



CALAVERAS COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION
PARKS AND RECREATION

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Director

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September 23, 1983

TO: Bill Burke

FROM: Brent Harrington *AA*

SUBJECT: Community Plans

You recently asked me about the status of the Valley Springs Community Plan and community plan development in general. The purpose of this memo is to respond to your inquiry.

In 1975, the County adopted a Valley Springs Community Plan. Although I have asked around, I've never been able to determine how or why the Plan was done at that time. The best I have been able to determine is that the impetus for the Plan was a recognition that Valley Springs was the one community in the County that had the primary physical features for economic development - rail and road transportation, water, sewer, gas and central location. It appears that the plan was done in-house. It does not appear that an advisory committee was involved, unlike current practice. I also don't know if there was any controversy. In short, the file is very bare.

In 1976, there were several large rezonings in Valley Springs. These rezonings were apparently initiated by the County to establish, for apparently the first time, zoning in Valley Springs. With few exceptions, the zoning was done in a manner consistent with the Community Plan.

In 1977, when David Porter and I were hired, we looked at the status of the General Plan and zoning. We proposed to rewrite the General Plan, then the zoning ordinance, and then the community plans. Instead, the Board instructed us to rewrite the 1969 Arnold Plan and rewrite the zoning ordinance, then the Board would look at other needs. A new zoning ordinance was adopted in August, 1978, and the Arnold Community Plan was completely rewritten and adopted February 25, 1980.

In late 1978, the question of the General Plan and community plans came up again. At that time, it was generally agreed by the Board that the County-wide General Plan would be rewritten and that community plans would be rewritten, or created for the first time, for San Andreas, Mokelumne Hill and Murphys. West Point was identified as a community large enough for a community plan, but due to the generally less than appreciative attitude toward the planning process, West Point was given a low priority for a community plan (Subsequently, West Point was shown as a "community center" on the new General Plan). The intent was to prepare the plans, and then seriously review all community plans, including Valley Springs, every 5 to 7 years to see that they are still current and relevant.

Bill Burke
Community Plans
September 23, 1983
page 2

In reviewing which community plans should be done first, it was noted that San Andreas and Mokelumne Hill did not have plans, and had virtually no existing zoning. Those plans were given first priority. Murphys had a plan (1969) and established zoning, but the zoning was inconsistently applied and there was continuing controversy. Murphys was given a second priority. At that time (1978-79), Valley Springs was felt to have a pretty good plan, the town was zoned consistently with the plan, and there was no known controversy. I would have to say that at that time, there was no specific priority given to reviewing the Valley Springs Plan.

In 1981, the San Andreas Plan was adopted and then subsequently rezoned. In January, 1983, the Mokelumne Hill Plan was adopted, but we have not yet rezoned the town. The Murphys Plan is near completion, with the Board scheduled to adopt the revised plan and rezoning in December of this year.

During the development of the Preliminary General Plan, the Planning Department proposed that one community plan be prepared for Valley Springs, Rancho Calaveras and Jenny Lind. As you know, this went over like a lead balloon, with each community not wanting to be associated with the other two. It was also at this time (September, 1981) that the first expression of community desire for a new Valley Springs plan was expressed. A petition (attached) with 66 signatures was submitted. Ultimately, the adopted General Plan identified the boundaries of the existing Valley Springs Plan.

Subsequent to adoption of the County General Plan, an implementation program was adopted by the Board of Supervisors to implement the Plan. Preparation of a revised Valley Springs Plan was not included in the implementation program, as it did not rank that high in necessity in comparison to other tasks. It should be noted that in late 1981, there had also been a formal request for community plan for a very large area surrounding Copperopolis. This request was also not included in the implementation program as it did not rank high in comparison to other tasks.

Subsequent to adoption of the General Plan and adoption of an implementation program, the Board did authorize the preparation of a special plan for Rancho Calaveras, which the Board will be shortly considering. Although the development of this plan was not included in the General Plan or implementation program, I did request and the Board did authorize preparation of the plan for several specific reasons:

1. An ad hoc committee had already been formed.
2. There were three specific and on-going issues that were unresolved.
3. The staff's time and corresponding financial commitment was knowingly to be minimal (maximum of 8 to 10 meetings).

As an additional point, we have been trying in an on-again off-again manner, to do a special plan for the area around the new airport for several years. We want to ensure that proper commercial/industrial sites are identified, yet we don't want residential encroachment around the airstrip itself. About half the work is done, and I would like to have it completed. The Airport Plan was identified in the General Plan and implementation program.

Bill Burke
Community Plans
September 23, 1983
page 3

Community Plans are a cornerstone of the planning process in Calaveras County. The plans completed since I've been here have been generally well received, with very little controversy or amendments after adoption. The Community Plan process has also been good, as it involves the local community and acts as an educational process for local residents. From a staff standpoint, they're generally the most enjoyable part of our job, and something with which most planners want to be involved.

While useful and usually enjoyable, community plans are not without their negative aspects. The plans are costly, being between \$8,000 and \$12,000 for staff time, materials, printing and related costs. They are also time consuming, with plans taking a minimum of one year and as much as 2½ years to complete from start to Board adoption. The nature of the work is such that the work is best done by one planner who tends to become intimately knowledgeable about the community. For this reason, I've found it best to have a planner work on only one plan at a time.

The question has arisen before about a community developing a plan without county staff involvement. Certainly, we don't have a monopoly on the necessary knowledge to develop a community plan. But, what is ultimately adopted by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors must be in a form and with policies that are consistent with past plans and the countywide plan. My experience in other jurisdictions is that the "let us do our own" approach eventually becomes "can't you give us a little help". I strongly believe that community plans should be done right or not at all, which means staff either gets fully involved, or not at all.

The question arises as to, regardless of what the General Plan or implementation program indicate, is there a need for a new Valley Springs Community Plan? My reaction is "yes", but that the need for a new community plan must be matched against other needs, and available funding and staff. The main point in support of a new community plan is that it's been 7 years since there was a comprehensive review of the plan. The current plan is not "pretty", and, because it was apparently developed without significant public input, is probably not felt to be "our own" by the local community. But, I do believe that there are some serious misconceptions by local residents as to what a community plan will or will not do, and I'd like to address those.

First, an argument has been made that since the search for a landfill centers in the western county, the Valley Springs Community Plan should be reviewed first. The ascertainment has been that the "proposed" sites are within the Valley Springs Community Plan boundaries. I agree that if a dump site is located within the Valley Springs Community Plan area, the Plan should be reviewed. For all intents and purposes, State law would require such action. In fact, none of the three Emeon sites are within the community plan boundaries, although the Paloma Road site is near. For a variety of reasons, I can't envision a landfill within the Valley Springs Community Plan boundaries.

Bill Burke
Community Plans
September 23, 1983
page 4

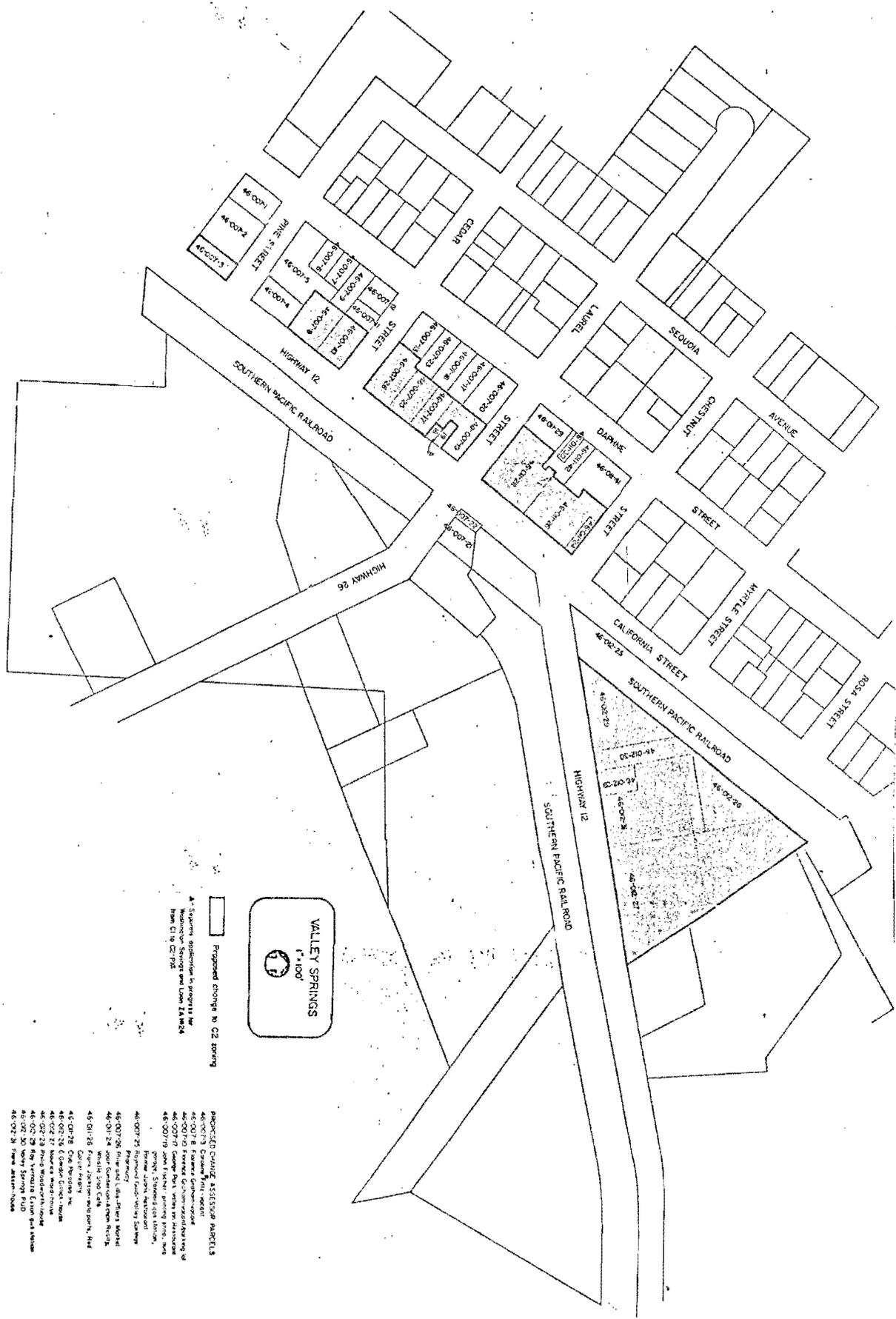
Second, barring a significant reversal of Board policy and significant changes to General Plan goals and policies, it will be rare that property that is commercially or industrially zoned, or zoned for multifamily residences, will be downzoned. Since Valley Springs has long been recognized as a commercial and industrial center, and the General Plan recognizes it as such, it is doubtful that the land use designation for "significant" properties will change as a result of a new community plan.

Third, the community plan will not solve possible problems associated with insufficient sewer or water connection. The local districts are going to have to solve this problem, or there won't be additional hookups. At this point, the local individual districts are able to control growth by not allowing additional connections.

Fourth, the Valley Springs School, which serves an area much larger than the community plan boundaries, has growing pains. If this is a problem, CUSD will have to resolve it. At this point, CUSD has not, unlike some districts in other counties, asked for a ban on further subdivisions and has not changed its policy requiring mitigation fees. The community plan will not alter this situation.

In sum, a new Valley Springs Community Plan would be a more professional document, would have greater community identification, and would have more information, but would not substantially change land use designations or development policies.

It is my recommendation that the Valley Springs Plan not be revised until, at least, the first three tasks associated with our solid waste activities (as identified in my September 13, 1983 memo to the Board) are completed. Between January 1 and July 1, 1984, I would like to finish the Airport Plan. Upon completion of these tasks (i.e. end of the current fiscal year with my proposed work program), then we can re-evaluate our position. I would further recommend that we not consider any additional general plan amendments for Valley Springs until the Plan is re-written. Additionally, I would recommend that we not consider any additional rezonings in Valley Springs until community plan revision, including our recently requested rezoning of all C1 property to C2 in Valley Springs.



Proposed change to CZ zoning
 A-1 Square application to project in the
 Municipal Service and Loan 1A MSB
 from C1 to CZ705

- PROPOSED CHANGE APPLICABLE PARCELS**
- 46-001-3 Canyon Hill, West
 - 46-001-4 Canyon Hill, West
 - 46-001-5 Canyon Hill, West
 - 46-001-6 Canyon Hill, West
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