



Introduction and Vision

Chapter 1

Williams is a growing agricultural community of 5,123 people (2010 Census) that offers an outstanding value and quality of life for its citizens. As a freestanding community, Williams exists as a node of development along Interstate 5 in Colusa County, in California’s Central Valley.

The neighborhoods and business areas create sufficient mass that Williams serves as a sub-regional convenience commercial center for its home community as well as residents residing in the outlying parts of Colusa County. As the City expands, there is optimism that Williams will be able to sustain a wider variety of regional shopping resources, more convenient local services, and new industries.

In the coming years, the City’s location 70 miles northwest of Sacramento will increasingly create the effect of an entrance to the Sacramento region, which in recent years has been experiencing growth at a rate that is double to that of California. Abundant rail and highway access creates additional economic development opportunities as businesses take advantage of Williams’ strategic location. Conversely, Williams is also the gateway for persons traveling northward to California’s abundant fishing and hunting resources. Additionally, the City is conveniently situated near the foothill hunting areas and highly regarded Sacramento River fishing areas.

Besides the land and connections needed to expand its base, the City has grown in large part due to its balance between a high quality of life relative to its medium-priced housing opportunities for a largely working population. Williams’ downtown, as well as other local shopping and activities present many opportunities for growth and redevelopment.

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The challenge Williams faces is that it must bring certain parts of the City up to the standards of its more attractive areas in order to support take advantage of its opportunities. In doing so, the City will be in a better position to compete for the type of development, redevelopment, and reinvestment that it desires.

Opportunities and Challenges

SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

The residents of Williams value stability and sustainability. They want growth to be slow and incremental, connected to and in character with the community's historical development patterns. In other words, the community wants to keep its "small town" character. In this respect, the land use pattern of much of the recent development east of I-5 stands in contrast to the highly imageable character of the older west area.

CONNECTIVITY AND UNIVERSAL ACCESS

Closely related to the vision of steady, incremental, sustainable growth is the desire of the community to improve its multi-modal connectivity. The near-downtown grid pattern should be continued and reinforced (which will also facilitate transit). Sidewalks should be designed for universal access and installed along all streets. The community also seeks to improve and interconnect its park and trail system.

DIVERSE ECONOMY

The creation of good jobs for the next generation is a critical need. The City envisions further development of its retail and industrial economy to reduce its prevailing dependence on the agricultural and service sectors for future employment.

DOWNTOWN

The City envisions the rejuvenation of its downtown. The vision is to promote infill development and redevelopment in the downtown area and eventually expanding its boundaries to create a stronger connection to the surrounding residential areas.

HOUSING

Much of Williams is relatively young and needs housing products to accommodate family living at a wide range of income levels. The City envisions increasing the range of housing options that are available to its residents, including the development of more mixed-income housing that is convenient to the downtown area.

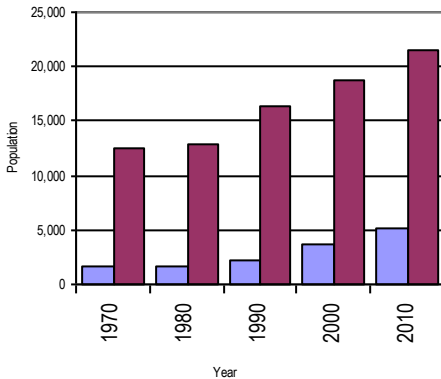


Figure 1.1 Williams and Colusa County Population Trends

Source: U.S. Census (1970 to 2010)



Williams Downtown

NONRESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

The City envisions increasing nonresidential development in a manner that better calibrates jobs and housing, results in an influx of daily commuters, and provides additional tax revenues to support City services. The City is well-positioned to take advantage of the regional access afforded by its two Interstate 5 interchanges.

REGIONAL ROLE AND COORDINATION

The City envisions strengthening its ties to Sacramento and nearby communities with better public transportation, and intergovernmental coordination to enhance its significance on the Interstate 5 corridor.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Additionally, residents of Williams value the quality of the City's environment and want to preserve and protect it. Farmland, stream protection, and water conservation are important to the community. Many also view the community's commitment to environmental quality as an economic development tool. Green building, alternative transportation, biofuels, and the like were opportunities presented as desirable industries for the community.

Context

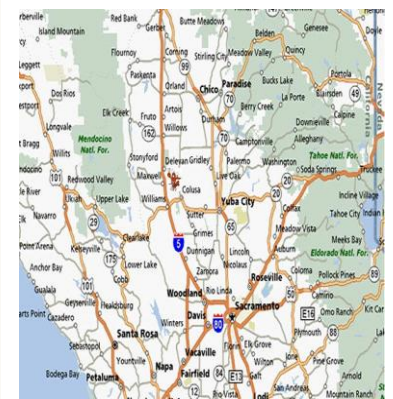
GENERALLY

Planning is not new to Williams. The City's earlier General Plan was created and adopted more than 20 years ago. Moreover, the City has frequently conducted surveys and special studies since the previous plan was adopted. Examples of these City and County studies include:

- City of Williams Senior Housing Site Feasibility Analysis, 2006
- Colusa County Economic Development Plan, 2002.
- Economic Development Plan for the City of Williams, 2002
- Williams Park and Recreation Master Plan, 2006
- Redevelopment Plan for the Williams Redevelopment Project Area, 2011
- Williams Storm Drainage Master Plan, 2007
- Colusa LAFCO, Draft City of Williams Municipal Service Review, 2011

RELATIONSHIP TO STATE PLANNING MANDATE

Under Section 65358(b) of the Government Code, the City may not amend any of the mandatory elements of the General Plan more than four times in any calendar year. Subject to this limitation, the City Council may amend the plan at any time of which each amendment may include more than one change. This requirement, however, is not applicable to amendments requested and necessary to address affordable housing and/or any amendment



Williams is strategically located

to comply with a court decision in a case involving the legal adequacy of the General Plan.

Pursuant to Section 65580, the housing element must be completed not less often than at five-year intervals. The current Housing Element Draft was completed in 2011, and its findings have been integrated into the other elements of this General Plan update.

In conformance with Section 66001, financing plans (known as nexus studies) that provide justification for mitigation fees adopted to implement the General Plan must be reviewed after five years and annually thereafter.

Prior to the consideration and adoption of this plan, the following process steps will be followed:

1. Refer the General Plan to those with jurisdiction in the area of influence, including the county and any abutting cities; unified school district; local agency formation commission, area wide planning agency; public water system; the California Native American tribe.
2. Attend a meeting with any elementary, high school or unified school district, as requested.
3. Conduct consultation with California Native American tribes, as applicable;
4. Hold at least one public hearing before the Planning Commission before approving a recommendation on the adoption or amendment of a general plan. (If the plan would affect the permitted uses or intensity of uses of real property, notice of the hearing shall be given pursuant to Section 65091.)
5. Planning Commission makes a written recommendation on the adoption or amendment, which will be sent to the City Council.
6. Hold at least one public hearing before the City Council.
7. Adopt or amend the general plan by resolution by an affirmative vote of not less than a majority of the total membership of the City Council.
8. Send a copy of the adopted general plan to all public entities specified in Section 65352.
9. Make a copy of the plan available to the general public.

The adopted General Plan must be available to the public at all times. It is advised to have it available both at City Hall as well as a public library. The complete plan, including consolidated and independent elements must be available, together with all applicable plans, maps, supporting text and tables, and any and all amendments since the last update. All components of the plan must also be available for reproduction.



Williams City Hall

A Capital Improvement Plan (Program), or CIP, is a short-range plan, usually one to five years, which identifies capital projects and equipment purchases, provides a planning schedule and identifies options for financing the plan. Essentially, the program provides needed public improvements that implement a city's share of its general plan.



Pursuant to Section 65402, the acquisition or disposal of real property, vacation or abandonment of streets, and construction of public buildings or structures may not occur until and unless it has been reported on by the planning agency as to its conformity with the plan. Furthermore, a capital improvement plan may not be carried out if it is not consistent with the General Plan. Lastly, all private development projects must be reviewed for their consistency and conformity with the adopted General Plan. If a project is inconsistent in any manner it must be denied or the plan amended.

About this General Plan Update

This plan offers a strategic policy framework for both the corporate limits and the Sphere of Influence (SOI). The objective of the plan is, therefore, to provide guidance for decisions relating to the future use of land, community character and design, housing and neighborhoods, economic development, circulation and mobility, open space and recreation, resource conservation and management, and public facilities and services.

The horizon of this plan is the Year 2030. Over this period, Williams will be facing many challenges in achieving its development goals. It is the intent of this plan that the policies and associated goals and recommended implementation strategies serve as a framework for community decision-making. To ensure growth that is both wise and sustainable, decisions must be based on a formulation of sound policy and founded by a comprehensive and integrated approach to analyzing community issues and identifying realistic solutions, as set forth in this plan.

Stages of the Planning Program

It is recognized that conditions have and continue to change since the adoption of these elements, due to the pending availability of water and hence, population growth and development. As such, City Council initiated the preparation of the Land Use element of General Plan. The scope was then further expanded to update the remaining elements of the General Plan with the exception of housing. The existing housing plan was prepared in April 2011 and will soon be adopted. This General Plan Update includes the following elements:

- Chapter 1 – Introduction and Vision
- Chapter 2 – Background Analysis
- Chapter 3 – Land Use and Character (Element 1)
- Chapter 4 – Public Safety (Element 2)
- Chapter 5 – Public Facilities (Element 3)
- Chapter 6 – Noise (Element 4)
- Chapter 7 – Open Space and Conservation (Element 5)
- Chapter 8 – Circulation (Element 6)
- Chapter 9 – Housing (Element 7)

"To ensure growth that is both wise and sustainable, decisions must be based on a formulation of sound policy and founded by a comprehensive and integrated approach to analyzing community issues and identifying realistic solutions, as set forth in this plan."

It is expected that the next logical step will be to invest in an implementation effort to set the vision and recommendations of this plan into motion. Such implementation process will include revision of existing ordinances and crafting new standards and regulations, consistent with the vision expressed by this adopted public document. Subsequent to this step, the above plan elements and their corresponding implementation will follow.

Value of the Plan Development Process

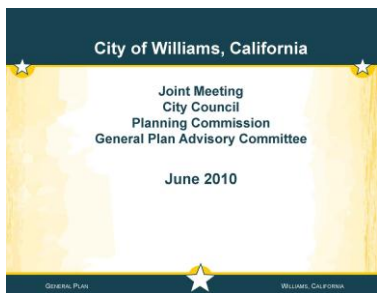
Undertaking this planning process was highly valuable for the community – both leaders and citizens alike – since it provided an opportunity to think beyond the normal day-to-day issues. This process allowed the community to think grand in scale by examining its historical, current, and projected growth and development within the City and its Sphere of Influence. The nature of the planning process also required the community to consider the interrelationships among a variety of long-range planning issues. For instance, there was evaluation of how the City’s future land use and growth patterns will affect the requirements to widen streets and improve major intersections. In addition, it allowed discussion as to the impact of individual development projects on the agricultural character of Williams, recognizing the rippling affect that transpires over the course of time.

Further to encouraging broad, long-term, and integrated thinking, the planning process provided a means for members of the public to identify the community they want now, and more importantly, in five, ten, and twenty years – and beyond. It was an important step in this process to allow citizens opportunities to identify their vision and further, to encourage their participation in planning for the future. The ability to successfully implement this plan is directly correlated to the amount of citizen participation and the sense of ownership derived from the plan development process.

The vision expressed by residents of this community was transcribed and formed into a series of goals and policy statements, each of which are contained within respective chapters of this plan. Collectively, they will serve as a guide for the City Council, Planning Commission, City staff, and other boards, committees, and groups in their decision-making and administrative activities over both the short- and long-term.

Benefits of the Plan

The General Plan provides long-term policy direction. In so doing, the plan offers community leaders and residents the following benefits:



The planning process involved at-large citizen interviews with a citizens’ General Plan Advisory Committee to provide oversight.



- Establishes policy direction for future development and redevelopment, providing decision-making guidance to members of the Planning Commission, City Council, City staff, as well as the community at-large.
- Identifies recommendations contributing to future work programs for the City.
- Sets out basic principles for maintaining and enhancing the character of existing and future neighborhoods, leading to the formation of new land use regulations.
- Identifies improvement needs and priorities for use by City management to guide budgeting and capital programming decisions.
- States the municipality's intentions regarding the physical development and infrastructure investment, ultimately creating an improved level of certainty for landowners and developers.
- Communicates to citizens the type, pattern, and density of future development, thereby flagging the impact of development on private property.
- Coordinates transportation and infrastructure improvements with development, creating an integrated development framework.
- Lays out the future economic and physical development of the community, which is useful to other local, State and Federal agencies engaged in the provision of programs, services, and facilities.

Envisioning the Future

A clear vision of what the community aspires to achieve is the first step in charting a path to address the complex decisions facing it in the short- and long-term. A vision describes the community's preferred future, offering direction for the goals, objectives, and policies that provide a framework for future planning, development, and programmatic decisions.

The Visioning Process

This update was a 15-month process involving a large number of residents and stakeholders representing the diversity of the community and its leadership. The Planning Commission led the process, offering their input to ensure the plan reflects the values and priorities of the community. During the drafting stage of the chapters (both text and maps), a General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) made up of citizen representatives provided detailed policy direction and oversight. The Planning Commission was charged with the responsibility of establishing the community's core values and its expectations for the visioning process. They were also involved in reviewing each of the plan elements to offer their insight and ensure the plan is both realistic and able to be implemented.



A vision of what 7th Street could look like in the future as redevelopment occurs.