

1 INTRODUCTION

The General Plan provides a vision for the future and establishes a framework for how Vacaville should grow and change over the next two decades. While embracing change, this General Plan also establishes goals, policies, and actions that empower the City and the community to maintain the goals and values that make Vacaville the thriving and friendly place it is today.

Vision Statement

The General Plan is intended to guide the City’s actions through the year 2035, or the *horizon year*¹ of the General Plan. Through the year 2035, the City of Vacaville will continue to preserve and enhance the qualities that make it a great community in which to live, work, and play. Drawing on its many strengths, the city will grow in a manner that provides a high quality of life for all current and future residents and employees. In the coming years, Vacaville will:

- Preserve its “small town feel” by continuing to be a family-friendly city.
- Promote a balance of high-quality housing and commercial development within the Urban Growth Boundary.
- Support existing businesses while attracting new businesses, particularly those that reflect community aspirations.
- Foster community-oriented neighborhoods that are diverse, attractive, safe, walkable, and affordable.
- Maintain its unique character by preserving historic and cultural resources.
- Meet the transportation challenges of the future, so that people can travel safely and conveniently on foot or by car, air, bicycle, and transit.
- Emphasize and protect natural and scenic features, such as open spaces, ridgelines, and creeks that define Vacaville’s setting and atmosphere.
- Ensure that development adheres to basic principles of high quality design.
- Continue to strengthen Vacaville’s Downtown culture and identity, supporting a vibrancy that will draw residents and visitors to the Downtown.
- Protect Vacaville’s unique identity through the preservation of agricultural lands and the creation of new park and open space lands.

¹ Throughout this document, key planning terms are *bolded and italicized* and followed by the definition, in addition to being defined in the glossary.

- Protect public health, safety, and the environment by taking steps to reduce noise and air pollution, conserve water and energy, and prepare for natural and man-made disasters.
- Continue to provide beautiful parks, exciting cultural and recreational amenities, and civic institutions that inspire community pride.
- Encourage and support high quality schools.
- Enhance the cultural environment in the city by promoting the arts and cultural activities.
- Welcome people from all backgrounds, ages, income levels, and physical abilities and invite them to become integral, long-term members of the community.
- Promote the health of Vacaville’s residents by providing a safe environment and increased opportunities for physical activity.
- Look ahead to plan for expected population growth and allow landowners to maintain economic use and value of their property.

The City will achieve this vision through bold civic leadership, citizen participation and assistance, and responsive, accountable government.

Purpose of this General Plan

The City of Vacaville’s General Plan is the principal policy and planning document for guiding future conservation, enhancement, and development in the city. It represents the basic policy direction of the Vacaville City Council regarding community values, ideals, and aspirations to govern a shared environment through 2035. The General Plan addresses all aspects of development including land use, transportation, housing, economic development, public facilities and infrastructure, and open spaces, among other topics.

California Government Code Section 65300 requires that the General Plan be comprehensive, internally consistent, and long-term. Although required to address the issues specified in State law, the General Plan may be organized in a way that best suits the City. The plan must be clearly written, available to all those concerned with the community's development, and easy to administer.

The City of Vacaville General Plan meets these requirements. The General Plan articulates a vision for the city’s long-term physical form and development. It also provides overall direction to the day-to-day decisions of the City Council, its commissions, and City staff. In particular, the General Plan serves six related purposes:

- **Policy Determination.** The General Plan defines a set of policies that govern the future physical development of the community.
- **Policy Implementation.** The General Plan provides a framework for the comparison and evaluation of specific projects.

- **Communication.** The General Plan provides a communication forum between the City, citizens, and key stakeholders about a shared vision for the future of the city.
- **Guidance.** The General Plan provides a coherent, unified structure for the Planning Commission to advise the City Council on development issues, and to allow the City to provide advice and recommendations to County and State government.
- **Education.** The document, and the process of creating and revising it, provides a forum for the City to educate itself and others on the problems and opportunities of the city.
- **Action Plan.** The General Plan includes specific actions that the City will take in order to meet its planning goals. These actions constitute a work program for the City Council, City commissions, and City staff over the life of the General Plan.

In order to be used in the ways described above, the General Plan contains the following characteristics and information:

- Defines a realistic vision of what the city intends to be in the long term.
- Serves as a comprehensive guide for making decisions about land use, community character, economic development, circulation, open space, the environment, and public health and safety.
- Contains a general level of information to allow for flexibility of future conditions and ideas and is designed to allow amendment in the future.
- Charts the course of coordinated development and conservation that will preserve the character and heritage of Vacaville.
- Serves as the City’s “constitution” for land use and community development. The General Plan provides the legal foundation for all zoning, subdivision, and public facilities ordinances, decisions, and projects, all of which must be consistent with the General Plan.)
- Is written in a clear and easy-to-understand format that encourages public discussion and understanding.

The City of Vacaville and its Planning Area

Vacaville is located in Solano County on the edge of the Coastal Range that separates California’s Central Valley from the San Francisco Bay Area. The city lies 27 miles southwest of Sacramento and 46 miles northeast of San Francisco. Interstate 80 runs through the middle of the city, connecting Vacaville to the core of the Bay Area to the southwest, and to the Sacramento metropolitan area to the northeast. Interstate 505 branches off Interstate 80 and connects to Interstate 5 to the north. Figure I-1 shows Vacaville’s regional location.

The State of California encourages cities to look beyond their borders when preparing a General Plan. For this reason, the General Plan assesses four delineated areas that are larger than the

incorporated city limits. These are the Sphere of Influence, Urban Growth Boundary, Urban Service Area, and Planning Area. Figure I-2 depicts the boundaries for each area.

The ***Sphere of Influence (SOI)*** is a boundary that identifies land that the City may annex in the future, and for which urban services, if available, would be provided. Under State law, the SOI is established by the Solano County ***Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO)*** with input from the City. LAFCOs are empowered by the State to approve the SOI and other local agency boundaries to ensure orderly growth and efficient governance. The SOI delineates the city's probable future boundary and service area. Factors considered in an SOI review focus on a city's existing and future land use, existing and future service needs and the capacity to meet those needs, and any relevant communities of interest. Vacaville's existing SOI is 35 square miles in size.

As shown in Figure I-2, this General Plan proposes to amend the SOI boundary to include areas that are designated for development beyond the existing SOI, but within the Urban Growth Boundary, as well as to remove areas that are not expected to develop within the General Plan horizon year of 2035. The planned SOI shown in Figure I-2 may not represent the City's final version that will be submitted to LAFCO for approval, but it represents the City's current plans for the future SOI; these proposed changes are subject to LAFCO approval.

In 2008, the City adopted a 20-year ***Urban Growth Boundary (UGB)***, which totals 36 square miles in size. The UGB was adopted by the City Council as a result of a voter signature-gathering process. Subsequently, the City Council voted to incorporate the UGB within the General Plan Land Use Element. The location of the UGB and the City's UGB policies can only be amended by the voters of Vacaville or by the City Council pursuant to the procedures set forth in the Land Use Element, which establish required findings for such an amendment. Land outside the UGB cannot be designated for anything other than agriculture, park, open space, public facility, and utility uses until March 1, 2028, specifically as set forth in this General Plan.

The ***Urban Service Area Boundary*** is a result of the 1995 Master Water Agreement between the City and the Solano Irrigation District (SID). As part of the Master Water Agreement, which remains in effect until 2050, the City and SID committed to accommodate and support urban development within the Urban Service Area Boundary. Conversely, both entities have committed not to support urban development outside of the boundary, which is considered to be the SID's agricultural service area.

The ***Planning Area*** is 98 square miles, and encompasses the city limits, SOI, and UGB. While the Planning Area does not give the City any regulatory power over this land, it signals to the County and to other nearby local and regional authorities that Vacaville recognizes that development within this area may have an impact on the future of the city.



Source: City of Vacaville; The Planning Center | DC&E, 2012; ESRI 2010; FHA 2002.

FIGURE I-1
REGIONAL LOCATION

Vacaville Today

Landscape

Vacaville lies in a geological transition zone between the Sacramento Valley to the east and the Coast Ranges to the west. The Vaca Mountains, part of the Coast Range, provide the dramatic western backdrop for the city. Known locally as the English Hills, several ridges extend into the western and northern areas of the city, and the central area of Vacaville features a number of low, rolling hills. Vacaville also contains portions of the Vaca and Lagoon Valleys, with the eastern portions of the city falling on the edge of California's Central Valley.

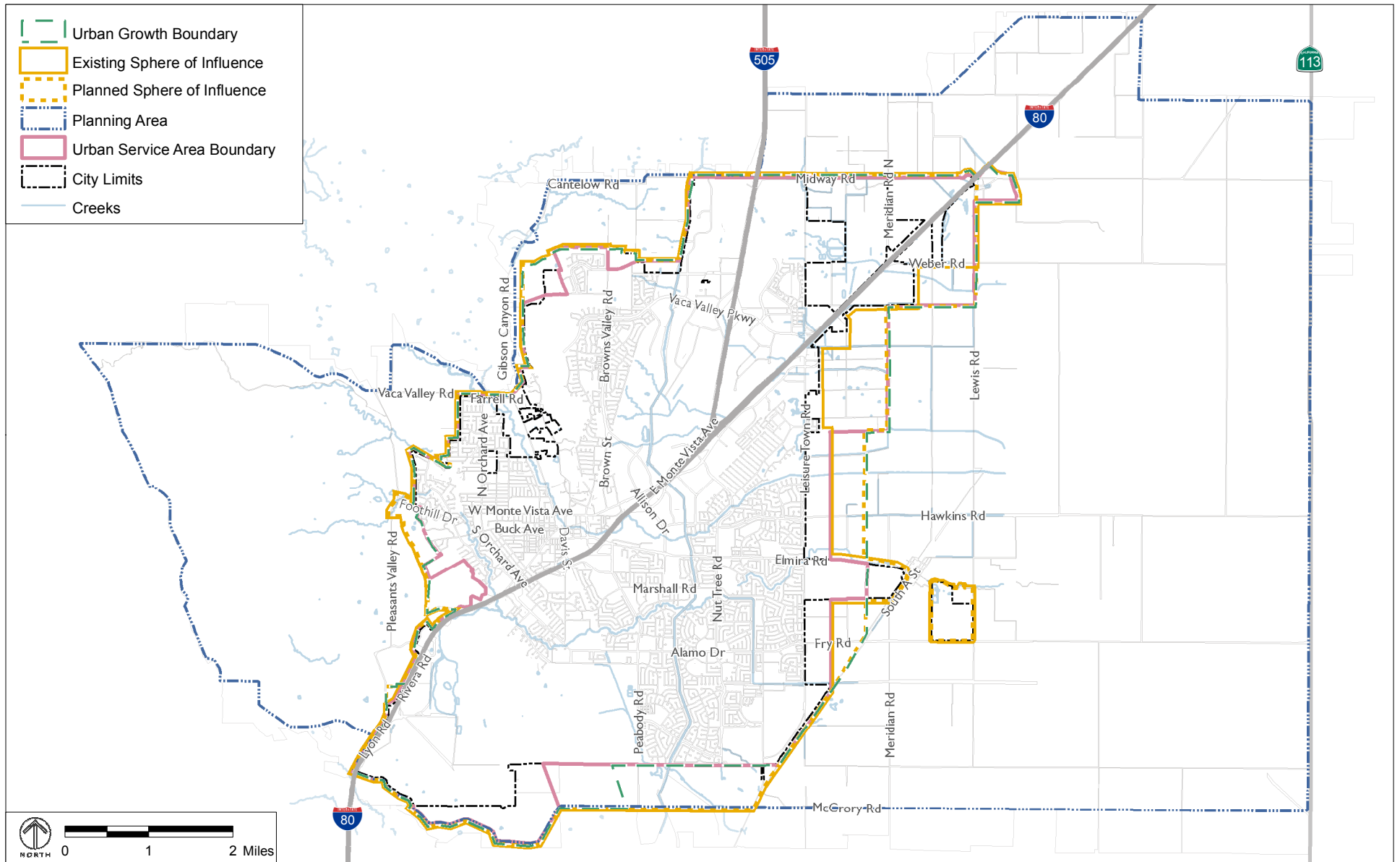
Vacaville is drained by Alamo, Ulatis, Horse, and Gibson Canyon Creeks, as well as their smaller tributaries. The major stream courses that flow through Vacaville are largely in a natural state and alignment, except at the eastern edge of the city where flood control channels have been constructed. Alamo and Ulatis Creeks are flanked by stands of riparian vegetation throughout most of their journey through the city.

Along with most of California, Vacaville enjoys a Mediterranean climate characterized by dry, warm to hot summers, with wet, cool winters. Located on the edge of the Bay Area, Vacaville occasionally experiences the cooling influence of marine air spilling through the Carquinez Strait during the otherwise warm spring, summer, and early fall. Winters are at times foggy and cold, but snow is exceedingly rare.

History and Economy

The town of Vacaville was established in 1851, when livestock and wheat production were the principal economic products in the county. The completion of nearby railroads in the late 1860s provided a way for ranchers to get their crops to market, but the higher cost of rail transport coupled with increased competition led to the decline of the area's wheat industry during the 1880s. Subsequently, Solano County farmers turned to other crops, most of which required irrigation. While rail transport had contributed to the decline of wheat production, the ease of access it provided gave a boost to produce farming. By the 1890s, Vaca Valley and the foothills of the Vaca Mountains were covered with orchards, and in 1892, Vacaville was formally incorporated.

After peaking in the mid-1910s, fruit production in the Vacaville area declined due to drought and soil depletion, competition during the Great Depression, and overproduction for the World War I war effort. In the mid-20th century, new employers arrived in the area, resulting in explosive growth in Vacaville. The now defunct Basic Vegetable Products company located a 1,000-worker onion dehydrating facility in Vacaville, and in 1942, Suisun Air Base (now Travis Air Force Base) was established just to the south of Vacaville.



Source: City of Vacaville.

FIGURE I-2
 PLANNING BOUNDARIES

With its industry, ease of access, and close proximity to the core of the Bay Area, Vacaville saw its population double between 1940 and 1950. Ongoing freeway construction and increasing employment in the Bay Area led to Vacaville's continued growth through the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st.

As of the 2010 US Census, approximately 46,600 people were employed in Vacaville. By employment, the largest industries are education and healthcare; retail; arts, entertainment, recreation, and accommodation and food services; manufacturing; and public administration. Together, these industries comprise about 70 percent of Vacaville's employment. The city's ten largest individual employers are the California State Department of Corrections, Vacaville Unified School District, Kaiser Permanente, Genentech, The City of Vacaville, State Compensation Insurance Co., Alza Corporation, NorthBay VacaValley Hospital, Travis Credit Union, and Mariani Packing Company. The presence of Genentech, Alza Corporation, and Novartis in Vacaville contribute to the city's position as a center for the biotech industry. Vacaville hopes to further strengthen this position in biotech and similar cutting edge industries over the lifetime of this General Plan.

Demographics

As of the 2010 U.S. Census, the population of Vacaville was approximately 85,000 people.² There were about 30,000 households in Vacaville, and the average household size was 2.71. The median age of Vacaville residents was 37 years, which is slightly older than the overall statewide median average of 35 years.

Approximately 67 percent of Vacaville's population identified as white, 10 percent identified as black, 6 percent as Asian, 1 percent as American Indian, and 0.6 percent as Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. Approximately 23 percent identified as being of Hispanic origin and 7 percent reported being two or more races. Of Vacaville residents, approximately 10 percent identified as foreign-born and 17 percent reported a primary home language other than English.

General Plan Update Process

The Vacaville General Plan was developed with extensive community input at key milestones, as illustrated in Figure I-3. Widely-publicized community workshops were held to inform community members about the update and to invite feedback on the process. To help guide the work of the consultant team and City staff, a nine-member Steering Committee was formed, composed of members of three different city commissions: the Planning Commission, Community Services Commission, and Housing and Redevelopment Commission. A total of 20 Steering Committee meetings, nine City Council study sessions, and five community workshops

² The 2010 Census reported a population of 92,400, which includes the prison populations of the California State Prison, Solano, and the California Medical Facility. In January 2010, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Data Analysis Unit, reported a prison population of 7,900 between both prisons.

were held during the planning process, all of which were open to the public and included extensive public comment periods. The City also hosted a number of community outreach meetings with community groups, including civic groups, church groups, neighborhood associations, and parent teacher associations, throughout the General Plan process. This input and direction from the public was then incorporated into the General Plan by City staff and the General Plan consultant team.

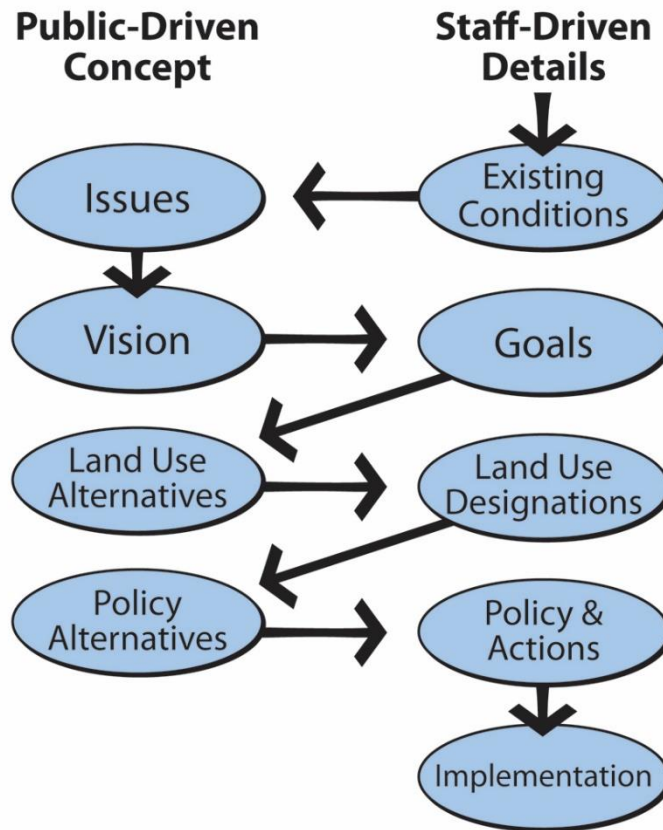


FIGURE I-3 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE PROCESS

Vacaville created a General Plan website at www.vacavillegeneralplan.org to enhance and inform the public process. The website provides all maps and documents, meeting summaries, meeting announcements and information, and additional records from public workshops, Steering Committee meetings, and City Council meetings. The website also includes an online discussion forum in which members of the public can post and discuss comments about Vacaville and the General Plan. The City also published four newsletters at key points throughout the process to raise awareness of the General Plan Update and inform the public about its progress.

The process to update the General Plan included the phases discussed below.

Existing Conditions

The first phase of the General Plan Update process was devoted to researching and documenting baseline environmental conditions in Vacaville. This effort resulted in a series of technical memoranda covering the following topics: land use, agriculture, demographics, economic development, parks and recreation, public services, utilities and infrastructure, biological resources, cultural resources, transportation, greenhouse gas emissions, air quality, and noise. These memoranda informed the issues identification phase and the development of land use alternatives, and they provided the foundation of baseline conditions for the *Environmental Impact Report (EIR)*, which is a document required by State law to evaluate and mitigate the potential environmental effects of implementing the General Plan.

Issues Identification

The issues identification phase involved a public process to identify issues and opportunities for the General Plan Update. This task included a community workshop, Steering Committee meeting, and City Council Study Session, which offered the public and decision-makers information on the General Plan Update, a chance to ask questions and make comments on the process and the update itself, and identify the issues they felt were most important.

Alternatives Development and Selection

This highly interactive and participatory phase involved crafting alternative land use scenarios in response to the issues identified in the second phase. Land use alternatives were then evaluated and compared in relation to market and financing feasibility, utilities and transportation infrastructure needs, public service needs, and impacts on environmental resources. This evaluation informed the selection of the Preferred Land Use Alternative, which formed the basis for the General Plan Land Use Map, and guides the nature, pattern, and location of land development and conservation in the city. During this phase, a community workshop was held, and the Steering Committee and City Council held numerous meetings to develop the alternatives and select the Preferred Land Use Alternative.

Policies Development

Following selection of the Preferred Land Use Alternative, the project team developed the goals, policies, and actions for each element of the General Plan. Policies were designed to support the Preferred Land Use Alternative and reflect the issues identified in the second phase and other community input provided throughout the process. Many policies from the prior General Plan were carried forward. In addition, a number of other policies were included in order to respond to specific environmental concerns and avoid common environmental impacts associated with new development under the General Plan. One community workshop and three Steering Committee meetings provided community guidance on the major policy issues for this General Plan.

Draft Documents

The City published a draft version of the General Plan for public review and comment. Also at this time, the City published the draft Energy and Conservation Action Strategy (ECAS), the result of a concurrent planning effort, and the associated Draft EIR for both documents. The Draft General Plan was based upon the Preferred Land Use Alternative and the goals, policies, and actions developed through the prior phases, integrated with feedback collected during community participation processes. Greenhouse gas reduction targets and a series of measures to achieve those targets were formulated for inclusion in the Draft ECAS. The completed EIR evaluates both this General Plan and the ECAS. By preparing the EIR concurrent with the Draft General Plan and ECAS, the City was able to incorporate necessary mitigation measures directly into the Plans themselves, thus ensuring that they are “self-mitigating.”

Public Review and Adoption

The final tasks of the General Plan Update process included the review and adoption of final documents and the certification of the EIR. This phase included the 45-day public review period of the EIR, followed by revision of the Draft EIR based on the public comments received, and completion of the Final EIR. In addition, a series of City Council and Planning Commission hearings were held to certify and adopt the Final EIR, General Plan, and ECAS. During these adoption hearings, the Planning Commission and City Council provided direction on final edits to General Plan policies and the land use map.

General Plan Organization and Contents

This General Plan includes the Introduction and seven separate elements that establish goals, policies, and actions for each given topic. The elements cover the topics required by California State Government Code Section 65302 as well as topics of particular interest to Vacaville. In addition, this General Plan includes a glossary. Throughout this document, key planning terms are ***bolded and italicized*** and followed by the definition, in addition to being defined in the glossary.

General Plan Elements

A brief explanation of each General Plan element is provided below.

- **Land Use Element.** The State-required Land Use Element designates all lands within Vacaville’s Planning Area for specific uses such as housing, retail, industrial, and agricultural uses. The Land Use Element also provides development regulations for each land use designation and overall land use policies for the City.
- **Transportation Element.** State law requires that a Transportation Element³ specify the general location and extent of existing and proposed major streets and other

³ State Law requires that the General Plan include a Circulation Element that addresses “the circulation of people, goods, energy, water, sewage, storm drainage, and communications.” This requirement is met through both the Transportation Element and the Public Facilities and Services Element of this General Plan.

transportation facilities. The Element is correlated with the Land Use Element to provide adequate pedestrian, bicycle, motor vehicle, transit, air transportation, and emergency access to serve both new and existing land uses.

- **Conservation and Open Space Element.** This Element combines two elements required under State law: the Open Space Element and the Conservation Element. It addresses four of the six types of open space identified by State law: open space for the conservation of natural resources, open space used for the managed production of resources, open space in support of the mission of military installations, and open space for the protection of Native American sacred sites. The other types of open space, open space for recreation and open space for public health and safety, are covered in the Parks and Recreation Element and the Safety Element. In addition to these open space types, the Conservation and Open Space Element addresses biological resources, agricultural resources, cultural resources, scenic resources, greenhouse gases, energy conservation, air quality, water resources, mineral resources, and military installations.
- **Parks and Recreation Element.** While not required by State law, this element discusses goals and policies for the maintenance and expansion of Vacaville’s park system and recreation facilities. This element considers park provision service standards and approaches to supporting the City’s recreation goals.
- **Public Facilities and Services Element.** This Element addresses public services and facilities within the city, including fire protection and emergency medical services, law enforcement, schools, public buildings, technology and telecommunications, other community services, solid waste and recycling, water service, and wastewater. It meets the requirements of State law that the General Plan address public utilities and facilities.
- **Safety Element.** The State-required Safety Element provides information about risks in Vacaville due to natural and human-made hazards, and contains goals, policies, and actions designed to protect the community and its property from hazards. It specifically addresses risks associated with geologic and seismic hazards, flooding and storm drainage, wildland fires, hazardous materials and waste, and climate change.
- **Noise Element.** The State-required Noise Element addresses noise problems, quantifies current and projected noise levels from a variety of sources, and establishes noise compatibility guidelines for different land uses.

Goals, Policies, and Actions

Each element of this General Plan contains background information and a series of goals, policies, and actions. Many of the goals, policies, and actions are carried over from the previous General Plan; those goals, policies, and actions include the goal or policy number in parentheses following the text. They will be deleted in the final, adopted version of this General Plan.

Figure I-4 illustrates that policies and actions are at the same level of importance, and are both intended to support goals. In most cases, goals have both policies and actions. However, it is

also possible for a goal to be supported exclusively by policies or actions. The following provides a description of goals, policies, and actions and explains the relationship between them:

- A **goal** is a description of the general desired result that the City seeks to create through the implementation of its General Plan.
- A **policy** is a specific statement that regulates activities in the City, guides decision-making and directs on-going efforts as the City works to achieve a goal. A policy is on-going and requires no further implementation. The General Plan’s policies set out the standards that will be used by City staff and the Planning Commission in their review of land development projects and in decision-making about City actions.
- An **action** is a measure, procedure, or technique intended to help reach a specified goal. The City must take additional steps to implement each action in the General Plan. An action is not on-going, but rather something that can and will be completed. Taken together, the actions in this General Plan constitute a “to-do list” for the City of Vacaville.

These goals, policies, and actions provide guidance to the City on how to direct change and manage its resources over the next 20 years.

FIGURE I-4 GENERAL PLAN COMPONENTS

