

# CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 DEVELOPMENT HISTORY AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

In 1841 the Mexican Government granted ten square leagues in what is now northern Solano County to Juan Felipe Peña and Manuel Cabeza Vaca. A decade later William McDaniel bought the townsite of Vacaville for three thousand dollars and filed a plat. Vacaville was incorporated in 1892 as a general law city. The economy was based almost entirely on fruit raising until World War II. The climate gave Vacaville's early-ripening fruit an advantage in the market, but lack of irrigation water limited production.

Between 1960 and 1990, the City grew from a population of 10,890 to an estimated April 1, 1990 household population of 62,950 excluding the California Medical Facility, representing a rate of population increase averaging about 4.5 percent per year. Between 1990 and 1999, the rate of growth decreased to a more moderate 3 percent per year for a household population of 80,345 in 1999. This growth initially was caused by expansion of Basic Vegetable Products Company and construction of Travis Air Force Base and the California Medical Facility. More recently, Bay Area job growth, coupled with industrial development in the I-80 corridor, has spurred residential and commercial development. There has been an expansion in the City's regional retail shopping sector and growth in biotechnical firms in the industrial sector. Some of the uses identified with early growth (Basic Vegetable and the Nut Tree Restaurant) have closed. The Basic Vegetable site has been redeveloped into a regional commercial use.

The City has made the transition from a small agricultural community to a suburban city in a major transportation corridor without losing many of the small town qualities that make it an attractive place to live. The hillsides and ridges surrounding the city have been largely preserved, and farming has continued outside the planned urban area.

Looking ahead, Vacaville is entering a new era of "city building," the period when the City will set the physical cornerstones upon which the structure for a mature, economically sound and balanced community will be built. Over the next 20 years, regional population projections prepared by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) indicate that rapid growth will continue in Solano County. The 1980 General Plan was geared to a population holding capacity of 90,000. By contrast, the 1990 General Plan anticipates a population holding capacity of approximately 112,000 (excluding the California Medical Facility and California State Prison, Solano). The City's economic base also is expected to grow and diversify, with job gains expected in the office and technology sectors as well as in government, manufacturing and distribution, health care, retailing and services.

The 112,000 population holding capacity is based upon an average of 2.84 persons per household and assumes that residential densities will occur at the midpoint of the density range within each residential land use category. Table 1-1 shows projected populations

based on densities at the low and high ends of the land use categories. The density of any specific site may be greater or less than the midpoint.

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**TABLE 1-1 COMPARISON OF GENERAL PLAN POPULATION HOLDING CAPACITY**

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<b>Land Use Density Assumption</b>	<b>Household Population at Plan Buildout<sup>a</sup></b>
Mid-point of Range□	111,500□
High-end of Range□	120,000□
Low-end of Range□	100,500□

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Note: a Excludes California Medical Facility (CMF) and California State Prison Solano (CSPS).

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## 1.2 NATURE AND FUNCTION OF THE GENERAL PLAN

This General Plan is a comprehensive update of the 1980 General Plan. It embodies policies for land use, circulation, community facilities, and environmental resource management. The balance between industrial, commercial and residential use, community identity, traffic, parks, and open space are the leading development issues. General Plan policies are designed to address each of these issues by establishing *Guiding Policies* that state the City's philosophy and *Implementing Policies* that represent its commitment to action. The Plan seeks to resolve apparent conflicts between stated community priorities, such as the desires to both provide sites for industry and housing and retain open space, or to provide for additional commercial development without creating unacceptable traffic impacts.

A General Plan for a city functions much as a constitution for a nation. It is a statement of the community's vision of its ultimate physical development and, to some extent, a guarantee of stability. State law requires each city and county to adopt and maintain a General Plan consisting of seven elements (land use, circulation, housing, open space, safety, conservation and noise) that must be consistent, each with the others. Optional elements, the Parks and Recreation Element (Chapter 4 of the Plan), and the Public Facilities, Institutions and Utilities Element (Chapter 5), also must be internally consistent. In addition to internal consistency requiring that, for example, the Plan's transportation system have sufficient capacity to serve proposed development, City actions must be consistent with its General Plan. Finally, the General Plan should show the City's role in meeting regional housing demand, including the demand for units affordable by households of all income groups.

The Vacaville General Plan consists of a General Plan Diagram (a drawing that shows arrangement and relations of land uses including principal roads) and carefully worded policies, accompanied by explanations needed to make the reasons for the policies clear. The Plan has three purposes:

- To enable the City Council, Planning Commission and Community Services Commission to establish long-range development policies;
- To provide a basis for judging whether specific private development proposals and public projects are in harmony with the policies; and
- To guide other public agencies and private developers in designing projects that are consistent with City policies.

The plan must be:

**Long-range:** However imperfect our vision of the future is, almost any development decision has effects lasting more than 20 years. In order to create a useful context for development decisions, the Plan must look at least that far ahead. This is because substantial development is likely in the Vacaville Planning Area by the end of the planning period.

**Comprehensive:** It must coordinate all major components of the community's physical development. The relationship between land-use intensity and traffic is the most obvious.

**General:** Because it is long-range and comprehensive, the Plan must be general. Neither time nor knowledge exist to make it detailed or specific. The Plan's purpose is to serve as a framework for detailed public and private development proposals. It establishes requirements for additional planning studies where greater specificity is needed before the City can act on development proposals.

Each individual element of the General Plan (maps and text) can be amended as often as four times each year (Gov. Code, Sec. 65361) and should be revised every five to ten years. The Housing Element is a separate document with supporting technical information. Housing Element Policies are found in the body of the General Plan text.

The General Plan is implemented by the weekly decisions of the City Council, Planning Commission, and other decision-makers, as required by the zoning and subdivision ordinances, specific and redevelopment plans, and the City's capital improvement program.

The Zoning Ordinance includes detailed use classifications and standards. The zoning map must be consistent with the General Plan map, but will not be identical to it, particularly in areas where changes in use are anticipated during the time period of the General Plan. The General Plan text includes policies that will require revisions to current zoning regulations.

### **1.3 THE VACAVILLE PLANNING AREA**

State planning law directs each jurisdiction to include in its General Plan "any land outside its boundaries which, in the planning agency's judgment, bears relation to its planning" (Gov. Code, Sec. 65300). Based on that direction, the Vacaville Planning Area includes approximately 100 square miles. The Planning Area includes land outside the Sphere of Influence or "probable ultimate physical boundaries and service area of a local governmental agency," as currently designated by the Solano County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). Figure 1-1 shows the overall area and the planning sectors as well as the City limits. The current Sphere of Influence is shown on Figure 2-3. If urban services are to be extended to outside the City's existing urban area, Vacaville is the only logical municipal provider.

General Plan policies represent the City's statements for the desired development of its entire Planning Area. Land inside and outside the corporate boundary is treated equally. Unless stated otherwise, all Plan policies refer to the entire Planning Area or specified individual subareas, regardless of the agency having jurisdiction at the time of Plan adoption.

### **1.4 USING THE PLAN**

The General Plan is intended to save the reader's time through clear organization and concise statement of City policies. The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on the General Plan is published in a separate volume, as is the full text of the Housing Element. Both the Plan and EIR include cross-references to policies and data sources.

The General Plan Diagram (in the pocket at the back of this volume) depicts the future land use and circulation pattern envisioned by the City. Vacaville's General Plan Diagram is a view of the City in its built-out state; phasing and annexation policies and standards will govern expansion beyond the current City limits.

The Diagram must be used in conjunction with the Plan text. The Land Use Classifications Section explains the Diagram's legend and specifies density and intensity ranges for each category. Policies throughout the Plan more fully express the City's intent for each category. A glossary at the end of the General Plan defines technical terms.

Two types of policies are included in the Plan: Guiding Policies are the City's statements of its goals and philosophy; Implementing Policies represent commitment to consistent actions. Implementing Policies are as specific as is appropriate given the City's current level of knowledge and agreement on each policy issue. These policies will provide direct guidance on City actions and decisions. Adopted policy statements are printed in roman type in the Plan. Italicized text is used to further explain policies and the implementation status.

The seven elements of the Vacaville General Plan are grouped into three sections: Land Use and Circulation, Housing, and Environmental Management. The Land Use and Circulation Section includes three required elements: the Land Use Element (Chapter 2), the Open Space Element (Chapter 3), and the Transportation Element (Chapter 6). It also includes the two optional elements: the Parks and Recreation Element (Chapter 4), and the Public Facilities, Institutions, and Utilities Element (Chapter 5). The Environmental Management Section includes three required elements: the Conservation Element (Chapter 8), the Safety Element (Chapter 9), and the Noise Element (Chapter 10). The seventh required element of the General Plan is the Housing Element, which is summarized in the Housing Section (Chapter 7). Chapter 11, Implementation, excerpts and summarizes all of the implementation actions presented in other sections.

Text and policies within each element are organized by subject, with cross references where policies on that subject are found in another chapter. These are intended to lessen confusion resulting from the overlapping requirements of Plan Elements required by State law.

The City has no obligation to approve projects at the maximum permitted density for any category. Text policies may limit development on particular sites in ways not apparent from the Plan diagram. For example, Plan policies protecting natural habitat or preventing flooding may prevent designated densities or intensities from being reached on some parcels. Likewise, policies requiring maintenance of traffic levels of service or elevation limits on water service will affect development potential. Determinations on questions such as these will be influenced by the actions of special districts, and state and federal agencies as well as by the City.

The classifications cover both public and private development, and serve as a guide for zoning. Zoning regulations must be consistent with the Plan, but need not be identical to it. Because of the scale of the Plan, and the mix of existing development types, development on some small sites (less than one acre in size) may not be specifically designated. For such sites, the specific interpretation of the land use designation shall be made as part of the zoning process. The policies of the General Plan shall serve as the basis of any such determination.

The General Plan Diagram is intended to be a general illustration of the policies of the General Plan. The Diagram is not intended to reflect every policy direction, and review of Plan policies is necessary to determine precise land use potential of any site. Should there be any apparent conflict between the Land Use Diagram and Plan policies, it is intended that Plan policies provide the guiding direction.

## **1.5 1990 GENERAL PLAN REVISION PROCESS**

The 1990 General Plan planning process started with an assessment of existing conditions and future prospects. Then, following community meetings, issues and planning options were identified and analyzed. Sketch plans showing different development patterns and alternative growth areas were prepared and compared in terms of traffic generation, utilities requirements, economic and fiscal effects and environmental consequences. Working papers were prepared to guide meetings of the General Plan Committee. These were structured to facilitate reaching consensus on many planning issues and proposals affecting specific development sites within the Planning Area.

The General Plan Committee (composed of the members of the City Council, Planning Commission, and two members of the Community Services Commission) provided policy direction on the proposed General Plan. Community participation was achieved through community sector forums, more than two dozen public General Plan Advisory Committee meetings and three cable television call in shows where issues were discussed by staff and the City's consultant.

Workshops and meetings were well-attended by persons who represented the full spectrum of community interests: homeowners, renters, seniors, open-space advocates, landowners, developers, merchants, major employers, realtors, and representatives of public agencies. Working papers and sketch plan maps were available for public review at City Hall and the library.

In addition to the public meetings and forums noted above, there were additional presentations to local interest groups, neighborhood meetings, special meetings, events and newsletters to reach out to the citizens of Vacaville.

## **1.6 1999 GENERAL PLAN REVISION PROCESS**

Since plan adoption in 1990, a number of amendments have been adopted and incorporated into the body of the text. Amendments have been listed at the end of each chapter and consist of numerous minor land use designation and density changes, policy guidance for the Lower Lagoon Valley Policy Plan and North Village Specific Plan and policy and diagram changes to achieve conformity with the West Valleys referendum. In addition, technical update amendments to keep the document current were processed periodically to reflect General Plan Implementation actions such as adoption of the Land Use and Development Code and the Master Water Agreement with the Solano Irrigation District, as well as other alterations to the base conditions under which the plan was prepared.

In 1999, at City Council direction, a technical update of the 1990 General Plan was prepared. It was limited to revisions in factual information such as population and housing data, status of public facilities that were constructed in 1990 (schools, parks, roads, sewer and water etc.) and revisions necessary to be consistent with other policy documents.

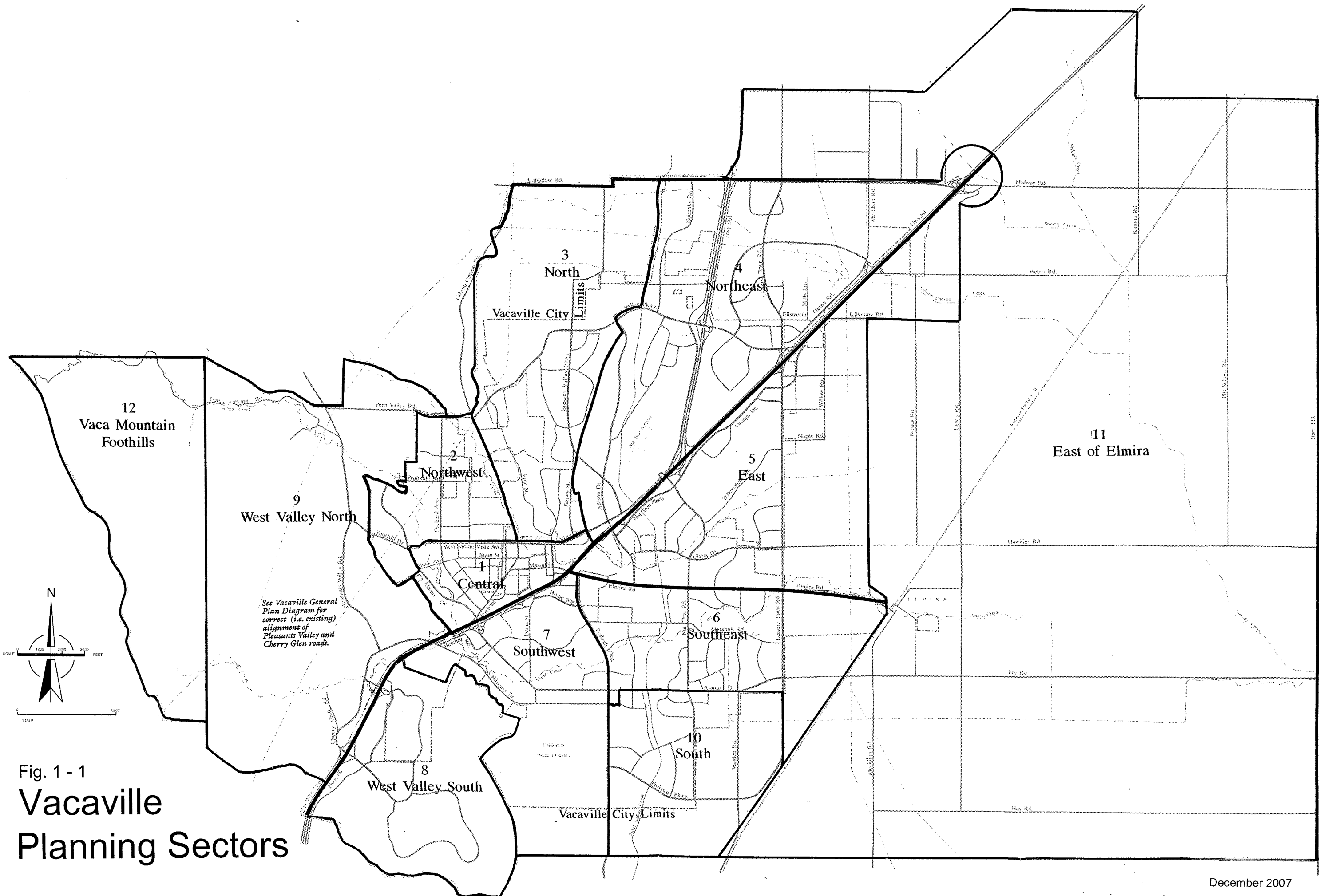
This strategy was adopted because, although the City was at the halfway point in the 1990-2010 time frame for the General Plan, it had built out less than half the vacant lands that existed at the time of adoption. The relevancy of the General Plan has been maintained by this slower rate of development, implementation of policy directives in the 1990 General Plan and absence of significant events or physical changes to alter the premises upon which the 1990 General Plan was based.

The next anticipated state mandated policy analysis will occur in July 2001 when the City updates its Housing Element.

**Amendments and Corrections to the Introduction:**

March 26, 1991                      Resolution No. 1991 - T - 2. Amendment to Figure 1-1 to include Spring Lane Phase 2 in the Central Sector. (GP-1-91)

November 9, 1999                      Resolution No. 1999-143. Miscellaneous revisions to the 1990 General Plan.



See Vacaville General Plan Diagram for correct (i.e. existing) alignment of Pleasant Valley and Cherry Glen roads.

Fig. 1 - 1  
**Vacaville  
 Planning Sectors**