
3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

INTRODUCTION

The proposed project analyzed in this Draft EIR is the adoption and implementation of the *Wheatland General Plan Update*. The primary components of the General Plan Update include guiding principles, a land use diagram, and goals and policies. This chapter summarizes the provisions of the proposed General Plan.

California Government Code Section 65300 et seq. mandates that all cities prepare a General Plan that establishes policies and standards for future development, housing affordability, and resource protection. State law encourages cities to keep general plans current through regular updates. Furthermore, each city's General Plan must include the following elements: Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Conservation, Open Space, Noise, and Safety. Additional elements may be included in the General Plan, at the discretion of the City.

PROJECT LOCATION

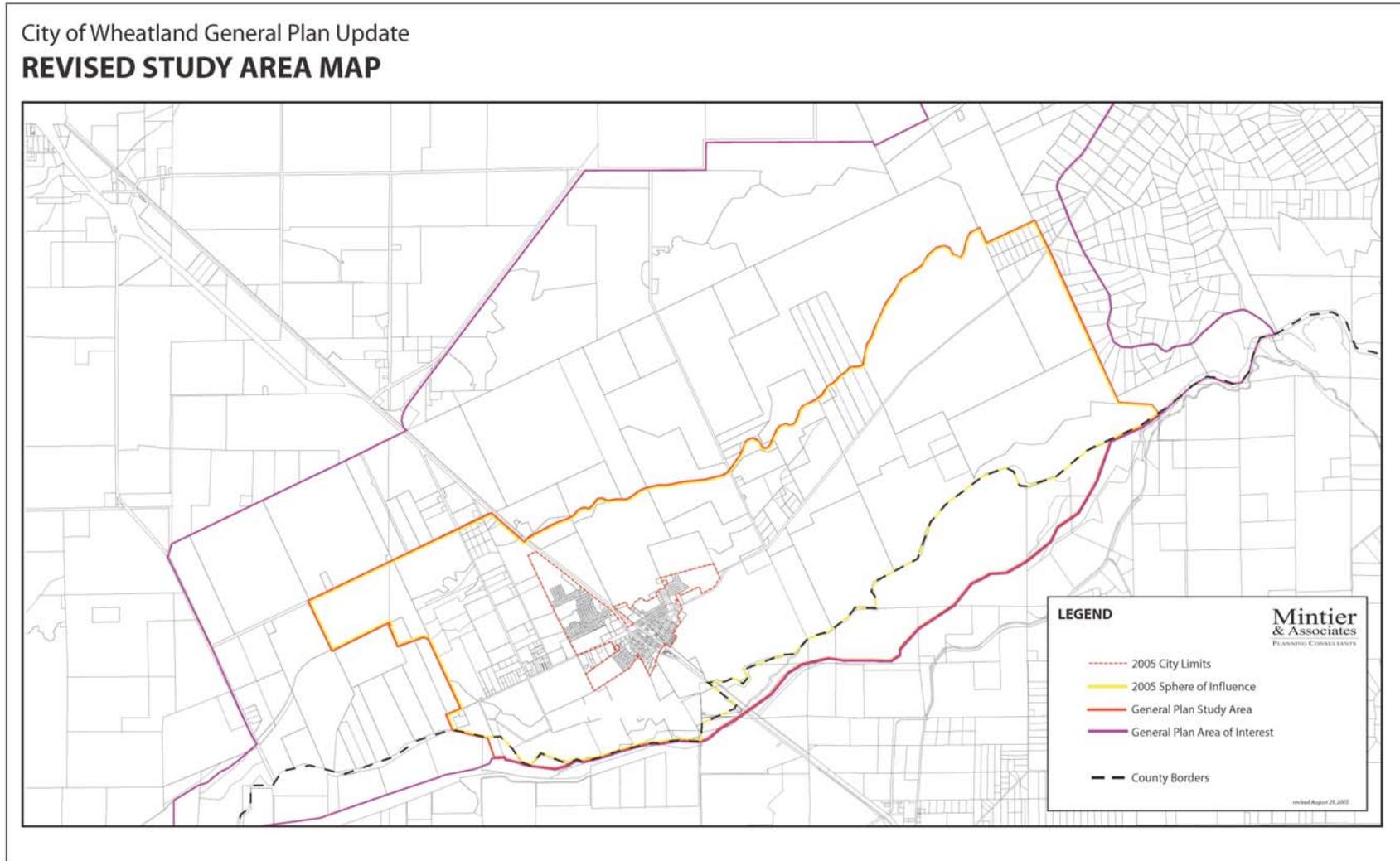
Wheatland is located in Northern California's Central Valley along State Route 65 in Yuba County. The City is located approximately one mile north of the Bear River and the tri-County boundary of Sutter, Placer, and Yuba Counties. Marysville (the county seat) and Yuba City, which are both about twelve miles to the north of Wheatland, are the closest cities of significant size (see Figure 3-1). Sacramento is approximately forty miles to the south and Beale Air Force Base is located eight miles to the northeast. Wheatland is also the gateway city to Camp Far West, a recreation area of regional significance. From the City's nineteenth century agrarian roots to the community of today, Wheatland has remained valued by its residents for its small town atmosphere and rural setting.

The City of Wheatland has two municipal boundaries, including the City limits and the City's Sphere of Influence. In addition, a study area boundary which is considered a non-municipal boundary has been created for the purposes of this General Plan Update (GPU) (see Figure 3-2). The study area boundary represents all land to be analyzed in the GPU process.

City Limits

The city limits represent all incorporated lands that are governed by the City of Wheatland. The city limits run approximately from Grass Hopper Slough in the north to Sixth Street in the south and from Wheatland Cemetery in the west to the Wheatland Park subdivision in the east. The total land area within the city limits is approximately 504 acres, or 0.8 square miles.

Figure 3-2
General Plan Study Area



Sphere of Influence

A Sphere of Influence (SOI) is an area designated as the physical boundaries and service area of a local governmental agency, as determined by the applicable Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), and is periodically reviewed and updated. Wheatland's SOI was adopted by the Yuba County LAFCO on June 7, 1995. The boundary borders Dry Creek to the north, the county line to the south, Ace Hardware to the west, and almost reaches Camp Far West Road to the east. The Sphere of Influence encompasses approximately 8,636 acres.

General Plan Study Area

The study area includes the area for which the City has interest regarding future developments and their associated impacts on Wheatland. The study area runs parallel to the Sphere of Influence along the northern and eastern borders, and extends to the Bear River in the south, and continues from ACE Hardware in the west (SOI line). The study area encompasses approximately 10,420 acres.

OBJECTIVES OF THE GENERAL PLAN

CEQA Guidelines Section 15124(b) requires a description of project objectives. This section outlines the objectives and guiding principles of the General Plan. The proposed General Plan is intended to replace the existing General Plan in all elements, including the Housing Element. The proposed General Plan also establishes a planning framework and policies out to a horizon of 2025.

The objectives in the General Plan are as follows:

- To guide the physical development of Wheatland over the next 20 years.
- To allow for future development within the Wheatland Planning Area, while preserving the City's existing identity and character.
- To ensure the community infrastructure keeps pace with development.
- To ensure the provision of a safe and convenient circulation system in the City of Wheatland.
- To encourage future economic growth within the City of Wheatland, while also providing adequate housing for all economic segments of the community.
- To provide economic growth that balances the existing development and future growth in Wheatland.
- To preserve agricultural land and uses in and adjacent to Wheatland and to ensure that there are open space buffers between Wheatland and surrounding cities.
- To protect current and future Wheatland residents from adverse effects of noise and other potential environmental hazards.
- To preserve and maintain the natural resources and features in Wheatland that contribute to the City's unique community character and quality of life.

- To ensure compatibility between existing and future land uses.
- To identify the City’s land uses, circulation, environmental, economic, and social goals and policies as they relate to future growth and development.
- To provide the basis for the City’s decisions on development approvals and exactions.
- To provide citizens with opportunities to participate in the planning and decision-making process of the City.
- To inform citizens, developers, decision makers, and other cities and counties of the ground rules that guide development in the City.
- To establish growth assumptions for the City’s infrastructure planning and financing.

PROJECT COMPONENTS

California Government Code Section 65300 defines a General Plan as “a comprehensive, long-term plan for the physical development of the county or city, and any land outside its boundaries, which in the planning agency's judgment, bears relation to its planning.” State requirements call for general plans that “comprise an integrated, internally consistent and compatible statement of policies for the adopting agency.”

A city’s general plan has been described as its constitution for development – the framework within which decisions on how to grow, provide public services and facilities, and protect and enhance the environment must be made. California's tradition of allowing local authority over land use decisions means that the cities have considerable flexibility in preparing their general plans.

While they allow considerable flexibility, state planning laws do establish some requirements for the issues that general plans must address. The California Government Code establishes both the content of general plans and rules for their adoption and subsequent amendment. Together, state law and judicial decisions establish three overall guidelines for general plans.

- *The General Plan Must Be Comprehensive.* This requirement has two aspects. First, the general plan must be geographically comprehensive. That is, it must apply throughout the entire incorporated area and should include other areas that the City determines are relevant to its planning. Second, the general plan must address the full range of issues that affects the City's physical development.
- *The General Plan Must Be Internally Consistent.* This requirement means that the general plan must fully integrate its separate parts and relate them to each other without conflict. “Horizontal” consistency applies as much to figures and diagrams as to the general plan text. It also applies to data and analysis as well as policies. All adopted portions of the general plan, whether required by state law or not, have equal legal weight. None may supersede another, so the general plan must resolve conflicts among the provisions of each element.

- *The General Plan Must Be Long-Range.* Because anticipated development will affect the City and the people who live or work there for years to come, State law requires every general plan to take a long-term perspective.

General Plan Elements

The State of California Office of Planning and Research indicates that seven (7) elements are required in a General Plan. Therefore, the Wheatland General Plan Update includes the following seven (7) elements: Land Use; Circulation; Housing; Conservation; Open Space; Noise and Safety (See Table 3-1).

Table 3-1 Organization of General Plan Elements		
General Plan Element	Topics Addressed by Element	Required by State Law
Land Use and Community Character	This element includes proposed use classifications, distribution of land uses via the General Plan diagram, buildout projections, and land use policies.	Land Use
Transportation and Circulation	This element includes existing and proposed location of the roadway network, transit systems, bikeways and pedestrian paths, as well as scenic roadways.	Circulation
Economic Development	Economic and employment trends, redevelopment activities, and economic development strategies are presented in this element.	N/A
Housing	This element consists of an update to demographic trends, housing characteristics, housing costs, development potential, constraints, and special housing needs. The City's 1992 Housing Element policies are reviewed, and accomplishments noted. Housing opportunity sites are identified, in addition to a discussion of quantified objectives. Housing policies address rehabilitation, affordable housing, conversion, homeless shelters, and energy efficiency.	Housing
Public Services and Facilities	Parks and recreation, public schools, water supply and conservation, sewer collection, solid waste, and fire and police protection are all addressed in this element.	N/A
Recreational, Educational, and Community	This element includes goals, policies, and implementation programs that establish the framework for the provision of recreational, educational, and community services for Wheatland residents and visitors.	N/A
Historic Preservation	This element identifies historic structures and preservation districts within the City. Goals and policies are presented to ensure conservation, rehabilitation and reuse, as appropriate.	N/A
Environmental Resources	This element includes analysis of open space, agricultural resources, biological resources, and air quality.	Conservation; Open Space
Health and Safety	Noise, geology and seismicity, flooding, hazardous materials, and wildfires are all addressed in this element. Geologic, seismic, and flooding hazards are mapped. Discussion of noise includes noise sources, projected noise contours, and mitigation policies.	Safety; Noise

Services and Administration	This element identifies goals, policies, and programs to ensure that the City of Wheatland maintains a high level of attention to the General Plan by providing for regular review and updating of the <i>Policy Document</i> and <i>Background Report</i> and ensuring that other City regulations and ordinances are consistent with the General Plan.	N/A
N/A = Not applicable; Element is not required by State Law		

PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS

General Plan Land Use Diagram and Acreage Summary

The proposed General Plan Update specifies land uses for the area within the existing city limits and the area outside the existing city limits, but within the Study Area. This area is expected to ultimately be built out for urban uses, but would not be developed within the 20-year planning horizon on this General Plan Update. Furthermore, General Plan amendments and environmental review would be required prior to any development in the Urban Reserve areas.

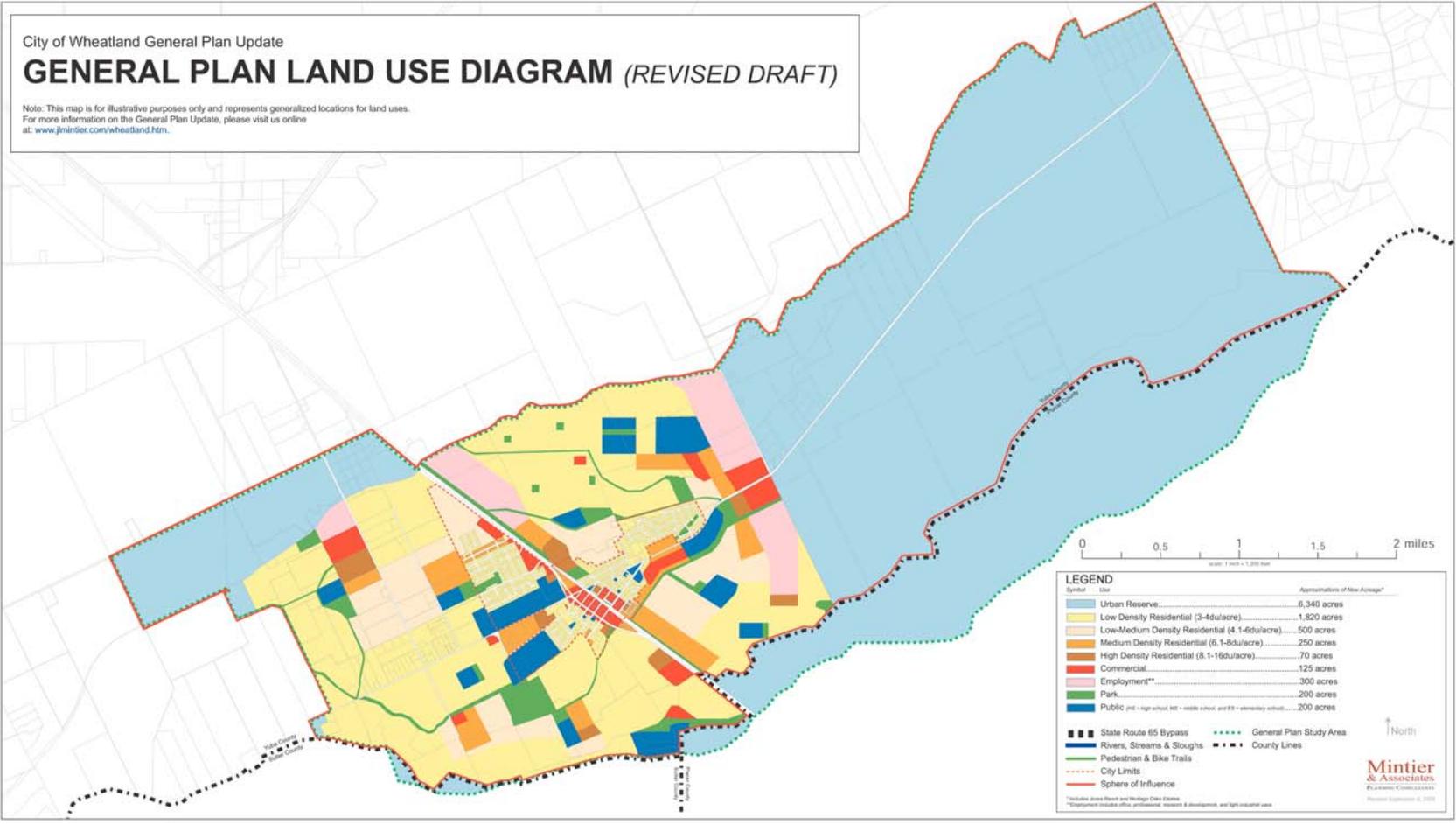
The General Plan Land Use Diagram depicts a generalized concept plan (Figure 3-3). The colors on the diagrams represent different uses of land (see legends). The following guiding principles were used in creating the Land Use Diagram.

- Balance development on both sides of existing SR 65, and Union Pacific railroad tracks.
- Reinforce downtown as the traditional and cultural core of the City, but not as the central commercial district.
- Emphasize neighborhood-oriented growth to retain a small town feel.
- Create a strong local employment base.
- Plan for the City to accommodate eventual development of a SR 65 bypass on either the east *or* west side.

In addition, key concepts and ideas used for drafting the Land Use Diagram are shown in Table 3-2.

Table 3-2 Key Concepts and Ideas for Drafting the Land Use Diagram	
Circulation System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major roads and utilities sized to handle growth. • A roadway system that effectively links both sides of town with overpasses across SR 65 and the railroad tracks at the north and south ends of the city. • Easy access to employment, commercial, schools, and the Civic Center. • Pedestrian/bike trails across SR 65 and the Union Pacific RR tracks, linking parks, schools, high density residential, and retail. • Neighborhood connectivity – walkable community (i.e., ¼ mile walking distances from residential to schools / commercial).
Land Use Pattern and Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New development based on village/clustering concept. • Residential neighborhoods organized around elementary schools, neighborhood commercial, and neighborhood parks. • Higher density housing near employment. • Develop historic center of Wheatland Front Street, Red School House, and Hop Farm. • Prefer low to medium-density homes.
Specific Use and Facility Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downtown revitalization. • A functional, accessible Civic Center/City Hall. • Regional park.
Conservation and Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preservation and enhancement of natural riparian drainage corridors. • Greenbelt on east side by oak grove/sewer treatment plant. • Preserve riparian habitats of Dry Creek and the Bear River.
Quality of Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreational areas (parks/recreational areas, bike trails, etc.) consistent with common standards. • A healthy, functional mix of residential, commercial, and jobs. • Neighborhood-oriented development. • Emphasis on historic preservation.
Source: J. Laurence Mintier & Associates, 2004	

**Figure 3-3
 General Plan Land Use Diagram**



According to Table 3-3, the proposed General Plan would provide for, upon ultimate buildout of the entire Planning Area, approximately 2,640 acres for residential uses, and 300 areas for employment uses. At this level of buildout, the jobs-housing ratio would be adequate to meet the assumed development intensities of Wheatland. In addition, public services including schools and parks encompass 400 acres of the overall Land Use Diagram, which would support the population increase from development activities.

Table 3-3 General Plan Land Use Diagram	
Land Use	Approximations of New Acreage
Urban Reserve (mostly within SOI, east of Study Area)	4,700 acres
Low Density Residential (3-4 du/acre)	1,820 acres
Low-Medium Density Residential (4-6 du/acre)	500 acres
Medium Density Residential (6-8 du/acre)	250 acres
High Density Residential (8-16 du/acre)	70 acres
Commercial	125 acres
Employment (Includes office, professional, research & development, and light industrial uses)	300 acres
Park	200 acres
Public (High School (HS), Middle School (MS), and Elementary School (ES))	200 acres
Source: Mintier & Associates: Planning Consultants	

KEY INFRASTRUCTURE

Proposed SR 65 Bypass

A city is both defined and constrained by the network of highways, roads, and railroad that move its residents and goods through, and in and out of the city. While Wheatland is not a large city, mobility through the Wheatland is hindered by congestion on State Route 65. The proposed General Plan improvements to the regional transportation system are shown in the General Plan Land Use Diagram, where an eastern bypass to State Route 65 would redirect traffic around the City. The bypass is expected to have a significant affect on land uses, given the accessibility and visibility. Much of the future commercial and employment development in the Wheatland Study Area is located near the bypass. Chapter 4.15 of this EIR provides a detailed analysis of the SR 65 bypass and its effects on traffic operations within the City.

Proposed Wastewater Treatment Plant

The existing wastewater collection system and treatment plant is adequate to serve the existing city limits only. A new plant is likely to be located west of SR 65, due to the westward-sloping terrain. Two location options are being considered, as shown in Figure 3-3. The locations are: 1) northwest portion of the Study Area near Dry Creek; and 2) southwest portion of the Study Area near the Bear River. The wastewater collection system will be designed once a treatment site is selected. Chapter 4.16 of this EIR includes a detailed analysis of the wastewater system requirements needed to serve the General Plan buildout.