

Tulare County General Plan 2030 Update Background Information
March 25, 2010

Tulare County General Plan 2030 Update

The February 2010 draft of the Tulare County General Plan 2030 Update (General Plan Update) documents, which includes Part I, Goals and Policies Report, and Part II, Area Plans, the Recirculated Draft Environmental Impact Report (RDEIR), and the Tulare County General Plan 2010 Background Report are now available for review. A Climate Action Plan has been prepared as an implementation measure of the General Plan Update. The Climate Action Plan is not a part of the formal General Plan Update documents but will be considered for approval subsequent to the adoption of the General Plan Update. These documents are available for review at the County of Tulare Resource Management Agency, located at the Tulare County Government Plaza, 5961 S. Mooney Blvd. in Visalia, California or at any of the Tulare County's library branches. The documents can also be found at the County's website (www.co.tulare.ca.us). For further information, please contact David Bryant, project planner at (559) 624-7000.

The County's General Plan provides a comprehensive, long-term plan for land use and physical development in the unincorporated areas of the County. The County's General Plan consists of development policies that set forth objectives, principles and standards that guide land use decisions within the County. The general plan and its figures, diagrams, and development policies form the basis for the County's zoning, subdivision, and public works decisions.

The General Plan Update maintains the long standing tradition of supporting sustainable agricultural resources through the Rural Valley Lands Plan, and directing future urban growth into established areas containing existing development through the proposed Planning Framework Element (update of the existing Urban Boundaries Element).

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires the County to have a public review or comment period wherein interested parties, including but not limited to public entities, private individuals and special interest groups, can comment in writing on the RDEIR. This public comment period will open on March 25, 2010 and close at 5:30 p.m. on May 27, 2010 for a 60 day review period. Notice of this public comment period will be published once on March 25, 2010, in a number of local newspapers in the County. At the end of the public comment period, the County plans on preparing a Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) on this project as required under CEQA. The FEIR will consist of the RDEIR and the County's responses to the comments received during the public comment period.

After the preparation of the FEIR, the Tulare County Board of Supervisors and the Tulare County Planning Commission plan to hold a joint public workshop on the General Plan Update in the Chambers of the Board of Supervisors, Administration Building, County Civic Center, 2800 West Burrel, Visalia, California. The workshop will provide the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission with a review of the preliminary responses to comments on the RDEIR, and seek direction regarding the completion of the General Plan Update process. A notice of this workshop will be published. Copies of the notice will be sent to any individual or entity requesting notice. After this workshop the Planning Commission will meet in a noticed public hearing to review the proposed project and make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. After the Planning Commission has made its recommendation on the proposed project, the Tulare County Board of Supervisors will notice and hold a public hearing on the proposed General Plan Update and will consider the Final EIR. Both of these public hearings will be noticed separately. Copies of the notice will be sent to any individual or entity requesting notice.

Historical Background:

After many community and County workshops, the County published in January 2008 a proposed Tulare County General Plan Update and Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR). The DEIR was circulated for public review and comment for an extended period of over 90 days (January 14, 2008 through April 15, 2008) to allow for maximum public involvement and input. During the public review period, the County received approximately 95 written communications from agencies, organizations and individuals with comments on the General Plan Update and DEIR.

The County and its consultants reviewed these comments to determine whether any additional environmental analysis would be required to respond to issues raised in the comments. Based on that review, the County determined that several subjects warranted additional information, analysis or clarification. In its role as the lead agency, the County directed the recirculation of a revised DEIR for the proposed project. Consideration of the various comments received on the DEIR, as well as continued developments in the areas of air quality, climate change impacts regulation and water resources resulted in the County's decision to update a number of sections of the previous DEIR as well as the Background Report. This effort has resulted in the proposed General Plan 2030 Update and RDEIR, released on March 25, 2010.

Although a part of the administrative record, the comments from the public and public entities received on the January 2008 DEIR do not require a written response in the FEIR because of the RDEIR that is being circulated at this time. The County, as provided in CEQA Guidelines, section 15088.5(f)(1), will not respond to individual comments received on the January 2008 Draft EIR but will respond to any new comments received on this February 2010 RDEIR as part of the FEIR to be considered by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

The following is a summary of current revisions to the General Plan Update.

1. **Introduction Hierarchy:** The Introduction chapter to Part I of the General Plan update has been revised to provide a clear hierarchy and summary of the General Plan Update document and how it relates to the existing General Plan documents the County will retain (i.e. Community Plans).
2. **Existing Plans Incorporated by Reference:** Part III of the General Plan update consists of the existing Plans and Amendments that will not be revised or re-adopted (Community, Hamlet, County Adopted City General, Valley Sub-Area, Corridor Sub-Area, and Mountain Sub-Area Plans). These plans are not being amended by the General Plan Update but are listed in Part I, Chapter 1 (Introduction) for reference. These plans and amendments are available on the County General Plan Update website or by compact disks (CD) upon request for the cost of copying the CD (six disks total) Each County library branch with computers available to the public will also have a copy of these CDs.
3. **Land Use Matrix:** A land use designation supersedure table/matrix, similar to a Land Use Designation/Zoning Matrix has been added that will realign existing land use designations into those of the proposed GPR.
4. **Updated Figures and Diagrams:** Many figures and diagrams have been revised, including but not limited to the following: Figure 4-1 in the Land Use Chapter of Part I has been revised to provide greater clarity. The revised diagram identifies all boundaries including Urban Development Boundaries (UDB's), Area Plans, Foothill Development Corridors, Rural Valley Lands Plan Area, Urban Area Boundaries (UAB's), and all new boundaries such as hamlets (HDB's), and Mountain Service Centers (MSC's). Other figures and diagrams have been added, corrected or revised as needed for clarity.

5. Minor Corrections: Minor changes have been made to the General Plan Update to include material inadvertently omitted in the older (2008) version, to provide clarification to policies, and Implementation timeframes, and to change the formatting to an easier to read (one column style instead of two).
6. Implementation Measures: Certain implementation measures that were simply a restatement of state law have been eliminated or condensed.
7. Initiated Climate Action Strategy: In light of on-going developments in the Global Climate Change arena, the RDEIR suggests new or revised policies that may be added to the General Plan Update policies document, including but not limited to air quality, health and safety, and water resources policies. A Climate Action Plan has been proposed as an implementation measure and will be considered for adoption after the adoption of the General Plan Update.
8. Policies related to unincorporated areas around cities: The proposed General Plan update includes revised policies in unincorporated areas around cities pertaining to urban development. The revised policies would provide a unique opportunity for coordinated development with incorporated cities within County Adopted City Urban Boundaries.

Draft Environmental Impact Report

The RDEIR is designed to assess the environmental impacts of the proposed Tulare County General Plan Update. Additionally, the RDEIR is intended to identify ways to minimize significant effects of the General Plan Update and describes reasonable alternatives to the General Plan Update that would avoid or reduce the General Plan Update's significant effects (Section 15121[a] CEQA Guidelines).

The Background Report, an informational document, offers insight into the conditions and environment that existed in the County during the preparation of the General Plan. The RDEIR lists the potential effects that the new policies found in the General Plan Update will have on the environment and identifies mitigation measures that could potentially lessen the effects of these impacts. The RDEIR also contains an executive summary and describes the environmental setting of the General Plan Update.

The following is a summary of current revisions to the DEIR, resulting in the RDEIR, and Background Report:

1. Initiated Climate Action Strategy: In light of the recent legislative actions specific to sustainability and climate change, the County has initiated a Climate Action Strategy specific to its unique rural nature. As an initial step, the County has prepared a Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Inventory for the Planning Area. Information from the inventory, as well as applicable regulatory information is incorporated into the "Air Quality" and "Energy and Climate Change" sections of the recirculated DEIR. Subsequently, the analysis of air quality impacts now includes a more robust discussion of the proposed project's impacts associated with climate change. Additionally, the RDEIR now includes and will be included within the Final General Plan Update, a number of additional policies (in the areas of sustainability, energy conservation, and climate change) that will assist the County in meeting the GHG emissions reduction goals set by the State.
2. Updated Figures and the Land Use/Circulation Diagram: The County has developed a land use/circulation diagram showing the location of all future growth areas proposed as part of the General Plan Update. Refer to Figure 2-2 in Chapter 2, Project Description. This figure also identifies Development Boundaries within which future urban growth is expected to occur. Updated Geographic Information System mapping data (e.g., Important Farmlands, etc.) and

available resource agency data (e.g., air quality monitoring, California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB), etc.) has been included..

3. Greenhouse Gas Inventory: The RDEIR includes a more thorough list of estimates for stationary sources of air pollution, including industrial emissions, residential emissions, agricultural emissions, landfills, power plants, and oil and gas production. Many of these sources were developed as part of the Greenhouse Gas Inventory report and subsequently incorporated into the RDEIR.
4. Environmental Setting: Updated the environmental setting to include any newly available data. The RDEIR now contains its own environmental setting integrated into the document.
5. Updated General Plan Background 2010 Report: To the extent feasible, the County has reviewed or updated baseline data in the General Plan Background Report for topics for which more recent data was available. These topics include Market Conditions and Demographics, Land Use, Agriculture, Recreation, and Open Space, Biological Resources, Air Quality, Safety (including Geologic and Seismic Hazards, Flood Hazards, Fire Hazards, Human-Made Hazards, and Climate Change), Biological, Archaeological, and Historical Resources, Natural Resources (including Mineral Resources, Oil and Gas Resources, and Timber Resources), and Scenic Landscapes. Changes have been made to the Background Report to include material that was inadvertently omitted from the prior version, clarification provided, and formatting, order and clerical errors corrected including updating information on: Important farmlands (FMMP) and Williamson Act lands, current crop types, updated or current information regarding the Reasonable Available Control Measures (RACM) programs, overall update of the air quality regulatory setting, wildland fire hazard areas, biological resources, which included updating the California Natural Diversity Data Base (CNDDDB), and updated Historic Resources.
6. Updated Water Supply Evaluation: The RDEIR incorporates the results of a water supply evaluation prepared for the proposed project. Using the most current (or readily available) data from the Department of Water Resources and other sources, the water supply evaluation provides a representation of 'existing' supply and demand conditions and projects 'future' conditions contemplated by the proposed project. The RDEIR updated conditions as it pertains to water, wastewater and sewer. Each community service district (CSD) area was reviewed and updated as needed. Identification of sanitary sewer service providers, community/urban water suppliers, solid waste and storm drainage infrastructure was assessed and updated as needed.
7. Updated Information: The RDEIR was prepared based on the updated technical studies and new information contained in the updated background report and other technical reports.
8. Organization of the RDEIR: The County has simplified the organization of the RDEIR to more closely resemble the CEQA Checklist found in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. While the original DEIR incorporated the Background Report information and data by reference, this RDEIR includes relevant information from the Background Report directly in the "Environmental Setting" and "Regulatory Setting" sections of each EIR resource section. Much of this information has been updated, as described previously.

Climate Action Plan

As part of the Climate Action Strategy, a Climate Action Plan has been prepared. The Tulare County Climate Action Plan (CAP) serves as a guiding document for County actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the potential effects of climate change. The CAP is an implementation measure of the General Plan 2030 Update. An Implementation Measure is a specific action, program, procedure,

or technique. Implementation Measures are provided to help ensure that appropriate actions are taken to implement the General Plan. Implementation Measures may be adjusted over time, without amending the General Plan, based on new information, changing circumstances, and evaluation of their effectiveness, so long as they remain consistent with the intent of the General Plan and adopted mitigation measures. The General Plan provides the supporting framework for development in the County to produce fewer greenhouse gas emissions during Plan buildout. The CAP builds on the General Plan's framework with more specific actions that will be applied to achieve emission reduction targets consistent with California legislation.

Comments on the RDEIR

New comments must be submitted for the RDEIR, because, as mentioned above, Tulare County will not respond to those comments submitted in response to the previous DEIR of January 2008 (Section 15088.5, California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines). The **RDEIR will have a public review period of 60 days**, starting on March 25, 2010 and ending on **May 27, 2010 at 5:30 p.m.** Any written comments on the RDEIR must be received by the County by 5:30 p.m. on May 27, 2010, at the Tulare County Resource Management Agency at Government Plaza, 5961 South Mooney Boulevard, Visalia, CA 93277 to the attention of David Bryant, Project Planner, in order to be included in the FEIR.

Once this public comment period has ended, the County will prepare a proposed Final EIR and set a joint workshop of the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission. After the joint workshop, it is anticipated that the County will 1) schedule and notice a public hearing on this matter in front of the Planning Commission, and 2) schedule a separate, subsequent public hearing on the matter in front of the Board of Supervisors to consider the recommendations of the Planning Commission before the Board of Supervisors makes its decision on the certification of the FEIR and adoption of the proposed General Plan Update. Anyone desiring mailed or e-mail notice of the workshop and/or future public hearings should make sure that a request for notice is on file with the Tulare County Resource Management Agency.