
1.0 INTRODUCTION



1.1 SCOPE AND ROLE OF THE GENERAL PLAN

This General Plan, through implementation of its comprehensive goals, policies, and implementing actions, will serve as the framework for the City's growth over the next 20 years, while striving to maintain and enhance the existing quality of life in the City of Colusa. Often referred to as the local government "constitution," the General Plan is the single most important document a local government can adopt. This General Plan will govern decisions relating to land use, circulation, housing, community design, parks & recreation, conservation and open space, noise, safety, and municipal facilities.

1.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Founded in 1850, the City of Colusa was briefly known as Salmon Bend. Prior to its incorporation, the City was the site of an Indian village inhabited by a subgroup of the Wintun Indian Nation. One of the first Anglo-Saxon settlers was the Semple family. This group settled along the Sacramento River at present day Colusa and established a trading center for gold mining activities farther north in Trinity and Shasta Counties. River steamers could travel as far north as Red Bluff in the winter but could navigate only up to Colusa in the summer due to low water levels. Because Colusa was at the upper end of navigable waters during summer months, the town became a year-round center of commerce.

In the 1860s, the economy of Colusa County changed from primarily stock-raising to the farming of wheat, barley, and other crops. Wheat production eventually became the predominant land use and economic activity. However, the market for wheat eventually declined when Argentina and Canada became major exporters of the product in the 1890s. Following the decline of the wheat industry, rice was introduced to the area and became the dominant crop in the County. Rice required a large amount of water compared to other crops produced in the area. The need for additional water was addressed with the construction of the Glenn-Colusa Irrigation Canal.

Colusa was incorporated in 1868, during an expansion of farming and a growth in population in the region. The City grew to a population of 2,000 in the prosperous 1870s, distinguished by broad, level streets, numerous brick business buildings, and stately residences. As the county seat, Colusa counted among its residents an unusually large complement of judges, attorneys, assessors, and governing officials, many of who also earned their livelihoods as farmers and merchants.

Vestiges of Colusa's 19th century traditional life continue to the present day. Stately Italianate and Queen Anne dwellings, intermingled with Craftsman bungalows and clusters of Tudor Revival homes, provide residences for a new generation of Colusans. Farm-supporting businesses continue to service agricultural production in the surrounding unincorporated lands.

1.3 COMMUNITY PROFILE

The City of Colusa is located near the geographic center of the Sacramento Valley. The nearest major metropolitan city is Sacramento, approximately 60 miles to the south. The City of Chico, located approximately 50 miles northeast of Colusa, and Yuba City, 22 miles east, are other nearby urban areas. Unique features of the Colusa community include its location next to the Sacramento River and historic character in the downtown core.

The population of the City of Colusa in 2005 was 5,582, according to State Department of Finance population estimates. The growth rate since 1990 has averaged 0.95 percent per year,

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with a high of 2.56 percent between 1996 and 1997 and a low of negative 1.84 percent from the year 1999 to 2000. The State Department of Finance's 20-year projections show the City of Colusa with a population of 10,317 by 2020.

The City's proximity to the Sutter Buttes, nearby wildlife refuges, and active agriculture offer a panorama of open landscapes surrounding the City. Transportation to parts of the Sacramento Valley and beyond is readily available by state highways and from the Colusa Airport. **Figure 1.1** shows the location of the City of Colusa in relation to the surrounding region.

Few small communities located within the influence of a major metropolitan region have managed to retain the same basic physical and community character that was present several decades ago through the beginning of the 21st century. Colusa represents what was once the "typical" small town across California and the nation. Some of the most striking features of present-day Colusa are the things one does not find here – characteristics all too common elsewhere in the Sacramento region. Missing from Colusa are large chain "superstores" on the edge of town, a struggling or downtrodden downtown core, and an unending series of housing developments with little to distinguish one from the other.

Colusa still relies in large part on the same economic base that has sustained it for more than a century – agriculture and its related businesses. Most of the residents in Colusa work in Colusa or the surrounding area, within a 30-minute commute or less from their homes. Unlike many other cities of equal distance from Sacramento, it has not become a "bedroom" community where most working residents face hours of daily commute to work.

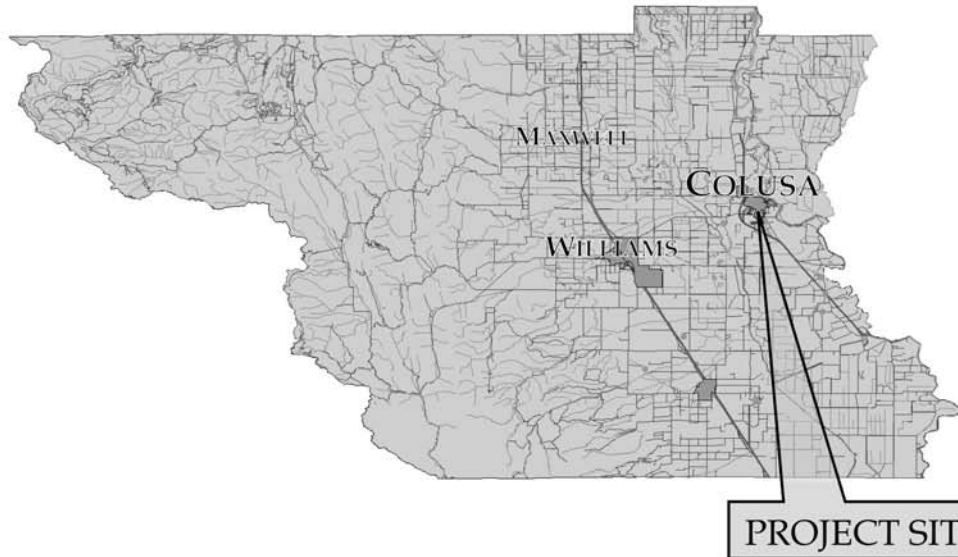
Traditional settlement patterns of the community have not significantly changed over the past several decades. Unlike the neighboring counties of Yolo and Sutter, growth in Colusa has developed slowly. For the most part, new neighborhoods have been located contiguous to the existing built areas and in a relatively compact form, with new residential subdivisions within the community located primarily to the south between Highway 20/45 and Wescott Road. The Downtown area is still active and healthy despite the presence of various franchise and service commercial uses along Highways 20 and 45. For all of these reasons, Colusa has generated a level of interest in growth and development that it hasn't seen in the past. As a result, Colusa is at a crossroads, and recent trends now point to the potential for dramatic change over the next two decades. It is the intent of this Plan to assist the City in making the choices that may be presented to the City in the coming years.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE GENERAL PLAN

The City of Colusa General Plan serves as a long-term policy guide for physical and economic growth and environmental sustainability. The General Plan will be used to inform citizens, developers, agencies, interest groups and others of the ground rules that will guide development-related decisions in the community. The General Plan will provide the long-term vision for the community, and, through its goals, policies and implementation programs, indicate how that vision may be achieved over time. The City of Colusa General Plan addresses planning through the year 2025. The City of Colusa General Plan has four fundamental purposes:

- To enable the Planning Commission and the City Council to make informed land use decisions that affect the City's quality of life.
- To inform the public of the City's policy approaches and to serve as a vehicle to invite public participation in the City's decision-making process.

COUNTY OF COLUSA



MAP DATA SOURCE: Download Census 2000 TIGER/Line® Data @ http://arcdata.esri.com/data/tiger2000/tiger_download.cfm



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FIGURE 1.1
REGIONAL LOCATION

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- To provide a basis for evaluating whether private and public development proposals and public programs are in harmony with Colusa's short-term objectives and long-term vision.
- To provide private developers and public agencies with clear expectations of new development proposals to ensure their consistency with Colusa's development priorities.

1.5 GENERAL PLAN THEMES

COMMUNITY IDENTITY

The City of Colusa strives to enhance its identity as a rural community with small-town character and a pleasant quality of life. In addition, the City recognizes its historical identity and considers the Downtown and Riverfront areas as the focal point of the community.

COMMUNITY-BUILDING

Implementation of the General Plan will help to ensure physical connectivity between existing and new development areas and enhance the "livability" of the community. Key elements of community livability include an attractive pedestrian- and bicycle-oriented public realm; affordable, well-designed, and appropriately located housing; convenient public transit, services, and shops; effective and efficient community services; accessible parks and open space; a clean and safe natural environment; an abundance of historical and natural features; and friendly, community-oriented social environments.

ENHANCEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Surrounding the City are many natural resources in preserves and open space, including the Colusa National Wildlife Refuge, one-half mile west of the City, and the Colusa-Sacramento River State Recreation Area to the north. In the future, the City of Colusa intends to promote these natural resources through increased awareness and improved public access.

COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY

Given that Colusa has development opportunities remaining in its planning area, the community recognizes the importance and opportunity to enhance sustainability while managing growth. Elements of the City's sustainable community include:

- **Environmental Integrity:** satisfying basic human needs such as clean air and water, protecting ecosystems and biodiversity (including sensitive marshlands, open space, and the Sacramento River), and implementing pollution prevention strategies
- **Economic Security:** local reinvestment in neighborhood commercial and employment centers, creating job opportunities for City residents, and promoting local business ownership
- **Empowerment and Responsibility:** respect and tolerance for diverse views and values, equal opportunity to participate in decision-making, and access to City government
- **Social Well-Being:** quality health services, housing, and education opportunities for all, creative expression, safety from crime, respect for public spaces and historic resources, and emphasis on the City's quality of life.

1.6 RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING PLANS, POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

The City of Colusa has various planning tools, documents, and programs in addition to the General Plan. As required by law, all of the following plans and policies are consistent with the General Plan or will be upon amendment as described in the General Plan implementation measures.

CITY OF COLUSA ZONING ORDINANCE

The Zoning Ordinance of the City of Colusa (Ordinance 403) zones property and prescribes development standards and processes within the City limits. Adoption of the General Plan will require amendments to the Zoning Ordinance for consistency with the updated General Plan. Government Code §65860 requires municipalities to maintain consistency between their Zoning Ordinance and their adopted General Plan. The relationship between the Zoning Districts established in the Zoning Ordinance and the General Plan Land Use designations are discussed throughout this document.

1.7 DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

The Colusa General Plan is organized into nine chapters. The Introduction provides background information on the City of Colusa, its General Plan update process, and the organization of the General Plan. The remaining eight chapters contain both the required elements (as discussed in Section 1.7) and optional elements of importance to the City – specifically Community Character and Design (Chapter 3) and Municipal Facilities and Services (Chapter 8). The Housing Element, which is a component of the General Plan, was adopted in March 2004 and is incorporated under separate cover.

Each General Plan element is structured as follows:

- “Introduction” section addresses the need for and purpose of the individual element, and summarizes its key components.
- “Setting” section describes the existing conditions, including plans, regulations, and standards currently in place, and current issues for the key topic areas of the specific element.
- “Outlook” section provides the City’s vision for the future during the 20-year timeframe of the General Plan. This section sets the direction and context for the goals and policies that follow.
- “Goals, Policies, and Implementing Actions” section provides the specific language that serves as a “road map” for future development within the City and its sphere of influence:
 - *Goals* state the overall desired conditions that the City would like to achieve as part of its vision; goal statements are general.
 - *Policies* indicate an action or direction that the City must take as a step toward achieving the desired condition or goal; policies are more specific statements of how a goal will be implemented.
 - *Implementing Actions* identify programs and actions that will be required to implement the stated policies.

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1.8 LEGALITY OF THE GENERAL PLAN

California Government Code (GC) §65300 requires the legislative body of every planning agency in the state – in this case, the City of Colusa—to adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan for its physical development. GC §65301(a) further requires that a municipality's General Plan address "any land outside its boundaries which in the planning agency's judgment bears relation to its planning." This area is referred to as the Sphere of Influence –a boundary that typically includes lands around the city which may ultimately be annexed and/or provided with city services.

To be effective, a General Plan must remain current. While State law does not specify rigid requirements or timing for updating a General Plan (other than for the Housing Element which must be updated every five years), it does establish that the responsibility for determining whether a General Plan is up-to-date and accurate rests with each jurisdiction.

The City Council adopted the last General Plan in October 1994. Since that time, the City has experienced minimal population growth, economic development, residential development, and other changes, in part because of limitations on the City's sewer treatment plant. Recently, however, there has been considerable interest in developing a substantial amount of residential and commercial acreage within the City's Planning Area. To ensure adherence to the City's comprehensive and long-term approach to planning, these new development proposals have been considered in this General Plan and will be guided by its goals, policies, and implementing actions once adopted by the City.

REQUIRED ELEMENTS

The Colusa General Plan covers all of the seven elements required by the California Government Code as well as optional elements which address issues of concern that are specific to this community. **Table 1.1** identifies the title of each General Plan element and its relationship to State law requirements.

TABLE 1.1
GENERAL PLAN ELEMENTS AND CORRESPONDING GENERAL PLAN CHAPTERS

Element	Colusa General Plan Chapter	Status
Introduction	1	-
Land Use	2	Required
Community Character and Design	3	Optional
Circulation	4	Required
Safety	5	Required
Parks, Recreation and Resource Conservation	6	Required ¹
Noise	7	Required
Municipal Facilities and Services	8	Optional
Housing Element	9 (under separate cover)	Required

¹Two required elements, *Open Space and Conservation*, along with the optional element, *Parks and Recreation*, are consolidated into a single element: *Chapter 6 Parks, Recreation and Resource Conservation*.

Land Use Element

California Government Code §65302(a) requires that the General Plan include a land use element, which addresses:

"The proposed general distribution and general location and extent of the uses of the land for housing, business, industry, open space, including agriculture, natural resources, recreation, and enjoyment of scenic beauty, education, public buildings and grounds, solid and liquid waste disposal facilities, and other categories of public and private uses of land. The land use element shall include a statement of the standards of population density and building intensity recommended for the various districts and other territory covered by the plan..."

Community Character and Design Element

Community character and design are critical to the decisions that determine the shape and form of growth and development. The element is not one of the seven "mandatory" elements under California law governing general plans. However, many general plans statewide contain design elements and policies. Aesthetics and design have long been recognized by California law and upheld by the courts as legitimate public policy issues within the regulatory authority of municipalities.

Circulation Element

California Government Code §65302(b) requires that the General Plan include a circulation element that describes plans and measures to provide for the City's transportation and circulation system as follows:

"The circulation element consists of the general location and extent of existing and proposed major thoroughfares, transportation routes, terminals, any military airports and ports, and other local public utilities and facilities, all correlated with the land use element of the plan."

Safety Element

California Government Code §65302(g) requires that the General Plan include a safety element. A safety element is to protect the community from any unreasonable risks associated with the following:

"Effects of seismically induced surface rupture, ground shaking, ground failure, tsunami, seiche, and dam failure; slope instability leading to mudslides and landslides; subsidence, liquefaction and other seismic hazards identified pursuant to Chapter 7.8 (commencing with Section 2690) of the Public Resources Code, and other geologic hazards known to the legislative body; flooding; and wild land and urban fires. The safety element shall include mapping of known seismic and other geologic hazards. It shall also address evacuation routes, military installations, peak load water supply requirements, and minimum road widths and clearances around structures, as those items relate to identified fire and geologic hazards."

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Parks, Recreation and Resource Conservation Element

The City of Colusa General Plan update has combined two state-required elements—open space and conservation—into a single Parks, Recreation and Resource Conservation element. An optional parks component is included in this chapter as well.

California Government Code §65302(e) requires that the General Plan include an open space element that describes plans and measures for preserving open space for:

- Natural resources;
- Managed production of resources;
- Outdoor recreation;
- Protect public health and safety;
- Support military uses, and
- Protect identified places, features, and objects.

Furthermore, California Government Code §65302(d) requires that the General Plan include a conservation element for the conservation, development, and utilization of natural resources. The parks, recreation and resource conservation element provides for:

“the conservation, development, and use of natural resources; details, plans and measures for the preservation of open space; and provides for outdoor recreation facilities. The overall goal of the element is to preserve a comprehensive interconnected system of open space, encompassing preservation and enhancement of natural habitat areas, for the use and enjoyment of the community. The element also integrates related land use, transportation and circulation, transit, and energy issues.”

Noise Element

California Government Code § 65302 (f) requires that the General Plan include a noise element to be used as a guide for establishing a pattern of land uses that minimizes the exposure of community residents to excessive noise. The noise element “shall identify and appraise noise problems in the community. The noise element will recognize the guidelines established by the Office of Noise Control in the State Department of Health Services and shall analyze and quantify, to the extent practicable, as determined by the legislative body, current and projected noise levels for all of the following sources:

- Highways and freeways.
- Primary arterials and major local streets.
- Passenger and freight on-line railroad operations and ground rapid transit systems.
- Commercial, general aviation, heliport, helistop, and military airport operations, aircraft overflights, jet engine test stands, all other ground facilities and maintenance functions related to airport operation.

- Local industrial plants, including, but not limited to, railroad classification yards.
- Other ground stationary noise sources, including, but not limited to, military installations, identified by local agencies as contributing to the community noise environment.

Noise contours shall be shown for all of these sources and stated in terms of community noise equivalent level (CNEL) or day-night average level (Ldn)."

Municipal Facilities and Services Element

Municipal Facilities and Services is an optional element that discusses public facility and service needs within Colusa and the remainder of the Planning Area. The element discusses civic and community facilities, including administration, public works, police, fire, and solid waste disposal; facilities provided by other public agencies, including library, schools, and airport facilities; services provided by the private sector, including electric, gas, and communication utilities; and water, wastewater, and stormwater drainage systems. Goals and policies emphasize the timing of facilities construction and services provision in relation to new development approvals, and they recognize the need for fair-share contribution from new development toward the provision of these facilities and services.

Housing Element

California Government Code §65302(c) requires every county and city in the State to include a housing element as part of its adopted general plan. In stipulating the content of this element, Article 10.6 of the Government Code indicates that the element shall consist of "identification and analysis of existing and projected housing needs and a statement of goals, policies, quantified objectives, and scheduled programs for the preservation, improvement and development of housing." This legislation further states that the element "shall identify adequate sites for housing, including rental housing, factory-built housing, and mobile homes, and shall make adequate provision for the existing and projected needs of all economic segments of the community."

Colusa's housing element identifies existing and projected housing needs. The element also establishes goals, policies, and implementing actions for the preservation, improvement, and development of housing to meet the needs of all economic sectors of the community. This element was previously prepared and adopted by the City Council in March 2004 to fulfill the requirements of State housing law.

REQUIRED CHARACTERISTICS

In addition to addressing the required elements, a General Plan must also have the following functions:

Long-Range in Scope

The General Plan must have a long-term perspective, establishing durable policies upon which daily decisions can be made for a period of many years. Although the Housing Element requires an update every five years, goals and objectives for other sections may consider community values or needs over a period of 15 to 20 years. This General Plan establishes goals, policies, and implementation measures for a period from 2005-2025.

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Comprehensiveness

Geographically Comprehensive

The General Plan must consider all areas within the City Limits, as well as “any land outside its boundaries which in the planning agency’s judgment bears relation to its planning” (California Government Code §65300). This area includes the City’s Sphere of Influence and any adjacent lands that may be affected by implementation of the General Plan.

Topically Comprehensive

The General Plan must cover a broad range of issues relevant to the planning area. Land use designations in the City’s General Plan consider impacts on environmental, social, and economic concerns.

Internal Consistency

Government Code §65300.5 requires that the General Plan be internally consistent through all of its elements. In other words, no policy conflicts may exist within the document. The requirement for internal consistency is reflected in five ways:

- Equal status among elements: policies of one element are not legally superior to policies of any other element.
- Consistency between elements: every element of the General Plan must be consistent with all other elements.
- Consistency within elements: each element’s analysis and goals, policies, and implementation measures must be consistent and complementary.
- Area plan consistency: all goals, policies, and implementation measures in an area plan must be consistent with the General Plan.
- Text and diagram consistency: figures and tables must be consistent with the text supporting them.

1.9 PROCESS USED IN PREPARING THE GENERAL PLAN

This General Plan is the culmination of an effort that began in 2000. The first part of the process was to research and acquire information to support the establishment of a resource inventory of the planning area. The resource inventory provided data on the physical aspects of the planning area, such as soils, biological resources, traffic, and air quality. Analysis of the public service aspects of the planning area included schools, solid waste, police and fire protection, and water service. The data provided a baseline against which the effects of future development could be evaluated, and goals and policies formulated.

As part of the second phase of the process, the City held a series of public workshops and hearings before the Planning Commission and City Council. Input received at these meetings from the Commission, the Council, other public agencies, and community residents has been incorporated into this document. The goals, policies, and implementing actions of this General Plan are the culmination of these meetings and hearings.

1.10 DEFINING USE OF GOALS, POLICIES, AND IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

The Colusa General Plan is supported by Goals, Policies, and Implementing Actions that set forth the guiding principles upon which future decisions are to be made. These components of the General Plan are defined and organized as shown in the following diagram. In descending order, each of the components provides more detail about how the City will achieve the components above it. The goals, policies, and implementing actions for each General Plan Element are located within each Element according to the sequence below.

<p>Goal:</p> <p>A broad statement reflecting community values and ideal future vision.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy: <p>A clear and specific statement that guides decision making in order to promote the achievement of a goal.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementing Action: <p>An action or procedure that carries out a General Plan Policy. Each Policy typically has one or more corresponding Implementing Actions.</p>

An example of this format is provided below, using the Land Use Element:

<p>Goal LU - 1:</p> <p>To provide a comprehensive, logical land use planning process.</p>

Policy LU-1.1:

The City shall ensure that annexation areas demonstrate comprehensive and logical growth, particularly where significant changes in land use are being considered.

Implementing Action LU-1.1.a: Prepare Annexation Phasing Plan

The City shall prepare and adopt an Annexation Phasing Plan to ensure a logical progression of annexations that meet the City’s economic and planning needs and does not strain City services, resources, and infrastructure. The plan shall include criteria that promote the preservation of open space and agricultural lands; benefit the local economy; and ensure a development pattern that is complementary and contiguous to existing development; include adequate infrastructure and services; and will enhance the City economy.

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