



County of Calaveras

Department of Planning

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Executive Summary

The 2014 Draft General Plan is now available for public review and comment. The draft plan consists of three primary components: the land use map that depicts the density and intensity of uses on all lands within the unincorporated portions of Calaveras County; the policy document, consisting of brief discussion of each element of the Plan and the goals, policies, and implementation programs; and a Background Report, that provides some of the more detailed information that led to the development of the goals and policies document.

The draft plan is divided into eight sections, or elements:

- Land Use – Identifies where different land uses should locate, and the density and intensity of those uses.
- Circulation – Links the land uses with the ability to move people and goods, addressing not only the road system, but also pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users.
- Housing – Addresses housing needs in the County, with policies and programs intended to provide housing for all segments of the County's populace.
- Resource Production – An optional element addressing agriculture, timber, and mining.
- Conservation and Open Space – Addresses a wide range of issues, including recreation, biological resources, water, soil, and cultural resources.
- Noise – Considers noise issues associated with land uses and transportation and proposes standards to protect the County's citizens from excessive noise exposure.
- Safety – Addresses hazards such as wildfire, flooding, and landslides.
- Public Facilities and Services – Addresses water and sewer service, libraries, park facilities, and providing the services that citizens need to build our communities.

While state law lays out a number of provisions that must be included in a general plan, there is great flexibility provided to the County to develop a plan that addresses our specific needs. This draft plan tends to address the minimum requirements of state law, although goals and policies addressing agriculture, economic development, and water supply have been included.

It should be noted that this is just the first draft. Changes to policies and land use designations are expected once the public has a chance to review the draft and the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors has an opportunity to review it.

Planning staff and its consultants have tried to take into consideration previous Board direction, public comments that have been received throughout the update process, and agency input.

Growth Projections

The Draft Plan is intended to provide for the expected growth over the next 20 years. Approximately 9000 new residents are expected to come to the county, based on projections by the state. This equates to the need for approximately 3700 new residential units by 2035.

Growth rates have varied dramatically in the county over the last two decades. During the 1990s the County population grew by 4.4%. From 2000 to 2010 growth averaging 2.4%. Growth was likely much higher through 2006, but the recession in the latter part of that decade slowed growth. That trend has continued since 2010, with Calaveras County experiencing a net loss in population of approximately 2.3%.

The draft plan takes this relatively slow growth into consideration. However, there is sufficient land in each land use category to accommodate five times the expected growth, using conservative build-out scenarios. The direction of the policies and land use designation is to direct the majority of future growth toward existing and planned communities where infrastructure and services exist, protecting the resource-based industries of agriculture, timber and mining, and promoting tourism.

In May 2013 the Board of Supervisors reviewed a draft Land Use Map (Draft #2.) This map provided for approximately 24,000 new residential units, and between 58,000 to 81,000 new residents. (The difference in the total number of residents is based on inconsistencies with Census data. While the census states that the average household size is 2.41 persons, the figures provided calculate to 1.59 persons per household.) That map was refined, consolidating some of the rural designation so that the map did not resemble a checkerboard of different land uses, and scaled back some of the community center designations where it was clear that such growth was not likely to occur within the time horizon of the plan. The resulting map provides for nearly 21,000 new residents, again using a very conservative estimate of buildout, and an additional population of between 50,000 to 73,000 new residents.

Land Use Requests

In May 2013 the Board provided an opportunity for property owners to request specific land use designations. Staff received requests covering 115 lots. Attachment 1 shows the disposition of those requests. Many were found to be appropriate and included in Draft #3. But most were not included in this draft. There were a variety of reasons, but primarily they fell into three categories: Insufficient infrastructure to support the proposed land use; the request was inconsistent with the intent of the plan to direct growth into existing communities; and that the request was considered a pre-entitlement for some future larger development.

Other Optional Elements

Several optional elements were considered during the preparation of the general plan update process. These were water, economic development, and energy elements. In 2013 the Board of Supervisors directed staff not to include these elements. However, many of the policies that were in the draft optional elements were included in this draft

plan. These are contained in the Land Use, Conservation and Open Space, and Public Facilities and Services Elements.

Community Plans

One of the most controversial and complex aspects of this draft plan was dealing with the desire of many in the community to incorporate existing and proposed community plans. On January 28, 2014, the Board of Supervisors held a workshop where this issue was discussed with the Planning Department. While no vote was taken, the general direction (although not everyone agreed) was that including the community plans into the General Plan update would take too much time, and could potentially create internal conflicts with the plan.

However, Planning staff recognizes the huge effort by citizens in the various communities that went into developing those draft plans, and did not want to waste that planning effort. While independent community plans are not included as a part of this draft plan, many of the policies and land use designations have been incorporated. Staff found, while reviewing the draft community plans and existing community plans, that there was a common thread to many of them, and that policies that a community wanted to have applied just to that community actually was appropriate county-wide. Where there were community-specific policies, these are included in a special section of the Land Use Element, Community Planning Policies. Staff has generated a cross-reference table (Attachment 2) that identifies where each community plan policy is covered by a general plan policy. The text of the policy is not identical, but staff believes that the intent of the policy is met.

A final change regarding community plans are the boundaries shown on the Land Use Map. Many of the Community Plan boundaries went well beyond the area that is part of that specific community, being general rectangles covering large areas of the rural parts of the County. While staff recognizes that people living within those areas might identify with a community, they don't necessarily live within it. The Community Area boundaries shown on the Land Use Map coincide with areas of existing or potential future higher intensity development.

Housing Element

The draft plan that is being released does not include a Housing Element at this time. That element is still being prepared, and will be reviewed on a separate track from the rest of the plan in order to meet State timelines for adoption. The Housing Element will be considered an amendment to the 1996 General Plan, however, it will be developed to fit seamlessly into the draft plan.

Public Comment

The release of the Draft General Plan on December 18, 2014 begins a 90-day public review and comment period. During this time a series of community workshops and other public meetings will be held. Staff encourages the citizens of Calaveras County to review the draft, and provide written comments. Comments can be submitted to Planning in writing, by e-mail, or through the Department's website. At the end of the comment period, near the end of March, the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission will hold a series of hearings to consider public comment, and make any changes to the draft plan that the Board feels is appropriate.