



**CITY OF ELK GROVE
CITY COUNCIL/PLANNING COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT**

AGENDA TITLE: City Council/Planning Commission Joint Session: General Plan Update

MEETING DATE: July 28, 2016

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RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Staff recommends that the City Council and Planning Commission receive the report and presentation and provide direction on the General Plan update as appropriate.

During this phase of the General Plan Update, staff is seeking specific policy and land use direction. As these policy questions arise, staff recommends that the Council and Commission continue with the following process:

- 1. Receive staff’s report and summary recommendations, including raising questions with staff.
- 2. Receive public comment on the information presented and possible policy direction.
- 3. Engage in a joint City Council-Planning Commission discussion and possible recommendation from the Commission.
- 4. Provide specific direction to staff from the Councilmembers.

Staff recommends that the collective body review the materials and recommendations and that the City Council provide specific direction to staff.

BACKGROUND:

The City has undertaken a comprehensive update to its General Plan. The General Plan is the City's overarching policy document, or blueprint, for creating a thriving, well-balanced, and sustainable community. All future development and actions of the City must be consistent with the General Plan. Since initiation of the project, staff has been working on a number of tasks and components. This has included:

- A Joint Study Session of the City Council and Planning Commission on June 1, 2015, to set the stage for the project, informing aspects of the scope and approach. Key issues and opportunities for the General Plan were also established, covering economic vitality; rural areas; regional goals and influences; infill development and outward expansion; neighborhood, district and community identity; multimodal and active transportation; sustainable and healthy community; coordinated services, technology and infrastructure; and open space and resource management.
- A one-day Citizen's Planning Academy, an educational workshop that introduced community members to the General Plan update and prepared community members for ongoing and productive participation in the process.
- Five mobile studios at community events between September and December 2015.
- Individual and group meetings with community members, community service providers, regional governmental agencies and nonresident interest groups (including non-profit and business interests).
- The community visioning workshop, which provided a forum for community members to come together to deliberate and provide input on the future of their community.
- Topic workshops on growth strategies and transportation.
- Workshops with homeowner and community groups.
- An on-line workshop on potential areas of land use change.
- A series of in-person and on-line workshops (currently live) to discuss specific land use alternatives for opportunity and study area sites.

POLICY INPUT AND DIRECTION:

Staff has been preparing a series of policy topic white papers that address policy issues relevant to the General Plan update. The first two in this series cover (1) *Specific Plans and Special Planning Areas* and (2) *Community and Area Plans* and were presented at the [May 26 Joint Study Session](#).

Attached are additional white papers covering other topics relevant to the General Plan Update (Attachment 1). These are:

Policy Topic Papers

#	<u>Title</u>
3.	Governance
4.	Complete Streets
5.	Fixed Transit
6.	Clustering Policy
7.	Jobs/Housing
8.	Annexation Strategy
9.	Mobility System Standards

Each paper is organized with a background section that defines the presented topic, a discussion section that presents policy considerations and proposed actions, and concludes with summary recommendations for potential goals, objectives, and policies for the new General Plan, as well as possible follow up or implementation actions. The following is a presentation of these summary recommendations by topic. Staff is seeking feedback and direction on if these recommendations should be incorporated into the draft General Plan or if they should first be adjusted in some way.

Recommendations by Policy Topic:

Policy Topic 3.0: Governance

3.1. Consider the following goals and policies for incorporation into the General Plan.

GOAL: A Transparent and Collaborative Decision-making Process

- Hold meetings which are open and easily accessible to the public, and, where feasible, are conducted in the primary language(s) of the audience.

- Provide a predictable and accessible decision-making process for planning decisions that is available to all community members.
 - Establish criteria for determining consistency with the General Plan for all types of Plan amendments (e.g., City-initiated, property owner-initiated, land use changes).
 - Establish criteria for evaluating General Plan amendment proposals for all types of Plan amendments (e.g., City-initiated, property owner-initiated, land use changes).
- Utilize a variety of outreach techniques to reach the broadest and most diverse public audience when announcing City actions, decisions, and opportunities.
- Require that all major planning efforts, policies, or projects include an outreach effort.
- Encourage and facilitate collaboration between organizations, schools, City departments and other agencies.

GOAL: An Engaged and Educated Community

- Partner with local organizations and schools to provide regular educational workshops on civic governance and planning processes and participation.
- Host public forums on issues important to the community, facilitating these forums with the purpose of guiding City policy.
- Provide a glossary of acronyms and technical terms online and as an accompaniment to public meeting agendas.
- Present all public documents in an easy-to-understand style which promotes understanding and clarity to readers.
- Reach out to students and youth to encourage participation in City workshops, forums, and the decision-making processes.

Policy Topic 4.0: Complete Streets

4.1. Identify targeted street segments in the Rural Area on the General Plan Circulation Map that may be the focus for developing street-specific mobility improvements. Street segments considered will include those identified in the Rural Residential Area Mobility Outreach Summary Report (October 2015) and any additional street segments, if necessary, to meet the intent of the Complete Streets Act. The segments identified and any accompanying policies must meet the obligations of the Complete Streets Act while still responding to the concerns and desires of the community.

4.2 Identify pedestrian-oriented areas on the General Plan Land Use and/or Circulation Map to guide applicability of targeted policies and design considerations.

4.3 Consider the following goals and policies for incorporation into the General Plan.

GOAL: The Transportation System Meets Resident, Employee, and Visitor Needs

- As new roads are constructed, assess how the needs of all users can be integrated into the street design based on the local context and street typology.
- Retrofit existing roads to enhance multimodal access.
 - Conduct a Citywide analysis to identify deficiencies and opportunities to connect segments of modal infrastructure.
- Implement the Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Trails Master Plan (BPTMP).
 - When planning and designing bicycle, pedestrian, and trail facilities and infrastructure, follow the recommendations and guidelines contained in the BPTMP.
 - Prioritize improvements identified in the BPTMP when updating the Capital Improvements Program.
- Recognize the needs of all segments of the population, including disabled, youth, and the elderly, and provide increased opportunities for their mobility.
 - When considering projects and requirements, require the action that, to the fullest extent feasible, best enhances mobility for those with limited travel options.
 - Provide for safe and convenient paths and crossings along major streets within the context of the surrounding area, taking into account the needs of disabled, youth, and elderly.
 - Continue to implement the ADA Transition Plan, as appropriate.
- Identify and plan for movement of goods in the transportation network, including rail service.
- Consider bus rapid transit or other accelerated methods of travel for major corridors during peak times.
- Strongly advocate for local and state funding to finance upgrades to services, facilities, and routes.

- Once complete, utilize the Comprehensive Operational Analysis to implement the best strategy that ensures the prioritization of efficient services, especially for those with limited mobility.
- Support and utilize infrastructure improvements and technological advancements such as intelligent transportation management tools to facilitate the movement and security of goods throughout the City in an efficient manner.
 - Coordinate traffic signals to maximize the flow of traffic while accommodating non-vehicular modes of travel.

GOAL: A Connected and Convenient Transit System

- Connect streets, trails, and transit to provide complete mobility locally and regionally, with priority funding and maintenance going toward those improvements which complete the local and regional circulation network.
- Develop a complete and connected street network with sidewalks, crossings, paths, and bike lanes that are convenient and attractive, with a variety of routes in pedestrian-oriented areas throughout the City.
- Require new development to include safe pedestrian walkways that directly link to streets and major destinations such as transit stops, schools, parks, and commercial centers.
- Require and place access areas and facilities for bicycle, pedestrian, and transit travel in front of major destinations, such as shopping centers and schools. Facilities may include any or a combination of the following: designated passenger drop-off and pickup zones, benches, lighting, bike racks, shelters, and street trees.
- Regularly update and expand the City's wayfinding signage to key destinations to help all users navigate the City in an efficient manner and to create a sense of place.

GOAL: Context-Sensitive Design for Complete Streets

- Update the City's improvement standards to incorporate, as appropriate, all modes of transportation.
 - Establish a working group of City departments and stakeholders to collaborate on the establishment of complete streets design standards.
 - Review City codes and policies to identify barriers to complete streets designs.

- Ensure that designs for complete streets employ features appropriate for the location and context.
 - Develop appropriate location- and context-specific street standards to meet complete streets requirements and promote safe travel for all modes.
 - Develop and/or revise street standards appropriate for rural, suburban, and urban contexts.
 - Develop street standards for pedestrian-oriented areas that place an emphasis on enhanced pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities.
- Develop criteria for determining appropriate application of pedestrian-oriented area design considerations.
- In planning and implementing street projects, allow for flexibility in design in order to maintain sensitivity to local conditions and local sense of place.

GOAL: Safety in All Modes of Travel

- Prioritize the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Ensure visibility of pedestrians at intersections through street design measures such as bulb-outs, painted crossings, signalized crossings, and street lighting.
- Provide safe and visible crossings at mid-block in areas with long block lengths.
- Incorporate traffic-calming measures such as roundabouts, reduced lane widths, and/or other design elements that result in lower vehicle speeds when possible and appropriate.
- Provide the safest form of bike path feasible on all roads identified for bicycle facilities.
- Conduct widespread awareness campaigns and educational services for complete streets safety in partnership with local organizations, such as WalkSacramento.

Policy Topic 5.0: Fixed Transit

5.1. Amend the General Plan Land Use map and/or land use designation descriptions to provide for increased densities and a mix of uses on opportunity sites throughout the Planning Area to support existing and future transit services, where appropriate. While there are opportunities for higher than average densities at sites such as Sheldon Farms (intersection of Sheldon Road and Bruceville Road) and in the Southeast Policy Area, much of the area between the two ends is

already developed. Opportunities for reuse of some of these sites with employment or higher-density residential uses would help to drive demand for fixed transit service.

5.2 Consider the following goals and policies for incorporation into the General Plan.

GOAL: The Transportation System Meets Resident, Employee, and Visitor Needs

- Offer bus routes and schedules that recognize the needs of all segments of the population, including youth and the elderly, and provide increased opportunities for their mobility.
 - Ensure, where feasible, that schedules and routes are capable of providing a complete transportation system that allows all people to conduct needed activities without significant delay or hindrance.
 - Increase and/or expand weekend transit services, to the extent rider demand and budget support the services that recognize nontraditional work patterns for commuting.
- Continue to strongly advocate for local and state funding to finance upgrades to services, facilities, and routes.

GOAL: A Connected and Efficient Transit System

- Continue to coordinate connections between local and regional transit systems.
 - Evaluate the regional transit service and identify areas of opportunity for linkages.
 - Utilize the results of the City Council-adopted Comprehensive Operational Analysis to configure routes and services that address system deficiencies and capitalize on opportunities while operating within transit budgetary constraints.
 - Regularly review the transit system to identify new deficiencies and opportunities and make changes to the system to reflect this analysis, including identifying and prioritizing resources for implementation.
 - Use the best available technology to streamline and link destinations and improve rider convenience and safety.
 - Work with transit providers to provide infrastructure and service technologies such as real-time route schedules at stops and on websites, route-planning apps, website and app pickup requests, and other innovative methods of streamlining transit travel information.

- Consider alternative service models, as necessary, to improve or augment fixed-route service, such as demand-stop service, route deviations, and flexible route service.
- Identify and minimize potential impediments to transit users.
 - Evaluate pricing for services and adjust as feasible to encourage transit use.
 - Continue to maintain clean, safe, welcoming facilities and buses.
- Consider access to and from designated transit routes and stops in the evaluation of new development applications.
 - Require adequate connections for all modes of travel from new development projects to facilitate access to existing and planned transit locations.
 - Continue to require the fair-share dedication (or in-lieu fee, as appropriate) of rights-of-way and station sites along the planned fixed-transit alignment during the development review and approval process.

Policy Topic 6.0: Clustering

- 6.1 Require that the scale of new clustered development be consistent with the character of existing and planned future surrounding areas.
- 6.2 Continue to prohibit application of the clustering policy in the Rural Residential Area.
- 6.3 Expand the applicability of the clustering policy to continue to protect natural features and open space, in addition to active agricultural uses and historic resources.
- 6.4 Improve General Plan-Zoning consistency through the following:
- a. Allow implementation through the creation and adoption of new Special Planning Area zoning districts, which allow for mixing of land uses.
 - b. Establish a new Clustering Permit that allows for modified development standards such as setbacks, minimum lot size, and lot coverage limitations consistent with the underlying General Plan land use designation for the subject property. The Clustering Permit would be approved by the Planning Commission as part of subdivision approval.

Policy Topic 7.0: Jobs/Housing

7.1 To help achieve a higher jobs/housing ratio and at the same time ensure more Elk Grove residents can be employed within the City, the City should consider establishing the following goals, objectives, and policies as part of the draft General Plan:

GOAL: A Higher Jobs/Housing Ratio, Increased Range of Housing Options, and More Residents Employed Locally.

- Establish a 1.0:1 jobs/housing objective in the City by 2025, and a 1.2:1 jobs/housing ratio objective in the City by 2040.
- Establish objectives that 35% or more of resident workers will be employed directly by businesses located in Elk Grove by 2025, and 50% or more of resident workers will be employed directly by businesses located in Elk Grove by 2040. (*This represents approximately a 10% increase from current conditions by 2025, and a 25% increase from current conditions by 2040.*)
- Complete a study to determine the skills of the resident workforce and identify target industries that are both jobs dense industries and present viable employment options for Elk Grove residents given their skill levels and lifestyle preferences. Align business attraction and infrastructure development efforts accordingly.
- Provide for a range of housing options that match the anticipated preferences and income levels of potential workers associated with planned employment-generating projects.
- Consider the multiple cost factors (e.g., fees, cost of service, construction costs) necessary to support new commercial development in Elk Grove. Identify the City's role in determining these costs, and explore or otherwise promote efforts to reduce this burden in a manner consistent with other General Plan goals and objectives.
- Update and present a local employment trends report to the City Council on an annual basis.

GOAL: A New Regional Employment Center

- Designate sufficient areas for priority business and job locations to achieve Major Employment Center status in the Sacramento region's Sustainable Communities Strategy. While the Southeast Policy Area will serve this role, consider additional opportunities¹.
- Continue efforts to attract larger employers that will help establish Elk Grove's place in the regional economy.
- Continue to invest in public infrastructure to attract target industries to Elk Grove, such as improved broadband capacity and reliability, road construction and maintenance, public transit, new and upgraded public utilities, and adequate community services.

GOAL: Balanced and Diverse Economic Growth

- Require and provide for a variety of sizes and types of commercial development to attract a diverse range of job opportunities and types.
- Continue to provide for and support existing, small, and home-based businesses and enable them to grow.

Policy Topic 8.0: Annexation Strategy

8.1 Provide direction to staff on evaluation criteria and submittal requirements for expansion proposals, as outlined in the attached white paper.

8.2 Consider the following goals and policies for incorporation into the General Plan.

GOAL: Expansion with Purpose

- Allow expansions when economic need, community vision, and regional goals align.
 - Establish criteria and submittal requirements as part of an overall annexation strategy that defines and/or addresses economic need, community vision, and regional goals.
 - Require a General Plan Amendment and an area-wide land use plan prior to or concurrent with a request for annexation. Land use plans shall include all land within the applicable study area boundary.

¹ Major Employment Centers are defined by SACOG as areas: a) that support concentrations of at least 10,000 "base" jobs (i.e. including manufacturing, office, medical, educational, and service employment, and excluding sectors like retail and restaurant uses), at average density of eight or more jobs per acre; and b) where 80 percent or more of the uses within the center are employment, not residential.

- Development within study areas shall be in substantial conformance with the established land use assumptions and design standards adopted for each area. A land use plan shall be considered in substantial conformance with the adopted land use percent targets when the proposal is within two percent of the target land use percent.
- Seek opportunities to annex additional land into the City, as appropriate, where the proposed project implements the community's vision and regional growth objectives.

GOAL: Ensure Availability of Infrastructure

- Development in expansion areas should pay for needed infrastructure and not be a burden to existing ratepayers.
- Infrastructure improvements must be financed and constructed concurrent with or prior to occupancy of new development.
- Establish funding mechanisms for the expansion of public services and infrastructure to ensure new development is carrying its cost burden:
 - Explore mechanisms such as facility impact assessments to minimize the cost burden on the first development requiring major improvements.
- Establish concurrency measures to ensure infrastructure adequately serves future development:
 - Coordinate public facility and service capacity with the demands of new development.
 - Require that the provision of public facilities and service to new development does not cause a reduction in established service levels for existing residents.
 - Ensure that new infrastructure will meet the required level of service standards set by the City's General Plan and Municipal Code.
- Phase new development in expansion areas to occur where public services and infrastructure exist or may be extended to serve the public interest with minimal impact.

Policy Topic 9.0: Mobility System Standards

- 9.1. Establish a land use type-based approach to setting Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) reduction targets, recognizing that alternatives to this approach may be recommended based on further analysis to determine the feasibility of implementing one or more components of

the approach. Steps to establish a land use type-based approach would include:

- Establish a 2015 static baseline based on existing conditions at the Citywide level and the 5-county, SACOG regional level.
- Identify appropriate VMT metrics for use by project type (e.g., single-family residential, multiple-family residential, commercial, office).
- Identify an absolute threshold of significance for each project type within each land use designation (e.g., Low Density Residential, Community Commercial, Employment Center, Village Mixed Use) by land use type, with a target of consistency with SACOG MTP/SCS regional VMT goals.
- Recommend criteria-based screening thresholds appropriate to Elk Grove to screen out projects that would be presumed to have a less than significant impact from further transportation system analysis under CEQA.
- Establish criteria for analysis of future community plans, specific plans, and area plans that may include, but not be limited to, consistency with the General Plan and consistency with the 2016 MTP/SCS.

9.2 Prepare a new policy on roadway efficiency that replaces LOS. The new policy would identify that the City desires a robust and efficient roadway network that provides access to properties in a safe and convenient manner, but that the design of specific intersection and roadway segment improvements should balance these needs with the character of the surrounding area, cost to complete the improvement, and ongoing maintenance obligations.

9.3 Submit a proposal for VMT-based CEQA significance thresholds that are aligned with the policies and targets identified in the draft General Plan.

9.4 Prepare revisions to the Citywide Roadway Fee Program that is aligned with the updated policies, targets, and roadway improvements identified in the draft General Plan. Under this approach, the Roadway Fee Program would function as a “fair-share” funding mechanism for roadway improvements and not as a CEQA mitigation program.

- 9.5 Develop options for mitigation of VMT impacts that are viable in the local context. Potential measures identified by OPR that may be applicable include increasing access to transit, improved pedestrian and bicycle networks, commute reduction programs, and increased connectivity to the project site.

NEXT STEPS:

Staff is looking for direction by the City Council to proceed with the above policy recommendations. Based upon the direction provided at this Joint Study Session, staff will incorporate this information into the draft General Plan for presentation next year.

Staff is currently gathering feedback on a range of land use alternatives for the Opportunity Sites and Study Areas as directed at the May 26, 2016 Joint Study Session. This public comment opportunity is available until August 1 at www.elkgrovecity.org/generalplan. Once the comment opportunity is complete, staff will aggregate the information together and begin developing a draft land use plan for presentation at the next Joint Meeting in either late August or September.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Policy Papers
 - A. Governance
 - B. Complete Streets
 - C. Fixed Transit
 - D. Clustering Policy
 - E. Jobs/Housing
 - F. Annexation Strategy
 - G. Mobility System Standards

POLICY TOPIC PAPER 3.0: GOVERNANCE



BACKGROUND

Effective governance includes both civic engagement from community members and decisions made by elected and appointed representatives of the community. The City of Elk Grove uses a variety of traditional and nontraditional methods to best determine the needs and desires of the community, but the City strives to have all residents understand the process and feel included in decision-making.

Government Structure

The City of Elk Grove is governed by the City Council, which is made up of five elected representatives, including a directly elected mayor. The City Manager is appointed by the City Council and manages the administrative affairs, operations, and policy implementation of the City. The City Council serves as the legislative body for Elk Grove and is responsible for the review and approval of the annual budget, establishing community goals and objectives, approving the City's General Plan, and listening to community problems and concerns. Council members serve four-year terms and the mayor serves a two-year term.

The Elk Grove Planning Commission is a five-member committee appointed by the mayor and approved by the City Council. The Commission reviews and approves planning applications and makes recommendations to the City Council on planning matters, including General Plan amendments and zone changes.

The Development Services Department includes, among other functions, the Planning Division. The Planning Division staff assists in guiding future growth and change in a manner that conforms to adopted policies and ordinances and reflects community values, including the processing of development applications.

Long-range planning, including management of the General Plan, community and area plans, and various strategic initiatives of the City, are operated out of the City Manager's Office. The separation of these functions from the Planning Division allows for greater focus on bigger picture and forward-looking projects.

Other departments and divisions that manage aspects of City government and operations include Public Works, Code Enforcement, Building Safety, Inspection and Permits, and Economic Development. A full list of City departments and divisions can be found on the City's website at www.elkgrovecity.org.

Governance Framework

The legal framework for planning and decision-making is structured by procedural law adopted by the State that guides the planning process for local jurisdictions, which are in turn given the ability to tailor and implement decisions in the way that works best for their specific community. The City uses a combination of planning principles, procedures, and documents to make land use decisions in Elk Grove.

The General Plan serves as the overarching document for all planning and conservation decisions, and is implemented through a variety of policy and standards documents, including the Zoning Code, design guidelines, land division regulations, and specific plans. The Municipal Code, which contains the Zoning Code and land division regulations, provides further regulations for the City that affect building design, safety, and enforcement of regulations as well as other aspects of City governance.

The City Council, serving as the legislative body for Elk Grove, reviews and approves major projects and is the final approval authority for General Plan amendments. The Planning Commission reviews and approves planning applications and makes recommendations to the City Council on planning matters, including General Plan amendments.

Commission and Council decision-making meetings are open to the public and include time for public comment. Additionally, for large-scale planning projects, the City notifies the public and conducts a range of public outreach activities to solicit community input.

General Plan Guidance

The General Plan is a required comprehensive planning document that provides guidance and a framework for future development and conservation decisions in the City. It guides the private and public development of the City by establishing a vision for the community, and all other codes, standards, and plans must be consistent with the goals, policies, and action items in the General Plan.

Amendment Process

As the City will continuously change and grow, the General Plan will require amendments to remain consistent with the desires and needs of the community and respond to changing conditions. Each State-mandated element, or topic categories, of the General Plan may be amended up to four times per year in response to a desired land use change or other policy change. The Governor's Office of Planning and Research recommends a comprehensive update to the General Plan when its information becomes outdated or conditions change dramatically from the time of adoption—generally every five to ten years. However, there is no mandate to comprehensively update a General Plan within a certain time frame. The Housing Element is the

only element required to be revised on a regular basis (every eight years for the City); it is approved by the State so as to ensure that it reflects accurate housing needs for the community.

To accommodate proposed amendments to the General Plan text or maps, Elk Grove outlines its General Plan amendment process in Chapter 23.16 of the Municipal Code, a process that is consistent with Section 65358 of the California Government Code addressing the preparation, adoption, and amendment of the General Plan.

The Municipal Code outlines the process, authority, frequency of updates, and the required finding for each General Plan amendment, specifically that “in the event that a General Plan amendment is requested by a private property owner, the applicant shall demonstrate to the City Council that there is a substantial benefit to be derived from the amendment.”¹

The Development Services Director and Planning Commission provide recommendations to the City Council, which is the final approving authority for General Plan amendments. The Municipal Code prohibits updating any mandatory element of the General Plan more than four times in a year, consistent with State mandate, to avoid project-by-project alterations to a cohesive plan vision.

General Plan Implementation

A number of documents serve as tools for implementation of General Plan policies, including the Zoning Code, design guidelines, land division regulations, and specific plans. Each tool provides additional and more specific guidance for subareas of the City, with varying levels of regulatory enforcement. The requirements of each must be consistent with the policies and land uses identified in the General Plan.

Title 23 – Zoning Code

Title 23 of the Elk Grove Municipal Code serves to carry out the policies of the General Plan by establishing zoning districts, which regulate land uses in the City in accordance with the General Plan. The General Plan includes a Land Use Map identifying land use designations for the City. These designations are implemented by the established zoning districts, which outline what uses are allowed in a given district and any development standards that apply to those districts and/or uses.

The Zoning Code must be consistent with all maps and policies in the General Plan, and therefore will need to be amended within a reasonable time period following any change to the

¹ Pursuant to Section 23.16.120.E of the Elk Grove Municipal Code.

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General Plan that results in a discrepancy between the General Plan and the Zoning Code map or text.

Design Guidelines

Design guidelines convey general policies about the design of alterations to existing structures, additions, new construction, and site work. However, they do not dictate solutions. Instead, they define a range of appropriate responses to a variety of specific design issues. Design guidelines establish a common understanding of design principles and standards for the City. Such guidelines can apply to an entire city or be specific to certain neighborhoods. The City has established Citywide Design Guidelines, which apply to most areas of the City. Supplemental guidelines have been established for the Laguna Ridge area to address landscaping and single-family residential architecture. Additionally, the Southeast Policy Area has its own design protocol, which is independent from the Citywide Design Guidelines. These guidelines and the design review process through which they are administered (Municipal Code Section 23.16.080) promote preservation of the historic, cultural, and architectural resources that reflect the history and character of Elk Grove.

Title 22 – Land Development

When a piece of land is divided into two or more lots, the land is considered to have been subdivided. This type of land division is regulated by Title 22 (Land Development) of the Elk Grove Municipal Code. The Title specifies certain minimum requirements and standards that all land divisions must meet. The ultimate aim of the Title is to ensure that when land is subdivided, each resulting lot will be provided with minimum services such as public streets, sewer and water systems, and storm drains and be adequate in size to accommodate the type of development planned for the property. The Title also specifies requirements for designing streets and lot layouts; standards for public improvements such as streets, sidewalks, storm drains, water and sewer; requirements related to the use of land on which flood plains have been located; and dedications. All requirements and standards of Title 22 must be consistent with the General Plan.

Specific Plans

Specific plans implement the General Plan within a specific geographic area of the City. Specific plans are prescribed in State law and have several required components, including identifying proposed major components of infrastructure needed to support planned land uses. Section 65451 of the Government Code mandates that a specific plan be structured to include a text and a diagram or diagrams which specify the distribution of the uses of land, major components of public and private transportation, sewage, water, drainage, solid waste disposal, energy, and other essential facilities, as well as standards and criteria by which development will proceed.

The Government Code also requires that specific plans include a statement of the relationship of the specific plan to the General Plan.

The City currently has three specific plans: East Elk Grove Specific Plan, East Franklin Specific Plan, and Laguna Ridge Specific Plan.

Refer to Policy Topic Paper 1.0: Specific Plans and Special Planning Areas for additional information and specific recommendations on specific plans.

Civic Engagement

A community that actively participates in civic decision-making has greater influence over its quality of life. Without an engaged community, decision-makers have to rely on other information when deciding a course of action. Attending public meetings and events, organizing efforts, and advocating to City Council and other commissions are ways the public can be involved and influence local governance.

Civic engagement is a right and responsibility of members of the community, but the City also must provide clear and easy avenues in which the public can be involved. To maximize participation, the City needs to meet the public in places where community members are most comfortable and in ways that match well with their normal daily lives.

The City of Elk Grove uses a variety of traditional and nontraditional methods to best determine the needs and desires of the community on a project-by-project basis, including:

Traditional Engagement Methods

- Direct mailing and emails
- Community workshops and open houses
- Flyers
- Online surveys
- Tabling at farmers markets and other community events
- Social media
- City newsletter
- Outreach through City committees

- Stakeholder interviews

Nontraditional Engagement Methods

- Community-led outreach programs
- Pop-up workshops
- Interactive online workshops
- Collaboration with established neighborhood groups

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Governance Framework

Transparency in the decision-making process fosters a sense of trust and understanding in the community when a General Plan amendment is being considered. While the General Plan amendment process is outlined in the Zoning Code, the required finding lacks specificity in what constitutes a “substantial benefit” to the community. The finding also applies to amendments proposed by private property owners. There is no codified finding outlined for amendments initiated by the City (though the City does use a finding of internal consistency for these types of amendments as required by State law). Providing parameters for determining significant benefit to the community as well as clarifying what criteria is used in determining the appropriateness of City-initiated amendments can provide a greater level of predictability in the decision-making process. This will build a common community understanding for evaluating General Plan amendments and hold the decision-makers accountable to the purpose of accommodating amendments to the General Plan.

Civic Engagement

The City should ensure all decisions are transparent and derived from substantial evidence, with community members being given the option to state support or concerns in a productive way. The Government Code and the Municipal Code both provide guidance on public noticing requirements when public hearings are required. Offering a range of outreach forums and venues that go beyond the requirements, reaching out to different segments of the population, and engaging with the community earlier in the process will ensure that the many perspectives and priorities of community members are heard, considered, and incorporated as appropriate into the decision-making process. The City can develop a menu of options for communicating to members of the public what their opportunities for input are and what standards are being used to evaluate proposals. The City can also play a role in facilitating conversations and educating the public on relevant topics in order to increase community engagement.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the discussion contained in this policy topic paper, staff recommends the following goals and policies for consideration. Commission and Council direction on these items will be consolidated with that provided on other key policy topics to inform the direction and contents of the draft General Plan update.

Policy Topic 3.0: Governance

3.1. Consider the following goals and policies for incorporation into the General Plan.

GOAL: A Transparent and Collaborative Decision-making Process

- Hold meetings which are open and easily accessible to the public, and, where feasible, are conducted in the primary language(s) of the audience.
- Provide a predictable and accessible decision-making process for planning decisions that is available to all community members.
 - Establish criteria for determining consistency with the General Plan for all types of Plan amendments (e.g., City-initiated, property owner-initiated, land use changes).
 - Establish criteria for evaluating General Plan amendment proposals for all types of Plan amendments (e.g., City-initiated, property owner-initiated, land use changes).
- Utilize a variety of outreach techniques to reach the broadest and most diverse public audience when announcing City actions, decisions, and opportunities.
- Require that all major planning efforts, policies, or projects include an outreach effort.
- Encourage and facilitate collaboration between organizations, schools, and City departments.

GOAL: An Engaged and Educated Community

- Partner with local organizations and schools to provide regular educational workshops on civic governance and planning processes and participation.
- Host public forums on issues important to the community, facilitating these forums with the purpose of guiding City policy.
- Provide a glossary of acronyms and technical terms online and as an accompaniment to public meeting agendas.
- Present all public documents in an easy-to-understand style which promotes understanding and clarity to readers.

3.0 GOVERNANCE

- Reach out to students and youth to encourage participation in City workshops, forums, and the decision-making processes.

POLICY TOPIC PAPER 4.0: COMPLETE STREETS



BACKGROUND

Complete streets are streets that are designed for safe and accessible use by all users and all modes of transportation. A well-designed complete street acknowledges that transportation may include not only vehicles, but also pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transit, and that these streets will be traveled by individuals of all ages with a wide variety of needs, destinations, and abilities.

The State of California passed the Complete Streets Act in 2008, requiring cities and counties to include complete streets policies when making significant revisions to the circulation element of their general plan. The Act acknowledges that the specifics of such policies should accommodate local context and priorities, and therefore does not contain a rigid regulatory format. The act establishes a mandate to plan for a multimodal transportation system “that meets the needs of all users ... in a manner that is suitable to the rural, suburban, or urban context,” allowing flexibility and local control of policymaking and design.¹

For a more thorough analysis of transit services in Elk Grove, refer to the Policy Topic Paper 5.0: Fixed Transit.

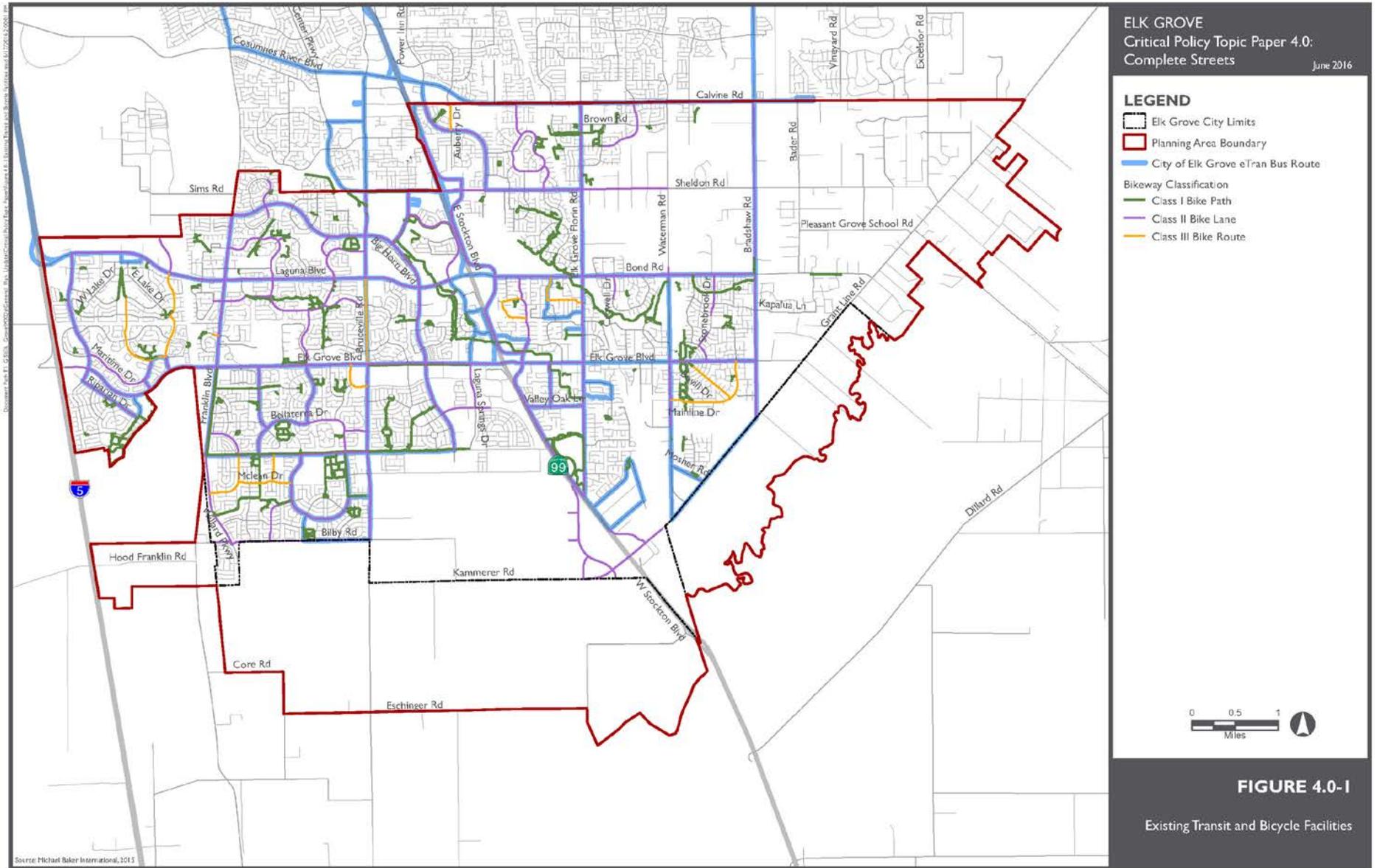
The City of Elk Grove adopted a Climate Action Plan in 2013, which contains policies to reduce the demand for personal motor vehicle travel for local trips, provide for safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle travel, and establish an employee incentive program to encourage the use of transportation alternatives.

Complete streets offer a multitude of benefits to a community, including healthy and sustainable transportation modes, access and street design improvements, enhanced mobility and safety, and an increase in choices for travel. When implemented efficiently, complete streets can reduce traffic congestion by providing additional methods of travel and moving a larger number of people in an existing space. In addition, complete streets provide economic benefits to a community, reduce air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions, and enhance community vitality.

Recent planning practice and legislation has placed emphasis on active transportation in an effort to increase the use of human-powered transportation methods such as walking and bicycling. Senate Bill (SB) 375 in particular furthers these goals as a component of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

¹ Assembly Bill 1358 (2008)

FIGURE 4.0-I EXISTING TRANSIT AND BICYCLE FACILITIES



Existing Conditions in Elk Grove

Elk Grove has a combination of bike lanes, pedestrian facilities, and public transit options throughout the City. Facilities are more limited in the eastern, more rural portion of the City, where population density is lower.

During a series of General Plan update mobile workshops in 2015, a total of 509 participants were surveyed to determine their priorities for the update. Multimodal transportation was the second highest priority for both individual neighborhoods and the community as a whole.

In 2012, the American Community Survey compared the modes of travel for commuting to work in Elk Grove, Sacramento County, and California (see Table 4.0-1). More people in Elk Grove carpool than in both Sacramento County and California, indicating this may be a method of travel to encourage. Commuting rates by public transportation and active transportation, however, are lower than County and State rates. Physical and environmental factors such as lack of regular, connected transit routes, connected and/or dedicated bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and the weather could be barriers to alternative transportation. Addressing these factors through improved infrastructure and facilities could increase travel by these modes.

TABLE 4.0-1: COMMUTING TO WORK COMPARISON, 2012

Commuting to Work	Elk Grove	Sacramento County	California
Car, truck, or van – drove alone	74.8%	76%	73.4%
Car, truck, or van – carpooled	16.9%	11.9%	11.1%
Public transportation	0.9%	2.4%	5.2%
Walked	1%	2.3%	2.7%
Bicycle	0.2%	1.3%	1.1%
Taxicab, motorcycle, or other means	0.5%	1.0%	1.3%
Worked at home	5.8%	5.1%	5.3%

Source: American Community Survey 2012

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS AND PROPOSED ACTIONS

Community Context

Because no two communities or streetscapes are alike, the incorporation of complete streets must be tailored to the area in context. A complete street in a rural area will be different from one in an urban area, and have different issues to be addressed. In addition, the community members, stakeholders, and policymakers will have varying interests that will guide complete streets policies and implementation. A wide variety of infrastructure features are available to create complete streets. Together these features

4.0 COMPLETE STREETS

create a “toolbox” of options and each tool can be evaluated individually for each location and used appropriately.

Rural Area

There is a significant amount of rural land in the Elk Grove Planning Area, much of it located within the Rural Area, which contains approximately 5,260 acres in the northeastern portion of the City. While the design of complete streets in rural regions differs from that in urban or suburban settings, a number of tools are still available to improve multimodal access in the area. Wide shoulders to allow for safer walking and bicycling and connections to regional trails and public transportation are examples of techniques used to design complete streets in rural areas.

Rural Road Improvement Policy and Standards

In 2007, Elk Grove established the Rural Road Improvement Policy and accompanying Rural Roads Standards to better evaluate and act on roadway improvements specific to the Rural Area. The Rural Road Improvement Policy calls for phasing road improvements incrementally to maintain the character of the rural residential area of the City. This policy works in conjunction with the Rural Road Standards, which establishes unique road improvement design standards that are rural (rather than urban) in character. The Policy and Standards together ensure that the rural character is maintained and also require that public workshops be held to gather input on any road improvements proposed prior to any changes to the policy, standards, or actions in the area.

Rural Residential Area Mobility Outreach

In response to some community interest for increased mobility for nonvehicular modes in the Rural Area, the Rural Residential Area Mobility Outreach project was initiated by the City in 2014. A combination of surveys and workshops was employed to engage community members and evaluate the level of multimodal infrastructure desired in the Rural Area. The vast majority of respondents advocated for a “less is more” approach to rural road mobility, desiring to maintain, at this time, the rural streets as they exist today.

The project concluded with a final City Council meeting, which took place on December 9, 2015, during which the following determinations were made:

1. The City will not pursue Rural Area-wide mobility improvements at this time.
2. The City will conduct an engineering study to determine feasible options for traffic-calming measures on major roadways in the Rural Area in response to prevalent concerns about speeds and volumes of vehicular traffic.
3. The City will use the outreach effort and report to inform the General Plan Circulation Element policy discussion for the Rural Area, specifically regarding complete streets considerations.

While there was a desire to maintain the rural streets at this time, a number of residents reported that they currently walk, bike, or ride a horse in the Rural Area, and even more said they would like to be able to travel by foot, bicycle, or horse to access community destinations. Many participants identified support for the following mobility improvements on certain street segments:

- *Excelsior Road.* Biking and walking trails that are separated from the road with adequate drainage and no impact to existing trees.
- *Pleasant Grove School Road.* A bicycle lane or other bicycle improvements on the side of the roadway, so long as the improvements do not change the rural character.

There was also some desire for selective improvements to address walking and/or biking safety on Waterman Road, Bradshaw Road, Calvine Road, Sheldon Road, and Bader Road. Most of the improvements were conditioned on maintaining the rural character of the roadway and preserving existing trees. However, the majority of residents living along these roads preferred that no pedestrian or bicycle paths be constructed for these segments.

Using the feedback from the Rural Residential Area Mobility Outreach project, the City should identify focused mobility improvements in the Rural Area that would balance the desires of the commenters with the City's obligation to address complete streets standards within the overall street network. Policies would be included to direct an update to street standards for the implementation of complete streets, within the context of the Rural Area. Such area-specific policies should also be considered for inclusion in the General Plan through establishment of a community or area plan for the Rural Area.

Refer to Policy Topic Paper 2.0: Community and Area Plans for additional information and specific recommendations for addressing policies within unique areas of the Planning Area.

Pedestrian-oriented Areas

Areas focused on pedestrian activity, such as Old Town and the Civic Center, require specific design treatment and planning considerations. A greater focus on pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in these areas will allow for safe, comfortable, and convenient active transportation choices by designing roads, pathways, and facilities with these users in mind. A complete and connected system of sidewalks, crosswalks, off-street multiuse paths, and painted bike lanes and signposted bike routes are essential to support walking and biking. Amenities that enhance pedestrian comfort, convenience, and visibility should be incorporated into street and pathway design. A combination of the following amenities should be included in street and pathway designs in these areas: street trees, landscaped medians, bulb-outs, bike racks, pedestrian-oriented lighting, benches, and wayfinding signage.

The City can include policies giving priority to pedestrian, bicycle, or transit mobility within specific pedestrian-oriented areas and directing updates to street standards for the implementation of enhanced

4.0 COMPLETE STREETS

infrastructure serving such modes of travel. These areas may be identified on a map or through defined standards for determining when pedestrian-oriented area design considerations should be implemented.

Existing Plans and Policies

The current Elk Grove General Plan, the City Municipal Code, and several other plans, policies, and codes contain requirements related to complete streets. A number of policy documents are already adopted by the City and will need to be reflected as appropriate in the updated General Plan to ensure consistency, while standards documents may need to be reviewed and updated to maintain consistency with the General Plan after the updated document is adopted.

Existing Policy Documents

The following documents include adopted policies and implementation action items that will need to be considered and supported as appropriate by the General Plan update.

City of Elk Grove Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Trails Master Plan (BPTMP)

The BPTMP was adopted in July 2014. It includes descriptions of available infrastructure, facilities, and modes; statistics on usage and survey results for the City and surrounding region; and the actions to be taken by the City to enhance the bikeway, trails, and pedestrian networks and encourage their usage. Existing and planned bikeways, trails, and pedestrian networks identified in the BPTMP should be reflected in the City's circulation system to ensure consistency across planning documents and align implementation actions.

Parks and Recreation Master Plan

The Cosumnes Community Services District (CCSD) oversees the construction and maintenance of parks and trails in much of the City; the CCSD and the City partner on new parks and trails in the City's New Growth Area. To address how new parks and recreation services are provided, the City and CCSD have jointly prepared a Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The City's Circulation Element should reflect existing and future park and recreation facilities as an integral part of the circulation system and ensure consistency across planning documents.

City Rural Road Improvement Policy

The City Council adopted the Rural Road Improvement Policy for phasing road improvements incrementally to maintain the character of the rural residential area of the City. The policies in this document, although specific to the Rural Area, will need to be considered to ensure consistency with all policies in the General Plan update. As noted above, such area-specific policies should also be considered for inclusion in the General Plan through establishment of a community or area plan for the Rural Area.

Refer to Policy Topic Paper 2.0: Community and Area Plans for additional information and specific recommendations for addressing policies within unique areas of the Planning Area.

Comprehensive Operational Analysis

The City is currently conducting an operational analysis of the local and commuter transit services provided by e-Tran. It includes an assessment of currently offered services, the existing market demand for services, the development of goals, objectives, and policies for how to meet such demand, and a financial analysis of future operating costs and possible fare modification options. Existing and future routes identified through this process should be considered in the planning and development of the circulation system to ensure transit services are supported by the appropriate infrastructure.

Refer to Policy Topic Paper 5.0: Fixed Transit for additional information and specific recommendations for addressing fixed transit service in the Planning Area.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the discussion contained in this policy topic paper, staff recommends the following items for consideration. Commission and Council direction on these items will be consolidated with that provided on other key policy topics to inform the direction and contents of the draft General Plan update.

Policy Topic 4.0: Complete Streets

- 4.1. Identify targeted street segments in the Rural Area on the General Plan Circulation Map that may be the focus for developing street-specific mobility improvements. Street segments considered will include those identified in the Rural Residential Area Mobility Outreach Summary Report (October 2015) and any additional street segments, if necessary, to meet the intent of the Complete Streets Act. The segments identified and any accompanying policies must meet the obligations of the Complete Streets Act while still responding to the concerns and desires of the community.
- 4.2 Identify pedestrian-oriented areas on the General Plan Land Use and/or Circulation Map to guide applicability of targeted policies and design considerations.
- 4.3 Consider the following goals and policies for incorporation into the General Plan.

GOAL: The Transportation System Meets Resident, Employee, and Visitor Needs

- As new roads are constructed, assess how the needs of all users can be integrated into the street design based on the local context and street typology.
- Retrofit existing roads to enhance multimodal access.

4.0 COMPLETE STREETS

- Conduct a Citywide analysis to identify deficiencies and opportunities to connect segments of modal infrastructure.
- Implement the Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Trails Master Plan (BPTMP).
 - When planning and designing bicycle, pedestrian, and trail facilities and infrastructure, follow the recommendations and guidelines contained in the BPTMP.
 - Prioritize improvements identified in the BPTMP when updating the Capital Improvements Program.
- Recognize the needs of all segments of the population, including disabled, youth, and the elderly, and provide increased opportunities for their mobility.
 - When considering projects and requirements, require the action that, to the fullest extent feasible, best enhances mobility for those with limited travel options.
 - Provide for safe and convenient paths and crossings along major streets within the context of the surrounding area, taking into account the needs of disabled, youth, and elderly.
 - Continue to implement the ADA Transition Plan, as appropriate.
- Identify and plan for goods movement in the transportation network, including rail service.
- Consider bus rapid transit or other accelerated methods of travel for major corridors during peak times.
- Strongly advocate for local and state funding to finance upgrades to services, facilities, and routes.
- Once complete, utilize the Comprehensive Operational Analysis to implement the best strategy that ensures the prioritization of efficient services, especially for those with limited mobility.
- Support and utilize infrastructure improvements and technological advancements such as intelligent transportation management tools to facilitate the movement and security of goods throughout the City in an efficient manner.
 - Coordinate traffic signals to maximize the flow of traffic while accommodating nonvehicular modes of travel.

GOAL: A Connected and Convenient Transit System

- Connect streets, trails, and transit to provide complete mobility locally and regionally, with priority funding and maintenance going toward those improvements which complete the local and regional circulation network.
- Develop a complete and connected street network with sidewalks, crossings, paths, and bike lanes that are convenient and attractive, with a variety of routes in pedestrian-oriented areas throughout the City.
- Require new development to include safe pedestrian walkways that directly link to streets and major destinations such as transit stops, schools, parks, and commercial centers.
- Require and place access areas and facilities for bicycle, pedestrian, and transit travel in front of major destinations, such as shopping centers and schools. Facilities may include any or a combination of the following: designated passenger drop-off and pickup zones, benches, lighting, bike racks, shelters, and street trees.
- Regularly update and expand the City's wayfinding signage to key destinations to help all users navigate the City in an efficient manner and to create a sense of place.

GOAL: Context-Sensitive Design for Complete Streets

- Update the City's improvement standards to incorporate, as appropriate, all modes of transportation.
 - Establish a working group of City departments and stakeholders to collaborate on the establishment of complete streets design standards.
 - Review City codes and policies to identify barriers to complete streets designs.
- Ensure that designs for complete streets employ features appropriate for the location and context.
 - Develop appropriate location- and context-specific street standards to meet complete streets requirements and promote safe travel for all modes.
 - Develop and/or revise street standards appropriate for rural, suburban, and urban contexts.
 - Develop street standards for pedestrian-oriented areas that place an emphasis on enhanced pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities.

4.0 COMPLETE STREETS

- Develop criteria for determining appropriate application of pedestrian-oriented area design considerations.
- In planning and implementing street projects, allow for flexibility in design in order to maintain sensitivity to local conditions and local sense of place.

Sense of Place: *Those characteristics that make a place special or unique, as well as to those that foster a sense of authentic human attachment and belonging*

GOAL: Safety in All Modes of Travel

- Prioritize the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Ensure visibility of pedestrians at intersections through street design measures such as bulb-outs, painted crossings, signalized crossings, and street lighting.
- Provide safe and visible crossings at mid-block in areas with long block lengths.
- Incorporate traffic-calming measures such as roundabouts, reduced lane widths, and/or other design elements that result in lower vehicle speeds when possible and appropriate.
- Provide the safest form of bike path feasible on all roads identified for bicycle facilities.
- Conduct widespread awareness campaigns and educational services for complete streets safety in partnership with local organizations, such as WalkSacramento.



POLICY TOPIC PAPER 5.0: FIXED TRANSIT

BACKGROUND

Fixed transit includes public transportation services that run along an established route in accordance with a preset schedule. This generally includes trains, subways, and buses that function on an established and generally unchanging schedule or timetable. Fixed transit routes typically consist of express fixed routes, such as commuter lines with fewer stops, or as feeder or circulator routes, which transport passengers from a neighborhood or employment area to stops along a connecting bus or rail line.

Factors Influencing Fixed Transit

A number of factors contribute to the success and efficiency of fixed-route systems. These factors can be divided into two categories: transit service and infrastructure, and land use and design. The General Plan update can have a larger impact on the latter through land use decisions, but can also help improve service levels through street and circulation infrastructure policies and mapping.

Transit Service and Infrastructure

Service levels are influenced by the following factors:

- *Extent of service area.* Effective transit systems provide service to a wide variety of destinations. Riders should be able to commute as well as reach services and entertainment by transit. The most successful transit systems provide enough stops at destinations and efficient connections to regional locations to allow users to get to all daily needs without use of a personal vehicle.
- *Service frequency.* This can also be described as the wait time for a specific route at a given stop. The more frequently a transit vehicle comes to each stop, the more flexibility and convenience are provided for riders.
- *Speed.* The speed at which a transit vehicle can travel between various destinations is a key factor in a transit system's competitiveness. The longer it takes to reach a destination using the system compared to other transportation options, the less competitive and effective the system is. The most successful transit systems provide right-of-way for transit vehicles which separates them from other roadway vehicles and traffic, either through undergrounding or overpassing or dedicated traffic lanes.

Benefits of Improving Transit

- *VMT reduction*
- *Reduced road congestion*
- *Increased mobility for non-drivers*
- *Greater flexibility and choice for local and regional commuters*
- *Boost to local businesses along transit corridors/near transit stops*

5.0 FIXED TRANSIT

- *Price.* The more expensive a transit trip is compared to the cost of other transportation options, the less competitive the transit system is. Successful transit systems are either competitively priced with other transportation options or provide other benefits (such as speed or comfort) that other options do not. However, multiple factors can influence the price per trip, including the amount of up-front investment in a transit system and the rate of ridership for cost recovery. Higher investment costs typically require higher ridership to keep per-trip prices lower.
- *Comfort, cleanliness, and safety.* Real and perceived safety and comfort for transit riders can make or break the success of a system. Factors such as transit stop design, lighting, cleanliness, and upkeep, as well as the relative number of other passengers, can greatly impact a passenger's comfort level. Other amenities such as seating, bathrooms, concessions, temperature control, and Wi-Fi can also contribute to the overall comfort and convenience for riders, and thus competitiveness of the transit system.

Land Use and Design

The use of transit is influenced by the following factors:

- *Street design and multimodal access.* The design of streets within close proximity, typically considered to be a ½ mile, of a transit stop can impact the experience of potential transit users. A more multimodal, friendly street system in proximity to stops can positively affect transit system success.
- *Land use intensity.* Studies show that urban densities in the areas served by the transit system are key to its success. Greater density provides for greater potential ridership to support the system. While there are no one-size-fits-all density recommendations, studies suggest that a minimum density of 30 persons per gross acre, or approximately 9 dwelling units/acre, is needed to support light rail transit service. Ridership is maximized when jobs are concentrated within a ¼ mile and housing within a ½ mile of transit stations.¹ Increased ridership allows transit systems to invest in and improve service and infrastructure, as described above.
- *Transit stop proximity to destinations.* Along with density, it is important that the areas served by the transit system include a variety of land uses. Systems should serve both ends of a commute (residences and employment locations) as well as entertainment and service amenities. As noted above, ridership of transit services is maximized when there are higher concentrations of jobs

¹ Institute of Transportation Studies, UC Berkeley. September 2011. Urban Densities and Transit: A Multi-dimensional Perspective.

within a ¼ mile and housing within a ½ mile of transit stations. The greater diversity of land uses accessible by transit, the more useful the transit service is to the user.

Alternative Service Models

Selecting the right service type for an area involves consideration of density, available resources, and community needs. In higher-density areas where passengers are clustered together, a fixed-route service with a traditional service schedule works well. In lower-density locations, however, a variety of alternative service models may be more effective and work in conjunction with or augment available fixed-route service, including:

- *Route Deviation.* A defined path and schedule is used to define a service area, but the transit vehicle(s) may serve requests for pickup or drop-off within a specified zone around the path. The deviation zone may or may not be strictly bounded. This service type is most effective in areas with enough density to support a predictable route and schedule but could benefit from the flexibility of serving origins and destinations that are otherwise off-route.
- *Point Deviation.* Service is provided within a defined zone with a set of specific stops, but the path between the stops is unspecified and the vehicle will serve locations within the zone on request. Point deviation can be most effective in an area with specific trip destinations but dispersed origins, or vice versa.
- *Demand-Responsive Connector.* The service operates entirely by demand response, but includes scheduled transfer points connecting with a fixed route. The demand-responsive connector is an effective option when there are scattered origins but a common destination once connected with the fixed-route system.
- *Request Stops.* The service operates on a scheduled fixed route in which certain stops are served only in response to passenger requests. Generally the vehicle must deviate from the fixed path to serve request stops. This is similar to route deviation, but limited to specific stops instead of a range of unspecified locations within a zone.
- *Flexible-Route Segments.* A portion of an otherwise scheduled fixed route is operated as demand response. Assigning a segment of a fixed route to flexible service can be beneficial in very low-density areas.
- *Zone Route.* A primarily demand-response service that has set departure and arrival times at its end points. The zone route is effective when there is not a defined corridor to travel, but a specific origin or destination exists within an area.

Fixed Transit Services in Elk Grove

Bus Service

Transit services in Elk Grove are run by e-Tran, the City's public bus service. The service runs through the City's commercial core and along major arterials, serving locations such as Cosumnes River College (CRC), the Elk Grove Auto Mall, the Elk Grove Marketplace, and the Laguna Gateway Shopping Center (see Figure 5.0-1, Existing Transit Routes).

A Comprehensive Operational Analysis of transit services is being conducted in the City. The most recent update in December 2015 reported that the current service is not well-utilized, and functionality and efficiency are limited. Local and commuter service is not integrated, resulting in lower effective frequencies on arterial segments. The dominant boarding and alighting location in for local service is CRC, indicating that more than half of all local trips are to places outside of Elk Grove. Differences between weekday and weekend service, low local route frequencies, and inadequate schedules and recovery times are also cited as major contributing factors.

Commuter services tend to be well-utilized in Elk Grove, but efficiency should be reviewed on an ongoing basis which may result in improvements. Preliminary suggestions from the Comprehensive Operational Analysis include reduced time on arterial streets, expansion of peak period times, and improvements to park-and-ride lots.

Once complete, the Comprehensive Operational Analysis will provide recommendations on alternative service models, stop locations, and routes to improve service in Elk Grove.

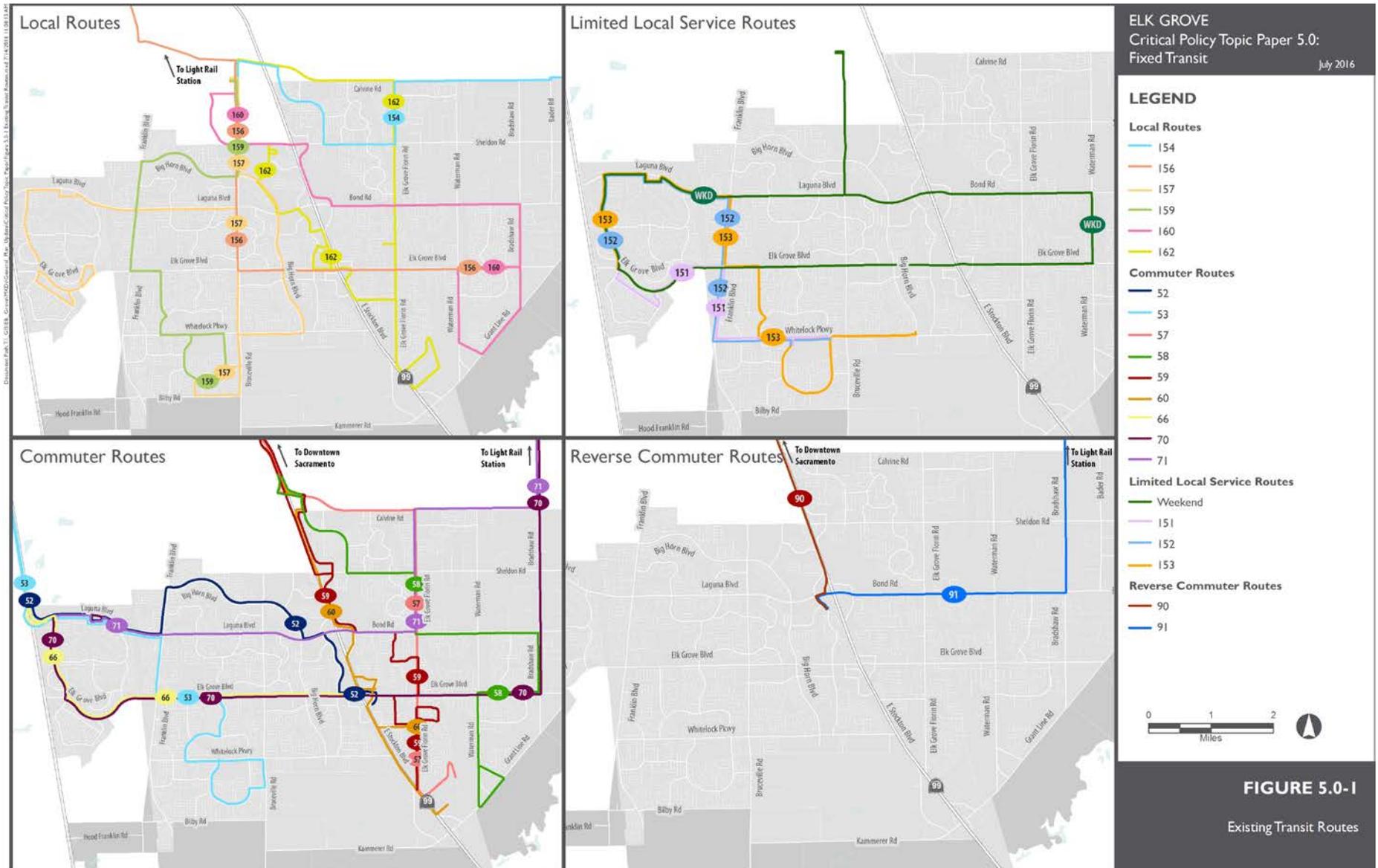
Bus Rapid Transit

The City of Elk Grove has proposed a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project, which would include two transit corridors covering a total of 15 miles with 28 boarding locations. The two transit corridors proposed are one north/south corridor and one east/west corridor, which would intersect at the City's future Civic Center in central Elk Grove. BRT service is proposed to operate weekdays from 5:00 a.m. to 10:30 p.m., and weekends from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with 15-minute frequencies. During the weekday peak hours, BRT would run on a 10-minute frequency.

The proposed north/south corridor is an 8.4-mile route beginning at CRC and connecting the main CRC campus with a major recreational center, the Kaiser medical center, the future Civic Center, and the southern CRC campus, and ending at the regional mall.

The east/west corridor would be parallel to Elk Grove Boulevard beginning at Interstate 5, connect several shopping centers, the future Civic Center, Old Town Elk Grove, and end at a shopping center in the eastern portion of the City.

FIGURE 5.0-I EXISTING TRANSIT ROUTES



Light Rail

The Sacramento Regional Transit District recently opened the latest extension of the Blue Line, which is part of the regional light rail system. The current system terminates with a stop at CRC and provides direct access to downtown Sacramento. The Blue Line operates at 15-minute headways from 4:46 AM to 11:56 PM. A future extension of the Blue Line (Phase 3) is anticipated along Bruceville Road and Big Horn Boulevard into the City, providing access to the Southeast Policy Area and the regional mall. An additional extension could provide service to the proposed multimodal transportation facility to be located in the southern portion of the City (see Figure 5.0-2, Existing and Proposed Blue Line Alignment).

Proposed Multimodal Transportation Facility

Currently programmed into the Capital Improvements Program is a proposed multimodal transportation facility to link multiple modes of transportation, including pedestrian, cyclist, cars, buses and trains, at a single facility. The proposed facility would be located adjacent to the Union Pacific Railroad alignment at the southern end of the City near Grant Line Road (see Figure 5.0-2, Existing and Proposed Blue Line Alignment) and would consist of an approximately 600-foot-long passenger loading platform, a 100-space parking lot, and drop-off/loading zones for passengers and buses.

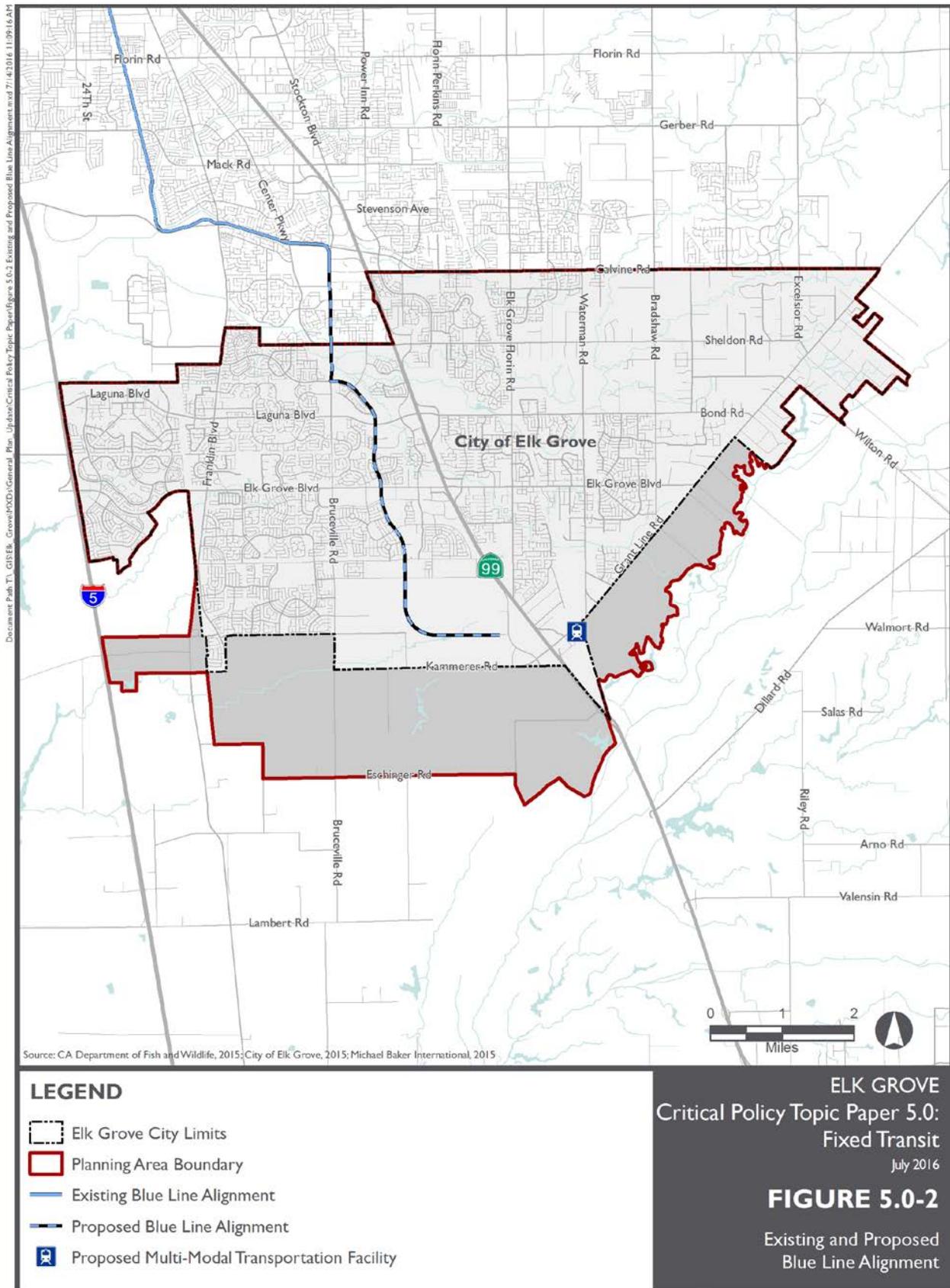
PROPOSED ACTIONS

As mentioned above, the General Plan update can have a larger impact on land use and design factors to support fixed transit. However, policies supporting service provision, including prioritizing resources for transit systems, are also appropriate for the General Plan and have been incorporated into the recommendations below, as appropriate.

To support both existing and future extensions of transit service, the General Plan should plan for increased densities near transit stops and along transit corridors as well as allow for a mix of uses in these locations. Street design in the vicinity, including designs to support all modes of travel, is also a factor that affects users' access to transit stops and surrounding destinations.

Refer to Policy Topic Paper 4.0: Complete Streets for additional information and specific recommendations on planning for all modes of transportation.

FIGURE 5.0-2: EXISTING AND PROPOSED BLUE LINE ALIGNMENT



SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the discussion contained in this policy topic paper, staff recommends the items below for consideration. Commission and Council direction on these items will be consolidated with that provided on other key policy topics to inform the direction and contents of the draft General Plan update.

Policy Topic 5.0: Fixed Transit

5.1. Amend the General Plan Land Use map and/or land use designation descriptions to provide for increased densities and a mix of uses on opportunity sites throughout the Planning Area to support existing and future transit services, where appropriate. While there are opportunities for higher than average densities at sites such as Sheldon Farms (intersection of Sheldon Road and Bruceville Road) and in the Southeast Policy Area, much of the area between the two ends is already developed. Opportunities for reuse of some of these sites with employment or higher-density residential uses would help to drive demand for fixed transit service.

5.2 Consider the following goals and policies for incorporation into the General Plan.

GOAL: The Transportation System Meets Resident, Employee, and Visitor Needs

- Offer bus routes and schedules that recognize the needs of all segments of the population, including youth and the elderly, and provide increased opportunities for their mobility.
 - Ensure, where feasible, that schedules and routes are capable of providing a complete transportation system that allows all people to conduct needed activities without significant delay or hindrance.
 - Increase and/or expand weekend transit services, to the extent rider demand and budget support the services, that recognize nontraditional work patterns for commuting.
- Continue to strongly advocate for local and state funding to finance upgrades to services, facilities, and routes.

GOAL: A Connected and Efficient Transit System

- Continue to coordinate connections between local and regional transit systems.
 - Evaluate the regional transit service and identify areas of opportunity for linkages.
 - Utilize the results of the City Council-adopted Comprehensive Operational Analysis to configure routes and services that address system deficiencies and capitalize on opportunities while operating within transit budgetary constraints.

5.0 FIXED TRANSIT

- Regularly review the transit system to identify new deficiencies and opportunities and make changes to the system to reflect this analysis, including identifying and prioritizing resources for implementation.
- Use the best available technology to streamline and link destinations and improve rider convenience and safety.
- Work with transit providers to provide infrastructure and service technologies such as real-time route schedules at stops and on websites, route-planning apps, website and app pickup requests, and other innovative methods of streamlining transit travel information.
- Consider alternative service models, as necessary, to improve or augment fixed-route service, such as demand-stop service, route deviations, and flexible route service.
- Identify and minimize potential impediments to transit users.
 - Evaluate pricing for services and adjust as feasible to encourage transit use.
 - Continue to maintain clean, safe, and welcoming facilities and buses.
- Consider access to and from designated transit routes and stops in the evaluation of new development applications.
 - Require adequate connections for all modes of travel from new development projects to facilitate access to existing and planned transit locations.
 - Continue to require the fair-share dedication (or in-lieu fee, as appropriate) of rights-of-way and station sites along the planned fixed-transit alignment during the development review and approval process.

POLICY TOPIC PAPER 6.0: CLUSTERING POLICY



BACKGROUND

When development is clustered, density is determined for an entire specified area, rather than on a lot-by-lot basis. Within the specified area, a developer can exercise greater flexibility in designing and placing structures, as long as the total density requirement is not exceeded. The City's 2003 General Plan contains a policy (CAQ-7) that promotes clustering development as a method to facilitate preservation and protection of woodlands, grasslands, wetlands, stream corridors, scenic areas, or other natural features as open space. The policy also includes the following qualifications:

- 1. Urban infrastructure capacity is available for urban use.*
- 2. On-site resource protection is appropriate and consistent with other General Plan Policies.*
- 3. The architecture and scale of development is appropriate for the area.*
- 4. Development rights for the open space area are permanently dedicated and appropriate long-term management is provided for by either a public agency, homeowners association, or other appropriate entity.*

This policy shall not apply in the Rural Residential area east of State Route 99, where clustering of development is not permitted.

Two development projects have been approved by the City since 2003 that relied on the clustering policy: Silverado Village in 2014 and Calvine Meadows in 2016. These projects preserved environmental resources (wetlands for Silverado Village and the Laguna Creek corridor for Calvine Meadows) in exchange for lot sizes smaller than normally allowed, but at a gross density consistent with the General Plan. Concerns with the current policy language and method for implementation were raised during the review of these previous development projects, as projects were essentially required to prepare site-specific development standards (i.e., Special Planning Areas) in order to comply with applicable zoning and general plan consistency requirements. This has prompted a review of the City's clustering policy as part of the General Plan update.

Applicable Conservation

The General Plan includes policies promoting the preservation of natural creek corridors and discouraging development within existing floodplains. Development may be allowed within the existing floodplains, provided the buildable area of the lot is brought out of the floodplain and there are no impacts to properties upstream or downstream. The existing clustering policy is silent on its relationship to the floodplain policies and how it can be used to incentivize preservation of the existing floodplain.

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However, this would only work in areas of the City where the floodplain is not already identified as open space on the General Plan Land Use Map. In most areas of the City, this distinction has been made. The primary exception is in the Rural Residential area and the area of Estate Residential along Calvine Road east of Waterman Road. Given the prohibition of the policy to the Rural Residential Area, the applicability of the policy to watercourses is limited.

Some communities utilize clustering as a way to preserve other features, such as agricultural land or historic resources. As the City considers development beyond the existing City limits, this may be a desired tool to preserve valuable agricultural land and promote the creation of “agrihoods,” or neighborhoods built around commercial farms, similar to The Cannery in Davis. It would also address the limited application of the policy in the existing City where watercourses are already defined on the General Plan Land Use Map.

General Plan-Zoning Consistency

The current policy encourages the clustering of development, but does not describe how the clustering should be implemented. General Plan Policy LU-3, which provides for consistency between the General Plan land use designations and the City’s Zoning districts (established in Title 23 of the Municipal Code, referred to as the Zoning Code), makes no allowance for application of different zone districts to implement the clustering policy. To date, the only effective way to accomplish clustering has been to create a new Special Planning Area (SPA) zoning district since, pursuant to Policy LU-3, SPAs are consistent with all General Plan designations. While this accomplishes the intent of the policy and is allowed under the SPA formation provisions, it creates an additional regulatory step for applicants because it requires that they draft a new SPA and request that the City Council rezone the site into the SPA as part of their project approvals.

In the case of the recently approved Calvine Meadows project, the gross density of the project was 2.47 units per gross acre, consistent with the General Plan designation of Estate Residential (0.6 to 4.0 units per gross acre). Through the clustering policy, the Council adopted a new SPA that allowed residential lot sizes similar to the RD-5 zone (maximum 5 units per acre). The RD-5 zone could not be directly applied to the project because the RD-5 zone is not listed as a consistent zone with the Estate Residential General Plan land use designation in Policy LU-3.

If the General Plan included language, either in the clustering policy or in the General Plan-Zoning consistency policy, that clarified how zoning is applied to development projects where the zoning density exceeds the allowed density range, the SPA requirement may have been avoided.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Continue to require that the scale of new clustered development be consistent with the character of existing and planned future surrounding areas.

The current policy requires that the “architecture and scale” of the proposed clustered development be “appropriate for the area.” This provision should be clarified and expanded to include not just existing development, but also the future buildout of the surrounding area. This is particularly important for projects that are the first to develop in an area where there are limited benchmarks to compare against. For example, in predominately single-story residential areas, multiple-story structures should not be allowed just so that building square footage meets market demands.

Continue to prohibit (or limit) application of the clustering policy in the Rural Residential area.

Expanding the policy to this area could generate the need for urban services, such as public water and sewer, which would be in conflict with other General Plan policies. Therefore, the current prohibition should remain. While a clustered subdivision could be designed to utilize private wells and septic systems dedicated to the subject development, the potential for confusion on this matter is great and would run counter to other policies in the General Plan that protect the Rural Area. If there is a desire to apply the clustering policy within the Rural Residential area, the policy should clearly state that such development shall be serviced by private wells and septic systems as a requirement.

Expand the applicability of the clustering policy to continue to protect natural features and open space, in addition to active agricultural uses and historic resources.

Application of the clustering policy could be a mechanism to promote the development of agrihoods or create transitions between urban and rural development in the more urban areas of the City. Additionally, an expanded application of the clustering policy could be used to protect historic and cultural resources.

Improve General Plan-Zoning Consistency

Three options are presented for addressing the General Plan-Zoning consistency issue through the General Plan update.

- **Option A: Continue to Utilize Special Planning Areas** — Under this option, the City would continue to allow the use of SPAs to implement the policy. As noted by the City Council during review of the Calvine Meadows project, this approach is rather intensive for smaller projects, requiring considerable time and effort on the part of the applicant to prepare, staff to review, and Planning Commission and City Council to consider the new zoning. However, in the case of the Silverado Village project, which involved both clustering of density and a unique

arrangement of the underlying residential and commercial land uses, the SPA was a valuable tool that allowed for details of the project to be documented at the Zoning level, thereby assuring the public that the project would be developed as stated. Therefore, staff recommends keeping the SPA tool available as an option for implementing the clustering policy.

- **Option B: Add a Footnote to the General Plan-Zoning Consistency Table** —The second potential option involves adding a footnote to the General Plan-Zoning consistency table identifying that while some lower-density residential zoning districts are not strictly compatible with an identified land use category, through the clustering policy these districts may be compatible. Table I illustrates the concept.

Table I. Example General Plan-Zoning Consistency Table

General Plan Land Use Designation	Consistent Zoning
Rural Residential	AR-5, AR-2
Estate Residential	AR-1, RD-1 through RD-4 ¹
Low Density Residential	RD-4 through RD-7 ¹
Medium Density Residential	RD-10, RD-15 ¹
High Density Residential	RD-20 through RD-40 ¹

Notes:

1. This General Plan land use designation may be implemented by other Zoning districts that accommodate additional density than would normally be allowed by this land use designation through implementation of the clustering policy.

While addressing the immediate needs of the consistency question, this option would still require a legislative act on the part of the City Council (a rezone) to implement on a project-by-project basis, similar to the SPA. Further, while the modified table would identify a pathway to consistency, a comparison between the General Plan Land Use Map and the Zoning Map would appear, on its face, to have an inconsistency and be prime for cleanup. This would not be ideal and would likely confuse future staff and property owners. For this reason, staff does not recommend adding the footnote to the table.

- **Option C: Adopt a New Clustering Permit**—The third option involves the creation of a new development permit, or entitlement, as part of the Zoning Code. A Clustering Permit would provide a process for applicants to request deviations to otherwise applicable development standards within a consistent Zoning district in order to achieve the lot sizes necessary to comply with gross density requirements and maintain appropriate setbacks for the lot size. This permit would be limited to setbacks, minimum lot size, and lot coverage, and would not affect allowed uses or any other development standards (e.g., parking, pervious surface, lighting). Further, as a quasi-judicial permit it could be approved by the Planning Commission concurrently with approval of the subdivision map. As a permit, it can be tracked

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with the underlying land in the City's mapping system and could appear as a notation on publicly viewable zoning maps for reference purposes (though it would not function as an overlay zone). Subsequent home construction would then be consistent with the provisions of the Clustering Permit, where the lot sizes and setbacks are established.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the analysis contained in this paper, staff recommends the following considerations for the updated General Plan. Commission and Council direction on these items will be consolidated with that provided for other key policy topics to inform the direction and contents of the draft General Plan update.

Policy Topic 6.0: Clustering

- 6.1 Require that the scale of new clustered development be consistent with the character of existing and planned future surrounding areas.
- 6.2 Continue to prohibit application of the clustering policy in the Rural Residential Area.
- 6.3 Expand the applicability of the clustering policy to continue to protect natural features and open space, in addition to active agricultural uses and historic resources.
- 6.4 Improve General Plan-Zoning consistency through the following:
 - a. Allow implementation through the creation and adoption of new Special Planning Area zoning districts, which allow for mixing of land uses.
 - b. Establish a new Clustering Permit that allows for modified development standards such as setbacks, minimum lot size, and lot coverage limitations consistent with the underlying General Plan land use designation for the subject property. The Clustering Permit would be approved by the Planning Commission as part of subdivision approval.

POLICY TOPIC PAPER 7.0: JOBS/HOUSING



BACKGROUND

A healthy and sustainable economy is a critical component of a city's overall health, and often a prerequisite to achieving community goals including infrastructure improvements, adequate services, safety, and upkeep. A range of factors determine the economic health of a city, including the number and diversity of businesses; the number of jobs in relation to resident workforce; resident income and wages; resident and business spending patterns; and levels of employment, among others.

The jobs/housing ratio, the ratio of available jobs to available housing in the community, has been commonly used by planners and decision-makers for many decades to identify the need for attracting and retaining employment-generating uses. Like many regional agencies, the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) also uses jobs/housing assessments to plan for the allocation of jobs and housing growth in the greater Sacramento region.

Why do indicators matter?

- Better understand strengths and weaknesses
- Identify appropriate role in the region's economy
- Provide way to measure if economic policies are effective

Jobs/Housing Ratio

A jobs/housing ratio is a calculation of jobs per housing units available in a given area. A low jobs/housing ratio can indicate a housing-rich community with fewer available jobs for its residents, while a high ratio can correlate to a jobs-rich area with more jobs available for residents. In a community with a low jobs/housing ratio, working-age residents are more likely to need to commute to work, which, depending on their mode of travel, can contribute to regional congestion and air pollution, and can increase individual time lost, stress, and travel costs. Providing for a better balance between jobs and housing in a particular community can enhance quality of life and improve environmental conditions.

Indicators of Economic Health

While the jobs/housing ratio is an important and informative tool to advance land use and economic goals, it is not an indicator of all economic health factors. Other considerations that need to be accounted for include the type of available jobs relative to the skill set of the local workforce, and lifestyle preferences (e.g., preferences for urban, suburban, and rural lifestyles). While the jobs/housing ratio has limitations as an indicator of overall economic health, it does provide useful information regarding the City's role in the regional economy (i.e., whether it is a jobs importer or exporter), and

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the number of job opportunities in the community. The following are additional economic indicators that are often used to support land use decisions.

Locally Employed Workforce

In addition to a jobs/housing ratio, the City can evaluate the percentage of its residents in the workforce (those ages 18–65 who are able and desire to work) who are employed in Elk Grove. The proportion of residents employed in the City can be compared year over year and to other jurisdictions in the region. While this is useful information, it is not directly influenced by City policies and land use decisions, as the City cannot determine specifically what types of jobs would be offered at a given location, nor can the City control for various factors that determine who fills available job openings. As discussed below, given the dynamics of the region's economy, for the foreseeable future it is anticipated that a larger percentage of residents will likely continue to be employed outside the City than within it, so this measure only shows a partial picture of economic health.

Worker Inflow/Outflow

Jobs inflow/outflow compares the number of commuters who live outside the City and come in for work (inflow) to the number of commuters who live in the City and commute elsewhere for work (outflow). In Elk Grove in 2014 (according to the US Census American Community Survey), approximately 90 percent of employed residents commuted to a job outside of Elk Grove (outflow), and about 75 percent of the jobs available in Elk Grove were held by employees who commuted into the City for work (inflow). About 25 percent of jobs available in Elk Grove were held by an Elk Grove resident.

Inflow/outflow provides useful information about behaviors and needs of residents. However, as previously mentioned, influencing the many factors that directly impact where people travel for work through land use policy is challenging. Therefore, inflow/outflow analysis is better used as an economic indicator than as a policy objective.

Quality of Available Jobs

While the number of jobs is important information, other details about jobs also influence the economic health of the City. Other important considerations include:

- **Wages:** Higher wages can indicate a healthy economy; however, it is important to note that there needs to be a diversity of jobs available at a number of pay ranges to match the skills and education levels of the resident workforce, including semi-skilled and unskilled jobs that likely pay lower wages than skilled or professional positions.

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- **Resident Skills and Education Levels:** Different jobs require different skill sets, levels of education, and experience in the field. In general, it is beneficial to match employer needs to the skills and education levels of the resident workforce.
- **Industry:** For the purposes of a city's economic health, not all jobs are equal. Different industries have different employment multiplier effects. An employment multiplier is used to determine the impact a particular industry will have upon a local economy when it arrives or departs. In its simplest terms, the employment multiplier estimates the number of direct, indirect, and induced jobs associated with an industry that are created (or lost) in the local area. Direct jobs are in the specific industry, while indirect jobs support the industry. Induced jobs result from direct and indirect employees spending wages in the community. Generally, industries with a higher multiplier are more desirable. For example, industries like chemical and similar product manufacturing have a high multiplier (5.6), while retail jobs have a comparatively low multiplier (0.8) (<http://www.contentfirst.com/multiplier.shtml>)

Land Use Preference

A less measurable, but nonetheless important indicator to consider is the land use preferences of employers. Certain industries are more suited to the existing environment in certain communities. Different industries have real differences in content of employment as well as the makeup of the built environment. At one end of the spectrum, agriculture requires extensive land with limited urban development. On the other hand, manufacturing jobs typically call for higher employee density (more employees per square foot) and extensive infrastructure.

Structural Economic Changes

The effects of macro economic forces on the nature and type of work can have an effect on the City's ability to increase its jobs/housing balance and locally employed resident base. Large companies are increasingly relying on fewer employees to do the same amount of work and off-shoring employment, while the amount of physical space being provided for employees continues to decrease in many traditional industries, especially in corporate office and tech environments. Companies are increasingly allowing employees to work remotely, and companies, especially in the tech industries, are outsourcing hiring to contract labor providers that pay low wages with limited benefits. The aforementioned EPS employment analysis indicates that 37% of Elk Grove businesses are home-based and 11% of Elk Grove employment is home-based. The same analysis indicates that 34.4% of total Elk Grove jobs were located at the City's 25 largest employers. These structural indicators place additional emphasis on adopting land use planning policies that encourage small startup companies, sole proprietorships, home-based businesses, and co-working environments, and the City's General Plan may need to establish goals and policies to promote these land uses to increase local employment options for Elk Grove residents.

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Limited Commercial Facilities

Currently, Elk Grove has a limited amount of existing commercial space to accommodate those businesses that wish to locate in Elk Grove by occupying vacant pre-existing buildings. For example, as of this writing, only six non-retail commercial facilities greater than 15,000 square feet are available for rent in Elk Grove, and only three retail properties. The quality of even these spaces varies widely, and most are not suitable for traditional manufacturing, medical, or tech industries, for example. At the same time, available commercial land for ground-up development is prevalent; however, constructing new facilities for new and expanding businesses is often not desirable for a particular user because of the increased complexity, cost, and time to do so in comparison to built space. This situation exacerbates the City's ability to attract new employment dense businesses or help existing businesses expand their operations. Unlike the residential construction sector, speculative construction of commercial space (especially non-retail) is limited to non-existent at this time in Elk Grove. Complicating matters further, other areas of the region do have robust portfolios of built commercial space. As a result, the General Plan may need to establish goals and policies that encourage speculative commercial construction so the City is pre-positioned with a robust portfolio of existing buildings.

Jobs/Housing Ratio as a Primary Indicator

While the jobs/housing ratio has limitations as an indicator of overall economic health, it does provide useful information from a land use planning perspective.

- Jobs/housing is a simple and easy-to-perform analysis, and can be consistently replicated. Total employment and housing are available through several reliable sources including the US Census and the California Department of Finance.
- Jobs/housing is also an easy measure to understand. Community members can quickly grasp what the indicator is showing and understand factors that impact it. A jobs/housing ratio is also one of the key indicators used at the regional level to determine progress toward land use, economic, and sustainability goals, and to allocate regional transportation dollars.

For a jobs/housing ratio to be a meaningful indicator, it is important to ensure that any ratio that is established as a goal is tailored to the community. A variety of factors influence the jobs/housing ratio, including land availability, existing worker skills, housing affordability, the land use types that the community prioritizes, and employee preferences about the type and location of work they wish to or are qualified to perform.

Benefits Attributed to a Balanced Jobs/Housing Ratio:

- Reduced driving and congestion
- Fewer air pollution and emissions
- Lower cost to businesses and commuters
- Lower public expenditures on facilities and services
- Greater family stability
- Higher quality of life

SCAG, *The New Economy and Jobs-Housing Balance in Southern California*, April 2001, pp. 19-20.

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Elk Grove is located near the State capitol in Sacramento, which is a large employment center. The City has relatively lower housing prices and generally offers higher quality suburban amenities than locations more proximate to the capitol. This makes the City an attractive housing location for many families, which among other factors contributes to a lower jobs/housing ratio in Elk Grove compared to locations more proximate to the region's existing employment centers.

However, simply attracting new jobs to Elk Grove without commensurate housing could be problematic. If the jobs added are not matched to the skill set of nearby employees, workers will continue to commute to jobs in Elk Grove from locations like Natomas, Rancho Cordova, Folsom and other locations in the region, and Elk Grove residents will continue to commute to jobs out of the City, contributing to longer commute times and higher vehicle miles traveled (VMT; see policy paper 9.0, *Mobility System Standards*).

The key, therefore, to identifying an appropriate target jobs/housing ratio is ensuring a balance that fits the needs of the community, offers a range of desired options and opportunities for potential living and work locations, and provides adequate access to local and regional job centers using multiple modes of transportation. Providing a variety of diverse housing types and creating places that support a variety of lifestyle choices and incomes can help to ensure that housing options are well-matched to employment options.

Current and Anticipated Future Jobs/Housing Ratios

A report by SACOG in 2015 listed the jobs/housing ratio in 2008 for Sacramento County as 1.22:1, and for the Sacramento region as 1.18:1¹. SACOG has established a target jobs/housing ratio of 1.4:1 for the region. Elk Grove's existing Economic Development Element includes Policy ED-7-Action 1, which calls for the City to continue to improve Elk Grove's jobs/housing ratio and seek to achieve sufficient employment opportunities in Elk Grove for all employed persons living in the City, while continuing to promote the City's role as a regional center. Elk Grove may set its own jobs/housing ratio target that considers factors specific to the community to provide guidance on planning and development decisions.

According to a recent study conducted by Economic & Planning Systems (EPS), Elk Grove's jobs/housing ratio was approximately 0.86:1 in 2013². This ratio may indicate that there are a high number of

¹ Sacramento Area Council of Governments. 2008. Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy. <http://www.sacog.org/metropolitan-transportation-plansustainable-communities-strategy>.

² The SACOG report from 2015 used different sources of information to establish the basis for the Regional Transportation Plan. SACOG's sources of information identified fewer home-based jobs and a lower employee per square foot assumption than the EPS study, which led to the conclusion of a lower jobs/housing ratio of 0.6:1 in the City and 0.49:1 in the larger planning area.

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residents who commute elsewhere for work, based either on limited employment options available in the City, or a mismatch in the types of jobs available and the skills of the workforce.

To achieve a more balanced job/housing ratio or a ratio that more closely mirrors that of the broader region, the City needs to continue to attract a diverse range of employment rich businesses and industries, which could result in significant investment costs for infrastructure and development incentives, but could also provide significant community benefits in terms of commute times, economic diversity, and quality of life. Based on estimates completed using SACOG's Urban Footprint land use model, the existing General Plan, inclusive of the recently adopted Southeast Policy Area, identifies planned land uses that would result in a jobs/housing ratio of 1.34:1 at buildout (which is not anticipated to occur within a specific year; this also assumes maximum intensity of development of all employment-designated lands). This would be a similar jobs-housing ratio to that targeted by SACOG for the entire region for 2035. However, all of Elk Grove's anticipated jobs and housing growth is not anticipated to occur by 2035 – it is assumed that a certain proportion of the growth would occur after that time. Future land use alternatives to be considered by the Planning Commission and City Council as part of the General Plan update may introduce more aggressive or conservative jobs and housing growth scenarios to respond to multiple related factors.

QUESTIONS

Questions to be considered relative to the jobs/housing balance in the General Plan include:

- Should the City establish a jobs/housing goal as part of the General Plan land use plan, and how should that goal relate to Elk Grove's role in the larger Sacramento region (e.g., bedroom community, jobs center).
- What other indicators should the City consider to identify economic vitality and progress toward community economic goals?

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the issues identified in this paper, staff recommends the following considerations for the updated General Plan. Commission and Council direction on these items will be consolidated with that provided for other key policy topics to inform the direction and contents of the draft General Plan update.

Policy Topic 7.0: Jobs/Housing

- 7.1 To help achieve a higher jobs/housing ratio and at the same time ensure more Elk Grove residents can be employed within the City, the City should consider establishing the following goals, objectives, and policies as part of the draft General Plan:

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GOAL: A Higher Jobs/Housing Ratio, Increased Range of Housing Options, and More Residents Employed Locally.

- Establish a 1.0:1 jobs/housing objective in the City by 2025, and a 1.2:1 jobs/housing ratio objective in the City by 2040.
- Establish objectives that 35% or more of resident workers will be employed directly by businesses located in Elk Grove by 2025, and 50% or more of resident workers will be employed directly by businesses located in Elk Grove by 2040. *(This represents approximately a 10% increase from current conditions by 2025, and a 25% increase from current conditions by 2040.)*
- Complete a study to determine the skills of the resident workforce and identify target industries that are both jobs dense industries and present viable employment options for Elk Grove residents given their skill levels and lifestyle preferences. Align business attraction and infrastructure development efforts accordingly.
- Provide for a range of housing options that match the anticipated preferences and income levels of potential workers associated with planned employment-generating projects.
- Consider the multiple cost factors (e.g., fees, cost of service, construction costs) necessary to support new commercial development in Elk Grove. Identify the City's role in determining these costs, and explore or otherwise promote efforts to reduce this burden in a manner consistent with other General Plan goals and objectives.
- Update and present a local employment trends report to the City Council on an annual basis.

GOAL: A New Regional Employment Center

- Designate sufficient areas for priority business and job locations to achieve Major Employment Center status in the Sacramento region's Sustainable Communities Strategy. While the Southeast Policy Area will serve this role, consider additional opportunities³.

³ Major Employment Centers are defined by SACOG as areas: a) that support concentrations of at least 10,000 "base" jobs (i.e. including manufacturing, office, medical, educational, and service employment, and excluding sectors like retail and restaurant uses), at average density of eight or more jobs per acre; and b) where 80 percent or more of the uses within the center are employment, not residential.

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- Continue efforts to attract larger employers that will help establish Elk Grove's place in the regional economy.
- Continue to invest in public infrastructure to attract target industries to Elk Grove, such as improved broadband capacity and reliability, road construction and maintenance, public transit, new and upgraded public utilities, and adequate community services.

GOAL: Balanced and Diverse Economic Growth

- Require and provide for a variety of sizes and types of commercial development to attract a diverse range of job opportunities and types.
- Continue to provide for and support existing, small, and home-based businesses and enable them to grow.

POLICY TOPIC PAPER 8.0: ANNEXATION STRATEGY



BACKGROUND

The City of Elk Grove is faced with the challenging task of balancing the need to accommodate new growth with the desire to remain true to its existing community character and meet current service levels. The development of a supportive growth management and annexation strategy will need to be developed to direct growth in a manner that aligns with community vision and supporting principles.

Population projections for the City of Elk Grove estimate an increase in population by approximately 30,000 persons through 2050¹. This is a significant increase that will require the City to identify locations where this residential growth may be accommodated. There are currently just over 1,800 acres of vacant land designated for residential use within the existing City limits. Under current planned land use designations and development standards, most but not all of the future anticipated population growth may be accommodated. However, various constraints may limit the development potential of the sites planned for residential growth, such as small or irregular sized lots, compatibility with surrounding development, critical habitat for sensitive species, environmental conditions, and/or floodplain restrictions.

In addition to providing land for residential uses, the City will need to apportion additional lands for new commercial, office, and retail development to achieve the City's vision for a diverse economy that attracts large-scale regional employers. Elk Grove is often considered a "bedroom community," with approximately 90 percent of employed residents who live in the community but work elsewhere². This results in a jobs/housing ratio of 0.86 jobs for each housing unit in Elk Grove³, which is below the current General Plan target of 1:1 (one job for each housing unit) and

Supporting Principles:

- *Our Regional Neighbors Know Us & Our Contributions*
- *Development Fills in the Gaps*
- *Our Economy Thrives & New Business Adds Value*
- *City Core, Heritage & Well-Known Neighborhoods*
- *Protecting Our Farming Heritage & Rural Life*
- *Outdoor Recreation is Right Outside Our Door*
- *Moving Around Anywhere, Any Way*
- *Clean, Green Practices and Healthy Living*
- *Services for the Needs of All Residents*

¹ SACOG (Sacramento Area Council of Governments). 2010. Metropolitan Transportation Plan Projections.

² U.S. Census. 2013. On the Map. <http://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>.

³ City of Elk Grove. 2016. Staff Report, March 23.

the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) target for the region of 1.4:1 (1.4 jobs for each housing unit). In order to meet the current City jobs/housing target and current SACOG jobs/housing regional target, the City would need to add approximately 16,400 jobs and approximately 41,000 jobs, respectively, for employment growth to keep pace with projected population growth. This employment growth may not be accommodated within the approximately 850 acres of vacant land currently planned for employment uses (commercial, industrial, or mixed use), particularly if the City intends to achieve a higher jobs/housing ratio. Providing additional employment opportunities through land use planning will assist the City in meeting its goals for economic vitality.

Refer to Policy Topic Paper 7.0: Jobs/Housing for additional information and specific recommendations for establishing jobs/housing ratios.

Growth Management Approaches

A number of growth management approaches may be considered to accommodate projected population growth and new employment and service opportunities.

Growth within Existing City Limits

Unfinished, undeveloped gaps found throughout the City become opportunities to develop new homes and businesses. Maximizing development within the City limits allows the City to accommodate more growth, taking advantage of existing infrastructure and services as well as potentially reducing the need for expansion beyond City boundaries. Prime locations for infill development include vacant or underutilized parcels, transit corridors, and locations near employment and shopping. If located in proximity to existing transit routes or within walking distance of goods and services, infill development can reduce auto use and accompanying congestion and pollution.

However, many infill sites present challenges for development or redevelopment due to site constraints such as size, shape, location, access, compatibility with surrounding development, existing site conditions, age of existing developments, and development requirements. In addition, infill development may require upgrades to or expansion of existing infrastructure systems and municipal services to meet increased demand.

Infill development may result in more efficient use of land and existing services; however, options in housing may also be limited due to site constraints and economic factors. Opportunities for employment-based development may also be restricted within the existing City limits, beyond those

Benefits:

- *Increased densities at key locations*
- *Use of existing infrastructure and services*

Challenges:

- *Limited housing options*
- *Limited opportunities for economic growth*
- *Potential impact on affordability*
- *Infrastructure and service limitations*
- *May accommodate most but not all of projected growth*

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areas already planned for such uses (e.g., Southeast Policy Area). This may limit the City's ability to implement the supporting principles for economic vitality, which encourage a variety of housing options, including more estate residential opportunities, as well as establish Elk Grove as a regional employment center in the region.

Limit New Growth

The City may choose to place limitations on new development and strive to slow growth to a rate that maintains Elk Grove's existing character. Limits can be placed on where growth occurs through the establishment of set physical boundaries that define where new growth can be accommodated. Such strategies include establishing an urban growth boundary or using conservation easements for open space or agricultural lands to define and limit the areas where new growth could occur. Limits can also be placed on how growth occurs through restrictions on the rate of growth. Such strategies include limiting the issuance of building permits to a certain number per year or only allowing growth in expansion areas once development within the existing City limits meets a predetermined threshold (e.g., percent of available land, number of building permits issued for infill development), effectively tying options for expansion to the growth rate of infill development. While strategies for limiting the where and how of new growth may allow for some expansion beyond the existing City limits, they still control the amount of projected growth that can be accommodated by the City.

Benefits:

- *Provides the most flexibility to the City in planning for future growth*

Challenges:

- *Managing growth to ensure appropriate expansion of required infrastructure*
- *Increased service demands*
- *Maintaining existing community character*
- *Loss of agricultural land and other resources lands*

Limiting new growth, whether that growth is accommodated within the existing City limits or allows some expansion to occur, has the potential consequence of increased housing prices and commercial rents due to limited housing stock and rising land costs. Limiting growth also reduces the City's tax-base opportunities and its ability to provide needed services as well as facilities and infrastructure maintenance, operations, and improvements. The ability for development to respond to market demand may be restricted as well, even for those projects that would implement one or more of the supporting principles, including housing and jobs targets. While Elk Grove may limit the amount of growth accommodated, surrounding communities may not; projected population growth and opportunities to increase the employment base would simply shift from Elk Grove to adjacent communities.

Growth beyond the City Limits

Planning for growth beyond the existing City limits offers the opportunity for the City to provide a greater range and choice of housing and a diverse mix of employment opportunities. The City would

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have the most flexibility to plan for future growth, which would accommodate projected population and employment needs that can respond more effectively to market demand.

However, new infrastructure would need to be constructed and maintained. New growth areas would also require an expansion in service areas and result in an increased demand for services including transit, park, school, library, and police and fire facilities and staff. Expansion could also result in the loss of agricultural land and potential habitat or other resource management lands.

Ensuring that infrastructure and services are provided and supported by new growth would require the City to incorporate policies on how and when new growth occurs. Additional criteria may also be established that dictates when growth in the expansion areas can move forward.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Balanced Growth Strategy

The City Council has provided direction on growth and development through the Development Fills in the Gaps supporting principle from the December 2015 vision book (*A Shared Community Vision*), which recognizes the importance of infill development in accommodating projected growth. Maximizing densities and providing for a variety of land use types on vacant and underutilized parcels, particularly along key corridors, would potentially support transit services as well as accommodate a greater share of the projected growth within the existing City limits. The supporting principle also recognizes that not all projected growth may be accommodated within the existing City limits and that planning for expansion may help the City achieve its goals of becoming a regional employment center, providing for a diverse economy, and offering a variety of housing options that remain affordable for existing and future residents. The supporting principle directs a balance of growth management strategies, through a focus on infill while allowing for expansion that is purposeful and demonstrates consistency with the community vision through implementation of one or more of the other supporting principles.

Focus on Infill

To implement a focus on infill, a series of opportunity sites have been identified within the existing City limits and a number of land use alternatives have been developed for each of these sites. The alternatives propose varying degrees of increases in density (residential uses) or intensity (nonresidential uses) as part of an infill growth strategy to accommodate a greater share of the projected growth than what is currently allowed. The City is in the process of garnering public input on these land use alternatives. The General Plan update will also incorporate policies to encourage infill development in support of a focus on infill strategy.

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Expansion with Purpose

Four study areas have been identified to explore options for potential expansion south of the City. The study areas include lands outside the City's existing limits which, in the City's judgment, bear relation to its planning efforts. The study area boundaries were based on the City's 2013 Sphere of Influence Amendment application, represent a reduction from the 2003 General Plan study area and General Plan Planning Area boundaries, and are in some ways similar to the boundaries of the SACOG Blueprint growth area and the SACOG 2016 Metropolitan Transportation Plan land plan.

At the May joint study session, direction was given to explore land use assumptions for each study area. Rather than express the land use assumptions through a land plan, assumptions would be expressed through programmatic concepts and supported by a number of design principles for how each of the study areas could develop. The design principles would address general location and intensities of land uses, conceptual relation of land uses to one another, transitions and buffers between land uses, and targets for preservation of agricultural or special resource lands such as habitat or flood areas. The City is currently in the process of garnering public input on the concepts for each study area to help inform future actions within the study areas.

Process for Expansion

Ultimately, development occurring within expansion areas relies on the annexation of unincorporated areas. Even without specific limitations on growth in expansion areas imposed at the local level, growth beyond the City limits is controlled through the annexation process, which requires approval through the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo). Annexations must meet the requirements of the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act of 2000 and local LAFCo policies, which dictate logical boundaries for expansion that is contiguous to existing development, ensure infrastructure and service availability, and require consistency with local land use plans.

Based on the land use planning assumption and design principles approach, as directed by the Planning Commission and City Council, annexation of land to the City of Elk Grove could occur in four distinct steps, some of which may happen concurrently.

Step 1: Sphere of Influence Amendment. The City limits and the Sphere of Influence (SOI) boundaries for Elk Grove are currently coterminous. Prior to additional land being annexed, the City must first expand its SOI boundary to include the potential areas for annexation. The City Council may initiate an application for an SOI amendment request; however, changes to SOI boundaries are reviewed and approved by LAFCo which evaluates the request against the requirements of the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act as well as any specific local LAFCo policies.

LAFCo policy does not currently require that a land use plan be submitted concurrently with an application for a SOI expansion.

Step 2: General Plan Amendment and Land Use Plan. Based on current direction, no land use plans will be incorporated into the General Plan for the study areas. Therefore, prior to any development occurring within the study areas, a land use plan would need to be developed and incorporated into the General Plan to determine the location and distribution of land uses. The land use plan would need to be in substantial conformance with the land use targets and design standards identified for the study area.

A General Plan amendment would be required to incorporate the land use plan, which may or may not be processed in conjunction with an application for an SOI amendment.

Step 3: Rezoning and Other Entitlements. Once a land use plan has been adopted for the study area, rezoning of the properties may occur, which is required prior to annexation. An applicant may also choose to file additional entitlement applications (e.g. tentative subdivision map).

Rezoning and any related entitlements may or may not be processed in conjunction with a General Plan amendment and land use plan.

Step 4: Annexation. Once rezoning of properties has been established, filing of an annexation request with LAFCo occurs. Ultimate approval of the annexation request lies with LAFCo. Annexations must meet certain criteria in accordance with the Cortese-Know-Hertzberg Act and with local LAFCo policies.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

While LAFCo has ultimate authority to approve or deny SOI amendment and annexation requests, the City has an opportunity to establish its own criteria in evaluating such requests prior to submittal to LAFCo. Allowing for expansion that is purposeful and occurs when economic need, community vision, and regional goals align will require a system of City policies and evaluation criteria to inform such decisions.

Incorporate Land Programs and Design Principles into General Plan Policies

The land use programs and design principles developed for each study area will be refined based on public input and direction from the Planning Commission and City Council at a future study session. These programs and principles should be incorporated into the General Plan policies as criteria for development within the study areas. The policies should allow for some deviation from the land use assumptions, perhaps expressed in percentage ranges by land use, to permit flexibility in land use planning for the study area while still meeting the intent of the design principles.

Require an Area-wide Plan for Study Areas

The City should require a detailed, General Plan level land use plan be prepared for the entire study area, not just a portion of the study area. The area-wide land use plan would address land use, circulation, infrastructure, public facilities, and public services and would be required prior to or concurrent with requests for annexation. Specific objectives of the land use plan would be to:

- Provide sufficient detail to confirm substantial conformance with the land use program and design principles for each study area, as identified in the General Plan policies.
- Provide sufficient detail relative to the location of land use designations to allow for rezoning of properties, which is a requirement for annexation.
- Identify anticipated phasing of development for the study area, including phasing and financing of backbone infrastructure improvements and provision of service facilities to maintain sufficient levels of service.

Requiring an area-wide land use plan will allow the City to determine consistency with the intent of the General Plan policies for each study area as a whole and provide context for how individual annexation proposals will be implemented.

Develop Evaluation Criteria for Expansion Proposals

In accordance with the expansion with purpose directive, the City would allow expansion when economic need, community vision, and regional goals align. Establishing criteria and submittal requirements that define and/or address economic need, community vision, and regional goals should be developed to guide City staff, Planning Commission, and City Council in evaluating expansion proposals as well as inform the public on the standards used when evaluating such proposals. Based on discussions to date, criteria to consider includes:

- Compliance with the land use program and design principles for the study area. Some allowance for deviations from the percent targets by land use designation would be established to permit flexibility in land use planning for the study area while still meeting the intent of the design principles.
- Demonstrate an identified market demand. A market study would be required prior to consideration of a proposal to evaluate compliance with this criteria.
- Further the community vision. An applicant would identify which supporting principle(s) would be implemented by the proposal and provide justification with particular attention being given to meeting economic need, community vision, and regional goals. This may include demonstrating how the proposal furthers regional goals as expressed through the Sacramento Region Blueprint and SACOG's MTP/SCS. Other examples may include:
 - Facilitates development of a regional attractor or use that implements one or more of the supporting principles. *Examples:* Major employment center that contributes to meeting an

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- established jobs goal. Regional attractor that draws visitors and contributes to increased economic or tourist activity.
- Constructs key infrastructure or facilities needed to maintain or improve community service levels. *Examples:* Constructs a major street intersection that improves safety conditions. Increases capacity of sewer facility or regional water treatment plant. Completes a segment of a trail that provides a key connection within the overall system.
- Demonstrate adequate services are available. A service and infrastructure plan would be required to demonstrate the service and infrastructure needs of the proposed development, what services and infrastructure are required to serve the proposed development, funding mechanisms for necessary improvements, and effect of expansion on current service levels within the existing City limits and expansion areas.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the discussion in this policy topic paper, staff recommends the following items for consideration relative to an annexation strategy for expansion areas. Commission and Council direction on these items will be consolidated with that provided on other key policy topics to inform the direction and contents of the draft General Plan update.

Policy Topic 8.0: Annexation Strategy

- 8.1 Provide direction to staff on evaluation criteria and submittal requirements for expansion proposals, as outline above.
- 8.2 Consider the following goals and policies for incorporation into the General Plan.

GOAL: Expansion with Purpose

Policies:

- Allow expansions when economic need, community vision, and regional goals align.
 - Establish criteria and submittal requirements as part of an overall annexation strategy that defines and/or addresses economic need, community vision, and regional goals.
 - Require a General Plan Amendment and an area-wide land use plan prior to or concurrent with a request for annexation. Land use plans shall include all land within the applicable study area boundary.
 - Development within study areas shall be in substantial conformance with the established land use assumptions and design standards adopted for each area. A land use plan shall

be considered in substantial conformance with the adopted land use percent targets when the proposal is within 2 percent of the target land use percent.

- Seek opportunities to annex additional land into the City, as appropriate, where the proposed project implements the community's vision and regional growth objectives.

GOAL: Ensure Availability of Infrastructure

Policies:

- Development in expansion areas should pay for needed infrastructure and not be a burden to existing ratepayers.
- Infrastructure improvements must be financed and constructed concurrent with or prior to occupancy of new development.
- Establish funding mechanisms for the expansion of public services and infrastructure to ensure new development is carrying its cost burden:
 - Explore mechanisms such as facility impact assessments to minimize the cost burden on the first development requiring major improvements.
- Establish concurrency measures to ensure infrastructure adequately serves future development:
 - Coordinate public facility and service capacity with the demands of new development.
 - Require that the provision of public facilities and service to new development does not cause a reduction in established service levels for existing residents.
 - Ensure that new infrastructure will meet the required level of service standards set by the City's General Plan and Municipal Code.
- Phase new development in expansion areas to occur where public services and infrastructure exist or may be extended to serve the public interest with minimal impact.

POLICY TOPIC PAPER 9.0: MOBILITY SYSTEM STANDARDS



BACKGROUND

As part of current practice under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the impact of a proposed project on vehicle level of service (LOS) has been a required component of environmental impact assessments. LOS measures the congestion level on a roadway segment or at an intersection(s) and is an indication of the comfort and convenience associated with driving. Relative levels of congestion are rated as A, B, C, D, E, or F. In general, LOS A represents free-flow conditions with no congestion, and LOS F represents severe congestion and delay under stop-and-go conditions.

Because LOS has been a required part of CEQA analysis, most general plans in California include policies setting minimum LOS for roadway segments and/or intersections. The current Elk Grove General Plan includes policies to achieve a minimum of LOS D on all roadways and intersection in Elk Grove at all times, with some allowances for certain roadways and intersections that do not currently meet this standard.¹

There are numerous concerns with using LOS alone as an environmental impact metric, such as the following:

- A focus on LOS values the free flow of vehicles above safety and the free flow of non-vehicular traffic;
- Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and associated criteria air pollutant and greenhouse gas emissions are generally increased when using LOS as a standard for roadway function;
- Incentives to use transit and active transportation options are reduced;
- Maintaining acceptable LOS often means widening streets, which can have negative environmental and urban character impacts, and congested areas where street widening is infeasible continue to have unacceptable LOS, regardless of the standards; and
- Sprawl development is incentivized due to lower impacts to LOS relative to other potential metrics.

In 2013, the California legislature approved and Governor Jerry Brown signed Senate Bill (SB) 743, requiring the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to revise the State CEQA Guidelines to replace LOS with an alternative method of transportation impact analyses. In response, OPR released a draft proposal (updated in January 2016) recommending updates to the State CEQA Guidelines using VMT as the preferred alternative metric for transportation impact analyses (https://www.opr.ca.gov/docs/Revised_VMT_CEQA_Guidelines_Proposal_January_20_2016.pdf). In this

¹ City of Elk Grove General Plan. 2008. Policies C-13 and C-14.

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document, OPR also recommended CEQA significance thresholds for use by lead agencies, including a 15 percent target reduction in VMT for residential and office development projects. Once revisions to the State CEQA Guidelines are adopted, impacts to LOS will no longer be considered a significant environmental impact under CEQA. OPR does acknowledge that LOS may continue to be used for roadway planning purposes, but the use of VMT in CEQA analysis is a more accurate measure of the potential impacts on the environment. It is important to note that OPR's recommended CEQA VMT significance thresholds for residential, office, commercial, mixed use and new roadway projects are proposed guidance and are not to be incorporated into the State CEQA Guidelines.

What is VMT?

A vehicle mile traveled, or VMT, represents one vehicle traveling on a roadway for 1 mile.

Regardless of how many people are in the vehicle, each vehicle traveling on a roadway generates one VMT for each mile it travels.

Why Vehicle Miles Traveled?

Other methods of transportation impact analysis, such as automobile trips generated or multimodal level of service, may also be used to comply with SB 743. However, VMT is the most effective metric for accomplishing the goals of SB 743 due to its consistency with other statewide and regional goals, its relationship to actual environmental impacts (e.g., air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, noise), and its use as an indicator of roadway function. It is also currently used to support analysis of greenhouse gas emissions attributable to the transportation sector under CEQA. VMT has been a primary indicator of travel for policymakers and transportation professionals for decades, and it is effective for the following reasons:

- **Historical Data is Available.** VMT is relatively easy to measure by counting traffic on roadways at different locations. It is one of the few measures of transportation performance that has been consistently and comprehensively monitored and documented over time in the state and region.
- **Relationship to Vehicle Emissions.** VMT bears a direct relationship to vehicle emissions, although the relationship is complex. It can be used as an indicator for how well a jurisdiction meets greenhouse gas emissions targets. Models that measure VMT for greenhouse gas analyses are already used by many cities (including Elk Grove).
- **Responsiveness to Policy and Land Use Influence.** VMT can be influenced by policy in a number of ways, including by encouraging carpooling or mode shifts from vehicle use to walking, biking, and transit. Land use patterns can also directly affect VMT. Mixing residential, employment, education, and service uses in an area can allow people to accomplish their daily activities with less driving, resulting in less VMT.

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- **Indicator of Roadway Function and Roadway Safety.** VMT correlates with traffic congestion and can also act as an indicator of roadway function. VMT also relates with the frequency of traffic collisions. Generally, the higher the VMT on a roadway, the greater exposure to motorists and other road users to more collision risk. This can provide additional valuable information to assist in prioritizing roadway improvements.
- **Benefits of VMT Analyses to Identify Transportation System Impacts.** Using VMT to measure transportation impacts under CEQA recognizes the value of alternative transportation options and balances the needs of vehicle travel with the needs of other modes of transportation. Benefits of using VMT to measure transportation system impacts include:
 - Reduced mitigation burden on infill projects, where new projects are more likely to trigger LOS impacts where roadways are already at capacity.
 - Reduced air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, and energy impacts related to associated reductions in VMT.
 - Project applicants are encouraged to reduce VMT through project location and design and by providing transit and active transportation incentives, rather than by widening roadways.

Existing and Planned Future Conditions

Under buildout of the current General Plan (including the Southeast Policy Area), VMT per capita (total VMT divided by population) is expected to *increase* by just under 20 percent compared to existing conditions, based on preliminary land use modeling. This is important, as OPR's recommendations include a 15 percent *reduction* from existing conditions as a threshold for significance under CEQA. However, it should also be noted that the 15 percent reduction would only be considered for new development projects. It does not represent a 15 percent reduction of Citywide VMT, and would not require changes to existing development to achieve the reduction. Nevertheless, achieving significant reductions in Citywide VMT is an important goal for the General Plan update, as it would enable future projects that are consistent with the General Plan to more readily meet their individual VMT reduction goals.

OPR is recommending the 15 percent reduction for a number of reasons. First, SB 743 identifies that criteria for determining the significance of transportation impacts must promote (1) reduction of greenhouse gas emissions; (2) development of multimodal transportation networks; and (3) a diversity of land uses. Various policies have been established by the State to address quantitative reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, including:

- Assembly Bill 32, which requires statewide greenhouse gas reductions to 1990 levels by 2020, as well as continued reductions beyond 2020;

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- Implementation by the California Air Resources Board in implementing SB 375 by setting targets for larger metropolitan planning organizations, such as SACOG, to reduce greenhouse gas by 13 to 16 percent by 2035;

As noted above, VMT can be directly influenced by existing and planned land use patterns based on land use mix, density, location relative to services, and/or transit service. This places additional importance on the arrangement of future land uses in the planning area in order to achieve target reductions in VMT.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

As noted above, SB 743 required OPR to revise the State CEQA Guidelines to replace LOS with an alternative method of transportation impact analysis. OPR released a series of recommendations describing VMT as the preferred alternative method for evaluating transportation impacts under CEQA, and recommended a significance threshold targeted reduction of 15 percent in VMT. Cities and counties can still establish their own VMT significance thresholds that reflect local conditions and priorities, so long as such thresholds are based on substantial evidence. Most jurisdictions are considering the options available to comply with the anticipated revisions to the State CEQA Guidelines.

For Elk Grove, the General Plan update presents a key opportunity to establish locally relevant VMT standards, as alternative land use configurations are being considered and updated traffic studies are being conducted to support the process. Following are a number of factors the City should consider in establishing its VMT reduction policies. These are preliminary considerations that may change based on further analysis of City land use and traffic alternatives and data, and any potential changes in OPR's recommendations.

Establishing a Baseline

SB 743 itself sets no local requirement to reduce VMT, but it does require that the method of transportation impact analysis selected in lieu of LOS promote greenhouse gas emissions reductions, use of multimodal transportation networks, and infill projects. OPR's recommended approach to meet this requirement is to establish a 15 percent reduction of VMT as a threshold of significance for proposed projects. To demonstrate a reduction in VMT, the City would need to establish a baseline value against which to analyze a project. OPR's draft approach includes no specific recommendation about what baseline should be used. The City would therefore need to establish an appropriate baseline for analysis.

Generally, the baseline for environmental analysis under CEQA is existing conditions at the time the environmental document is initiated. However, this would present a complicated "moving target" for VMT that results in a need for frequent analysis to establish the existing conditions at the time of project analysis. Using existing conditions at the time of project analysis also creates a situation where it will become increasingly difficult to achieve reductions as overall existing conditions improve. While OPR

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makes no specific recommendation about what baseline to use, selecting an alternative baseline would require the City to present substantial evidence describing why the use of an existing conditions, or moving target, baseline would not provide accurate or meaningful information.

Options for alternative baselines include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Static 2015 Existing Conditions Baseline.** This baseline would not shift over time as VMT changes. Rather, it would establish 2015 conditions as the baseline for the VMT reductions required for new projects moving forward. 2015 is the most recent full year that VMT data has been collected for the region, which would make it an accurate static baseline to use if repeated analysis is not desired for each project. This baseline would apply to all proposed projects Citywide.
- **Static 2015 Existing Conditions Baseline by Land Use Type.** This baseline also would not shift over time as VMT changes and would use 2015 data. However, as land use mix and location are directly related to transportation patterns, it would be unreasonable to assume that VMT generated by one land use (e.g., low density residential with little or no services in the vicinity) would be equal to VMT generated by another land use (e.g., higher density residential uses located within walking distance to services and a transit stop). Establishing baselines that vary by land use type using land use designations established on the City's General Plan Land Use Map would allow more flexibility to consider the desirable characteristics of specific project types when preparing CEQA analyses, compared to a one-size-fits-all baseline across all land uses in the City.

Additionally, the City may consider establishing both a Citywide baseline, which would include VMT assigned to Elk Grove only, and a regional baseline, which would include VMT assigned across the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) five-county region. While OPR's recommendations are silent on establishing baselines, they do provide a number of numeric significance thresholds to consider (see examples under Establishing Thresholds of Significance, below). The thresholds recognize that a particular project type may meet a threshold based on a Citywide baseline but not meet a threshold based on a regional baseline, or vice versa. OPR also recommends that significance thresholds be consistent with the relevant Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS), suggesting jurisdictions establish at least a regional baseline. For Elk Grove's purposes, this would represent consistency with SACOG's 2016 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (2016 MTP/SCS).

Establishing both a Citywide and regional baseline could provide additional flexibility in establishing thresholds of significance, particularly if there is an advantage to analyzing projects focused on serving the local community one way (e.g., a new neighborhood commercial center), while analyzing projects that would draw patrons from the region (e.g., a regional mall) another way. This also provides an

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opportunity for the City to consider additional significance thresholds that respond more appropriately to the local context.

It should be noted that Elk Grove's physical location in the region will have direct impacts on VMT. Certain types of development will attract users from throughout the region, rather than just the local market. For example, a new employment use that addresses the jobs-housing balance may have a high VMT impact if the employees for that use are coming from beyond the local labor pool as they could be driving from Folsom, Natomas, or Roseville. Similarly, residential uses with no opportunities for new employment will cause residents to commute outside the City for work. While this relationship between land use and circulation is critical and the development of a balanced land use pattern cannot be overstated, some level of VMT impact will occur and these impacts will need to be mitigated in a feasible way.

Establishing a Vehicle Miles Traveled Metric

The City has discretion to select a VMT metric that would provide the most appropriate measure of local conditions based on City goals. A variety of VMT metrics can be used to comply with OPR's recommended amendments to the State CEQA Guidelines. Each metric essentially considers the total VMT calculated within a defined area, such as the City of Elk Grove, and divides that total by a defined group of people, households, and/or jobs. For example, some common VMT metrics include:

- **VMT per capita**, which is total VMT divided by total population in an area.
- **VMT per household**, which is total VMT divided by the total number of households in an area.
- **VMT per employee**, which is total VMT divided by the total number of jobs in an area.
- **VMT per service population**, which is total VMT divided by the total population plus jobs in an area.

Rather than identify one VMT metric to use for all projects Citywide, the City may consider using different VMT metrics for the various project types. This approach may be more relevant should the City choose to establish thresholds of significance by land use type, as discussed further below.

Establishing Thresholds of Significance

Based on the direction established in SB 743, OPR has identified the following recommendations for local agencies seeking to establish thresholds of significance.

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Screening Thresholds

The following are considered screening thresholds, which are meant to recognize and screen out certain projects, which, due to their size or location, would be anticipated to have a less than significant impact to the transportation system.

- Small projects generating fewer trips than 100 trips per day can generally be assumed to cause a less than significant impact.
- Residential, retail, and office projects, as well as mixed-use projects featuring these uses, can be assumed to have a less than significant impact *if* they are located within one-half mile of an existing stop along a high-quality transit corridor, so long as factors such as a lack of sufficient density or excessive parking do not dispute this presumption.
- Transportation projects that reduce or have no impact on vehicle miles traveled would be presumed to have a less than significant impact. If a project impact has already been analyzed as a plan-level impact, the lead agency may incorporate that analysis for reference. Examples of these types of projects include bicycle trail improvements...others?

What is a “High Quality Transit Corridor?”

SB 743 defines a high-quality transit corridor as a corridor with fixed route bus service with service intervals no longer than 15 minutes during peak commute hours. Elk Grove does not have any high quality transit corridors today.

Establishing screening thresholds would allow the City to identify projects that may not require additional analysis under CEQA relative to transportation impacts. Aligning these thresholds with criteria used under other CEQA “infill” exemptions, as well as recognizing that land use mix and proximity to transit facilities should be considered, are beneficial.

In addition to criteria-based screening thresholds, as identified above, some jurisdictions (including the City of Sacramento) have developed map-based screening thresholds. Maps could identify areas in the City that are currently below the established VMT threshold based location, use types, and proximity to services and/or transportation. Certain project types may then be screened out from additional analysis if they would be located within one of the areas with desirable VMT characteristics identified on the map. It should be noted that map-screening thresholds are typically more applicable in denser locations, and may not be as effective or appropriate for Elk Grove.

Numeric Thresholds of Significance

OPR has also recommended a 15 percent VMT reduction threshold of significance for larger projects, which is meant to align VMT reductions with greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets adopted under SB 375. The following are considered numeric thresholds as they assign the target reduction of 15 percent from existing VMT levels (see discussion under Establishing a Baseline, above).

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- Residential projects would have a less than significant impact if *either*:
 - City household VMT per capita is 15 percent below the baseline, or
 - Existing regional household VMT per capita is 15 percent below the baseline.
- Office projects would have a significance threshold of 15 percent below existing VMT per employee for the relevant geographic area (e.g., region, county).
- Retail projects would have a threshold of any net increase in total VMT in the area affected by the project. Mixed-use projects would be analyzed component-by-component and may receive credit for “internal capture.”

While any significance thresholds proposed should be tailored to feasible and appropriate steps for Elk Grove, the recommended OPR thresholds demonstrate that thresholds of significance may not be one-size-fits-all and can vary based on project type. This approach to establishing thresholds of significance recognizes varying baselines (Citywide versus regional) and varying metrics (VMT per household for residential projects and VMT per employment for office projects). It would be similar to a baseline by land use type approach, as discussed above.

The City may also consider establishing thresholds by land use type expressed in absolute terms (e.g., 55 daily VMT per household, 65 daily VMT per employee) as opposed to a percent reduction (e.g., 15 percent below existing VMT per household, 15 percent below existing VMT per employee). However, the ability of the City to establish an absolute threshold would be influenced by the type of baseline established (static versus a moving target).

Thresholds of Significance for Land Use Plans

In addition to project-specific thresholds of significance, OPR has recommended the following threshold for use in evaluating land use plans, including general plans, community plans, specific plans, and area plans.

- The adoption of land use plans should be consistent with the relevant RTP/SCS. Consistency with the SCS would be determined as follows:
 - Development specified in the plan is also specified in the SCS (i.e., the plan does not specify developing in outlying areas specified as open space in the SCS).
 - Taken as a whole, development specified in the plan leads to VMT that is equal to or less than the VMT per capita and VMT per employee specified in the SCS.

Establishing thresholds for how land use plans should be analyzed is also a consideration the City needs to make. This is of particular importance for the proposed study areas beyond the current City limits, where area-wide land use plans may be required. While consistency with the RTP/SCS may be considered, it should not be the only determining factor for significance thresholds. As an example, it may be appropriate to provide some flexibility in determining significance if a land use plan meets

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established VMT reduction targets, but is not consistent with development identified in the SCS. At a minimum, consistency with the General Plan would be required for subsequent community plans, specific plans, and area plans.

Retaining Level of Service

While the use of LOS will no longer be a component of transportation impact analysis under CEQA, the option to retain this measurement for planning purposes is available. It may still be beneficial to require LOS as a project review requirement for the purposes of traffic mitigation, intersection safety, roadway impact fee determination, and street capacity and sizing determinations. If established in the General Plan, consistency with LOS standards would be considered a matter of General Plan consistency.

To implement General Plan LOS policies and determine the significance of project impacts to LOS, the City of Elk Grove established Traffic Impact Analysis Guidelines in July 2000. An impact to an intersection is considered significant, and mitigation measures must be identified when:

- Traffic generated by the project degrades the LOS from an acceptable LOS D or better (without the project) to an unacceptable LOS E or F (with the project).
- LOS (without project) is unacceptable and project-generated traffic increases the control delay by more than five seconds.
- For bicycle/pedestrian facilities: implementation of the project will disrupt or interfere with existing or planned bicycle or pedestrian facilities.
- For freeway facilities: the project causes the facility to change from acceptable to unacceptable LOS.
 - For facilities, which are or will be (in the cumulative condition) operating at unacceptable LOS without the project: increases the volume-to-capacity ratio on a freeway mainline segment or freeway ramp junction by 0.05.
 - Increase the number of peak hour vehicles on a freeway mainline segment or freeway ramp junction ramp junction by more than 5 percent.
- For transit facilities: the project will disrupt or interfere with existing or planned transit operations or transit facilities.

These criteria are used for project analysis under CEQA. They also establish necessary roadway improvements when evaluating projects. Although these criteria can no longer be considered as part of environmental review for transportation impacts, they should be maintained as part of the planning review process. However, the City needs to consider if the LOS policies will be retained in the General Plan, and, if so, how the LOS policies are implemented, particularly in conjunction with any new VMT reduction policies. This is necessary to ensure that roadway improvements completed in response to

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LOS policies do not conflict with VMT goals, greenhouse gas reduction goals, or other goals of the General Plan.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the discussion contained in this policy topic paper, staff recommends the following items for consideration. Commission and Council direction on these items will be consolidated with that provided on other key policy topics to inform the direction and contents of the draft General Plan.

Policy Topic 9.0: Mobility System Standards

- 9.1. Direct staff to establish a land use type-based approach to setting VMT reduction targets, recognizing that alternatives to this approach may be recommended based on further analysis to determine the feasibility of implementing one or more components of the approach. Steps to establish a land use type-based approach would include:
- Establish a 2015 static baseline based on existing conditions at the Citywide level and the 5-county, SACOG regional level.
 - Identify appropriate VMT metrics for use by project type (e.g., single-family residential, multiple-family residential, commercial, office).
 - Identify an absolute threshold of significance for each project type within each land use designation (e.g., Low Density Residential, Community Commercial, Employment Center, Village Mixed Use) by land use type, with a target of consistency with SACOG MTP/SCS regional VMT goals.
 - Recommend criteria-based screening thresholds appropriate to Elk Grove to screen out projects that would be presumed to have a less than significant impact from further transportation system analysis under CEQA.
 - Establish criteria for analysis of future community plans, specific plans, and area plans that may include, but not be limited to, consistency with the General Plan and consistency with the 2016 MTP/SCS.
- 9.2 Direct staff to prepare a new policy on roadway efficiency that replaces LOS. The new policy would identify that the City desires a robust and efficient roadway network that provides access to properties in a safe and convenient manner, but that the design of specific intersection and roadway segment improvements should balance these needs with the character of the surrounding area, cost to complete the improvement, and ongoing maintenance obligations.

9. MOBILITY SYSTEM STANDARDS

- 9.3 Direct staff to submit a proposal for VMT-based CEQA significance thresholds that are aligned with the policies and targets identified in the draft General Plan.
- 9.4 Direct staff to prepare revisions to the Citywide Roadway Fee Program that is aligned with the updated policies, targets, and roadway improvements identified in the draft General Plan. Under this approach, the Roadway Fee Program would function as a “fair-share” funding mechanism for roadway improvements and not as a CEQA mitigation program.
- 9.5 Direct staff to develop options for mitigation of VMT impacts that are viable in the local context. Potential measures identified by OPR that may be applicable include increasing access to transit, improved pedestrian and bicycle networks, commute reduction programs, and increased connectivity to the project site.