently updated Airport Master Plan.
- Describe existing facilities and proposed expansions.

### Rail

- Assess the adequacy of and safety hazards associated with existing rail facilities and the need for expansion and improvements.
- Inventory potential opportunities for re-establishing rail service and potential benefits to the community.

### **Scenic Highway Corridors**

- Identify state highways included in the Master Plan of State Highways eligible for official State designation as Scenic Highways, local highways of scenic significance, and National Scenic By-ways and All-American Roads as designated by the U.S. Forest Service.
- Assess identified scenic highway corridors and their appropriate boundaries, scenic features, and relationship to surroundings, the incompatible, existing development within the corridor, the proposed realignments or improvements, and the potential for future public and private development within the corridor.
- Inventory of billboards.

# Managing Natural Resources

## **- Topics covered**

The following topics are included in the Natural Resources grouping:

### Open Space

#### Forest/Timber Resources

- Lands Inventory
- Forest/Timber Uses
- Forest/Timber Economy
- Forest/Timber Conversion
- Forest/Timber Conservation

#### Agricultural Resources

- Lands Inventory
- Agricultural Uses
- Agricultural Economy
- Agricultural Conversion
- Agricultural Conservation

#### Water Resources

- Inventory
  - Watersheds
  - Surface Water
  - Ground Water
- Water Quality
- Water Supply
- Water Export

### Biological Resources

#### Inventory

- General Habitat Types
- Sensitive Habitats & Species
- Bio-regions, Ecological Units, & Corridors

#### Biological Resources Conservation

### Recreation

- Parks
- Trails
- Scenic Highways

### Cultural Resources

#### Inventory

- Cultural Heritage Resources
- Archaeological Resources
- Historical Resources

#### Cultural Resource Conservation

The Open Space category is a defined element in general plan that law covers all the other topics listed above. For instance, Cal. Gov. Code §65560(b) identifies open space for managed production of resources including forest lands, rangeland, and agricultural lands; open space for preservation of natural resources including habitat for plants, fish and wildlife; and open space for outdoor recreation, including scenic, historic and cultural value.

Open space for public health and safety for hazardous areas such as floodplains and earthquake fault zone are also a consideration, and are treated in the Planning for Hazards section of this report.

All these issues require close integration with other elements of the general plan, especially the land use element. For instance, the Land Use Element section of State Code §65302(a) directs the land use element to address open space concerns including agriculture, natural resources, recreation, etc., and to provide a land use category that provides for timber production for those lands zoned TPZ.

## ***-Key findings: public input and existing conditions***

This issue group has received substantial input throughout the start up phase of the program, through both the organizational meetings and at the earlier regional meetings (See input summary in the back of this report.)

The Critical Choice Workshop for this issue group was held on December 6, 2000, with over 100 people attending.

Forest/Timber issues have been at the forefront of many discussions. Originally titled Timber Resources, the issue has been broadened to take in a wider range of concerns related to forested lands. In many cases these issues parallel agricultural land issues, and both are closely related to watershed and fire issues. Based on the substantial interest and large land area affected by these issues, a full inventory and review of land policy matters seems warranted.

Water resource issues include surface and groundwater resources, available water supplies for planned uses, water export, conservation, and water quality concerns. Such concerns were expressed most often as requests for watershed-level management and planning.

Biological resource issues are a growing concern, heightened by the recent species listings. A more proactive approach to enhance protections beyond those provided by state and federal regulations by applying innovative incentive-based programs received popular support.

Parkland issues are a major concern for the communities adjacent to these areas. Numerous recent acquisitions trigger a need to inventory these areas, review their management objectives, and assess their integration into the County's open space element. Community and neighborhood parks are becoming a growing issue as urbanization occurs in unincorporated areas.

Updating of the adopted 1979 Trails Element appears to be a necessary part of updating the general plan. (See Circulation section.)

The physical appearance of the County was rated as a very important element in the community survey. Identifying scenic vistas, natural landforms, and other aesthetic resources could play a key role in meeting these concerns, and ties in well with Prosperity! recommendations.

Scenic Highways is not a mandated element, but concerns about billboards and community beautification efforts suggest a more proactive approach such as preparing a Scenic Highways element warrants consideration.

The cultural and historic resources of the County are limited and important, and the tribal governments have requested additional efforts to protect areas of cultural significance.

### ***-Challenges: broad policy questions:***

- Open space functions - to keep communities distinct; wildlife corridors
- Forest resources - management vs. preservation - role of County?
- Local rules? - sustainability, special treatment areas?
- Should the County evaluate acquisition options?
- Sustainable agriculture: minimum parcel sizes, incentives and other policies that would make this work
- Regulations vs. incentives/education/involvement
- Watershed planning & management - minimum flows, water quality - role of County vs. Regional Board

### ***-Critical Choices: possible solutions:***

#### ***Visual Resources***

##### Key Questions:

- How and where to address visual impacts: identifying and protecting viewsheds – where are vulnerable hillsides and flat areas?

##### Possible Solutions:

- Develop comprehensive preservation program for high quality visual resources, implement through Plan policies, development standards, incentives, and transfer of development rights.

#### ***Signage (see also Building Communities)***

##### Key Questions:

- Signage – need for guidelines and standards and issue of amortization

##### Possible Solutions:

- Continue to regulate size & height of signs; maintain liberal allowances for the number and location of attached and unattached signs throughout the County.

#### ***Open Space***

- Apply County-wide policies at the Community Plan level (e.g. establishment of urban development boundaries for each community).
- Inventory open space needs and resources and apply protection policies in specific critical areas.

#### ***Agricultural Resources***

##### Key Questions:

- How to conserve agricultural resources without impairing agricultural operations?

##### Possible Solutions:

- Develop County programs to provide additional incentives for preservation (e.g., conservation easements, Transfer of Development rights, agricultural industry economic development).
- Undertake comprehensive inventory of agricultural lands (soils and uses), revise Plan and zone designations to enhance protection of medium and high value lands.

### ***Biological Resources***

- Develop County specific policies to enhance protections beyond those provided by state and federal regulation.

### ***Water Resources***

- Develop watershed management plans for each major watershed to preserve and protect water quality and quantity.

### ***Timber Resources***

- Develop updated County-wide policies for timber resource protection and management and include consideration of economic, social and environmental affects of harvesting; implement in specific areas through Plan and zone modifications, other areas of County jurisdiction (e.g., roads) and policy input to state and federal agencies.

## ***-Recommendations: direction for future effort:***

### **Forest/Timber Resources**

- Identify the location, amount and ownership patterns of land in production and land suitable for production.
- Include location, acreage, and extent of classification of soils (use Soil-Veg mapping).
- Inventory of lands in TPZ, industrial and non-industrial timberlands.
- Evaluate rate of timberland conversion through subdivision, lot line adjustment, public land acquisition, utilities, urban fringe conflicts)
- Inventory forest resources including an analysis of conservation needs for forests, woodlands and the interrelationship they have with watersheds
- Describe the type, location, amount, and ownership of forests with a value for commercial timber production, wildlife protection, recreation, watershed protection, aesthetics, and other purposes
- Project alternative land uses within resource areas including density and intensity of development

### **Agricultural Lands**

- Identify the location, amount and ownership patterns of land in production and land suitable for production. Include location, acreage, and extent of classification of soils, including identification prime and other farmland classifications.
- Generally describe agricultural production in the area by type.
- Identify land within the boundaries of agricultural preserves or in other land

- conservation programs, including type and acres.
- Identify grazing lands in and out of agricultural preserves.
  - Evaluate resource land conversion through issuance of Certificates of Compliance and subsequent lot line adjustment of patent parcels.
  - Analyze compatible uses, including public utilities (e.g., cell towers), in resource production lands.

### **Minerals Resources**

- Inventory mineral resource areas classified or designated by the State Mining and Geology Board under the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act.

### **Open Space**

- Inventory open-space lands, including agricultural, forest, grazing, public and private recreational lands, and open-space for conservation.

### **Water**

- Delineate the boundaries of watersheds, aquifer recharge areas, floodplains, and the depth of groundwater basins.
- Delineate the boundaries and description of unique water resources (e.g., saltwater and freshwater marshes, wetlands, riparian corridors, wild rivers and streams, lakes).
- Assess the current and future quality of various bodies of water, water courses, and ground water. Need to establish quality and quantity standards for stormwater runoff by watershed and land use.
- Inventory existing and future water supply sources for domestic, commercial, industrial, and agricultural uses.
- Assess existing and projected demands upon water supply sources, in conjunction with public and private water suppliers, for agricultural, commercial, residential, industrial, and public uses. This analysis must also include private on-site systems, e.g., wells. Need to determine rural residential water supply policies and standards. This should be correlated with Land Use.
- Assess the adequacy of existing and future water supply sources, in conjunction with water suppliers.

### **Wildlife**

- Inventory natural vegetation, fish and wildlife and their habitats, including rare, threatened, and endangered species
  - Inventory plants, natural communities and special animals using the California Department of Fish and Game's "Natural Diversity Data Base."
  - Identify the types of animals that might be found in a particular habitat, the time of year they might be found there, and their activities (e.g., winter range, breeding, etc.) using information from the "Wildlife Habitat Relationships Program."
  - Consult with the California Department of Fish and Game and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding listed species
  - Analyze any adopted Habitat Conservation Plan or Natural Communities Conservation Plan for pertinent policies
- Assess the potential effects of development on the continuity of plant and wildlife habitats.

- Analyze the potential for development patterns to fragment plant and wildlife habitat.
- Analyze the regional trends in development to determine their effects on natural resources.

### **Scenic**

- Inventory areas of outstanding scenic beauty

### **Cultural, Historic, & Recreational Resources**

- Inventory historic and architecturally significant structures, sites, and districts
- Inventory cultural heritage and archaeological resources (without disclosing sensitive locational information)
- Evaluate cultural & historic resource conservation methods
- Assess the demand for public and private parks and recreational facilities and inventory areas particularly suited to parks and recreational purposes
- Describe the type, location, and size of existing public (federal, state, regional, and local) and private parks and recreational facilities (map)
  - Review federal, state, regional, and local plans and proposals for the acquisition and improvement of public parks (map)
  - Assess present and future demands for parks and recreational facilities
- Inventory points of public access to lake shores, beaches, rivers and streams (map)

## Planning for Hazards

### **- Topics covered:**

The hazard groupings discussed in this section include the following:

Geologic	Fire
Seismic	Wildland fire
Ground shaking	Structural/Urban fire
Fault rupture	
Liquefaction	Noise
Tsumanis	
Non-seismic	Airport Safety
Landslides and mudflows	
Soil erosion	Air Quality
Shoreline erosion	
Hydrologic	Industrial Hazards
Flooding	
Dam failure	Hazardous Materials, Waste

California general plan law (Gov. Code 65300) directly discusses these issues in the Conservation, Open Space, Safety, and Noise Elements. These issues have an important bearing on decisions made in the Land Use, Circulation, and Housing Elements. They are key factors in the setting of the County that must be considered prior to planning lands for particular uses.

### **-Key findings: public input and existing conditions:**

Public input on these topics was primarily received at the Hazards and Emergency Preparedness Critical Choice Workshop held on December 4, 2000. The meeting was well attended by fire agency personnel and volunteers, and consequently a major focus of discussion was the preparation of a county-wide fire protection master plan, a concept which received unanimous support at the meeting.

For geologic issues, significant new information has arisen since the County last addressed the issue in 1984, particularly with respect the Cascadia Subduction Zone and its potential to generate an extremely large groundshaking event (9.0) and possible tsunamis. The CDMG landslide mapping project referenced in the 1984 Framework Plan has made significant progress, but County coverage is still incomplete. There was agreement on the need to do a comprehensive hazards assessment, but opinion was divided regarding policy approach.

With respect to flooding, majority opinion favored specific policies and development standards implemented through revised plan and zoning designations. Public monumenting of high water levels in communities was again called for, an issue raised in the Avenue of the Giants Community Plan.

Hazardous waste management planning should achieve consistency with current state and federal laws and programs, according to input received. The appropriate role for the general plan in meeting these mandates and other hazardous materials issues need to be reviewed.

Emergency preparedness planning was also strongly supported, beyond levels mandated by general plan requirements.

Noise, light, and air emissions were discussed at the Building Communities workshop on 12/5/00, with significant support for a comprehensive inventory and active attenuation of existing sources.

### ***-Challenges: broad policy questions:***

- Hazards mapping vs. performance standards (includes geological and flooding)
- Fire safe standards – role of county in spurring expansion of volunteer fire dept. efforts (training, small pensions after x years services, other potential benefits)
- Emergency preparedness – emergency services: strategic focus, partnerships

### ***-Critical Choices: possible solutions:***

#### ***Geologic Hazards (unstable slopes & soils, earthquakes, tsunami, liquefaction)***

- Perform comprehensive mapping of all geo hazards, evaluate development on case-by-case basis; develop GP policies and development standards specific to mapped hazard areas.
- Prepare comprehensive hazards safety strategy applied through appropriate planning and zoning designations, consider potential for applicant harm, protecting third parties and public liability.

#### ***Fire Protection***

- Prepare County-wide Fire Protection Master Plan jointly with Districts and CDF, develop specific plans and an array of financing and implementation approaches.

#### ***Flooding***

- Develop specific policies and development standards to prevent development within floodplains; implement through revised plan and zone designations.

#### ***Hazardous Materials***

- Update Hazardous Waste Management Plan and achieve consistency with state and federal laws and programs.

- Develop County specific policies for hazardous material use, storage, and disposal (e.g., regulation of the use of herbicides) and implement through regulatory programs or incentives.

### ***Emergency Preparedness***

- Promote County-wide Emergency Preparedness Plan using the Standard Emergency Management System in partnership with OES, cities, tribes and citizen groups (NEST).

### ***-Recommendations: direction for future effort:***

#### **Geologic**

- Review the general geology and seismic history of the region and the planning area
- Geological evaluation of the potential for displacement along active and potentially active faults in the planning area (map)
- Location of Earthquake Fault Zones designated by the State Geologist under the Alquist-Priolo Earth-quake Fault Zoning Act (map)
- Assess the potential for ground shaking
  - Geological evaluation of the potential for ground shaking based on a maximum credible earthquake
- Assess the potential for ground failure
  - Geological evaluation of the potential for seismically induced landslides, mudslides, liquefaction, and soil compaction
- Assess slope stability
  - Review historical data on landslides and mudslides
  - Geological evaluation of the potential for landslides and mudslides (map)
- Assess the potential for cliff erosion
- Assess the potential for land subsidence

#### **Hydrologic**

- Identify flood-prone areas using:
  - National Flood Insurance Program maps published by the Federal Emergency Management Agency;
  - Information from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers;
  - Dam failure inundation maps prepared pursuant to §8589.5 (available from the Office of Emergency Services);
  - Historical data on flooding including information from conversations with long-time local residents.

#### **Fire**

- Assess the risk of wild land fires
  - Identify classify areas of varying fire hazard severity based on fuel loading (vegetation), weather and slope, and historical data (map)
  - Identify the developments, facilities, and people in and near hazardous areas
  - Evaluate the adequacy of access to hazardous areas (e.g., types of roads, dead-end roads)

## **Noise**

### *Identification and appraisal of major noise sources:*

- Highways and freeways, primary arterials and major local streets.
- Passenger and freight on-line railroad operations and ground rapid transit systems.
- Commercial, general aviation, heliport, and military airport operations, aircraft overflights, jet engine test stands, and all other ground facilities and maintenance functions related to airport operations.
- Local industry, including, but not limited to, railroad classification yards.
- Other ground stationary noise sources identified by local agencies as contributing to the community noise environment
- Appraise major noise sources and the extent of the problems they create for the community currently and in the future.

### *Analysis and quantification of the local noise environment*

- Inventory noise-sensitive receptors such as hospitals, schools, senior housing, etc.
- Select the method of noise measurement or modeling to be used in the noise element.
- Measuring major sources of noise.
- Map noise level contours, expressed in CNEL or Ldn, for the area surrounding each of the identified noise sources.
- Project future noise sources, noise levels, and anticipated impacts upon existing and proposed land uses. This should be correlated with the land use element.
- Analyze the current and future impacts on community residents of noise emanating from the identified sources. This should be correlated with the land use element.
- Analyze current and predicted levels of transportation noise consistent with the requirements of the Federal ISTEA.
- Identify local noise problems and areas of conflict between noise sources and sensitive uses.

## **Airport Safety**

- Review airport master plans and criteria for surrounding land uses and compare against general plan designations for consistency.
- Evaluate changes needed to achieve consistency between airport plans and general plan

## **Air Quality**

- Apply to Air Management District to fund an Air Quality element for the general plan.

## **Emergency Preparedness**

- Review County Emergency Response & Preparedness Plans and incorporate relevant components into general plan.

## **Governance**

The General Plan update will include a new section on Governance, addressing the issue of how to clarify and improve the process of government and government accountability in the arena of land use planning. A critical element of the General Plan Update process is strong public participation (as described above). This emphasis will carry through as a major goal of the General Plan itself. This Report describes in general terms how this goal might be approached in the General Plan.

The 1984 Framework Plan includes a section entitled Planning and Coordination that sets out goals and policies for citizen participation. In addition, there is a Builders' Bill of Rights contained in the Housing Element that outlines what permit applicants' may rightfully expect of County staff. These two documents, as well as the public input received on the issue will be used to formulate the new Governance section.

The Governance section will examine both the relationship between County government and the community and between the County, government agencies and other jurisdictions. An important, and new aspect to this section will address the relationship between the County and Tribal governments.

### County to community relationship:

There are several broad principles that will guide the County's approach to community involvement in land use planning. These are:

- being inclusive - encouraging participation by those who have an interest or are affected by a particular activity or project;
- being open, honest and responsive - being clear about opportunities for participation, having flexible and responsive processes and respecting diverse points of view;
- creating timely processes - allowing sufficient time for community members to respond and contribute to decision-making;
- providing sufficient information to allow citizens to participate to the level they desire; and
- taking a practical approach - targeting resources for public participation in the most effective and efficient ways.

### County to cities and community services districts:

As part of the General Plan update process, Community Development Services (CDS) offered to come to each city in the County to discuss the Update. Most cities took part in this discussion, holding either a public workshop or hearing. These meetings were open to the public and generated good discussion of issues facing cities particularly in their spheres of influence with the County. During the General Plan Update process, CDS will keep cities and community service districts informed of upcoming opportunities to participate and will continue to work with

cities on the issues they have identified as important. The updated General Plan will take into consideration the plans of cities and community services districts.

County to tribes and rancherias:

In an initial effort to formulate a working relationship with the tribes on land use planning issues, Community Development Services has taken part in two Tribal Summits, held in November and December 2000. Each summit had a broad representation of tribes and many issues were discussed at length.

A major issue that had broad agreement from the tribes was the need for a clear relationship between the County and Indian Tribes relative to the development of the General Plan Update. The County is committed to cooperating with the Tribes and to providing a process for tribal involvement in addressing General Plan issues. The goal of the Update process is to create a foundation for cooperation between the tribes and the County on all the issues relative to the General Plan. Specific policies would address the following areas:

- acknowledgment of tribal sovereignty
- recognition of tribal cultural & economic contributions
- acknowledgment of tribal interests outside Indian Country
- protection of cultural and natural resources especially in aboriginal territories identified by tribal governments
- land use and zoning designations adjacent to tribal boundaries
- process for efficient fee-to trust conveyance
- lack of emergency services, transportation and other services on reservations

The County will continue to work with tribes on defining the government-to-government relationship as well as specific tribal issues. Further meetings will be held with Tribal Councils to explore broad issues as well as issues specific to each tribe.

### **State Mandates**

Because of the process used in the Critical Choice workshops which involved "voting" for policy ranges, there was some concern that State mandated requirements of developing and adopting a general plan would be overlooked or put aside.

The County will closely follow the State Office of Planning & Research's *General Plan Guidelines* in developing and adopting the plan. No necessary components will be omitted or given less than adequate treatment.

## **List of Appendices**

### **Appendix A: Summary of Public Involvement**

- List of Participants
- Meetings held, dates & attendance numbers

### **Appendix B: Public Input**

- Issue charts from organizations
- Comments received at regional, community meetings & Critical Choices Workshops
- List of emails and letters received

### **Appendix C: Comments received sorted by 4 themes**

- Building Communities
- Managing Natural Resources
- Planning for Hazards
- Moving Goods and People

### **Appendix D: Critical Choice Ranges & Recommended Options**