

Calaveras Planning Coalition: P.O. Box 1373, San Andreas, CA 95249 209 754-3317

The Calaveras Planning Coalition, a Coalition of community groups and non-profits interested in growth and planning issues in Calaveras County, respectfully recommends the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors consider the following as they consider the General Plan update process.

Public Participation Plan

What is a Participation Plan?

The Participation Plan (PP) is the process whereby the citizens and taxpayers of Calaveras County have their views expressed in the updated General Plan.

To succeed the PP needs to have the following characteristics:

1. It must give people a voice in the planning of their own communities
2. It should provide a forum for the free and respectful exchange of views
3. It should seek to define and resolve differences where possible
4. It should be empowered by local government
5. It should involve elected officials and planning commissioners
6. It should ensure that there is linkage between the public input and the output generated by staff / consultant, and note the linkage to promote public acceptance
7. It must involve a broad spectrum of interested stakeholders, including local residents, the business community, ranchers/landowners, and government agencies and departments

The PP should be proactive in reaching out to the various communities in Calaveras County. Meeting times should accommodate both those who are available during the day, and those who can only attend evening meetings or weekends. Specific efforts must be made to involve commuters, retirees, Native Americans, young families, youth, non-English speakers, and persons with disabilities.

Technology should also be fully utilized, emphasizing two-way communication. Attending meetings can be problematic for many, so the PP should include opportunities for people to express their opinions on relevant questions through letters, on-line and through other media.

In partnership with local groups, agencies, and departments, the County should consider various survey options to determine public opinion on issues relating to growth and planning in Calaveras County.

Elements of the PP

- **Begins in Spring 2007**
- **Community Meetings on Community Concerns**
- **Outreach**

Begins Spring 2007 -- The PP anticipates that the main PP effort will begin in Spring of 2007. Between now (Nov. 15 2006) and then, the County intends to hire a General Plan Coordinator.

In addition, either County Staff or, preferably, County contracted Consultants need to begin preparing Baseline Conditions Reports to identify current resource constraints, including water, wastewater, and infrastructure, as well as identifying valuable critical wildlife habitat, open space, and “viewshed” resources on both a Countywide and local community basis. These Reports are an important and necessary pre-requisite to an informed and useful public input process.

Community Meetings on Community Concerns

The PP calls for four rounds of workshops in each community. Called, organized, and managed by County Staff / Consultants, initial workshops will seek to develop the community’s vision and goals. Guided by the input received from the members of the community, Staff and Consultants will draft increasingly specific objectives, policies, and implementation measures for review and discussion in the subsequent community workshops in that community.

To assist citizens and facilitate input, the workshops should have experienced Facilitators or otherwise have designated discussion leaders. Preference should be for “hands-on” visually oriented exercises, including those utilizing maps and overlays to depict growth pattern alternatives, land use options, etc.

The proposed list of communities is:

1. Wallace – Burson
- 2 Valley Springs
3. Rancho Calaveras
4. Copperopolis, including Lake Tulloch
5. Mokelumne Hill
6. Paloma
7. San Andreas
8. Glencoe, West Point
9. Wilseyville, RR Flat, Sheep Ranch
10. Mountain Ranch
11. Murphys, including Vallecito and Douglas Flat
12. Hathaway Pines – has current community plan
13. Forest Meadows
14. Avery, Arnold, Dorrington

These community definitions are not intended to restrict or otherwise inhibit cross-community participation or even cooperation. In addition, consideration should be given to the regional influence some County communities exert owing to their size and / or location in the County. These communities include but are not necessarily limited to Valley Springs and Murphys. Workshops in these communities should be mindful of the regional influence their vision will have on surrounding communities and accordingly persons from adjacent communities should be encouraged to take part in relevant workshops.

While anyone should be welcome at these workshops, in general only property owners or residents of the community (with exceptions noted above for regional influence, etc.) should

“vote” or otherwise be counted in a show of hands or other ad-hoc expression of community opinion. However, questions of doubt should be resolved in favor of inclusion; persons living or owning land just outside a perceived border should be encouraged to “vote”. The intent is to prevent obviously unfair situations.

In addition, in areas where the County shares a body of water with another county, shoreline residents in the other county who affect, and will be affected by, the update of the General Plan should be encouraged to take part in the appropriate and relevant Calaveras County workshops.

These ad-hoc expressions of opinion are intended to shape, guide, and provide the inspiration for County Staff and Consultants as they proceed to draft more specific language for discussion and review in subsequent meetings. Expressions of differing opinions should be considered carefully by County Staff and Consultants as they prepare new General Plan language, and can be useful in defining the parameters of the alternatives called for under CEQA.

All community members should be given an opportunity to identify the land use designations they would like to see in their communities.

Outreach – Simple Brown Act type notifications (legal ads in 8 pt type) of these workshops is insufficient. The County needs to utilize press releases, the internet, paid advertising, surveys, and targeted mailings to alert residents and landowners of the meetings scheduled in their communities, as well as keeping the general population up to date on the progress of the PP and GP update.

During this time the County staff should seek out opportunities to speak to homeowners associations, community, service, and business groups, on the opportunities to participate. The County should host a booth at the County Fair in May promoting the PP and disseminating literature. Other public events, such as the Calaveras Kite Fair, should also be seen as opportunities to expand interest in the PP.

In addition, County Staff / Consultants should emphasize reaching out and tapping into the experience and data available from public interest groups and agencies in the social services, business, and the environment. To be sure, groups such as CAP and the members of the Coalition will be also called on to play important roles in promoting participation in the community meetings, as well participating in them.

As alluded to earlier, the internet should play an innovative role in promoting greater participation in the community meetings by a segment of the public that could be otherwise disenfranchised. Staff reports, baseline studies, draft language, etc. should be available for download at least a week prior to the next relevant meeting. Digital document formats should be as widely compatible across different operating platforms as possible.

The results of any County commissioned public opinion surveys must have the confidence of the public to be useful. Some form of public review of the survey’s methodologies, including issues related to sample selection, question wording, and any statistical manipulation of results (so-called “weighting”), is very important.

Next Steps: 2007

After the rounds of community meetings are complete, County staff / Consultants will complete drafting, refining, and choosing the language of the GP, including Goals and Objectives statements, policies, standards, and implementations for each General Plan Alternative. Maps are also developed.

At this time, the Draft General Plan Alternatives are released for public view for 30 days.

In keeping with the required characteristics of a successful PP (#6: *“It should ensure that there is linkage between the public input and the output generated by staff / consultant, and note the linkage to promote public acceptance”*), the documents should be drafted and annotated so that people can identify the public input that went into defining the Goals and Objectives of the Draft GP.

Within the 30 day window, citizens will have the opportunity to submit comments on the Draft GP. These comments can include moving particular policies from one alternative to another, adding or eliminating policies and implementation measures, etc.

After this, County Staff / Consultants will summarize the comments and identify key policy choices for consideration.

County Staff will hold hearings on the Draft General Plan Alternatives, and will prepare recommendations for the Board of Supervisors. It is here that the advantage of having strong Supervisorial involvement and support for the General Plan participation process is clear.

2008

January: The Board of Supervisors will hold a hearing to approve the Project Description and the General Plan Alternatives for inclusion in the EIR. The EIR will evaluate each alternative equally, so that any alternative can be chosen by the Board at the end of the process, without the delay associated with further environmental review. (*Note: The County may also need to analyze additional alternatives to reduce significant impacts of the Project Description that are identified in the EIR*). The County sends out a scoping notice to the relevant agencies, and to parties who have participated in the General Plan process. The public can respond by telling the County the issues to analyze, the methodologies to employ, and the mitigation measures to consider. The County should hold at least two workshops to allow people to express their concerns regarding the EIR process. One workshop should be in the evening or on a weekend, so working folks can participate.

Feb. - Aug: During this time, the County's outreach efforts will go back to the communities with another round of workshops to show the connection between the plans and the maps and the input each community region gave early in the process. This is critical to maintain public support for the plans.

August: The General Plan DEIR is released for 45 day public comment. People can comment on the adequacy of the document. The County should hold at least two public workshops to highlight key impacts and to solicit public input.

2009

January – March: Staff presents mitigation measures for consideration by the County.

It is critical that these agendas be detailed so that people know which issues will be dealt with at which hearings. People should be given an opportunity to address the County on each issue.

April – June: Staff and consultants complete the Final EIR, and annotate the General Plan Alternatives with the proposed mitigation measures.

July: The Planning Commission reviews the Final EIR, holds a hearing, and makes recommendations to the Board of Supervisors regarding certification of the FEIR.

August: The Planning Commission reviews the General Plan Alternatives, holds a hearing, and makes recommendations to the Board of Supervisors regarding adoption of the General Plan.

September – October: Staff goes back to the public for the last round of public workshops. At this round, there are three things conveyed. First, the three alternatives and their maps are explained. Second, the relative impacts of the three alternatives are explained, including the significant and unmitigated impacts of each alternative. Third, staff identifies the connections between public input and the contents of each plan and map, by displaying the origins of each goal, objective, policy, and map component. This demonstration can also be on the County web site. Again, this is an important time for County staff to be available at existing public forums (harvest & wine festivals, service clubs, etc.) to help people understand and appreciate the new plan.

November – December: The General Plan goes before the Board for a two-part hearing. The first part is to receive staff input, to receive public comment, to close the public comment portion of the hearing, to deliberate, and to direct staff which alternative to prepare for final approval. This hearing can begin in the afternoon, and continue in the evening, so that all have a chance to participate. If necessary, the hearing can be continued for another day to accommodate additional public input or board deliberation. The second part of the hearing is simply to make the formal motions certifying the EIR, accepting the findings of fact, accepting the statement of overriding considerations, and approving the final plan.

(Note: There will need to be a few weeks between the hearings so staff can produce the documents needed for Board approval. CEQA findings of fact can be quite lengthy.)