



# GOVERNANCE

*Final*

## PURPOSE

The purpose of the Governance Element is to provide an understanding of the governing structure in Amador County and its relationship to land use and planning. Governance is broader than regulatory authority; it also describes how the County interacts with its citizens, as well as with State, federal, and local agencies and organizations to carry out policies in this General Plan.

State law does not require counties to address governance within their general plans. However, citizen involvement in government is fundamental to Amador County's character, economic vitality, and local history. Land use and other decisions guided by the General Plan principally address orderly residential, commercial, and industrial growth. The General Plan also guides Amador County's future course of action on a variety of related and critical topics, including agriculture, timber production, mining, hunting, and fishing, water resources, and tourism.

Amador County has a tradition of relying on public participation and involvement to ensure successful and meaningful land use decisions, as well as the stewardship, use, and conservation of natural resources. The goals and policies of the Governance Element define and build upon Amador County's history of civic involvement and community vision.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Governance Element includes the following sections:

- **Amador County Government.** This section describes the structure of Amador County's government, including responsibilities of the Board of Supervisors, the Planning Commission, the County Administrative Officer, County Counsel, and County departments responsible for implementing the General Plan.
- **Local, State, and Federal Agencies.** This section briefly describes other local, state, and federal agencies which operate in Amador County, and describes how these agencies interact with the County relative to land use decisions.
- **Planning in Amador County.** This section summarizes the legal basis for land use planning in California, and a summary of how this process is applied in Amador County.



- **Issues, Goals, and Policies.** This section builds on the background information presented in earlier sections to define Amador County's approach to interactions with its citizens and other government agencies.

## AMADOR COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Amador County is governed by a five-member Board of Supervisors (Board) elected by qualified voters residing in Amador County and a County Administrative Officer (CAO) who receives direction from the Board. This form of governance is provided for in California's constitution. The following sections describe how the County has organized its local system of governance, and how each part relates to one another.

### *Board of Supervisors*

Each member of the Amador County Board of Supervisors is elected by district on a non-partisan basis. Board members must reside within the district they are elected to represent. Within the broad limits established by the State constitution, the Board exercises both the legislative and the executive functions of government. The Board of Supervisors is also the governing body for a number of special districts within Amador County, such as water, sewer, county service areas, and fire protection. Each of the five members is elected to overlapping four-year terms.

Each of the Supervisors also serves as a member of various advisory committees, on topics such as Agriculture and Natural Resources, Land Use, Tribal Relations, and the Martell and Carbondale Business Parks. Committee recommendations are referred to the full Board for action.

The Board has the authority to make both legislative and quasi-judicial discretionary decisions. Legislative acts are usually general policy decisions, such as general plan revisions and zoning changes, and are binding only when they are approved by the Board. The Planning Commission may make recommendations, but only the Board can approve legislative actions, which are, in-turn, subject to California's initiative and referendum processes. Quasi-judicial decisions apply legislative policy (as established by the Board) to individual developments. In other words, they require discretion and interpretation by local government agencies.

Each Supervisor nominates/submits for approval by the Board of Supervisors, a resident from their district to serve on the County's Planning Commission. Supervisors also hire and direct the County Administrative Officer (CAO). The CAO manages the day to day operation of the County's departments to implement the Board's direction and ensure proper delivery of County services.



### *Planning Commission*

The Planning Commission consists of five members, one from each supervisorial district, nominated by that district's supervisor and approved by the Board as a whole. The Planning Commission holds public hearings and reviews development applications. The Commission makes recommendations to the Board regarding interpretation, updates, and maintenance of the General Plan, county code amendments, zoning changes, variances, and environmental studies and analysis for these projects and actions pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Planning Commission also makes decisions, applying legislative policy established by the Board of Supervisors, on use permits, tentative subdivision maps, tentative parcel maps, and appeals of staff's interpretation and/or enforcement of county codes. The Planning Commission's decisions on these matters are legally binding, but may be appealed to the Board of Supervisors.

### *Other County Commissions*

In addition to the Planning Commission, the Board of Supervisors appoints other public commissions (such as the Commission on Aging) that meet on regular schedules to consider issues of local importance and make recommendations to the Board as needed. Commissioners are Amador County residents who volunteer their time and work to serve their community's interests. The types of commissions have varied over the years, and will continue to vary in the future in response to community objectives and interests. These commissions remain an important opportunity for citizen involvement in County government.

### *County Departments*

Amador County's governing structure includes a variety of departments that carry out the day-to-day business of the County. The General Plan provides policy direction which affects all of the County's departments. Following is a brief description of County departments whose functions have the greatest effect on land use and planning decisions.

**County Counsel:** renders legal advice and provides legal representation on civil matters to County officers, departments, and the Board.

**County Administrative Officer:** directed by the Board; administers all County departments and programs including development and maintenance of the County budget, oversight of County departments, staff support to the Board, and management of specific programs as directed by the Board.



**Assessor:** administers the County's property tax system.

**Building Department:** processes and issues building permits, reviews construction plans in unincorporated Amador County, provides field inspection of projects requiring construction approval, and enforces County and State building codes.

**Environmental Health Department:** supports compliance with State and County regulations regarding control of toxic materials, sewage and solid waste, protection of food and water supply, public bathing areas, nuisance complaints and housing conditions.

**Public Health Department:** supports community health through education and programs, disease prevention, and protection from environmental risk.

**Planning Department** oversees the processing of plans for new development and redevelopment plans; maintains and updates the General Plan; proposes policy for land use; and regulates, monitors and enforces the County Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision, Surface Mining, and other ordinances. The Planning Department processes land use permits and applications, and provides summary reports and recommendations to the Planning Commission and the Board for legislative and quasi-judicial land use and planning decisions.

**Sheriff's Department and Office of Emergency Services:** The Sheriff's Department performs law enforcement functions for the County. The Sheriff's Office of Emergency Services (OES) is responsible for the administration of County emergency management; planning, coordination, response support and communications with all agencies in the event of large scale emergencies or disasters.

**Department of Transportation and Public Works:** provides County roads, bridges, and infrastructure maintenance and construction, waste management oversight, and land development infrastructure, plan review, and inspection. The Department of Transportation and Public Works also is responsible for implementing state fire and life safety regulations.

**Agricultural Commissioner:** provides for the local administration of statewide agricultural enforcement programs that protect the agricultural industry and environment of Amador County. The Agricultural Commissioner also performs a variety of pest management functions, as well as enforcement of pesticide regulations, seed certification, and compilation of crop statistics for the County.

**Amador County Library:** provides a network of community libraries, including a main library, six branch libraries, and outreach services.



## LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCIES

Although the County is solely responsible for many local land use and planning decisions and policy development, numerous issues require Amador County to work together with other local, state, and federal agencies to achieve solutions that benefit County residents and the environment. Following is a description of other local, state and federal agencies operating in Amador County.

### Cities

In addition to County departments and countywide agencies, cities exercise jurisdiction over land within their limits. Five cities are located within Amador County: Amador City, Lone, Jackson, Plymouth, and Sutter Creek. Each city has its own General Plan and zoning regulations. Each city shares an interest with the County regarding future land uses within areas surrounding its established limits. Prior to annexation, such areas are within the land use jurisdiction of Amador County. Following annexation, they are within the land use jurisdiction of the city.

The Amador Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) approves spheres of influence, which may be (SOIs) outside cities. The sphere of influence is a planning document that defines a city's (or a district's) probable future boundary and service area. These SOIs, which are updated every five years following a municipal service review, designate lands which are expected to be annexed into the City in the future. Large lot or rural-style development within SOIs can impede future city annexations, since these types of development typically do not require urban services, or cannot be economically provided with urban services. When Amador LACFO approves amendments to the SOIs outside cities, the County incorporates these revised SOI boundaries into the General Plan land use diagram, with no amendment required to the General Plan.

Although the County does not have authority over land use decisions in the five incorporated cities, residents of these cities do vote for County elected offices, and receive a variety of services from the County. For instance, judicial services (courts), elections, public records (such as deeds), and many health and social services (such as mental health services) are provided by the County in both incorporated and unincorporated areas. In addition, some of the County's cities contract with the County to provide law enforcement and other services within their boundaries.



### *Neighboring Counties*

Neighboring counties, including Sacramento, San Joaquin, Calaveras, El Dorado, and Alpine, also make decisions in their jurisdictions which have the potential to indirectly affect Amador County, including changing traffic patterns and changing demand for commercial services. Their interactions with regional, state, and federal agencies also have potential to affect Amador County's planning process. County officials routinely engage in discussions with our neighbors and monitor their inter-jurisdictional activities to ensure positive outcomes for Amador residents and businesses.

### *Special Purpose Agencies and Districts*

Special purpose agencies and districts advise the County Board of Supervisors and city councils with regard to planning policy and implementation. Although each agency or district has its own Board and executive director, these roles often overlap with elected and appointed County and city positions. Following are descriptions of the special purpose agencies and districts which have direct roles in implementing the General Plan.

**Amador Air District:** local agency responsible for air quality planning and monitoring activities, as well as permitting of commercial and industrial uses.

**Amador County Transportation Commission (ACTC):** Serves as the Regional Transportation Planning Agency for Amador County. ACTC's functions include preparation and implementation of the Countywide Regional Transportation Plan, and allocation of State and federal funds for transportation improvements.

**Amador County Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC):** The Airport Land Use Commission, which is governed by California Public Utilities Code Section 21670, has a basic responsibility to assist the County and cities in ensuring compatible land uses in the vicinity of airports located within the County. The ALUC reviews land use proposals near airports and other land use issues which have the potential to have an effect on airport operations.

**Amador County Recreation Agency (ACRA):** Joint Powers Authority established in October 2003 between City and County governments, as well as several special districts. ACRA operates parks and recreation areas, as well as recreation programs throughout the county.



**Amador Transit:** operates a fleet of 12 buses with weekday service between all major population centers in the County and into downtown Sacramento.

**Amador Water Agency (AWA):** special district which provides water and wastewater services to some residents of Amador County. AWA provides wholesale, treated, and irrigation water to other agencies and districts, as well as providing retail water service directly to customers.

**Amador County Unified School District:** provides K–12 education for approximately 5,000 students throughout the County. Government Code sections 65351 and 65352 define the close working relationship between County government and the school district regarding planning agency decisions, the General Plan, and the potential expansion of existing school sites or the necessity to acquire additional school sites. The school district is an independent agency, and has authority to make land use decisions concerning its facilities independent of the land use authority held by the County or cities.

**Amador Fire Protection Authority:** In 2003, the Amador Fire Protection District, the Sutter Creek , Jackson Valley, and Lockwood Fire Districts, and the cities of Lone, Jackson, and Sutter Creek joined together to form the Amador Fire Protection Authority (AFPA). AFPA coordinates future fire protection planning, mutual aid partnerships, and funding.

**Amador Fire Protection District:** responsible for emergency fire, rescue, and medical aid services in approximately 85 percent of the unincorporated portion of Amador County. Services are provided by volunteer firefighters, through mutual aid agreements with nearby fire districts, and by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. A one-half cent sales tax ballot measure was passed in 2008 to fund some paid firefighting staff.

**Local Utility Special Purpose Districts:** A variety of local utility districts are responsible for providing services such as water and/or sewer service to specific areas. An example is the Pine Grove Community Services District, which provides retail water supply and parks to Pine Grove.

**Amador Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO):** LAFCO is an independent regulatory commission created by the legislature to control the boundaries of cities and most special districts. LAFCO is not a part of County government. a state required independent county commission that is not part of county government. LAFCO is responsible for creating orderly boundaries, managing annexations, approving city incorporations, updating spheres of influence every five years, and reviewing how municipal services are provided throughout the county.

**East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD):** EBMUD provides water service to portions of the Bay Area. EBMUD's primary source of water is



the Mokelumne River, including its reservoirs in Amador County. EBMUD is a large landowner in the County, holding approximately 28,000 acres along the Mokelumne River and Camanche and Pardee Reservoirs. EBMUD has a particular interest in maintaining water quality in Amador County and the Mokelumne River watershed.

### *State Agencies*

Several State agencies have jurisdiction over certain lands in Amador County, or perform functions in the County which affect land use. The County seeks to interact with these agencies in a manner that promotes responsible management of resources while preserving the interests of the County and ensuring that the culture and traditions that define Amador County are maintained. Following are descriptions of the State agencies that routinely interact with the County related to implementation of land use and planning policies.

**California Department of Public Health (CDPH):** responsible for protecting the public from unhealthy or unsafe environments, ensuring access to health services, and responding to public health emergencies. CDPH's responsibilities include regulation of public water systems and residential water treatment.

**California Air Resources Board (CARB):** responsible for coordinating and providing oversight of state and local air pollution control programs in California, and for implementing the provisions of both the California Clean Air Act of 1988 and the California Climate Solutions Act of 2006 (AB 32).

**California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE):** responsible for fighting wildland fires in State Responsibility Areas, which includes most of the unincorporated County (non-federally owned, unincorporated land). A large portion of the County, particularly upcountry, is classified as a high- or very high- fire hazard severity zone. CAL FIRE also reviews and approves Timber Harvest Plans, which are required for timber harvesting conducted on State or privately-owned lands.

**Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR):** prepares CEQA guidelines, provides planning assistance to local agencies, and administers some planning procedural requirements.

**California Department of Water Resources (DWR):** operates the State Water Project, which brings water from Northern California and the Sierra Nevada Mountains to the Central Valley. DWR also coordinates the Inter-Regional Conjunctive Use Project (IRCUP) to provide inter-regional water supply reliability benefits in Amador, Calaveras, and San Joaquin Counties, and within the EBMUD service area.





**California Department of Transportation (Caltrans):** builds and maintains the state highway system. Amador County is located in Caltrans District 10. Caltrans has authority over the state highways within Amador County's boundaries, including SR-16, SR-26, SR-49, SR-88, SR-104, and SR-124. Access to state highways for purposes such as driveways and road connections is controlled by Caltrans, which can affect determinations of what uses or activities are appropriate on adjacent parcels with no other means of access. In addition, the Caltrans Division of Aeronautics permits airports and heliports in California, and is involved in land use decisions for schools.

**California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR):** builds, maintains, and operates correctional facilities and rehabilitation centers throughout the state. In Amador County, CDCR administers Mule Creek State Prison and Preston School of Industry in Lone, and the Pine Grove California Youth Authority Camp.

**California Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW):** makes determinations with the potential to affect land use through streambed alteration permit requirements and enforcement of laws such as the California Endangered Species Act.

**Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB):** regional boards are subdivisions of the California Water Resources Control Board, and are responsible for water quality, wastewater treatment, wetland protection, and surface water allocation rights. Amador County is located in RWQCB Region 5.

**California Department of Conservation (DOC):** responsible for agricultural land conservation, mining and mine reclamation, geological research and mapping, regulation of oil, gas, and energy resources, and recycling. DOC implements the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, which identifies and tracks conversion of important farmland to other uses, and the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA), which requires that each operating mine have a permit, reclamation plan, and financial resources to ensure reclamation.

### *Federal Agencies*

Federal agencies also affect local land use decisions. Federal agencies, including the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service, also manage public land within the boundaries of Amador County. Amador County does not have jurisdiction over federally-owned lands within its boundaries; rather federal agencies have historically made land use decisions affecting these lands independently.

Federal laws, including laws intended to protect air quality, water quality, and endangered species, also affect local land use decisions. The County



seeks to interact with these agencies in a manner that promotes responsible management of resources and preserves the interests of County residents, ensuring that the culture and traditions that define Amador County are maintained.

The actions of federal agencies—including planning, adoption of rules and regulations, acquisition of land or interests in land, promulgation of programs, adjustments of land, and other activities on public lands—can have significant effects on the culture, traditions, economy, and resources of Amador County and its residents.

In order to protect the customs, cultures, economy, resources and environment of the County of Amador as set forth in County policy, the County considers it to be critical that federal agencies recognize and address the effects of any proposed action which would affect land in the County.

Federal coordination with the County, and consideration of the County's interests, is required by law by the National Environmental Protection Act, the National Forest Management Act, the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act, The Federal Land Policy and Management Act, the Federal Administrative Procedures Act, and numerous other federal statutes and administrative procedures.

There is a clear need to establish an effective and consistent joint planning procedure for advance notification, referral, coordination and participation. This joint planning procedure should be followed by all federal agencies when undertaking activities or actions affecting the public health, safety, land use, customs, culture, economy, conservation of natural resources, and environment of Amador County, including its agricultural industry, livestock grazing, production of timber and wood products, water resources, summer cabin usage, access to public lands, mining, tourism, recreation, Native American interests, and hunting and fishing.

The Board expects the following advance notification, referral, coordination and joint participation process to be followed by all federal agencies active in Amador County:

- In accordance with federal law, the Board expects all federal agencies to inform the County of pending, contemplated, or proposed actions affecting local communities, citizens, or affecting County policy. The Board expects that agencies shall coordinate planning and implementation of those actions with the County upon the County's request. Notification of these proposed actions must be timely, and include a description of the proposed action sufficient to permit an informed response by the County and its citizens. These reports shall be provided to the County for review and coordination with sufficient time to prepare a meaningful response.



- Federal agencies must provide notification when documents pertaining to projects or actions in Amador County are available, and these documents must be available for the minimum time set forth by the federal statute for such review. Where there is no minimum review period established by law, the Board has established a review period of 45 days prior to the proposed date of action, adoption, or approval. Any substantive revisions that are proposed shall be processed in the same manner and given the same notification as the original proposal.
- In accordance with federal law, the Board expects that federal agencies shall comply with all applicable procedures, policies and practices required by the State of California and the County of Amador.
- Any citizen or group claiming to be affected by any pending, contemplated, or proposed action of any federal agency is encouraged to present relevant information to the Board.
- The Board may hold hearings on any proposed federal action and may designate staff to receive, review, and comment upon the pending, contemplated, or proposed action on behalf of the Board.
- The Board may decide to seek whatever remedy is available to protect the best interests of the County and its citizens against those federal actions which could adversely affect the custom, culture, economy, resources and environment of Amador County.
- Whenever any federal agency proposes to take any action, including the formation of any policy, which will affect Amador County, the Board may request the federal agency enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the County. The purpose of an MOU is to ensure the agency acts in accordance with the County's needs and priorities. Where the County interacts with federal agencies on a regular and routine basis, the County shall seek to enter into general MOUs to formalize this interaction.

Amador County contains large areas of public lands. The erosion of revenues directly and indirectly attributable to multiple-uses of public lands represents a threat to the County's fiscal stability. Other County concerns related to use of public lands include:

- Need for continued renewal of Forest Service leases for recreational cabins as a valid way of supporting the "multiple use" concept of forest management. The Board supports the continuation of these permits.
- Need for continued road access to public lands for public use, including hunting and fishing. The Board opposes the closure or gating of roads on public lands without County input.



- Need for continued issuance of grazing permits on public lands to allow continuation of agricultural use. The Board supports the continued use of public lands for agricultural activities.

Following is a brief listing of some of the federal agencies which manage public land within the County, may be involved in local land use decisions, or both.

**U.S. Forest Service (USFS):** USFS, part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, manages large tracts of public land, including approximately 78,116 acres in Amador County. The Forest Service's primary task is conservation, but the Service must also accommodate recreation and resource extraction land uses.

**U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM):** BLM, part of the U.S. Department of the Interior, manages public lands, including approximately 9,045 acres of environmentally sensitive open space in Amador County where urban development is not permitted. The BLM balances competing preservation, resource extraction, and recreation uses.

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):** EPA is responsible for a broad range of environmental issues. EPA's primary role in planning is through administration of the Clean Air Act.

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE):** USACE is responsible for large public works projects. USACE most commonly affects land use decisions through its administration of permits to dredge and fill wetlands (Section 404 of the Clean Water Act).

**U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation):** Reclamation, part of the U.S. Department of the Interior, builds and maintains water systems, including the Central Valley Project that brings water from Northern California and the Sierra Nevada Mountain Ranges to the Central Valley.

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS):** USFWS, part of the U.S. Department of the Interior, administers the federal Endangered Species Act, including protection of endangered species habitat.

**U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT):** provides funding for roads and transit facilities throughout the County.

**National Park Service (NPS):** in addition to its administration of national parks, the park service (part of the U.S. Department of the Interior) also administers the National Register of Historic Places, which lists numerous sites and buildings within Amador County.

**Federal Aviation Administration (FAA):** controls airspace in Amador County, including permitting authority for tall towers.



### *Native American Tribes and Rancherias*

California Senate Bill (SB) 18 (2004) requires that the County consult with Native American groups to aid in the protection of traditional tribal cultural places through local land use planning. Pursuant to SB 18 requirements, the County invited representatives of the region's Native American groups to contribute to the General Plan update process, and will continue to seek such interaction with regard to future development proposals.

Federally-recognized Native American tribes can petition to have land taken into trust by the federal government, such as Jackson Rancheria. The Buena Vista Rancheria and the Lone Band of Miwok Indians have sought to have tribal lands established (either under trust status or otherwise as "Indian Country") within the boundaries of Amador County. These lands are not subject to Amador County jurisdiction.

### PLANNING IN AMADOR COUNTY

California has created a legal framework for local land use planning. Most of the state's land use and planning laws are located in the Government Code, Public Resources Code, and Health and Safety Code. California's planning laws are largely procedural; that is, they do not prescribe specific policies for local governments to implement, but rather establish a procedural structure to guide local agencies. This procedural structure creates a uniform planning process throughout the state, but allows local agencies' land use plans and decisions to cater to local conditions and customs. Local governments must follow a detailed set of procedures when adopting land use plans. The General Plan Law, the Subdivision Map Act, and CEQA are three very influential state land use laws affecting Amador County.

California **General Plan Law** requires the County and each of its cities to prepare a general plan, which describes a jurisdiction's vision of future development via policy statements. This law specifies the seven topics (also known as 'elements') required in all general plans,<sup>1</sup> and identifies the general plan review and adoption process. Specific Plans may be created to implement the General Plan within more precise geographic areas of the County.

The **Subdivision Map Act** grants the County the authority to establish regulations regarding land subdivisions. The act establishes procedures that the County must use, but does not require specific designs or public infrastructure improvements. Under the Subdivision Map Act, the County

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<sup>1</sup> Required elements are land use, circulation, housing, safety, conservation, open space, and noise.



has the authority to require improvements, or funding for improvements, such as roads, sewer, and water utilities, prior to granting planning approvals.

The **California Environmental Quality Act** requires public disclosure of potential environmental effects of proposed projects. The County conducts environmental analysis of most public and private development projects, general plan amendments and rezones, specific plans, and subdivision actions. This analysis results in a determination as to whether project implementation would result in one or more negative impacts on the physical environment. CEQA often requires preparation of Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs), Mitigated Negative Declarations, or Negative Declarations. Because CEQA's purpose is disclosure, the County may approve projects found to have significant impacts on the environment which offer other community benefits through adoption of specific findings and a statement of overriding considerations. Amador County serves as a CEQA lead agency for many projects within its jurisdiction, and routinely comments on CEQA documents prepared by other agencies described within this Element.

California **Housing Element Law** requires local governments to consider the housing needs of all income levels in their general plans. Jurisdictions must also demonstrate that their development regulations provide adequate opportunities for housing development to meet the area's housing need. The California Department of Housing and Community Development reviews local housing elements for compliance with state law.

The **Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act** regulates the procedures through which government boundaries, including city limits, spheres of influence, and special district service areas, can be modified. Each county has a Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) which processes these boundary changes.

In addition to these basic planning laws, a number of other laws and regulations can affect local land use planning. For instance, the **Endangered Species Act** can affect land use changes which would limit critical habitat for species which are either listed or being considered for listing as threatened or endangered. **SMARA** governs mining and reclamation of former mines. Voluntary **Williamson Act** contracts require that land remain in agricultural use for 10-year contract terms. In **Timber Production Zones (TPZs)**, lower value is assessed for property taxes, with timber harvesting considered the highest and best use.



### *Amador County's Planning Process*

The County exercises its land use authority through a combination of planning principles, procedures, and documents, as described below. The General Plan outlines the County's vision, goals, and policies for both development and conservation, which are then implemented in more detail in other planning documents, including the Zoning Code, Subdivision Ordinance, and design review guidelines.

The General Plan includes a Land Use Map, which identifies land use designations in the unincorporated County. A general plan land use designation includes information regarding the types of uses which are appropriate, and provides a range of how many dwellings, or how large a commercial or industrial building may be developed on a per-acre basis. For example, a parcel's general plan land use designation might be "Rural Residential," which permits a general range of residential uses on parcels of 1 to 5 acres.

The County's Zoning Code (Title 19 of the County Code) provides much more detailed information about development which is appropriate for a parcel. The example "Rural Residential" parcel described above might be in a "Residential Estate" zoning district. This district would describe details such as how far a building must be set back from the road or from property lines, building height limits, or the required number of garage parking spaces. Some uses which are potentially appropriate in a given zone, but could cause negative noise, light, or odor effects on neighboring properties or property owners may require a discretionary use permit. Such uses and procedures for use permits are also defined in the zoning code.

Ministerial actions include those decisions where discretion is not required to evaluate the proposal. If a proposed project meets the criteria defined in the Zoning Code and General Plan, it may be approved administratively by the Planning Department, and is not generally subject to review by the Planning Commission or Board of Supervisors. For instance, in the example above, a property owner could bring forward a proposal for a single-family residence meeting zoning code requirements for the Residential Estate district.

However, proposals which differ from the established general plan or zoning requirements must request to modify these standards. For instance, on the parcel above, if the property owner wished to construct a restaurant or service station, the parcel's general plan designation and zoning district would first have to be changed. Such changes require approval by the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors, which is considered a legislative action. The Board and the Planning Commission would evaluate the proposal and make a decision whether or not to amend the general plan or zoning code, as well as whether to



approve or deny the proposal based upon its merits, applying policies defined in the general plan and knowledge of local conditions and needs. This decision requires the Board and/or the Planning Commission to exercise considerable discretion, thus a disclosure of potential environmental impacts under CEQA and public hearings are required. Pursuant to California law, the County may amend the General Plan no more than four times per year.

### ISSUES, GOALS, AND POLICIES

Goals and policies for the Governance element provide direction regarding how the County government intends to conduct its interactions with the public and other agencies. Governance issues addressed within the General Plan include public notification and information distribution, public participation opportunities, and successful collaboration with other agencies to achieve mutual goals.

#### *Public Involvement*

Amador County's culture is characterized by strong local involvement and pride in the community. The Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission, and all levels of County government will continue to work in and for the community, and our decisions will continue to be the result of respectful and meaningful input and deliberation.

**Goal G-1: Amador County will make decisions in the public interest, and will seek meaningful public input to support its decisions.**

Policy G-1.1: Conduct open meetings where County residents have an opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns.

Policy G-1.2: Provide public notice of meetings by a variety of methods.

Policy G-1.3: Encourage public participation in the County's discussions, meetings, and policy development.

#### *Cooperation with Other Local Agencies*

Many of Amador County's land use, economic development, agricultural, conservation, and public safety goals can be better met through cooperation with cities, special purpose agencies and districts, community organizations and by working with our neighbors. The County is committed to working with all willing partners to support and promote the interests of County residents.





**Goal G-2: Amador County will promote the interests of its residents in its dealings with other local governments and coordinate with cities and other local government agencies to ensure orderly growth and efficient service provision.**

Policy G-2.1: Encourage participation by County residents and business owners in solutions to County and regional issues.

Policy G-2.2: Coordinate with other agencies and jurisdictions to identify and resolve regional problems.

Policy G-2.3: Actively participate in long-range regional land use and transportation planning efforts to ensure positive outcomes for the County.

Policy G-2.4: Encourage collaboration among public agencies, residents, and civic organizations.

Policy G-2.5: Work with other local agencies, including cities, the Amador County Transportation Commission, the Amador County Recreation Agency, the Amador Fire Protection Authority, and the Amador Water Agency, to ensure that public services such as fire protection, flood protection, recreation, water, and wastewater services are provided efficiently and cost-effectively.

Policy G-2.6: Consider schools an essential part of the infrastructure required to accommodate new development and establish maintaining adequate school facilities as a community priority. Ensure that potential effects on the County educational system are considered when reviewing development projects.

#### *Cooperation with State, Federal, and Tribal Agencies*

Certain actions of State and federal agencies and tribal governments are not subject to County jurisdiction. However, Amador County will continue to work proactively to support the interests of county residents in its interactions with these bodies. A healthy economy, preservation of property rights, orderly growth, judicious use of natural resources, access to reliable water supplies, and stewardship of the natural environment are all important County goals. Through active participation and deliberation in intergovernmental affairs, the County will ensure that these goals are considered and respected by other levels of government.



**Goal G-3: Amador County will promote the interests of its residents in its dealings with the State and federal governments.**

Policy G-3.1: Maintain regular communication with State and federal agencies which manage public land or are involved in land use decisions in Amador County.

Policy G-3.2: Communicate the County's and residents' interests and opinions to State and federal agencies throughout their decision making processes.

Policy G-3.3: Promote the County's goals for stewardship, property rights, judicious use, and conservation of natural and agricultural resources in interactions with State and federal governments.

Policy G-3.4: Consult with Native American Tribes to aid in the protection of traditional tribal cultural places when reviewing future development projects.

Policy G-3.5: Evaluate future planning and development activities of Native American Tribes to ensure that potential traffic, noise, light, public safety, and other effects from these activities are minimized within the County's jurisdictional area.