

Chapter II

Community Growth Strategy

This chapter contains policies and a diagram to help define the quality, quantity, and direction of future urban growth for the City of Modesto (City).

Since 1974, the City has maintained policies regulating the quality, quantity, and direction of urban growth in the Urban Area General Plan. The methods and details of these policies have evolved over time, but the legacy of these policies has resulted in a compact urban form, with few infill parcels remaining, neighborhoods offering a diversity of housing types and higher than average densities, and a geographic balance with new growth occurring on all sides of the community. While there may be significant public facility deficiencies in the short term, their resolution is still deemed manageable over the long term. Given the continued growth of the Modesto Urban Area as well as the surrounding area, this section of the General Plan presents an Urban Growth Strategy to manage that anticipated growth.

A. COMMUNITY GROWTH STRATEGY DIAGRAM AND DESIGNATIONS

A key concept in this General Plan is the Growth Strategy Diagram, as presented in Figure II-1. The Growth Strategy Diagram divides the General Plan into three geographic areas: the Redevelopment Area, the Baseline Developed Area, and the Planned Urbanizing Area. Each of these areas is treated differently, with policies presented throughout this General Plan that are unique to each.

1. Adoption of Growth Strategy Diagram

Figure II-1 is the “Growth Strategy Diagram,” which is hereby adopted and incorporated into the Modesto Urban Area General Plan as follows: Redevelopment Area, Baseline Developed Area, and Planned Urbanizing Area.

2. Adoption of Growth Strategy Designations

This section describes the general character and geographic location of the three Growth Strategy Designations depicted on the Growth Strategy Diagram. These designations are hereby adopted into the General Plan.

a. Redevelopment Area

The approximately 1,970-acre Redevelopment Area covers the land within the boundaries of the Redevelopment Planning District (the “Project Area”) as adopted by the Modesto Redevelopment Agency in October 2007.

b. Baseline Developed Area

The Baseline Developed Area is generally defined as the lands that can be served by the City's sanitary sewer system. The area served by the Modesto Municipal Sanitary District Number 1 is 25,953 acres, the area served by the "Will-Serve Agreement" is 888 acres, and the area served by the Ceres Agreement is 914 acres. The Baseline Developed Area, comprising approximately 21,200 acres excluding the Redevelopment Area, contains lands which are mostly developed with urban uses, which are not expected to change substantially during the time horizon of this plan. Also included within the Baseline Developed Area are vacant lands which have a clearly defined future, such as the Beard Tract industrial area.

c. Planned Urbanizing Area

Future development within the approximately 20,042-acre Planned Urbanizing Area (PUA) will occur on land which is predominantly flat, vacant and/or developed with agricultural uses, and minimally, if at all, served with urban services and infrastructure, including roads. Approximately 12,640 acres of the PUA are located within the Sphere of Influence, excluding the Redevelopment Area and Baseline Developed Area. The remaining areas of the PUA, approximately 7,402 acres, are located outside the Sphere of Influence. The Planned Urbanizing Area is expected to absorb substantial urban development in a comprehensively planned manner. For this reason, the land uses projected by the Land Use Diagram in Chapter III will be implemented through "Comprehensive Planning Districts," as defined and explained in Chapter III.

As the major growth area, the Planned Urbanizing Area is the geographic area where most of the Project Objectives will be achieved.

B. COMMUNITY GROWTH POLICIES

The future development of the Modesto community is guided by two fundamental and mutually supportive needs: economic development and maintaining the sound fiscal base of the City. These needs are addressed in the policies presented in this section.

1. Economic Development Policies

The policies described below implement Modesto's Economic Development Goals, as presented in Chapter I, Section D. These policies are categorized further as: increasing economic development opportunities and providing sufficient land supply for such opportunities, providing infrastructure in a timely manner to support economic development opportunities, and expediting the development process for economic development proposals.

a. Provide Economic Development Opportunities and Sufficient Land Supply

- (1) Economic development should be a key consideration of future expansion, irrespective of population projections. Expansion for business park areas, particularly between now



CITY OF MODESTO
GENERAL PLAN PROGRAM

Figure II-1
GROWTH STRATEGY
DIAGRAM

LEGEND

DESIGNATIONS

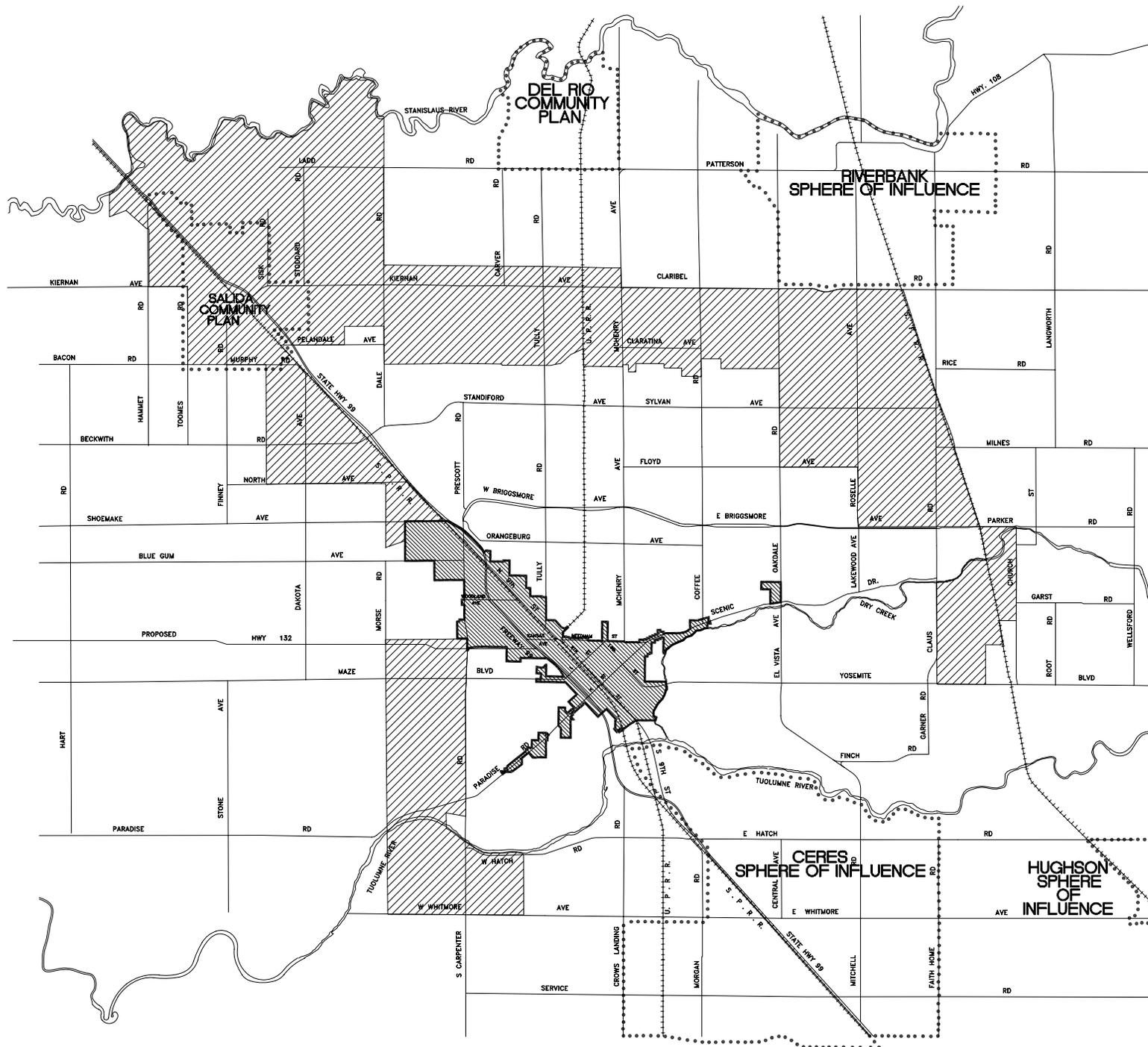
-  REDEVELOPMENT AREA
-  BASELINE DEVELOPED AREA
-  PLANNED URBANIZING AREA

BOUNDARY LINES

-  GENERAL PLAN BOUNDARY
-  BOUNDARY BETWEEN DESIGNATIONS

REFERENCE POINTS

-  STREETS
-  FREEWAYS
-  RAILROADS
-  RIVERS
-  ADJACENT COMMUNITY BOUNDARY



and 2015, should be given top priority. Regional commercial uses should be allowed, where appropriate, within business park areas.

- (2) The Land Use Diagram presented in Chapter III provides adequate land and opportunities to expand and diversify Modesto's economic base to provide for future employment needs through establishment of business park areas. These opportunities should be focused on the types of businesses that will thrive in the 21st century. Simultaneous with this diversification of the economic base, Modesto's current agricultural and industrial bases shall be preserved for as long as possible.
- (3) The Land Use Diagram should locate business parks and other industrial land near existing and proposed transportation corridors such as State Highways 99, 132, 219, and proposed expressways. These business park locations should foster efficient use of land and resources, as well as reduce aggravation of existing circulation problems.
- (4) The Land Use Diagram provides for the expansion of the Modesto Urban Area toward the west to ensure that the downtown redevelopment area remains the "central core" of Modesto, and to provide social and economic development for the west side of Modesto.
- (5) Maintain and expand the City as a regional center for financial services, medical services, shopping, entertainment, and education.
- (6) Provide support for retention and growth of existing firms within the City.
- (7) Target new companies and industries that will help diversity the existing economic base.
- (8) Establish sites and services to attract technology-based business, based on the needs of the local economy.
- (9) Plan for regional retail commercial centers along highway corridors in urbanized areas to encourage growth within the City rather than Stanislaus County.
- (10) Increase business ownership in the minority sector.
- (11) Protect future business park areas in the General Plan from encroachment by low employment density land uses.

b. Provide Timely Infrastructure

As the City expands and vacant land becomes developed, infrastructure such as roads, sewer, water, and storm drainage is necessary to support that development. As the City directs the extension of this infrastructure, economic development opportunities within the City's limits should receive the highest priority for receiving such infrastructure. The City shall establish the timely provision of infrastructure to support the policies in Section II-B.2.

c. Expedite the Development Process

In order to accommodate the magnitude of job opportunities projected in the future, simply designating an area as business park is not sufficient. The City will proactively assist the private sector to establish viable business parks by expediting the processing of such development requests. The comprehensive planning policies presented in Chapter III, as well as the full utilization of the Master Environmental Impact Report process provided by the state law, will serve to expedite those future development proposals, which stimulate economic growth in accordance with the City's economic development goals.

2. Maintenance and Enhancement of the City's Fiscal Base

The City's overall Community Development Strategy is that new growth and development should, to the extent provided by law, provide public infrastructure and should generate public revenue so that the City's overall fiscal base is maintained and enhanced. In evaluating development proposals, the City should consider the long-range impact on the City's fiscal balance.

- a. In order to achieve desirable levels of community facilities, it will be necessary to address existing deficiencies. The long-term financing strategy should provide for broad-based funding approaches to meet broad-based community needs.
- b. Typically, there is a long lead time to plan, finance, and construct infrastructure to serve new areas. Long-range infrastructure planning should identify cost estimates and accompanying rate structures, and buy-in fees, and staging and coordination issues which can be included in any long-term financing strategy.
- c. Development proposals within the Baseline Development Area do not require the same attention to fiscal impact analysis as in the Planned Urbanizing Area because projects will tend to be smaller, in-fill types, which will be served by existing infrastructure. Nonetheless, community-wide financing strategies should apply to Baseline Development as well.
- d. Community growth should be managed so that the quality of life is enhanced without imposing significant fiscal burdens on the existing community. The City shall ensure the timely provision of infrastructure.
- e. Require new development to support the infrastructure and public services necessary to serve that development. General fund and other broad-based outlays should be limited to those situations where the infrastructure will provide Citywide benefits or will otherwise offer a tangible benefit beyond the area of the new development.
- f. Substantial areas proposed for new development will be required to plan for appropriate infrastructure and its funding consistent with the City's Specific Plan Guidelines. Infrastructure shall be in place before or concurrently with development. Similarly, infrastructure-financing mechanisms shall be required to be in place prior to development within approved specific plans. The City will take a comprehensive approach to financing, using a blend of special taxes, benefit assessments, bonds, and other methods to ensure that infrastructure installation occurs in a timely manner.

- g. New development shall be phased according to the capacity of public facilities and services to serve new development.
- h. The City shall require a fiscal impact analysis to identify operation and maintenance costs for discretionary development proposals of potential fiscal significance.
- i. The City shall develop, collect, and update standard processing/administration fees for staff time to process will-serve letters, water supply assessments/verifications, and/or other future water-related, unfunded state-mandated studies/assessments.

C. GENERAL PLAN MAINTENANCE

1. Urban Area Growth Policy Review

A review of the growth trends in the Modesto Urban Area should be held on a periodic basis. This periodic review should provide for the selection of potential urban areas to be served with urban infrastructure during the ensuing five years. This review should be focused on the information presented in Sections 2, 3, and 4, below, and on the following policies:

- a. In general, maintenance of a five-year supply of available developable land served with urban infrastructure is desirable.
- b. Urban development should be kept as contiguous as possible in order to avoid premature urbanization of valuable farmland, foster resident convenience, and provide for economy in City services.
- c. Residential growth and development within the Modesto Urban Area General Plan shall take place only following annexation to the City.
- d. Urban growth should be directed, as long as economically feasible, to areas currently served with City services.
- e. The Master EIR should be updated when necessary (see Section 3, below).
- f. Broad-based regional financing options will be developed for regional-serving capital projects.
- g. Investments in capital improvements will be increased through maintaining or enhancing existing funding sources, maximizing joint-use efficiencies, strategically prioritizing capital investments, and allocating additional revenues for infrastructure.

2. Annual Report to the State/Maintenance of the General Plan and Related Planning Documents

Each year, the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) conducts the Local Government Planning Survey to simplify and standardize local governments' compliance with Section 65400 of the Government Code. This section requires California cities and counties to report annually to

OPR and the State Department of Housing and Community Development on their planning activities. The survey also identifies local issues and problems, which OPR may be able to help remedy by providing technical assistance. The following policy governs the maintenance of the General Plan and related planning documents.

- a. The City of Modesto shall fund the ongoing maintenance of the General Plan and related planning documents, which provide the institutional infrastructure for development of the community.

3. Maintenance of the Master Environmental Impact Report

The Master Environmental Impact Report (Master EIR) promotes significant streamlining of subsequent projects if they are consistent with the General Plan, as well as the assumptions, conclusions, and mitigation measures presented in the Master EIR document itself. The following policies govern the process to maintain the currency of the Master EIR.

- a. The City of Modesto shall ensure that the Master EIR be periodically re-evaluated and updated as necessary, so that it can continue to serve as a streamlining document. The MEIR may streamline further CEQA review for subsequent projects, which are defined in Section 21157.1 of the Public Resources Code.
- b. The Master EIR shall not be used to streamline further CEQA review for subsequent projects if either of the following has occurred (per Section 21157.6(a) of the Public Resources Code), except as provided in Section c below:
 - (1) The certification of the Master EIR occurred more than five years prior to the filing of an application for the subsequent project.
 - (2) The filing of an application for the subsequent project occurs following the certification of the Master EIR, and the approval of a project that was not described in the EIR report has affected the adequacy of the environmental review in the Master EIR for any subsequent project.
- c. A Master EIR that was certified more than five years prior to the filing of an application for a subsequent project may be used to review a subsequent project that was described in the Master EIR if the City of Modesto reviews the adequacy of the Master EIR and does either of the following (per Section 21157.6(b) of the Public Resources Code):
 - (1) Finds that no substantial changes have occurred with respect to the circumstances under which the Master EIR was certified or that no new information, which was not known and could not have been known at the time that the Master EIR was certified as complete, has become available.

- (2) Prepares an initial study and, pursuant to the findings of the initial study, does either of the following:
 - (a) Certifies a subsequent or supplemental environmental impact report that has been either incorporated into the previously certified Master EIR or references any deletions, additions, or any other modifications to the previously certified Master EIR.
 - (b) Approves a mitigated negative declaration that addresses substantial changes that have occurred with respect to the circumstances under which the Master EIR was certified or the new information that was not known and could not have been known at the time the Master EIR was certified.
- d. The General Plan Traffic Analysis and Model (Appendix F of the Master EIR) shall be kept current through periodic updates, performed either unilaterally by the City or in conjunction with a Focused Environmental Impact Report, which includes a Comprehensive Traffic Study.

4. General Plan Amendment Process

Over time, various sections of the Modesto Urban Area General Plan may need to be revised. The policies presented in this General Plan contain some degree of flexibility, but any General Plan Amendments must be judged by relatively fixed criteria. The following process must be followed in reviewing proposed General Plan Amendments:

a. Description of Amendment

Proposals to amend the General Plan must be accompanied by detailed information to document the change requested. This information should include revised General Plan text (or excerpt thereof) and revised Land Use Diagram, where relevant, depicting the amendment requested.

b. Presentation of Need for Amendment

Any proposals to amend the General Plan must document the need for such changes. The applicant should indicate the economic, social, or technical issues which create the need to amend the General Plan.

c. Criteria for Analysis of General Plan Amendment

Any proposal to amend the Modesto Urban Area General Plan must be analyzed for the amendment's effects compared to the adopted General Plan on the following issues:

- (1) Compatibility with surrounding, existing, and planned land uses

- (2) Traffic impacts, both existing and planned
- (3) Air quality impacts, as addressed in the Master EIR
- (4) Water quality impacts, as addressed in the Master EIR
- (5) Water supply and wastewater, as addressed in the Master EIR
- (6) Preservation of open space, both existing and planned
- (7) Public Facilities and Public Services, both existing and planned, including financing approaches

d. Environmental Review

The proposed amendment must receive environmental review to determine if it is within the scope of the Master EIR or if further environmental analysis is required. Depending on the nature of the amendment, supplemental environmental analysis may be necessary, according to the California Environmental Quality Act (Sections 15162 and 15178).