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# Draft Comprehensive American Canyon 2040 General Plan Update

Countywide Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan Consistency  
Determination for the City of American Canyon 2040 General Plan  
Update # P25-00114  
Airport Land Use Commission Hearing Date (May 7, 2025)



## **TITLE**

General Plan Comprehensive Update, Environmental Impact Report, and Zoning Code Amendment

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The Planning Commission is requested to make the following decisions:

1. A Resolution recommending the City Council of the City of American Canyon (i) Certify the Comprehensive Technical General Plan Update Final Environmental Impact Report (SCH # 2022070038), (ii) Adopt CEQA Findings of Fact and a Statement of Overriding Considerations, and (III) Adopt a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program.
2. A Resolution recommending the City Council of the City of American Canyon adopt the Comprehensive 2040 Technical General Plan Update and Policies to sustain compliance with the 2024 Napa County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan.
3. A Resolution recommending the City Council of the City of American Canyon adopt Zoning Code Amendments to ensure consistency with the General Plan and the 2024 Napa County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan.

## **CONTACT**

Brent Cooper, AICP, Community Development Director

## **BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS**

### **What is a General Plan :**

The General Plan guides the City toward a shared community vision of a Healthy, Equitable, Resilient, and Economically Vibrant community through the Year 2040 and beyond. Since 1990, the California Supreme Court firmly established that the General Plan is the pre-eminent statement of local planning that governs future growth and development. Referring to it as "the constitution for all future development," the General Plan is inherently broad-based because it lays out overarching goals, policies, and actions that guide all government actions.

Our current General Plan was adopted soon after incorporation on November 3, 1994. Over the years, the General Plan has been amended many times - as recently as November 2023. However,

inconsistencies among the elements emerge, and some policies have become outdated. The proposed Comprehensive General Plan Update addresses current local and regional conditions, as well as changes in State law that may not have been in effect when the General Plan was originally adopted.

With a legally adequate General Plan in place, the City can systematically implement its vision through regulatory tools such as Specific Plans, Zoning Ordinances, and Design Guidelines, as well as immediate-term projects like Land Subdivisions, Design Permits, Conditional Use Permits, and Public Works Capital Improvement Programs.

The proposed 2040 Technical General Plan Update is organized into the following elements: Land Use; Housing; Mobility; Utilities; Public Services and Facilities; Environment, Parks, and Recreation; Safety; and Environmental Justice. Together, these elements cover all topics required to be included in a General Plan under State law. Additional elements may be added in the future as resources and priorities arise. A copy of the General Plan is included as Attachment 2, Exhibit A. A graphic prepared by the League of California Cities illustrates the General Plan and its relationship to mid- and short-range policy actions. See Attachment 4. You can read more about the Purpose and Use of a General Plan in the Introduction Chapter of the General Plan. The General Plan is available in Attachment 2, Exhibit A.

#### **General Plan Study Areas:**

California state law requires the study area to include the City limits plus any land outside its boundaries, in the planning agency's judgment, that bears relation to its planning " (Gov. Code § 65300). Consistent with State Law, there are several geographical areas that influence long-term planning. These include the following:

- **City Limits.** This is the boundary within the incorporated city limits. Land Use policies in American Canyon are adopted by the City Council. Except for property owned and operated by the Federal Government or State of California and their agencies (i.e.: Caltrans, Napa Valley Unified School District), American Canyon has land use authority over all land within its city limits.
- **Sphere of Influence.** The Napa Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) establishes the Sphere of Influence (SOI), which defines the probable physical boundary and service area of a local agency. The SOI includes incorporated and unincorporated areas where the City has or plans to have responsibility to provide public facilities and services. In most situations, property must be located in the SOI before it can be annexed into the City limits. The City's SOI was approved by LAFCO at the time of incorporation in 1992 and updated periodically since then. The most recent update was in 2015 in association with the Canyon Estates annexation.
- **Urban Limit Line.** The City Council adopted a voter-initiated Urban Limit Line (ULL) around the

city in 2008. Negotiated with Napa County in 2008, the ULL extends beyond the City's SOI. The ULL boundary represents an agreement between the City and County over the City limits to the Year 2030, after which the ULL expires. The General Plan contemplates extending the existing ULL indefinitely and designates the Hess/Laird Property northeast of the City's current ULL as a ULL Study Area.

- **General Plan Planning Area.** The General Plan Planning Area encompasses the City of American Canyon Water and Sewer Service areas. Napa County has land use authority outside the City Limits, however, as the Water and Sewer Service provider, the City has authority over these services. For this reason, the Water and Sewer Service areas bear relation to the City's planning consistent with Government Code Section 65300.

A map published by LAFCO depicts the City in grey, the SOI with a solid black line, and the ULL with a dashed red line. See Attachment 5. A map depicting the City's General Plan Planning Area is included as Attachment 6.

#### **General Plan Update Scope:**

The General Plan update effort began in December 2019 with Mintier Harnish as the project manager. Later on, Rincon Associates joined the team. Over these years, numerous significant activities influenced the proposed General Plan. A summary of important milestones are listed below:

- January 2020 - The City Council established an advisory committee for Lifelong Learning and the West Side Roadway Connector. Numerous meetings helped shape policies in the 2040 General Plan.
- January 2020 - The City Council amended the General Plan to update the Citywide Bicycle Master Plan. This plan remains in the 2040 General Plan along with the Pedestrian Master Plan, adopted in 2017.
- September 2020 - Significant budget reductions caused by diminished economic activity from the Covid Pandemic necessitated a lower General Plan budget and reduced scope.
- June 2021 - The City Council accepted the West Side Committee's roadway alignment recommendation. See Attachment 7.
- September 2021 - The City Council amended the General Plan to incorporate greenhouse gas and climate change policies into the Land Use Element. This General Plan Amendment enabled an ordinance to prohibit any new gas stations in American Canyon.
- September 2021 - The City Council amended the General Plan to allow multifamily residential development on the east side of Oat Hill. A series of entitlements were approved at that time, and today, apartment construction is well under way.

- January 2022 - City Council modified the scope to address a more technical approach, intended to expedite completion of the General Plan schedule.
- April 2022 - The City Council directed staff to add the Hess/Laird property to the General Plan scope as a Special Study area for potential inclusion in the City's Urban Limit Line.
- June 2022 - The City issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) to begin the environmental review process for the General Plan. The NOP provides a detailed description of the General Plan Update. A copy of the NOP is included in Attachment 8.
- January 2023 - In a joint meeting with the Planning Commission, the City Council approved an update to the Housing Element. In June 2023, the State of California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) certified the Housing Element.
- April 2023 - The City Council amended the General Plan to delete growth control policies that conflicted with State Housing laws.
- August 2023 - The City Council amended the General Plan to accommodate changes to the Watson Ranch Specific Plan.
- September 2023 - The City Council adopted for "Vehicle Miles Traveled" (VMT) standards for new development. Adopting VMT standards is a goal in the NOP scope of work.
- September 2023 - The City Council decided to not amend the NVUSD surplus school sites to a residential zoning district through the General Plan update process.
- November 2023 - The City Council amended the General Plan to accommodate pre-zoning for the Paoli/Watson Lane annexation.
- February 2024 - The City Council certified the Measure K Initiative, establishing ministerial permitting for certain warehouse facilities in American Canyon.
- February 2024 - The City Council approved first-of-its-kind industrial greenhouse gas and commerce center sustainability standard ordinances in the Bay Area.
- September 2024 - The General Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was released for public review.
- October 2024 - The Planning Commission conducted a workshop on the Draft EIR conclusions.
- December 2024 - Napa County Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) adopted an updated

Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) for the County's two airports - Angwin and Napa. This issue is discussed further in the staff report.

- December 2024 - The extended General Plan EIR public review period ends.
- March 2024 - Responses were sent to address comments on the Draft EIR.

#### **General Plan Map and Zoning Map Changes:**

The proposed General Plan Land Use map is included as Attachment 9. This map designates a General Plan land use category to all property within the city limits, sphere of influence, and urban limit line.

Normally, a Comprehensive General Plan Update brings many land use changes. Fortunately, because many significant land use amendments were completed during the General Plan update timeframe, there are few remaining land use changes needed at this time. What is left include General Plan land uses that do not match the existing uses. For example, various creeks are redesignated from Residential to Open Space. Napa Junction Elementary School, Donaldson Way Elementary School, and various parks are redesignated from Residential to Public. Proposed land use changes are shown in Attachment 10.

The General Plan land use changes are paired with zoning map changes. Amending the zoning at the same time as the General Plan maintains consistency between these two documents. A table identifying each parcel earmarked for a zoning map amendment can be found within the Zoning Amendment Resolution included as Attachment 3.

#### **Public Review Draft General Plan Revisions:**

The General Plan was made available for public review in September 2024. During this time, the City received a letter from the Napa County Bicycle Coalition. In addition, City staff conducted its own review. The Napa County Bicycle Coalition comments improved the General Plan.

Nearly all the Napa County Bicycle Coalition recommendations were included in the revised General Plan. One area that staff is unable to accommodate involves the Bike Coalition's recommendations for service standards. Examples include committing to a specific percentage VMT reduction by 2045, completing 50% of our active transportation network by 2040, street sweeping schedules, and similar suggestions.

While staff does not necessarily disagree with the intent and benefits of these standards, they require City Council policy direction related to general plan implementation. We appreciate the time spent by the Napa County Bicycle Coalition to improve the General Plan. A copy of their letter and staff response is included as Attachment 11.

The draft General Plan has been renamed "Public Review Draft March 2025." The current draft identifies changes to the September Public Review Draft. Deleted text is noted with strikethrough. Added text is noted with a double underline. Each change is explained with a Justification note.

### **General Plan Graphic Images:**

Apart from the content itself, there are a number of placeholder graphics throughout the General Plan. Over the past year, the City Communications team has acquired an extensive library of local photos. Prior to the General Plan adoption, staff will review the General Plan graphics and replace "non-local" images with illustrations more representative of life in American Canyon.

### **Napa Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan Update:**

On December 4, 2024, the Napa County Airport Commission (ALUC) adopted a new Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) for the County's two airports - Angwin and Napa. The 2024 Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) updates and entirely replaces the 1991 ALUCP amended in December 1999 (1999 ALUCP). Much like our General Plan, the need for the comprehensive update arose primarily because of a ALUC desire to bring the plan up to current standards, reflect current airport layout plans (ALPs), and address stakeholder needs.

The primary function of the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) is to ensure compatibility between Napa and Angwin Airports and future land use development in their surrounding areas. The plan achieves this by establishing a set of compatibility criteria for new development around each airport.

The ALUCP is a complex regulatory document because it considers many different land use scenarios in the vicinity of each airport. A land use compatibility zone map that corresponds to safety generally associated with aircraft patterns around the airport is a primary tool to regulate building occupancy and land uses within the airport influence area. The Napa Airport land use compatibility zone map is an exhibit in the new Zoning Code Chapter 19.55 Airport Land Use Compatibility (Attachment 3, Exhibit B).

The Land Use Compatibility Zone map divides the airport influence area into Zones A through E. Zone A is the most restrictive, and Zone E is the least restrictive. In American Canyon, most areas of the City are located well outside the most restrictive areas close to the airport. In our industrial districts located south of Napa Airport, the warehouse, logistics and office uses meet the building occupancy standards. Under the new plan there is no significant change anticipated to occupancy limitations on new development.

The areas of American Canyon, generally south of the warehouses off Green Island Road, and north and east of Oat Hill were located in Zone D of the former Airport Compatibility Plan. Under the former plan, Zone D was considered an aircraft noise impact area and housing was considered incompatible.

The new plan updated aircraft noise contours and concluded that very low density and higher density housing is compatible in the southern areas of the former Zone D. Today, the new ALUCP designates this area as Zone D2. Zone D2 covers the vacant properties between Eucalyptus Drive and Green Island Road, the Paoli/Watson Annexation area, and the Hess/Laird properties, among others. Allowance of residential uses in the former Zone D opens up new opportunities for vacant properties within the General Plan study area. Amendments to the General Plan, should it be considered, would occur *after* this current General Plan update is complete.

For now, because the Napa Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan extends into American Canyon, State Law requires our General Plan to be revised within 180 days of the ALUCP adoption. The 180-day deadline will occur on June 2, 2025. To meet this deadline, the General Plan update adopts the ALUCP as a standalone document into the General Plan and adds policy amendments. The ALUCP may be viewed in Attachment 1, Exhibit B. The ALUCP policy amendments may be viewed in the Land Use Element, Goal LU-9 and the Safety Element, Goal S-6.

State Law also requires the Zoning Ordinance be consistent with the ALUCP. To provide this consistency, the Zoning Code Amendment includes a new Municipal Code Chapter 19.55 - Airport Land Use Compatibility. This new zoning chapter provides further consistency with the ALUCP. The new Chapter 19.55 can be viewed in Attachment 3, Exhibit B.

Amendment of the General Plan, including policies to bring the General Plan and Zoning into conformance with the ALUCP requires a conformance review by the ALUC. Administered by Napa County staff, we will submit the General Plan and Zoning Code update to ALUC shortly after the Planning Commission hearing. The project schedule contemplates a conformance determination by the ALUC prior to City Council action on the EIR, General Plan and Zoning Code Amendments.

#### **California Environmental Quality Act:**

The General Plan Update is subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), a state law enacted in 1970. CEQA requires all public agencies to identify and disclose potentially significant environmental effects of land use projects and to avoid or mitigate those effects if feasible.

The 2040 Technical General Plan Update Environmental Impact Report (EIR) examines the potential environmental effects of the proposed General Plan and subsequent activities, such as zoning code amendments and approval of development proposals throughout the City.

The EIR evaluates numerous environmental issues and categorizes each potential impact under one of four levels of environmental significance:

1. **No Impact:** The proposed plan would have no effect on environmental conditions or would reduce existing environmental problems or hazards.
2. **Less than Significant.** An impact that may be adverse but does not exceed the threshold levels



and does not require mitigation measures. However, mitigation measures that could further lessen the environmental effect may be suggested if readily available and easily achievable.

3. **Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated.** An impact that can be reduced to below the threshold level with reasonably available and feasible mitigation measures. Such an impact requires findings under Section 15091 of the CEQA Guidelines.
4. **Significant and Unavoidable.** An impact that cannot be reduced to below the threshold level with reasonably available and feasible mitigation measures. Such an impact requires a Statement of Overriding Considerations to be issued if the proposed plan is approved pursuant to Section 15093 of the CEQA Guidelines.

Fortunately, the General Plan is anticipated to cause only two significant and unavoidable environmental impacts:

**1. Construction Noise.** Construction noise will temporarily exceed limits in the Noise Ordinance. Although noise may exceed standards, many measures can be taken to reduce noise to the greatest extent possible, including measures that will reduce noise from non-construction activities. Table ES-1 in the Draft EIR identifies these measures. See Attachment 1, Exhibit A.

**2. Vehicle Miles Traveled.** Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) measures the distance people travel. Typically, automobile travel is inefficient because many of us travel alone in cars. As a result, transportation is a major source of greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change. Smart growth policies, such as improving transit, creating safer ways to walk and bike to frequent destinations, and reducing the distance between homes and shopping or employment can reduce VMT.

American Canyon adopted a Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Policy in 2023, aiming to reduce per capita vehicle transportation use by 19 percent. The good news is that smart growth policies in the updated General Plan reduce non-residential (employee) VMT by nearly 33%, exceeding the 19% reduction goal. However, citywide residential VMT is forecasted to be reduced by only 4.4%, falling short of the 19% reduction goal. Continued efforts to provide services near residents and economic development efforts to bring more jobs closer to American Canyon residents will help reduce VMT in the long term.

Because the General Plan Update creates two significant and unavoidable impacts, the Planning Commission will be requested to recommend the City Council adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations which is contained in Attachment 1, Exhibit E.

### **Economic Development:**

A General Plan promotes economic development by providing a framework for future growth, including land use, infrastructure, and housing. This framework attracts businesses and creates a stable environment for economic activity.

The original General Plan included an Economic Development Element, but its policies are now outdated. Due to Covid-era budget limitations, a new Economic Development Element was removed from the General Plan scope. While an Economic Development Element can be useful, an updated General Plan that complies with State Law is itself a powerful tool for spurring economic development. For example, a General Plan that highlights American Canyon's intrinsic appeal can attract economic activity.

What makes American Canyon an attractive location for economic activity? The City's contribution to economic activity is good governance. Good governance means implementing the General Plan through the following public services:

- Specific Plans (such as Watson Ranch and Broadway District),
- CEQA Streamlining with Program EIRs (such as the General Plan EIR),
- Online permitting,
- Responsive development application review times,
- Cost-effective infrastructure implementation (including parks, trails, roadways, and utilities),
- Strong public safety,
- Robust recreation and active transportation measures,
- Environmental stewardship and climate adaptation,
- Support for public schools and lifelong learning,
- Inclusive community outreach and participation,
- Extensive community partnership,
- A balanced municipal budget, and much more.

Policies addressing these and other issues, when implemented earnestly, will enhance American Canyon as an attractive place to do business, thereby furthering economic development in our City.

#### **General Plan Review Schedule:**

The General Plan Update schedule would complete the update and associated zoning code amendments before the the City's next Fiscal Year, which begins July 1. Listed below is the schedule:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Hearing Body</b>	<b>Hearing Type</b>
03.27.25	Planning Commission	EIR, General Plan & Zoning Public Hearing
04.02.25	OSATS Commission	General Plan & Zoning Recommendation
04.10.25	Parks & Community Services Commission	General Plan & Zoning Recommendation
04.15.25	City Council	EIR, General Plan & Zoning Workshop
05.07.25	Napa County ALUC	General Plan & Zoning Conformance
05.20.25	City Council	EIR, General Plan & Zoning Public Hearing
06.03.25	City Council	Zoning Final Reading Consent

## **COUNCIL PRIORITY PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS**

Organizational Effectiveness: "Deliver exemplary government services."

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

The cost to prepare the General Plan Update project is included in the current and proposed Citywide budget.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The City of American Canyon prepared an Environmental Impact Report (EIR – State Clearinghouse No. 2022070038) for the General Plan Update Project in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act.

## **ATTACHMENTS:**

- 1 PC CEQA Reso General Plan Update
- 1. Exhibit A 2040 General Plan Update DEIR
- 1. Exhibit B 2040 General Plan Update DEIR Appendices
- 1. Exhibit C 2040 General Plan Update FEIR
- 1. Exhibit D MMRP
- 1. Exhibit E CEQA Findings and SOC\_Final
- 2. PC Reso General Plan Update
- 2. Exhibit A 2040 General Plan Update
- 2. Exhibit B ALUCP
- 3. PC Zoning Resolution
- 3. Exhibit A Chapter 19.55 Airport Land Use Compatibility
- 4. General Plan Graphic
- 5. City SOI and ULL Map
- 6. General Plan Study Area Map
- 7. West Side Connector
- 8. EIR Notice of Preparation (NOP) 7-5-22
- 9. General Plan Land Use Map
- 10. General Plan Land Use Amendments
- 11. NCBC Comments