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11/14/08

Bob Sellman, Planning Director  
County of Calaveras  
891 Mountain Ranch Road  
San Andreas, CA 95249

RE: General Plan Baseline Report Supplement: Chapter 12 Draft Economic Analysis

Dear Sir:

My name is Thomas Infusino, and I am submitting these comments on the Draft Economic Analysis on behalf of the Calaveras Planning Coalition. The Coalition is a group of community organizations and individuals who want a healthy and sustainable future for Calaveras County. We believe that public participation is critical to a successful planning process. United behind eleven land use and development principles, we seek to balance the conservation of local agricultural, natural and historic resources, with the need to provide jobs, housing, safety, and services.

The Draft Economic Analysis is very useful in that it provides data to confirm the importance of many issues the public raised during the Community Workshops for treatment in the General Plan Update:

At the Community Workshops, transportation challenges were a major issue of public concern. (Issues & Opportunities Report, p. 21-24.) The Draft Economic Analysis confirms that the county's economy is currently tied very strongly to transportation of commuters and tourists, while at the same time its infrastructure backlog and land use choices are making this transportation more difficult. (pp. 12-2, 12-4, 12-6, 12-20, 12-36, 12-45 to 12-54, 12-69 to 12-71.) This suggests that future economic wellbeing will be tied to a Circulation Element that invests in infrastructure and promotes transportation alternatives; and to a Land Use Element that employs smart growth principles to make transportation alternatives more attractive. At the Calaveras Planning Coalition, one of our land use principles is that development should not be allowed to outpace the ability the local government to provide the necessary infrastructure.

At the Community Workshops, water and telecommunications infrastructure were issues of public concern. (Issues and Opportunities Report, pp. 18-20.) The Draft Economic Analysis notes the need for improved water, wastewater, and telecommunications infrastructure to support economic growth. (pp. 12-6; 12-72 to 12-73.) This suggests that the Circulation Element will need to plan for these infrastructure improvements. Also, the Water Element must provide guidance on how to make the most of water supplies through water conservation and recycling. At the Calaveras Planning Coalition, one of our land use principles is that new development should be approved only if there is adequate water to supply it.

At the Community Workshops people noted the need to protect open space. (Issues & Opportunities Report, p. 7.) The Draft Economic Analysis notes that the ranching sector needs help to keep these enterprises viable into the next generation. (p. 12-5.) This highlights the need for policies in the Economic Development Element and/or the Agriculture Element that actively engage the County in helping.

At Community Workshops, people raised the affordable housing issue. (Issues and Opportunities Report, pp. 29-32.) The Draft Economic Analysis confirms the lower than average wages in the County. (p. 12-2.) This highlights the need for the Economic Development Element and the Housing Element to address workforce housing and childcare facilities. (pp. 12-12, 12-67 to 69.) At the Calaveras Planning Coalition, one of our land use principles is that a range of housing types should be available for people of all income levels.

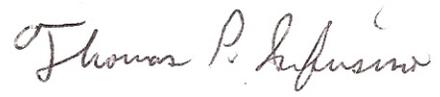
At the Community Workshops, participants expressed a need for improved healthcare services. (Issues & Opportunities Report, p. 25.) The Draft Economic Analysis confirms that the County needs more healthcare services for its population, and that this is a growing sector of the economy. (pp. 12-2, 12-4, 12-34, 12-36.)

Also, the Draft Economic analysis notes the potential for growth in the retail sector. (p. 12-5.) We feel that a Land Use Element that promotes mixed use development can provide for such retail growth while also allowing people to access it with the least impact on regional traffic infrastructure.

Finally, the Draft Economic Analysis explains the major and growing role that transfer payments and other non-employee income (pensions, 401(k)'s, investment dividends, social security, etc.) play in the local economy. Much of local household income in the county is not earned by employees, but brought in by retirees through returns on investments, pensions, and government payments. (p. 12-32, 12-68.) Providing the needs of this demographic will not only help these people get the goods and services they need locally, but also boost the local economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Thomas P. Infusino". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Thomas P. Infusino