

Supes Vote Against Sprawl for Calaveras County

Other Issues Not So Clear

(from the July 2010 CAP/CPC Newsletter)

AT an April 20 combined session of the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors and the Planning Commission, the Supervisors decided against residential sprawl.

By approving the map associated with Alternatives B & C as detailed in the Alternatives Report (see the April 2010 CAP/CPC Newsletter for an explanation of the Alternatives), Supervisors have indicated that the land use policies in the General Plan update will encourage future growth in existing community centers.

This policy change reflects a departure from the way Calaveras County has approached growth in the past. Before the collapse of the housing bubble, the sundry pressures to approve far-flung residential projects often proved too great for the Supervisors to resist. These and other planning failures have contributed to an overall infrastructure deficit in Calaveras County that is today estimated to approach one billion dollars. Inadequate roads, unsafe bridges, water and wastewater facilities operating at or beyond capacity, and a public safety net that must respond over an increasingly vast area with diminishing resources – all are a legacy of the poor planning decisions made in the last 25 years.

By focusing future growth in existing community centers, it is hoped that infrastructure costs can be reduced - helping to keep taxes and rates down while reducing the costs of environmental mitigation. Although not a complete answer to the County's planning and infrastructure problems by itself, adoption of the B/C map is a significant first step towards putting Calaveras County on the road to a healthier economy and preservation of our rural lifestyle.

The Supervisors, however, were unable to choose between Alternative B, which projects a vigorous growth rate similar to that experienced in the last 10 years, or Alternative C, which increases that growth rate by another 50 percent. In response to inquiries, the Planning Department says it will take various factors into account while deciding whether a given community will be associated in the General Plan with a B growth rate or a C growth rate. The Planning Department says that the factors to be considered will include infrastructure constraints.

The Planning Department is currently scheduling meetings with community planning groups to discuss how the General Plan update will reflect the goals and vision of their specific community.

Several community groups, some of whom are members of the Calaveras Planning Coalition, have for the last few years gone through an open, public, and democratic process that has resulted in community plans, visions, and other documents being submitted to the Planning Department for consideration in the General Plan update. When these community groups have their opportunity to sit down with the Planning Department, it will be their first chance to see how their hard work over the years has been reflected in the General Plan update so far.

