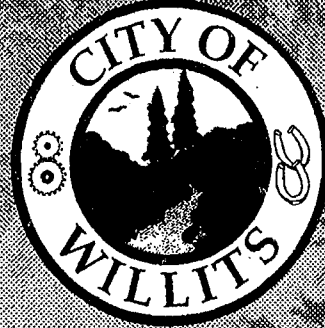


# WILLITS GENERAL PLAN REVISION



# VISION 2020

A Railroading Wonderland  
WILLITS, CALIFORNIA  
1888 1988

VISION 2020  
WILLITS GENERAL PLAN REVISION  
ADOPTED  
August 12, 1992

Prepared by Neal Martin and Associates

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## VISION 2020: WILLITS GENERAL PLAN REVISION

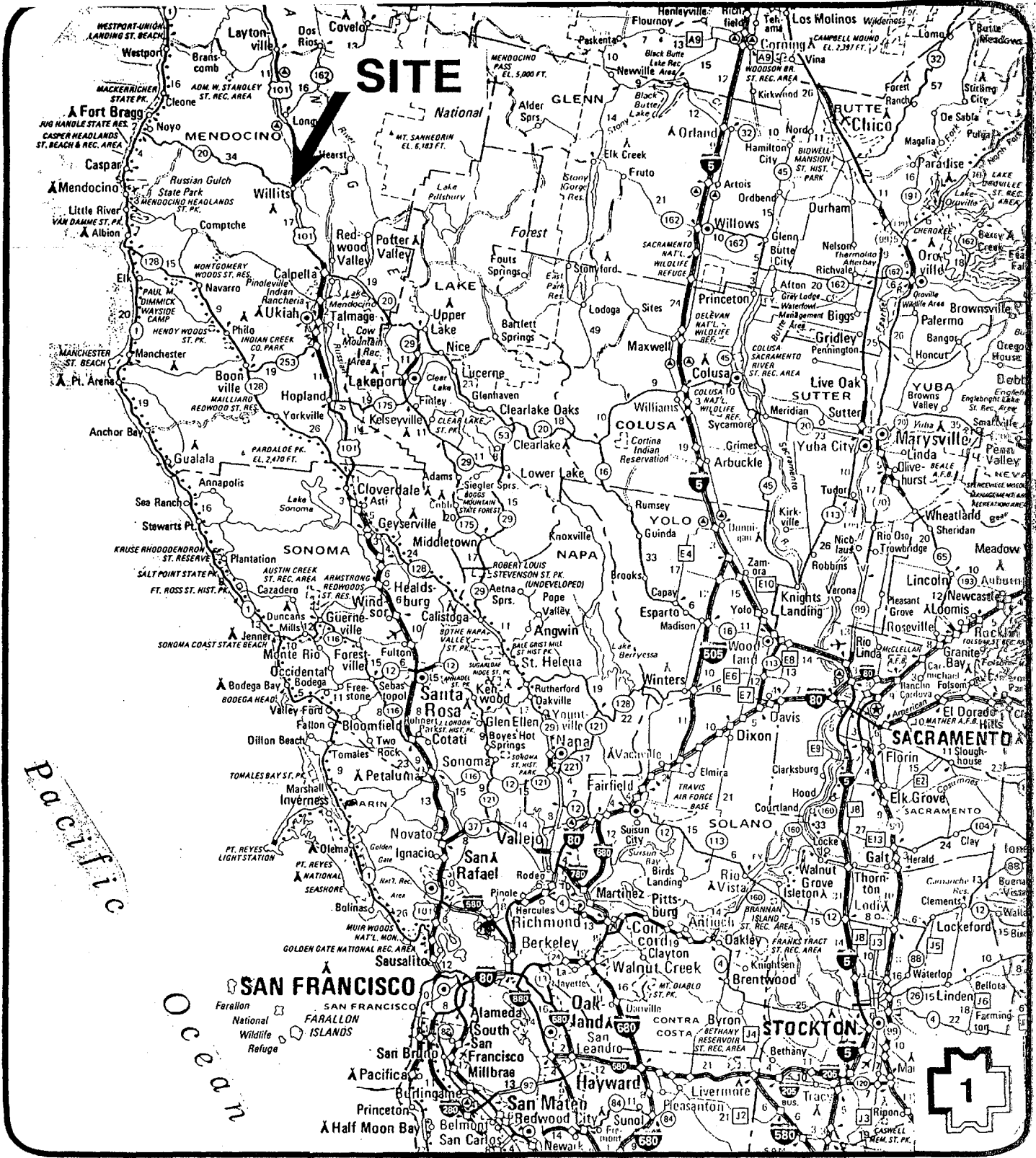
### INTRODUCTION

The Willits General Plan is a policy document which establishes a framework to guide the long-term development of the community. The General Plan sets forth the City's goals and policies regarding land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, public health and safety. The plan also establishes programs for putting these goals and policies into effect.

Because of its comprehensive and long-range nature, the General Plan, by necessity, has a broad policy focus. It is neither necessary nor desirable for the General Plan to encompass specific details pertaining to individual properties or development projects. Such details are more appropriately incorporated into Specific Plans and Development Agreements prepared in consistency with the overall General Plan.

The Willits General Plan is organized into three volumes. Volume One contains goals, policies and implementation measures for each of the eight General Plan Elements (land use; circulation; conservation and open space; noise; housing; public services, parks and recreation; safety; and economic development). Volume 2 contains the background information and analysis upon which both the General Plan policy document and the environmental analysis are based. Volume 3, the Environmental Impact Report, assesses the environmental effects of the General Plan Revision and identifies mitigation measures for reducing adverse effects to acceptable levels. Collectively, Volumes 1 through 3 comprise the Willits General Plan Revision and Environmental Impact Report.

The City of Willits is located in the heart of northern California, approximately 140 miles north of San Francisco (see Exhibit 1). The City occupies the western periphery of Little Lake Valley in central Mendocino County. The immediate vicinity of the General Plan area is illustrated by Exhibit 2.



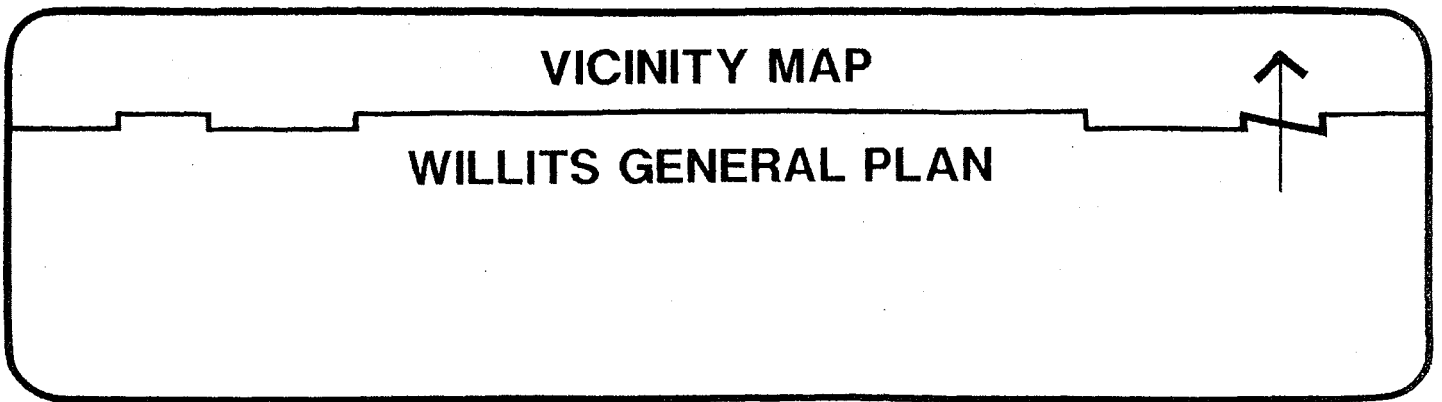
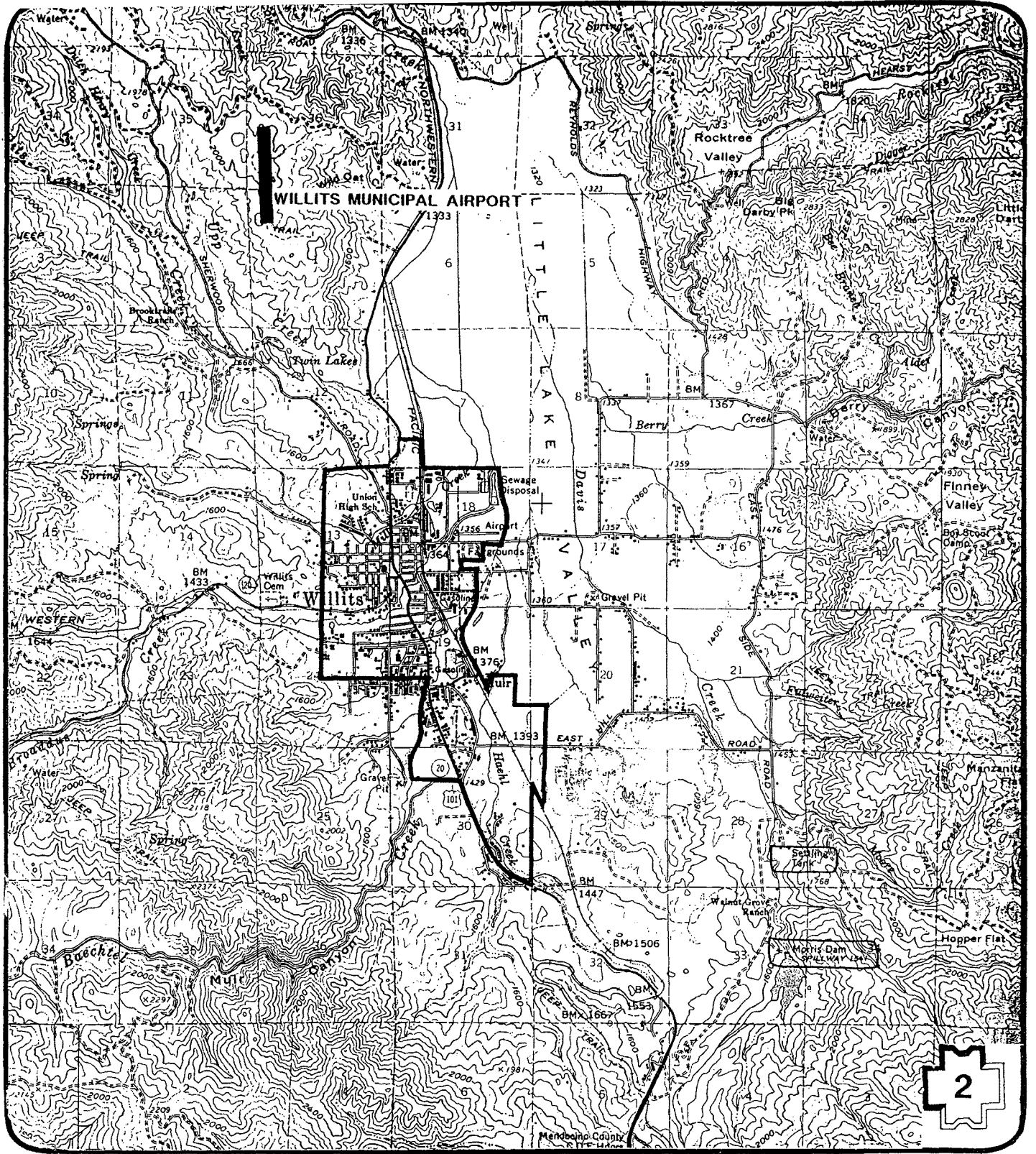
Pacific

Ocean

1

### REGIONAL MAP







# **VOLUME 1**

VISION 2020  
WILLITS GENERAL PLAN REVISION  
VOLUME 1

1.000 LAND USE ELEMENT

1.100 Land Use Goal

To achieve an optimal balance of residential, commercial, industrial and open space land uses.

1.200 Land Use Policies

1.210 Facilitate local growth in accordance with Scenario 1, identified in Section 2.322 of the Technical Appendices (Volume 2). This scenario calls for an ultimate build-out population of approximately 7,500 residents.

1.220 Minimize potential land use conflicts by defining compatible groups of activities, assigning appropriate land use designations and requiring development standards and buffers to offset adverse project impacts on surrounding properties.

1.230 Give priority consideration to infill development of vacant and underutilized land within the City limits.

1.240 Consider annexations which are consistent with the extension of public services and facilities and other City policies and plans. Possible future annexation sites are shown on Exhibit 3-2 of the Technical Appendices (Volume 2).

1.250 Gateways to Willits shall be designated and identified by well-designed landscaped entrances to enhance access corridors into the downtown area.

1.260 In reviewing proposals for changes in land use, priority shall be given to projects which would result in the creation of employment opportunities.

1.270 Until such time as the community reaches a balance of jobs and housing, commercial and industrial development shall be regarded as a higher priority objective than residential development.

1.280 On lands designated for industrial use, buildings and accessory structures should be designed and located in a manner which will not intrude upon adjacent land uses.

1.290 Encourage agricultural activities on lands designated for industrial use until such time as the lands are utilized for industrial purposes.

1.300 Land Use Implementation Measures

1.310 Revise Zoning Ordinance to accommodate changes in land use designations and standards contained in the Revised General Plan.

1.320 Investigate and implement methods of accelerating the project review process for commercial and industrial development proposals which generate employment opportunities.

1.330 Develop design review standards for structures, landscaping and related development to facilitate compatibility with surrounding uses.

1.340 Strengthen the Zoning Ordinance to promote landscaping, specifically:

- (a) prescribe a ratio of trees per parking stalls and require parking lots to be interspersed with landscaping;
- (b) prescribe a minimum proportion of landscaped area for each land use category;
- (c) require landscaping plans to be submitted and approved as part of the application process.
- (d) utilize drought-resistant landscape materials to the greatest feasible extent.

## 2.000 CIRCULATION ELEMENT

### 2.100 **Circulation Goal**

To design and maintain a fully integrated local network which provides for safe and convenient circulation using a variety of transportation modes.

### 2.200 **Circulation Policies**

2.210 Prevent gridlock by maintaining a roadway level of service of LOS D or better on local streets. (See Volume 3, Table 4.2-1 for definition and measurement of roadway levels of service).

2.220 Assess residential developers inside and outside of the City traffic impact fees for roadway improvements and other measures necessary to offset the impact of such development on the local roadway network.

2.230 Enhance the availability and accessibility of alternative modes of transportation, such as walking, bicycling, carpools and buses. Incorporate mass transit facilities such as bus shelters and park and ride lots into the design of public and private development projects.

2.240 Support the proposed U.S. 101 bypass of Willits, including provisions for direct access from the bypass to the downtown Willits commercial area. Continue researching the feasibility of a north/south roadway parallel to U.S. 101 while awaiting bypass approval.

2.250 Support efforts by Brooktrails Township to overcome its circulation constraints, provided that the Township establishes mechanisms, such as impact fees, to offset the impact of future Brooktrails growth on the Willits roadway network.

2.260 Accomplish a 25 percent reduction in single occupancy vehicle trips by 2000. Methods to be employed shall include:

- (a) making the existing circulation network safer and more accessible to pedestrians, bicyclists and car poolers;
- (b) studying and implementing methods of improving and expanding existing bus service; and
- (c) reducing commuting by increasing the number of well-paying jobs in close proximity to Willits residents.

2.270 Promote beautification efforts along the City's roadways.

2.280 Encourage continuation and expansion of passenger, tourist and freight rail service, including the Northwestern Pacific and Eureka Southern freight lines and the Skunk Train.

2.290 Coordinate local transportation planning with the California Department of Transportation and Mendocino County.

#### 2.300 **Circulation Implementation Measures**

2.310 Establish traffic impact fees to secure funding for circulation network improvements necessitated by planned future growth.

2.320 Require traffic impact studies for proposed projects which would generate 50 or more peak hour vehicle trips. Studies shall include mitigation measures designed to maintain adherence to level of service standards contained in the General Plan.

2.330 Improve signage to Willits Airport and to existing public parking facilities in the downtown area. Utilize signage to highlight gateways to the community.

2.340 Designate a network of bicycle routes providing safe passage throughout the City; establish linkages between schools and the designated bikeway.

2.350 Require bicycle storage facilities as a condition of approval for multi-family residential development projects containing 10 or more units and for all commercial development proposals.

2.360 Investigate the feasibility of expanding existing MTA bus service or providing local service from Brooktrails to Evergreen Shopping Center and points in between.

2.370 Conduct a study to assess the need for additional downtown off-street parking.

2.380 Provide additional landscaping, including street trees, along existing roadways. Utilize reclaimed water to the maximum feasible extent to irrigate roadway landscaping.

2.390 Initiate and conduct the planning process for the Willits Airport. Ensure that the airport planning process includes participation from Brooktrails, Mendocino County and other affected jurisdictions and that various alternatives in addition to accelerated commercial development are included in the airport planning process.

### 3.000 CONSERVATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

#### 3.100 Conservation and Open Space Goal

To ensure that the future growth of Willits occurs in a manner which minimizes adverse impacts on the City's existing plants, wildlife, open space and natural resources.

#### 3.200 Conservation and Open Space Policies

3.210 Conserve, to the greatest feasible extent, the City's existing natural resources, with particular emphasis on air and water quality, open space, tree preservation and riparian habitat maintenance and enhancement.

3.220 Ensure that all adverse environmental impacts of proposed development projects are identified and acceptably mitigated prior to approval.

3.230 Ensure that environmental mitigation measures included as conditions of project approval are effectively implemented and maintained over the long term.

3.240 Support the preservation and improvement of buildings and sites of local historical significance.

3.250 Maximize open space preservation on lands outside of the City limits which are not identified for possible future annexation on Exhibit 3-2 (Volume 2).

3.260 Cooperate with regional and state agencies in programs designed to reduce air and water pollution levels.

3.270 Consider utilization of focused Environmental Impact Reports and Mitigated Negative Declarations to address significant adverse project impacts in a cost-effective manner.

3.280 Initiate and/or support local and regional recycling programs, air quality policies, water conservation and watershed preservation efforts.

3.290 Promote alternatives to automobile use as a means of improving local air quality.

### 3.300 Conservation and Open Space Implementation Measures

3.310 Pursuant to state environmental law, mitigation monitoring programs shall be included as part of the environmental review process for all projects requiring an Environmental Impact Report or Mitigated Negative Declaration. Mitigation monitoring programs shall specify how each mitigation measure will be implemented, which individual or agency will be responsible for follow-up and the time schedule that will be followed in monitoring project mitigation efforts.

3.320 All applications for development within 250 feet of Willits, Broaddus or Baechtel Creeks shall be required to include site-specific field observation by a qualified botanist and a wildlife biologist as part of the application package. This requirement may be waived in the event that the City's Environmental Review Officer determines that the proposed project will have no impact on the riparian corridor or that the site in question has been previously disturbed to the extent that the proposed project would be of minimal environmental concern.

3.330 Within the shaded areas shown on Exhibit 10-1 (Volume 2), field investigation by a qualified archaeologist shall be required as part of the application package for proposed development projects. Any potential adverse cultural or archaeological impacts identified by the field study shall be acceptably mitigated as a condition of project approval.

3.340 Appoint, by December 1993, a Historical Resource Committee to identify historically significant buildings and sites for inclusion on the Historical and Archaeological Resources Map (Exhibit 10-1, Volume 2).

3.350 Study the feasibility of establishing a regional recycling facility in Willits.

3.360 Appoint, by December 1992, a committee to identify local trees of significance and to make recommendations to the City Council toward the formulation of a Tree Preservation Ordinance. Adopt, by December 1993, a City-wide Tree Preservation Ordinance.

3.370 Adopt, by December 1993, an ordinance requiring all newly installed wood-burning stoves to be certified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for low emissions. Also require retrofitting of existing wood-burning stoves to reduce pollution emissions as a condition of approval for all home expansion projects in excess of 1,000 square feet.

Study the feasibility of offering rebates to existing residents to retrofit wood-burning stoves.

3.380 Reduce water pollution due to infiltration by completing all high priority improvements identified in the Sewer System Master Plan by 1995.

3.390 Develop programs to officially recognize and commend the efforts of individual residents to beautify and enhance the local environment.

4.000 NOISE ELEMENT

4.100 **Noise Goal**

To preserve the existing community noise environment, while minimizing the exposure of Willits residents to potentially harmful noise levels.

4.200 **Noise Policies\***

4.210 The City seeks to maintain ambient noise levels of 55 dBA (CNEL) in existing residential areas.

4.220 For residential development in areas with existing ambient noise levels in excess of 60 dBA, noise attenuation shall be required to reduce average indoor noise levels to a maximum of 45 dBA.

4.230 All noise sensitive land uses in areas with ambient noise levels in excess of 60 dBA shall require acceptable mitigation of noise impacts as a condition of approval.

4.240 Application processing procedures may require the submittal of appropriate acoustical data so that the noise impacts of proposed uses can be properly evaluated and mitigated.

4.250 Noise from all sources should be maintained at levels that will not adversely affect adjacent properties or the community, especially during the evening and early morning hours.

4.260 Noise created by temporary activities necessary to provide construction or required services should be permitted for the shortest duration possible and limited to time periods that will have the least possible adverse effect on surrounding land uses.

4.270 Uses should be located where they will be most acoustically compatible with elements of the man-made and natural environment.

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\* See Volume 2, Chapter 5 for definition of terms used in this section.



4.280 On completion of the U.S. 101 bypass, load limits shall be established along Main Street north of State Route 20 to prevent large trucks from traversing this portion of the roadway.

#### 4.300 **Noise Implementation Measures**

4.310 Through the application review process, orient sensitive portions of buildings away from noise sources and encourage utilization of design techniques that will reduce adverse noise impacts.

4.320 Utilize natural terrain to screen structures from major arterials or other noise sources.

4.330 Monitor known noise problems and evaluate complaints regarding new noise sources in order to develop the most practical solutions.

4.340 Should complaints regarding undesirable noise levels increase significantly, the City shall consider an ordinance providing for the control of excessive noise-generating activities.

4.350 Continue to monitor airport noise levels and seek to minimize noise increases, both in Willits and within unincorporated residential areas in the vicinity of the airport.

4.360 Encourage the use of landscaping and vegetation as noise buffers.

#### 5.000 **HOUSING ELEMENT**

Policies and programs contained in this section are based on the Housing Needs Assessment contained in Chapter 7 of the Technical Appendices (Volume 2).

#### 5.100 **Housing Goal**

To promote a variety of housing types to meet the City's projected housing needs.

#### 5.200 **Housing Policies**

5.210 Avoid becoming a "bedroom community" by encouraging residential development which meets the needs of local workers as opposed to commuters.

5.220 Expand the availability of affordable housing by encouraging multi-family residential development on lands designated for commercial use. Encourage mixed residential/commercial development along Main Street and in the area between Main Street and the railroad tracks.

5.230 Initiate efforts to address the shelter needs of the City's homeless and "at risk" families.

5.240 Encourage development of large executive homes by designating additional lands for residential estate use.

5.250 Endeavor, through the approaches set forth in the Housing Needs Assessment (Volume 2) and the policies and programs contained in the Housing Element, to meet the City's share of regional housing need for the 1990-1997 period. The City's share of regional housing need has been estimated as follows:

<u>INCOME GROUP</u>	<u>ESTIMATED # UNITS NEEDED, 1990-97</u>
Very Low	68
Low	29
Moderate	50
Above Moderate	<u>78</u>
TOTAL	225

(Note: Affordability criteria are set forth in the Housing Needs Assessment, Volume 2, Chapter 7).

5.260 Facilitate the private rehabilitation of up to 140 homes by 1997 through identification of available funding sources and informing existing residents of such sources. Conserve, through rehabilitation and replacement, the City's existing number of affordable housing units, which is estimated at 775 (including units affordable to very low-, low- and moderate-income households).

5.270 Actively oppose housing discrimination on the basis of age, race, health, religion, gender, family size or sexual preference.

5.280 Promote energy efficiency in residential construction.

5.290 Avoid concentration of affordable housing in a single portion of the City.

#### 5.300 **Housing Element Implementation Measures**

5.310 Waive lot line adjustment fees and accelerate the review process for projects in commercial and multi-family areas which would result in affordable housing creation.

5.320 Provide information and referral services to victims of housing discrimination. Publish notices of the City's nondiscrimination housing policy and the availability of information and referral service.

5.330 Encourage second dwelling unit construction by eliminating public hearing requirements for such units.

5.340 Encourage applicants to meet with Pacific Gas and Electric Company regarding energy efficiency early in the process of designing residential development projects.

5.350 Pursuant to Section 65915 of the Government Code as amended, provide a density bonus of at least 25 percent or an equivalent incentive to residential developers who agree to price 20 percent of the units at levels affordable to low-income households, or 10 percent of the units for very low-income households, or 50 percent of the units for senior citizens.

5.360 Assist in meeting the housing needs of special groups identified in the Housing Needs Assessment by working with local nonprofit organizations to establish home sharing and housing rehabilitation information and referral programs.

5.370 Permit emergency homeless shelters and transitional housing on lands designated for commercial and multi-family use.

5.380 Earmark 10 percent of hotel bed tax revenues for homeless assistance programs and shelters. Encourage private contributions to local homeless assistance programs and shelters.

5.390 Enact a resolution urging the State to provide cost of living differentials for AFDC recipients in high cost urban areas and to provide increased financial assistance for rural communities whose AFDC caseloads have increased more than 50 percent since 1980.

## 6.000 PUBLIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES, PARKS AND RECREATION ELEMENT

### 6.100 **Public Services and Facilities, Parks and Recreation Goal**

To develop and maintain a public service delivery network which meets the needs of local residents in a cost-effective and equitable manner.

### 6.200 **Public Services and Facilities, Parks and Recreation Policies**

6.210 Ensure that development occurs in a manner which is consistent with the ability of local public agencies to provide adequate services and facilities within an efficient cost framework.

6.220 Continue to evaluate the capacity and effectiveness of local water, sanitary sewer, storm drainage and service delivery systems.

6.230 Endeavor to more equitably distribute parks and recreational facilities throughout Willits.

6.240 Establish and maintain a minimum standard of five acres of parkland per 1,000 residents within the City limits.

6.250 Promote a diverse range of parks, recreational facilities and programs to meet the needs of various components of the local population.

6.260 Promote voluntarism as a means of increasing the quantity and quality of local recreational programs.

6.270 Continue to cooperate with local school districts to provide opportunities for recreational use of school and park facilities.

6.280 Endeavor to establish and maintain a local budgetary reserve equivalent to one-half of the City's estimated annual sales tax revenue.

6.300 **Public Services and Facilities, Parks and Recreation Implementation Measures**

6.310 Require residential developers to set aside lands or provide in-lieu fees to ensure that the City's parkland standard of five acres per 1,000 residents is maintained.

6.320 Require applicants for development projects to finance public infrastructure improvements which would be necessitated by project approval.

6.330 Continue to make the community center and other local facilities available to local groups and organizations for recreational programs.

6.340 Reestablish a committee of volunteers to provide input to the City Council on parks and recreation issues.

6.350 Investigate user fees as a financing mechanism for local public services and facilities.

7.000 SAFETY ELEMENT

7.100 **Safety Goal**

To provide a local environment that is relatively free from hazards and as safe as practicable.

## 7.200 Safety Policies

7.210 Cooperate with the Little Lake Fire District in developing standards and guidelines to assure adequate fire protection and the provision of medical and other emergency services for all persons and property in the community.

7.220 Encourage installation of fire safety devices in all residences and require such installation at the time of original construction, remodeling or expansion.

7.230 Establish five minutes or two miles travel distance as the maximum response time or travel distance from the nearest fire station. Outside of this response range, built-in fire protection systems (i.e., sprinklers) shall be required in all new buildings.

7.240 Upon completion of the U.S. 101 bypass, prohibit the transport of hazardous materials along Main Street north of State Route 20.

7.250 Require geologic, seismic and soil analyses and acceptable mitigation of potential impacts for projects proposed within the Alquist-Priolo seismic study zone.

7.260 Technical reports addressing the geologic hazards of development sites within the seismic study zone shall be prepared by an independent geotechnical consultant approved by the City at the expense of the applicant.

7.270 Development of structures designed for human occupancy shall be prohibited within 50 feet of mapped fault traces.

7.280 Ensure that all new construction is built to established minimum standards with respect to seismic safety.

## 7.300 Safety Implementation Measures

7.310 The Little Lake Fire District shall review all proposed construction projects prior to permit issuance. Conditions of approval pertaining to water supply adequacy, emergency vehicle access, road widths, turning radii and building design features may be submitted by the District based upon its review.

7.320 Maintain regular fire and seismic safety inspection programs, with priority given to emergency facilities, public buildings and older structures.

7.330 Enact zoning ordinance revisions to require built-in fire protection systems for all structures outside of the maximum response range of the Little Lake Fire District.

7.340 Establish inspection procedures to ensure that all grading and foundation work is observed and documented at critical stages of construction.

7.350 Consider fire, flooding, geologic and seismic safety risks in reviewing proposals for development.

7.360 Identify and alleviate safety hazards associated with underground fuel tanks.

7.370 Comply with FEMA standards regarding flood zone management.

## 8.000 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

### 8.100 Economic Development Goal

Foster and maintain a vibrant, diversified, self-sustaining local economy.

### 8.200 Economic Development Policies

8.210 Achieve and maintain a balance of jobs and housing in Willits.

8.220 Designate industrial employment development and downtown revitalization as the City's two most important economic development objectives.

8.230 Actively recruit new businesses which generate employment while encouraging existing employers to maintain or expand their work forces.

8.240 Continue to support efforts by local businesses to upgrade the quality and appearance of stores, offices and other commercial enterprises.

8.250 Continue to facilitate the provision of infrastructure improvements which promote commercial and industrial development.

8.260 Develop strategies for increasing employment at the Willits Airport.

8.270 Continue to encourage existing area industries in their efforts to retain and expand their local operations.

8.280 Utilize zoning and other regulatory mechanisms to prevent encroachment into industrial areas by incompatible land uses.

8.290 Encourage a diverse range of commercial enterprises to locate within the City in order to strengthen sales tax revenues and expand employment opportunities.

**8.300 Economic Development Implementation Measures**

8.310 Adopt, by December 1993, a Specific Plan for the revitalization of the downtown commercial area. This plan should include provisions for a "gateway" to Willits in conjunction with the U.S. 101 bypass interchange.

8.320 Continue to initiate efforts to attract new industries to Willits, focusing on businesses which have expressed an interest in the area, including participants in the Solar Energy Expo and Rally and respondents to the Northern California Industrial Development Executives Association advertising campaign.

8.330 Establish mechanisms for determining the needs and concerns of existing area employers and take action in response to the input received.

8.340 Utilize the Redevelopment Agency to generate funds for economic development activities.

8.350 Offer accelerated permit processing for development proposals which will result in the creation of employment opportunities.

8.360 Continue to cooperate with the Chamber of Commerce and other entities active in local economic development efforts.

8.370 Initiate and conduct the planning process for the Willits Airport. Ensure that the airport planning process includes participation from Brooktrails, Mendocino County, the Airport Land Use Commission and other affected jurisdictions and that various alternatives in addition to accelerated commercial development are included in the airport planning process.

8.380 Adopt, by December 1992, an updated Strategic Marketing Plan which identifies and targets commercial and industrial enterprises that can be attracted to Willits.

8.390 Develop, by July 1993, a Community Profile of Willits containing information required by industries seeking to relocate to Willits.

# VOLUME 2



CHAPTERS 1 AND 2 OF THE TECHNICAL APPENDICES ARE BACKGROUND REPORTS WHICH WERE PREPARED BY THE GENERAL PLAN CONSULTANT. THE VIEWS EXPRESSED ARE THOSE OF THE CONSULTANT; NOT ALL OF THE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE BACKGROUND REPORTS WERE ADOPTED BY THE CITY COUNCIL. SEE VOLUME ONE FOR ADOPTED GENERAL PLAN GOALS, POLICIES AND PROGRAMS.

## 1.000 ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

### 1.100 Introduction

The City of Willits has begun the process of revising its General Plan. Revision of the General Plan will result in the adoption of goals, policies and programs designed to guide the progress of the City for the next 20 to 30 years.

Before embarking on policy revisions of such importance, it is necessary to develop an understanding of local economic conditions as they exist today and as they are likely to evolve over the coming years. Economic conditions influence future growth opportunities and can pose constraints to future development. The health of the local economy also plays an important role in determining the standard of living of community residents. For these reasons, long range land use planning should be preceded by a thorough analysis of the local economy. Labor market conditions, retail sales patterns, industrial activity and government finances are among the economic factors of particular importance in preparing plans for future community development.

The purpose of this paper is to provide local decision-makers with an assessment of existing economic conditions and an analysis of future trends in the local economy. Information contained in this study may be useful in determining the likely rate of future population growth, the optimal mix of land uses necessary to accommodate future development and the types of commercial businesses which are likely to be most successful in view of prevailing economic trends.

### 1.200 Methodology

This study relies upon a combination of analysis of existing labor market statistics and economic growth forecasts and interviews with local community leaders. By analyzing quantitative economic data along with the qualitative impressions of local bankers, real estate brokers, business persons and community activists, a broad view of future trends in the local economy has been derived. This perspective has been applied to the issues of employment, retail sales, industrial development and local fiscal management. Each of these issues has been further analyzed in relation to three alternative future growth scenarios. Finally, recommendations are made with respect to the level of future planned growth and strategies for employment development, retail sales enhancement and local fiscal management.

### 1.300 Existing Economic Conditions

The local economy in Willits is presently characterized by strong retail sales, stable government finances and a rapidly evolving labor market.

The City functions as a sub-regional commercial center serving a market area of approximately 15,000 people.

### 1.310 Retail Sales

An increasingly significant role in the local economy is played by retail sales. Nearly one in four nonagricultural jobs in Mendocino County are in the retail trade sector. Taxes generated through retail trade constitute the largest component of local government revenues. Fortunately, because of its geographic location, Willits is well-suited for its role as a retail trade center.

Taxable retail sales in Mendocino County increased by 34 percent between 1984 and 1989 according to the State Board of Equalization. Although this growth rate was somewhat lower than the 40 percent state-wide increase, it is still indicative of a healthy retail sales environment. Locally, retail sales growth appears to be stronger than the County average with the Chamber of Commerce estimating a 13.1 percent increase between 1988 and 1989. In 1989, roughly one out of every nine dollars in County-wide retail sales occurred in the City of Willits. Total 1989 taxable retail sales in Mendocino County by type of business are shown on Table 1-1.

On a cautionary note, both local and County-wide retail sales appear to be disproportionately concentrated in slow growth sectors of the economy. For example, 40 percent of all retail sales in Mendocino County in 1989 were in the automotive and forest products groups; locally, 50 percent of retail sales fell into these categories. These groups only comprised 27 percent of state-wide retail sales. This suggests that consideration be given to diversification of local retail sales, an issue which is addressed in greater detail in Section 1.420.

### 1.320 Labor Market Conditions

Figures 1-1 and 1-2 illustrate how the structure of the labor market has changed in Mendocino County since 1975. Over this time period, manufacturing employment declined substantially as a proportion of total employment, while jobs in the services and trade sectors increased proportionately. In 1975, more than one-fourth of nonagricultural employees in Mendocino County worked in manufacturing; in 1992 only about one in five workers will fall into this category. By 1992, half of all nonagricultural employees in the County will be working in the wholesale, retail trade or service sectors (See Table 1-2). Because jobs in these sectors often offer lower pay than manufacturing jobs, this transformation of the labor market has important policy implications. Specifically, attention must be given to ensuring retention of existing high-wage employment and attracting new employers in high-wage industrial sectors. Strategies of this nature are discussed in Section 1.430.

Although the local labor market is clearly in transition, there are some signs of strength among existing employers. For example, a telephone survey of 37 Willits area employers conducted in July, 1991 indicated that nearly sixty percent of the respondents expect to increase the size of their work force in future years. This survey included several representatives of the forest products industry, most of whom appear to be optimistic regarding the future of their industry in Willits. It is important in identifying work force trends to acknowledge existing strengths, one of which is the large number of well-paying manufacturing jobs which continue to exist in Willits.

TABLE 1-1: TAXABLE RETAIL SALES IN MENDOCINO COUNTY, 1989  
(in thousands of dollars)

TYPE OF BUSINESS	# PERMITS	TAXABLE TRANSCATIONS	PERCENT OF TAX
Apparel Stores	66	\$ 12,104	2.0
General Merchandise Stores	64	60,406	10.1
Specialty Stores	343	34,921	5.8
Food/Liquor Stores	134	61,434	10.3
Eating/Drinking Establishments	234	56,689	9.5
Appliances/Home Furnishings	99	14,960	2.5
Building Materials	78	59,075	9.9
Automobiles, Service and Accessories	162	115,798	19.4
Business/Personal Services	358	31,124	5.2
All Other Outlets	<u>1,399</u>	<u>150,809</u>	<u>25.2</u>
TOTALS	2,937	\$597,320	99.9

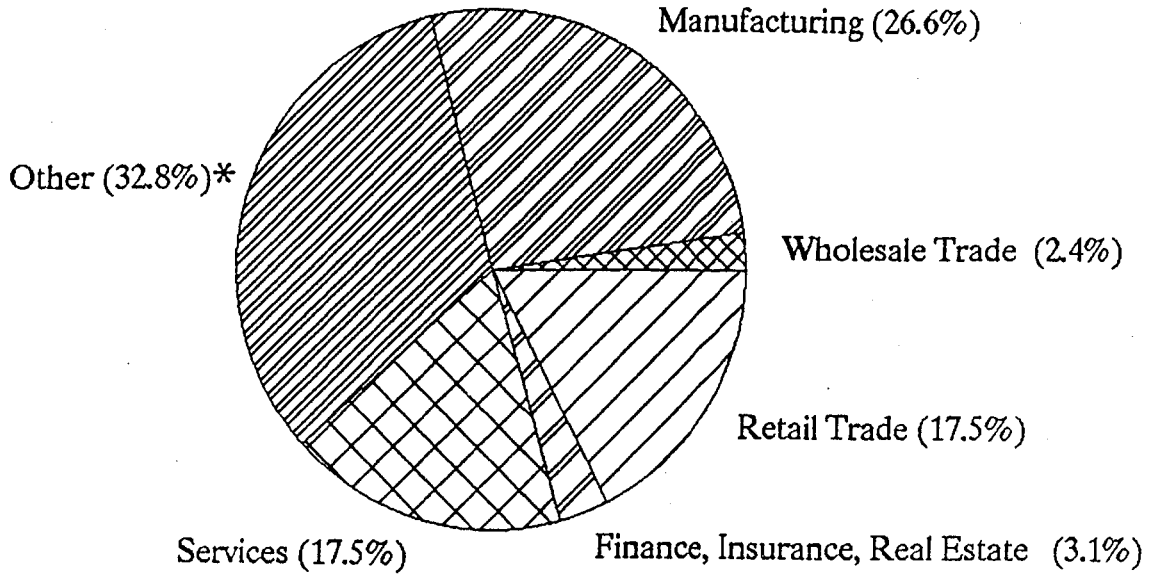
SOURCE: State Board of Equalization, Taxable Sales in California, 1989.

TABLE 1-2: EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY, MENDOCINO COUNTY  
1987 Annual Average and 1992 Projected Employment

INDUSTRY TITLE	1987	1992	CHANGE	PERCENT CHANGE
Total Nonagriculture	25,500	28,775	3,275	12.8
Mining and Construction	900	1,000	100	11.1
Manufacturing	5,600	6,100	500	8.9
Nondurable Goods	1,600	1,900	300	18.8
Food & Kindred Products	800	1,000	200	25.0
Other Nondurable Goods	800	900	100	12.5
Durable Goods	4,025	4,200	175	4.3
Lumber & Wood Products	2,875	2,900	25	0.9
Other Durable Goods	1,150	1,300	150	13.0
Trans. & Public Utilities	925	1,025	100	10.8
Transportation	450	550	100	22.2
Communications & Utilities	475	475	0	0.0
Wholesale Trade	1,050	1,300	250	23.8
Retail Trade	5,600	6,650	1,050	18.8
Restaurants & Bars	1,925	2,250	325	16.9
Other Retail Trade	3,675	4,400	725	19.7
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	875	1,000	125	14.3
Services	5,625	6,425	800	14.2
Hotels & Motels	1,025	1,225	200	19.5
Health Services	1,675	1,825	150	9.0
Social Service Organizations	925	1,025	100	10.8
Other Services	2,025	2,350	325	16.0
Government	4,925	5,275	350	7.1
Federal Government	325	350	25	7.7
State & Local Government	4,575	4,925	350	7.7
Education	2,275	2,425	150	6.6
State	575	575	0	0.0
Local Except Education	1,725	1,925	200	11.6

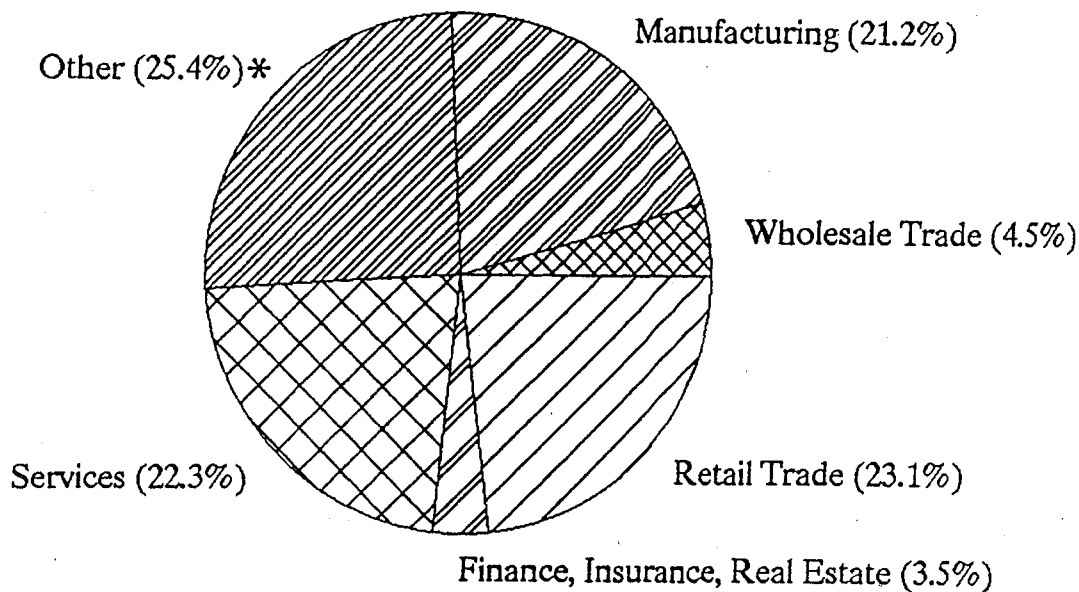
NOTE: Detail may not add to totals due to independent rounding.  
SOURCE: Employment Development Department, Projections of Employment,  
1987-92, 1989.

NON-AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT  
MENDOCINO COUNTY, 1975



\* Includes Mining and Construction, Transportation & Utilities and Government.  
Source: Employment Development Department

NON-AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT  
MENDOCINO COUNTY 1992 (PROJECTED)



\* Includes Mining and Construction, Transportation & Utilities and Government  
Source: Employment Development Department

### 1.330 Local Fiscal Management

Local government finances are an important element of the City's overall economic condition. Sound fiscal management serves to encourage additional investment in the community. By contrast, imbalances in local government finances act as a deterrent to community economic development.

The City of Willits has a strong fiscal base which enables it to offer a full range of urban services to City residents. Sales tax revenues are the basis of the City's fiscal well-being, comprising roughly 40 percent of all local government revenues. Reliance upon sales tax revenues has become increasingly common among California localities since the 1978 passage of Proposition 13, which eliminated property tax increases as a source of local revenue growth. By 1990, property tax revenues accounted for substantially less than 20 percent of the total revenue accruing to the City of Willits. The policy implications of heavy reliance on sales tax revenue are discussed in Section 1.440. Recommendations for strategic fiscal management are offered in Section 1.530.

### 1.340 National and State-wide Economic Conditions

To some extent, local economic conditions are influenced by fluctuations in the state-wide and national economy. This is especially true with regard to retail sales, which are an increasingly important component of local economic activity. The community's increased dependence upon retail sales for both employment and local government revenue makes it vulnerable to cyclical downturns in the national or state economy. This became evident during the 1990-91 recession, which had a negative impact on local employment, retail sales and tax receipts.

The consensus of most economists is that economic growth during the 1990's will occur at a slower rate than was the case during the previous decade. Declines in Gross National Product during the last quarter of 1990 and the first quarter of 1991 put an end to the longest peacetime economic expansion on record. Although economic growth is expected to resume during the second half of 1991, few expect a return to the robust growth of the mid-1980's. In the near to intermediate future, annual economic growth in the 2-3 percent range would appear to represent a reasonable estimate with respect to the national economy.

At the state level, there are indications that the recovery from the recent recession will be slower in California than in the nation as a whole. Factors such as reductions in national defense expenditures, the effects of a five year drought on the agricultural economy, the tenuous condition of state and local government finances and the continued slump in the housing industry are likely to have a negative cumulative impact on the state's economy. For this reason, economic growth in California is unlikely to outpace national economic growth; a reversal of historic growth patterns which could persist into the next century.



The preceding discussion suggests that the local economy may be becoming increasingly vulnerable to fluctuations in national economic conditions, and that the state of California has, at least temporarily, relinquished its role as a growth leader in comparison with other regions of the country. These findings should be taken into consideration in formulating local strategies for economic development.

#### 1.400 Future Economic Prognosis

Having analyzed existing local economic conditions, the focus of the study will now shift toward future economic trends. First, three alternative growth scenarios will be set forth. Each of the economic factors identified in the previous section will then be analyzed from the standpoint of the alternative growth scenarios.

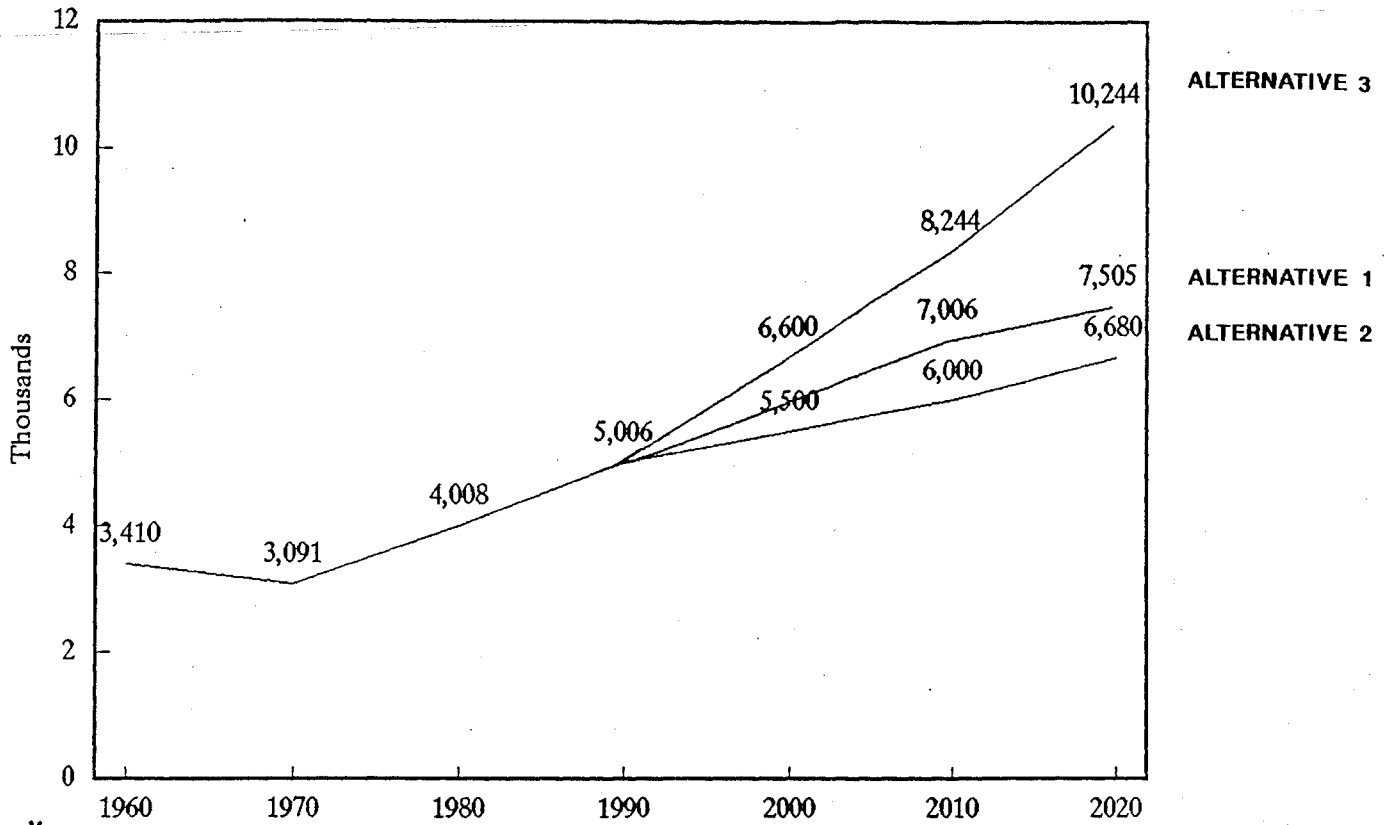
#### 1.410 Alternative Growth Scenarios

The Department of Finance has estimated that population growth in Mendocino County will occur at an average annual rate of 1.7 percent between 1990 and 2020. Since the population of Willits has historically followed the same growth pattern as the County as a whole, it is reasonable to assume that future local population growth will occur at or near the 1.7 percent annual rate forecast for Mendocino County. This "existing growth" scenario would result in a total population of 7,505 in Willits by 2020 (See Scenario 1 on Table 1-3). This figure is close to the "build-out" population of 7,700 forecast under the existing Willits General Plan.

To some extent, local development policies can have the effect of either reducing or increasing future population growth relative to growth in other parts of the County. For example, if the community desired a lower population growth rate, it could simply refuse to expand local services and infrastructure and pass other policies making it difficult for future growth to occur. Alternatively, if the City sought to achieve a growth rate in excess of the County-wide figure, it could accelerate efforts to expand the local infrastructure and adopt policies encouraging commercial and residential growth, making it more likely that future growth would occur in Willits as opposed to elsewhere in the County.

Of course there are limits to how much the expected rate of future growth can be reduced or increased by local policy actions. Even if the City prefers a "no growth" approach, some population increase will occur as a result of births and in-migration. Conversely, even if the City seeks unlimited growth, there are limits to the aggregate amount of economic activity which can be attracted. These lower and upper limits have been estimated and are shown as scenarios 2 and 3 on Table 1-3. The population growth trends associated with the three alternative scenarios are shown graphically on Figure 1-3. The underlying assumptions of the three approaches are discussed in detail in Working Paper #2.

ALTERNATIVE GROWTH SCENARIOS\*



\* 2020 estimates derived from Department of Finance projections.

The three growth scenarios shown on Table 1-3 constitute the existing, reduced growth rate and accelerated growth rate alternatives. Each alternative would require a somewhat different mix of goals, policies and action programs to be put into effect. Selection of a preferred growth scenario will therefore be a key determinant regarding the types of policies to be included in the Revised General Plan. In the following sections, the likely impact of each alternative will be addressed in analyzing future local trends in employment, retail sales, industrial development and fiscal management.

TABLE 1-3: WILLITS GENERAL PLAN REVISION - ALTERNATIVE GROWTH SCENARIOS

SCENARIO	AVERAGE ANNUAL GROWTH RATE	2020 POPULATION ESTIMATE
1	1.7	7,505
2	1.0	6,680
3	2.5	10,244

NOTE: The 1990 Census estimated Willits' total population at 5,027

1.420 Retail Sales Growth

The prognosis for future growth in local retail sales is dependent upon factors such as the rate of future population and household income growth and the ability of retailers to adjust their marketing strategies to meet the needs of a changing local population. Consistent increases in local retail sales require steady population growth, household income stability and effective marketing efforts.

In terms of population growth, the existing growth scenario identified as Alternative 1 in the previous section would provide, in the opinion of this writer, the minimum level of population growth necessary to sustain a healthy and growing local retail sector. Population growth below this level, as hypothesized under Alternative 2, would provide insufficient incentives for investment by existing retailers and for the attraction of new retail uses. Alternative 3, the increased growth scenario, offers the highest potential benefits for local retailers, provided that the increased sales associated with the higher local population are not offset by adverse environmental impacts such as traffic congestion.

Income growth is a consideration of equal importance to population in determining the prospects for future increases in local retail sales. In

this regard, the local labor market transformation alluded to in Section 2.200 is a matter of concern. Workers in low-wage sectors have lower levels of discretionary income than well-paid workers. It is imperative, therefore, for the City to retain and attract a significant proportion of jobs in middle and upper income categories in order for future population growth to result in higher sales by local retail establishments. Industrial sectors which combine relatively high wages with better than average growth prospects are identified in Section 1.430.

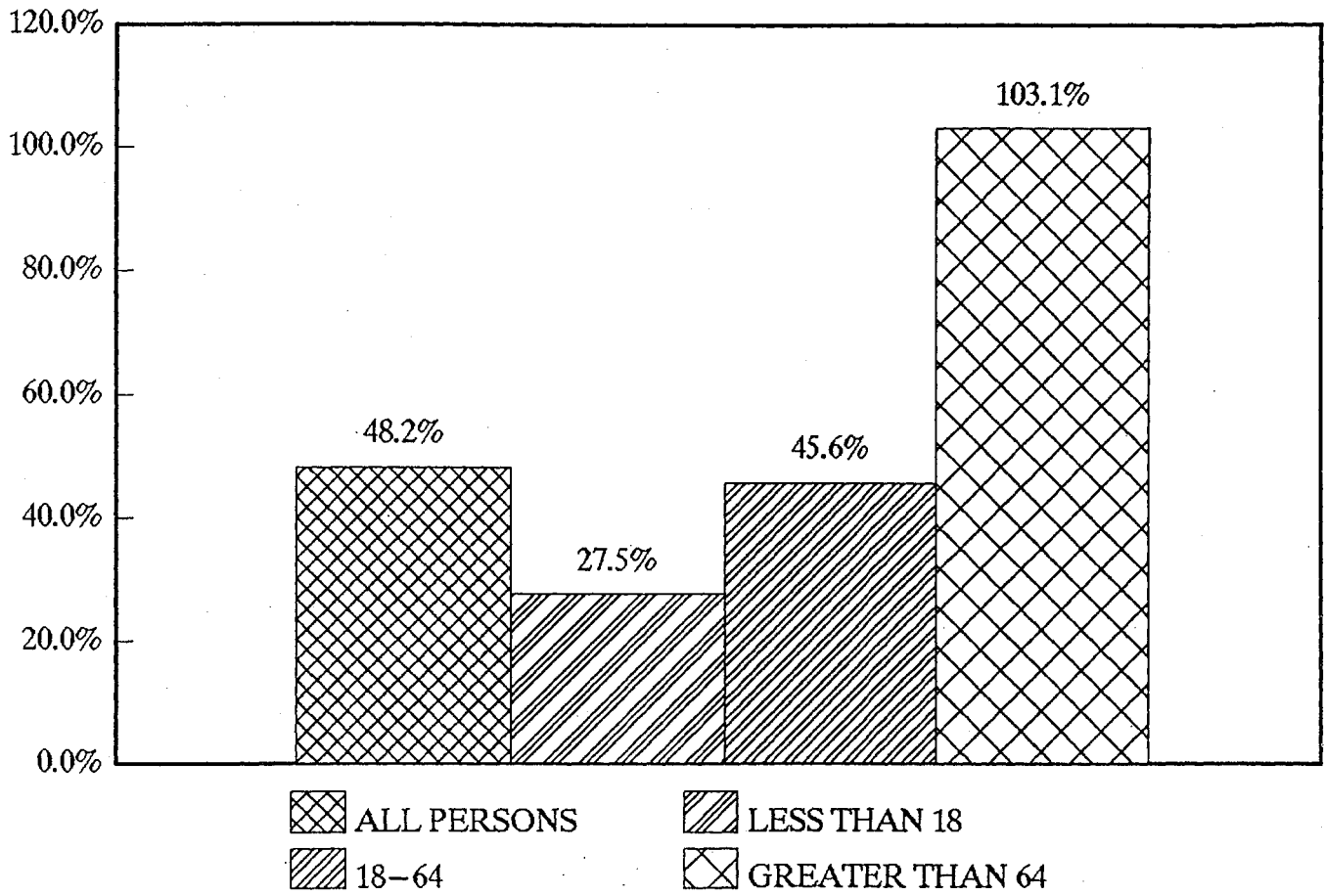
In addition to overall population and household income growth, the changing characteristics of the local population are a key factor in assessing the likelihood of future increases in local retail sales. Population characteristics help determine individual spending behavior, which in turn affects the profitability of local retailers. The most important trend, from the standpoint of retail marketing strategy, is the continued aging of the local population. Figure 1-4 illustrates that the fastest growing component of the County's population is the 64 and over age group which is expected to more than double between 1990 and 2020. By contrast, the number of County residents under the age of 18 will increase by only about one-fourth over this same time period. Clearly, the strongest potential for local retail sales growth lies in product areas likely to attract spending from elderly residents such as drugstores, health care products, gardening supplies, optical equipment and services and recreational vehicles. On the other hand, goods and services which appeal primarily to young people such as records and tapes, stereo equipment, bars and restaurants, motorcycles and amusement parks appear to offer lower potential for future sales growth given the changing characteristics of the local population. The tourism market, of course, constitutes an exception to this general tendency, since tourists do not conform to the same demographics as local residents.

Future increases in local retail sales will require concerted action on the part of both policy-makers and retailers. Local policy-makers should focus on efforts to sustain steady population growth and to facilitate retention and attraction of employers in high-wage industrial sectors. Local retailers should adjust their product lines and marketing strategies to meet the changing needs of a rapidly aging local population and to attract additional sales from tourists. Through these combined efforts, sustained growth in local retail sales can be achieved.

#### 1.430 Labor Market Trends

Earlier in this report it was pointed out that the most rapidly growing employment sectors in Mendocino County are those with relatively low-wage rates, such as retail trade and services. While these sectors represent a significant source of future employment growth, it is also important that job increases occur in sectors such as manufacturing and distribution which tend to include a higher proportion of well-paying positions. With-

PROJECTED POPULATION INCREASE, 1990-2020  
FOR MENDOCINO COUNTY BY AGE GROUP



Source: Calculated from Department of Finance Population Projections (1986)

out an influx of high-wage employees future increases in aggregate household income will be limited, thus dampening the prospects for long range local economic growth.

Recent projections by the State Employment Development Department identify wholesale trade and nondurable goods manufacturing, particularly food and related products, as sectors with relatively good prospects for future growth. Many industries within these sectors offer higher wages than the majority of positions in services and retail trade. Wholesale distribution centers, breweries and food processing facilities should be investigated as potential sources of future local employment. Health care represents an additional growth sector with a relatively high proportion of well-paid workers. Finally, alternative technologies including solar energy development and regional recycling facilities offer some potential for employment growth, based on interviews with local industry representatives and residents. Such technologies provide opportunities for job growth in consistency with the City's environmental objectives.

Future increases in retail trade and services employment should be augmented by increases in well-paying jobs in other sectors of the local economy. Over-dependence upon jobs with comparatively low wages and high vulnerability to cyclical shifts in the economy will have the effect of weakening the overall economic health of the community. Consequently, efforts should be made to attract employers from industries outside of the retail and service sectors such as nondurable goods manufacturing and wholesale trade.

Although it is important for Willits to think in terms of diversifying the local employment base, it is equally important that the forest products industry not be written off in a rush toward industrial diversification. While County-wide job growth in the lumber and forest products sector is unlikely to occur over the planning period, employment in the industry will remain at a substantial level. Willits is well-suited geographically to retain a large portion of jobs in this sector. Moreover, because of differences in prevailing wages, it takes up to four new retail and service workers to offset the economic impact of losing one lumber industry job. For this reason, the City should consider policies geared toward retention of lumber industry employment. The City should also encourage diversification of the industry itself, with an emphasis on the manufacture of finished wood products.

With regard to the alternative growth scenarios, the slow growth scenario (Alternative 2) would not permit sufficient growth to accommodate the executive homes which may be necessary to attract managerial and professional workers. Both Alternative 1 (the existing growth scenario) and Alternative 3 (the accelerated growth alternative) would enable the City to grow enough to accommodate some new large homes while continuing to meet its share of regional affordable housing needs. Without some growth, however, it will be difficult to diversify the City's employment base.

#### 1.440 Local Fiscal Management

Among the issues likely to have an impact on future local fiscal conditions are the prospects for retail sales growth, changes in the property tax base and increases in the cost of providing urban services. Heavy dependence on sales tax revenues puts a strong emphasis on retail sales growth as a prerequisite to fiscal balance. Statutory limits on property tax increases make new residential and commercial construction necessary in order to achieve real property tax revenue growth. Perhaps most importantly, increases in the cost of providing urban services necessitate that impact fees be considered as a mechanism for financing improvements in the local infrastructure and that user fees for City services be eventually increased to cover a higher proportion of service delivery costs.

All of the above issues have important implications from the standpoint of the selection of an alternative growth scenario. Should the City grow too slowly, it will be unable to sustain the sales and property tax revenues necessary to retain existing service levels. On the other hand, should the City grow too rapidly, it may be overwhelmed by both environmental impacts and the costs of providing additional services and infrastructure. Clearly, a balance between these two extremes should be sought.

The short and intermediate term outlook for local government finances appears to be quite favorable. Factors which can be expected to contribute to local fiscal balance include household population growth, increases in retail sales and the construction of the U.S. 101 bypass (depending upon its ultimate alignment, as discussed in the following section). The City's long range fiscal health is dependent upon its ability to overcome cyclical fluctuations in sales tax revenues and to accommodate future population growth without overburdening the urban service delivery system.

#### 1.450 U.S. 101 Bypass

Construction of the long anticipated U.S. 101 bypass is scheduled to begin midway through the planning period, around 1999-2000. The alignment of this roadway has yet to be determined, although several alternatives have been studied and discussed.

The consensus of the representatives of the business community interviewed for this report is that the economic well-being of the City would be best served by an east side bypass. Concerns were expressed that an alignment located west of the City would hurt existing local businesses and make it difficult to attract new retail uses. An east side bypass with an interchange leading to an east side "gateway" to Willits appears to offer the strongest potential from the standpoint of downtown economic development. Unfortunately, Caltrans recently deleted all interchanges from its concept plan for the Willits bypass. This decision, if implemented, would have an extremely adverse impact on downtown retail sales. Local efforts to

diversify employment and increase retail sales could be jeopardized by a bypass alignment which draws economic activity away from planned commercial centers. The ultimate alignment of the U.S. 101 bypass is therefore a crucial issue in determining the economic future of the City of Willits.

#### 1.460 Rail Service

Railroads have historically played a key role in the Willits economy. The availability of freight rail service has enhanced the City's role as a regional commercial and industrial center. Rail service via the Skunk train has provided the City with a ready source of tourism dollars. Maintenance and expansion of both freight and tourism rail service are important components of the City's economic development strategy. Development of commuter rail service, on the other hand, appears to be considerably less feasible and is also not necessarily in the best interest of the City, since it would encourage formation of a bedroom suburb, as opposed to a self-sustaining community. Efforts to promote rail should therefore be focused on freight and tourism service along existing established lines.

#### 1.500 Recommendations

This concluding section contains a set of policy recommendations for consideration in formulating the goals, policies and programs to be contained in the Willits General Plan Update. While not all of the recommendations in this section are directly related to land use planning, they all relate to the City's ability to meet its long-range objectives.

#### 1.510 Promoting Retail Sales

1.511 Local policy-makers should allow enough population growth to generate sufficient increases in retail sales to attract new investment and to provide incentives for reinvestment by existing retailers.

1.512 Local policy-makers should continue to encourage and support the efforts of the Downtown Revitalization Committee, which should be more closely coordinated with Chamber of Commerce economic development programs. With this in mind, a Specific Plan for the downtown commercial area should be prepared by 1995.

1.513 Local retailers should study and implement ways of diversifying the products and services they offer to meet the needs of an aging market population and to attract additional sales from tourists. Both the Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Revitalization Committee may be of assistance in this regard.

1.514 To promote the health of local businesses, an east side alignment of the U.S. 101 bypass should be pursued. An interchange at Commercial



Street is an essential component of the bypass project. Commercial development at bypass interchanges should be severely restricted, if not prohibited.

1.515 In the long run, an eastern "gateway" commercial development project should be planned in conjunction with the U.S. 101 bypass.

1.516 In the short run, the City should advocate on behalf of year-round Skunk Train service to Willits as a means of increasing retail sales.

#### 1.520 Labor Market Strategies

1.521 Intensify efforts to diversify the local employment base, with particular emphasis on nondurable goods manufacturing, wholesale trade and distribution, tourism, health care and alternative energy products. Follow up on the promotional efforts of the Northern California Industrial Development Executives Association (IDEA) by targeting businesses in the above sectors who have responded to the IDEA advertising campaign. Similar follow-up efforts should occur with respect to businesses who participate in the annual Solar Energy Expo and Rally.

1.522 Investigate strategies for attracting industrial development, such as tax breaks, industrial revenue bonds and provision of infrastructure improvements through the local redevelopment agency.

1.523 Designate sufficient sites for larger single family homes to balance the City's housing stock, making the location more attractive for employers. Locate these sites appropriately in relation to existing services and infrastructure and in terms of compatibility with surrounding land uses.

1.524 Study alternatives for increasing the employment generating potential of the Willits Airport.

#### 1.530 Local Fiscal Policy

1.531 Promote revenue base diversification, using mechanisms such as assessments on commercial and residential developers, increases in user fees and the establishment of new fees where appropriate.

1.532 Attempt to establish and maintain a local cash reserve equal to one-half of the projected annual sales tax revenue. Substantial cash reserves are necessary to protect the City budget from unusually steep or prolonged declines in the local economy.

## 2.000 SUMMARY OF ISSUES AND SUGGESTED PLANNING APPROACH

### 2.100 Introduction

The first two months of the General Plan Revision work program consisted of using various means to identify the key issues to be addressed by the goals, policies and programs contained in the plan. Methods employed at the issue identification stage included field observation, review of the existing General Plan, interviews with community leaders, a mail survey (see Table 2-1), which was returned by 417 Willits residents, a telephone survey of 37 area employers and a series of four public workshops. The purpose of using a variety of sources at the issue identification stage is to involve the public at an early point in the work plan and to avoid the distortion which may occur in the event of over-reliance upon a single data source. While each of the methods employed have empirical shortcomings, collectively they enable the City to derive an accurate picture of prevailing public opinion.

### 2.200 Identification of Key Planning Issues

The following sections represent a synthesis of the viewpoints expressed through the various sources listed above. Issues which have been identified as significant include traffic congestion, employment, business and economic development, housing, environmental protection, Brooktrails Township growth and the proposed U.S. 101 bypass.

#### 2.210 Traffic Congestion

Traffic congestion was the most frequently cited local problem throughout the issue identification process. The resident survey, public workshops and interviews with community leaders all were suggestive of strong public concern regarding traffic.

Field observations and existing studies of local traffic indicate that virtually all of the City's existing traffic problems can be found along Main Street (U.S. 101). To a significant extent, these problems will be alleviated by the eventual construction of the U.S. 101 bypass, which will divert through traffic, including most trucks, off of this roadway. In the interim period, however, traffic congestion along Main Street could worsen, creating a need for roadway improvements and policies geared toward promoting alternatives to the automobile, such as bicycles and buses. Such policies should be contained in the Circulation Element of the Revised General Plan.

Future growth at Brooktrails (see Section 2.260) will result in additional traffic volume in Willits. Depending upon the alternative access route chosen for Brooktrails, one of the City's signalized intersections will require improvements to accommodate additional capacity. Provisions

TABLE 2-1: RESIDENT SURVEY RESULTS (N=417) \*

1. Please rank the following objectives from 1 to 10 in order of their importance to you.

OBJECTIVE	AVERAGE RANKING (1=MOST IMPORTANT; 10=LEAST IMPORTANT)
Reducing Traffic Congestion	2.9
Increasing Employment Opportunities	4.0
Encouraging Business Development	4.3
Balancing Local Finances	5.1
Retaining Environmental Quality	5.4
Revitalizing Downtown Area	5.6
Promoting Housing Affordability	5.9
Preserving Open Space	6.4
Expanding Recreational Opportunities	6.7
Controlling Growth	7.2

2. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (Results shown in percentages)

STATEMENT	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DON'T KNOW	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
a. The existing level of City services is generally adequate	3.6	61.1	15.8	16.0	3.4
b. Future growth in Willits should be strictly controlled	11.3	29.3	8.4	33.6	17.1
c. Future growth in Willits should be encouraged by local development policies	26.2	50.6	8.2	10.1	4.8

STATEMENT	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DON'T KNOW	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
d. Existing recreational opportunities in the City are adequate	6.9	31.2	11.8	35.6	14.4
e. Existing traffic congestion is a serious problem in Willits	68.5	24.2	1.2	4.8	1.2
f. Willits needs more City parks	7.3	18.8	7.8	52.1	14.2
g. More affordable housing is needed in Willits	25.6	37.2	15.0	17.2	4.9
h. Environmental protection is more important than economic development	14.7	25.5	8.1	35.1	16.5
i. Future growth in Willits should be carefully managed, but not strictly limited	25.3	64.8	2.9	4.3	2.6
j. Commercial development in Willits should be planned primarily to meet the needs of local residents	15.4	47.3	7.1	25.7	4.4
k. Commercial and industrial uses at the airport should be expanded	16.5	31.9	33.3	11.2	7.0
l. The U.S. 101 bypass should be located east of the City	41.2	24.0	17.7	6.7	10.2

3. What are the three most important issues which you think should be taken into consideration by the Willits General Plan Revision.

ISSUE	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS LISTING
U.S. 101 bypass	113
Traffic Congestion	106
Promoting business growth	96
Attracting employment	91
Affordable housing	80
Increasing industry	54
Revitalizing downtown	47
Environmental quality	43
Parks/Recreation	42
Roadway improvements	37
Growth management	27
Economic development	20

4. Descriptive Characteristics of Respondents

Average Age	52.1
Percent Homeowners	82.6
Number of Years in Willits (average)	21.8
Number of Members in Household (average)	2.79
Number of School Age Children in Household (average)	.74
Mean Household Income	\$35,726

\* The total number of responses received was 417. Averages and percentages shown are based on the number of responses received for the individual items, which ranged from 283 to 416 due to missing data.

should be contained in the plan to assure that developers in Brooktrails are assessed a portion of the cost of circulation improvements necessitated by Brooktrails growth.

#### 2.220 Employment

The changing labor market in Willits is discussed in detail in Working Paper #1. Residents, business leaders and local officials have all expressed concern regarding the need for well-paying employment opportunities tied to career ladders. Many residents are concerned that jobs lost in the forest products industry will be difficult to replace with similarly paid positions. Although the City's major employers, including those in the lumber industry, expressed optimism in a recent telephone survey regarding their future hiring plans, it is clear that efforts must be made to attract and retain good jobs in Willits.

General Plan policies can promote employment development by designating sufficient lands for industrial use and by increasing the availability of quality housing and other amenities sought by employers and workers. In addition, all of the policies contained in the plan should be analyzed in terms of their impact on the City's ability to attract and retain a diverse and well-paid work force.

#### 2.230 Business/Economic Development

Promoting business and economic development was recognized by a broad range of participants in the issue identification process as essential to the General Plan revision effort. Many of the City's objectives with respect to housing, employment development and infrastructure improvement will be difficult to achieve in the absence of a healthy and growing business community. Current local efforts to promote business development include the formation of a City Redevelopment Agency in 1985 and programs sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Committee.

Business and economic development can be promoted through the General Plan revision by adopting a preferred growth scenario which permits sufficient expansion to occur and by including policies to support business growth, such as action programs calling for specific plans to be prepared for the downtown area, the airport and an eastern "gateway" to Willits. Economic development can also be encouraged by avoiding policy approaches which may be perceived as detrimental to the business community, such as unduly restrictive zoning constraints.

#### 2.240 Housing

Housing was identified as an issue of concern by a significant number of survey respondents, workshop participants and community leaders. The most

frequently mentioned need is for affordable housing to meet the needs of low-paid workers and their families. The City's changing wage structure, combined with an apparent influx of AFDC recipients driven from the state's urban areas by rising living costs, create a strong demand for housing at the low end of the affordability spectrum. To address this need, State law requires that the Housing Element of the General Plan identify sufficient sites to accommodate the City's low-income housing need and include programs to facilitate attainment of local housing objectives.

In addition to affordable housing, Willits has a need for housing at the upper end of the price spectrum. It is difficult to attract well-paying employment if a City offers few neighborhoods in which well-paid workers would like to live. Identification of suitable sites for single family estate homes may, therefore, be a prerequisite to diversification of the City's employment base.

## 2.250 Environmental Quality

The environmental quality of Willits is one of the community's most attractive features. Wooded hillsides, undeveloped ridgelines, stream corridors, mature trees and abundant wildlife are all important features of the natural environment worthy of preservation. Historical structures, City parks and rail lines and other aspects of the built environment serve to further enhance the area's environmental quality.

Local opinions concerning environmental quality are as diverse as the varying interpretations of the term itself. The majority of Willits residents seem to prefer that growth be allowed to occur, provided that measures are taken to address its adverse environmental impacts.

The environmental concerns of area residents are discussed further in the General Plan Environmental Impact Report (Volume 3). This report includes estimates of adverse impacts under the preferred growth scenario and under alternative growth scenarios. Specific mitigation measures to offset adverse environmental impacts are included in the EIR.

## 2.260 Brooktrails Township Development

Brooktrails is an unincorporated community located immediately west of the Willits City limits. The level of future development which occurs in Brooktrails Township will have an influence on the nature, extent and location of future development in Willits. It is essential, therefore, that the potential for Brooktrails growth be assessed and that this assessment be incorporated into the growth scenarios which drive the Willits General Plan revision.

Brooktrails was originally envisioned as a recreational community consisting of small vacation homes. In recent years lots have been increasingly developed for primary residential purposes.

Although the Brooktrails subdivision contains over 6,000 residential parcels, only about 20 percent of the lots are presently developed. Thus, Brooktrails has the potential to accommodate a significant proportion of the future growth which is likely to occur in the greater Willits area. There are, however, serious infrastructure constraints which may preclude Brooktrails from reaching its full development potential. These constraints include water and sewerage availability and, to a lesser extent, roadway capacity. According to one recent report, fewer than 300 additional dwellings can be built at Brooktrails unless water supply constraints can be overcome. Sewerage capacity constraints are estimated to limit Brooktrails to a maximum build-out of 2,057 dwelling units. The limited capacity of Sherwood Road poses an additional constraint to Brooktrails development.

In some respects, it is in the interest of the City for Brooktrails Township to overcome its growth constraints. The City's high dependence on sales tax revenue makes Brooktrails growth desirable in order to maintain and improve local services and infrastructure. Similarly, efforts to promote downtown revitalization would benefit from additional development within Brooktrails. Perhaps most importantly, residential growth which occurs at Brooktrails does not require the same level of local government services as do homes built within the City limits. This enables the City to enjoy many of the revenue benefits of urban growth without paying all of the service costs. For these reasons, the City may wish to consider efforts to assist Brooktrails in overcoming its infrastructure constraints. At the same time, however, Brooktrails Township must recognize that its future growth will have an impact on Willits, particularly with regard to traffic. Mitigation of traffic impacts on Willits should, therefore, be a component of all proposals to remove Brooktrails infrastructure constraints.

Assumptions regarding whether and when Brooktrails Township will successfully address its growth constraints and reach full build-out have been factored into the alternative growth scenarios presented in Section 2.320. Although it is likely that improvement in the circulation, sewerage and water service delivery systems at Brooktrails will be accomplished within the planning period, it is highly unlikely that these improvements will occur at a pace which enables the Township to reach full build-out by 2020. Overall, it seems reasonable to assume that Brooktrails will add about twice the number of housing units as the City of Willits (roughly 2,000) within the 1991-2020 planning period.



## 2.270 U.S. 101 Bypass

The proposed U.S. 101 bypass of Willits is tentatively scheduled for completion in 2000. Assumptions regarding the likely completion date of the bypass and its ultimate alignment should be taken into consideration in formulating the General Plan growth alternatives. The timing and alignment of this facility are key factors in determining the City's likely future growth pattern.

Several of the participants in the issue identification phase of the General Plan revision effort expressed opposition to the concept of a U.S. 101 bypass at any location. These individuals believe that the bypass will result in increased vehicle traffic traversing the valley, causing adverse air quality impacts.

The purpose of the General Plan revision effort is to identify future events which are likely to occur, plan for them and assess their probable environmental impacts. In the case of the U.S. 101 bypass, this is an event which is likely to occur at some point during the planning period, in spite of the opposition of some area residents. The bypass, therefore, has been incorporated into two of the three growth scenarios discussed in Section 2.320. The environmental impact of the bypass is presently being assessed, with the California Department of Transportation serving as lead agency. Local environmental impacts of the bypass will be included in the General Plan EIR.

In terms of alignment, many representatives of the business community believe that an east side bypass would be best for local businesses. They fear that building a bypass west of the City will discourage travelers from stopping off in Willits, resulting in diminished retail sales growth. An east side alignment would also appear to be desirable based on topographical and environmental considerations. Brooktrails Township has expressed a preference for a west side bypass, indicating that this may be a somewhat contentious issue. Our recommendation, however, is to advocate on behalf of an eastern alignment and to incorporate this assumption into the General Plan revision effort.

Caltrans has recently announced that it will no longer be considering bypass interchanges at State Route 20 or Commercial Street leading into Willits. This decision, if implemented, would seriously jeopardize the City's downtown revitalization efforts and would reduce the beneficial impact of the bypass on the local circulation network. For these reasons, the City should continue to advocate on behalf of at least one interchange, and should include it in the diagram of the City's future transportation system. Construction of the bypass without an interchange leading to downtown Willits would provide regional traffic benefits at the expense of the local economy.

## 2.300 Suggested Planning Approach

Having identified the various issues to be addressed through the General Plan Revision process, the proposed structural format and growth assumptions to be employed will now be discussed. Upon review, modification and approval by the City Council, the approach outlined herein will be used in formulating the Revised General Plan.

### 2.310 Proposed Structural Format

As proposed by the consultants, the Revised General Plan and Environmental Impact Report (EIR) would consist of three separate volumes. Volume 1 would include the goals, policies and action statements. All supporting data, maps, background information and analysis pertaining to the General Plan goals and policies would be contained in Volume 2, the technical appendix to the Revised General Plan. The third volume under the proposed structural format would be the Draft EIR. The EIR would reference some of the data contained in the technical appendix and would include analysis such as a review of several different growth alternatives. The advantage of this structural format is that it separates the general policy statements from the technical data which are much more detailed in nature. This allows for appropriate focus to be placed on significant policy questions while still providing the detailed analysis called for by the State planning guidelines. Combining goals, policies and extensive data analysis in a single volume would result in a potentially more confusing document and could lead to an overemphasis on technical details to the neglect of substantive policy concerns. For this reason, separation of goals and policies from the background information on which they are based is recommended.

All three volumes will be published in a single document to facilitate crossreferencing. Following adoption of the revised plan, the City may wish to publish the General Plan goals, policies and programs in newspaper format for use by residents and other interested individuals.

### 2.320 Alternative Growth Scenarios

General Plan revisions typically include analysis of several different growth scenarios for the community in question. The population and household growth estimates associated with each scenario, as well as the underlying assumptions of each alternative, need to be identified and agreed upon at an early stage to facilitate timely analysis of General Plan growth alternatives. The consultants have devised three proposed growth scenarios for the Council's review and approval. The population and household growth estimates associated with each of these alternatives are presented in Table 2-2. In the following sections, the assumptions which form the basis of the three alternative growth scenarios will be discussed and a preferred approach will be recommended.

TABLE 2-2: ALTERNATIVE GROWTH SCENARIOS

SCENARIO	AVERAGE ANNUAL POPULATION GROWTH RATE	2020 POPULATION <sup>1</sup> ESTIMATE	2020 HOUSING UNIT <sup>2</sup> ESTIMATE
1	1.7	7,505	2,794
2	1.0	6,680	2,604
3	2.5	10,244	3,707

- (1) Growth alternatives based on 1990 U.S. Census estimate of 5,027 population and 1,968 housing units.
- (2) Alternatives 1 and 3 are based on 3 persons per housing unit added after 1990; Alternative 2 is based on 2.6 persons per additional dwelling. The difference is attributable to the assumption that large homes will make up a significant portion of new residential development under the former alternatives, while the latter alternative will not produce enough growth to make residential estate land uses feasible on a large scale, resulting in a lower average household size.

2.321 Growth Factors. Factors to be taken into consideration in estimating the rate of future population and household growth in Willits include:

- (1) The timing and alignment of the proposed U.S. 101 bypass;
- (2) The extent to which Brooktrails growth constraints will be overcome;
- (3) National, state and regional economic policies and conditions; and
- (4) The preferences of local residents as expressed in the form of growth policies contained in the Revised General Plan.

All of these factors were considered in relation to the City's existing and anticipated future land uses in formulating the three alternative growth scenarios discussed below.

2.322 Alternative 1. The California Department of Finance has estimated that the population of Mendocino County will grow by about 50 percent between 1990 and 2020. Historically, population and household

growth in Willits have closely followed the County-wide growth trend. Assuming 50 percent population growth in Willits between 1990 and 2020 results in a 2020 population estimate in the 7,500 range. In terms of underlying assumptions, this alternative is based on the premise that Brooktrails will overcome its growth constraints during the planning period, but will not reach build-out until after 2020. Alternative 1 assumes that an east side U.S. 101 bypass will be completed by 2005. Economically, this scenario relies upon local growth in the range of 1.5 to 3 percent annually. Regarding local policy preferences, Alternative 1 assumes a moderate policy approach toward growth, resulting in a partial build-out of lands designated for future development.

2.323 Alternative 2. Making different assumptions with respect to the growth factors identified in Section 2.321 results in different population and household estimates for 2020. If Brooktrails development constraints are not overcome during the planning period; if the U.S. 101 bypass is not completed; if local economic growth lags persistently behind the rates assumed under Alternative 1; and if the City chooses to restrict future growth using mechanisms such as moratoria or annual limitations on building permits, the population of Willits in 2020 will be closer to the figure represented under Alternative 2, if not slightly lower. Zero or negative population growth, however, are not considered to be likely under any set of circumstances over the long term.

2.324 Alternative 3. In contrast to the previously discussed alternative, which is based on slow growth assumptions, Alternative 3 is intended to represent a maximum feasible population and household estimate for 2020. This scenario assumes that Brooktrails growth constraints will be overcome by 2000 and that the subdivision will be built out within the planning period. It assumes completion of the U.S. 101 bypass by its presently scheduled target date of 2000. Robust economic growth in the 4 to 7 percent average annual range is assumed, along with aggressively pursued local growth policies, resulting in a full build-out of all planned uses as well as some additional annexations. The total population of Willits in 2020 envisioned under this scenario would be well in excess of 10,000 residents.

2.325 Preferred Growth Scenario. To a large degree, the future population of Willits will depend upon factors which are beyond the control of local policy-makers. Decisions by individuals and businesses, macroeconomic factors and occurrences in other jurisdictions all will have an effect on the future of Willits independent of local policy actions. Nevertheless, it is desirable at the outset of the General Plan revision process to identify a scenario which represents the rate of future growth desired by local decision-makers. This is necessary in order to formulate goals, policies and programs which make it more likely that the preferred growth scenario will be attained. The preferred growth alternative will

form the basis of the General Plan Land Use Diagram and Housing Element, as well as the goals, policies and programs contained in the plan. The remaining two alternatives will be analyzed as part of the EIR.

Taking both economic and environmental factors into consideration, it is the judgment of the consultants that Alternative 1 represents the most desirable of the three scenarios. Alternative 1 also appears to be the most likely scenario to occur, based on our understanding of the growth factors previously discussed. It is, therefore, recommended that the City Council adopt Alternative 1 as the preferred growth scenario and direct the consultants to include analysis of Alternatives 2 and 3 in the Environmental Impact Report.

#### 2.400 Conclusion and Recommendations

Upon the approval of this report by the City Council, the remaining work tasks will be conducted using the structural framework, growth assumptions and approaches to key issues that have been identified herein. It is recommended that the City Council review this draft analysis, revise the alternative growth scenarios if necessary, and direct the consultants and staff to proceed with the General Plan Revision in accordance with the issues, assumptions and procedures identified in this report.

### 3.000 LAND USE APPENDIX

This appendix contains text and diagrams intended to illustrate the City's existing designated land uses, and to identify opportunities for changes in land use which may enhance the City's ability to meet the objectives of the revised General Plan. Exhibit 3-1 constitutes the General Plan Land Use Diagram. This map is the City's official statement of current designated land uses. Exhibit 3-2 illustrates a number of possible changes in land use which may be considered as future amendments to the General Plan.

The purpose of illustrating possible future changes in land use in addition to existing land use designations is to present a vision for the future without locking the City into land use alternatives which subsequently prove to be unworkable. As time progresses, one or more of the land use changes identified in Exhibit 3-2 may be incorporated into the General Plan by the City Council.

#### 3.100 Existing Land Uses

Table 3-1 shows the existing distribution of land uses in Willits and the approximate amount of developed acreage in each land use category. Most lands within the City limits are designated for residential and industrial use. Commercial lands comprise the third largest category in terms of aggregate acreage with the remainder of the City's lands designated for parks, open space and public facilities. Exhibit 3-1, the General Plan Land Use Diagram, serves as the City's official map of designated land uses. Land use density and building intensity standards are set forth in the zoning ordinance and summarized on Table 3-2.

#### 3.200 Possible Future Changes in Land Use

Exhibit 3-2 identifies a number of locations at which the Council may wish to consider changes in land use designations at some point in the future. West of U.S. 101, lands outside of the City limits presently designated as agricultural open space have been identified for possible annexation and designation as residential estates. North of Willits High School, along U.S. 101, a 30 acre parcel designated for commercial use is well-suited for conversion to a mobile home park. Future planning efforts are recommended for the airport, gateway and downtown areas.

In addition to the above changes, three areas are identified for possible future planning efforts; downtown, the airport and the eastern "gateway" area located along Commercial Street in the vicinity of the railroad station. It is recommended that a Specific Plan be prepared for each of these three areas by 2000. The downtown area Specific Plan should focus on developing an integrated theme around which to center the City's revitalization efforts. The airport Specific Plan should place an emphasis on