

1 Introduction and Key Findings

1.1 PURPOSE

The City of Turlock has embarked on a comprehensive update of its General Plan, the policy document that guides the growth and development of the city. The General Plan is required by law in the state of California, and identifies current and future needs regarding land use, transportation, housing, environmental quality and resources, safety, and noise. In addition to these required elements, Turlock's General Plan also addresses public facilities and services, city design, and financial implementation. The General Plan update provides an exciting opportunity for Turlock community members to share their vision for the city's future and provide input on the city's long-term goals and development opportunities.

The City's objectives for the General Plan update process include:

- Public Participation – Working with the City Council, Planning Commission, City Staff, and community members to articulate a vision that reflects common goals and desires
- Quality of Life – Developing a plan that builds on the city's existing assets, including good neighborhoods, schools, and services, and responds appropriately to changing demographics
- Clear Direction for New Growth – Explore alternative patterns and locations for new growth and development, and conduct rigorous analysis that determines a preferred plan
- Fiscal Planning for Economic Development, Infrastructure, and Services – Prioritize the City's fiscal health by identifying innovative strategies that establish a strong economic base, ensure that new development pays for itself, and promote economically and environmentally efficient development patterns
- A Well-Designed Plan Integrated with Environmental Review – Produce a plan that is accessible, attractively designed, and easily revised, and incorporate the results of the Environmental Impact Report into the General Plan through responsive policies

Accomplishing these goals requires a solid knowledge base of existing conditions. The first General Plan Report, which analyzes existing conditions and key issues, is the first major step in the General Plan update process. It summarizes baseline conditions in Turlock and the immediately surrounding area and discusses preliminary planning implications that the update process will address going forward. The information conveyed in the Existing Conditions and Key Issues Report will help community members, city staff, and elected officials make informed input and decisions throughout the rest of the General Plan update.

1.2 CONTENTS AND ORGANIZATION

Chapters in the Map Atlas are organized by topic, as follows:

1. *Introduction and Key Findings.* Overview of the General Plan update process, public participation component, summary of key findings, and Turlock's regional context and Planning Area.
2. *Demographics and Economics.* Describes Turlock's current and projected population and employment, and discusses other demographic and economic trends that have implications for future growth and development.
3. *Land Use.* Illustrates Turlock's historical urban development, identifies current land uses in the Planning Area, and describes existing land use plans efforts in Turlock and surrounding jurisdictions.
4. *Growth and Development Potential.* Describes current development projects, analyzes future demand for and existing supply of land for development, and identifies potential opportunity sites.
5. *Transportation.* Examines the existing conditions of roadways, transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
6. *Public Facilities and Services.* Describes the current conditions and future needs of Turlock's parks, recreation, and open spaces; public schools; social services; police and fire departments; water supply; wastewater and stormwater infrastructure; solid waste facilities; and electricity supply.
7. *Environmental Resources and Hazards.* Examines the current state and concerns related to assets and hazards of Turlock's natural environment, including agriculture, geology, biological resources, cultural resources, air quality, flooding, fire threats, and hazardous materials.

The research and analysis on each topic is communicated through text, tables, and maps. Key findings and planning implications are summarized in this chapter. In some cases, individual sub-topics within chapters also end with a "Planning Issues and Implications" section that distills the important conclusions drawn about the topic.

1.3 PUBLIC OUTREACH AND PARTICIPATION

Because the General Plan is a policy document meant to implement a community's vision for its future, public participation is an essential part of the planning process. An effective public participation program helps create confidence in the planning process, ensures that the plan's policies are based upon ideas with broad support and reflect the needs and desires of community members. Successful public participation involves collaboration between the City decision-makers, City Staff, community members, and the planning team.

Members of the public are encouraged to voice their opinions and contribute to the planning process at any stage. The public participation program for Turlock's General Plan update includes the following components:

- City Council and Planning Commission meetings
- Working sessions with City Staff
- Community Workshops
- Community Interviews
- Newsletters
- Project Website (<http://www.gpupdate.turlock.ca.us>)
- Focus Groups

1.4 KEY FINDINGS AND PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

One of the main purposes of the Existing Conditions and Key Issues report is to distill planning implications from the baseline research that must be addressed as the General Plan update process moves forward. This section describes the key findings and planning implications for each section of the report: Demographic, Economic, and Fiscal Conditions; Land Use; Growth and Development Potential; Transportation and Circulation; Public Facilities and Services; and Environmental Resources and Hazards.

Demographic, Economic, and Fiscal Conditions

The Demographic, Economic, and Fiscal Conditions chapter analyzes historical and current trends of Turlock's demographic and economic conditions. This baseline research is used to generate population and employment forecasts, which then drive the analysis of determining how much land must be planned to accommodate the new growth. This chapter also examines the city's fiscal conditions, in terms of General Fund revenues and expenditures, over the past eight years. The key findings are as follows:

- *Population Projections.* In order to project population in Turlock over the next 20 years, numerous factors were considered, including historical trends, regional growth patterns, household size, and changing demographics. At the low end, Turlock is projected to gain approximately 30,000 residents by 2030; at the high end, it may gain up to 50,000. Additionally, there is the possibility that current economic conditions will slow growth considerably in the near term, which would result in about a 25 percent reduction from the baseline growth scenarios.
- *Employment Projections.* Employment projections consider local trends, economic growth by sector, and regional forecasts. The low end projection shows Turlock gaining 17,000 new jobs by 2030, and the high end projection shows 35,000 new jobs. Similar to population projections, these estimates could be around 25 percent less if the present economic slowdown continues.
- *Fiscal Conditions.* General Fund revenues have increased significantly over the past decade as substantial growth occurred in Turlock. Expenditures have similarly increased as the city has had to extend services to new development, and the Fiscal Year 2008-09 Final Budget included a General Fund deficit of nearly \$1.3 million. Assessing new development's ability to "pay its way" and the City's ability to both pay for new services and maintain existing services will be key issues for the General Plan process.

Land Use

Turlock's historical and current land use planning present numerous key issues that the General Plan update must address. The City has pursued development in a coherent and orderly fashion through the use of master planning and now faces critical decisions regarding how future development will proceed over the next 15 to 20 years. Key issues include:

- *Location of Future Growth.* Through implementing a series of master and specific plans, Turlock has built out most of the large, vacant areas of land that existed at the time of the 1992 General Plan update. While scattered sites within city limits offer infill and redevelopment opportunities, the city must determine in what areas outside of the city limits new development will be allowed to occur. Chapter Four, Growth and Development Potential, explores of Turlock's existing capacity for new development on infill, redevelopment, and greenfield sites and compares it to projected demand.
- *Residential Densities and Mix of Housing Types.* As well as determining the location of future growth, Turlock must also consider the types of residential densities and housing types that will occur. Future residential development in the Planning Area may not take the same form as that which was built over the last decade. Both demographics and market trends need to be considered to ensure that future growth will accommodate Turlock's growing and changing population.
- *Downtown and Older Neighborhood Revitalization.* A city's vitality is enhanced by the strength of its core. Turlock's Downtown and older neighborhoods will require reinvestment over the next planning period. The city has implemented beautification efforts Downtown, and now needs to focus on economic revitalization to ensure that the area is a viable center for residents to work, shop, and live. Similarly, many older residential areas are in need of physical and economic investment, and funding sources will have to be identified in order to accomplish these goals.
- *Coordinating Land Use and Transportation Planning Decisions.* The location and intensity of new growth will have impacts on the city's existing roads and will determine the type of new investment in transportation infrastructure that is necessary to support it. Chapter Five, Transportation and Circulation, discusses the current conditions of the city's road and transit system.
- *Coordinating with County and Inter-County Planning Efforts.* Numerous land use and transportation planning efforts are underway in Stanislaus, Merced, and other counties that will have impacts on Turlock's future growth and development, particularly in the southeast quadrant of the Planning Area.

Growth and Development Potential

The analysis of growth and development potential identifies vacant and under-utilized sites in the Planning Area where future new growth and redevelopment may occur. The capacity of these sites, which is determined based on the densities allowed by their current General Plan designation, is aggregated for each land use and compared to the projected land demand that new population and employment growth is expected to generate. The key findings from this analysis are:

- *Need for Additional Residential Land.* Turlock is projected to add between 30,000 and 50,000 new residents over the next 20 years. In addition to the capacity of land already designated for residential use, Turlock would need to designate between 1,100 and 2,300 acres for residential development to accommodate this amount of growth. The majority of the land will be for low density development, but around 20 percent will need to be for medium and high density development and parks.
- *Sufficient Land for Office, Retail/Commercial, and Industrial Uses.* Due to numerous opportunity sites in the Westside Industrial Specific Plan area and the Northwest Triangle retail area, the Planning Area contains an excess supply of land designated for retail/commercial and industrial uses. This is the case under both the low and high growth scenarios. Supply and demand for office land are essentially equal under the low growth projection; an additional 200 acres would be needed for office land under the high growth scenario.

Transportation and Circulation

The Transportation and Circulation chapter studies the existing type, condition, and level of service of the Planning Area's roadways, as well as the status of non-automotive modes of transportation. Land use and transportation planning will proceed in concert to ensure that new development areas are adequately served and that existing problem areas are addressed. The key issues and findings regarding transportation and circulation are:

- *Local East-West Circulation.* While many of Turlock's east-west roads have excess capacity, travel in this direction on some streets is problematic for residents of Turlock and Denair.
- *Regional Access to Interstate 5.* Turlock is located along State Route 99; however, access to I-5 is limited. The establishment of the Westside Industrial Specific Plan area is expected to attract industrial users who prioritize interstate access, making improving regional access an important consideration.

- *Upgrading Existing Roadways.* Residents and businesses alike are affected by the deteriorating quality of many of Turlock's existing roads, particularly in older industrial areas that experience heavy truck traffic.
- *Increasing Mode Share of Non-Automobile Means of Transportation.* While projected growth in Turlock will likely necessitate increasing traffic capacity in some places, a larger population base also creates an opportunity for building a more effective transit network. New residential development also has the opportunity to be designed in a way that maximizes ease of walking and cycling to destinations.

Public Facilities and Services

This chapter examines the current status and future needs of public facilities and service providers in Turlock, including parks and recreation; public schools; community and emergency services; fire and police departments; solid waste disposal; electric utilities; potable water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure. The following key issues and opportunities are most salient regarding public facilities and service provision:

- *Sufficient Parkland and Recreation Opportunities.* A challenge for Turlock will be identifying and dedicating sufficient land for public open space to meet the goal of 4.5 acres per 1,000 residents. The city has already expressed a desire for increased recreational facilities and programs, such as an aquatic center and a comprehensive trail system. As the city's population increases, addressing these needs and setting aside land for parks, trails, and open space will be increasingly important.
- *Coordinating School Facilities and Land Use Planning.* Despite having added significant capacity in recent years, the Turlock Unified School District is still operating over capacity based on state standards. In addition to upgrades to current facilities, the District will also have to identify new school sites to accommodate projected population growth. Land use planning and school site selection need to be coordinated so that major new school investments serve neighborhoods and children optimally. Another key issue related to both parks and schools planning will be identifying additional opportunities for shared use of facilities and cross-programming, involving the school districts, CSU Stanislaus, other public agencies, non-profits and businesses.
- *Maintaining Adequate Police and Fire Service.* The physical pattern of land use and urban development has impacts on the level of service that police and fire departments can provide. Both public safety departments have emphasized the importance of contiguous growth for providing adequate service.
- *Water, Sewer, and Stormwater Infrastructure.* With the construction of the Turlock Regional Water Quality Control Facility and the initiation of the

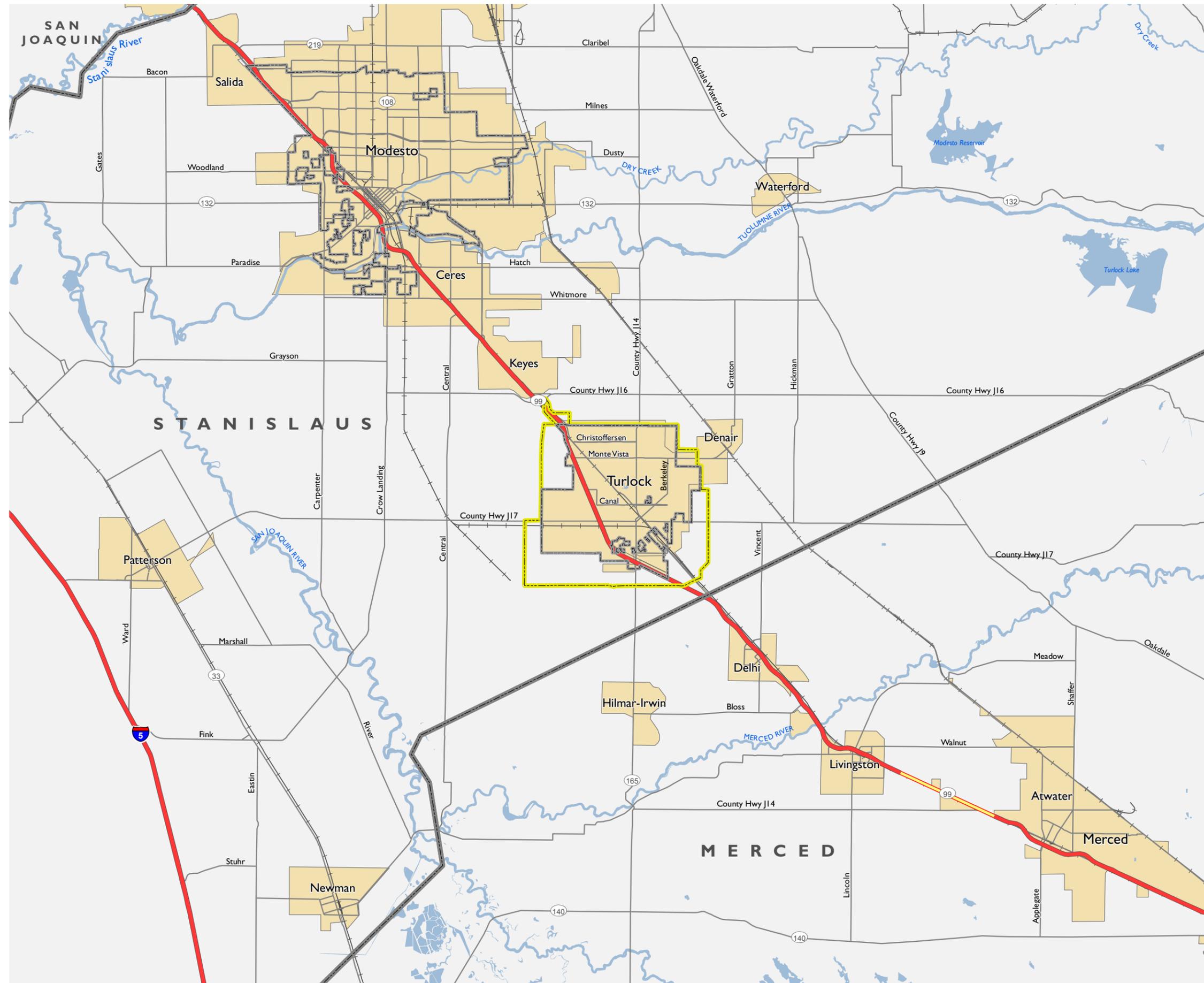
Turlock Irrigation District Surface Water Project (SWP), Turlock has positioned itself well to accommodate future growth from the perspective of sewer and water service. The city's current Urban Water Management Plan is based upon the city's decision to participate in the SWP. However, some of the city's sewer lines are at or near capacity. As the General Plan update process moves into the phase of analyzing alternatives, costs and feasibility of upgrading the city's infrastructure where necessary will be considered.

Environmental Resources and Hazards

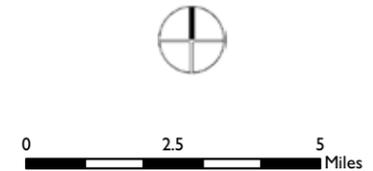
Turlock is a small city surrounded by productive farmland in California's Central Valley, not proximate to any rivers, steep topography, or active faults. Due to this natural setting, many environmental hazards that pose risks to other areas are not issues of concern for Turlock: the Planning Area is minimally impacted by seismic, flood, or fire hazards. Contaminated sites also do not pose a real constraint on development. Regarding cultural resources, while Turlock has some stock of cultural assets, future development is not likely to result in their conversion or destruction. The following issues are key issues that will need to be addressed:

- *Agricultural Land Preservation.* Land and soil suitable for agriculture is Turlock's greatest environmental asset. Farmland is a cornerstone of the Turlock and Stanislaus County economy. It also provides habitat for some wildlife and functions as a green buffer around the urban center. Future development in the Planning Area will have an immediate impact on the quantity of farmland around Turlock, as virtually all of the non-urbanized land outside of the city boundaries is good quality farmland in agricultural use. Farmland preservation strategies and conversion mitigation will be important considerations in developing growth alternatives for the General Plan update.
- *Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions.* Air quality is the other major environmental issue that plans for future development in the Planning Area must address. Solving the San Joaquin Valley's air quality problems requires regional cooperation. Turlock's General Plan must be consistent with regional plans that specify population and vehicle use projections and transportation control measures to be implemented. Similarly, with the passage of SB 375, land use and transportation planning Stanislaus County will become better coordinated as a means of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Figure 1-2: North San Joaquin Valley Context



- Freeway
- Highway
- Major Road
- Railroad
- Urbanized Area
- Planning Area Boundary
- County Line



Source: City limit data, City of Turlock, 2008; County line data, County of Stanislaus, 2008; Hydrology data, California Spatial Information Library and Metropolitan Transportation Commission, 2008; Map base data, Tele Atlas North America, Inc., 2008.

1.5 REGIONAL LOCATION AND PLANNING BOUNDARIES

Regional Location

The City of Turlock is located in Stanislaus County, on the eastern side of California's San Joaquin Valley, 100 miles east of the San Francisco Bay Area. Turlock is home to around 70,000 residents, making it the second largest city in Stanislaus County after Modesto. The City is on the State Highway 99 corridor, linking it to other Central Valley cities including Stockton and Sacramento to the north and Fresno and Bakersfield to the south. Turlock remains a stand-alone urban, largely residential area surrounded by productive agricultural land. Figure 1-1 shows Turlock in its regional Northern California context.

In addition to Modesto, which lies 14 miles north, Turlock's nearest neighbors are a collection of small towns and unincorporated County areas. Keyes, Denair, and Ceres are the closest neighboring communities to the north; Delhi, Hilmar, and Livingston are located within 10 miles to the south. Twenty miles to the west and southwest, Patterson and Newman are along the I-5 corridor. This collection of communities represents the area in which most Turlock residents may work, as well as the area from which people come to Turlock for employment and shopping. Figure 1-2 illustrates Turlock's local context in the North San Joaquin Valley.

While over 75 percent of Turlock residents work locally, some commute long distances. Stockton lies 44 miles north, followed by Sacramento, 87 miles north of Turlock. To the south, residents may commute 27 miles to Merced, or 82 miles to Fresno. San Francisco Bay Area workers could commute 60 miles to Livermore, at the eastern edge of the Bay Area, or 89 miles to Oakland.

Planning Boundary

The Planning Area is the geographic area for which the General Plan establishes policies about future urban growth, long-term agricultural activity, and natural resource conservation. The boundary of the Planning Area was determined in response to State law requiring each city to include in its General Plan all territory within the boundaries of the incorporated area as well as "any land outside its boundaries which in the planning agency's judgment bears relation to its planning" (California Government Code Section 65300).

The 2002 General Plan Update defined a larger planning boundary, shown in the pink outline in Figure 1-3, that encompassed the communities of Keyes and Denair, but did not designate land uses for these areas. For the purposes of this existing conditions analysis, the Planning Area focuses exclusively on the land

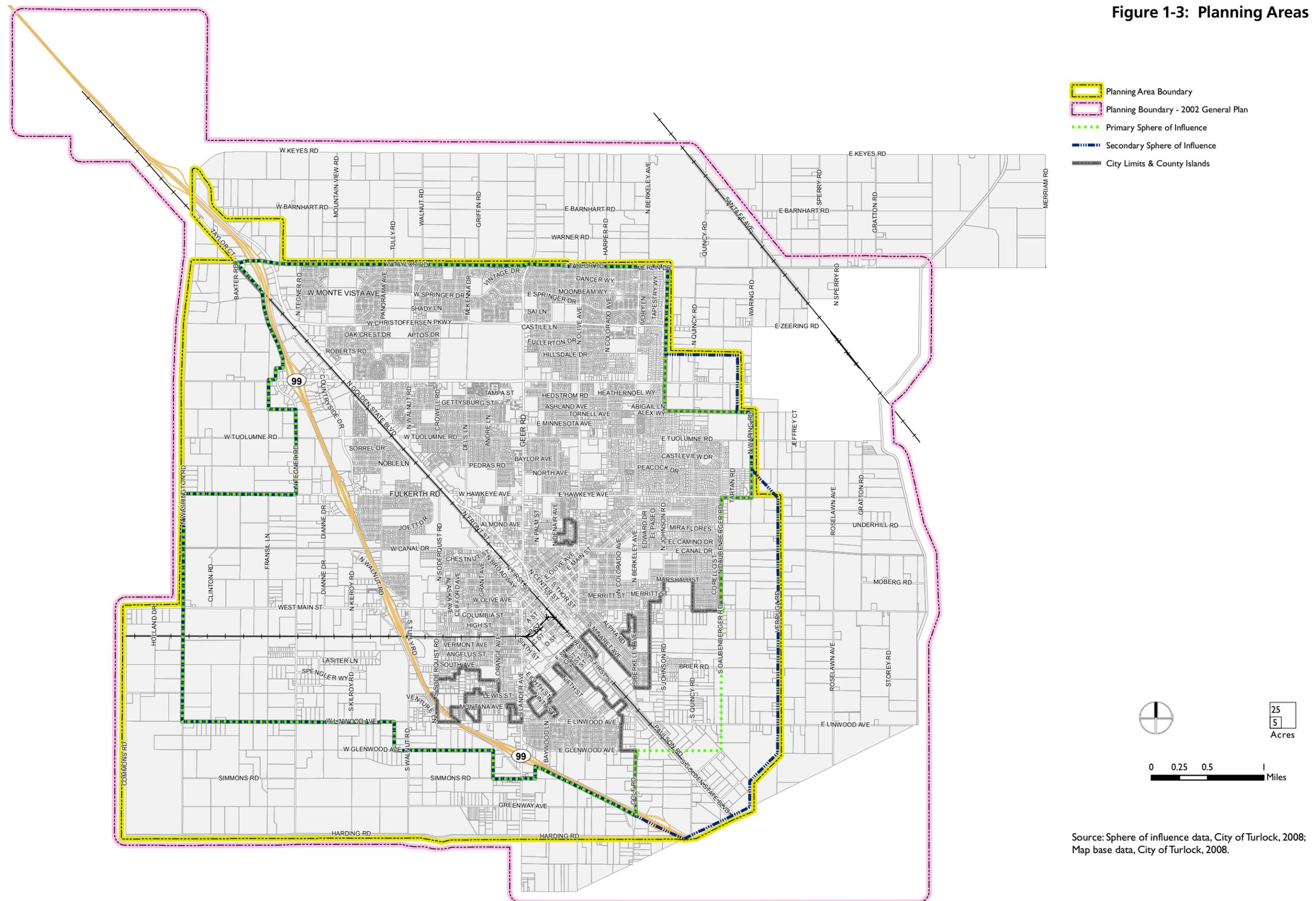
that the existing General Plan designated for urban uses or as Urban Reserve. Thus, as defined in this document (shown in yellow outline in Figure 1-3 and on subsequent maps in this document), the Planning Area encompasses approximately 14,720 acres, or 23 square miles. It is bounded roughly by Taylor Road to the north, Waring and Verduga Roads to the east, Harding Road to the south, and Commons and Washington Roads to the west. It also includes additional land on the northwest corner along the State Route 99 Corridor, from the Taylor Road interchange to just south of the Keyes Road interchange.

Contained within the Planning Area is the City's Sphere of Influence (SOI). The SOI is a boundary that encompasses lands that are expected to ultimately be annexed by the City. It is determined by the Stanislaus County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), which is an entity empowered to review and approve proposed boundary changes and annexations by incorporated municipalities, determines the SOI. Portions of the Planning Area beyond the SOI may or may not be annexed to Turlock, but are still considered to be related to and influenced by the City's planning.

Figure 1-3 shows the 2002 planning boundary, the current Planning Area used for this Existing Conditions Report, the city limits, and the Primary and Secondary SOIs. (The Secondary SOI reflects a 1993 amendment that expanded the SOI further to the east.) Data for this report was largely collected and analyzed for the Planning Area as a whole, or, where necessary, for the area just within the city limits.

Currently, research and analysis indicates that the Planning Boundary as defined in this report is of adequate size and does not need to be expanded. Chapter Four, Growth and Development Potential, discusses the capacity of the Planning Area to accommodate new growth in population and jobs that is expected to occur over the next 20 years.

Figure 1-3: Planning Areas



Source: Sphere of influence data, City of Turlock, 2008;
Map base data, City of Turlock, 2008.

