

Woodlake General Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report

5.0 UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The following potential adverse environmental effects appear to be unavoidable if the Woodlake General Plan is implemented, even if certain mitigation measures are implemented. These unavoidable effects are as follows:

1. Accelerated loss of prime and unique farmland to urbanization.
2. Loss of open space to urbanization.

6.0 ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION

6.01 No Project

This alternative would preclude the approval and implementation of the Woodlake General Plan. Under the No Project Alternative, Woodlake would be required to make planning and capital improvement decisions based on the 1975 General Plan. The 1975 Plan is outdated. It does not provide suitable direction for the public, Planning Commission and City Council in regards to where future growth should be directed, the alignment of new roadways, the location of various public buildings and grounds, the design of new development, and the means of financing new growth.

The No Project Alternative will not eliminate the environmental impacts discussed in Section 4.0, Environmental Impact Analysis, of this EIR. Population growth and urban development will still occur in the Woodlake planning area, even without the adoption of the General Plan.

Without the adoption of the General Plan, Woodlake will be required to accommodate future urban development through numerous general plan amendments, zone changes, and conditional use permits. This approach to managing urban development in a community is disjointed, inefficient, and is subject to wholesale changes in planning philosophy and direction as staff, Commissioners and Councils change. For these reasons, the No Project Alternative has been rejected by Woodlake.

Woodlake General Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report

6.02 No Annexation Alternative (Superior Alternative)

This alternative to the General Plan involves no annexation of lands into the City of Woodlake during the planning period. This alternative would force development to occur on vacant or agricultural lands within the city limits. This planning approach will force urban infill and preclude development on the fringe of the community.

Enacting this alternative would be environmentally superior to the proposed General Plan because it would champion a non-sprawl urban pattern. This alternative would promote the conservation of agricultural land and open space that surrounds the community. In addition, because growth would be concentrated within the existing city limits, infrastructure would be more effectively used and the city's service delivery system (police, fire, solid waste, code enforcement, etc.) would be more efficient since the geographic area that these services would cover would be concentrated.

Most of the goals, policies and actions contained in the proposed General Plan could be implemented under this alternative. Those goals, policies and actions that call for the outward expansion of Woodlake's current city limits would not be implemented under this alternative.

7.0 LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

7.01 Short-Term Use of the Environment versus its Long-Term Productivity

The short-term use of the environment will involve the implementation of the General Plan over a 20-year planning period. The growth that will be facilitated by the implementation of the Plan will cause between 109 and 283 acres of land to be developed. This acreage will accommodate residential, office, commercial, and industrial uses, parks, and schools.

The long-term productivity of the environment will be adversely affected by the conversion of the planning area from an agriculture to an urban use and the development of one urban use to another. These land use conversions will have environmental impacts that have been discussed in Chapter 4.0: Environmental Impact Analysis. As discussed in this section of the EIR, except for cumulative impacts

Woodlake General Plan

Draft Environmental Impact Report

involving depletion of ground water and production of air emissions and the loss of agricultural land, none of these impacts are deemed significant. Through local plans and ordinances, State and federal laws, and site plan requirements, these impacts have been reduced to a less than significant level.

7.02 Irreversible Environmental Changes

Irreversible environmental changes are as follows:

1. Loss of agricultural land and open space.
2. Consumption of nonrenewable resources, including petroleum and natural gas, during the development of the planning area.
3. The scenic appearance of the planning area as its open space features are developed with buildings and other improvements.
4. Increase in the amount of impervious surfaces in the planning area thereby causing additional storm water runoff.
5. Increase in groundwater pumping causing an overdraft of the aquifer from which the planning area draws its domestic water.

7.03 Growth-Inducing Impacts

Development of the proposed General Plan will be growth-inducing in terms of promoting urban, economic and population growth. However, general plans do not by themselves generate the types of growth previously mentioned. These types of growth are stimulated by a multitude of variables, including the economy, interest rates, immigration, and natural growth rates. The general plan serves to manage, direct, design, finance, and control growth, and to a certain degree stimulate it.

7.04 Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative effects are defined as two or more separate effects which when considered together are considerable, or which compound or increase either environmental impact. Cumulative impacts can result in individually minor, but collectively significant impacts taking place over time in different but spatially close locations.

Woodlake General Plan

Draft Environmental Impact Report

The following are cumulative environmental effects that will result from the implementation of the Woodlake General Plan.

1. Air emissions generated from the Woodlake planning area will aggravate the San Joaquin Valley's already poor air quality.
2. Urban development within the Exeter planning area over the next 20 years will add to the continued loss of agricultural land, a nonrenewable resource, in the Central Valley.
3. Consumption of ground water as a result of urban growth in the planning area will aggravate the "overdraft" condition that exists in the Kaweah River Ground Water Basin.

7.05 Green House Gases (GHG) Impacts

Recent state legislation (AB 32), requires environmental documents prepared consistent with CEQA to discuss the project's (general plan) impact on green house gases. Green house gases result in climate change (global warming), which can result in numerous adverse impacts on the environment, including warmer climates, reduced runoff from the Sierras, increased water consumption, change in agricultural production, change in distribution of native plant and animal species, and change in rainfall on the Valley floor to name a few.

There are a number of mitigation measures and alternative strategies that can reduce the production of green house gases, many of which, are included in this general plan as goals, policies and actions. Some of the strategies that directly relate to the reduction of green house gases are as follows:

Land Use Element

Growth Management

- **Maintain Woodlake as a small, agriculturally-oriented city surrounded by farmland and open space features.**
1. Insure that Woodlake is surrounded by agricultural land that is zoned for large parcel agriculture (e.g. AE-20).
 - a. The City shall notify the County of Tulare that all agricultural land that is

Woodlake General Plan

Draft Environmental Impact Report

within its Sphere of Influence (SOI) and outside its city limits should be zoned to the AE-20 zone district.

b. The City shall protest any division of land requests within its Sphere of Influence that would create nonviable agricultural parcels.

- **Use natural barriers as a means of delineating the urbanized portion of Woodlake, including the St. Johns River, Antelope Creek, Bravo Lake and foothill lands.**

1. The City of Woodlake shall establish the southern alignment of its Sphere of Influence (SOI) along the St. Johns River and Friant-Kern Canal.

2. Woodlake's urban development boundary line (20- year growth line) shall follow Antelope Creek between Naranjo Boulevard and Cajon Avenue.

3. Woodlake's urban development boundary line (20-year growth line) and Sphere of Influence shall align with St. Johns Street, a street that separates foothill and agricultural lands from lands that can be potentially urbanized.

- **Promote Smart Growth planning principals in order to discourage urban sprawl and the premature urbanization of agricultural land.**

1. The City shall amend its Zoning Ordinance to add Smart Growth planning principles to its Planned Unit Development (PUD) zone district.

- a. The Smart Growth planning principles shall potentially include reduced yard standards, passive solar orientation, narrower streets, unique architectural dwelling designs, and water and energy conservation measures.

2. The City shall promote mixed-use development where appropriate.

- a. The City shall amend its Zoning Ordinance to provide for a mixed-use zone district.

- b. The City should identify sites in the downtown core where mixed-use development would be appropriate.

- **Encourage the County of Tulare to upzone properties that surround the City of**

Woodlake General Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report

Woodlake so as to avoid future land use conflicts.

1. Insure that Woodlake is surrounded by agricultural land that is zoned for large parcel agriculture (e.g. AE-20).
 - a. The City shall notify the County of Tulare that all agricultural land that is within its Sphere of Influence and outside its city limits should be zoned to the AE-20 zone district.
 - b. The City shall protest any division of land requests within its Sphere of Influence that would create nonviable agricultural parcels.

Circulation Element

School Routes

- **Woodlake shall continue to utilize Safe-Route-To-Schools funds to improve the travel routes of school-aged children, including the installation of sidewalks, and street crossings upgrades, which include blinking lights, painted crosswalks or flashing lights mounted on the surface of the street.**
1. Working with Woodlake's two school districts, Woodlake should identify streetscape projects that will improve safety conditions for school-aged children walking or riding to school.
 - a. The City should budget funds from its transportation, gas tax, Measure R, and state Safe-Route-To-Schools grants to install streetscape improvements identified by the three agencies.

Transit

- **Promote alternative modes of transportation, including bicycles, buses, and walking.**
2. Woodlake shall adopt the Tulare County Regional Bike Plan.
 - a. Adoption of the Bike path Plan will allow Woodlake to apply for monies to construct bike paths.

Woodlake General Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report

- **Reduce automobile use by improving transit service and encouraging transit use.**

1. Facilitate the provision of convenient, frequent, dependable and efficient scheduled transit for Woodlake residents.

a. The City of Woodlake could explore contracting with Visalia City Coach to provide twice a day transit service between the two communities.

b. All arterial streets shall be designed to accommodate buses and bus loading zones.

Bike and Pedestrian Pathways

- **Encourage persons to ride bikes for health reasons as well as for environmental reasons.**

1. Develop a bike path plan that is a part of the Circulation Element.

a. Design the Plan so that some of the bike path segments are not along surface streets but are along railroad rights-of-way, parks and ditch easements.

b. Apply for state and federal funds to finance the construction of the bike path system.

c. Insure that subdivisions are designed so that persons riding bikes can access adjacent properties from the neighborhood.

d. Work with the county of Tulare to insure that Woodlake's Plan is linked to the County's Bike path Plan.

e. Consider implementing traffic calming designs where bike paths cross surface streets.

f. Bike paths will be constructed consistent with the bike path cross-section illustrated in Appendix A of the Circulation Element.

- **Design a bike path system that encourages persons from other communities to bike to Woodlake.**

Woodlake General Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report

1. The Circulation Element map will delineate the location of existing and future bikepaths in Woodlake. The county's bikepath plan shows a bikepath running north and south along Road 196. A proposed bikepath will connect Woodlake's system with the county's path on Road 196.

- **Insure that Woodlake's bike path system is consistent with the Tulare County Bicycle Transportation Plan.**

1. The Circulation Element map will delineate the location of existing and future bikepaths in Woodlake and surrounding environs that are consistent with the county's plan.

- **Promote persons to walk in Woodlake.**

1. Attempt to provide safe and convenient pedestrian access to all areas of the city, including between neighborhoods.

- a. Maintain and repair sidewalks to make them safe for pedestrians.
- b. Plant existing parkways that are devoid of trees so make the walking experience more enjoyable.
- c. Provide signage for walking paths.
- d. Investigate the use of ditch easements and railroad rights-of-way for walking paths.

The above policies and action programs will reduce the general plan's impact on green house gases to a less than significant level.

8.0 EFFECTS FOUND NOT TO BE SIGNIFICANT

Findings contained in Section 4.0, Environmental Impact Analysis, showed that certain environmental effects were "insignificant" and others had been reduced to an "insignificant" level through mitigation measures. These "insignificant" impacts are as follows:

1. Potential for loss of property and life due to seismic and geologic hazards.
2. Potential for loss of property and life due to flooding.

Woodlake General Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report

3. Potential for exposing persons to significant levels of noise.
4. The loss of native habitat and the potential for "taking" rare, endangered, or threatened plant or animal species.
5. Ground water contamination.
6. Surface water contamination
7. Land use conflicts.
8. The General Plan's impact on law enforcement, fire protection and medical aid services.
9. The General Plan's impact on the planning area's sewer, water and storm drainage systems.

9.0 ORGANIZATIONS AND PERSONS CONSULTED

Organizations and persons consulted during preparation of the EIR include the following:

Ruben DeLeon, Public Works Manager, City of Woodlake

Dean Uota, City Engineer, City of Woodlake

Woodlake school districts

John Zapalac, Police Chief, City of Woodlake

Federal Emergency Management Agency, flood insurance rate maps

Soil Conservation Service

California Natural Diversity Data Base