

47

Planning Services

Home > Government > Planning

Land Use Update Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is a General Plan?
2. What subjects does the General Plan address?
3. Does the County have an adopted General Plan?
4. What is a Targeted General Plan Amendment?
5. What is a Zoning Ordinance?
6. How are General Plan land-use designations different from Zoning?
7. Once the General Plan is adopted, for how long will it be used?
8. What is the Housing Element Update?
9. How often can the General Plan be amended?
10. What is the Travel Demand Model?
11. Where are copies of presentations and documents available?
12. Does the Targeted General Plan Amendment and Zoning Ordinance Update require any environmental review or studies?
13. What are the impacts if changes are adopted?
14. How long will all of this take?
15. Will this effort delay any development projects currently under consideration?
16. Who is in charge of this project?
17. How can I get involved and provide input?
18. How will public input be taken into consideration?
19. Is the Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan (INRMP) a part of this process?
20. What is a Climate Action Plan (CAP)? Is a climate action plan going to be adopted as part of this process?
21. What is the difference between a Community Region and a Rural Center?
22. Will proposed changes to the General Plan or Zoning Ordinance affect my ability to grow my own food, or animals if I live in a Community Region or Rural Center?
23. Will changes to Agricultural setbacks be considered?
24. Will water quality issues be considered as part of the EIR?
25. Why are we proposing amendments to policies in the Transportation and Circulation Element of the General Plan?
26. Who do I contact with questions?

1. What is a General Plan?

State law requires the County to adopt "a comprehensive, long-term general plan for [its] physical development" (Government Code §65300). A General Plan contains official County policy regarding the location of housing, business, industry, roads, parks, and other land uses, protection of the public from noise and other environmental hazards, and conservation of natural resources. The legislative body of the County (i.e., the Board of Supervisors) is responsible for adopting a General Plan and Zoning, Subdivision, and other ordinances to regulate land uses and to carry out the policies of the General Plan.

2. What subjects does the General Plan address?

According to state planning law (Government Code §65302), a General Plan must address seven (7) subjects as they relate to future countywide development: land use, circulation (transportation and traffic), housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety. A county may also choose to address other subjects in conjunction with or in addition to the seven mandatory subjects. In its General Plan, El Dorado County also addresses agriculture and forestry, public services, parks and recreation, and economic development.

For more information on the structure and legal requirements of a General Plan, or to see a list of planning related terms and acronyms, please view the following sites:

A Citizen's Guide to Planning; Published by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research
http://ceres.ca.gov/planning/planning_guide/plan_index.html

The California General Plan Glossary; Published by the California Planning Roundtable
http://www.cproundtable.org/media/uploads/pub_files/Roundtable_glossary_2001.pdf



3. Does the County have an adopted General Plan?

Yes, the El Dorado County General Plan was adopted by the Board of Supervisors on July 19, 2004. Subsequent to adoption, a referendum measure that would affect implementation of the plan was filed with the County. On March 8, 2005, the voters upheld the Board's July 2004 adoption of the new general plan. The Housing Element of the General Plan was revised in 2009.



4. What is a Targeted General Plan Amendment?

The General Plan recognizes that development patterns in the County will change, new laws affecting land use will be passed, events will occur that will require changes, and imperfections will be discovered as the County implements the General Plan.

On April 4, 2011 the Board of Supervisors received a five-year review of the General Plan. The review concluded that

On April 4, 2011 the Board of Supervisors received a five-year review of the General Plan. The review concluded that the basic General Plan goals and assumptions are still valid. The review also revealed areas within the General Plan that could be improved to better address the development of moderate income housing, the creation of jobs, the loss of tax revenues and the promotion and protection of the agriculture and natural resource industries in the County. On November 14, 2011 the Board adopted a Resolution of Intention to improve these areas of the General Plan. The areas of the General Plan subject to improvement are said to be "targeted" for change or amendment.

5. What is a Zoning Ordinance?

The General Plan is a long-range policy document that looks at the future of the community. A zoning ordinance is the local law that spells out the immediate, allowable uses for each piece of property within the community. The purpose of zoning is to implement the policies of the General Plan. Zoning must be consistent with the General Plan.

The County's Zoning Ordinance has not been updated in over 30 years. It has been amended many times resulting in a patchwork of provisions and out-dated regulations. On November 14, 2011 the Board of Supervisors adopted a Resolution of Intention to comprehensively update the County's Zoning Ordinance.

6. How are General Plan land-use designations different from Zoning?

Every parcel in the unincorporated areas of El Dorado County is assigned a General Plan Land-Use designation and a Zoning designation. General Plan designations identify generalized permitted land uses such as Commercial or Multifamily Residential. Zoning designations, which by law must be consistent with the General Plan designations, provide more detail on permitted uses and development standards; a single General Plan designation may be consistent with a number of different zoning designations. For example, a parcel with a General Plan designation of Medium Density Residential could potentially have a Zoning designation of residential one acre (R1A), residential two acres (R2A), or residential three acres (R3A) under the current Zoning Ordinance. Once a new General Plan is adopted, the County will pursue an update of the current Zoning Ordinance, as required by state law. The update will address inconsistencies between the General Plan designations and current Zoning designations.

7. Once the General Plan is adopted, for how long will it be used?

State planning law simply states that a jurisdiction shall "periodically review and revise, as necessary, the General Plan" (Government Code §65103[a]). The adopted 2004 General Plan provides guidance through 2025. Though regular 5 year reviews, as required by General Plan policy 2.9.1.2, the need for periodic revisions may be needed. An exception is the Housing Element, which must be updated every five years pursuant to state law.

8. What is the Housing Element Update?

The Housing Element is a required component of the County's General Plan. The State of California Housing Element law, enacted in 1969, mandates that local governments adequately plan to meet the existing and projected housing needs of all economic segments of the community. The law acknowledges that, in order for the private market to adequately address housing needs and demand, local governments must adopt land use plans and regulatory systems which provide opportunities for, and do not unduly constrain, housing development.

For local governments within the regional jurisdiction of the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG), the year for revising the housing element is 2013 and will cover the planning period from January 1, 2013 through October 31, 2021. On January 24, 2012 the Board of Supervisors adopted a Resolution of Intention to amend the Housing Element of the General Plan.

Following a series of public workshops and review of public comments received, staff will prepare a draft of the 2013 Housing Element Update to present to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors for review and approval before the end of 2012. The approved draft will be submitted to the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) for review as to conformance with the California State Housing Element Law. A final draft will be reviewed under California Environmental Quality Act and include a minimum 30-day public review period. The target date for adoption is July 2013 with certification from HCD anticipated on or before October 1, 2013.

9. How often can the General Plan be amended?

The Board of Supervisors may consider general plan amendments up to four times a year. The County may accept applications for amendment, or initiate amendments by resolution of the Planning Commission or Board of Supervisors at any time.

10. What is the Travel Demand Model?

A Travel Demand Model is a tool for analyzing the impacts of development on the transportation system. The County's existing Travel Demand Model is based on a software platform with limited capability that is no longer supported.

The new Travel Demand Model is essential for:

- Meeting General Plan goals
- Updating the Zoning Ordinance
- Planning of new roadways for the Capital Improvement Program.
- Updating Traffic Impact Mitigation Fees

The new Travel Demand Model will help guide the County through the next twenty-five (25) years of land use planning. The new model will be used not only by the County but also by private companies and public agencies such as Caltrans. The County intends to keep the model current, updating it as needed to incorporate new development.

11. Where are copies of presentations and documents available?

All presentations and documents available on the project website at: <http://www.edcgov.us/landuseupdate/>

12. Does the Targeted General Plan Amendment and Zoning Ordinance Update require any environmental review or studies?

Yes. It is the intent of the Board of Supervisors to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) which fully reviews the potential impacts resulting from the General Plan amendments and the comprehensive Zoning Ordinance update. The EIR provides the Board of Supervisors a range of options to consider in determining the best course of action to address the issues found as part of the 5-year review. The Targeted General Plan Amendment is to focus on the objectives outlined in the Resolution of Intention adopted by the Board of Supervisors on November 14, 2011. To ensure the General Plan remains viable, the Targeted General Plan Amendment will also address recent changes in State laws, recent changes in market demand and development patterns, and the availability of new information. The process shall include and consider amendments that support the agriculture and natural resource industries in the County.

13. *New!* What are the impacts if changes are adopted?

Potential impacts of the proposed changes to the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance will be analyzed and presented in the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The Draft EIR will be circulated for public review and comment prior to any action by the Board of Supervisors. The County has released the Notice of Preparation (NOP) with an attached Environmental Checklist that outlines the anticipated impacts from the proposed Targeted General Plan Amendments and Zoning Ordinance Update. The Public Comment Period for the NOP provides an opportunity for public agencies and the public to identify significant environmental issues and reasonable alternatives and mitigation measures that should be explored in the Draft EIR. Additional information about the Notice of Preparation can be found at: http://ceres.ca.gov/ceqa/flowchart/lead_agency/Notice_of_Prep.html

14. *Updated* How long will all of this take?

The Targeted General Plan Amendment and Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance Update EIR is scheduled to take approximately 12-18 months, starting February 2012 and concluding in June 2013. Should the Board of Supervisors add or delete something that would change the conclusions in the EIR, particularly if the change would result in a new or worsened significant environmental impact, the EIR may need to be revised and recirculated for public review before the Board can take final action. If this were to happen it would extend the timeline beyond June 2013.

15. *Updated* Will this effort delay any development projects currently under consideration?

No. Existing planning policies and ordinances will guide current projects. There are no comprehensive land use designation changes as a result of the Targeted General Plan Amendments, with the exception of approximately 175 parcels that are already developed in a manner inconsistent with the General Plan. These parcels are being proposed to be amended in order to conform the land use map to the existing development.

16. Who is in charge of this project?

The Board of Supervisors has designated the Chief Administrative Office as the project lead. The Board of Supervisors also directed the Chief Administrative Office to form an Executive Advisory Team consisting of representatives of the following county departments and organizations:

- Development Services Department
- Department of Transportation
- Environmental Management Department
- Air Quality Management District
- Department of Agriculture
- Human Services Department
- Planning Commission
- Parks Commission
- Agriculture Commission
- Economic Development Advisory Committee

17. How can I get involved and provide input?

The Targeted General Plan Amendment and Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance Update have a heavy emphasis on public involvement. Opportunities to get involved include but are not limited to attending the many community meetings and public hearings that are part of this process and by reviewing the County's website and providing feedback through the public comment forms. The County will host a minimum of six (6) community workshops held between March 2012 and April 2012 that will provide interested individuals a chance to learn about recent steps in the process and to participate in interactive exercises. All project related information will be posted at the Land Use Policy Programmatic Update website. Please subscribe to this site to receive automatic e-mail notifications when new information becomes available. Also, please check the Calendar of Events for upcoming presentations.

18. *New!* How will public input be taken into consideration?

All public comments received in writing will be distributed to the Board of Supervisors throughout the process. Only the Board of Supervisors can amend the proposed Targeted General Plan Amendment and Zoning Ordinance Update content. No final decisions or actions as to the Targeted General Plan Amendments or the Zoning Ordinance Update have been made. In fact, any final action cannot be taken until after the Final EIR is completed and the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors hold public hearings and deliberations on the amendments and updates based on the findings of the environmental review.

19. *New!* Is the Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan (INRMP) a part of this process?

No. The INRMP will be addressed through a separate process.

20. *New!* What is a Climate Action Plan (CAP)? Is a climate action plan going to be adopted as part of this process?

The State of California has set a goal to reduce the state's greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 and to 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050. The Air Resources Board is responsible for implementing the California Global Warming Solutions Act (AB32) in order to meet 2020 emission reduction goals. A Climate Action Plan is a set of policies and implementation measures adopted by a local jurisdiction or agency to assist in meeting State requirements. There is no mandate that a jurisdiction must adopt a climate action plan. However, there is a mandate that a "project" as defined and subject to the California Environmental Quality Act must analyze the impacts of greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate impacts to protect against climate change. At this time the County is exploring options to meeting State objectives as it relates to climate change. Additional information can be found at the State Government website of <http://www.climatechange.ca.gov/>

21. *New!* What is the difference between a Community Region and a Rural Center?

The General Plan defines a Community Region as urban limit areas...where the urban and suburban land uses will be developed (Objective 2.1.1). Community Regions are ...those areas which are appropriate for the highest intensity of self-sustaining compact urban-type development or suburban type development within the County based on the municipal spheres of influence, availability of infrastructure, public services, major transportation corridors and travel patterns, the location of major topographic patterns and features, and the ability to provide and maintain appropriate transitions at Community Region boundaries (Policy 2.1.1.2).

Existing Community Regions identified on the General Plan Land Use map are: Camino/Pollock Pines, El Dorado Hills, Cameron Park, El Dorado, Diamond Springs, Shingle Springs, and the City of Placerville and immediate surroundings (Policy 2.1.1.1).

Rural Center boundaries establish areas of higher intensity development throughout the rural areas of the County based on the availability of infrastructure, public services, existing uses, parcelization, impact on natural resources, etc (Policy 2.1.2.2).

Existing Rural Centers identified on the General Plan Land Use map are: Coloma, Cool, Fairplay, Garden Valley, Greenwood, Georgetown, Grey's Corner, Grizzly Flat, Kelsey, Kyburz, Latrobe, Little Norway, Lotus, Mosquito, Mount Ralston, Mt. Aukum, Nashville, Oak Hill, Phillips, Pilot Hill, Pleasant Valley, Quintette, Rescue, Somerset, Strawberry, and Chrome Ridge (Policy 2.1.2.1).

Both Community Region and Rural Center boundaries are shown on the General Plan land use map.

22. *New!* Will proposed changes to the General Plan or Zoning Ordinance affect my ability to grow my own food, or animals if I live in a Community Region or Rural Center?

No. The proposed Targeted General Plan Amendments or Zoning Ordinance Update does not eliminate or diminish existing allowed agricultural uses for personal use. The proposed Zoning Ordinance Update supports additional agricultural uses than is currently allowed.

23. *New!* Will changes to Agricultural setbacks be considered?

No. The policies as they are applied today are not proposed to be changed. The Targeted General Plan Amendment proposes an amendment to Policy 8.1.3.2 which provides a limited buffer for lands within a Community Region by adding language similar to General Plan policy 8.4.1.2 to bring the forest resources and agriculture lands buffering policies into consistency with one another.

24. *New!* Will water quality issues be considered as part of the EIR?

Yes. Initial discussion of water quality issues can be found in the Environmental Checklist attached to the Notice of Preparation at <http://www.edcgov.us/landuseupdate/>

25. *New!* Why are we proposing amendments to policies in the Transportation and Circulation Element of the General Plan?

As discussed in Question 4 above, based on the outcome of the General Plan five year review and recent changes in State law, the Board of Supervisors is considering the amendments to policies within the Traffic and Circulation Element (TCE). The TCE policies are being reviewed to determine if an improvement can be made to promote the development of moderate income housing, the creation of jobs, the loss of tax revenues and the protection of the agriculture and natural resource industries in the County. Other changes have been made to clarify language, bring terms to current industry standard, and to update referenced document titles since the adoption of the General Plan. Additionally, the Board is considering changes necessary to meet recent changes in State Law.

26. Who do I contact with questions?

Please e-mail TGPA-ZOU@edcgov.us with questions.

Return to Land Use Policy Programmatic Update