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## Chapter 2. Public Guide

### 2.1 Purpose

This chapter provides a guide for reading and using the Plan. It describes the organization of the Plan, the layout of a typical chapter, and the relationship of this document to other planning documents.

To maximize the public participation in land use decision-making and to educate the public about the broad public participation opportunities, this chapter describes the history of public participation from the beginning of the 1984 Framework Plan, and outlines ways in which the public may continue to be involved. This chapter emphasizes the public participation policies and programs in the Governance Policy presented in Chapter 3. Additionally, this Public Guide provides guidance on the maintenance of the Citizens Handbook, a resource for those who want to participate in local land use decision-making.

### 2.2 Background

The State of California requires a general plan to address specified provisions of each of seven mandated elements—Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Conservation, Open Space, Noise, and Safety—to the extent that the provisions are locally relevant. State law offers considerable flexibility to go beyond the mandatory elements of the general plan. To minimize redundancies, the elements of this Plan have been combined and organized along functional lines, and include legally mandated elements, and optional elements.

### 2.3 Overall Plan Organization

This Plan is divided into the following five principal parts:

**Part 1—Setting.** Part 1 describes the planning area, the purpose and use of the Plan, and how the Plan relates to other documents. Also included are policies regarding public participation and governance, which includes maintenance and amendments to the Plan as well as inter-governmental coordination.

**Part 2—Building Communities.** Part 2 addresses urban and rural lands and focuses on the built environment, such as the general location; appropriate mix, timing, and extent of land uses; and supporting infrastructure. This part of the Plan includes the state required Land Use and Circulation elements and a summary of the Housing Element, which is updated on a different schedule than the rest of the Plan (see note below). Elements included in this part that also address the built environment are the Community Infrastructure and Services, Telecommunications, and Economic Development elements.

**NOTE: Chapter 8, Housing Element.** The Housing Element is considered Chapter 8 of the General Plan and is found in Part 2, Building Communities. The Housing Element, one of the required elements of a General Plan, is updated every five to six years as required by state law. Because of this, the Housing Element has a separate review

process and implementation program from the other sections of the Plan. Sections 8.1 through 8.5 of this Element contain goals, policies, standards and implementation measures, similar to the other Elements of the Plan. These sections are part of the main body of the General Plan. The remainder of the Housing Element, due to its size, is included in the General Plan as Appendix G. Appendix G is a part of the Housing Element. It contains technical background information to support the policies, standards and implementation measures in the Housing Element chapter. It also provides a more detailed analysis on many other issues related to housing, such as governmental constraints on housing and the effectiveness of the previous Housing Element.

**Part 3—Resource Management.** Part 3 focuses on the natural environment and how land use activities interact with it. The state-required Conservation and Open Space elements are combined in this part of the Plan, including sections on waste management, cultural, scenic, mineral, and biological resources. Also included are the Water Resources and the Energy elements.

**Part 4—Health and Safety.** Part 4 includes policies and programs to protect people, property, and the environment from risks associated with seismic, geologic, noise, flood, air quality, and wildfire hazards. This part of the Plan contains the state required Noise and Safety elements, as well as the Air Quality Element.

**Part 5—Appendices.** Part 5 includes the Implementation Action Plan, Glossary and Definitions, Acronyms, Reference List, Community Area Plans Policy Extract, and Coastal Plans.

## 2.4 Chapter Structure

Individual chapters in this Plan are structured according to the following divisions:

**Element Organization and Combined Element Organization:** Provides additional guidance about chapter organization. The Land Use and Conservation and Open Space elements are large elements with multiple sections and, in the case of Conservation and Open Space, consolidated elements. The complexity of these chapters warranted additional explanation and they are the only elements containing this section.

**Purpose:** Presents the purpose of the chapter.

**Relationship to Other Elements:** Explains the chapter's relationship to other elements of the Plan.

**Background:** Discusses key findings from the technical background studies and other research supporting the proposed policy direction. Depending on the complexity of the particular topic, this section may be broken into subsections.

**Goals and Policies:** Presents goals and policies to set direction and guide decisions associated with the topic.

**Standards:** Identifies the standards that will be used to apply policies to a given situation.

**Implementation Measures:** Identifies measures that will be taken to implement the Plan.

## 2.5 Key Terms

As suggested above, the core of this Plan focuses on goals, policies, standards, and implementation measures. Because of the frequency of use and relative importance in the Plan, these terms are explained briefly below.

**Goal:** “A goal is a general expression of community values and, therefore, may be abstract in nature” (2003 General Plan Guidelines, Governor’s Office of Planning and Research). Goals should be expressed as ends, not action; they set the direction towards an ideal future. Goals are not necessarily quantifiable or time dependent.

**Policy:** A policy is a specific statement that must be followed when making decisions. It indicates an unambiguous commitment of the County to a particular course of action designed to achieve a specific goal.

The policies contained in the Plan are expressed in terms of “shall” or “should”. There is an important distinction between these two terms. As used in the Plan, “shall” indicates an unequivocal commitment, while “should” is advisory, in that it, like “may” is not mandatory, but “should” indicates a policy preference of the County.

**Standard:** A standard is a specific, often quantified rule or measure that helps define how a policy will be enacted. Standards define the abstract terms of goals and policies with concrete specifications.

**Implementation Measure:** An implementation measure is an action, procedure, program, plan, or technique used to carry out General Plan policy.

## 2.6 Maps

The General Plan includes official and background maps. Official maps show the geographic application of the Plan policies, while background maps (referenced as figures in the main text) provide support information. The official maps consist of the following map sets:

**Land Use.** These maps show planned land uses using General Plan land use designations. These maps do not always reflect existing land use, but rather the planned use. They indicate the kind and intensity of planned land uses, such as rural residential, 5 to 20 acres per dwelling unit.

**Biological Resources.** These maps show identified sensitive biological resources and prime agricultural soils. The level of detail and accuracy is highly variable, so project-specific mapping is usually necessary to determine the actual location and extent of such resources. These maps are useful for regional planning and to flag the need for specific on-site review to determine the nature and extent of the resources present.

**Flood Hazard.** This map series shows areas subject to periodic flooding, based on computer versions (Q3) of the 100-year floodplain. The hardcopy FEMA FIRM and floodway maps, which are referenced by this General Plan, provide specific regulatory implementation of floodplain management.

**Geologic.** These maps show relative slope stability, major faults, and areas subject to liquefaction. The level of detail and accuracy of these maps is also variable so, again, more specific on-site review is often necessary.

**Circulation/Public Facilities.** This map series shows the general location and extent of existing and proposed major transportation routes, airports, port terminals, trails and other utilities and facilities.

**Noise Maps.** This map series shows current and projected noise around local airports as well as other areas that are subject to potential noise impacts.

The County now uses a Geographic Information System (GIS) to generate its maps, so the above maps are actually individual layers in a unified comprehensive base map and are available in virtually any scale. The Planning and Building Department maintains an online GIS web application (<http://humboldt.gov/1357/Web-GIS>) that allows the public to view and print General Plan maps at any scale along with all of the information shown on the official maps listed above and the background maps referenced in the text of this Plan. Official versions of these maps will be produced as hardcopies at set scales and can be generated as PDF files for digital distribution.

There are inherent limitations on the accuracy associated with any countywide map set. State planning law, in fact, refers to "diagrams" rather than maps to emphasize this point. It is clear, however, that local governments need to be able to administer their plans with substantial certainty, and be clear about which land use designations and policies apply to any given parcel of land.

The linework on the General Plan map sets should be interpreted according to the following rule:

Where a line is intended to follow an administrative boundary such as a city limit or parcel line or a natural or manmade feature such as a river or road, the actual location of the administrative boundary or feature is the intended location of the General Plan line.

## 2.7 Relationship to Other Documents

The Humboldt County General Plan – Volume I - Framework Plan was adopted on December 10, 1984. The adoption of the Framework Plan did not specifically supersede the following previously adopted Humboldt County General Plan Elements or components:

- Open Space and Conservation Elements to the Humboldt County General Plan, adopted Dec. 27, 1973 (Resolution 73-164)
- Humboldt County General Plan Recreation Element, adopted July 13, 1976 (Resolution 76-92)
- Noise Element of the Humboldt County General Plan, adopted August 23, 1977 (Resolution 77-134)
- Trails Element of the Humboldt County General Plan, adopted June 26, 1979 (Resolution 79-80)
- Seismic Safety and Public Safety Element of the Humboldt County General Plan, adopted July 31, 1979 (Resolution 79-96)
- Scenic Highway Element of the Humboldt County General Plan, adopted September 16, 1980 (Resolution 80-102)

Prior to the adoption of the Framework Plan, land use planning outside the Coastal Zone was governed by the following land use plans that were adopted in the mid 1960's and together comprised the County General Plan:

- Northern Humboldt County General Plan (1965) (covering Orleans, Trinidad-Westhaven (inland), Fieldbrook-Glendale, and Blue Lake unincorporated area)
- Arcata General Plan (1966) (unincorporated area around Arcata not in the coastal zone or Jacoby Creek)
- Southern Humboldt General Plan (1968) (unincorporated Rio Dell and the inland portion of Shelter Cove)

These Plans also were not superseded with the adoption of the Framework Plan, and the County has continued to use the land use maps and land use designations associated with these plans within Community Plan Areas that do not have adopted Plans. As a result, these Plans and Elements remained a part of the Framework Plan.

Significant amendments were made to the Framework Plan several times following its adoption in 1984. Two amendments involved the addition of new Elements relating to solid waste:

- Hazardous Waste Management Plan, adopted as an amendment to the Humboldt County General Plan, November 28, 1989 (Resolution 89-157)
- Countywide Siting Element of the Humboldt County Integrated Waste Management Plan, adopted March 87, 1994 (Resolution 94-22)

The resolution adopting this Plan would clearly indicate that the Humboldt County Framework Plan and all of the other Plans and Elements listed above are superseded. Adoption of this Plan would also incorporate all Community Plan policies, except those contained in the Avenue of the Giants, Eureka, and McKinleyville Community Plans, into a single document, Appendix C, Community Area Plans Extract. As a result, the following Community Plans are amended and consolidated into this Plan, and this Plan is considered to be the Community Plan for those communities until such time that the Community Plans are updated:

- Jacoby Creek Community Plan (1982)
- Freshwater Community Plan (1985)
- Fortuna Community Plan (1985)
- Willow Creek Community Plan (1986)
- Hydesville-Carlotta Community Plan (1986)
- Garberville-Benbow-Redway-Alderpoint Community Plan (1987)
- Orick Community Plan (1985)

The following types of modifications to Community Plans were made in the process of consolidating these Community Plans into the General Plan:

- Each Community Plan policy was given a new unique policy number consistent with this Plan, and policies were grouped according to Community Planning Area and further grouped by topic area consistent with the organization of the proposed Plan (e.g., Circulation, Biological Resources, Hazards, etc.)
- Policies with obsolete references to the 1984 Framework Plan, such as references to land use designations, have been revised to reflect the appropriate land use designations and incorporated into Appendix C in the manner described above.

- Policies that were no longer relevant have been to be deleted, such as Orick Community Plan Policy 2230.3(B) “supporting the construction of the Redwood Park Bypass,” which has been completed.
- Policies that were identical to a 1984 Framework Plan policy, such as a land use designation or a development timing policy are not unique to the Community Plan Area, have been deleted in an effort to reduce redundant language and because the old land use designation would be superseded by the proposed Plan.

**Local Coastal Plans.** Within the Coastal Zone, the following Local Coastal Program land use plans will be modified to incorporate the new policies and land use maps of the General Plan once the coastal related portions of this document are certified through the California Coastal Commission:

- North Coast Area Plan
- Trinidad Area Plan
- McKinleyville Area Plan
- Humboldt Bay Area Plan
- Eel River Area Plan
- South Coast Area Plan

## Companion Documents

These are documents that are bound separately but are part of the General Plan. They include the following:

**Housing Element Appendix.** The Housing Element (2014) is bound as a separate document and serves as the housing element portion of the General Plan for unincorporated areas.

**Avenue of the Giants, McKinleyville and Eureka Community Plans.** The Avenue of the Giants (2000), McKinleyville (2002) and Eureka (1995) community plans, because they were the most recent Community Plans to be adopted and due to their complexity, remain standalone separately bound documents, and in concert with this Plan serve as the applicable general plans for those areas. Their land use designations, which in most cases were identical to the Framework Plan, are amended as part of this General Plan. Policies that were in conflict with this Plan were amended or specific findings were made.

## Documents Related to this Plan

These are documents that supported the adoption of the Plan or implement the Plan.. They include the following:

**Environmental Impact Report.** This document should be referred to for more extensive information on existing conditions, potential impacts of the Plan, and how impacts will be mitigated. A range of alternatives to the Plan are also discussed in the EIR.

**County Regulations.** Various County regulations are affected by this Plan and are important vehicles for carrying out policy directives. They are not part of the General Plan but must be consistent with it.

**Zoning Regulations.** Sections 311–319 of Title III, Division 1 of the Humboldt County Code provide zoning implementation for this General Plan. These ordinances have been revised to reflect the policies of this General Plan. The structure of the Zoning Ordinance parallels that of the Land Use Element in that they both contain maps depicting the distribution of land uses throughout the County and descriptions of development standards for various designations identified on the maps. However, while the General Plan embodies a long-term perspective, the Zoning Ordinance is immediate in its application.

**Subdivision Regulations.** Division 2, of Title III, of the Humboldt County Code governs subdivisions of lands and has been appropriately revised so that it is consistent with this Plan.

**Building Regulations.** Division 3, , of Title III, of the Humboldt County Code governs construction, grading, and flood plain management and is also an important tool for the implementation of this Plan and is referenced where appropriate.

## Background Reports

Numerous technical background reports were prepared to provide a range of information and detail necessary to complete the Plan. Technical data found in this Plan originated from these reports unless otherwise noted and referenced in Appendix D. Although not part of the Plan, these reports can be found on the County website. Some of the key reports are listed below.

- Building Communities (February 2002)
- Natural Resources and Hazards (September 2002)
- Moving Goods and People (October 2002)
- Agricultural Resources and Policies (August 2003)
- Community Design Toolkit (October 2003)
- Forest Resources and Policies (October 2003, revised April 2006))
- Residential Land Availability Survey (February 2004)
- Sketch Plan Alternatives (June 2004)
- Draft General Plan Energy Element Technical Report (October 2005)
- Living in a Networked World – Telecommunications (December 2004)
- Water Resources Technical Report(November 2007)
- Community Infrastructure and Services Technical Report (July 2008)
- Related Studies:
  - Humboldt County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (May 2013)
  - Harbor Revitalization Plan and Rail Study
  - Airport Master Plan
  - Prosperity! Update
  - District Sphere Reports (LAFCO)

## 2.8 History & Overview of Public Participation in Land Use

“Broadened public participation at all levels of the decision making process; including education, study, workshops, hearings, and plan revisions” (1984 Framework Plan §1231.4) was a Major Plan Policy of the earlier General Plan for the County, the 1984 Framework Plan. The goal was to maximize the opportunity for individuals and groups to have meaningful participation in the planning process (1984 Framework Plan §1343).

This goal was developed from the understanding that the public would be more able to support policies guiding the development of the County when given an opportunity to participate in the development and review of the general plan. Through this exposure, and the contributions it made to the process and the product, the public gained greater understanding of the plan. Participation not only in the review of that document, but also in subsequent revisions improved what was adopted and ensured the Plan remained a current statement of public policy (1984 Framework Plan §1343).

As part of the Work Program authorized in October 1980 the Citizens Participation Advisory Committee (CPAC) was formed and charged with the responsibility of developing goals, policies and standards for public participation.

The material developed by the CPAC was reviewed by the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors. The Board approved these policies as direction for developing the Hearing Draft, as well as reviewing it. These goals, policies, and standards were again reviewed by the Planning Commission in their preparation of the Commission Rules of Procedure. Revisions made for those Rules of Procedure were also recommended for inclusion in the Hearing Draft General Plan on September 30, 1982.

The Board of Supervisors, following the 26 month review and public hearing process of the Hearing Draft, adopted the Rules of Procedure as the Planning and Coordination for Public Participation §1500 policies for inclusion as an integral part of the Humboldt County General Plan adopted on December 10, 1984.

The County recognizes the need for public involvement in the land use planning process. The successful application of any law depends to a great extent on the citizens' understanding and support of that law.

The most successful land use planning process will provide for the education of the public. Knowledge of the process allows citizens to have meaningful access to the decision makers, evaluate alternative proposals, and make specific recommendations on hearing draft land use proposals.

In the most successful local determination of the future character of Humboldt County, the residents will understand the land use planning process, and the alternatives and reasons for decisions made that affect our County and our neighborhoods.

Besides the individual residents and property owners, other citizens in the form of corporate, municipal and special district entities may also participate. In Humboldt County there are seven incorporated cities, more than fifty special districts providing varied services plus school and street lighting districts that will be affected by this plan. Much of the resource land of the County is in corporate and other forms of business

interests and 28% of the County is in public ownership. This section of the plan provides direction for public participation in the planning process.

It is an essential function of a democratic society that public policy reflects the needs of the citizenry as expressed by the citizens themselves. Citizens will participate when they feel their participation will have an effect. But the large size of the County can make it difficult for citizen involvement. Plus, there are conflicting land uses and interests within the County which points to the need for creative solutions and a forum for resolution. The following goals and policies seek to provide the opportunities needed to overcome these challenges.

## 2.9 Goals and Policies

### Goals

- PG-G1. Comprehensive Planning Documents.** A set of planning documents that is a comprehensive statement of public policy concerning land use and the provision of public services.
- PG-G2. Community Plans.** Coordinated regional plans that include more than one incorporated city, community, special district, and/or unincorporated area.
- PG-G3. Accessible General Plan.** A comprehensive General Plan written in understandable language which is readily accessible to the public and encourages citizen participation throughout the planning process.
- PG-G4. Meaningful Participation.** Maximum opportunity for individuals and groups to have meaningful participation in the planning process.
- PG-G5. Process Education.** Maximum opportunities to educate the public about the planning process and the citizen's role in it.
- PG-G6. Direct Access to Decision Making Process.** Maximum public access to the decision making process.
- PG-G7. Outreach Program.** Aggressive solicitation of input of the public through an "outreach" program of public participation.
- PG-G8. Direct Access to Decision Makers.** The Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors provide the most direct relationship between the public and the decision makers.
- PG-G9. Budgetary Constraints.** Funding to provide opportunities for public participation in the land use planning process is maximized consistent with the budgetary constraints of the County.

### Policies

- PG-P1. Planning Process Education.** The County shall provide education and information to the public to encourage participation in the planning process prior to public hearings on the Plan proposals in adequate time to insure informed participation.

- PG-P2. Method of Education.** The education of the public shall be provided through, but not limited to, a Citizens Handbook, print and electronic media, and public meetings.
- PG-P3. Procedures for Clarity and Fairness.** The Planning Commission shall develop and maintain clear and fair procedures for operation and relationships with the public, the Board of Supervisors, ad hoc committees, and Local, State, and Federal agencies.
- PG-P4. Access to Procedures.** Planning Commission procedures shall be prepared in a format and language that is clear and readily available to the public.
- PG-P5. Citizen Committees.** The County shall encourage the formation of working groups, citizen organizations and citizen committees to provide input on specific matters in a format consistent with the adopted policies and procedures.
- PG-P6. Community Plans.** The County shall encourage the development of Community Plans consistent with overall County policies in the General Plan.
- PG-P7. Community Input.** The County shall encourage a variety of views, within an area, are taken into consideration in the development of Community Plans.
- PG-P8. Community Plans-Local Input.** The County shall seek out and give consideration to input from affected communities, ensuring that their views are heard and respected.
- PG-P9. Public Notification of Planning Commission Meetings.** The Planning Commission shall provide notification of meetings adequate to insure public participation consistent with the goals of this program.
- PG-P10. Planning Commission Meeting Accessibility.** The meetings of the Planning Commission shall be held in the geographic areas under consideration whenever practical, or where the meetings of the Commission concern countywide issues as addressed in the General Plan, such meetings shall be held in the regional centers most representative of the issues to be addressed.
- PG-P11. Public Hearings.** Public hearings shall be organized to provide public opportunities to evaluate alternative proposals and participate in the choice of the preferred alternative.
- PG-P12. Cost.** The costs of review shall be minimized consistent with the requirements of this section by the following:
- A. Review on an exception or "consent calendar" approach
  - B. Focusing testimony and comments on specific issues being addressed
- PG-P13. Rules of Procedure for Planning Commission.** The Planning Commission should prepare and adopt rules of procedure to govern the conduct of hearings, solicitation and limitations on oral comments, and other business of the Commission.

- PG-P14. Planning Commission Committees.** The Planning Commission should be authorized to create subcommittees or recommend the creation of ad hoc committees from their membership, and to create joint committees for the conduct of planning matters.

## 2.10 Standards

- PG-S1. Planning Advisory Committees.** Planning Advisory Committees (PAC) may be created to help educate and facilitate public participation, review and prepare recommendations concerning special or technical planning matters that may have county-wide significance. Such PAC's should:

- A. Be established and appointed, subject to Board concurrence, by the Planning Commission;
- B. Report directly to the Commission;
- C. Be charged with a specific list of tasks and a schedule for completion;
- D. Not be created as a standing committee;
- E. Be composed of lay citizens and technical advisors.

- PG-S2. Community Advisory Committees.** Community Advisory Committees (CAC) should be created to review and prepare recommendations on planning matters that affect their individual communities. Such CAC's should:

- A. Be formed in the community
- B. Be representative of the community make-up, report on the selection process used to form the CAC and be confirmed by the Board based on a recommendation by the Commission;
- C. Contain not less than five (5) nor more than eleven (11) members;
- D. Adhere to common CAC organizational guidelines adopted by the Board;
- E. In cooperation with County staff, direct all comments and questions on planning matters to the Planning Commission; CAC's will be provided County staff for answering questions, and making recommendations to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors;
- F. Establish a work program, regular meeting schedule and completion date;
- G. Prepare a map showing the limits of the community's area of interest and all such limits should be approved by the Planning Commission;
- H. Designate a contact person who will communicate with the Planning Commission and inform the public;
- I. Hold local workshops and public meetings to receive public comments;
- J. Educate the public about its community plan and other planning programs that affect the community;
- K. Provide a forum for citizen comments, and provide a mechanism for relaying those comments to the Planning Commission;

- L. Advise the Planning Commission on planning matters that affect the community;
- M. Provide input to the Commission on specific matters in a format consistent with the adopted policies and procedures;
- N. Develop hearing drafts of Community Plans consistent with overall County policies in the Framework Plan;
- O. Community Advisory Committees should be included in all planning notification procedures that affect their area.

**PG-S3. Public Education.** The education of the public shall be provided through any or all of the following, but not limited to:

- A. Citizens Handbook
- B. Print and electronic media
- C. Public meetings
- D. Community Advisory Committees
- E. Public workshops, charrettes, and facilitated discussions
- F. Direct mailings and email notices
- G. Internet Web pages
- H. Technical reports
- I. Interactive live remotes

## 2.11 Implementation Measures

**PG-IM1. Documents in Library.** The County shall provide a complete set of General Plan documents to each branch of the Humboldt County Library and provide the Library with internet addresses for web pages relating to Humboldt County land use planning. In addition, one loaner copy will be available at the Planning Department for the general public.

**PG-IM2. Orientation for Planning Commissioners.** The County should continue to familiarize new Planning Commissioners with their job, and to explain new programs and regulations to existing Commissioners by providing them all the following:

- A. Providing a Handbook which includes Planning Commissions Operational Procedures, League of Cities Procedures,
- B. Providing copies of the General Plan and Development Codes,
- C. Periodic training by County Counsel or other entities.

**PG-IM3. Citizens Handbook.** The County shall develop and maintain a Citizens participation handbook to explain the planning process to Community Advisory Committee members and the general public. To maximize the education of the public, and as a guide and reference for informed citizen and community involvement in the planning process, the Handbook, at minimum, should contain the following topics: planning law, the history of land use planning in Humboldt County, General Plan revisions, and public participation options.