

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

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1.1 City of Colfax Background

1.1.1 Regional Setting

The City of Colfax is located in Placer County, California which is on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada foothills bounded by the Bear River to the northwest and the North Fork of the American River on the southeast. The City of Colfax lies at the extreme northeastern edge of the Sacramento metropolitan area some 50 miles from the City of Sacramento. Today Colfax is still a small railroad community. The general elevation of Colfax is 2400 feet (See Figure 1-1).

The City is bisected by the Union Pacific Railroad and Interstate 80, both major transportation routes from California to the Rocky Mountains, Mid-west and Eastern portions of the United States.

The City is located on a steep-sided ridge and offers few relatively level locations for urban development. Future development is closely tied to its location on the rail line and interstate highway. These transportation routes encourage commuting into the Sacramento Metropolitan area. Colfax is located just outside the heavy-snow line, which led to its selection as a major rail switching point and maintenance station.

Colfax in the heart of the mother lode, just a short distance from the gold mining areas along the American River, Bear River and Auburn Ravine.

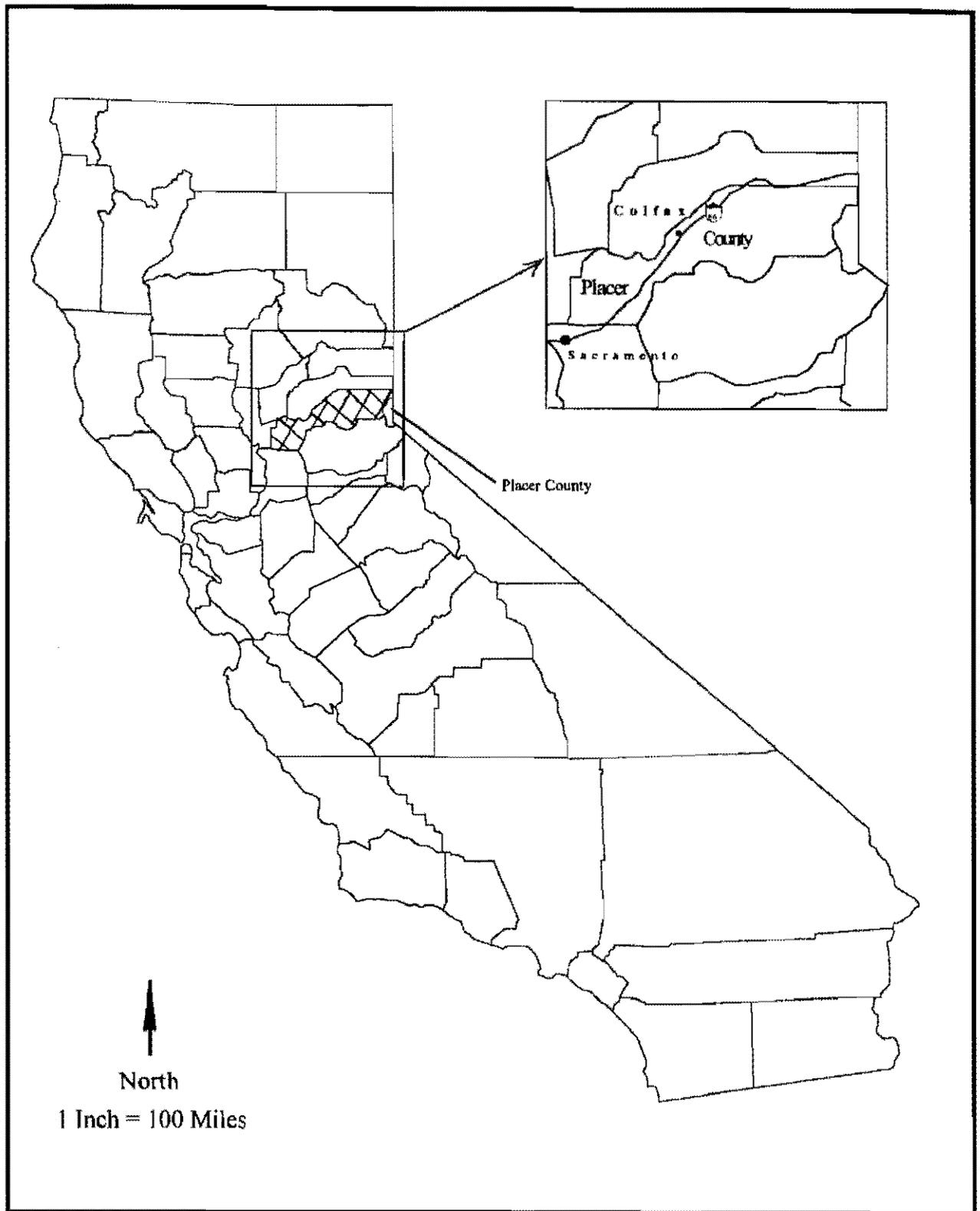
1.1.2 Climate

The climate is quite mild in the Colfax area. Temperatures range from lows in the twenties in Mid-winter to highs in the 80's and 90's in mid-summer, with an occasional cold snap in December and January and occasional temperatures exceeding 100 degrees in July and August. Precipitation is approximately 40 inches per year, mostly in the form of rain, with occasional snow in the winter months. With the exception of a rare summer shower, most of the precipitation occurs between October and April. Chain control on I-80 is usually at the 4000 to 5000 foot elevation level. However, chain requirements occasionally occur near Colfax.

Colfax is normally out of the winter fog and above valley smog. The air is clear and clean and is inviting to persons suffering from respiratory problems. A number of tubercular

Figure 1-1

City of Colfax and Placer County



Base Map United States Geologic Survey

clinics were established here and to the southwest near Weimar. Air Pollution levels are increasing in the Sacramento Valley which have an increasing adverse impact on the foothills. Air quality regulations established by the State Air Resources Board and programs carried out at both state and local levels have been designed to reduce this threat over the next decade.

1.1.3 History

The town of Illinoistown was established in 1849 in a valley called Alder Grove. It was a supply terminal and transportation hub located on the ridge trail with wagon roads servicing the mining operations to the east and west. There were conflicts with native Indians and a local militia was formed to drive them off the ridge and across the Bear River. The town took on the name of Illinoistown prior to the advent of the transcontinental railroad.

The route taken by railroad surveyors by-passed Illinoistown due to the need for an approach to the summit at a much-higher elevation. Several railroad executives and investors noting the topographic advantages, established a townsite on the railroad by-pass at Colfax, naming it after U.S. Grant's vice-presidential running mate Schayler Colfax. The original town lots sold out in a short time for a total figure of roughly \$7000.

In 1865 the Central Pacific Railroad arrived and built a route east over the summit to Promontory Point, Utah thereby completing the transcontinental railroad. The history and economy of Colfax has been tied closely to the railroad since that time. In 1876 a narrow gage railroad was established between Colfax and Grass Valley. It operated until 1942. The city population in 1875 was estimated at 1,000 persons. The City of Colfax was incorporated as a general law city in 1910.

1.2 Purpose of the General Plan

California Government Code requires each city and county to prepare a general plan. A general plan is defined as "a comprehensive, long-term general plan for the physical development of the county or city, and any land outside its boundaries which in the planning agency's judgement bears relation to its planning." (Government Code Section 65300). The State requires general plans "comprise an integrated, internally consistent and compatible statement of policies for the adopting agency." (Government Code Section 65302).

The general plan has evolved into a clear guide for rational decision making regarding a city or county's long-term physical development. 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.** First, the general plan must be geographically comprehensive. It must apply through out the entire incorporated area and it should include other areas that the City determines 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.** The general plan must fully integrate its separate Elements and relate them to each other without conflict.
- **The General Plan Must Be Long-Range.** The general plan shall be a long-term perspective. The general plan is a dynamic document because it is based on needs, all of which continually change. An on-going review and evaluation process enables the Plans' time-horizon to be extended regularly. However, any adjustments to the General Plan require and amendment. Local governments may not amend any one of the mandatory elements of the general plan more than four times in one calendar year (Government Code Section 65358[b]).

The major purpose of the general plan is to serve as the Constitution of the City. As such all ordinances, resolutions and development approvals must be consistent with the goals, policies and objectives of the plan. It is also used as a starting point for City plans and procedures such as capital improvement planning, building code enforcement, subdivision map review, zoning changes, environmental reviews of projects, and specific plan development.

The Colfax General Plan 1980-2000 was adopted in February 1981. Prior to that the Colfax General Plan for 1990 was adopted by the City in 1967. An update was prepared in 1978. The city adopted revised "City Policies for Growth and Development" in 1980. The General plan contained herein reflects the previous General Plan and subsequent updates. This General Plan update contains all mandatory Elements along with recommendations for augmenting those Elements and adding optional elements as circumstances dictate.

The City of Colfax General Plan sets forth the goals and policies that will guide future growth in the Colfax Area. The Plan will be used by City staff and City decision makers to review new development to ensure future development will contribute to retaining and improving the character of Colfax as a unique and readily identifiable foothill community.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires the identification and mitigation of environmental impacts resulting from the general plan update. CEQA requirements here have been satisfied by incorporating the environmental impact analysis into the plan text. A CEQA format Initial Study (Appendix G) to this plan keys required CEQA findings to appropriate sections of the Plan.

A Negative Declaration has been prepared and is included with the Initial Study (Appendix G). This document will meet the CEQA guidelines for the Colfax General Plan.

Adopting the General Plan includes the responsibility to implement it, to report on its continuing status, and to communicate with citizens and other agencies regarding the Plan's policies as they affect local decision making.

1.3 Organization of the General Plan

This Plan is organized into a combination of text, maps, tables, and figures. The plan is presented in eight components referred to as Elements. Each Element is presented as a Chapter. The eight Elements are:

- Land Use (LU)
- Circulation (CIR)
- Housing (H) * This is an existing certified element that is already in affect.
- Natural Environment (NE)
- Noise (N)
- Safety (S)
- Community Design (CD)
- Economic (E)

This Plan consists of an officially adopted map (Fig. 2-2) and accompanying text. This text is organized for ease of use and in response to major issues that may confront City decision makers in the near future. Each Element follows a similar format, (except Housing Element) with existing conditions presented first, future conditions and needs presented next, and goals, policies and implementation measures presented last. The goals and policies are presented by topic, not in order of priority. The goals, policies, and implementation measures are the heart of the plan. In following these directives, the City will chart the course of growth and development and will determine the nature of the environment and future character of Colfax.

A Goal is: A general , overall, and ultimate purpose, aim or end toward which the City will direct its efforts.

A Policy is: A specific statement of principle or of guiding actions which implies clear commitment but is not mandatory. It is a general direction that the City will follow in order to meet its goals and objectives by undertaking specific action programs. The word "shall" makes mandatory those policies in which it appears.

An Implementation Measure is : An action, activity, or strategy carried out in response to an adopted policy to achieve a specific objective.

Policies and implementation measures establishes the "who", "how", and "when" for carrying out the "what" and "where" of goals to which the City aspires.

1.4 Legal Authorization For The Plan

This plan addresses the legal requirements under Government Code Section 65302 et. al. Table 1-1 identifies the legal requirements and where they can be found in this document.

The **Land Use Element (LU)** designates the general distribution, location and extent of land uses, including housing, business, industry, open space, agriculture, natural resources, recreation, scenic areas, public grounds, waste disposal facilities and other uses. It also includes standards of population density and building intensity for the area covered by the plan. It also identifies areas subject to flooding. (Government Code Section 65302[a]). This element also addresses current economic programs that work to maintain and enhance economic development opportunities within the City.

The **Economic Element (E)** allows decision makers to maintain resources to retain and assist local businesses and attract new industry that will increase the City's tax base and support efforts to strengthen and diversify the local economy.

The **Circulation Element (CIR)** consists of the general location and extent of existing and proposed major thoroughfares, transportation routes, terminals and other local public facilities and utilities. (Government Code Section 65302[b]).

The **Housing Element (H)** consists of identification, analysis of existing and projected housing needs, statement of goals, policies, quantified objectives, scheduled programs for the preservation, improvement, and development of housing. The Housing Element is also required to identify sites for housing, including rental housing, factory built housing, mobile homes, and should provide for existing and projected needs of all economic segments of the community. (Government Code Section 65583).

The **Noise Element (N)** quantifies the community noise environment for short and long term growth and traffic activities, and guides the land use element in achieving noise compatible land uses. State noise standards are followed in identifying noise sources and plotting noise levels. (Government Code Section 65302[f]).

Table 1-1
City of Colfax
General Plan Section *

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS	LU	CIR	H	NE	N	S	CD	E
63502(a) Land Use Element	X							
65302(a) Circulation Element		X						
65583 Housing Element			X					
65583 (a) Housing Needs			X					
85583 (b) Implementation Housing Dev. Goals, Policies & Objectives			X					
665583 (c) Public Participation			X					
65583 (a) (4) and (5) Constraints			X					
65583 (a) Energy Conservation			X					
65584 New Construction Needs			X					
65588 (a) and (b) HCD Guidelines			X					
65302 (d) Conservation Element				X				
65302 (e) Open Space Element				X				
65560 (b) Local Open Space Plan				X				
65302 (f) Noise Element					X			
65302 (g) Safety Element						X		
65303 Elective Elements							X	X

* LU = Land Use
N = Noise

CIR = Circulation
S = Safety

H = Housing
E = Economic

NE = Natural Environment
CD = Community Design

The **Natural Environment Element (NE)** is a collaborative element that fulfills the statutory requirements of both the Open Space and Conservation Elements. The **Open Space Element** plans for the comprehensive and long range preservation and conservation of open space lands. Open space lands include unimproved land or water, which is for the preservation of natural resources for the managed production of resources for outdoor recreation, or public health and safety. (Article 10.5, Government Code Section 65302[e], 65560, 65563). The **Conservation Element** addresses the conservation, development and utilization of natural resources including water, forests, soils, rivers and other waters, fisheries, wildlife, minerals and other natural resources. (Government Code Section 65302[d]).

The **Safety Element (S)** recommends measures to protect the community from fires, earthquakes, geologic hazards, including evacuation routes, water supply requirements, minimum road widths, and clearances around structures, (Government Code Section 65302[g]).

The **Community Design Element (CD)** is intended to influence the physical form of the community by enhancing and preserving the unique characteristics of the community. This element proposes specific design criteria be incorporated into development projects. (i.e. historic preservation of the downtown and general guidelines for new development).

1.5 Implementation of the General Plan

This document supercedes the 1980 Colfax General Plan. The plan covers the area within the city limits of Colfax and within its Sphere of Influence and Planning Area. It is the product of community scoping sessions held by the City Planning Commission, input from city staff, and local input provided through public meetings and workshops. The process for adoption of this plan is review of the Draft General Plan by the Planning Commission, City Staff and adopted by the City Council.

The Colfax General Plan should be consulted in making all major decisions affecting the community. It should be updated when decisions makers wish to alter the rate or direction of ongoing changes in the community. State Law permits up to four General Plan Amendments per year (Government Code 65358[b]). Most amendments propose a change in the land use designation of a particular property. As time goes on, the City may decide it is necessary to revise portions of the text to reflect changing circumstances or philosophy. State law provides direction to the Planning Department to report annually to the City Council on "the status of the plan and progress in its implementation" (Government Code 65400[b]).

The General Plan may assist in many areas of decision making including the preparation of precise plans for city services and infrastructure, the development of capital improvement programs, administration of the zoning ordinance, implementation of subdivision standards and other development regulations, enforcing building codes and municipal code ordinances that affect land use, conducting environmental impact review of proposed projects, and determining interagency perspectives on matters affecting the future of Colfax.

The General Plan can also act as a foundation for adoption of specific plans for selected areas of the City in order to promote economic development, adequate housing or other desired objectives.

State Law addresses procedures for amending the General Plan.

1. Prior to filling an official application for a General Plan Amendment, the prospective applicant or his or her agent should discuss it with the City's Planning Officer. This gives the applicant a first hand opportunity to find out the details of the amendment process, as well as any concerns the City may have about the proposed changes.

2. The next step is to file an official application with the Planning Department and pay the required processing fees. All applications for changes in land use designation should be accompanied by a development plan or sufficient detail to ascertain the potential impacts of the project on the site and surrounding area.
3. Environmental review in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) will be conducted for every General Plan Amendment. CEQA action may be approval of a Negative Declaration or of an Environmental Impact Report.
4. The proposal for a General Plan amendment is placed on the agenda of the City Planning Commission for a public hearing. Applications may be processed concurrently.
5. The City Planning Official will provide to the Commission and the applicant a staff report which recommends approval or denial of the Amendment. State law requires that any decision concerning the General Plan Amendment must be supported by finding of fact. While specific findings may be applied on a project-by-project basis, at least the following standard findings should be made for each General Plan Amendment:
 - A. The proposed amendment is deemed to be in the public interest.
 - B. The proposed amendment is consistent and compatible with all other elements of the General Plan and the implementation measures.
 - C. The potential impacts of the proposed amendment have been assessed and have been determined not to be detrimental to the public health, safety and welfare.
 - D. The proposed amendment has been processed in accordance with applicable provisions of the California Government Code and the California Environmental Quality Act.

City initiated amendments, as well as amendments requested by other agencies, are subject to the same basic process and requirements described above in order to insure consistency and compatibility with the plan.

Although local governments may not amend any of the mandatory elements of the general plan more than for times in one calendar year, this limitation does not apply to the following:

1. Optional elements;

2. Amendments requested and necessary for affordable housing (Government Code Section 65358[c]);
3. Any amendment necessary to comply with a court decision in a case involving the legal adequacy of the general plan (Government Code Section 65358 [d][1]);
4. Amendments after January 1, 1984, to bring a general plan into compliance with an airport land use plan (Government code Section 65302.3);
5. Amendments required in connection with adoption of a comprehensive development plan under the Urban Development Incentive Act (Health and Safety Code Section 56302[d]); or
6. Government Code Section 65358(b) provides that each amendment may include more than one change to the general plan. Case law established that each of the permitted amendments within a calendar year may encompass several different changes (Karlson v. City of Camarillo (1980) 100 Cal. App. 3d 789. See also, 66 Ops. Cal. Atty. Gen 258 (1983).

1.6 Overall Goals and Objectives

The major all inclusive goals of this plan are presented here. These goals guide Colfax's development for the next twenty years.

- Maintain and improve the quality of life in Colfax by creating a better physical living environment (CD)
- Maintain and attract employment for Colfax residents. (E)
- Ensure that new development is self supporting, high quality and compatible with the City. (CD)
- Provide a safe and efficient circulation system and maintain acceptable traffic service levels. (CIR)