



**CITY OF ELK GROVE  
CITY COUNCIL/PLANNING COMMISSION  
STAFF REPORT**

**AGENDA TITLE:** City Council/Planning Commission Joint Session: General Plan Update

**MEETING DATE:** August 25, 2016

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**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

Staff recommends that the City Council and Planning Commission receive the report and presentation and provide direction on the General Plan update as appropriate.

During this phase of the General Plan Update, staff seeks specific policy and land use direction. As these policy questions arise, staff recommends that the Council and Commission continue with the following process:

- 1. Receive staff’s report and summary recommendations, including raising questions with staff.
- 2. Receive public comment on the information presented and possible policy direction.
- 3. Engage in a joint City Council-Planning Commission discussion and possible recommendation from the Commission.
- 4. Provide specific direction to staff from the Councilmembers.

Staff recommends that the collective body review the materials and recommendations and that the City Council provide specific direction to staff.

## **BACKGROUND:**

As discussed at the previous Joint Study Sessions, the General Plan is the overarching policy document of the City. It provides the venue for the City to communicate its long-term vision for the community through goals and objectives and specific policy statements to further that vision. It is accompanied by action items that direct the implementation of those goals and policies.

Historically, general plans throughout the state of California have centered on the role of land use regulation and the location of activities and uses in a future condition. In this regard, Elk Grove is not an exception. Certainly, land use is a central tenet of the general plan; however, it is only one of the various topics (or elements) required to be addressed. The other topics required to be addressed include circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety. Additional topics may be added at the discretion of the local agency.

Through the General Plan Update, the City has been exploring a number of key topics and issues. These were defined during the project scoping in June 2015, discussed at the public workshops in the fall of 2015, considered at a broad level with the Vision and Supporting Principles at the December 2015 Joint Study Session, and followed up in more detail at the February 2016 Joint Study Session. These key issues are:

- Regional Role
- Growth Management Strategy
- Economic Vitality
- Community Identity
- Rural and Agricultural Heritage
- Parks, Trails, and Open Space
- Mobility
- Healthy Living
- Community Services

Each of these key topics dovetails with one or more of the required elements of a general plan. For example, the City's role in the region relates to not only what we provide for the region (e.g., choice housing, quality schools), but how we advocate for greater transportation funding through the Metropolitan Transportation Plan or participate in economic development activities that bring more jobs to the City. These new jobs, in

turn, mean residents do not have to commute long distances for employment, creating better mobility throughout the community and improving the lives of the residents.

By looking at the General Plan in this more interconnected way, the plan can address more than just how a specific property can be developed. Rather, it can be an expression of the City's long-term community vision and objectives and provide a road map for how to achieve those goals.

At this stage of the policy discussion, staff has prepared a series of policy topic white papers that focus the broader key issues into more discrete policy components. This approach does not limit or negate the interconnected nature of these policies; rather, it simply focuses the discussion.

The first two policy papers cover (1) *Specific Plans and Special Planning Areas* and (2) *Community and Area Plans*; these were presented at the [May 26 Joint Study Session](#).

At the [July 28, 2016](#) joint meeting, staff presented the following additional papers and direction was received.

**Policy Topic Papers (July 2016 presentation)**

<u>#</u>	<u>Title</u>
3.	Governance
4.	Complete Streets
5.	Fixed Transit
7.	Jobs/Housing

The final three papers (listed below) are the subject of this report and request for direction:

**Policy Topic Papers (August 2016 presentation)**

<u>#</u>	<u>Title</u>
6.	Clustering
8.	Annexation Strategy
9.	Mobility Standards

These final three papers are provided in Attachments 1, 2 and 3 and summarized below. Based upon the direction at the July 28 meeting, staff has taken the opportunity to update the papers with additional background and analysis, and has clarified the potential policy options. Therefore, these newer versions supersede the July versions.

## **POLICY INPUT AND DIRECTION:**

The following sections summarize the content of the three remaining policy papers and provide summary questions or direction items for consideration.

### **Clustering**

The Clustering paper outlines a number of issues that have been raised with the existing General Plan policy. In short, the General Plan allows for the clustering of development as a method to facilitate preservation and protection of woodlands, grasslands, wetlands, stream corridors, scenic areas, or other natural features as open space. Two development projects have been approved by the City since 2003 that relied on the clustering policy: Silverado Village in 2014 and Calvine Meadows in 2016. These projects preserved environmental resources (wetlands for Silverado Village and the Laguna Creek corridor for Calvine Meadows) in exchange for lot sizes smaller than normally allowed, but at a gross density consistent with the General Plan. Concerns with the current policy language and method for implementation were raised during the review of these previous development projects, as projects were essentially required to prepare site-specific development standards (i.e., Special Planning Areas) in order to comply with applicable zoning and General Plan consistency requirements. This has prompted a review of the City's clustering policy as part of the General Plan update. The paper covers these issues and a number of background points in greater detail.

As described in the Clustering paper, staff seeks direction on the following potential actions:

1. Should the City retain a clustering policy as an optional form of development?
2. Should the City continue to require that the scale of new clustered development be consistent with the character of existing development and planned future land uses in surrounding areas?
3. Should the City continue to prohibit the application of the clustering policy in the Rural Area?
4. Should the City expand the applicability of the clustering policy to continue to protect natural features and open space and add protection of active agricultural uses and historic or cultural resources?

5. Should the City retain Special Planning Areas (SPAs) as a tool for implementing the clustering policy and create a new Clustering Permit to provide an additional mechanism to implement the clustering policy without requiring a rezone?

## **Annexation Strategy**

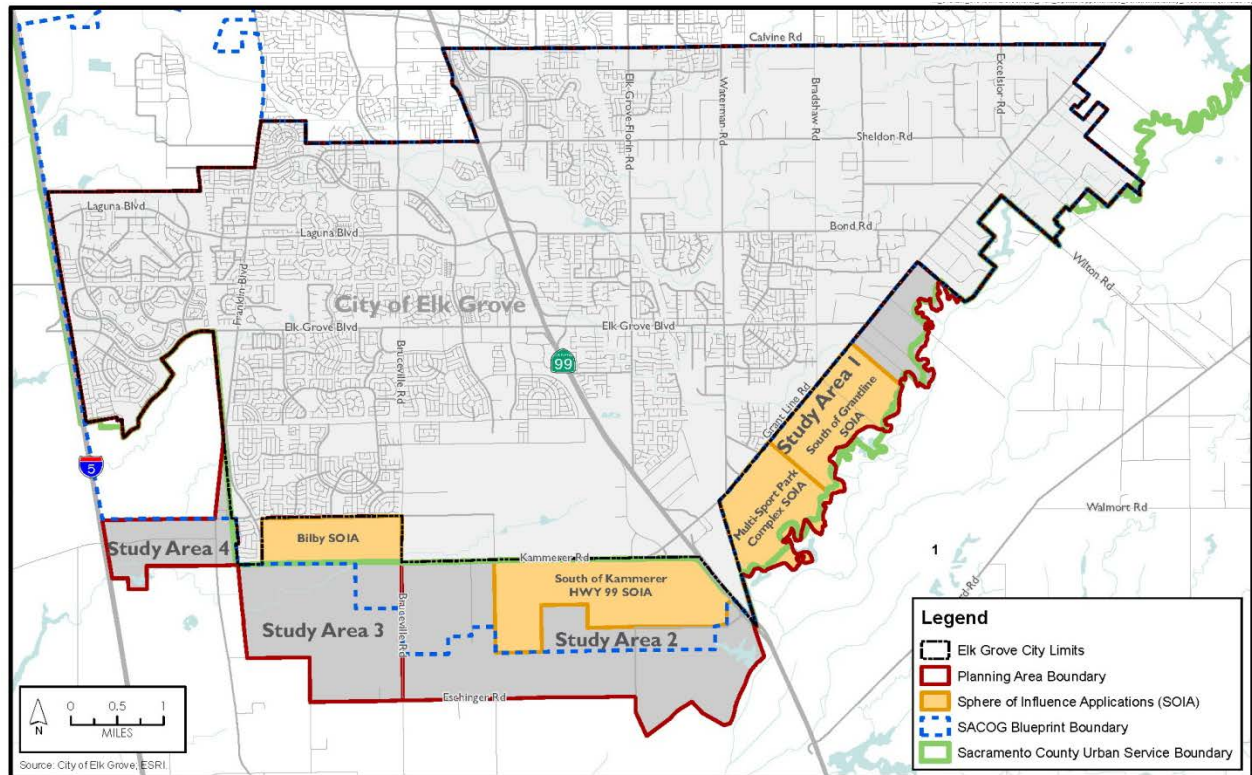
The City continues to experience demands for new growth. While a number of development projects have been approved to address this demand (e.g., Laguna Ridge, Southeast Policy Area), these alone will not fulfill the demand. There are a number of infill development opportunity sites around the City that could be further developed; however, they cannot accommodate all of this demand. Infill development sites are also constrained by the surrounding context of existing development, limitations in infrastructure availability, and other factors (see the paper for more details). Therefore, the City should plan for new growth demands beyond its existing limits.

The Policy Paper identifies a number of issues and considerations with the development of an annexation strategy. Some of these include:

- How areas for potential annexation are illustrated on maps and exhibits and described in policy text in the document.
- How the City's consideration for proposed projects dovetails with the State-required Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) process.
- How annexation requests should be evaluated for consistency with the General Plan.

Four Study Areas have been discussed as part of the General Plan Update as opportunities for expansion of the City (Figure 1). This area conforms to the City's 2013 Sphere of Influence (SOI) Amendment application to LAFCo and is similar to the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) Blueprint growth area and the SACOG 2016 Metropolitan Transportation Plan. The larger area (approximately 8,000 acres in size) was divided into these four areas based upon existing roads and does not reflect ownership dynamics or market conditions. As illustrated in Figure 1, there are currently four applications for amendments to the City's SOI on file with LAFCo. Of these, three are private applications, and one is City-initiated for the Sports Complex project.

**Figure 1 – Study Areas  
and Proposed Sphere of Influence Amendments**



At the December 2015 Joint Study Session, Council directed that the City should consider expansion to help the City achieve its goals of becoming a regional employment center, providing for a diverse economy, and offering a variety of housing options that remain affordable for existing and future residents. Further, the City should allow for expansion that is purposeful and demonstrates consistency with the community's vision through implementation of one or more of the supporting principles, which were reviewed by the Council at that time.

At the May 2016 Joint Study Session, Council directed that the General Plan should not include land plans for the Study Areas. Rather, land use assumptions were to be developed and expressed through programmatic concepts supported by a number of design principles for how the areas could develop. The design principles would address general location and intensities of land uses, conceptual relation of land uses to one another, and other factors.

Staff believes an annexation strategy is necessary in order to:

- Provide a process for analysis of future development applications.
- Define how the development of these areas implements the goals, objectives, and policies of the General Plan. Examples include jobs-housing balance objectives and addressing mobility issues.
- Provide a framework for ensuring Elk Grove's long-term interest and needs are represented in regional planning efforts, such as the Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

Based upon the information presented in the attached Policy Paper, staff is seeking direction on the following items. Given the interrelated nature of this topic, the land plan for the City, and other related goals, it may be desirable to provide staff with preliminary direction now, and then provide a final review at the next Joint Study Session (date to be announced).

1. How should the City review and consider future development applications for consistency with the goals and policies of the General Plan? The following options are presented in the paper. These could be considered individually or, in some cases, combined.
  - a. Require comprehensive land planning for an entire study area prior to or in conjunction with consideration of a specific development application.
  - b. Refine and enhance the detail of the land programs and design principles with additional land planning criteria, similar to what is provided in the paper.
  - c. Divide the study areas into smaller areas, based upon factors such as ownership or project size.
  - d. Combine the study areas into larger areas with a more tiered planning process that incorporates approved SOI amendments.
2. In keeping with the direction from December 2015, what types of evaluation criteria should be incorporated into the General Plan? Possible criteria, as described in the paper, include:
  - a. Compliance with the land use program and design principles
  - b. Demonstrated market demand
  - c. Furtherance of the community vision
  - d. Demonstrated service availability

As requested by the Council at the July 28, 2016 meeting, Attachment 4 provides a comparison of the goals and policies identified in the July 2016 version of the paper.

## **Mobility Standards**

When development projects or roadway improvements are proposed, their design and operating characteristics are evaluated to determine the impacts on existing roadways, asking whether the associated impacts reduce the level of service, or LOS, for that segment or intersection. This analysis is done through a traffic model and results in a letter grade (A through F) for each studied roadway segment and intersection. The current Elk Grove General Plan includes policies to achieve a minimum of LOS D on all roadways and intersections in Elk Grove at all times, with some allowances for certain roadways and intersections that do not currently meet this standard. In addition to being a General Plan policy for consistency analysis, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that this LOS be incorporated into a project's environmental review.

### Vehicle Miles Traveled

As described in the policy paper, there are a number of concerns with utilizing LOS alone as an environmental impact metric, including:

- A focus on LOS values the free flow of vehicles above safety and the free flow of non-vehicular traffic;
- Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and associated criteria air pollutant and greenhouse gas emissions are generally increased when using LOS as a standard for roadway function;
- Incentives to use transit and active transportation options are reduced;
- Maintaining acceptable LOS often means widening streets, which can have negative environmental and urban character impacts, and congested areas where street widening is infeasible continue to have unacceptable LOS, regardless of the standards; and
- Sprawl development is incentivized due to lower impacts to LOS relative to other potential metrics.

In 2013, the State adopted Senate Bill (SB) 743, which, when fully implemented over the next two years, will replace LOS as a traffic impact analysis in CEQA. In its place, the State recommends an analysis of VMT.



The policy paper presents a range of reasons why this metric makes sense, including the following:

- Available historic data
- Relationship to vehicle emissions
- Responsiveness to policy and land use influences
- Indicator of roadway foundation and roadway safety
- Benefits of VMT analysis to identify transportation system impacts

Given the timing of the General Plan Update, the City has an opportunity to prepare for this coming change, including a VMT analysis of the future land use of the City within the accompanying CEQA document. The intent is to provide CEQA traffic impact coverage for projects consistent with the General Plan, addressing potential significant and unavoidable impacts at the citywide level. This creates a streamlining opportunity for these future projects.

While there are a number of benefits with the change to VMT, the process for determining impacts and mitigation is still being developed. The State has recommended a significance threshold that relates to greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets already developed; however, the City is able to establish its own thresholds so long as they are justified. Staff does not have a specific recommendation on a threshold at this time, as the metrics should be established after looking at the potential future land uses for the City.

Regarding potential mitigation for VMT impacts, guidance from the State, at this point, is relatively light. Many of the suggestions focus on mixed land use plans or increasing opportunities for transit. While these are interesting ideas, staff is concerned they may not be viable given Elk Grove's physical location in the region (an edge suburban community). Ideally, how the City addresses its jobs/housing imbalance through land use decisions (e.g., developing a major employment center) will reduce the potential impacts and make the General Plan self-mitigating. As discussed in the Jobs/Housing and Annexation Strategy papers, the City will need to utilize lands outside the existing City limits to address these issues.

#### Level of Service Standards

Separate from the VMT analysis, and because it will no longer be a required component of CEQA, the City could consider changes to its LOS policy. The existing policy imposes a blanket "D" standard on all roadways

and intersections, with additional policy language that “D” may not be maintainable as development continues. While a laudable goal, the policy does not recognize unique locations and constraints in developing a uniform LOS D roadway network. For example, widening roadways and intersections in Old Town or the Rural Area to achieve LOS D would significantly damage the character and quality of those respective areas.

Therefore, staff recommends the City consider a new policy on roadway efficiency that replaces LOS. The new policy would identify that the City desires a robust and efficient roadway network that provides access to properties in a safe and convenient manner, but that the design of specific intersection and roadway segment improvements should balance these needs with the character of the surrounding area, cost to complete the improvement, and ongoing maintenance obligations. The existing LOS D objective could be retained, but with additional acknowledgement and potential flexibility. Once a preferred land plan is identified, staff will prepare a detailed traffic analysis and identify necessary roadway and intersection sizing system wide. This analysis can be based upon the LOS D standard as an ideal objective, with select modifications based upon known constraints. The Council would then review this analysis and direct changes prior to finalizing the General Plan. From there, the City’s Roadway Fee would be updated to cover all of these planned improvements, making it solely a fair-share financing program and not a CEQA mitigation fee.

### Request for Direction

Based upon this information, staff seeks direction on the following:

1. Direct staff to develop a land use-based approach to setting VMT reduction targets through the draft land use plan.
2. Direct staff to develop VMT CEQA-significant thresholds that are aligned with the policies and objectives of the General Plan.
3. Direct staff to prepare a new policy on roadway efficiency that replaces LOS.
4. Direct staff to prepare revisions to the Citywide Roadway Fee Program that is aligned with the updated policies, targets, and roadway improvements identified in the draft General Plan.
5. Direct staff to develop options for mitigation of VMT impacts that are viable in the local context.

**NEXT STEPS:**

Staff requests direction by the City Council on the above policy topics. Based upon the direction provided at this Joint Study Session, staff will incorporate this information into the draft General Plan for presentation next year. Given the interrelated nature of these topics, there will be an opportunity to finalize this direction as part of the review of the land use map at the next Joint Study Session.

Staff is currently reviewing the public feedback on land use alternatives for the Opportunity Sites and Study Areas as directed at the May 26, 2016 Joint Study Session. This public comment opportunity was open from July 1 through August 1. A date for the presentation of this information has not been set; however, staff is targeting late September or early October.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Clustering Policy
2. Annexation Strategy
3. Mobility System Standards
4. Comparison of Existing General Plan and Summary Recommendations from the July 2016 Annexation Strategy Paper

## POLICY TOPIC PAPER 6.0: CLUSTERING POLICY REVISED



### BACKGROUND

When development is clustered, density is determined for an entire specified area, rather than on a lot-by-lot basis. Within the specified area, a developer can exercise greater flexibility in designing and placing structures, as long as the total density requirement is not exceeded. The City's 2003 General Plan contains a policy (CAQ-7) that promotes clustering development as a method to facilitate preservation and protection of woodlands, grasslands, wetlands, stream corridors, scenic areas, or other natural features as open space. The policy also includes the following qualifications:

- 1. Urban infrastructure capacity is available for urban use.*
- 2. On-site resource protection is appropriate and consistent with other General Plan Policies.*
- 3. The architecture and scale of development is appropriate for the area.*
- 4. Development rights for the open space area are permanently dedicated and appropriate long-term management is provided for by either a public agency, homeowners association, or other appropriate entity.*

*This policy shall not apply in the Rural Residential area east of State Route 99, where clustering of development is not permitted.*

Two development projects have been approved by the City since 2003 that relied on the clustering policy: Silverado Village in 2014 and Calvine Meadows in 2016. These projects preserved environmental resources (wetlands for Silverado Village and the Laguna Creek corridor for Calvine Meadows) in exchange for lot sizes smaller than normally allowed, but at a gross density consistent with the General Plan. Concerns with the current policy language and method for implementation were raised during the review of these previous development projects, as projects were essentially required to prepare site-specific development standards (i.e., Special Planning Areas) in order to comply with applicable zoning and General Plan consistency requirements. This has prompted a review of the City's clustering policy as part of the General Plan update. Following is a discussion of issues associated with the implementation of the clustering policy as well as proposed actions to address each issue.

### ISSUES AND PROPOSED ACTIONS

#### **Determination of Compatibility**

The current policy requires that the “architecture and scale” of the proposed clustered development be “appropriate for the area.” For example, in predominantly single-story residential areas, multiple-story structures should not be allowed merely to meet market demands for building square footage. However, when a project is the first to develop in an area, there may be limited, if any, benchmarks against which to compare a cluster development when determining appropriate architecture and scale.

This provision should be clarified and expanded to include not just existing development in an area but also the future buildout of the surrounding area. This clarification will allow staff to consider the planned land uses in an area and will provide additional information for staff to determine what an appropriate scale may be.

***Proposed Action:*** Continue to require that the scale of new clustered development be consistent with the character of existing development and planned future land uses in surrounding areas.

#### **Rural Area Applicability**

Cluster development is currently not permitted in the Rural Area. While it is possible to design cluster developments in the Rural Area that would maintain the overall density of the area (e.g., same number of total units allowed on a gross acreage basis), the clustered lots would be reduced in size, creating potential conflicts with other General Plan policies specific to the Rural Area.

In particular, it is the necessity for providing urban-type services (public water and sewer, in particular) that would put cluster development in the Rural Area in conflict with other General Plan policies. Lot sizes within a clustered subdivision would likely preclude individual septic systems due to minimum lot size requirements for such systems. While a clustered subdivision could be designed to utilize shared private wells and septic systems dedicated to the subject development, implementation and maintenance of such a system would be difficult and potentially cost prohibitive. The reduced lot sizes in a cluster development would also likely limit the keeping of horses and other large animals, which runs counter to the desire and intent for the Rural Area.

If there is a desire to apply the clustering policy in the Rural Area, the policy should be amended to clearly state that such development will be serviced by private wells and septic systems, whether individual or shared, as a requirement. Other clarifications may also be necessary to ensure that minimum lot sizes in cluster developments are not in conflict with the intent of the Rural Area (e.g., keeping of large animals). However, due to the potential conflict and confusion in implementing the clustering policy in the Rural Area, staff recommends retaining the current prohibition on cluster development in the area.

***Proposed Action:*** Continue to prohibit application of the clustering policy in the Rural Area.

### **Resource Types for Preservation**

The General Plan includes policies promoting the preservation of natural creek corridors and discouraging development within existing floodplains. Development may be allowed within the existing floodplains, provided the buildable area of the lot is brought out of the floodplain and there are no impacts to properties upstream or downstream. The existing clustering policy is silent on its relationship to the floodplain policies and how it can be used to incentivize preservation of the existing floodplain. However, this would only work in areas of the City where the floodplain is not already identified as open space on the General Plan Land Use Map. In most areas of the City, this distinction has been made. The primary exception is in the Rural Area and the area of Estate Residential along Calvine Road east of Waterman Road. Given the prohibition against application of the policy in the Rural Area, the applicability of the policy to watercourses is limited.

Some communities utilize clustering as a way to preserve other features, such as agricultural land or historic or cultural resources. As the City considers development beyond the existing City limits, this may be a desired tool to preserve valuable agricultural land and promote the creation of “agrihoods,” or neighborhoods built around commercial farms, similar to The Cannery in Davis. Clustering could also be a mechanism to create transitions between urban and rural development. Additionally, an expanded application of the clustering policy could be used to protect historic and cultural resources.

***Proposed Action:*** Expand the applicability of the clustering policy to continue to protect natural features and open space and add protection of active agricultural uses and historic or cultural resources.

### **General Plan-Zoning Consistency**

The current policy encourages the clustering of development, but does not describe how the clustering should be implemented. General Plan Policy LU-3, which provides for consistency between the General Plan land use designations and the City’s Zoning districts (established in Title 23 of the Municipal Code, referred to as the Zoning Code), makes no allowance for application of different zone districts to implement the clustering policy. To date, the only effective way to accomplish clustering has been to create a new Special Planning Area (SPA) zoning district since, pursuant to Policy LU-3, SPAs are consistent with all General Plan designations. While this accomplishes the intent of the policy and is allowed under the SPA formation provisions, it creates an additional regulatory step for applicants because it requires that they draft a new SPA and request that the City Council rezone the site into the SPA as part of their project approvals.

In the case of the recently approved Calvine Meadows project, the gross density of the project was 2.47 units per gross acre, consistent with the General Plan designation of Estate Residential (0.6 to 4.0 units per gross acre). Through the clustering policy, the Council adopted a new SPA that allowed residential

## 6.0 CLUSTERING POLICY

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lot sizes similar to the RD-5 zone (maximum 5 units per acre). The RD-5 zone could not be directly applied to the project because the RD-5 zone is not listed as a consistent zone with the Estate Residential General Plan land use designation in Policy LU-3.

If the General Plan included language, either in the clustering policy or in the General Plan-zoning consistency policy, that clarified how zoning is applied to development projects where the zoning density exceeds the allowed density range, the SPA requirement may have been avoided.

There are three options for addressing the General Plan-Zoning consistency issue through the General Plan update:

- **Option A: Continue to Utilize Special Planning Areas.** Under this option, the City would continue to allow the use of SPAs to implement the policy. As noted by the City Council during review of the Calvine Meadows project, this approach is rather intensive for smaller projects, requiring considerable time and effort on the part of the applicant to prepare, staff to review, and the Planning Commission and City Council to consider the new zoning. However, in the case of the Silverado Village project, which involved both clustering of density and a unique arrangement of the underlying residential and commercial land uses, the SPA was a valuable tool that allowed for details of the project to be documented at the zoning level, thereby assuring the public that the project would be developed as stated. Therefore, staff recommends keeping the SPA tool available as an option for implementing the clustering policy.
- **Option B: Add a Footnote to the General Plan-Zoning Consistency Table.** The second potential option involves adding a footnote to the General Plan-Zoning Consistency Table identifying that while some residential zoning districts are not strictly compatible with an identified land use category, through the clustering policy these districts may be compatible. Table I illustrates the concept.

**Table 6.1. Example General Plan-Zoning Consistency Table**

General Plan Land Use Designation	Consistent Zoning
Rural Residential	AR-5, AR-2
Estate Residential	AR-1, RD-1 through RD-4 <sup>1</sup>
Low Density Residential	RD-4 through RD-7 <sup>1</sup>
Medium Density Residential	RD-10, RD-15 <sup>1</sup>
High Density Residential	RD-20 through RD-40 <sup>1</sup>

Notes:

1. This General Plan land use designation may be implemented by other zoning districts that accommodate additional density than would normally be allowed by this land use designation through implementation of the clustering policy.

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While addressing the immediate needs of the consistency question, this option would still require a legislative act on the part of the City Council (a rezone) to implement on a project-by-project basis, similar to the SPA. Further, while the modified table would identify a pathway to consistency, a comparison between the General Plan Land Use Map and the Zoning Map would appear, on its face, to have an inconsistency and be prime for cleanup. This would not be ideal and would likely confuse future staff and property owners. For this reason, staff does not recommend adding the footnote to the table.

- **Option C: Adopt a New Clustering Permit.** The third option involves the creation of a new development permit, or entitlement, as part of the Zoning Code. A Clustering Permit would provide a process for applicants to request deviations to otherwise applicable development standards within a consistent zoning district in order to achieve the lot sizes necessary to comply with gross density requirements and maintain appropriate setbacks for the lot size. This permit would be limited to setbacks, minimum lot size, and lot coverage, and would not affect allowed uses or any other development standards (e.g., parking, pervious surface, lighting). Further, as a quasi-judicial permit it could be approved by the Planning Commission concurrently with approval of the subdivision map. As a permit, it can be tracked with the underlying parcel(s) in the City's mapping system and could appear as a notation on publicly viewable zoning maps for reference purposes (though it would not function as an overlay zone). Subsequent home construction would then be consistent with the lot sizes, lot coverage, and setbacks established under the Clustering Permit.

***Proposed Action:*** Retain Special Planning Areas (SPAs) as a tool for implementing the clustering policy (Option A) and create a new Clustering Permit to provide an additional mechanism to implement the clustering policy without requiring a rezone (Option C).

### SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis contained in this paper, staff recommends the following considerations for the updated General Plan. Commission and Council direction on these items will be consolidated with that provided for other key policy topics to inform the direction and contents of the draft General Plan update.

#### **Policy Topic 6.0: Clustering**

- 6.1 Require that the scale of new clustered development be consistent with the character of existing development and planned future land uses in surrounding areas.
- 6.2 Continue to prohibit application of the clustering policy in the Rural Area.



## 6.0 CLUSTERING POLICY

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- 6.3 Expand the applicability of the clustering policy to continue to protect natural features and open space and add protections of active agricultural uses and historic or cultural resources.
  
- 6.4 Improve General Plan-zoning consistency through the following:
  - a. Allow implementation through the creation and adoption of new Special Planning Area zoning districts, which allow for mixing of land uses.
  - b. Establish a new Clustering Permit that allows for modified development standards such as setbacks, minimum lot size, and lot coverage limitations consistent with the underlying General Plan land use designation for the subject property. The Clustering Permit would be approved by the Planning Commission as part of subdivision approval.

## POLICY TOPIC PAPER 8.0: ANNEXATION STRATEGY REVISED



### BACKGROUND

The City of Elk Grove is faced with the challenging task of balancing the need to accommodate new growth with the desire to remain true to its existing community character and meet current service levels. The development of a supportive annexation strategy will need to be developed to direct growth in a manner that aligns with community vision and supporting principles.

Population projections for the City of Elk Grove estimate an increase in population by approximately 46,000 persons through 2036<sup>1</sup>. This represents an approximately 25% increase from existing conditions. Additional population growth is projected beyond 2036 based upon a simple trend-line analysis. This is a significant increase that will require the City to identify locations where this growth may be accommodated. There are currently just over 1,800 acres of vacant land designated for residential use within the existing City limits. Under current planned land use designations and development standards, some, but not all, of the future anticipated population growth may be accommodated. However, various constraints may limit the development potential of the sites planned for residential growth, such as small or irregular sized lots, compatibility with surrounding development, critical habitat for sensitive species, environmental conditions, and/or floodplain restrictions. Additionally, through outreach on this General Plan Update, community feedback has trended to limiting new development in the existing City at densities consistent with historical levels. A desire for higher-density infill development has not presented itself.

In addition to providing land for residential uses, the City will need to apportion additional lands for new commercial, office, and retail development to achieve the City's vision for a diverse economy that attracts large-scale regional employers. Elk Grove is often considered a "bedroom community," with approximately 90 percent of employed residents who live in the community but work elsewhere<sup>2</sup>. This

### **Supporting Principles:**

- *Our Regional Neighbors Know Us & Our Contributions*
- *Development Fills in the Gaps*
- *Our Economy Thrives & New Business Adds Value*
- *City Core, Heritage & Well-Known Neighborhoods*
- *Protecting Our Farming Heritage & Rural Life*
- *Outdoor Recreation is Right Outside Our Door*
- *Moving Around Anywhere, Any Way*
- *Clean, Green Practices and Healthy Living*
- *Services for the Needs of All Residents*

<sup>1</sup> SACOG (Sacramento Area Council of Governments). 2016. Metropolitan Transportation Plan Projections.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census. 2013. On the Map. <http://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>.

## 8.0 ANNEXATION STRATEGY

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results in a jobs/housing ratio of 0.86 jobs for each housing unit in Elk Grove<sup>3</sup>, which is below the current General Plan target of 1:1 (one job for each housing unit) and the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) target for the region of 1.4:1 (1.4 jobs for each housing unit). In order to meet the current City jobs/housing target and current SACOG jobs/housing regional target, the City would need to add approximately 16,400 jobs and approximately 41,000 jobs, respectively, for employment growth to keep pace with projected population growth. This employment growth may not be accommodated within the approximately 850 acres of vacant land currently planned for employment uses (commercial, industrial, or mixed use), particularly if the City intends to achieve a higher jobs/housing ratio. Providing additional employment opportunities through land use planning will assist the City in meeting its goals for economic vitality. Again, through public outreach efforts, public interest for locating employment centers in infill locations has not been well received, due to potential conflicts, most specifically traffic.

*Refer to Policy Topic Paper 7.0: Jobs/Housing for additional information and specific recommendations for establishing jobs/housing ratios.*

Staff believes an annexation strategy is necessary in order to:

- Provide a process for analysis for future development applications.
- Define how the development of these areas implements the goals, objectives, and policies of the General Plan. Examples include jobs-housing balance objectives and addressing mobility issues.
- Provide a framework for ensuring Elk Grove's long-term interest and needs are represented in regional planning efforts, such as the Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

This paper seeks to outline the opportunities and challenges present in various approaches to growth management (infill and expansion) and, based upon the objectives and direction provided to date, identify a range of options to an annexation strategy that addresses the needs of the City.

### **Growth Management Approaches**

A number of growth management approaches may be considered to accommodate projected population growth and new employment and service opportunities.

#### Growth within Existing City Limits

Unfinished, undeveloped gaps found throughout the City become opportunities to develop new homes and businesses. Maximizing development within the City limits allows the City to accommodate more growth, taking advantage of existing infrastructure and services as well as potentially reducing the need for expansion beyond City boundaries. Prime locations for infill development include vacant or

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<sup>3</sup> City of Elk Grove. 2016. Staff Report, March 23.

underutilized parcels, transit corridors, and locations near employment and shopping. If located in proximity to existing transit routes or within walking distance of goods and services, infill development can reduce auto use and accompanying congestion and pollution.

However, many infill sites present challenges for development or redevelopment due to site constraints such as size, shape, location, access, compatibility with surrounding development, existing site conditions, age of existing developments, and development requirements. In addition, infill development may require upgrades to or expansion of existing infrastructure systems and municipal services to meet increased demand. Also, as mentioned previously, community feedback has been to limit new development in the City at densities consistent with historic levels.

Infill development may result in more efficient use of land and existing services; however, options in housing may also be limited due to site constraints and economic factors. Opportunities for employment-based development may also be restricted within the existing City limits, beyond those areas already planned for such uses (e.g., Southeast Policy Area). This may limit the City's ability to implement the supporting principles for economic vitality, which encourage a variety of housing options, including more estate residential opportunities, as well as establish Elk Grove as a regional employment center. As mentioned in the Jobs/Housing paper, a major employment center is one that supports concentrations of at least 10,000 "base" jobs (i.e. including manufacturing, office, medical, educational, and service employment, and excluding sectors like retail and restaurant uses), at average density of eight or more jobs per acre; and b) where 80 percent or more of the uses within the center are employment, not residential. The Southeast Policy Area (SEPA) is intended to serve the objective; however, by itself SEPA will not allow the City to realize its jobs/housing objectives.

### Limit New Growth

The City may choose to place limitations on new development and strive to slow growth to a rate that maintains Elk Grove's existing character. Limits can be placed on where growth occurs through the establishment of set physical boundaries that define where new growth can be accommodated. Such strategies include establishing an urban growth boundary or using conservation easements for open space or agricultural lands to define and limit the areas where new growth could occur. Limits can also be placed on how growth occurs through restrictions on the rate of growth. Such strategies include limiting the issuance of building permits to a certain number per year or only allowing growth in

### ***Infill Development***

#### ***Benefits:***

- *Increased densities at key locations*
- *Use of existing infrastructure and services*

#### ***Challenges:***

- *Limited housing options*
- *Limited opportunities for economic growth*
- *Potential impact on affordability*
- *Infrastructure and service limitations*
- *May accommodate most but not all of projected growth*

expansion areas once development within the existing City limits meets a predetermined threshold (e.g., percent of available land, number of building permits issued for infill development), effectively tying options for expansion to the growth rate of infill development. While strategies for limiting the where and how of new growth may allow for some expansion beyond the existing City limits, they still control the amount of projected growth that can be accommodated by the City. Ultimately, though, these sorts of techniques result in artificial market controls and can limit the City's ability to respond to unique projects and situations.

Limiting new growth, whether that growth is accommodated within the existing City limits or allows some expansion to occur, has the potential consequence of increased housing prices and commercial rents due to limited housing stock and rising land costs. Limiting growth also reduces the City's tax-base opportunities and its ability to provide needed services as well as facilities and infrastructure maintenance, operations, and improvements. The ability for development to respond to market demand may be restricted as well, even for those projects that would implement one or more of the supporting principles, including housing and jobs targets. While Elk Grove may limit the amount of growth accommodated, surrounding communities may not. Projected population growth and opportunities to increase the employment base would simply shift from Elk Grove to adjacent communities.

### Growth beyond the City Limits

Planning for growth beyond the existing City limits offers the opportunity for the City to provide a greater range and choice of housing and a diverse mix of employment opportunities. The City would have the most flexibility to plan for future growth, which would accommodate projected population and employment needs that can respond more effectively to market demand.

However, new infrastructure would need to be constructed and maintained. New growth areas would also require an expansion in service areas and result in an increased demand for services including transit, park, school, library, and police and fire facilities and staff. Expansion could also result in the loss of agricultural land and potential habitat or other resource management lands.

Ensuring that infrastructure and services are provided by new growth would require the City to incorporate policies on how and when new growth occurs. Additional criteria may also be established that dictates when growth in the expansion areas can move forward.

### **New Growth**

#### **Benefits:**

- *Provides the most flexibility to the City in planning for future growth*

#### **Challenges:**

- *Managing growth to ensure appropriate expansion of required infrastructure*
- *Increased service demands*
- *Maintaining existing community character*
- *Loss of agricultural land and other resources lands*

### POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

#### **Balanced Growth Strategy**

The City Council has provided direction on growth and development through the Development Fills in the Gaps supporting principle from the December 2015 vision book (*A Shared Community Vision*), which recognizes the importance of infill development in accommodating projected growth. Maximizing densities and providing for a variety of land use types on vacant and underutilized parcels, particularly along key corridors, would potentially support transit services as well as accommodate a greater share of the projected growth within the existing City limits.

The supporting principle also recognizes that not all projected growth may be accommodated within the existing City limits and that planning for expansion may help the City achieve its goals of becoming a regional employment center, providing for a diverse economy, and offering a variety of housing options that remain affordable for existing and future residents. The supporting principle directs a balance of growth management strategies, through a focus on infill while allowing for expansion that is purposeful and demonstrates consistency with the community vision through implementation of one or more of the other supporting principles.

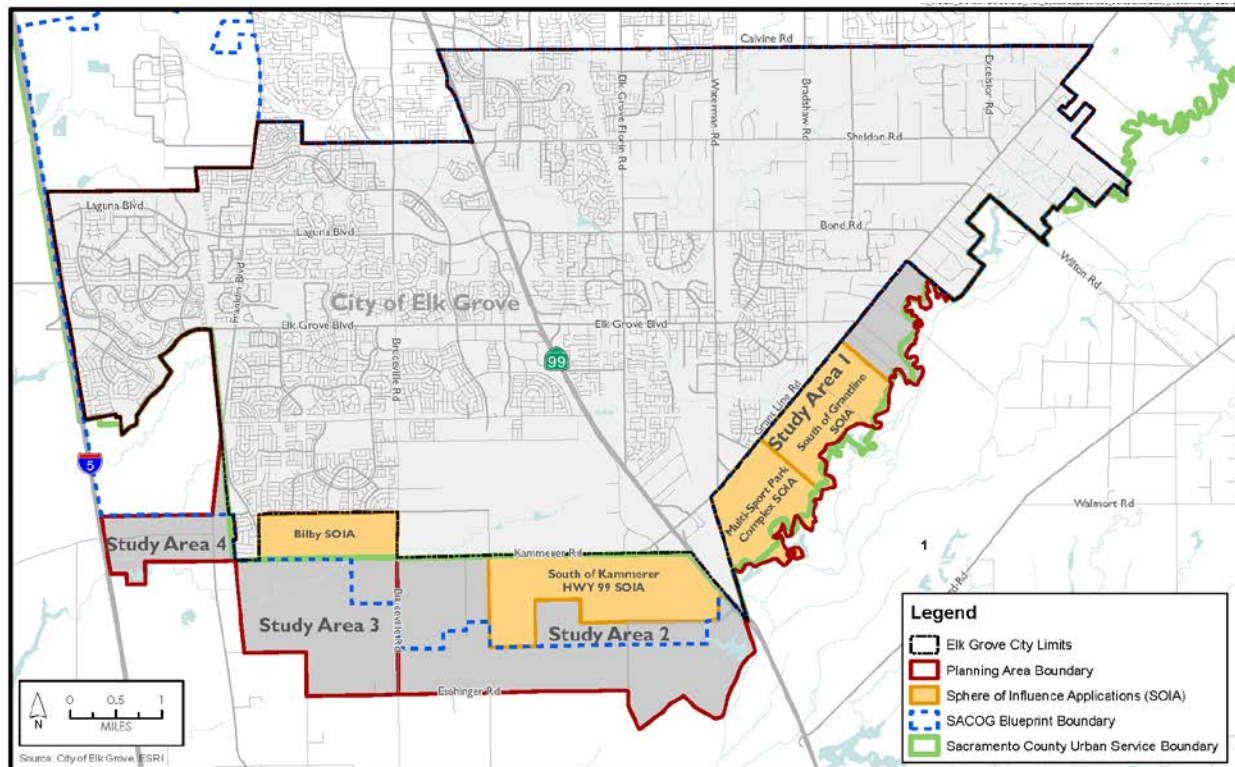
#### Focus on Infill

To implement a focus on infill, a series of opportunity sites have been identified within the existing City limits and a number of land use alternatives have been developed for each of these sites. The alternatives propose varying degrees of increases in density (residential uses) or intensity (nonresidential uses) as part of an infill growth strategy to accommodate a greater share of the projected growth than what is currently allowed. Public input on these land use alternatives has been gathered and is being synthesized by staff for review at a future joint study session. While the General Plan update will also incorporate policies to encourage infill development in support of a focus on infill strategy, preliminary results of the outreach indicate that there is limited public support for infill development at higher than historic densities due to compatibility and impact (e.g., traffic) concerns.

#### Expansion with Purpose

Four broad study areas have been identified to explore options for potential expansion south of the City (Figure 8.1). The study areas include lands outside the City's existing limits which bear relation to its planning efforts. The study area boundaries were based on the City's 2013 Sphere of Influence Amendment application, represent a reduction from the 2003 General Plan study area and General Plan Planning Area boundaries, and are in some ways similar to the boundaries of the SACOG Blueprint growth area and the SACOG 2016 Metropolitan Transportation Plan land plan.

Figure 8.1 – General Plan Study Areas



At the May joint study session, direction was given to explore land use assumptions for each study area. Rather than express the land use assumptions through a land plan, assumptions would be expressed through programmatic concepts and supported by a number of design principles for how each of the study areas could develop. The design principles would address general location and intensities of land uses, conceptual relation of land uses to one another, transitions and buffers between land uses, and targets for preservation of agricultural or special resource lands such as habitat or flood areas. The City has gathered public input on concepts for each study area and staff is summarizing this feedback and preparing a recommendation for consideration at a future study session.

The boundaries of the study areas are based upon existing roads and do not reflect ownership dynamics or the market realities of bringing any one area into the City. For example, each of the four pending Sphere of Influence Amendment applications (shown in Figure 8.1) reflects a portion of their respective study areas. Therefore, how the programmatic concepts will be implemented is a point of concern – how will future development applications for these proposed Sphere of Influence areas be evaluated for General Plan conformance? How will the competing needs for clear General Plan policies and flexibility to respond to market conditions be balanced?

Cities address the process and intent for expansion in a variety of different ways. Here are three local examples that are worth reviewing.

## 8.0 ANNEXATION STRATEGY

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### City of Sacramento

The City of Sacramento includes in their General Plan (excerpted in Exhibit A) a number of policies relative to potential annexation. They begin with a policy to “continue to plan for future expansion and new growth” in five Special Study Areas around their City. They identify that this planning is to “ensure that regional growth is adequately accommodated and served by the City, particularly when it cannot be absorbed in infill areas” (policy LU 1.1.9). Specific land use plans for these Special Study Areas are not included in the General Plan; however, policy LU 10.1.2 requires that each area be “planned comprehensively prior to annexation and development” through a process that starts with a General Plan amendment, a Sphere of Influence amendment by LAFCo, and adoption of master plans, specific plans, rezoning, and other entitlements to establish the timing, phasing, costs, and responsible parties associated with development of the area. Finally, policy LU 10.1.3 requires that “regional and community benefits are achieved as a result of the annexations and development approvals” in these areas. A list of examples is provided, including a mix of land uses with jobs and housing, transportation systems that are substantially improved and expanded, sustainable infrastructure and community facilities, and conservation of open space including agricultural lands and habitat.

### City of Folsom

The City of Folsom (Exhibit B) has a policy to “encourage urban development within the City Limits and to discourage urban development in the unincorporated” areas in their General Plan Planning Area. The intent of the policy is to “insure the orderly growth of the City, to enable the logical and most economic extension of services and to better ensure a quality living environment.” The City identifies its intent to “annex all areas within its General Plan area and Sphere of Influence at the earliest time consistent with the goals and policies of [the Plan], the orderly extension of the Folsom City Limits, and the provision of public services and facilities.” The section concludes with a discussion on municipal services and facilities plans as requirements prior to annexation. The map included with the section is from the 1990s and does not reflect Folsom’s current boundaries.

### City of Roseville

Within the last ten years, the City of Roseville (Exhibit C) has completed several annexations of land on the western edge of their City, including the Reason Farms and Sierra Vista projects. As such, the Sphere of Influence for Roseville is conterminous with the current City limits. That said, there are a number of policies in the Roseville General Plan that address annexation. First, item 5 under Policies: Growth Management – Growth Areas (page II-53) identifies that any new development proposed in or out of the City’s corporate boundaries must comply with a series of Guiding Principles. These Guiding Principles include financial feasibility and neutral or positive fiscal impacts on the City’s General Fund, logical growth/plan boundaries, utility and water capacity, and provide “a public benefit to the City and residents.” A second policy (Growth Management – Annexations and Sphere of Influence, page II-56) provides that the City may initiate studies to investigate potential annexation and expanded sphere of



influence, where the studies should be focused “on those areas that, both long and short term, may affect General Plan goals and policies and would be logically served and planned by the City.” It goes on to state that the City may consider annexations that, among other things, are contiguous with the City boundaries and are a logical expansion, ensure preservation of open space and agricultural lands, and are consistent with the General Plan.

### **Process for Expansion**

Ultimately, development occurring within expansion areas relies on the annexation of unincorporated areas. Growth beyond the City limits is controlled through the annexation process, which requires approval through the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo). Annexations must meet the requirements of the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act of 2000 and local LAFCo policies, which dictate logical boundaries for expansion that is contiguous to existing development, ensure infrastructure and service availability, and require consistency with local land use plans.

Based on the land use planning assumption and design principles approach, as directed by the Planning Commission and City Council, annexation of land to the City of Elk Grove could occur in four distinct steps, some of which may happen concurrently. The following describes this process, which is consistent with State law.

- **Step 1: Sphere of Influence Amendment.** The City limits and the Sphere of Influence (SOI) boundaries for Elk Grove are currently coterminous. Prior to additional land being annexed, the City must expand its SOI boundary to include the potential areas for annexation. The City Council may initiate an application for an SOI amendment request; however, changes to SOI boundaries are reviewed and approved by LAFCo which evaluates the request against the requirements of the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act as well as any specific local LAFCo policies. SOI applications to LAFCo may also be initiated by property owners.

LAFCo policy does not currently require that a land use plan be submitted concurrently with an application for a SOI expansion; however, Sacramento LAFCo has previously requested some land use assumptions as part of SOI applications in order to inform environmental review of the potential impacts of a SOI expansion.

- **Step 2: General Plan Amendment and Land Use Plan.** Based on current direction, no land use plans will be incorporated into the General Plan for the study areas. Therefore, prior to development occurring within the study areas, land use planning would need to be developed and incorporated into the General Plan to determine the location and distribution of land uses. The land use plan would need to be in substantial conformance with the land use program and design standards identified for the study area.

A General Plan amendment would be required to incorporate the land use plan, which may or may not be processed in conjunction with an application for an SOI amendment.

- **Step 3: Rezoning and Other Entitlements.** Once a land use plan has been adopted for the study area, rezoning of the properties may occur, which is required prior to annexation. An applicant may also choose to file additional entitlement applications (e.g. tentative subdivision map).

Rezoning and any related entitlements may or may not be processed in conjunction with a General Plan amendment and land use plan.

- **Step 4: Annexation.** Once rezoning of properties has been established, filing of an annexation request with LAFCo occurs. Ultimate approval of the annexation request lies with LAFCo. Annexations must meet certain criteria in accordance with the Cortese-Know-Hertzberg Act and with local LAFCo policies.

POTENTIAL ACTIONS

While LAFCo has ultimate authority to approve or deny SOI amendment and annexation requests, the City has an opportunity to establish its own criteria in evaluating such requests prior to submittal to LAFCo. Allowing for expansion that is purposeful and occurs when economic need, community vision, and regional goals align (as described in the Supporting Principles, reviewed at the December Joint Study Session) will require a system of City policies and evaluation criteria to inform such decisions. The following discusses a number of potential components to include in the General Plan.

**Incorporate Programmatic Land Principles into General Plan Policies**

As mentioned earlier, direction was provided at the May Joint Study Session to develop programmatic concepts and design principles for the Study Areas, rather than a conceptual or specific land plan. These principles would address the general location and intensities of land uses, conceptual relation of land uses to one another, and other factors. While the principles for each study area will be reviewed at a future study session, the following is an example of how this could work for a hypothetical Study Area X.

**SAMPLE  
Programmatic Land Principles for Study Area X**

<b>Land Use Concept</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locate activity nodes of community commercial and employment along the major arterials</li> <li>• Provide a mix of residential uses, including products in the estate residential range</li> <li>• Transition the density and intensity of development from north to south</li> <li>• Integrate open space and parks throughout the plan</li> <li>• Provide buffers from adjoining agricultural uses, water courses, and flood zones</li> </ul>
<b>Program Considerations</b>

*Land uses within the study area will conform to these ranges of land uses on a land area (gross acreage) basis. The arrangement of land uses shall be in keeping with the land use concept above.*

- Commercial: 5-10%
- Employment Center: 5-20%
- Residential:
  - High Density: 5-10%
  - Medium Density: 5-15%
  - Low Density: 10-30%
  - Estate: 10-20%
- Parks, Open Space, and Schools: as necessary to support the planned land uses

These principles would be incorporated into the General Plan policies as criteria for development within the study areas. As illustrated, the policies would allow for land use flexibility, expressed in percentage ranges by land use (as shown above), to permit a range of land planning solutions for the study area while still meeting the intent of the concept.

### **Consider How Planning Will Occur Within the Study Areas**

As discussed above, thought needs to be given to how the Programmatic Land Principles for the Study Areas will be implemented as the Study Areas (as currently defined) are considered through smaller SOI amendment applications and development proposals. The issue here is that the Programmatic Land Principles will be fairly generic, with flexibility in the allocation of land uses and the Study Areas are rather large. This could create challenges in ensuring that land uses are organized in the best interest of the City, such as meeting the overall jobs-housing objectives. Infrastructure delivery is another concern, where there is the potential to create duplications in services or, worse still, under build facilities that could be shared, creating economic efficiencies for the delivery of these services in the long-term.

Possible considerations include the following:

- I. **Comprehensive Land Planning** - The City could require a detailed, General Plan level land use plan be prepared for an entire study area prior to or in conjunction with consideration of a specific development application. As described above, the City of Sacramento has a similar requirement. The area-wide land use plan could address land use, circulation, infrastructure, public facilities, and public services and could be required prior to or concurrent with requests for annexation. Specific objectives of the land use plan could be to:
  - Provide sufficient detail to confirm substantial conformance with the land use program and design principles for each study area, as identified in the General Plan policies.
  - Provide sufficient detail relative to the location of land use designations to allow for rezoning of properties, which is a requirement for annexation.

- Identify anticipated phasing of development for the study area, including phasing and financing of backbone infrastructure improvements and provision of service facilities to maintain sufficient levels of service.

Requiring an area-wide land use plan would allow the City to determine consistency with the intent of the General Plan policies for each Study Area as a whole and provide context for how individual annexation proposals will be implemented.

However, this approach would require large-scale coordination between property owners and development interest, which would impact time and cost considerations when looking at market timing. The process would also require planning for non-participating properties, where the development interest driving the process are, in effect, planning land uses on property outside of their control. It is possible that these issues outweigh the overall benefits of a comprehensive planning exercise. It is possible that the only way to effectively coordinate and plan at this scale would be through a City-initiated effort, similar to the effort in the Southeast Policy Area (SEPA). Due to the financial limits of the City and existing investments in SEPA, the City's ability to do this for any one area would be limited for a considerable period of time.

2. **Augmenting the Programmatic Land Principles** – In this concept, the General Plan would continue to not include a land plan for the study areas and the Programmatic Land Principles would be incorporated. Additional information would be added that describes more universally the City's desires for organizing land uses. An example of this approach is provided in Exhibit D. These Land Planning Criteria describe a broad framework for how the goals and policies of the General Plan would be comprehensively achieved. This information would accompany the introduction of the Study Areas. Following this information, the Programmatic Land Principles for each area would be presented. If this is a concept that is supported, staff would develop it further and bring it back with the land use discussion at the next Joint Study Session. None of the three attached example General Plans utilize this specific approach, though City of Sacramento comes the closest through their Policy LU 10.1.3. Regionally, Rancho Cordova probably comes the closest, though their General Plan includes conceptual land use plans for their study areas, therefore they were not included herein for review.

The benefit of this approach is that it reaches beyond the more traditional policy formulation shown in the attached example General Plans to form the backbone of a comprehensive plan. It would provide an inflection point connecting the goals, objectives, and policies of the General Plan to more concrete expectations for future development. And, it does so without identifying specific land uses for an individual property, where the concerns in Option 1 above would occur.

The intent of this concept would be to allow individual applications to be considered without compromising the big-picture objectives of the City. This approach does not require intensive

coordination between property owners and development interest as the applications come forward. Further, the goal would be for enough detail to be provided in the Land Planning Criteria to address long-term infrastructure coordination to the extent financially feasible.

The downside with this approach is that the broader structure of the Land Planning Criteria is not directly integrated with the Programmatic Land Principles. However, to do so would essentially create a land plan for the subject area. Based upon prior Council direction this should be left to the subsequent development application.

- 3. Dividing the Study Areas into Smaller Areas** – The division of the overall area into four Study Areas generally follows existing roads and topographic and regional planning features. Alternatively, the City could divide the Study Areas into smaller components. The intent of this option would be to further the comprehensive land planning requirement in Option I above, but not at a scale that impacts market feasibility. This would allow individual properties to move forward for consideration more independently but would require more Programmatic Land Principles to be included in the General Plan. To do this, staff would first need guidance on how to divide the areas – ownership, feasible project acreage, or other metrics. Following this, the Programmatic Land Principles would need to be divided into the smaller areas.

This trade off of greater property independence for more site-specific programing may be a concern. Specifically, this change could move the focus from the General Plan to the individual SOI applications. The focus of the General Plan Update is on broad policy and future planning for the City, not specific development applications. Therefore, this could impact the establishment of goals and policies for the City. Further, the revised areas are unlikely to align with future SOI and annexation requests, resulting in similar issues as Option I, but on a smaller scale.

- 4. Combining the Study Areas into Larger Areas** – Under this concept, rather than showing a series of study areas similar to Figure 8.1 above, the Study Areas would be combined into one or two planning areas. At this early level, they could collectively be referred to as, perhaps, the General Plan “Vision Area” – areas where the City wants to consider future development in keeping with the broader goals and objectives of the General Plan. The General Plan could include policies about ideal SOI amendment applications, such as minimum size. Then, as LAFCo considers individual SOI amendment applications, these application areas would transition into a “Planning Area” that, through General Plan policy(ies) would allow for preparation of comprehensive plans for the subject properties. Once the plan is approved by the City, the project would return to LAFCo for consideration as an annexation as it normally would.

This approach would preclude land planning at the General Plan level and would best be implemented through the Land Planning Criteria (Exhibit D). Functionally, this most resembles the Folsom approach where a catchment area of future City opportunities is defined and a process is established to bring the area into the City at the appropriate time. The approach is no better than the existing General Plan, which identifies a large area south of the existing City as a “future study area.” This doesn’t articulate a vision for the area in the true sense of the term, leaving many questions for both the public and other agencies in the region. Additionally, it places a lot of reliance on LAFCo to decide the value of the SOI applications. In that regard it doesn’t address many of the criticisms with the City’s 2013 application.

### **Develop Evaluation Criteria for Annexation Proposals**

In accordance with the *expansion with purpose* directive from the December 2015 Joint Study Session, the City would allow expansion when economic need, community vision, and regional goals align. Establishing criteria that define and/or address economic need, community vision, and regional goals should be developed to guide City staff, Planning Commission, and City Council in evaluating expansion proposals as well as inform the public on the standards used when evaluating such proposals. Based on discussions to date, criteria to consider includes the following. This list includes many of the same materials that LAFCo requires in considering an annexation application, such as market feasibility and availability of services. By incorporating it with the City’s review, it allows the City to consider this same information and for consistent information to be considered through both the land planning and approval process with the City and the LAFCo annexation process. It is not an imposition of additional submittal information.

- Compliance with the land use program and design principles for the study area. Some allowance for deviations from the percent targets by land use designation would be established to permit flexibility in land use planning for the study area while still meeting the intent of the design principles.
- Demonstrate an identified market need. A market needs analysis would be required as part of the City Council’s consideration of a proposal in order to evaluate compliance with this criterion and to demonstrate how Elk Grove is accommodating its share of the regional demand.
- Further the community vision. An applicant would identify which supporting principle(s) would be implemented by the proposal and provide justification with particular attention being given to meeting economic need, community vision, and regional goals. This may include demonstrating how the proposal furthers regional goals as expressed through the Sacramento Region Blueprint and SACOG’s MTP/SCS. Other examples may include:
  - Facilitates development of a regional attractor or use that implements one or more of the supporting principles. *Examples:* Major employment center that contributes to meeting an

- established jobs goal. Regional attractor that draws visitors and contributes to increased economic or tourist activity.
- Constructs key infrastructure or facilities needed to maintain or improve community service levels. *Examples:* Constructs a major street intersection that improves safety conditions. Increases capacity of sewer facility or regional water treatment plant. Completes a segment of a trail that provides a key connection within the overall system.
- Demonstrate adequate services are available. A service and infrastructure plan would be required to demonstrate the service and infrastructure needs of the proposed development, what services and infrastructure are required to serve the proposed development, funding mechanisms for necessary improvements, and effect of expansion on current service levels within the existing City limits and expansion areas.

### POLICY QUESTIONS

Based on the discussion in this policy topic paper, staff recommends that the Commission and Council consider the following specific questions. Additionally, the Commission and Council could provide clarification or adjustment in prior direction.

Note: Given the interrelated nature of this topic, the land plan for the City, and other related goals, it may be desirable to provide staff with preliminary direction now, then provide a final review at the next Joint Study Session.

1. How should the City review and consider future development applications for consistency with the goals and policies of the General Plan? The following options are presented in the paper. These could be considered individually or, in some cases, combined.
  - a. Require comprehensive land planning for an entire study area prior to or in conjunction with consideration of a specific development application.
  - b. Refine and enhance the detail of the land programs and design principles with additional land planning criteria, similar to what is provided in the paper.
  - c. Divide the study areas into smaller areas, based upon factors such as ownership or project size.
  - d. Combining the study areas into larger areas and more tiered planning process that incorporates approved SOI amendments.
2. In keeping with the direction from December 2015, what types of evaluation criteria should be incorporated into the General Plan? Possible criteria, as described in the paper, include:
  - a. Compliance with the land use program and design principles
  - b. Demonstrated market demand
  - c. Furtherance of the community vision
  - d. Demonstrated service availability

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# SACRAMENTO 2035 GENERAL PLAN



**Adopted  
March 3, 2015**

**LU 1.1.8** **Annexation Prior to City Services.** Prior to the provision of City services to unincorporated areas, the City shall require those unincorporated properties be annexed into the City, or that a conditional service agreement be executed agreeing to annex when deemed appropriate by the City. (RDR)



**LU 1.1.9** **New Growth.** The City shall continue to plan for future expansion and new growth in Special Study Areas to ensure that regional growth is adequately accommodated and served by the City, particularly when it cannot be absorbed in infill areas. (MPSP/RDR)

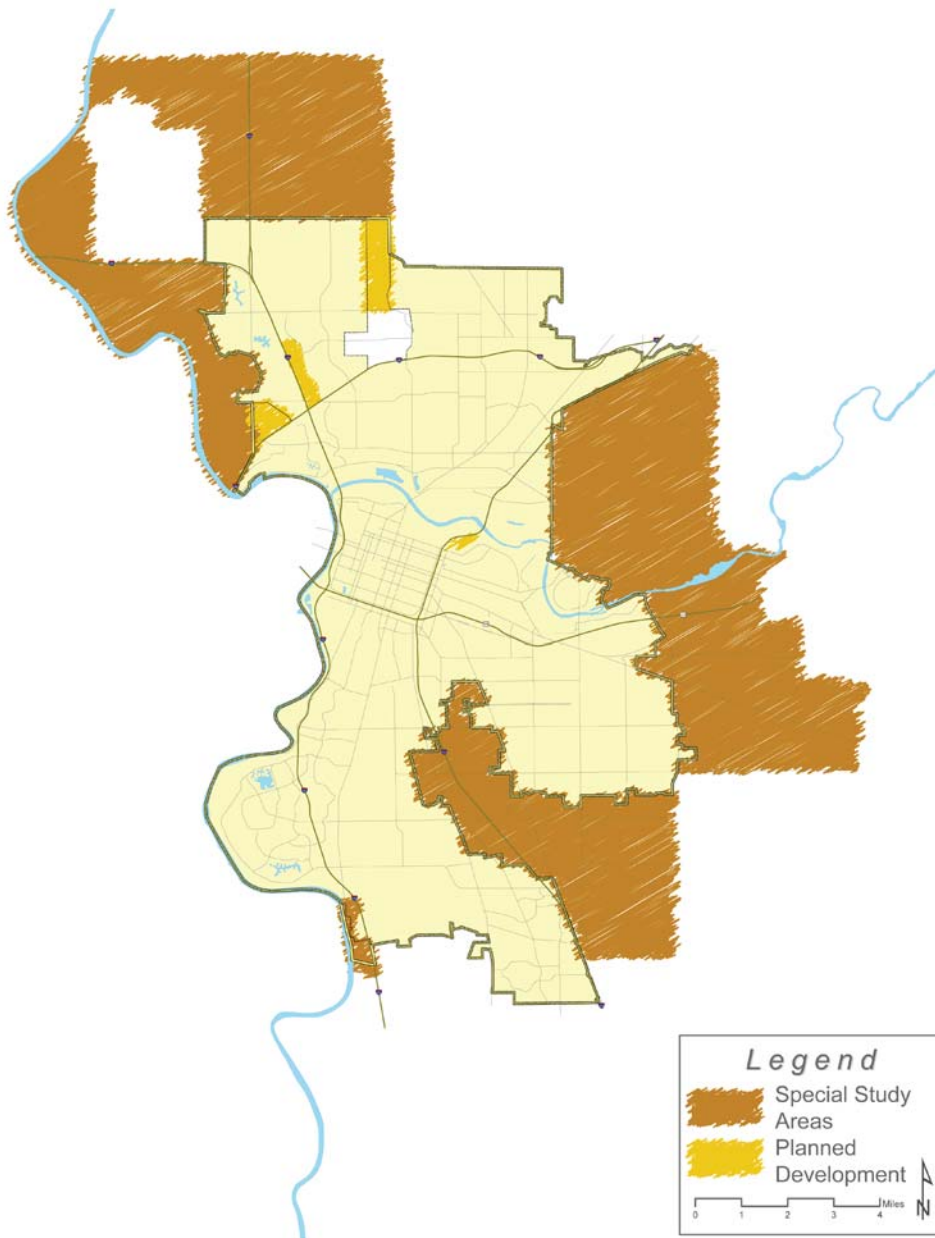
*See LU 10, Special Study Areas and Planned Development, for additional policies on Special Study Areas.*

**LU 1.1.10** **Exceeding Floor-Area-Ratio** 🌐. The City may allow new development to exceed the maximum allowed FAR or density if it is determined that the project provides a significant community benefit. (RDR)



# Special Study Areas and Planned Development

Policies in this section ensure that areas mostly on the edges of the city are planned through a process that addresses regional, local, and site specific issues. They also provide opportunities for the City to explore possible expansions into adjoining lands or where inter-jurisdictional cooperation is needed with the County and other entities to resolve issues regarding the nature, timing, extent of development, the appropriate mechanism to achieve flood protection and open space preservation, and other related challenges. Of particular concern is the need to determine the timing and extent of development planned in the Natomas Joint Vision Study Area, including preservation of a one-mile open space buffer.



*The diagram to the left illustrates the location of Sacramento's Special Study Areas and Planned Development.*

*See Part 3, Community Plan Areas and Special Study Areas for a discussion of the five Special Study Areas.*

## Special Study Areas

The Special Study Areas designation is applied to five potential annexation areas that may become part of the City in the future after additional studies have identified the fiscal and service delivery implications on City functions. These include Arden Arcade Study Area, East Study Area, Fruitridge Florin Study Area, Natomas Joint Vision Study Area, and Town of Freeport Study Area. The future land use and urban form for these areas will include a combination of several land use and urban form designations applied in conjunction with a General Plan amendment. (See Part 3 of the 2035 General Plan for a discussion of these areas.)

## Planned Development

The Planned Development designation is applied to four areas with pending projects that are in the development review process as of March 2014. These include McKinley Village, Panhandle, Camino Norte, and Natomas Crossing.

Specific land use and urban form designations (i.e., designations outlined in this plan) will be applied to these areas once planning is complete and the City has approved the development.

### GOAL LU 10.1

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**Growth and Change.** Ensure annexation and city expansion is consistent with the Regional Blueprint principles, SACOG MTP/SCS, and the City's Vision and Guiding Principles, and provides regional and community benefits.

### Policies

*See LU 1, Growth and Change, for additional policies on new development in Special Study Areas.*

#### LU 10.1.1

##### **Special Study Areas and Interagency Coordination.**

The City shall engage in cooperative planning with Sacramento County, school districts, Sacramento Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo), and other public agencies to ensure that mutual benefits can be derived from potential future development of Special Study Areas adjacent to the city's boundaries. (IGC)

**LU 10.1.2 Comprehensive Planning for Special Study Areas.**

The City shall require that Special Study Areas be planned comprehensively prior to annexation and development, and subject to the following processes:

- Amendment of the General Plan, including completion of a new Community Plan chapter where applicable.
- Approval of a Sphere of Influence amendment by the LAFCo prior to annexation request where applicable. (Sacramento LAFCo local policies discourage concurrent Sphere of Influence Amendment and Annexation).
- Completion and adoption of Master Plans, Specific Plans, pre-zoning, and Development Agreements, as appropriate, in order to establish the timing, phasing, costs, and responsible parties associated with development in the area to be annexed. (MPSP/RDR)

**LU 10.1.3 Regional and Community Benefits .**

The City shall require that regional and community benefits are achieved as the result of annexations and development approvals in any Special Study Area or Planned Development Area, consistent with the goals and policies outlined in this Plan. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A mix of land uses that results in a full range of jobs, housing, amenities, services, and open space, resulting in complete neighborhoods and dynamic centers that have strong linkages with the city and region.
- Transportation systems, including transit and roadways that are substantially improved and expanded, in a manner that provides enhanced mobility for all sectors of the community and benefits regional air quality.
- Sustainable infrastructure and community facilities, where adequate land is provided for such facilities, and construction and ongoing maintenance are funded by proposed development.
- Conservation of open space, including important agricultural lands, sensitive habitat areas and wildlife corridors, and other non-urbanized areas that serve as buffers or “greenbelts” for public use.

<sup>(1)</sup> The Fruitridge Florin Study Area is located in the Fruitridge Broadway Community Plan Area and the South Area Community Plan Area. The Town of Freeport Study Area is already within the South Area Community Plan. The unincorporated portion of Arden Arcade Study Area lies within the Arden Arcade Community Plan boundary. Natomas Joint Vision Study Area and East Study Area would require new Community Plan chapters.

<sup>(2)</sup> Town of Freeport Study Area and Fruitridge Florin Study Area are already within the City's Sphere of Influence.

- Net fiscal benefits are achieved by both the City and County, with minimal impacts to affected special districts. *(MPSP/RDR)*

**LU 10.1.4**

**Planned Development.** The City shall require areas designated Planned Development on the Land Use and Urban Form Diagram be developed consistent with the General Plan's Vision and Guiding Principles and obtain a General Plan Amendment to designate the area consistent with the proposed project using the appropriate designations contained in the Land Use and Urban Design Element. *(RDR)*

**LU 10.1.5**

**Planned Development Sunset.** The City shall not designate any other areas Planned Development beyond those shown on the Land Use and Urban Form Diagram as of March 3, 2009. *(RDR/MPSP)*

**CITY OF  
FOLSOM  
  
GENERAL  
  
PLAN**

JANUARY 1993 UPDATE



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# URBAN DEVELOPMENT POLICY

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# URBAN DEVELOPMENT POLICY

## 11.1 APPLICATION

This Urban Development Policy shall be applicable to the Folsom General Plan Area. A distinction is made in the Policy for incorporated and unincorporated areas and for agricultural uses.

## 11.2 STATEMENT OF POLICY BASIS

The City of Folsom seeks to implement its General Plan, to direct the orderly growth of the City of Folsom (versus haphazard or leapfrog development), and to provide an adequate level of service to the community. To this end, the City of Folsom has found it to be both timely and appropriate to set forth its Policy for urban development in its General Plan area to ensure that the City can carry out its role as provider of urban services in the northeastern portion of the County of Sacramento. This Policy is set forth in recognition of the following:

1. The State planning policy disfavors encirclement of incorporated Cities with urban development which lacks adequate and comprehensive urban services.
2. The City of Folsom is a general law City and such political subdivisions have limited authority and means to generate funds under State Law.
3. There has been a further reduction of available revenue for urban development resulting from the fiscal constraints of Articles XIII A and B of the Constitution of the State of California, otherwise known as Propositions 13 and 4.
4. Planned, orderly urban development decreases the cost of urban services while simultaneously improving the environment for urban development.

## 11.3 POLICY ON DEVELOPMENT OF UNINCORPORATED AREAS

To insure the orderly growth of the City, to enable the logical and most economic extension of services and to better ensure a quality living

environment, it is the policy of the City of Folsom to encourage urban development within the City Limits and to discourage urban development in the unincorporated sections of the General Plan area and to coordinate with the County of Sacramento to implement this Policy.

## 11.4 ANNEXATION POLICY

It is the policy of the City of Folsom to annex all areas within its General Plan area and Sphere of Influence at the earliest time consistent with the Goals and Policies of the Folsom General Plan, the orderly extension of the Folsom City Limits and the provision of public services and facilities in accordance with Sections VI and VII of this Urban Development Policy. In conjunction with this Policy, it is the policy of the City to continue to actively develop additional sources and capacities for services for newly annexed lands. Annexation does not imply development approval.

Section 56076 of the Government Code states that a Sphere of Influence is to be a plan for the probable ultimate physical boundaries and service area of a local governmental agency. A copy of the City's currently adopted Sphere of Influence is shown in Figure 11-1. It is the policy of the City of Folsom to request that LAFCO expand the City's current Sphere of Influence to include areas south of U.S. 50 in a manner consistent with the City's General Plan which will foster orderly urban development and discourage leapfrog development and urban sprawl.

It is the policy of the City of Folsom to encourage annexations which:

1. Are consistent with the City's General Plan, State Law and LAFCO standards and criteria.
2. Constitute fiscally sound additions to the existing City.
3. Ensure the provision of adequate public facilities and services.
4. Are part of a planned and orderly annexation program.

It is the policy of the City of Folsom to pre-zone all properties proposed for annexation in a manner consistent with the City's General Plan. Generally this will involve use of the Agricultural Reserve District (A-1-A) until such time as public facilities and services are available for urban development. However, the City may utilize the County of Sacramento General Plan designation or the existing zoning as a basis for determining pre-zoning consistency so long as the proposed annexation is consistent with and furthers the goals and policies of the City's General Plan.

It is the policy of the City of Folsom that prior to the approval of a tentative map, building permit or other development permit, properties located within the annexation area shall comply with the provisions of Sections VI and VII of this Urban Development Policy to the extent deemed applicable by the City Engineer.

#### **11.5 POLICY FOR APPROVAL OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT PLANS**

It is the policy of the City of Folsom to approve development proposals for urban development (not including agricultural development) only when such development is consistent with the General Plan and when full urban services can be logically provided, expanded, and/or extended to serve such development. To insure the logical extension of services in an economically feasible manner, it is the policy of the City of Folsom to restrict development without full services except under extraordinary circumstances. Extraordinary circumstances may be found to exist when the City Council, after considering the recommendation from the Planning Commission finds that:

1. This Policy would cause extreme hardship on the property owner; or
2. The type and extent of the development will not impede implementation of this Policy.

In every case where an exception is granted, there must be a finding of consistency with the General Plan and a finding that the use can function in a safe and healthful manner. The property owner must provide information to the City to support the health and safety finding.

The property owner for whom an exception is granted must:

1. Pay all fees associated with the normal provision of services.
2. Enter into a binding agreement with the City, recorded in the County of Sacramento Recorder's Office, whereby the property owner, his successors, heirs and assigns agree to extend line(s) and connect to services when the adjacent property develops or at the request of the City Council, whichever occurs first.

Agricultural development includes the uses set forth in the A-1-A Zone. These uses, in areas zoned A-1-A, are not governed by this Section of the Urban Development Policy, except as stated in the text of that District, which includes a statement regarding General Plan consistency.

#### **11.6 POLICY ON MUNICIPAL SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

It is the policy of the City of Folsom to require new development to bear the cost of its increased demand/effect on municipal services and facilities so as not create a greater burden on existing residents. Development contributes to the need for the expansion and extension of the City's circulation, water, sewer, storm drainage, and parks systems and other capital improvements, facilities, and equipment to adequately serve the development area. Service expansion and extension is not necessarily site-specific; rather, it is generally related to a larger area and the City as a whole. In order to accommodate the new development, maintain an acceptable level of service, and alleviate the effects of the increased demand on City services, it is the policy of the City of Folsom to require certain necessary improvements as a part of the development and/or the payment of municipal services and facilities fees consistent with the proportional effect of the development on such services.

The City of Folsom has previously adopted various fees for financing facilities, including roads, water, sewer, drainage, capital improvements, and parks. The fees, in effect prior to 1983, do not, for the most part, provide sufficient

revenue for improvements needed and for the provision of adequate and acceptable levels of services. The City will periodically update its fees to reflect the cost of providing municipal services and facilities. Also, the City of Folsom is addressing the need for adequate and acceptable educational facilities during the City's urban growth and development by considering an impact fee ordinance.

### 11.7 POLICY FOR AREA FACILITIES PLANS

In order to assure an adequate funding level for municipal services and facilities in developing areas of the City and in recognition of the possible need for special financing plans to provide such services and facilities, it is the policy of the City of Folsom to formulate and adopt Area Facilities Plans as part of a Public Facilities Element of the Folsom General Plan. Such Area Facilities Plans shall identify the necessary services and facilities and the means to finance such improvements.

It is the policy of the City of Folsom to require the preparation of an Area Facilities Plan or other suitable substitute as approved by the City Council, for a particular area of the City when:

1. Development of an area necessitates provision, extension, and/or expansion of municipal services and facilities which are not customarily constructed by a developer, or
2. There is a need for services or facilities not otherwise funded by the regular City fees, or
3. The construction of the necessary services and facilities cannot be logically or economically provided by one landowner/developer in the normal sequence of orderly development as directed by this Urban Development Policy.

An Area Facilities Plan shall be prepared for and shall apply to all properties within the identified plan area, unless a parcel is specifically excluded in the adopted text of the plan. Where a development proposal covers property which is within an Area Facilities Plan boundary as established by the City Council and such Plan has not been adopted nor has any suitable substitute

been approved by the City Council, no tentative subdivision map or development permit shall be approved for such property until the Area Facilities Plan has been adopted. This restriction shall not, however, preclude the approval of final subdivision maps which are in substantial compliance with unexpired tentative subdivision maps which were approved prior to the City Council's determination to require an Area Facilities Plan for the area encompassing such property. The City Council may require the applicant to bear or to share in the cost of the preparation of the Area Facilities Plan.

The adoption of Area Facilities Plans shall not limit the City's authority to impose fees in other areas of the City nor shall it limit the City's or another jurisdiction's authority to impose additional fees in the plan areas for other public facilities when found to be needed in the future.

An Area Facilities Plan shall include, but not be limited to those topics listed in the Public Facilities Element of the General Plan.

### 11.8 DEFINITIONS

1. Agricultural Development means the types of uses provided for in the City's A-1-A District in areas zoned A-1-A.
2. Development means the act, process, or result of securing approval of a use permit, variance, and/or land division, including a subdivision map, parcel map, land division plat, building permit or the like.
3. Municipal Services and Facilities means those services and related facilities including, but not limited to, water, sewer and storm drainage systems, circulation and transportation systems, parks, police, fire, administration, and other similar services.
4. Urban Development means land development which generates a need for municipal services and facilities as defined. The following development activities typically do not generate a need for services and, therefore, are specifically excluded from the term "urban development" as addressed in this Urban Development Policy:

A. Agricultural development as defined herein.

B. The operation, repair or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, or mechanical equipment which does not involve physical expansion of the use.

C. The construction of minor structures such as carports, patios, swimming pools, or fences which are accessory and appurtenant to existing residential uses.

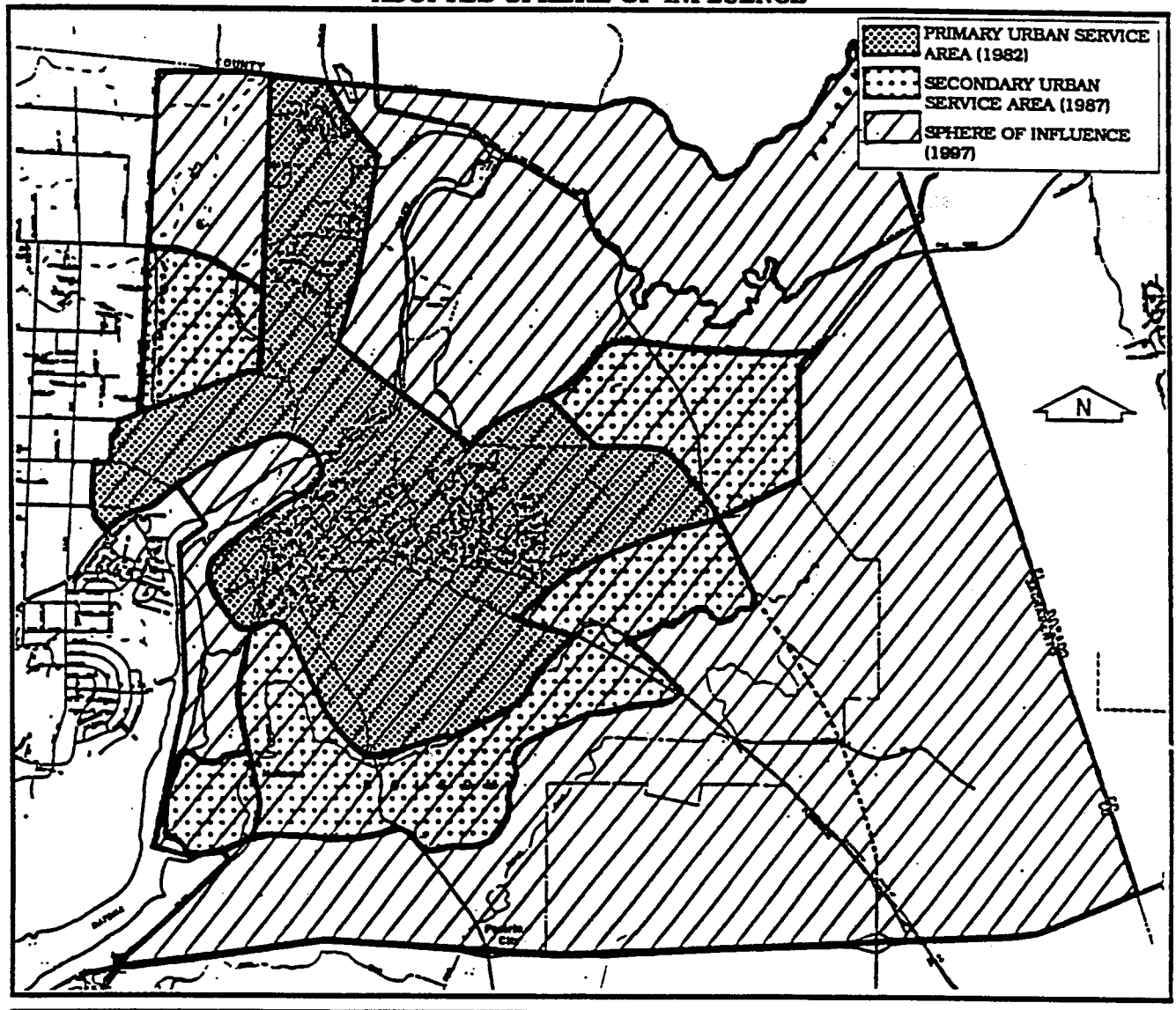
D. The construction or placement of minor structures such as on-premise signs, small parking lots, or fences which are accessory and appurtenant to existing commercial, industrial, or institutional facilities.

E. Re-occupancy of existing vacant structures by uses which are found by the City to be consistent with the land use designation of the site.

F. Reconstruction of a damaged, destroyed, or unsafe building which involves no expansion of the previously existing use when that use presently is consistent with the Folsom General Plan.

G. Such other development as may be found and declared by resolution of the City Council not to constitute urban development because such development does not generate a need for development improvements and/or City services.

**FIGURE 11-1  
ADOPTED SPHERE OF INFLUENCE**



# GENERAL PLAN



**2035**



Last Amended: June 15, 2016

## C. GOALS AND POLICIES

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### **GOALS: GROWTH MANAGEMENT**

- Goal 1* The City shall proactively manage and plan for growth.
- Goal 2* The City shall encourage a pattern of development that promotes the efficient and timely provision of urban infrastructure and services, and preserves valuable natural and environmental resources.
- Goal 3* Growth shall mitigate its impacts through consistency with the General Plan goals and polices and shall provide a positive benefit to the community.
- Goal 4* The City shall continue a comprehensive, logical planning process, rather than an incremental, piecemeal approach.
- Goal 5* The City shall encourage public participation in the development of and monitoring of growth management policies and programs.
- Goal 6* The City shall manage and evaluate growth in a regional context, not in isolation.
- Goal 7* Potential population growth in Roseville must be based on the long-term carrying capacities and limits of the roadway system, sewer and water treatment facilities, and electrical utility service, as defined in the Circulation Element and the Public Facilities Element.
- Goal 8* Growth and development must occur at a rate corresponding to the availability of desired facilities' capacity and the attainment of defined General Plan levels of service for public activities.
- Goal 9* Growth should be managed to minimize negative impacts to existing businesses and residents within the City.
- Goal 10* Growth should be planned in a way that addresses the appropriate interface between City and County lands.
- Goal 11* New growth should be designed to meet the Guiding Principles.
- Goal 12* The City shall use growth management as a tool to maintain the City's identity, community form, reputation in the region, to maintain high levels of service for residents, and to influence projects outside the City's boundaries that have the potential to affect the quality of life and/or services that are provided to residents.
- Goal 13* New development shall be consistent with the City's desire to establish an edge along the western boundary of the City that fosters: a physical separation from County lands through a system of connected open space; a well-defined sense of entry to City from west; opportunities for habitat preservation and recreation; and view preservation corridors that provide an aesthetic and recreational resource for residents.
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**Policies: Growth Management - General (G)**

***Implementation Measures***

1. Growth must provide a strong diversified economic base and a reasonable balance between employment and affordable housing.

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*Each of the following measures shall be utilized as applicable, to implement the identified Growth Management - General policies:*

2. Growth should occur on the basis that projected revenue should be sufficient to meet public costs.

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- *Specific Plans*
- *Public Participation*
- *Intergovernmental Coordination*
- *Biennial Public Service Monitoring Report*

3. The City shall encourage a development pattern that is contiguous with existing developed areas of the City.

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4. Growth shall be managed to ensure that adequate public facilities and services, as defined in the Public Facilities Element, are planned and provided and the public health, safety and welfare is protected.

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5. The City shall accommodate projected population and employment growth in areas where the appropriate level of public infrastructure and services are planned or will be made available concurrent with development.


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6. The City shall use the specific plan process to ensure a comprehensive, logical growth process for new development areas (e.g., annexations) or any areas where significant land use changes are considered.

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7. The City shall oppose urban density residential, commercial or industrial development in unincorporated areas unless adequate public facilities and services can be provided and mechanisms to ensure their availability and provision are secured during the land use entitlement process. It is the City's preference that urban development occur within incorporated area.

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8.  Manage growth in such a way to ensure that significant open space areas will be preserved.

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9. Retain and enhance Roseville’s identity and character to ensure that Roseville, even as it grows, remains consistent with the Growth Management Visioning Committee’s Vision Statement.

10. Work aggressively to address traffic generated outside of Roseville by working in collaboration with neighboring jurisdictions, regional, state, and federal entities to ensure traffic through Roseville is mitigated by regional solutions. Ensure that transportation solutions are supported by land-use and design policies that promote walking, biking, and transit, consistent with the Growth Management Visioning Committee’s Vision Statement.

**Policies Growth Management - Land Use Allocation (LUA)**

**Implementation Measures**

1. The City shall, through its land use planning process, capital improvement plans, and facility and service programs, provide a land use dwelling unit allocation at buildout as shown in Table II-4 and non-residential entitlements as designated on the General Plan land use map.

*Each of the following measures shall be utilized, as applicable, to implement all of the identified Growth Management - Land Use Allocation policies:*

- Public Participation
- Land Use Allocation Review

2. The City shall maintain a pool of 1,000 residential units to be allocated for City sponsored and state mandated programs (e.g. second units, density bonuses for affordable housing, infill revitalizationannexations of island areas to complete corporate boundaries as reflected on Figure II-1) to be utilized in areas where existing development entitlements exist or to further City affordable housing goals.

3. The City shall review, and if necessary, modify, the 1,000 unit pool in conjunction with regular updates of the Housing Element, and concurrent with any significant modification to the General Plan resulting in the allocation of additional residential units.

**Policies: Growth Management - Growth Areas (GA)**

**Implementation Measures**

1. The City may consider modification to the General Plan land use allocation where adequate public

- Specific Plans
- Public Participation
- Intergovernmental



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services and facilities and preservation and conservation of natural resources can be provided in conjunction with the following:

- a. Additional land to accommodate demand for housing or employment uses
- b. Projects that will provide public benefit to the City, including the provision of public transit services
- c. Ensure that growth provides benefits to the Community as a whole and weigh community benefits against fiscal costs

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**2.** Prior to the consideration of any General Plan amendment to modify the land use allocation or expand the City's boundaries or sphere of influence, the City shall complete or cause to be completed the following City-wide studies/plans:

- a. Long-Range Transit Plan
- b. Economic Development Studies
- c. Public Facilities and Services Capacity Study
- d. Transportation System Capacity Study

The studies shall define overall holding capacities and identify additional performance standards that will need to be met to ensure the achievement of the goals and policies of the General Plan.

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**3.** The City shall require the submittal of a specific plan for the consideration of new development areas or any areas where a significant modification to the General Plan land use allocation is proposed. The specific plan process shall, at a minimum, include the following:

- a. General Plan Amendment
- b. Development Agreement
- c. Zoning Entitlements
- d. Environmental Impact Report
- e. Phasing, Financing, Capital Improvements Plan
- f. Fiscal Impact Analysis

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**4.** Specific plans will be evaluated based on the following minimum criteria:

- a. Government Code requirements for specific plans
  - b. Demonstrated consistency with General Plan goals and policies
  - c. Demonstrated consistency with the identified City-wide studies and holding capacity analysis
-

- 
- d. Justification for proposed specific plan boundaries
  - e. Community benefit
  - f. Ability to mitigate impacts
  - g. Impact on the City's growth pattern

Each specific plan proposal shall include, with its initial submittal, a full analysis of how the plan complies with and relates to the above factors. The specific plans' consistency with the General Plan, and its relation to other identified criteria, will be a primary factory in determining whether the proposal will or will not be considered by the City.

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- 5. Apply the City's adopted Guiding Principles to any new development proposed in and out of City's corporate boundaries, which is not already part of an adopted Specific Plan or within the infill area:
    - 1. Any development proposal shall, on a stand-alone basis, have an overall neutral or positive fiscal impact on the City's General Fund Services.
    - 2. Any development proposal shall include logical growth/plan boundaries and an east to west growth pattern.
    - 3. Any development proposal shall not conflict with the Pleasant Grove Wastewater Treatment Plant and future Power Generation Facility.
    - 4. Any development proposal shall maintain the integrity of existing neighborhoods and create a sense of place in new neighborhoods.
    - 5. Any development proposal shall include a plan to ensure fully funding and maintenance of improvements and services at no cost to existing residents (including increased utility rates). A proposal shall not burden/increase the cost, or diminish the supply and reliability of services.
    - 6. Any development proposal shall aid in regional traffic solutions and in right of way preservation.
    - 7. Any development proposal that does not have a sufficient supply of surface water shall secure additional supplies above what the City currently has available. Development proposals shall also provide financial assistance to incorporate the new source of supply into the City's water supply portfolio (surface water, groundwater and recycled water); and development proposals shall include measures to reduce water demand by implementing the use of conservation best management practices, recycled water and other off-sets.
    - 8. Any development proposal shall consider development potential within the entire City/County Memorandum of Understanding Transition Area in the design and sizing of infrastructure improvements.
    - 9. Any development proposal shall aid in resolution of regional storm water retention.
-

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10. Any development proposal shall incorporate mechanisms to ensure new schools are available to serve the residents and shall not impact existing schools.
  11. Any development proposal shall include a significant interconnected public open space component/conservation plan in coordination with the City of Roseville/ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Memorandum of Understanding.
  12. Any development proposal shall include a public participation component to keep the public informed and solicit feedback throughout the specific plan process.
  13. Any development proposal shall provide a “public benefit” to the City and residents.
- 

**6.** As new development is proposed in or outside the City’s Sphere of Influence,, project proponents shall provide a transitional area between City and County lands, through a system of interconnecting Open Space land areas or other buffers, such as separation by arterial roadways.

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**7.** Monitor and participate in development proposals and/or General Plan updates in Placer County to ensure that potential impacts to City residents are minimized, with respect to traffic, service levels, and other quality of life matters.

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**8.** New development proposals to the west of Fiddyment Road within the County/City Memorandum of Understanding Transition Area shall meet the objectives and terms of the Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Roseville and the County of Placer.

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**9.** Development proposed on the western edge of the City shall provide a distinctive open space transition to create a physical and visual buffer between the City and County to assure that the identity and uniqueness of the City and County will be maintained.

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**10.** Consistent with the County/City Memorandum of Understanding Transition Area, the City shall continue to support and endorse the maintenance of the one-mile buffer zone around landfill operations, as set forth in Policy No. 4.G.11 of the Placer County General Plan, adopted in August 1994.

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11. Promote stakeholder involvement and ensure accountability between property owners, Placer County, and surrounding jurisdictions on defining and shaping the vision for growth to the west and north of the City.
- 

**Policies: Growth Management – Public Amenities**

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**Implementation Measures**

1. The City may determine, in accordance with the goals and polices of this element, that it is appropriate to amend its General Plan land use allocation and expand. Under such circumstances, a specific plan will be required to comprehensively plan each of the areas.
2. In addition to being consistent with the other goals and policies of the General Plan, specific plans shall comply with the following:
- a. Provide a public focal point, community, and/or theme feature. These features shall be specific to each area and be designed to contribute to the promotion and enhancement of community character. A special feature may include, but is not limited to, a community plaza, central park, or some other type of gathering area; outdoor amphitheater; community garden; regional park with special facilities; sports complex; or cultural facilities.
  - b. Provide entryways at entrances to the City in accordance with the Community-wide Design Guidelines. Where possible, the entryways shall take advantage of and incorporate existing natural resources into the entry treatment. The specific plans shall identify the location and treatment of the entryways, and shall consider the use of open space, oak regeneration areas, signage and/or special landscaping to create a visual edge or buffer that provides a strong definition to entryways into the City.
  - c. The specific plan areas shall be planned and oriented to be an integral part of the City consistent with the policies of the Community Form Component of this Element.

*Each of the following measures shall be utilized, as applicable, to implement the identified Growth Management - Growth Areas policies:*

- *Specific Plans*
- *Public Participation*
- *Intergovernmental Coordination*

- d. Develop design guidelines, specifying screening and a transition between public utilities (e.g. substations, pump stations) and other uses, in conjunction with the public utility departments and agencies. In addition, development along power line and pipeline easements shall incorporate design treatment to insure compatibility and safety. Design guidelines and treatment may include minimum setbacks, building and landscape design standards and possible limitations on certain types of uses and activities.
- e. Preserve natural resource areas where they exist, and where feasible, along new roadways. Such roadways may create a public boundary between the resource area and other uses. The specific plans shall identify locations and standards for the preservation of natural resources along roadways, and shall identify sources of financing for such road segments.
- f. The specific plans shall include a resource mitigation/banking plan to be developed in accordance with the provisions of the Open Space and Conservation Element.

**Policies**

**Growth Management - Annexations and Sphere of Influence (ASI)**

**Implementation Measures**

1.

The City may initiate studies to investigate the potential of (1) annexing areas within its sphere of influence; and (2) expanding its sphere of influence boundaries. The studies should be focused on those areas that, both long and short term, may affect General Plan goals and policies and would be logically served and planned by the City. The studies shall include the identification, availability and funding of public services, as well as the costs and impacts to the City and other service providers. Issues to be analyzed include, but are not limited to, present and planned land uses, water, sewer, electric, library, parks, schools, circulation and affordable housing. Based on these studies, and resident and property owner input, the City may take steps to annex or expand its sphere of influence

*Each of the following measures shall be utilized, as applicable, to implement the identified Growth Management - Growth Areas policies:*

- *Specific Plans*
- *Public Participation*
- *Intergovernmental Coordination*

2.

The City may consider annexations that:

- a. Are contiguous with City boundaries and provide for a logical expansion of the City;

- 
- b. Create clear and reasonable boundaries;
  - c. Are beneficial from a fiscal standpoint to the City and its residents;
  - d. Are consistent with State Law and Placer County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) standards and criteria;
  - e. Ensure the preservation of open space and agriculture lands; and
  - f. Are consistent with the General Plan.
- 

**3.** The City may consider expanding its sphere of influence to incorporate areas that, in the future, should be logically planned and serviced by Roseville. The City shall consider the following factors, as identified by LAFCO, when making determinations involving sphere of influence boundaries:

- a. Present and planned land uses in the area;
  - b. Present and probable need for public facilities and services in the area;
  - c. Present capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public services;
  - d. Existence of any social or economic communities of interest in the area; and
  - e. Open space and agricultural lands.
-

**Exhibit D  
Land Planning Criteria - DRAFT**

As part of the General Plan, the City has not conducted an extensive analysis of the Study Areas. Such an effort is to be completed through a subsequent planning exercise. The intent of the following criteria is to create a system of assessment of physical and economic factors that assist in determining the future land use plan for an area as part of that subsequent exercise. This analysis must also account for the various interrelated goals and policies of the General Plan, recognizing that not every project or property can implement every policy. The following criteria is meant to describe a broad framework for planning that addresses how these goals and policies will be comprehensively implemented over the course of multiple development proposals.

**Circulation and Mobility**

Future planning should build off of the existing and planned circulation system in the area. Some roads are planned for extensive widening in the near-term while others have not yet been defined for improvement. As described below, these facilities provide opportunities for nodes of activity at varying scales and intensities.

These circulation corridors also provide opportunities for multimodal transportation solutions that provide connectivity between nodes and the rest of the City. Capacity and access for transit service and trails should be analyzed and incorporated into master planning activities.

**Activity Nodes**

Nodes of commercial activity<sup>1</sup> should be placed around intersections of major roads. Depending upon the classification of these roads (e.g., highway, expressway, arterial, and collector), the intensity and composition of the node will change. For example, locations at the intersection of an expressway and arterial should include high intensity commercial uses, potentially focusing on office and regional retail opportunities. A location at the intersection of two arterials, or the intersection of an arterial and a collector, should focus on less intensive commercial uses that are more oriented to the immediate trade area, such as neighborhood serving retail and accompanying, lower-intensity office uses.

While the roadway classification is helpful in identifying opportunities for activity nodes, the scale of these nodes is also influenced by the surrounding land uses. Not all arterial-arterial intersections are appropriate for a major activity node. Consideration, especially through a qualified market analysis, is necessary to ensure the scale of the node is appropriate.

Consideration should also be given to incorporation of residential uses within activity nodes. Again, the appropriateness will depend upon the context of the location and the scale of the node itself. In some instances this may be appropriate through a vertical mixed use development; in others, an adjacent multifamily (apartments, condominiums) or denser townhome development may be appropriate. Given available access to circulation corridors and accompanying multimodal transportation these uses would complement these mobility options and increase the viability of transit services.

The nodes also present opportunities to incorporate a range of civic uses. These could be in the form of a public plaza with opportunities for a farmer's market or outdoor concerts, or larger park spaces with more active areas and amenities.

**Surrounding Areas**

The areas between the activity nodes are critical to the success of the nodes themselves. The commercial activities that exist in the nodes need people to fill the offices or frequent the retail uses. As these in between areas are defined, consideration needs to be given to a number of factors, including:

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<sup>1</sup> As used herein, "commercial activity" includes retail and office uses. Depending upon adjacent land uses and circulation access, it may also include industrial (e.g., manufacturing, warehousing) uses.

## EXHIBIT D

- Residential uses that meet community needs (e.g., range of housing choices, affordability to a variety of income categories, Regional Housing Needs Allocation)
- Parks located and sized to meet community planning standards
- Open space areas that complement the active park spaces and integrate more natural elements into the fabric of the community
- Schools, day care, and similar community-serving institutions

The density and intensity of these areas should be a reflection of the access and surrounding context. The further an area is from a major roadway or activity node, the less intensive the development should be.

In some instances, the areas between nodes may be appropriate for larger blocks of employment uses, including office and industrial development. While the planning for this type of area will require more exploration as part of the planning process, it directly relates with the City's stated jobs-housing objectives and strategy to identify a major employment center within the City as part regional planning efforts. Again, proximity to circulation and mobility corridors is a major factor in citing these uses.



## POLICY TOPIC PAPER 9.0: MOBILITY SYSTEM STANDARDS REVISED



### BACKGROUND

As part of current practice under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the impact of a proposed project on vehicle level of service (LOS) has been a required component of environmental impact assessments. LOS measures the congestion level on a roadway segment or at an intersection(s) and is an indication of the comfort and convenience associated with driving. Relative levels of congestion are rated as A, B, C, D, E, or F. In general, LOS A represents free-flow conditions with no congestion, and LOS F represents severe congestion and delay under stop-and-go conditions.

Because LOS has been a required part of CEQA analysis, most general plans in California include policies setting minimum LOS for roadway segments and/or intersections. The current Elk Grove General Plan includes policies to achieve a minimum of LOS D on all roadways and intersection in Elk Grove at all times, with some allowances for certain roadways and intersections that do not currently meet this standard.<sup>1</sup>

There are numerous concerns with using LOS alone as an environmental impact metric, such as the following:

- A focus on LOS values the free flow of vehicles above safety and the free flow of non-vehicular traffic;
- Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and associated criteria air pollutant and greenhouse gas emissions are generally increased when using LOS as a standard for roadway function;
- Incentives to use transit and active transportation options are reduced;
- Maintaining acceptable LOS often means widening streets, which can have negative environmental and urban character impacts, and congested areas where street widening is infeasible continue to have unacceptable LOS, regardless of the standards; and
- Sprawl development is incentivized due to lower impacts to LOS relative to other potential metrics.

In 2013, the California legislature approved and Governor Jerry Brown signed Senate Bill (SB) 743, requiring the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to revise the State CEQA Guidelines to replace LOS with an alternative method of transportation impact analyses. In response, OPR released a draft proposal (updated in January 2016) recommending updates to the State CEQA Guidelines using VMT as the preferred alternative metric for transportation impact analyses

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<sup>1</sup> City of Elk Grove General Plan. 2008. Policies C-13 and C-14.

([https://www.opr.ca.gov/docs/Revised\\_VMT\\_CEQA\\_Guidelines\\_Proposal\\_January\\_20\\_2016.pdf](https://www.opr.ca.gov/docs/Revised_VMT_CEQA_Guidelines_Proposal_January_20_2016.pdf)). In this document, OPR also recommended CEQA significance thresholds for use by lead agencies, including a 15 percent target reduction in VMT for residential and office development projects. Once revisions to the State CEQA Guidelines are adopted, impacts to LOS will no longer be considered a significant environmental impact under CEQA. OPR does acknowledge that LOS may continue to be used for roadway planning purposes, but the use of VMT in CEQA analysis is a more accurate measure of the potential impacts on the environment. For example, VMT is directly linked to both greenhouse gas emissions analysis and criteria air pollutant analysis for emissions sources within the transportation sector, whereas LOS measures traffic throughput and driver comfort and convenience. It is important to note that OPR's recommended CEQA VMT significance thresholds for residential, office, commercial, mixed use and new roadway projects are proposed guidance and are not to be incorporated into the State CEQA Guidelines.

### **What is VMT?**

*A vehicle mile traveled, or VMT, represents one vehicle traveling on a roadway for 1 mile.*

*Regardless of how many people are in the vehicle, each vehicle traveling on a roadway generates one VMT for each mile it travels.*

As the City approaches an update to the Circulation Element of the General Plan following the adoption of SB 743, the following policy options are available:

- Establish a locally-based VMT threshold for CEQA analysis
- Retain an LOS policy in the General Plan and Traffic Impact Analysis Guidelines
- Establish a roadway efficiency standard in the General Plan

The City may employ these strategies either individually or in combination. The following discussions illustrate potential tradeoffs associated with these options. Recommended policy approaches for City Council and Planning Commission discussion are presented at the conclusion of this topic paper.

### **Why Vehicle Miles Traveled?**

Other methods of transportation impact analysis, such as automobile trips generated or multimodal level of service, may also be used to comply with SB 743. However, VMT is the most effective metric for accomplishing the goals of SB 743 due to its consistency with other statewide and regional goals, its relationship to actual environmental impacts (e.g., air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, noise), and its use as an indicator of roadway function. It is also currently used to support analysis of greenhouse gas emissions attributable to the transportation sector under CEQA. VMT has been a primary indicator of travel for policymakers and transportation professionals for decades, and it is effective for the following reasons:

- **Historical Data is Available.** VMT is relatively easy to measure by counting traffic on roadways at different locations. It is one of the few measures of transportation performance

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that has been consistently and comprehensively monitored and documented over time in the state and region.

- **Relationship to Vehicle Emissions.** VMT bears a direct relationship to vehicle emissions, although the relationship is complex. It can be used as an indicator for how well a jurisdiction meets greenhouse gas emissions targets. Models that measure VMT for greenhouse gas analyses are already used by many cities (including Elk Grove).
- **Responsiveness to Policy and Land Use Influence.** VMT can be influenced by policy in a number of ways, including by encouraging carpooling or mode shifts from vehicle use to walking, biking, and transit. Land use patterns can also directly affect VMT. Mixing residential, employment, education, and service uses in an area can allow people to accomplish their daily activities with less driving, resulting in less VMT.
- **Indicator of Roadway Function and Roadway Safety.** VMT correlates with traffic congestion and can also act as an indicator of roadway function. VMT also relates with the frequency of traffic collisions. Generally, the higher the VMT on a roadway, the greater exposure to motorists and other road users to more collision risk. This can provide additional valuable information to assist in prioritizing roadway improvements.
- **Benefits of VMT Analyses to Identify Transportation System Impacts.** Using VMT to measure transportation impacts under CEQA recognizes the value of alternative transportation options and balances the needs of vehicle travel with the needs of other modes of transportation. Benefits of using VMT to measure transportation system impacts include:
  - Reduced mitigation burden on infill projects, where new projects are more likely to trigger LOS impacts where roadways are already at capacity.
  - Reduced air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, and energy impacts related to associated reductions in VMT.
  - Project applicants are encouraged to reduce VMT through project location and design and by providing transit and active transportation incentives, rather than by widening roadways.

### Existing and Planned Future Conditions

Under buildout of the current General Plan (including the Southeast Policy Area), VMT per capita (total VMT divided by population) is expected to *increase* by just under 20 percent compared to existing conditions, based on preliminary land use modeling. This is important, as OPR's recommendations include a 15 percent *reduction* from existing conditions as a threshold for significance under CEQA. However, it should also be noted that the 15 percent reduction would only be considered for new development projects. It does not represent a 15 percent reduction of Citywide VMT, and would not require changes to existing development to achieve the reduction. Nevertheless, achieving significant

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reductions in Citywide VMT is an important goal for the General Plan update, as it would enable future projects that are consistent with the General Plan to more readily meet their individual VMT reduction goals.

OPR is recommending the 15 percent reduction for a number of reasons. First, SB 743 identifies that criteria for determining the significance of transportation impacts must promote (1) reduction of greenhouse gas emissions; (2) development of multimodal transportation networks; and (3) a diversity of land uses. Various policies have been established by the State to address quantitative reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, including:

- Assembly Bill 32, which requires statewide greenhouse gas reductions to 1990 levels by 2020, as well as continued reductions beyond 2020;
- Implementation by the California Air Resources Board in implementing SB 375 by setting targets for larger metropolitan planning organizations, such as SACOG, to reduce greenhouse gas by 13 to 16 percent by 2035;

### ANALYSIS

As noted above, SB 743 required OPR to revise the State CEQA Guidelines to replace LOS with an alternative method of transportation impact analysis. OPR released a series of recommendations describing VMT as the preferred alternative method for evaluating transportation impacts under CEQA, and recommended a significance threshold targeted reduction of 15 percent in VMT. Cities and counties can still establish their own VMT significance thresholds that reflect local conditions and priorities, so long as such thresholds are based on substantial evidence. Most jurisdictions are considering the options available to comply with the anticipated revisions to the State CEQA Guidelines.

For Elk Grove, the General Plan update presents a key opportunity to establish locally relevant VMT standards, as alternative land use configurations are being considered and updated traffic studies are being conducted to support the process. Following are a number of questions the City should consider in establishing its VMT reduction policies:

- What baseline should be used to measure changes in VMT that would result from implementation of the General Plan and future proposed projects?
- What metrics should be used to measure VMT associated with implementation of the General Plan and future proposed projects?
- What thresholds of significance should the City establish to consider VMT impacts under CEQA?
- How might SB 743 potentially constrain the City's existing land use authority?
- Should the City retain LOS as a measure of transportation system performance and a means to ensure completion of future roadway improvements?

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- Should the City characterize the role and intended primary users of each major roadway and prioritize future safety, capacity, and access improvements according to these factors?

The following discussions present preliminary considerations related to these questions. This information may change based on further analysis of City land use and traffic alternatives and data, and any potential changes in OPR's recommendations.

### **Establishing a Baseline**

SB 743 itself sets no local requirement to reduce VMT, but it does require that the method of transportation impact analysis selected in lieu of LOS promote greenhouse gas emissions reductions, use of multimodal transportation networks, and infill projects. OPR's recommended approach to meet this requirement is to establish a 15 percent reduction of VMT as a threshold of significance for proposed projects. To demonstrate a reduction in VMT, the City would need to establish a baseline value against which to analyze a project. OPR's draft approach includes no specific recommendation about what baseline should be used. The City would therefore need to establish an appropriate baseline for analysis.

Generally, the baseline for environmental analysis under CEQA is existing conditions at the time the environmental document is initiated. However, this would present a complicated "moving target" for VMT that results in a need for frequent analysis to establish the existing conditions at the time of project analysis. Using existing conditions at the time of project analysis also creates a situation where it will become increasingly difficult to achieve reductions as overall existing conditions improve. While OPR makes no specific recommendation about what baseline to use, selecting an alternative baseline would require the City to present substantial evidence describing why the use of an existing conditions, or moving target, baseline would not provide accurate or meaningful information.

Options for alternative baselines include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Static 2015 Existing Conditions Baseline.** This baseline would not shift over time as VMT changes. Rather, it would establish 2015 conditions as the baseline for the VMT reductions required for new projects moving forward. 2015 is the most recent full year that VMT data has been collected for the region, which would make it an accurate static baseline to use if repeated analysis is not desired for each project. This baseline would apply to all proposed projects Citywide.
- **Static 2015 Existing Conditions Baseline by Land Use Type.** This baseline also would not shift over time as VMT changes and would use 2015 data. However, as land use mix and location are directly related to transportation patterns, it would be unreasonable to assume that VMT generated by one land use (e.g., low density residential with little or no services in the vicinity) would be equal to VMT generated by another land use (e.g., higher density residential uses located within walking distance to services and a transit stop). Establishing baselines that

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vary by land use type using land use designations established on the City's General Plan Land Use Map would allow more flexibility to consider the desirable characteristics of specific project types when preparing CEQA analyses, compared to a one-size-fits-all baseline across all land uses in the City.

Additionally, the City may consider establishing both a Citywide baseline, which would include VMT assigned to Elk Grove only, and a regional baseline, which would include VMT assigned across the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) five-county region. While OPR's recommendations are silent on establishing baselines, they do provide a number of numeric significance thresholds to consider (see examples under Establishing Thresholds of Significance, below). The thresholds recognize that a particular project type may meet a threshold based on a Citywide baseline but not meet a threshold based on a regional baseline, or vice versa. OPR also recommends that significance thresholds be consistent with the relevant Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS), suggesting jurisdictions establish at least a regional baseline. For Elk Grove's purposes, this would represent consistency with SACOG's 2016 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (2016 MTP/SCS).

Establishing both a Citywide and regional baseline could provide additional flexibility in establishing thresholds of significance, particularly if there is an advantage to analyzing projects focused on serving the local community one way (e.g., a new neighborhood commercial center), while analyzing projects that would draw patrons from the region (e.g., a regional mall) another way. This also provides an opportunity for the City to consider additional significance thresholds that respond more appropriately to the local context.

It should be noted that Elk Grove's physical location in the region will have direct impacts on VMT. Certain types of development will attract users from throughout the region, rather than just the local market. For example, a new employment use that addresses the jobs-housing balance may have a high VMT impact if the employees for that use are coming from beyond the local labor pool as they could be driving from Folsom, Natomas, or Roseville. Similarly, residential uses with no opportunities for new employment will cause residents to commute outside the City for work. While this relationship between land use and circulation is critical and the development of a balanced land use pattern cannot be overstated, some level of VMT impact will occur and these impacts will need to be mitigated in a feasible way.

### **Establishing a Vehicle Miles Traveled Metric**

The City has discretion to select a VMT metric that would provide the most appropriate measure of local conditions based on City goals. A variety of VMT metrics can be used to comply with OPR's recommended amendments to the State CEQA Guidelines. Each metric essentially considers the total VMT calculated within a defined area, such as the City of Elk Grove, and divides that total by a defined group of people, households, and/or jobs. For example, some common VMT metrics include:

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- **VMT per capita**, which is total VMT divided by total population in an area.
- **VMT per household**, which is total VMT divided by the total number of households in an area.
- **VMT per employee**, which is total VMT divided by the total number of jobs in an area.
- **VMT per service population**, which is total VMT divided by the total population plus jobs in an area.

Rather than identify one VMT metric to use for all projects Citywide, the City may consider using different VMT metrics for the various project types. This approach may be more relevant should the City choose to establish thresholds of significance by land use type, as discussed further below.

### Establishing Thresholds of Significance

The City uses thresholds of significance to determine the potential extent of a proposed project's impacts to the environment under CEQA. A threshold of significance is an identifiable quantitative, qualitative, or performance level of a particular environmental effect. Levels of impacts include:

- **No impact or less than significant impact.** This level of impact does not require specific mitigation measures or preparation of an environmental impact report (EIR).
- **Less than significant impact with mitigation.** This level of impact requires specific mitigation measures, but may not require preparation of an EIR.
- **Significant impact.** This level of impact may require specific mitigation measures, and would require preparation of an EIR. If feasible mitigation is not available to reduce a significant impact to a less than significant level, the City Council may still approve a proposed project, but must find that specific benefits of the proposed project outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental effects using a statement of overriding considerations.

Non-compliance with the threshold of significance means the effect of a proposed project will normally be determined to be significant by the City. Compliance with the threshold of significance means the effect of a proposed project normally will be determined to be less than significant by the City.

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.7 encourages local agencies to develop and publish thresholds of significance to evaluate proposed projects. Locally-based thresholds must be adopted by ordinance, resolution, rule, or regulation, through a public review process and supported by substantial evidence. The City may consider thresholds of significance adopted by other agencies or recommended by experts, provided these are supported by substantial evidence.

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Based on the direction established in SB 743, OPR has identified a number of recommendations for local agencies seeking to establish thresholds of significance for VMT. These recommendations are presented in the following table and described below.

Type of Threshold	Purpose	Level of Impact
Screening Threshold	<p>“Screens” projects from further analysis based on size or location.</p> <p><i>Minimizes project-level analysis.</i></p>	<p><u>Below numeric threshold:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less than significant impact</li> </ul> <p><u>Above numeric threshold:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Needs project-specific analysis; subject to numeric thresholds</li> </ul>
Numeric Threshold	<p>For projects that are not “screened” out, a numeric threshold is used to determine project impacts.</p> <p><i>Requires project-specific analysis.</i></p>	<p><u>Below numeric threshold:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less than significant impact</li> </ul> <p><u>Above numeric threshold:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requires mitigation</li> <li>May require an EIR</li> </ul>
Land Use Plan Threshold	<p>Thresholds may include consistency requirements (General Plan consistency or regional plan consistency) or may include numeric thresholds.</p>	<p><u>Below numeric threshold:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less than significant impact</li> </ul> <p><u>Above numeric threshold:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requires mitigation</li> <li>May require an EIR</li> </ul>

### Screening Thresholds

The following are considered screening thresholds, which are meant to recognize and screen out certain projects, which, due to their size or location, would be anticipated to have a less than significant impact to the transportation system.

- Small projects generating fewer trips than 100 trips per day can generally be assumed to cause a less than significant impact.
- Residential, retail, and office projects, as well as mixed-use projects featuring these uses, can be assumed to have a less than significant impact *if* they are located within one-half mile of an existing stop along a high-quality transit corridor, so long as factors such as a lack of sufficient density or excessive parking do not dispute this presumption.



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- Transportation projects that reduce or have no impact on vehicle miles traveled would be presumed to have a less than significant impact. If a project impact has already been analyzed at a plan-level impact, the lead agency may incorporate that analysis for reference. Examples of these types of projects include rehabilitation or maintenance projects that improve the condition of existing transportation facilities, a reduction in the number of through lanes on a street (a “road diet”), grade separation projects, roundabouts and traffic calming projects, bicycle trail improvements, new transit services, removal of off-street parking, and new lane additions less than 1/3 mile long, among others.

Establishing screening thresholds would allow the City to identify projects that may not require additional analysis under CEQA relative to transportation impacts. Aligning these thresholds with criteria used under other CEQA “infill” exemptions, as well as recognizing that land use mix and proximity to transit facilities should be considered, are beneficial.

In addition to criteria-based screening thresholds, as identified above, some jurisdictions (including the City of Sacramento) have developed map-based screening thresholds. Maps could identify areas in the City that are currently below the established VMT threshold based location, use types, and proximity to services and/or transportation. Certain project types may then be screened out from additional analysis if they would be located within one of the areas with desirable VMT characteristics identified on the map. It should be noted that map-screening thresholds are typically more applicable in denser locations, and may not be as effective or appropriate for Elk Grove.

### Numeric Thresholds of Significance

OPR has also recommended a 15 percent VMT reduction threshold of significance for larger projects, which is meant to align VMT reductions with greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets adopted under SB 375. The following are considered numeric thresholds as they assign the target reduction of 15 percent from existing VMT levels (see discussion under Establishing a Baseline, above).

- Residential projects would have a less than significant impact if *either*:
  - City household VMT per capita is 15 percent below the baseline, or
  - Existing regional household VMT per capita is 15 percent below the baseline.
- Office projects would have a significance threshold of 15 percent below existing VMT per employee for the relevant geographic area (e.g., region, county).
- Retail projects would have a threshold of any net increase in total VMT in the area affected by the project. Mixed-use projects would be analyzed component-by-component and may receive credit for “internal capture.”

While any significance thresholds proposed should be tailored to feasible and appropriate steps for Elk Grove, the recommended OPR thresholds demonstrate that thresholds of significance may not be one-

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size-fits-all and can vary based on project type. This approach to establishing thresholds of significance recognizes varying baselines (Citywide versus regional) and varying metrics (VMT per household for residential projects and VMT per employment for office projects). It would be similar to a baseline by land use type approach, as discussed above.

The City may also consider establishing thresholds by land use type expressed in absolute terms (e.g., 55 daily VMT per household, 65 daily VMT per employee) as opposed to a percent reduction (e.g., 15 percent below existing VMT per household, 15 percent below existing VMT per employee). However, the ability of the City to establish an absolute threshold would be influenced by the type of baseline established (static versus a moving target).

### Thresholds of Significance for Land Use Plans

In addition to project-specific thresholds of significance, OPR has recommended the following threshold for use in evaluating land use plans, including general plans, community plans, specific plans, and area plans.

- The adoption of land use plans should be consistent with the relevant RTP/SCS. Consistency with the SCS would be determined as follows:
  - Development specified in the plan is also specified in the SCS (i.e., the plan does not specify developing in outlying areas specified as open space in the SCS).
  - Taken as a whole, development specified in the plan leads to VMT that is equal to or less than the VMT per capita and VMT per employee specified in the SCS.

Establishing thresholds for how land use plans should be analyzed is also a consideration the City needs to make. This is of particular importance for the proposed study areas beyond the current City limits, where area-wide land use plans may be required. While consistency with the RTP/SCS may be considered, it should not be the only determining factor for significance thresholds. As an example, it may be appropriate to provide some flexibility in determining significance if a land use plan meets established VMT reduction targets, but is not consistent with development identified in the SCS. At a minimum, consistency with the General Plan would be required for subsequent community plans, specific plans, and area plans.

### **Land Use Authority**

As noted above, VMT is directly influenced by existing and planned land use patterns based on land use mix, density, location relative to services, and/or transit service. This places additional importance on the arrangement of future land uses in the Planning Area in order to achieve target reductions in VMT. Nothing in SB 743 directly affects the City's land use regulatory authority. However, because VMT and land use patterns are directly linked, establishing and adhering to VMT standards may place certain constraints on how the City is able to approve future land use projects.

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As an illustrative example, assume that the City may establish a VMT standard for future projects. If the City seeks in the future to approve a proposed project that would exceed the standard, the City may need to prepare an environmental impact report (EIR) identifying a potentially significant VMT impact, and identifying any feasible mitigation.

In order to identify potentially feasible mitigation, the City and project applicant may be required to consider strategies to adjust the proposed land use mix, density, location, and/or transportation amenities offered in order to reduce the project's VMT. Rather than traditional roadway widening and intersection improvement options, mitigation of transportation impacts would likely include enhancing the availability of high-quality transit, including alternative transportation features (e.g., bike paths, trail connections, enhanced pedestrian routes) in project designs, and/or employing transportation demand management solutions (e.g., parking limitations, transit pass subsidies, bicycle parking). If none of these strategies was determined to be feasible or to reduce the impact to a less than significant level, the City could still approve the project, but would be required to identify the impact as significant and unavoidable, and adopt a statement of overriding considerations.

Prior to SB 743, such a project could have created unacceptable LOS conditions at one or more intersections that could have required potential roadway widening or intersection improvements to mitigate a significant impact under CEQA. Subsequent to SB 743, the unacceptable LOS conditions would not be considered significant impacts under CEQA, and the potential widening or intersection improvements would not be available as mitigation measures. The City could still require such improvements if an LOS policy was retained in the General Plan and Traffic Impact Analysis Guidelines. However, such improvements would not be required as mitigation measures under CEQA.

Considering the dynamics of this example, and factors describing Elk Grove's location at the edge of the Sacramento metropolitan region and the City's current jobs-housing ratio (further outlined in Policy Topic Paper 7.0, Jobs/Housing), the City should anticipate that certain future projects with VMT characteristics that exceed City-wide or region-wide levels may trigger preparation of an EIR and potentially adoption of a statement of overriding considerations, where they may not under current procedures. This would also require consideration and disclosure of alternatives to the proposed project, would expand the typical process for public and agency comments and responses, and could expand the potential for legal challenges on such projects. The City should also anticipate that the range of potential mitigation measures it requires applicants to consider will include land use factors such as location, density, and use mix, in addition to providing options for high-quality transit, alternative transportation, and transportation demand management. In these ways, although SB 743 focuses primarily on transportation impacts, it can also be viewed as a potential constraint to the City's existing land use authority.

### **Retaining Level of Service**

While the use of LOS will no longer be a component of transportation impact analysis under CEQA, the option to retain this measurement for planning purposes is available. It may still be beneficial to require LOS as a project review requirement for the purposes of traffic mitigation, intersection safety, roadway impact fee determination, and street capacity and sizing determinations. If established in the General Plan, consistency with LOS standards would be considered a matter of General Plan consistency.

To implement General Plan LOS policies and determine the significance of project impacts to LOS, the City of Elk Grove established Traffic Impact Analysis Guidelines in July 2000. An impact to an intersection is considered significant, and mitigation measures must be identified when:

- Traffic generated by the project degrades the LOS from an acceptable LOS D or better (without the project) to an unacceptable LOS E or F (with the project).
- LOS (without project) is unacceptable and project-generated traffic increases the control delay by more than five seconds.
- For bicycle/pedestrian facilities: implementation of the project will disrupt or interfere with existing or planned bicycle or pedestrian facilities.
- For freeway facilities: the project causes the facility to change from acceptable to unacceptable LOS.
  - For facilities, which are or will be (in the cumulative condition) operating at unacceptable LOS without the project: increases the volume-to-capacity ratio on a freeway mainline segment or freeway ramp junction by 0.05.
  - Increase the number of peak hour vehicles on a freeway mainline segment or freeway ramp junction by more than 5 percent.
- For transit facilities: the project will disrupt or interfere with existing or planned transit operations or transit facilities.

These criteria are used for project analysis under CEQA. They also establish necessary roadway improvements when evaluating projects. Although these criteria can no longer be considered as part of environmental review for transportation impacts, they should be maintained as part of the planning review process. However, the City needs to consider if the LOS policies will be retained in the General Plan, and, if so, how the LOS policies are implemented, particularly in conjunction with any new VMT reduction policies. This is necessary to ensure that roadway improvements completed in response to LOS policies do not conflict with VMT goals, greenhouse gas reduction goals, or other goals of the General Plan.

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### **Roadway Efficiency Standards**

A potential alternative approach to establishing LOS policies in the General Plan would be to identify the roles and intended primary users of each major roadway in the City, then establish priorities for future safety, capacity, and access improvements for each major roadway that fulfills the needs of the primary users.

For example, certain arterial roadways (e.g., Elk Grove Boulevard, Bruceville Road) are designed and intended to carry primarily vehicular traffic to and from regional routes and collector roadways through a suburban environment. While these roadways also provide facilities to support alternative modes (e.g., walking or bicycling) and public transit, these modes are inherently subservient to vehicle use on these corridors. Future safety, capacity, and access improvements along these roadways should be prioritized for vehicles. Conversely, other roadways could be designed and/or function to support alternative modes and public transit at levels similar to vehicles. Along these roadways, improvements could be prioritized to support alternative modes and public transit.

The City could designate each major roadway in the General Plan according to its intended function and priority users as a matter of policy. Using this information, a range of priority improvements for each roadway could be determined in advance that would improve the efficiency of each roadway for each priority user. Future proposed projects that impact each roadway could then be required to make a fair-share contribution to complete the pre-determined projects. Such improvements would need to be completed in a manner that balances the role and function of the subject roadway, character of the surrounding area, cost to complete the improvement, and ongoing maintenance obligations.

### **SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the discussion contained in this policy topic paper, staff recommends the following items for consideration. Commission and Council direction on these items will be consolidated with that provided on other key policy topics to inform the direction and contents of the draft General Plan.

### **Policy Topic 9.0: Mobility System Standards**

9.1. Direct staff to establish a land use type-based approach to setting VMT reduction targets, recognizing that alternatives to this approach may be recommended based on further analysis to determine the feasibility of implementing one or more components of the approach. Steps to establish a land use type-based approach would include:

- Establish a 2015 static baseline based on existing conditions at the Citywide level and the 5-county, SACOG regional level.
- Identify appropriate VMT metrics for use by project type (e.g., single-family residential, multiple-family residential, commercial, office).

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- Identify an absolute threshold of significance for each project type within each land use designation (e.g., Low Density Residential, Community Commercial, Employment Center, Village Mixed Use) by land use type, with a target of consistency with SACOG MTP/SCS regional VMT goals.
  - Recommend criteria-based screening thresholds appropriate to Elk Grove to screen out projects that would be presumed to have a less than significant impact from further transportation system analysis under CEQA.
  - Establish criteria for analysis of future community plans, specific plans, and area plans that may include, but not be limited to, consistency with the General Plan and consistency with the 2016 MTP/SCS.
- 9.2 Direct staff to prepare a new policy on roadway efficiency that replaces LOS. The new policy would identify that the City desires a robust and efficient roadway network that provides access to properties in a safe and convenient manner, but that the design of specific intersection and roadway segment improvements should balance these needs with the role and function of the subject roadway, character of the surrounding area, cost to complete the improvement, and ongoing maintenance obligations.
- 9.3 Direct staff to submit a proposal for VMT-based CEQA significance thresholds that are aligned with the policies and targets identified in the draft General Plan.
- 9.4 Direct staff to prepare revisions to the Citywide Roadway Fee Program that is aligned with the updated policies, targets, and roadway improvements identified in the draft General Plan. Under this approach, the Roadway Fee Program would function as a “fair-share” funding mechanism for roadway improvements and not as a CEQA mitigation program.
- 9.5 Direct staff to develop options for mitigation of VMT impacts that are viable in the local context. Potential measures identified by OPR that may be applicable include increasing access to high-quality transit, improved pedestrian and bicycle networks, commute reduction programs, and increased connectivity to the project site.

**Attachment 4  
Comparison of Existing General Plan and Summary Recommendations  
from the July 2016 Annexation Strategy Paper**

Existing General Plan	Summary Recommendations
<p><b>LAND USE POLICIES: AREAS OUTSIDE THE INCORPORATED AREA OF ELK GROVE</b></p> <p><b>LU-12</b> The Land Use Policy Map for the Planning Area (Figure LU-2) provides conceptual land use policy for the area outside the current incorporated boundaries of Elk Grove. This policy is intended as a statement of the City’s long-term vision for this area; these lands remain under the jurisdiction of Sacramento County. Except where specifically indicated, the City’s land use policy for areas outside the city limits reflects the County of Sacramento’s land use policy as it existed on December 31, 2002.</p> <p><b>LU-12-Action 1</b> Following the annexation of any area within the Planning Area to the City of Elk Grove, initiate any planning process necessary to implement the land uses shown in the Land Use Policy Map for the Planning Area.</p>	<p><i>This policy would be updated to reflect the direction on the Study Areas regarding land use program and design principles.</i></p>
<p><b>LAND USE POLICIES: SPHERE OF INFLUENCE AND ANNEXATION</b></p> <p><b>LU-13</b> The City will work with the Sacramento Local Agency Formation Commission to establish and update a Sphere of Influence, which reflects the City’s near-term goals for potential additions to the corporate boundaries.</p> <p><b>LU-14</b> The City shall apply the following policies to potential annexations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annexations should conform to an orderly expansion of city boundaries within planned urban growth areas and provide for a contiguous development pattern.</li> <li>• Annexations should include a comprehensive land use plan for the affected territory, including Pre-zoning and a plan for infrastructure financing and phasing;</li> <li>• Annexations should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constitute fiscally sound additions to the existing City.</li> <li>• Be consistent with State law and Local Agency Formation</li> <li>• Commission policies, standards and criteria.</li> <li>• Preserve neighborhood identities.</li> <li>• Ensure the provision of adequate municipal services.</li> <li>• Be consistent with General Plan and Community Plan land use policies.</li> <li>• Incorporate Smart Growth criteria for sustainable economic growth while</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><i>Policy LU-13 would remain. Supplemental language recognizing private applications for SOI amendments that are consistent with the General Plan would be added.</i></p> <p><i>Policy LU 14 would be modified to incorporate the following concepts:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Allow expansions when economic need, community vision, and regional goals align.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Establish criteria and submittal requirements as part of an overall annexation strategy that defines and/or addresses economic need, community vision, and regional goals.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><i>Note: the Policy Topic Paper identified four potential criteria points as follows:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Compliance with the land use program and design principles for the study area.</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Demonstrate an identified market demand.</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Further the community vision.</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Demonstrate adequate services are available.</i></li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Require a General Plan Amendment and an area-wide land use plan prior to or</i></li> </ul>

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<p>maintaining environmental integrity, and providing for social equity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote fiscally sound, efficient service boundaries.</li> </ul> <p><b>LU-15</b> The City shall encourage annexations initiated by landowner/ residents, which are consistent with the City's policies.</p>	<p><i>concurrent with a request for annexation. Land use plans shall include all land within the applicable study area boundary.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Development within study areas shall be in substantial conformance with the established land use assumptions and design standards adopted for each area. A land use plan shall be considered in substantial conformance with the adopted land use percent targets when the proposal is within 2 percent of the target land use percent.</i></li> <li>Seek opportunities to annex additional land into the City, as appropriate, where the proposed project implements the community's vision and regional growth objectives (e.g., Regional Housing Needs Allocation, jobs/housing balance).</li> </ul> <p><i>Policy LU-15 would remain.</i></p> <p><i>The following would also be added to the General Plan:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Development in expansion areas should pay for needed infrastructure and not be a burden to existing ratepayers.</i></li> <li><i>Infrastructure improvements must be financed and constructed concurrent with or prior to occupancy of new development.</i></li> <li><i>Establish funding mechanisms for the expansion of public services and infrastructure to ensure new development is carrying its cost burden:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Explore mechanisms such as facility impact assessments to minimize the cost burden on the first development requiring major improvements.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li><i>Establish concurrency measures to ensure infrastructure adequately serves future development:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Coordinate public facility and service capacity with the demands of new development.</i></li> <li><i>Require that the provision of public facilities and service to new development does not cause a reduction in established service levels for existing residents.</i></li> <li><i>Ensure that new infrastructure will meet the required level of service standards set by the City's General Plan and Municipal Code.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li><i>Phase new development in expansion areas to occur where public services and infrastructure exist or may be extended to serve the public interest with minimal impact.</i></li> </ul>



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<p><b>LAND USE POLICIES: URBAN STUDY AREAS</b></p> <p><b>LU-16</b> The areas designated in the Planning Area as “Urban Study Areas” are envisioned as areas in which urbanization to some extent could occur, generally in compliance with the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development should be limited to areas outside of the 100-year floodplain.</li> <li>• Development should take place in compliance with the goals and policies of this General Plan.</li> <li>• Any study of potential land uses in these areas should be accomplished in cooperation with the County of Sacramento, the Sacramento Local Agency Formation Commission, and other agencies and parties with ownership or jurisdiction of lands in and near the study area.</li> <li>• Any study of land uses in these areas should be accompanied by an environmental evaluation of the potential impacts of development.</li> <li>• Prior to the completion of land use studies, the City’s policy is that County of Sacramento land use designations in effect as of December 31, 2002, are retained.</li> </ul> <p><b>LU-16-Action 1</b> Work with the County of Sacramento to establish and implement a program to study the potential for these areas to support urban development.</p> <p><b>LU-17</b> Implement a comprehensive and city-wide strategy for the preservation of open space, habitat and agriculture, both inside and outside the City’s existing city limits.</p>	<p><i>These policies would be updated to reflect the direction on the Study Areas regarding land use program and design principles.</i></p> <p><i>Existing language regarding preparing a study in cooperation with the County and Sacramento LAFCo, as well as environmental evaluation of potential impacts and development of a strategy for open space, habitat, and agricultural preservation would also likely be retained.</i></p>