



## INTRODUCTION



*Citizen input from meetings like this one in Angwin in August 2006 is reflected in this General Plan.*

### **BACKGROUND: THE 2007 UPDATE PROCESS**

This General Plan represents the product of years of efforts on the part of residents and businesses in the community working to maintain and improve Napa County's superior quality of life.

The first Napa County General Plan was adopted in 1969. Since then, the General Plan has been periodically reviewed and updated to reflect changing conditions and to remain timely and useful. The County adopted a major update to the General Plan in 1983, but it was not until 2005 that another comprehensive update to the General Plan was begun.

### **AN ERA OF GROWTH AND CHANGE, 1983-2005**

Between 1983 and 2005, Napa County had become much more diverse in terms of its demographics. Internal and external forces also changed substantially—in 1983, the personal computer was relatively new, the Internet had just been launched, and the residents of American Canyon had not yet formed their new city. The Bay Area, of which Napa County is a part, grew by more than 1.6 million persons during this same



period (the equivalent of adding more than twice the population of the City of San Francisco), placing increasing development pressure on lands in Napa and other counties.

Recognizing the need to update the General Plan to address the issues now facing the county, the Board of Supervisors embarked on a process that began with the preparation of a comprehensive Baseline Data Report (completed in 2005) and a comprehensive update of the General Plan itself. In the years between 2005 and 2008, all of the General Plan's elements were reviewed and revised except for the Housing Element, which must be updated on a regular cycle determined by state law.

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Citizen participation played an important role in preparing this General Plan. Because the General Plan needs to reflect community goals and aspirations, citizens were involved throughout the process of updating the 1983 General Plan. One of the most important parts of this process was the General Plan Update Steering Committee, whose 21 members met at least monthly throughout the preparation of the Draft General Plan to bring their own expertise to the process and to hear from members of the public.

A wide variety of civic and professional organizations were consulted during the preparation of this Plan. Numerous public meetings were conducted throughout the county, and additional opportunities for public involvement were available during the public hearing process at Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors meetings. Targeted outreach to leaders and members of the County's large Hispanic community supplemented these efforts.

## ROLE OF THE GENERAL PLAN

This General Plan serves as a broad framework for planning the future of Napa County. This General Plan is the official policy statement of the County Board of Supervisors to guide the private and public development of the County.

State law requires that the County's ordinances regulating land use be consistent with the General Plan. The Zoning Code, individual project proposals, and other related plans and ordinances must be consistent with the goals and policies in this General Plan. Because policies in the General Plan reflect a range of competing interests, the decision-makers are allowed to weigh and balance the Plan's policies when applying them, and they have broad discretion to construe the policies in light of the Plan's purposes. Balance does not require equivalence, but rather a weighing of pros and cons to achieve an acceptable mix.

Periodic review and possible amendment of the General Plan to adjust to changing conditions and County priorities is required. This General Plan, while prepared with a time horizon of at least 20 years in mind, is not unchangeable. As circumstances or the County's desires change, this General Plan may be amended by the County Board of Supervisors following review by the Planning Commission. The General Plan may also be amended by the voters of Napa County, and as explained in later sections of the document, there are certain policies and portions of the official Land Use Map that can only be changed by the voters pursuant to Measure J (1990) and Measure P (2008).



## EIGHT ELEMENTS OF THIS GENERAL PLAN

Every county and city in California is required by state law to prepare and maintain a General Plan.

State law requires that seven topic areas be addressed in a General Plan: Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Conservation, Open Space, Noise, and Safety. This General Plan arranges these topics into the eight main sections, or “Elements,” shown below:

- Agricultural Preservation and Land Use Element
- Community Character Element
- Conservation Element
- Circulation Element
- Economic Development Element
- Housing Element
- Recreation and Open Space Element
- Safety Element

The eight General Plan Elements provide the goals and policies for the long-term development of the County. Each Element provides a brief summary of the topics it covers, with references to the Baseline Data Report and other documents where necessary to help the reader find additional or more detailed information.

As well as the eight elements, this General Plan contains a Summary and Vision section, a chapter on Implementation (which contains all of the action items included in each element and suggests ways to monitor progress towards the Plan goals), and a Glossary.

*Note to Reader: Please see “Using and Interpreting this General Plan,” later in this chapter, for notes on identifying and using the Goals, Policies, Objectives, and Action Items in this document.*

## BASELINE INFORMATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

Two important documents support the General Plan. The *Baseline Data Report (BDR)* and the *General Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR)* are both intended to be used in conjunction with this General Plan and to serve as companions to this policy document.





The BDR comprises a comprehensive data set and computer-generated maps reflecting existing environmental conditions in the County. It also includes several computer models which may be used as tools to evaluate future changes. To provide up-to-date information, the BDR is envisioned as an evolving work product that will be updated as necessary over time to reflect new information, changes in the plans adopted by other agencies, and other new information.

The General Plan EIR assesses the potential implications of the policies in this General Plan in terms of physical environmental impacts. State law requires that the EIR be certified prior to adoption of the General Plan and be used to inform specific findings that are part of the Board's approval action(s). In the years following plan adoption, the assumptions, analyses, conclusions, and recommended mitigation measures inherent in the EIR will be useful in assessing follow-on implementation actions and projects.

Several other documents support the General Plan and are incorporated by reference in appropriate sections. Specifically, the Housing Element cites and incorporates by reference a Housing Needs Assessment which is required as part of any Housing Element Update. The Safety Element incorporates by reference both the Napa Operational Area Hazard Mitigation Plan and the County's Flood Plain Management Ordinance. Copies of all referenced materials are available for review at the Napa County Department of Conservation, Development and Planning.

### **USING AND INTERPRETING THIS GENERAL PLAN**

The General Plan is intended to be used by a broad range of persons, including:

- The Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission in decision-making activities;
- County staff in developing programs and projects;
- The development community in preparing development proposals; and
- Residents and citizens interested in the future of Napa County and the County's policies.

When using this General Plan, the following basic rules should be kept in mind:

- Only those statements specifically listed as "Goal" are to be interpreted as stating the County's goals. Only those statements specifically listed as "Policy," "Objective," or "Action Items" are to be interpreted as statements of County policy. Narrative descriptions and discussions not preceded by a Goal, Policy, Objective, or Action Item designation are provided for information and background only. Narrative and/or discussion items may assist decision-makers with the interpretation of policies but do not themselves establish County policy.
- Unless specifically defined by Policy, the standard definitions of words and terms shall be used. The Glossary to this General Plan provides definitions of many commonly used planning terms; these definitions may be used as a starting point in resolving disputes about the meanings of words in Goals or Policies.
- General plans ordinarily do not state specific mandates or prohibitions. Rather they state policies and set forth goals. The General Plan sets forth two types of policies: guiding policies, which are the County's statement of its goals and philosophy, and implementing policies, which describe actions consistent with these goals with as much specificity as is appropriate given the County's current level of knowledge and agreement on each policy issue. Introductory statements in the General Plan stress the flexibility of the policies described and the ability of decision-makers to balance competing



policies when necessary. Thus the General Plan states that the classifications for development serve as a guide for zoning, and zoning regulations, while they must be consistent with the Plan, need not be identical to it. The policies allow for flexibility and require interpretation by staff and the decision-makers.

- Some information in this General Plan (e.g. population figures) is expected to become outdated in the normal course of events. Where this information is critical to the interpretation of Goals or Policies, the most up-to-date information should be used, including the Baseline Data Report.

The following specific conventions are used in this General Plan:

- Where the word “County” is capitalized, the reference is generally to the County of Napa as a governmental agency, as in “*The County’s offices are located in Napa.*”
- Where the word “county” is lowercase, the reference is generally to the geographic place, as in “*There are five incorporated communities in the county.*”
- References to current facts and figures and ‘existing’ conditions should generally be considered to refer to the years 2006-2007, unless specifically stated otherwise.

## **AMENDMENTS TO THIS GENERAL PLAN**

Recognizing the need for the General Plan to remain up-to-date and reflective of local issues and policies, state law allows the County to amend the General Plan to ensure that it is consistent with the conditions, values, expectations, and needs of the community. The General Plan may be amended only by action of the Board of Supervisors or by voter-approved initiative.

Periodic updates to the Housing Element are required by state law (generally every five years), but there is no required regular update for any other portion of the General Plan.

As provided in Measure J (1990) and Measure P (2008, in effect through 2058), any changes to the Land Use Map which would re-designate land designated as Agricultural Resource or Agriculture Watershed Open Space as of February 1, 1990 requires voter approval. Lands that are re-designated from urban use to agricultural use by the Board of Supervisors are not subject to a vote if such lands are later returned to a non-agricultural land use designation.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS GENERAL PLAN**

This General Plan is not intended to be a step-by-step guidebook for its own implementation. It is not intended to answer every question which will be faced by the County over the lifetime of the Plan.

Future work will be needed to fully implement this General Plan. This work, shown in the form of “action items,” is listed in each Element and in the Implementation section of this General Plan. Some of these actions may occur in the short term; others will require more time and resources and may not be completed for some time.

Title 18 of Napa County Code (The Napa County Zoning Ordinance or “Zoning Ordinance”) is a key implementation tool for the General Plan. Many of the Goals, Policies, Objectives, and Action Items in this General Plan are achieved through zoning, which regulates public and private development. The County is responsible for ensuring that its Zoning Ordinance and this General Plan are in conformity. In most



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instances, this will mean that land is designated in the General Plan and zoned for similar uses with similar development standards (i.e., similar densities and minimum parcel sizes). Where zoning and General Plan land use designations are not identical, policies of this General Plan should be consulted carefully for guidance.