

This section of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR or DEIR) is the Project Description of the proposed City of Chico General Plan Update. The purpose of the Project Description is to describe the project in a way that will be meaningful to the public, reviewing agencies, and decision-makers. As described in Section 15124 of the CEQA Guidelines, a complete project description must contain the following information but is not required to supply extensive detail beyond that needed for evaluation and review of the environmental impact: (1) the location and boundaries of the proposed General Plan Update on a regional and detail map; (2) a statement of objectives sought by the proposed General Plan Update; (3) a general description of the proposed General Plan Update's technical, economic, and environmental characteristics; and (4) a statement briefly describing the intended uses of the EIR.

3.1 LOCAL AND REGIONAL SETTING

PROJECT LOCATION

The City of Chico 2030 General Plan Planning Area (Planning Area) is located in Butte County in northern California (**Figure 3.0-1**). The Planning Area includes the City of Chico, the City's Sphere of Influence, and unincorporated areas in Butte County. The actual Planning Area boundaries have not been changed and are consistent with the currently adopted 1994 General Plan. The Planning Area consists of approximately 150 square miles of land located in the west-central portion of Butte County (**Figure 3.0-2**).

PROJECT SETTING

The City of Chico consists of approximately 22 square miles in the central portion of northern California. Butte County has a high diversity of biological communities because it extends from the Sacramento Valley floor to the Sierra Nevada over elevations ranging from approximately 50 feet to more than 8,000 feet above mean sea level. Butte County comprises five different geographic subregions, including the Sacramento Valley subregion where most of the Planning Area is located. The very eastern portion of the Planning Area falls within the Cascade Range Foothills subregion. The upper extent of this eastern portion consists of landscape dominated (more than one half) by oak woodland natural communities. The upper elevation range of the oak woodland community varies from about 800 to 1,500 feet above mean sea level. Typically oak tree-dominated land cover types are replaced with either chaparral or conifer-dominated land cover types at higher elevations. The Sacramento Valley is part of the northern subregion of the Great Central Valley of north-central California that extends from Red Bluff in Tehama County to the Suisun Slough in southwest Solano County.

There are 14 biological communities that occur in the Planning Area: urban/park, agriculture, grassland, blue oak woodland, blue oak savanna, valley oak woodland, mixed oak woodland, interior live oak woodland, cottonwood-willow riparian, valley oak riparian, mixed riparian, willow scrub, open water (including riverine), and wetlands (including emergent wetland and vernal pool). The reader is referred to Section 4.10, Biological Resources, for a further discussion of natural habitat conditions of the area.

Two major highways, State Routes (SR) 32 and 99, comprise Chico's regional transportation network and serve much of the population in Butte County. SR 32 connects Chico residents to Glenn and Plumas counties to the west and east, respectively. SR 99 connects residents to Tehama and Sutter counties to the north and south, respectively.

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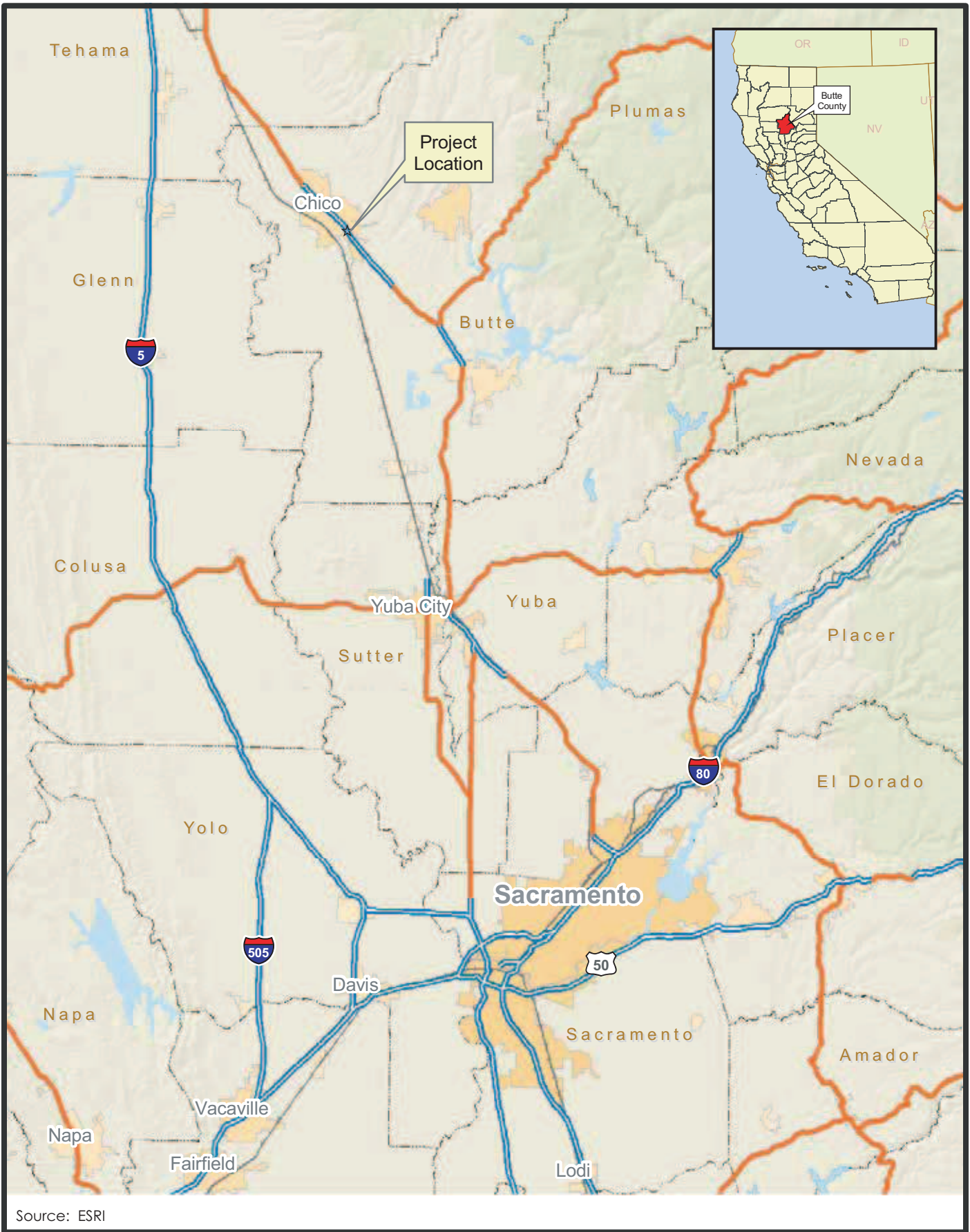
3.2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

The City's first General Plan was adopted in 1961, although long-range studies of City services and facilities preceded that date. The second General Plan was adopted in 1976 and addressed a wide range of issues associated with development and environmental conservation. The City Council adopted the current General Plan in 1994. At the time, the City identified city limits, a Planning Area boundary, and the City's Sphere of Influence. The City also identified future urban expansion areas and an Urban Development Boundary. In total, the 1994 General Plan Planning Area included 150 square miles, approximately 22 square miles of which were intended for urban use.

Since 1994, the City has adopted various General Plan amendments, as well as mandated updates to the Housing Element. The Housing Element is the only General Plan element that must be updated according to a schedule set by the state.

The current General Plan Update process commenced in August of 2007. The City of Chico conducted an extensive public outreach process for the General Plan Update to understand the needs and desires of the community and to identify and discuss concerns and controversial issues throughout the update process. Hundreds of Chico residents, business owners, community leaders, and other stakeholders participated in development of the proposed General Plan Update. A summary of those efforts is provided below.

- **General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC).** The City Council appointed 12 Chico residents to serve on the GPAC for focused consideration of important General Plan issues. The GPAC held 15 meetings to provide guidance and recommendations on the key issues, guiding principles, land use alternatives, and policies for the General Plan Update.
- **Downtown Ad Hoc Committee (DAHC).** The City Council appointed 14 Chico residents, business owners, and other stakeholders to serve on the DAHC with the task of providing input and recommendations on key issues, land uses, and policies for Downtown Chico. The DAHC held a total of eight meetings and one field trip on the General Plan Update.
- **Sustainability Task Force (STF).** The STF was established by the City Council in 2006 to make recommendations on implementation of the Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The STF provided input and guidance on key issues and policies for the City's first Sustainability Element and for the General Plan Strategy of Sustainability.
- **Stakeholder Groups.** The City identified 14 stakeholder groups (approximately 400 individuals) in the community with wide-ranging interests and facilitated stakeholder group meetings/interviews in three separate phases of the proposed General Plan Update to solicit input and ideas about future vision and key issues, Downtown, land use alternatives, and important policies relevant to the stakeholder groups.
- **Community Workshops.** For the community-at-large, the City held nine public workshops to provide information about the proposed General Plan Update and to solicit feedback at important phases of the project (visioning, CSUC visioning, key issues, Downtown, land use alternatives, and draft General Plan Update).

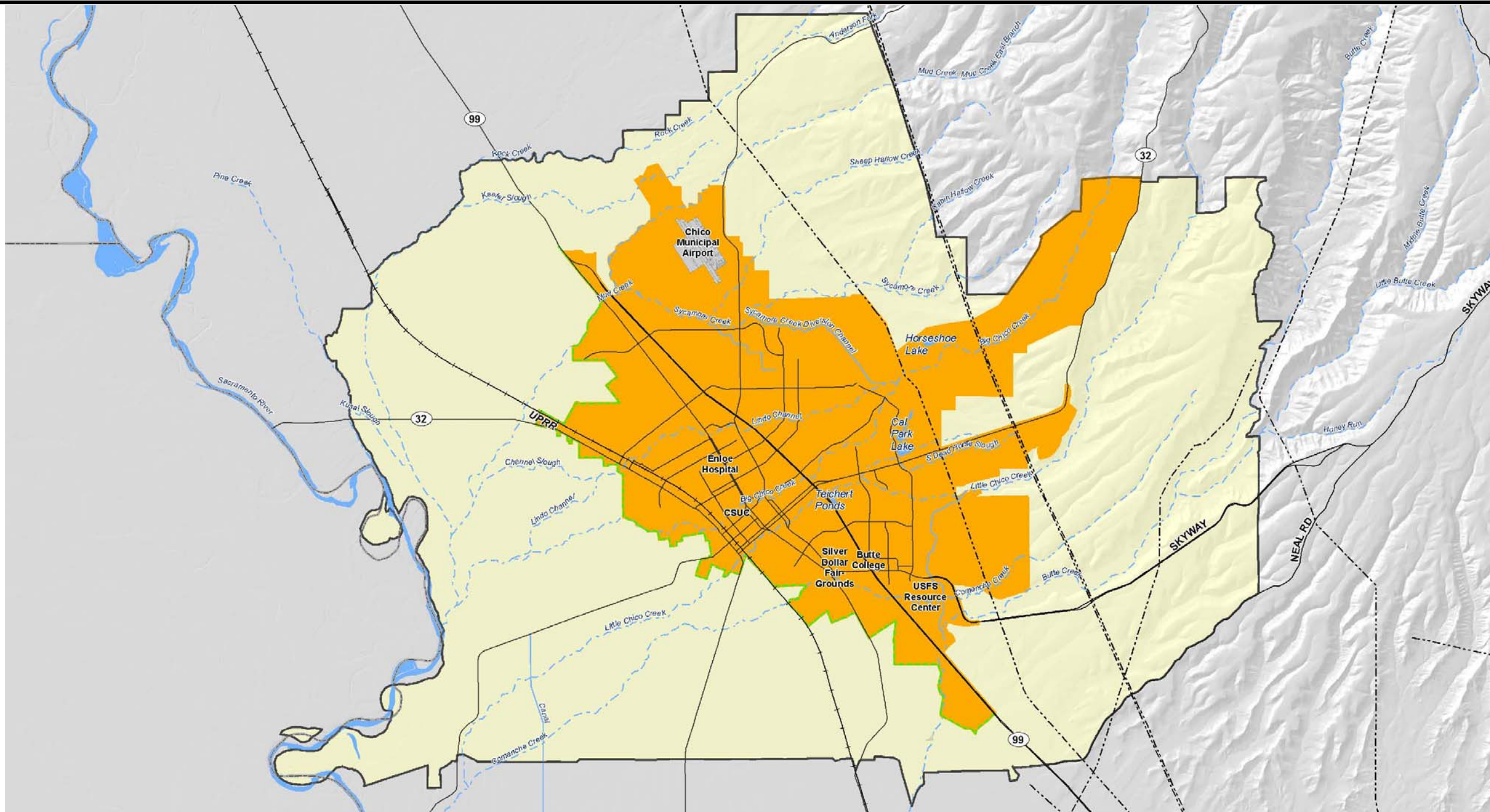


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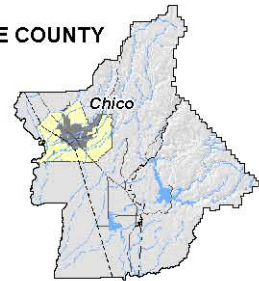
Source: ESRI



FIGURE 3.0-1
REGIONAL LOCATION MAP



BUTTE COUNTY



- Powerlines
- County Line
- +— Railroad
- Greenline
- City of Chico Sphere of Influence Boundary
- City of Chico Planning Area

Source:

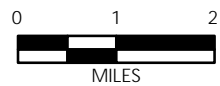


Figure 3.0-2
2030 General Plan Planning Area

- **Public Hearings and Study Sessions of City Council and Planning Commission.** The City noticed and invited public participation and testimony at over 17 (as of July 2010) public hearings and study sessions with the City Council and Planning Commission. Meeting topics included visioning results, Guiding Principles, the key issues report, land use projections, land use alternatives, Housing Element, and key policies.

As part of the proposed General Plan Update development, several technical studies were conducted to document environmental conditions and analyze prospects for economic development, community character and growth, and development alternatives. Studies and reports prepared include:

- **Existing Conditions Report** – The Existing Conditions Report includes data, maps, tables and information which inform the reader as to the current conditions in the city and provide a baseline of information used in the preparation of the goals, policies, and actions in the proposed General Plan Update. The Existing Conditions Report also serves as a portion of the environmental baseline for the Environmental Impact Report prepared in support of the proposed General Plan Update process.
- **General Plan Survey** – A statistically valid phone survey of 400 City residents (with a margin of error less than 5 percent) was taken in December 2007 to gather input on topics addressed in the proposed General Plan Update process. The survey asked respondents to provide information on important topics such as community needs, wishes, and perceptions about land uses, development density and intensity, location and type of future growth, and City services. Survey responses informed policy development and provided a baseline from which additional questions and information were pursued.
- **Vision Book** – The Vision Book summarizes the future ideas and visions of Chico residents captured during the initial public outreach effort of the General Plan Update process. The Vision Book sets forth an overall vision for Chico in 2030, highlights the “Big Ideas” for the city, and frames ideas of city residents that the City considered during the preparation of the proposed General Plan Update.
- **Key Issues Report** – At the conclusion of the initial public outreach process, the key issues identified were consolidated and catalogued into a report that was utilized by the City, stakeholder groups, and advisory committees to provide policy direction.
- **Land Use Alternatives Report** – The Land Use Alternatives Report presents each of the three alternatives as well as the Preferred Land Use Alternative and provides data and information on each alternative. The report summarizes an abundance of information produced in a series of staff reports and other supporting material to the General Plan Advisory Committee, Ad Hoc Downtown Committee, Planning Commission, and City Council on the subject of land use alternatives. The report serves as a record of the community process to select a Preferred Land Use Alternative, as well as a reference for development of the policy document.

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3.3 PROPOSED GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

REQUIREMENT TO ADOPT A GENERAL PLAN

California Government Code Section 65300 et seq. establishes the obligation of cities and counties to adopt and implement general plans. The general plan is a comprehensive and general document that describes plans for the physical development of a city or county and of any land outside its boundaries that, in the city's or county's judgment, bears relation to its planning. The general plan is required to address the following mandatory elements: land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety. A city or county may also adopt additional elements. A general plan identifies the goals, objectives, policies, principles, standards, and plan proposals that support the city's or county's vision for each area addressed in the plan. The general plan is a long-range document that typically addresses the physical development of an area over a 20-year period. Although the general plan serves as a blueprint for future development and identifies the overall vision for the planning area, it remains general enough to allow for flexibility in the approach taken to achieve the plan's goals.

CHICO 2030 GENERAL PLAN VISION, STRATEGY, AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The proposed General Plan Update Introduction Chapter includes three important statements about project objectives in the form of the 2030 Vision, Strategy of Sustainability, and Guiding Principles. Those statements are provided below as a framework for the environmental analysis of the project.

2030 Vision

The 2030 General Plan is based on a new vision for the community, which was developed with the community. Below is an excerpt from the Imagine Chico 2030 Vision, which summarizes the future ideas and vision of the community captured during the initial public outreach process for the proposed General Plan Update.

Chico, in the year 2030, is a livable, healthy, and sustainable community that offers a high quality of life with a strong sense of community and place. Chico maintains its small-town character while providing opportunities for future generations to thrive. Government is transparent and politics are open and engaging. The City is characterized by a vibrant Downtown, a healthy economy, compact urban form, identifiable neighborhoods with diverse housing choices, convenient access to locally-produced goods, and a focus on alternative transportation and healthy lifestyles. Historic places and buildings are prominent, and Chico is celebrated for its diversity, arts, culture, outdoor access, recreational opportunities, and parks. It is known as a leader in innovative technology and educational capital. Above all, Chico is a place we're proud to call home.

Sustainability Strategy

Chico's proposed General Plan Update is committed to the challenge of creating and maintaining a sustainable community locally, regionally, and globally. Sustainability in Chico means maintaining a culture of stewardship to enhance natural resources, economic interests, and quality of life for present and future generations. The proposed General Plan Update's goals and associated policies and actions are intended to work together toward achieving sustainability. The proposed General Plan Update also recognizes that sustainability must be an

organizing principle; thus the City must consider the interdependent interests of protecting the environment, promoting social equity, and achieving a healthy economy in all of Chico's actions and programs. The Sustainability Element of the proposed General Plan Update includes the following definitions for Environment, Economy and Equity.

- **Environment.** Environmental sustainability is accomplished by reducing the impact of human activities on natural systems and lands that supports the community. A major component of protecting the environment is the wise utilization of land. Focusing Chico's growth within the Sphere of Influence will reduce pressure to develop at the community's edges where it would impact agricultural lands and foothills. Growth consistent with the Land Use Diagram and policies in the General Plan will result in reduced impacts on the environment, reduced contributions to global climate change, reduced reliance on oil and other fossil-fuel sources, and decreased consumption of natural resources. Strategies in this General Plan for protecting the environment include promoting compact, walkable, infill and mixed-use development; focusing redevelopment along transit corridors and at other key locations; protecting sensitive habitat, open space and agricultural lands; promoting the efficient use of energy and resources; improving local air and water quality; directing waste diversion and reduction; and establishing energy and water conservation measures in building, landscaping, and municipal operations.
- **Economy.** A sustainable economy is strong and resilient, environmentally conscientious, and accessible to the entire community. To be sustainable, Chico's economy must be diverse in order to provide stability through economic cycles. There must be jobs for a skilled local workforce in traditional business sectors, as well as green businesses. It must grow its retail base in order to generate tax revenue to fund quality public services for the community, and must continue to grow base-level businesses that export products and import revenue. Strategies in the General Plan that promote a sustainable economy include fostering a positive climate for economic development, providing an adequate supply of land, ensuring the readiness of physical conditions to support development, targeting public investment to help attract investment and support local prosperity, creating partnerships within the region to generate jobs, and ensuring a quality of life that makes Chico a desirable place to invest.
- **Equity.** For the purposes of the General Plan, equity means ensuring equal access to housing, transportation, government, jobs, education, and recreation for all residents, and equal protection from potential hazards and nuisances. Promoting social equity is a critical investment in human capital, which in turn supports the other two sustainability components of economic vitality and environmental protection. Strategies in this General Plan for promoting social equity include ensuring adequate housing for all income levels; providing open government that values public participation; promoting local goods and cultures; assisting the more vulnerable members of the community; promoting community health through a safe circulation system with multi-modal transportation options; and providing parks and quality public services to all members of the community.

To establish a sustainable development trend for the community, the General Plan identifies and promotes certain development patterns, including compact urban development, infill development and redevelopment, mixed-use development, complete neighborhoods, and a variety of housing types. The Plan further seeks to preserve and enhance its older neighborhoods, promote economic development, protect sensitive environmental resources, and provide open space and parks. To achieve these sometimes competing goals, the General

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Plan addresses three distinct areas of the City: areas of stability, areas of potential change, and areas for new growth.

- **Areas of Stability** - While the General Plan's underlying land use theme is a compact urban form, it also recognizes that not all areas are suited for significant new growth. Areas of stability are those parts of the City that are not anticipated to change substantially in character, land use or development intensity. These areas include most existing residential neighborhoods, environmentally sensitive lands, open spaces, and parks.
- **Areas of Potential Change** - Areas of potential change are the 15 Opportunity Sites as identified on the Land Use Diagram. These strategic infill and redevelopment areas include underutilized transportation corridors, regional retail centers, areas in the City's core, and other residential, light industrial, and mixed-use areas that can accommodate growth. To support increased density and intensification of uses at these locations, the City will need to invest resources, particularly to ensure infrastructure can adequately support growth.
- **New Growth Areas** - The General Plan identifies five new growth areas to help meet the City's future housing and job needs. These areas are designated as Special Planning Areas on the Land Use Diagram, and are to be developed as connected and complete neighborhoods with a mix of housing types, employment, services, and shopping opportunities, along with parks and open space.

Guiding Principles (Project Objectives)

The proposed General Plan Update Guiding Principles reflect core community values and identify desired outcomes. They provide broad statements of purpose and direction to achieve the community vision and served as inspiration for development of the proposed General Plan Update goals, policies, and actions. Each goal, policy, and action of every proposed General Plan Element relates back to one or more of the important principles listed below. These Guiding Principles were developed through the visioning process early in the proposed General Plan Update and reflect input provided by the public, General Plan Advisory Committee, Planning Commission, and City Council. These principles are identified in this EIR as the objectives of the proposed General Plan Update:

- 1) **Planned and Balanced Growth and Conservation.** The General Plan balances growth and conservation by reinforcing the city's compact urban form, establishing urban growth limits, and managing where and how growth and conservation will occur. The Plan guides new development to areas contiguous to existing development, so it may be efficiently served by the extension of infrastructure and municipal services. Fiscally and environmentally responsible development is a priority.
- 2) **Healthy Environment and Resource Conservation.** The General Plan supports preservation of natural resources, local production of goods and services, the use of renewable versus nonrenewable resources, and new strategies to minimize waste and dispose of it locally. The City strives to improve and protect its air quality, climate, and human health by reducing harmful emissions, such as greenhouse gases. Chico will lead the way to a healthy environment by providing local government support, partnerships, and innovation for sustainability.

- 3) **Strong Local Economy with Diversified Employment Base.** The General Plan supports local businesses and seeks to strengthen Chico's role as a regional center for education, commerce, retail, medicine, and other professional services to ensure a mix of professional local jobs for future generations. The General Plan also supports locally produced goods and services.
- 4) **Resource Protection and Enhancement.** The General Plan calls for the conservation, enhancement, and protection of viable agricultural land natural resources and sensitive environments. Historic and cultural resources will be preserved as significant reminders of the city's rich history.
- 5) **Enhance Chico's Character and Identity.** The General Plan reinforces the unique identity and character of Chico as a thriving North Valley college town in a unique natural setting. The proposed General Plan Update promotes Chico as the civic, cultural, and economic hub of the region while maintaining the City's small-town charm. The Plan emphasizes the role of Downtown as the heart of the community.
- 6) **Complete Neighborhoods as Community Foundation.** The proposed General Plan Update fosters the creation and enhancement of complete, well-designed, and walkable neighborhoods, from the traditional Downtown core to infill projects and integrated new communities. Complete neighborhoods include places to gather, nearby retail and services for daily needs, and multimodal access to recreation, jobs, and other areas of the community.
- 7) **Development Patterns that Offer Alternatives to Automobile Use.** The General Plan reduces distances between complementary land uses and emphasizes a balanced, multimodal circulation system that is efficient and safe and that connects neighborhoods to jobs, shopping, schools, services, local attractions, and open space.
- 8) **Progress Toward Sustainability.** The City is committed to sustainability, and the General Plan guides the creation and maintenance of tools to analyze the City's reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and its progress toward sustainability.
- 9) **Community Health and Well-Being.** The General Plan envisions a safe, healthy community with a strong sense of identity. The General Plan facilitates quality public services and facilities, community engagement, learning opportunities, and equal access to community resources. The Plan supports a varied and diverse housing supply that meets the needs of Chico's current and future residents. The Plan strives to protect all members of our community.

COMPONENTS OF THE PROPOSED CHICO GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

Elements of the Proposed Chico General Plan Update

The City of Chico proposed General Plan Update consists of 12 elements. Each element includes a vision statement, introduction, explanation of the most significant issues and considerations, as well as goals, policies, and actions intended to address element issues in keeping with the community vision. A brief description of each element is provided below.

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Sustainability Element

As identified in the proposed General Plan Update Introduction, the General Plan Update's Guiding Strategy is to create and maintain a sustainable community that is environmentally responsible, economically robust, and socially equitable. Policies and actions in every element of the proposed General Plan Update support this overarching theme. The Sustainability Element addresses aspects of sustainability that are not covered in other elements (e.g., greenhouse gas reduction strategies) and details how the City defines and incorporates sustainability at the local level. This element explains how the City will approach balancing of environmental, economic, and social equity interests with annual evaluation of sustainability indicators and sustainability-based decision-making.

Land Use Element

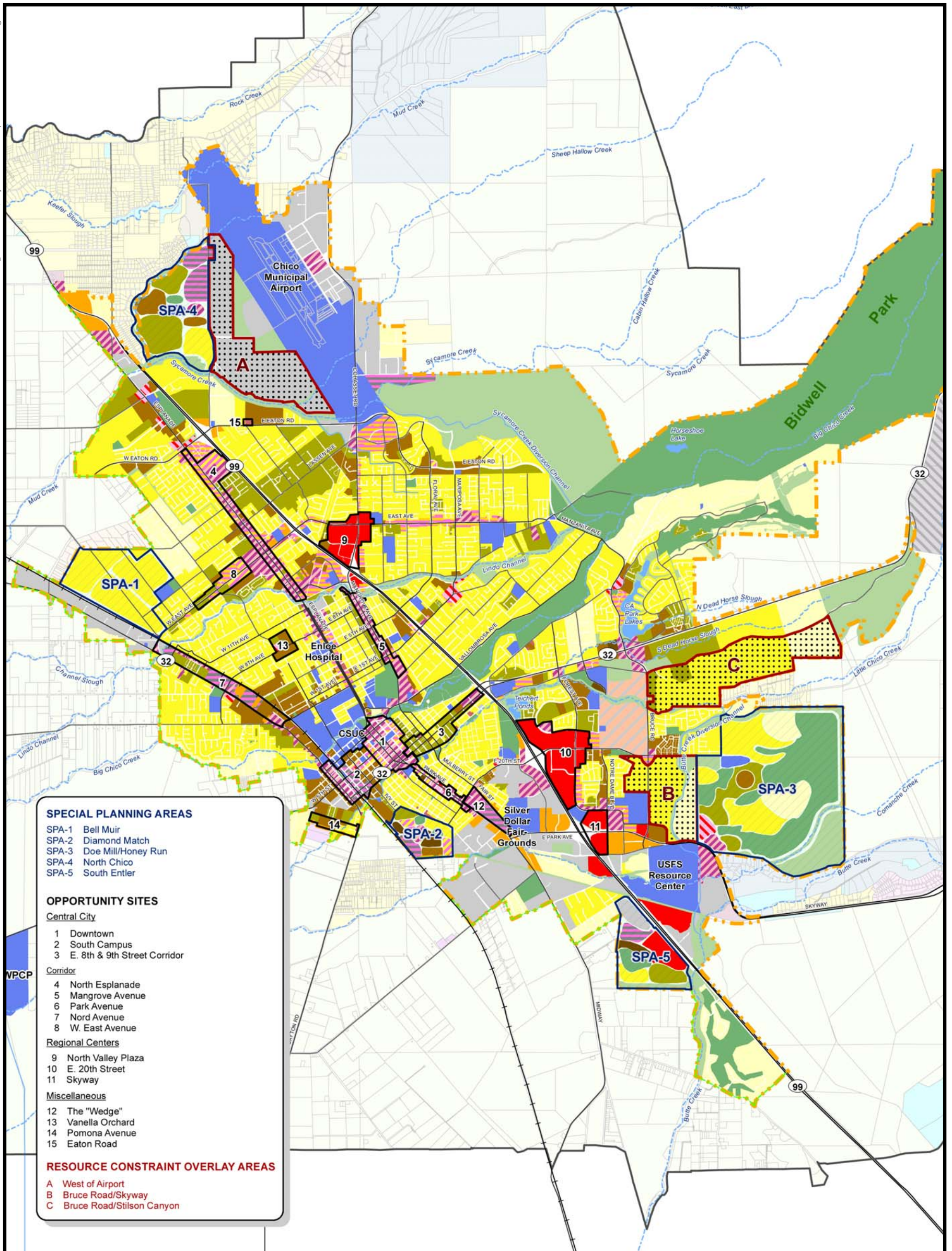
The Land Use Element provides the policy basis for land use decisions, establishing land use classifications, and outlines other land use policies. This element directs a sustainable land use pattern by designating areas of stability (such as existing residential neighborhoods), potential change (redevelopment of designated opportunity sites), and growth (five designated Special Planning Areas) to meet future housing and job needs projected for 2030. The proposed Land Use Diagram is shown in **Figure 3.0-3**. Land use designations and policies direct future development with an integration of uses, balance between housing and jobs, establishment of urban growth limits (for example, the Greenline), and direction regarding increased density and intensity, and the form of development in targeted areas. Land use designations and policies also protect existing neighborhoods, agriculture, open space, and biologically sensitive areas.

Circulation Element

The Circulation Element describes existing and future transportation systems in the Planning Area. Goals, policies, and actions guide the City's circulation and mobility system, including the roadway network, future connections, transit facilities and services, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Policies in this element focus on the development of an integrated, multimodal transportation network to increase travel choice, improve goods movement, and reduce vehicle miles traveled. Finally, text and policies in this element introduce a new multimodal approach to evaluating roadway function (level of service) for all primary modes of travel (vehicles, transit, bikes, and pedestrians) and plan for future implementation of that system, which would differ from the more traditional auto-oriented level of service standards currently provided under the existing 1994 General Plan. Circulation Element maps include the Circulation Plan (**Figure 3.0-4**), Bikeway/Pedestrian System Plan (**Figure 3.0-5**), and Transit System (**Figure 3.0-6**).

Community Design Element

The Community Design Element focuses on the visual quality of the physical elements and spaces that shape Chico. Top community design issues for the proposed General Plan Update include neighborhood character, infill design compatibility, sense of place, complete streets, wayfinding, and design review. Goals, policies, and actions in this element focus on preservation and enhancement of both natural and man-made physical attributes in the community, design quality and compatibility, community gateways, wayfinding, and public art.



- SPECIAL PLANNING AREAS**
- SPA-1 Bell Muir
 - SPA-2 Diamond Match
 - SPA-3 Doe Mill/Honey Run
 - SPA-4 North Chico
 - SPA-5 South Entler
- OPPORTUNITY SITES**
- Central City
- 1 Downtown
 - 2 South Campus
 - 3 E. 8th & 9th Street Corridor
- Corridor
- 4 North Esplanade
 - 5 Mangrove Avenue
 - 6 Park Avenue
 - 7 Nord Avenue
 - 8 W. East Avenue
- Regional Centers
- 9 North Valley Plaza
 - 10 E. 20th Street
 - 11 Skyway
- Miscellaneous
- 12 The "Wedge"
 - 13 Vanella Orchard
 - 14 Pomona Avenue
 - 15 Eaton Road
- RESOURCE CONSTRAINT OVERLAY AREAS**
- A West of Airport
 - B Bruce Road/Skyway
 - C Bruce Road/Stilson Canyon

- | | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| <p>Residential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VLDR Very Low Density Residential LDR Low Density Residential MDR Medium Density Residential MHDR Medium-High Density Residential HDR High Density Residential RMU Residential Mixed Use | <p>Commercial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MUNC Mixed Use Neighborhood Core NC Neighborhood Commercial CS Commercial Services RC Regional Commercial CMU Commercial Mixed Use | <p>Office and Industrial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> OMU Office Mixed Use IOMU Industrial Office Mixed Use MW Manufacturing & Warehousing | <p>Public and Open Space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PFS Public Facilities & Services POS Primary Open Space SOS Secondary Open Space | <p>Special</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SPA Special Planning Area SMU Special Mixed Use RCO Resource Constraint Overlay |
|---|---|--|--|---|
- Butte County General Plan Designations (within Chico Planning Area, outside City's Sphere of Influence)**
- | | | |
|---|--|-----------------------|
| Resource Conservation | Medium Density Residential (4-6 du/ac) | Agriculture |
| Rural Residential (up to 1 du/5ac) | Foothill Residential (1 to 40 ac/du) | Agricultural Services |
| Very Low Density Residential (1 du/5ac - 1 du/ac) | Retail/Office | Public |
| | Specific Plan Area | |
- City of Chico Sphere of Influence Boundary
 Greenline
 Planning Area

Source: City of Chico

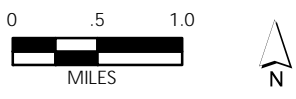
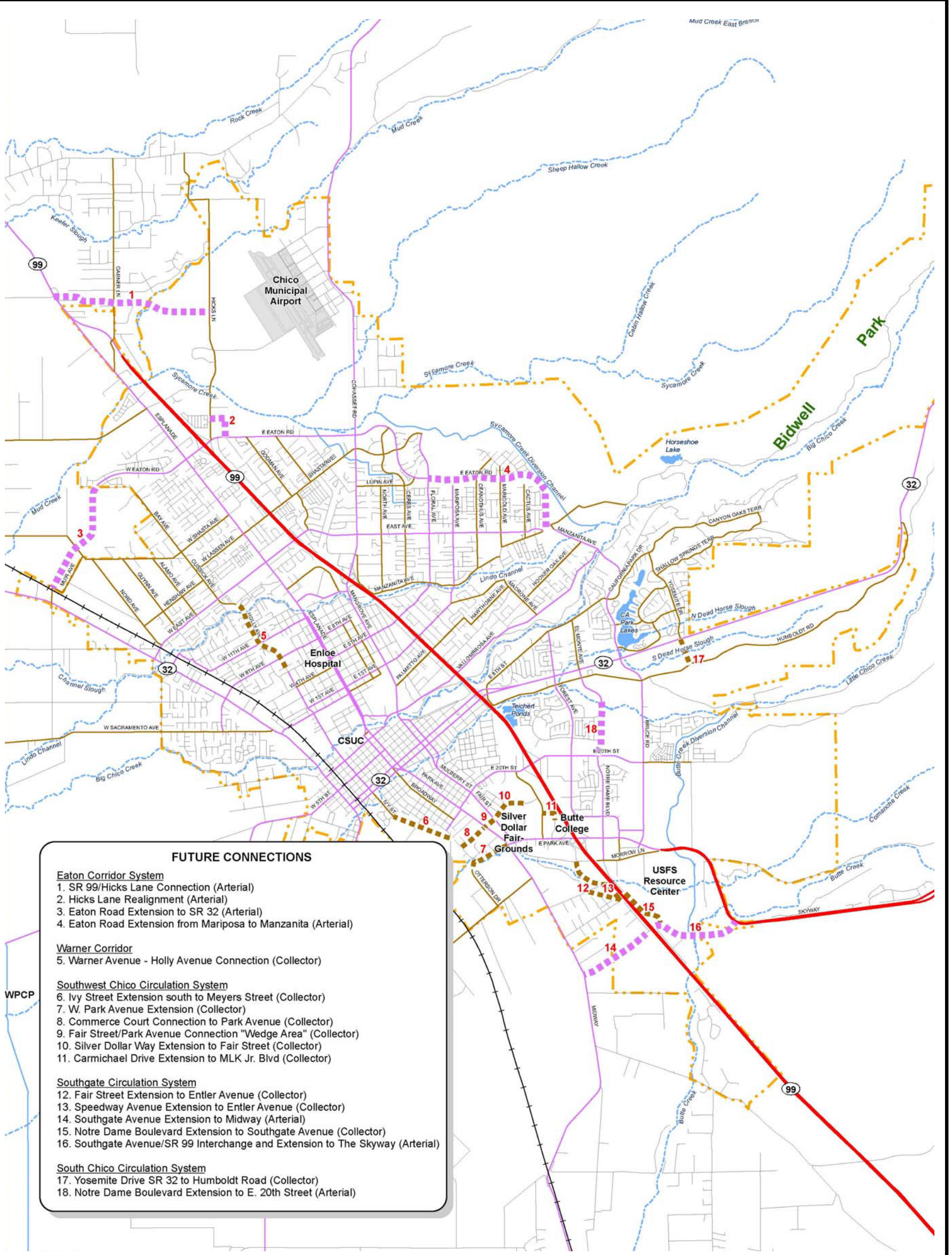


Figure 3.0-3
Proposed Land Use Diagram



- FUTURE CONNECTIONS**
- Eaton Corridor System**
1. SR 99/Hicks Lane Connection (Arterial)
 2. Hicks Lane Realignment (Arterial)
 3. Eaton Road Extension to SR 32 (Arterial)
 4. Eaton Road Extension from Mariposa to Manzanita (Arterial)
- Warner Corridor**
5. Warner Avenue - Holly Avenue Connection (Collector)
- Southwest Chico Circulation System**
6. Ivy Street Extension south to Meyers Street (Collector)
 7. W. Park Avenue Extension (Collector)
 8. Commerce Court Connection to Park Avenue (Collector)
 9. Fair Street/Park Avenue Connection "Wedge Area" (Collector)
 10. Silver Dollar Way Extension to Fair Street (Collector)
 11. Carmichael Drive Extension to MLK Jr. Blvd (Collector)
- Southgate Circulation System**
12. Fair Street Extension to Entler Avenue (Collector)
 13. Speedway Avenue Extension to Entler Avenue (Collector)
 14. Southgate Avenue Extension to Midway (Arterial)
 15. Notre Dame Boulevard Extension to Southgate Avenue (Collector)
 16. Southgate Avenue/SR 99 Interchange and Extension to The Skyway (Arterial)
- South Chico Circulation System**
17. Yosemite Drive SR 32 to Humboldt Road (Collector)
 18. Notre Dame Boulevard Extension to E. 20th Street (Arterial)

STREET CLASSIFICATION

- Freeway/Expressway (4-6 lanes)
- Arterial (4-2 lanes)
- Collector (2 lanes)
- Local Street

- Future Roadways***
- - - Arterial (4-2 lanes)
 - - - Collector (2 lanes)

City of Chico Sphere of Influence Boundary

* Future roadways include new construction and major widenings.

Source: Fehr & Peers, City of Chico

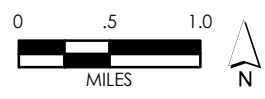
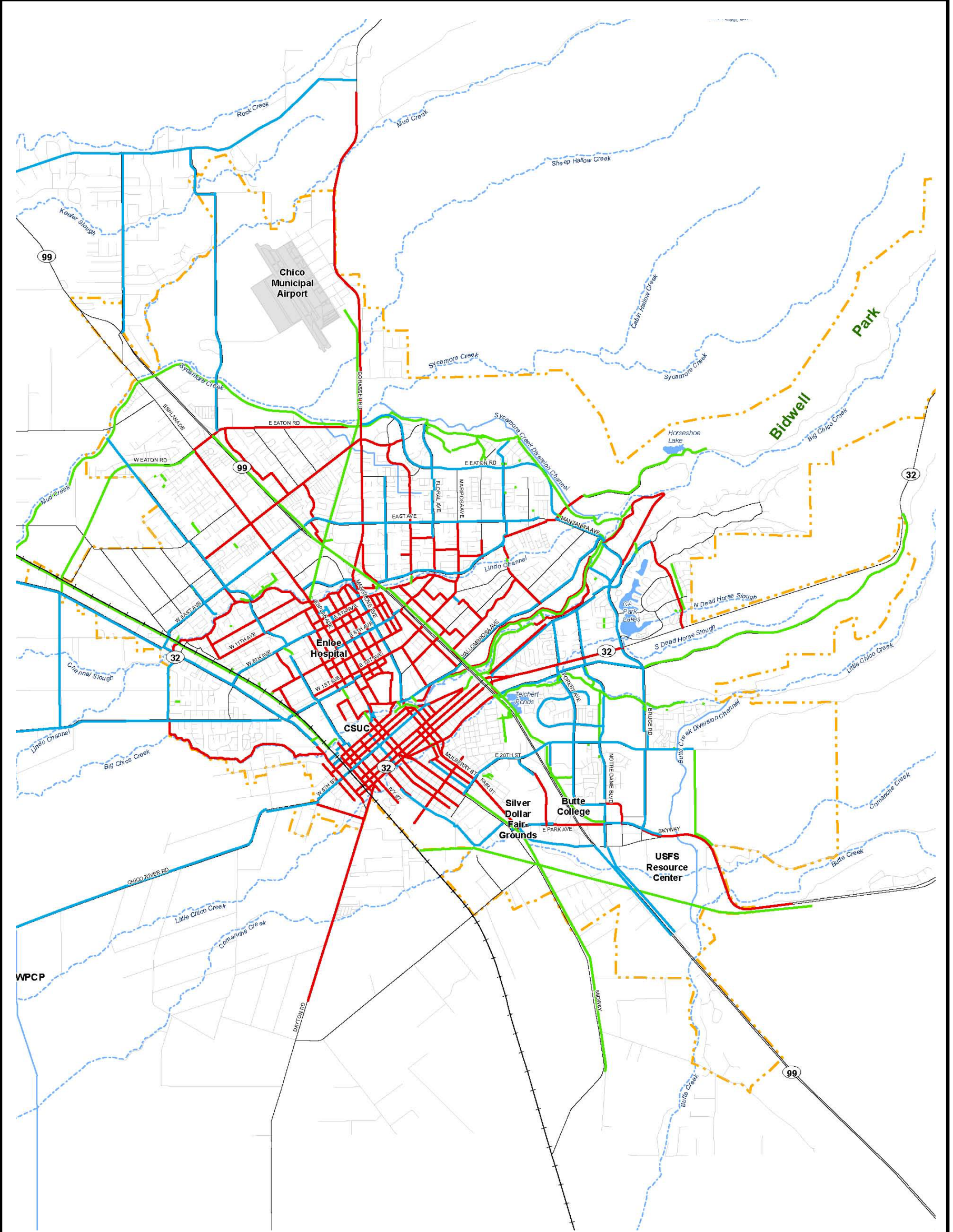


Figure 3.0-4
Circulation Plan
PMC



**CITY BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES
(Existing and Proposed)**

Bicycle/Pedestrian Facilities

- Paths (Class I)
- Lanes (Class II)
- Routes (Class III)

City of Chico Sphere of Influence Boundary

Source: City of Chico



Figure 3.0-5
Bicycle/Pedestrian System Map

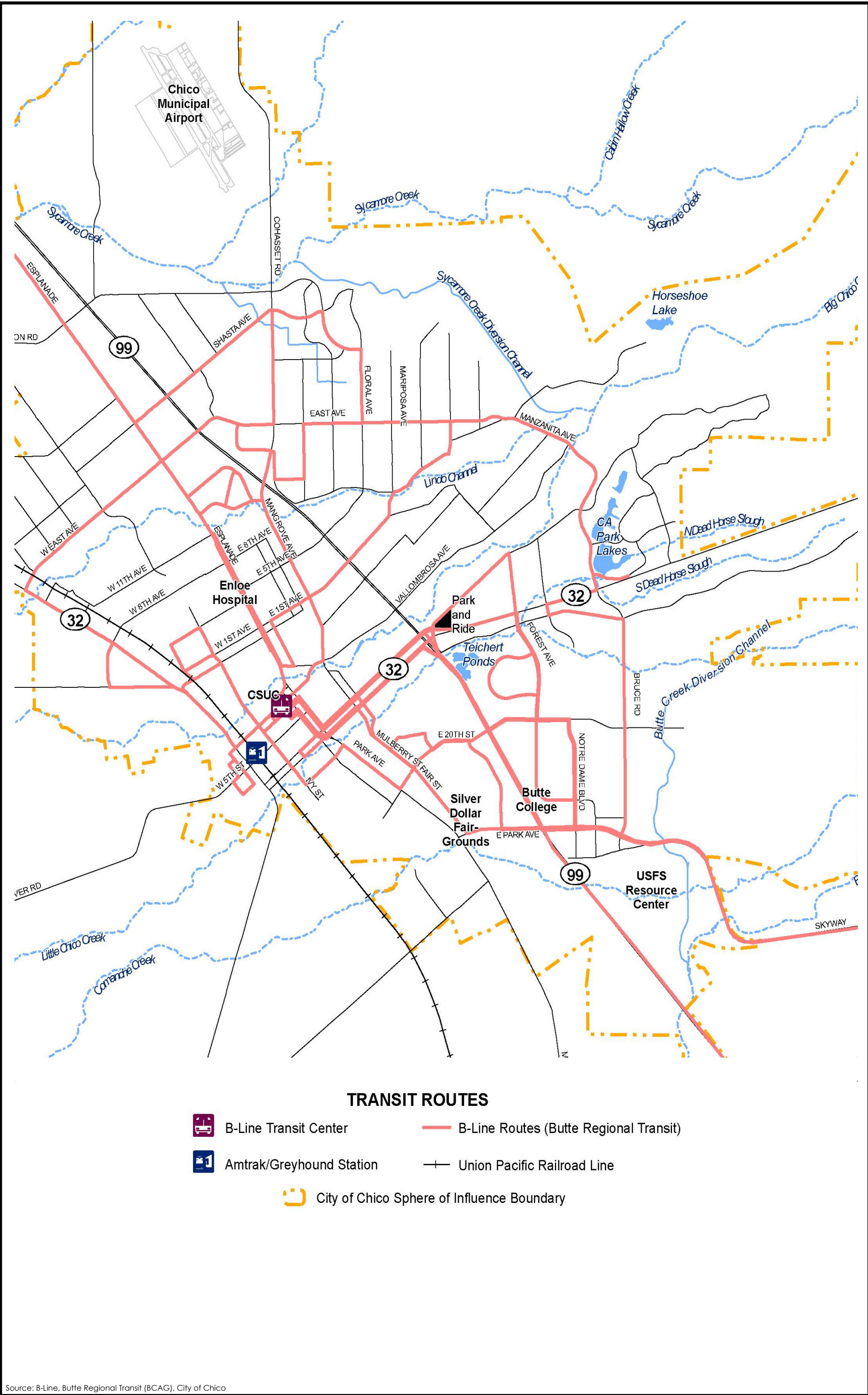


Figure 3.0-6
Transit System
PMC

Downtown Element

The Downtown Element focuses on the continued vitality and enhancement of Downtown Chico as the city's central core. Historically, policies associated with Downtown Chico have been integrated into several different elements of the General Plan. Because of the important role of Downtown in making Chico a successful and sustainable community, the City has created a separate element to address key issues associated with Downtown. This element includes a Downtown Vision Illustration and corresponding Vision Concepts as a visual representation to reflect the future vision for Downtown as an evolving, vibrant, mixed-use neighborhood. Key issues addressed in the goals, policies, and actions include an enhanced role for Downtown, mixed-use development, pedestrian-scale environment, circulation, character of South Downtown, parking, design, and the relationship of Downtown with CSU Chico.

Economic Development Element

The Economic Development Element guides the City's resources to maximize Chico's economic health and vitality. Important economic development issues for the proposed General Plan Update include an evolving regional role, attracting higher-paying jobs, strengthening Chico's retail and service industry, increasing investment opportunities with available land supply given a limited growth footprint, ensuring available land supply is ready for investment, and increasing the City's leadership role in economic development. Goals, policies, and actions in this element focus on maintenance and implementation of the City's Economic Development Strategy, enhancing tourism opportunities, and establishing a redevelopment strategy for revitalization of existing neighborhoods and successful commercial and employment centers.

Housing Element

The Housing Element is a comprehensive statement by the City of Chico of its current and future housing needs at all income levels. The element provides policies related to the provision of housing for all income levels as well as provisions that are state-mandated. In keeping with the state-mandated schedule, the City's Housing Element was updated separately in 2009 with separate environmental review. Thus, while the Housing Element will be incorporated into the proposed General Plan Update upon its adoption, this environmental document does not cover that component of the project.

Parks, Public Facilities, and Services Element

The Parks, Public Facilities, and Services Element identifies existing public services and facilities as well as future public, private, and community service needs. Significant issues addressed in the proposed General Plan Update include parks and recreational open space services, wastewater collection and treatment capacity, water delivery and service provision, and storm drainage and protection of waterways. Goals, policies, and actions in this element guide the City's planning, implementation, enhancement, and maintenance of public services, including parks, public services, utility infrastructure, arts, cultural resources, and education throughout the proposed General Plan Update horizon.

Open Space and Environment Element

The Open Space and Environment Element focuses on the preservation and enhancement of the natural environment and ensuring that long-term growth does not adversely affect environmental resources. Goals, policies, and actions in this element address preservation of

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known sensitive biological resources, preservation and enhancement of open space in and around the city, protection of agricultural resources, reducing impacts associated with urban runoff on local waterways and human-induced impacts to local air quality, and protection and enhancement of the city's urban forest. Key policy provisions in this element include participation in the Butte County Habitat Conservation Plan.

Cultural Resources and Historic Preservation Element

The Cultural Resources and Historic Preservation Element identifies important local cultural, archaeological, and historic resources. This element updates issues and considerations relative to tribal consultation protocol, the City's recent historic preservation efforts, and the desire to recognize the City's history as a continuum. Goals, policies, and actions focus on the protection and preservation of local cultural, archaeological, and historic resources, local investment in resources, and strategic partnerships.

Safety Element

The Safety Element focuses on maintaining Chico as a safe place for residents and businesses by minimizing risk and the provision of protective services. Goals, policies, and actions address potential risks associated with fires, floods, earthquakes, and hazardous materials, airport safety, traffic and pedestrian safety at railroad crossings, and the provision of law enforcement and emergency services.

Noise Element

The Noise Element identifies the major sources of noise and noise-related concerns in Chico and outlines goals, policies, and actions intended to promote safe and comfortable noise levels throughout the community.

Land Use Diagram

The proposed General Plan Update includes a Land Use Diagram which depicts the location and distribution of land use designations in the Planning Area (see **Figure 3.0-3**). It is important to note that the proposed General Plan Update introduces several new mixed-use land use designations not provided in the 1994 General Plan.

In addition, the Land Use Diagram identifies several areas with special land use considerations. Areas identified for potential change include the 15 Opportunity Sites and the five Special Planning Areas. Additionally, as part of this proposed General Plan Update, the Land Use Diagram includes a Resource Constraint Overlay for those areas with known sensitive environmental resources that may reduce development potential. A more detailed description of these special areas is provided below.

Opportunity Sites

Opportunity Sites represent those areas in the city that are expected to be the focus of improvement, change, and revitalization over the next 20 years. There are a total of 15 Opportunity Sites shown on the Land Use Diagram (**Figure 3.0-3**). These Opportunity Sites are intended to attract mixed-use, higher-density residential development, and other land uses compatible with existing or evolving uses in the surrounding area. Opportunity Sites are shown on the Land Use Diagram with a dark outline and the numbers 1 through 15. Opportunity Sites are categorized by their general location as follows:

- **Central City Opportunity Sites.** There are three Opportunity Sites in the City's core area including Downtown, South Campus, and East 8th and 9th Street Corridor.
- **Corridor Opportunity Sites.** There are five Opportunity Sites located along corridors including North Esplanade, Mangrove Avenue, Park Avenue, Nord Avenue, and East Avenue.
- **Regional Center Opportunity Sites.** There are three Opportunity Sites located at regional centers including North Valley Plaza, East 20th Street, and Skyway.
- **Other Opportunity Sites.** There are four Opportunity Sites located in other areas of the city including The Wedge, Vanella Orchard, Pomona Avenue, and Eaton Road.

Appendix B of the proposed General Plan Update includes a brief description of the site characteristics, vision for transformation, and a land use map for each of the 15 Opportunity Sites.

Resource Constraint Overlay Sites

The Resource Constraint Overlay (RCO) designation acknowledges a reduced development potential in areas with known significant environmental constraints compared to allowable development potential based upon the underlying land use designation. The Resource Constraint Overlay designation is applied to three key areas (see **Figure 3.0-3**):

- A. West of the Airport
- B. Bruce Road
- C. Stilson Canyon

The boundaries of the three constraint sites are specified on the Land Use Diagram of the proposed General Plan Update, along with aerial images showing general site conditions. The most significant environmental constraints at these locations are vernal pools, populations of Butte County meadowfoam (BCM), and habitat for BCM.

Vernal pools are a unique ephemeral wetland feature that provide habitat for an array of unique plant and animal species, many of which are protected by state and federal agencies. One of the most sensitive vernal pool species is BCM, a state and federally listed endangered plant species found only in limited areas within Butte County. Loss of habitat has been identified as the primary threat to BCM, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Recovery Plan for BCM calls for protecting 100 percent of known and newly discovered occurrences as well as protecting 95 percent of the suitable habitat in the Chico region.

Butte County Association of Governments' (BCAG) research in developing the Butte Regional Habitat Conservation Plan was used in setting the location of the three constraint sites.

The RCO is applied in conjunction with an underlying land use designation. For purposes of calculating overall densities and intensities of the General Plan build-out, development potential is assumed to be 15 percent of the average development assumed for the underlying land use designation. Land owners of RCO parcels may conduct more detailed studies, including environmental review, and coordinate with resource agencies to determine actual development potential. Such potential may be more or less than the assumed 15 percent, but

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not more than the maximum allowed development potential allowed by the underlying land use designation.

Special Planning Areas

There are five areas on the Land Use Diagram designated as Special Planning Area (SPA) (see **Figure 3.0-3**). The SPA designation identifies areas with significant new growth potential and requires more detailed subsequent land use planning in the form of a specific plan, planned development, or other comprehensive plan. The SPAs were established based on several criteria, including strategic locations within the General Plan Planning Area, proximity to services, ability to advance General Plan goals, compatibility with adjacent uses, and environmental resources. The SPAs are to be developed as connected and complete neighborhoods with a mix of residential densities, employment, services, and retail, parks and open space. Subsequent planning will establish land use and circulation patterns within the SPAs and consider infrastructure and financing issues. The five SPAs are:

- Bell Muir
- Diamond Match
- Doe Mill/Honey Run
- North Chico
- South Entler

Within each SPA, the City has identified a mix of desired land uses in the form of a conceptual land plan. The conceptual land use plans include a collage of shapes with land use designations that were selected to reflect the desired uses on the site, take into consideration existing conditions, and accommodate projected housing and job needs. The shapes in the conceptual land use plans do not determine the actual sizes or locations of the land uses.

General Plan Update Build-Out Conditions

Table 3.0-1 below summarizes total housing and job numbers for the proposed General Plan Update build-out conditions, which are a combination of existing development conditions in 2008 and future development assumptions. As further discussed in Section 4.0, Introduction to the Environmental Analysis and Assumptions Used, the build-out under the proposed General Plan Update is not expected to occur by 2030. However, for purposes of the analysis in this EIR, it was assumed that build-out would occur by 2030.

**TABLE 3.0-1
EXISTING, PLANNED, AND TOTAL BUILD-OUT CONDITIONS FOR THE PROPOSED GENERAL PLAN UPDATE**

Housing and Job Factor	Existing Condition	Future Growth Potential	Total Build-Out Condition
Residential Units	41,438	21,495	62,933
Population	99,451	51,588	151,039
Total Square Footage	25,841,806	15,762,679	41,604,485
Commercial Square Feet	9,167,755	5,836,549	15,004,304
Office Square Feet	3,476,055	1,761,594	5,237,649
Industrial Square Feet	10,650,592	7,980,786	18,631,378
Other Square Feet	2,547,404	183,749	2,731,153
Total Employment	42,884	25,582	68,466
Commercial Employees	14,667	10,633	25,300
Office Employees	10,131	5,745	15,876
Industrial Employees	9,040	9,204	18,244
Other Employees	9,046		9,046

Note: Future growth in Other Employees are counted as Office or Industrial.

3.4 SUBSEQUENT ACTIVITIES AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE CITY

After adoption of the proposed General Plan Update by the City of Chico, all subsequent activities and development within the city will be subject to the policies set forth in the Chico 2030 General Plan. Some of the activities include private development that would be subject to entitlements such as tentative map, design review, and use permit approval. Other public activities such as parks, roadway improvements, and infrastructure, including drainage, sewer, and water, are required to be consistent with the proposed General Plan Update. Implementation of the proposed General Plan Update, specifically approval of development outside of the City's current SOI, would require LAFCo approval of an SOI expansion and annexation of those areas into the city. The City's proposed SOI associated with implementation of the Chico 2030 General Plan is shown in **Figure 3.0-3**.

Additional actions anticipated to occur subsequent to adoption of the proposed General Plan Update are listed below under Subsection 3.6, Regulatory Requirements, Permits, and Approvals.

3.5 OTHER PLANNING ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

As part of a separate but related process, the City is developing a Climate Action Plan (CAP). The CAP will provide direction to ensure the City fulfills its commitment to the U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent from 2005 levels by the year 2020. The CAP will include a summary of the recently conducted Community Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory as well as programs and actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the energy, transportation, solid waste, water, and land use and development sectors that will help achieve Chico's emission reduction target. Financial analysis

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of the emission reduction strategies will also be included. The CAP will implement the policy direction of the proposed General Plan Update to reduce greenhouse gases. Specifically, the Sustainability Element includes a policy with supporting actions (SUS-6.1) to continually update the Citywide Greenhouse Gas Inventory and the CAP as necessary to achieve the City's emission reduction goal.

HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN/NATURAL COMMUNITY CONSERVATION PLAN

The City is a participant in the Butte Regional Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Community Conservation Plan (HCP/NCCP) process which, as of the writing of this document, is being drafted by the Butte County Association of Governments (BCAG). The HCP/NCCP is a comprehensive and broad-based approach to biological resource preservation. This effort will identify the most important areas to preserve for permanent protection of plants, animals, and habitats, but also allow for compatible land development, urban growth, and other economic activities. The HCP/NCCP is a voluntary plan that provides comprehensive species, wetlands and ecosystem conservation, contributes to recovery of endangered species, and establishes a more streamlined process for biological resource-related permitting. The HCP/NCCP area covers approximately two-thirds of Butte County (564,270 acres) and is evaluating coverage of 36 special-status species.

3.6 REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS, PERMITS, AND APPROVALS

CITY ACTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE AND EIR

The proposed General Plan Update will be presented to the City of Chico Planning Commission for review, comment, and recommendations for consideration by the Chico City Council. The Chico City Council, as the City's legislative body, is the approving authority for the General Plan. In order to adopt the General Plan, the City Council would have to take the following actions:

- Certification of the City of Chico General Plan Update Final EIR;
- Adoption of the General Plan Update;
- Actions to override the Butte County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) associated with residential densities in the overflight zone of the Chico Municipal Airport and Ranchoero Airport if the proposed General Plan Update is found by ALUC to be inconsistent with the ALUCP;
- Adoption of required findings for the adoption of the proposed General Plan Update, including required findings under the CEQA Guidelines, Sections 15090, 15091, and 15093;
- Adoption of a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program.

The 2030 General Plan EIR will be used extensively by the City to address CEQA issues related to the implementing actions identified in the 2030 General Plan, including the Municipal Code Update, Nexus/Development Impact Fee Update, Design Guidelines additions, and other development standards and guidelines updates.

AGENCIES EXPECTED TO USE THIS EIR

CEQA Guidelines Section 15124 states that an EIR should contain a statement briefly describing the intended uses of the EIR and, to the extent that it is known to the lead agency, a list of agencies expected to use the EIR in their decision-making, permits or other approvals implementing the project, and related environmental review and consultation required by law or regulation.

Several federal, state, regional, and local agencies may use this EIR in their planning process, issuance of their permits, or exercise of their regulatory authority over resources or jurisdictional actions within the City of Chico. Agencies may utilize the EIR in whole or part to conduct environmental review in conjunction with specific agencies' project approval actions.

A number of other jurisdictional and permit-granting agencies have control over specific environmental concerns in the Planning Area. The following is a listing of agencies that may utilize this EIR. Because it is not practical or possible for the City to know or ascertain all of the possible specific uses for which other agencies may subsequently utilize this EIR, the listing attempts to provide a brief summary disclosure of the applicable types of actions or authorities for which the cited agency may use this EIR as follows:

- Butte County Air Quality Management District (monitors air quality and has permit authority over certain types of projects and facilities)
- Butte County Airport Land Use Commission (regulates land planning in the vicinity of Butte County airports in order to protect public health, safety, and welfare)
- Butte County Association of Governments (develops federal and state transportation plans and programs in order to secure transportation funding for the region's highways, transit, streets and roads, pedestrian and other transportation system improvements; policymaking agency for the region's public transit service)
- California Department of Conservation, Division of Mines and Geology (expertise in evaluating geologic and seismic hazards, as well as mineral resource issues)
- California Department of Fish and Game (streambed alteration agreement pursuant to Section 1600 of the California Fish and Game Code; approval of any future potential take of state-listed wildlife and plant species covered under the California Endangered Species Act)
- California Department of Transportation (encroachment permit; approval of improvements and/or funding for future improvements on State Route 99 or State Route 32)
- California Department of Housing and Community Development (reviews the adequacy of housing elements and funding for affordable housing programs)
- California Department of Water Resources (manages and regulates the State's water usage)
- California Public Utilities Commission (certificate of public convenience and necessity)

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- State Water Resources Control Board (file Notice of Intent to obtain a General Construction Activity Storm Water Permit prior to construction activities)
- Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (water quality certification pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act; National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit)
- Butte County Association of Governments (directs transportation planning and financing in Butte County)
- Native American Heritage Commission (mandated to preserve and protect places of special religious or cultural significance pursuant to Section 5097 et seq. of the Public Resources Code)
- State Office of Historic Preservation (consultation for impacts to historic or cultural resources)

In addition to these agencies, the following federal agencies may use environmental information in this EIR for permitting decisions, in addition to other federal agencies:

- U.S. Army of Corps of Engineers (Section 404 of the Clean Water Act permit)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Section 7 consultation or Section 10a Habitat Conservation Plan/Section 9 incidental take permit pursuant to the federal Endangered Species Act)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (concurrence with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act permit)

RELATIONSHIP TO LAFCO POLICY

There is an additional agency that has influence on the City's ability to implement the proposed General Plan Update, in particular the proposed Land Use Diagram. The Butte Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) reviews and evaluates all proposals for the formation of special districts, incorporation of cities, annexation to special districts or cities, and consolidation or merger of districts with cities.

As part of the proposed General Plan Update process, it is typical for cities to assess changes to the Sphere of Influence (SOI) to meet the community's vision for the future. However, the proposed General Plan Update itself is not a Sphere of Influence amendment request or application. There are specific requirements and processes administered by the Butte LAFCo for SOI amendment requests. The City would prepare supporting materials and pursue any SOI amendment request separately from the proposed General Plan Update and EIR process.

Implementation of the proposed General Plan Update, specifically approval of development outside of the City's current SOI, would require LAFCo approval of an SOI expansion and annexation of those areas into the city. This EIR is designed to programmatically and comprehensively analyze impacts associated with implementation of the proposed General Plan Update, including expansion of the City's SOI and future annexations consistent with the Land Use Diagram.