**SHEEP RANCH COMMENTS REGARDING DRAFT GENERAL PLAN**

INTRODUCTION

Thank you very much for your very considerable efforts to have the 2014 Draft General Plan meet the intent of each of the policies contained in the Sheep Ranch Community Plan. Exec. Sum. p. 3; Cross Reference to Community Plan Goals.[[1]](#footnote-1) To a large degree, you have been successful.

These comments point to some major changes and corrections that must be made to fulfill vital elements of the Sheep Ranch Community plan and thus enable Sheep Ranch to continue to exist as a rural and historic community.

I. LAND USE MAP DRAFT #3: THE BOUNDARIES OF THE MAP'S "SHEEP RANCH COMMUNITY AREA" NEED TO BE ADJUSTED SO THAT THEY CLOSELY REFLECT SHEEP RANCH'S HISTORICAL BOUNDARIES.

The Sheep Ranch central community has had official boundaries since 1878, when the survey of the Sheep Ranch Townsite was prepared and filed under direction of I.H. Reed, County Judge of Calaveras. See Calaveras County Maps, Subdivisions, Book 1, pp. 37-38. Under the 1996 General Plan, this surveyed townsite area is the Sheep Ranch Community Center. Given this historic background, it was appropriate for previous planning director Rebecca Willis and her staff to use the 1878 boundaries as the basis for delineating the Sheep Ranch Community Plan Area proposed by Land Use Map Draft #2. In that map, the only deviations from those boundaries were in the cases of parcels that were partially within and partially without those boundaries; those parcels were either completely included or completely excluded from the Community Center.

Sheep Ranch agreed with this approach as reasonably balancing the historical boundaries with the need to avoid having only a portion of any parcel being subject to special land use provisions applicable only to the community center. This was one of the reasons that, in a July 13, 2014 e-mail, we recommended that Planning Director Peter Maurer adopt that Land Use Map Draft #2 for Sheep Ranch.

When the Planning Department drew the boundaries of the Sheep Ranch Community Area for Land Use Map Draft #3, about half of the historic Sheep Ranch central community was left outside those boundaries.

We understand from the Executive Summary (p.3) that under map draft #3, nothing and no one outside that map draft #3's boundaries of the Sheep Ranch Community Area is considered to be a part of Sheep Ranch.

If that is the case, the following are examples of things that are no longer in Sheep Ranch: (1) the historic 1875 house built for George Hearst (William Randolph Hearst's father) and his partners with the Sheep Ranch Mine; (2) the historic Sheep Ranch Brewery, built in approximately 1880; (3) the historic Sheep Ranch Mining Company Millsite, originally the Ferguson & Wallace Millsite; (4) the sign on the Sheep Ranch/Murphys Road that indicates that people are entering Sheep Ranch; (5) the 1906 house built for the mining superintendent for the Sheep Ranch Consolidated Group of Mines; (6) the historic (dating from 1868-69) and well-known Pioneer Hotel.

Most important, people residing within the historic boundaries of Sheep Ranch (but outside map draft #3's "Sheep Ranch Community Area") are being told they no longer live in Sheep Ranch. See Exec. Sum. p. 3. These are not people living within what the Executive Summary calls "general rectangles covering large areas of the rural parts of the County." Exec. Sum. p. 3. They are people who have lived, some for decades, in the historically designated and formally bounded Sheep Ranch Townsite.[[2]](#footnote-2)

In conclusion, the boundaries of the newly created Sheep Ranch Community Area should be readjusted to be consistent with the boundaries of the Sheep Ranch Community Plan Area proposed by Land Use Map Draft #2. If for any reason this cannot be done, the new boundaries of Land Use Map #3should just be removed from the map, leaving no newly designated Sheep Ranch Community Area, and leaving the residents as they were, within the historic 1878 Sheep Ranch Townsite boundaries.[[3]](#footnote-3)

II. LAND USE ELEMENT: ALL SHEEP RANCH PARCELS DESIGNATED AS COMMUNITY CENTER HISTORIC SHOULD BE REDESIGNATED AS RURAL RESIDENTIAL.

As correctly noted in the Community Plan Policy Cross-Reference table (Exec. Sum. Att. 2), Sheep Ranch, which has no access to public sewer, desires the following in its central area:

1. A building density of one dwelling unit per parcel with public water;

2. A building density of one dwelling unit per five acres for parcels with no public water;

3. Maintenance of "the noncommercial nature of all properties other than the one parcel (parcel 36023012) now zoned 'Rural Commercial.'"

4. Seeking no further development, "the community wishes to remain a very small rural town and surrounding area with very low population density." SRCP pp. 2-3.

Land Use Map Draft #3, presumably the applicable land use map for the Draft General Plan,[[4]](#footnote-4) designated many of the parcels in the new Sheep Ranch Community Area as "Community Center Historic." Therefore, for those Sheep Ranch parcels, the following would apply (see Table LU-1, p. LU5):

1. A building density of up to 12 dwellings per acre, with a possibility of floor areas that are twice the square footage as the area of the parcels;

2. Population density of up to 28.68 persons/acre;

3.Mixed residential and commercial use permitted on every parcel. See also LU 1.8.

Obviously, adjustments must be made.

As pointed out in our July 13, 2014, e-mail to Planning Director Peter Maurer, one major concern for Sheep Ranch was that Land Use Map Draft #2 be adopted for the Sheep Ranch area, along with the land use designations as they existed in June 2012. For the Sheep Ranch area, that draft map and the accompanying designations had been negotiated in detail with former Planning Director Rebecca Willis, and Sheep Ranch was content. If we could return to that status, Sheep Ranch would still be content.

The goal is to agree on a revision to Land Use Map Draft #3 for Sheep Ranch in order to find the proper land use designations that will reach the same result as would have applied under Land Use Map Draft #2 and the June 2012 designations.

First, Sheep Ranch cannot have any area with parcels designated as "Community Center Historic." It's simple: Sheep Ranch has no public sewer service. SRCP, p. 1. A parcel designated as Community Center Historic must have "Public sewer except as otherwise provided pursuant to General Plan Policy PF 2.6[not applicable, unless someone is planning regularly to truck all sewage and waste water elsewhere]." With no public sewer service in Sheep Ranch, all parcels currently designated as "Community Center Historic," with that designation's high building and population intensity, must be changed to another designation.

It is not clear whether, under the Draft General Plan, Sheep Ranch can have a formally designated "Community Area" if it does not have any parcels designated as "Community Center Historic" or some other high density and mixed residential/ commercial use. See LU 1.8. Not having any Community Area specified for Sheep Ranch would not create an insurmountable problem, as long as the goals and policies of the Sheep Ranch Community Plan can still be realized through proper land use designations (and recognitions of Sheep Ranch's unique needs under LU6SHR provisions).

For the rest of this discussion, references to "central Sheep Ranch" are to the geographic area that Land Use Map Draft #2 had designated as the "Sheep Ranch Community Plan Area."[[5]](#footnote-5) Thus central Sheep Ranch is the Sheep Ranch Townsite as established by survey in 1878, with the additions and subtractions that were negotiated with the former planning director and staff.

Under Land Use Map Draft #2, every parcel except one within what we are now referring to as central Sheep Ranch (see last paragraph) was designated as Rural Transition-B.[[6]](#footnote-6) Under Land Use Map Draft #3, parcels in central Sheep Ranch are designated Rural Transition-B, Rural Residential, or Community Center Historic. The only change we are requesting is that all of the Community Center Historic lots (except the commercial lot discussed in footnote 6) be redesignated as Rural Residential.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Rural Residential would fit all the redesignated parcels (except the commercial parcel) in central Sheep Ranch as long as, under the Rural Residential designation, residents in all Sheep Ranch Rural Residential properties will be able to conduct reasonable agricultural activities, including the keeping of sheep, horses, chickens and pigs, and raising of fruit, vegetables, grain and lavender. (See SRCP 3; see also suggested addition of LU 6SHR.5, below.)

III. LAND USE ELEMENT: FOUR ADDITIONAL POLICIES FROM THE SHEEP RANCH COMMUNITY PLAN SHOULD BE ADDED TO THE SHEEP RANCH SECTION IN THE "COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND DESIGN" SECTION.[[8]](#footnote-8)

A. Introduction.

In the table Cross-Reference of Community Plan Goals, etc., many Sheep Ranch Community Plan Policies are cross-referenced to LU-6, but with no equivalent policies being given in the Sheep Ranch policies sections under LU 6 SHR sections. LU-6 provides the "Goal" that the County

"Recognize the unique characteristics, history and development patterns for each community in Calaveras County . . . ."

That goal cannot be achieved unless there are specific policies to guide decision-making; such policies need to be "clear and unambiguous." See California Office of Planning and Research, "General Plan Guidelines" (2003), p. 15. Under the Draft General Plan, the Sheep Ranch Community Plan will not be a part of the ultimate General Plan. Thus, while it is comforting that the County is recognizing in principle that various characteristics and historical aspects of Sheep Ranch are unique and would be protected in policies stated in the Sheep Ranch Community Plan, that recognition accomplishes nothing until those Sheep Ranch policies are restated as clear and unambiguous County policies within LU 6 SHR sections under goal LU-6.

B. Add LU 6SHRT.4—Open Grazing.

LU 6SHR. 4 should be added as follows to provide for open grazing of sheep in Sheep Ranch (SRCP, p. 2):

"LU 6SHR.4 Maintain permission for open grazing of sheep within the Sheep Ranch townsite as surveyed in 1878 and described in Maps, Subdivisions, Book 1 at pages 37 and 38."

As far as is known, Sheep Ranch is the only California community in which open grazing of sheep is provided for by law. Given the goal of LU-6 to recognize the unique characteristics for each community, preservation ofthis truly unique characteristic of Sheep Ranch should be stated as county policy in the General Plan.

C. Add LU 6SHR.5—Agricultural Activities.

LU 6SHR.5 should be added as follows for agricultural activities in Sheep Ranch parcels designated as Rural Residential (SRCP, p. 3):

"LU 6SHR.5 In Sheep Ranch parcels designated as Rural Residential or Rural Transition-B,reasonable agricultural activities can be conducted, including the keeping of sheep, horses, chickens and pigs, and raising of fruit, vegetables, grain and lavender."

Table LU-1's description under the Rural Residential designation does not include any provision for agricultural activities, which are quite important to central Sheep Ranch residents. Either this policy LU 6SHR.5 needs to be added, or similar language needs to be added to the Rural Residential description. Similar language now found at the end of the Rural Transition-B description would also serve well.

D. Add LU 6SHR.6—Preserving Rural Nature.

LU SHR.6 should be added as follows:

"LU 6SHR.6 Preserve and enhance the quiet and rural quality of Sheep Ranch and surrounding areas, with its special combination of peacefulness, natural beauty, low traffic, minimal light pollution, clean air and diverse wildlife habitat."

This provision, similar to policy LU 6AR.1 provided for Arnold, is necessary to recognize and protect Sheep Ranch's uniquely rural nature. Under Draft General Plan Goal LU-6, LU SHR.6 would provide a policy that would enable a unique set of rural environmental characteristics to be preserved in Sheep Ranch.

 E. Add LU 6SHR.7—Public Water Connections

LU 6SHR.7 should be added as follows:

"LU 6SHR.7 In Sheep Ranch, provide public water service to properties currently physically connected to that service, but do not expand public water service to other properties."

This provision is vital to realize Sheep Ranch's desire to limit development in order to preserve the rural and historic nature of Sheep Ranch. It would also protect against overstretching Sheep Ranch's limited water supply from San Antonio Creek.

IV. LAND USE ELEMENT: TABLE LU-1 NEEDS A NOTATION THAT CLARIFIES THE MEANING AND USAGE OF THE LOT ACREAGE RANGES THAT ARE GIVEN IN THE TABLE'S "BUILDING INTENSITY" COLUMN.

One possible source of confusion, controversy and future litigation regarding the land use designations is in the significance of the lot acreage ranges (e.g., "20-40 acres/lot" for the Working Lands designation) that are given in the Building Intensity column of Table LU-1. Even though the Working Lands entry has those minimum and maximum acreage figures, Land Use Map Draft #3 has some parcels designated as Working Lands that are not within that acreage range. This also is true for other land use designations. How do those minimum and maximum acreage figures relate to such a parcel?  Also, what is the significance (if any) that the maximum acreage given for one designation is also the minimum acreage given for the next larger designation? Our understanding from working with former Planning Director Rebecca Willis was that such questions were going to be answered in a detailed narrative that would accompany the table that is now Table LU-1.

There is no narrative accompanying Table LU-1.

In place of a narrative comment, there needs to be a new footnote in Table LU-1 that would appear by the acres/lot figures given for the categories of Resource Production, Working Lands, Rural Transition-A, Rural Transition-B, and Rural Residential; that footnote could provide as follows:

“/k/When a minimum lot size is stated for a Land Use Designation in Table LU-1, that is the minimum size of any subdivided lot that can result from the subdivision of any existing lot with that designation.  Thus a Resource Production lot, listed with “40-160 acres/lot," cannot be subdivided unless it is at least 80 acres, and unless each of the resulting subdivided lots is at least 40 acres.  Also, there are lots on the Land Use Map with Land Use Designations that usually apply to larger or smaller lots, i.e., their actual current acreage does not come within the lot acreage ranges given in Table LU-1 for the designations that have been assigned to those lots.  This was done because such a lot is best described in Table LU-1’s Description column for the designation it has been given.  To determine the minimum size of any lot that could result from any subdivision of a current lot as designated, look to the minimum acreage given for that lot's designation, not the actual acreage of the lot.”[[9]](#footnote-9)

If that proposed footnote is not accurate, please provide a statement that covers this area and that would clear up the existing confusion.

Since the planning department has assigned designations to lots that are larger than the upper acreage figure listed for the assigned designations, it is clear that those upper acreage figures are not true upper acreage limits for that designation. It appears that the only purpose served by the upper acreage amounts is to show the acreage range within which lots usually fall for the particular designation involved. If the upper acreage figures serve any other purpose, please make that purpose known somewhere in Table LU-1.

 V. CIRCULATION ELEMENT: THERE SHOULD BE NO PROSPECTIVE PLANS FOR UPGRADING OF ROADS TO SHEEP RANCH

A. No Prospective upgrading should be shown on figure CIR-2 for Fricot City Road.

1. Discussion.

Fricot City Road runs for 10.6 miles between Calaveritas Road in the west and Sheep Ranch in the east. Sheep Ranch is a very small, very rural and historic town with no store or gas station; it hopes and plans to stay that way. Most of Fricot City Road is an unpaved, winding, one-lane dirt road through undeveloped areas; it has considerable stretches of steep hillsides going down either the San Antonio Creek canyon or the O'Neil Creek canyon. At the eastern (Sheep Ranch) end there are only .3 miles of pavement. All of the rest of Fricot City Road's pavement (4.8 miles) is at the western end, from the intersection with Calaveritas Road, through the Sierra Ridge Campus of Right of Passage, and ending past several Sierra Ridge neighbors beyond the campus. That paved portion (at the western end) bears most of the traffic on Fricot City Road. (Sierra Ridge has agreed to encourage its traffic to come to Sierra Ridge from the west.) There is very little (on some days probably no) daily through traffic on the unpaved part of Fricot City Road (rated LOS F) between Sierra Ridge and Sheep Ranch. It is not known whether that traffic flow has ever been measured.

Figure CIR-2 (titled "Existing Circulation System with Planned Growth") shows a prospective upgrading of Fricot City Road to "LOS C or Better." We understand that this upgrading is not meant by the Planning Department to happen in the near future. However, we do not believe that any such prospective upgrading of Fricot City Road should appear on any map of the coming General Plan.

Figure CIR-2 refers to "Planned Growth." We do not know what "planned growth" (if any) is expected by anyone along the unpaved portions of Fricot City Road. No such growth appears to be contemplated in Land Use Map Draft #3. In any event, septic seepage from any significant growth in this steep canyon area would threaten the waters of O'Neil and San Antonio Creeks. The upgrading of that portion of Fricot City Road, and even the appearance of the prospective upgrading in a map like figure CIR-2, would encourage development pressure where significant development is neither planned nor appropriate.

Goal CIR-1 of the Circulation Element is "A balanced circulation system that provides for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods while maintaining the county's rural and historic character."

Upgrading the dirt portion of Fricot City Road from LOS F to LOS C or better would be contrary to this goal. That upgrading is not needed for the movement of people and goods, and it would degrade the area's (including Sheep Ranch's) rural and historic character. As it now exists, the dirt portion of Fricot City Road provides a prime rural chaparral experience for those who navigate its curves slowly through the steep watersheds of San Antonio Creek and O'Neil Creek.

Policy CIR 2.12: "Implement measures to reduce travel speeds within community and neighborhood areas to protect the historic character or special function of the community and to protect public safety."

Upgrading Fricot City Road to LOS C or better would create a major roadway dumping higher speed traffic down a downhill straightaway directly into the heart of a small rural and historic community, Sheep Ranch, with its open range sheep wandering its roadways. It is hard to imagine any greater violation of policy CIR 2.12.

Policy CIR 2.13: "New and/or improved roadway connections shall create a transportation environment that is consistent with the community/neighborhood character where they are implemented . . . ."

The proposed upgrading of the portion of Fricot City Road east of the Sierra Ridge area would create an environment very inconsistent with the present character of the undeveloped chaparral area and with the rural historic community of Sheep Ranch; thus it would be directly inconsistent with policy CIR 2.13.

Policy LU 2.4 of the Land Use Element provides that "high capacity roads shall not be extended outside existing developed areas unless those areas are contiguous to existing communities, are in areas where future development is anticipated by the General Plan as reflected in the General Plan land use designation, or are essential to public health and safety"

Upgrading the dirt portion of Fricot City Road to high capacity LOS C or better would not meet any of the criteria of LU 2.4.

2. There Is a Better Existing Alternative Route.

Fricot City Road is not the only road connecting to areas west of Sheep Ranch. Since approximately 1879, Sheep Ranch Road has gone southwest to Murphys from Sheep Ranch. Although that route is not shown in CIR-1 (Existing Circulation System), that route provides an existing paved connection to Murphys and Highway 4, including Parrot's Ferry Road and westward to Angels Camp and Highway 49. In contrast, CIR-2's super-sized prospective upgrade of Fricot City Road, linked with its prospective upgrade of Calaveritas Road, is mapped in CIR-2 only as another connector between Sheep Ranch and San Andreas, a function that the combination of Mountain Ranch Road (LOS C or better) and Sheep Ranch Road from Mountain Ranch Road to Sheep Ranch (LOS C) already sufficiently serves.

3. Recommendation.

The prospective upgrading of Fricot City Road on figure CIR-2 is more than a meaningless line on a map. Particularly with CIR-2's reference to "Planned Growth," that mapped line is an invitation for developers to consider developing the rough rural beauty of the watersheds of San Antonio Creek and O'Neil Creek. That mapped line is also an ominous indication that, from the viewpoint of the Draft General Plan, Fricot City Road development would not result in significant damage to the rural nature of Sheep Ranch itself.

Please, do not include in the General Plan any prospective upgrading of the dirt portion of Fricot City Road or the .3 miles of pavement at the Sheep Ranch end. Keep them as they are, at least during the life of the General Plan now being proposed.

B. No prospective upgrading should be shown on figure CR-2 for the Sheep Ranch/Avery route.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In addition to its Fricot City Road proposal, CIR-2 also proposes that a prospective upgrade to LOS C or better should be shown between Sheep Ranch and Avery. The Roads and Bridges Division informs us that this portion of Sheep Ranch Road is rated LOS F and that Avery/Sheep Ranch Road is rated mostly LOS F. CIR-2's proposal is contrary to the Sheep Ranch Community Plan; also, the proposal would, contrary to LU 2.4 and CIR-1, encourage development pressure in areas not planned for it in the draft General Plan, and significantly damage "the county's rural and historic character." As is the case with the proposed upgrading of Fricot City Road, discussed above, this Sheep Ranch/Avery proposed upgrade would also violate policy CIR 2.12 and policy CIR 2.13.

C. Conclusion as to roads:

As stated in the Sheep Ranch Community Plan, Sheep Ranch does not want any road into Sheep Ranch improved except for "minimum improvements needed to meet county public safety standards." SRCP p. 2. All of the potential upgrades shown on CIR-2 on roads connecting to Sheep Ranch would be contrary to this policy and to CIR-1 and LU 2.4.

It is imperative that the prospective and unnecessary upgrading of Fricot City Road between Sheep Ranch and the Sierra Ridge Campus area be removed from CIR-2 and the Circulation Element. Sheep Ranch should be treasured and protected by the County as a rural and historic community, not as a potential regional transportation hub.

VI. BACKGROUND REPORT: CORRECTIONS ARE NEEDED TO THE NUMBERS GIVEN FOR SHEEP RANCH'S 2010 POPULATION AND ESTIMATED GROWTH.

Table INT-2 of the Background Report (p. 5) shows Sheep Ranch's 2010 population as 107, with a reference to footnote /b/. Footnote /b/ reads, "Community Plan area that is not also CDP." The 107 figure is very much too high, and there is no explanation of how it was reached. The Community Area as drawn by Land Use Map Draft #3 is quite small; its 2010 population, reached by a physical review of the area, was approximately 44. Reached in the same way, the 2010 population of the central Sheep Ranch area that these comments suggest should be designated as the revised Sheep Ranch Community Area was approximately 56. That would be an appropriate number to be used for Sheep Ranch's 2010 population. Since the Draft General Plan has eliminated the extensive boundary for Sheep Ranch's Community Plan Area as shown on earlier Land Use Maps because "people living within those areas . . . don't necessarily live within [the community]" (Exec. Sum. p. 3), people outside central Sheep Ranch are not counted for purposes of these comments, however much they are considered by their neighbors to be fellow citizens of Sheep Ranch. It is important to recognize how low a population central Sheep Ranch has, so planning will proceed in an appropriate manner for this small, very rural, very historic community.

Table INT-2 also predicts that Sheep Ranch will grow by 23 people by 2035; this is a 21 percent increase over INT-2's erroneous 2010 population figure of 107. A 21 percent increase over central Sheep Ranch's 2010 figure of 56 would result in an increase of 12 people by 2035.

In Table INT-2 of the Background Report, Sheep Ranch's 2010 population should be given as 52, and Sheep Ranch's 2035 Population Increase should be given as 12.

CONCLUSION

As stated in the Sheep Ranch Community Plan, "In a county where other communities are developing, Sheep Ranch will serve as an increasingly rare living example of Calaveras County's past." SRCP p. 2.

With the changes to the Draft General Plan that are recommended in these comments, together with other sound provisions already in the Draft General Plan, Sheep Ranch will be given a chance to make this goal a reality.

*A jewel does not have to be big to be valuable.*

DATED: February 10, 2015

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

TIMOTHY G. LADDISH

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

ROBIN BUNCH BRANCH

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

PATRICIA PAYNE

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

CHRISTINE J. LADDISH

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

DONALD PAYNE

APPENDIX A

Part 3, Chapter X.

Sheep Ranch Community Plan

SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

**Location and Features**

The Sheep Ranch Community Plan Area, which includes a small quiet town and its surrounding area, is located in the remote and rural area of northern Calaveras County. The community is located halfway between Mountain Ranch and Murphys. Sheep Ranch Road, which bisects the town's center, connects the community to Highway 4 to the south via Murphys and Highway 49 to the west via Mountain Ranch Road.

**History of the Area**

Sheep Ranch is rich in gold-mining history and historic buildings. The Sheep Ranch Town Center essentially follows the boundaries of the Sheep Ranch Townsite that was established in the survey completed November 6, 1878, and amended October 31, 1879.

**Planning and Development History**

The Sheep Ranch Town Center was called the "Sheep Ranch Community Center" in the 1996 General Plan. A new draft Sheep Ranch Community Plan was developed by a group of residents in 2008-2009 and endorsed by the residents with full consensus (no dissents) at a meeting on January 30, 2009. The Sheep Ranch Community Plan was submitted to the County for inclusion in the General Plan Update.

SECTION 2. VISION AND PLANNING PRINCIPLES

The people in Sheep Ranch prize its rural environment, with peace and quiet, clean air, low population density, diversity of landscape and wildlife, minimal light pollution, open space, little traffic, lack of commercialism, and general beauty.

Large ranches and timberlands frame our area and reinforce our solitude and lifestyle. How rural is Sheep Ranch? The Sheep Ranch sheep roam the streets of town and graze wherever they want, except where property owners have fenced them out.

In a county where other communities are developing, Sheep Ranch will serve as an increasingly rare living example of Calaveras County's past. The community does not seek further development of the area. With no public sewer service available, and with no plans to expand current water service, the community wishes to remain a very small rural town and surrounding area with very low population density.

SECTION 3. POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

***A. Policies for the Entire Sheep Ranch Community Plan Area:***

* Continue use of the Sheep Ranch firehouse as a fire station and community center serving the entire Sheep Ranch Community Plan Area.
* Preserve the rural character of the Sheep Ranch Community Plan Area and maintain the local road system as two-lanes with minimum improvements needed to meet county public safety standards.
* Ensure that development is consistent with the natural beauty of this low-density area and protects important wildlife habitats.
* The community respects lawful use of firearms, consistent with safe practice and consideration for others. The community discourages all use of firearms between one-half hour after sunset and one-half hour before sunrise, except for particularly needed nighttime usages (such as the elimination of feral pigs and defense of livestock).
* The community encourages pedestrian and horse trail links between Sheep Ranch and Mountain Ranch and between the Sheep Ranch Community Plan Area and the Arnold Rim Trail.

***B. Policies for Sheep Ranch Town Center:***

* Maintain current densities (one dwelling per acre for parcels served by public water and conventional septic, and one dwelling per five acres on parcels served by well and conventional septic) and current subdivision limitations in the Town Center, with all existing parcels maintaining their current development potentials and restrictions.
* Maintain the noncommercial nature of all properties other than the one parcel (parcel 36023012) now zoned "Rural Commercial."
* Maintain the county's ordinance permitting open-range grazing of sheep.
* Preserve the historic nature of the Sheep Ranch Town Center by encouraging the traditional Mother Lode architectural style for any new building construction or exterior renovation in the Town Center.
* Provide public water service to properties currently physically connected to that service, but do not expand public water service to other properties.
* The community supports development of an open-space park on the parcel behind the firehouse and bordered on two sides by Sheep Ranch Road: it is a keystone in preserving the town's rural nature.
* Preserve the ability of Sheep Ranch citizens to conduct reasonable agricultural activities, including the keeping of sheep, horses, chickens, and pigs, and raising of fruit, vegetables, grain and lavender.

***C. Policies for Sheep Ranch Community Plan Area other than the Sheep Ranch Town Center***

* For parcels currently above 20 acres, maintain a 40-acre minimum subdivision parcel size for lands in the Sheep Ranch Community Plan Area other than the Sheep Ranch Town Center. For parcels currently 20 acres or smaller, maintain a 20-acre minimum subdivision parcel size for lands in the Sheep Ranch Community Plan Area other than the Sheep Ranch Town Center.
* The community strongly supports the establishment of more voluntary conservation easements covering lands in the area or the public acquisition (not through condemnation) of full title to those lands for conservation purposes.
1. A copy of the Sheep Ranch Community Plan is attached as Appendix A, and it is cited in these comments as "SRCP." [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. We also do not agree with the Executive Summary's treatment of people that are outside central Sheep Ranch but inside the broader Sheep Ranch Community Plan boundaries shown on Land Use Map Draft #1B. No matter what the Draft General Plan might say, we all remain residents of Sheep Ranch. However, since the Draft General Plan is recognizing the land use needs of those within the larger boundaries, there is no need to continue the fight for the former broader boundaries that existed beyond the Sheep Ranch Townsite. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. After all, "Community Area boundaries . . . coincide with areas of existing or potential future higher intensity development" (Ex. Sum. p. 3), and Sheep Ranch "does not seek further development of the area." SRCP 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. It is also presumed that all reference to land use categories and designations should be to Table LU-1 within the Draft Land Use Element, not to the differing Draft General Plan Land Use Map Definitions shown as a General Plan Document on the Draft General Plan website. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. We are not suggesting that the General Plan should add formally "central Sheep Ranch" to its categories or designations. We are using the term for this document only as a shorthand reference to the geographical area described above. If possible, this area would best be designated the "Sheep Ranch Community Area," even though it would have no Community Center Historic parcels. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The one exception was parcel 36023012, the only parcel currently zoned for commercial purposes. As stated in the Sheep Ranch Community Plan (p. 3), and as provided in Land Use Map Draft #2, that parcel should remain as the only commercially designated parcel in the Sheep Ranch area, even though it does not have public sewer. See LU INT 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Most central Sheep Ranch lots have public water. Despite language in Table LU-1's "Water/Sewer Requirements" column, it is assumed that the County would not rule a 5-acre parcel ineligible for Rural Residential designation, or any parcel ineligible for Rural Transition-B designation, because it had public water. Thus "or public water" should be added to "Individual well" or "Private well" in table LU-1's discussion of Water/Sewer Requirements in its designations for Resource Production, Working Lands, Rural Residential, Rural Transition-A and Rural Transition-B*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Previous planning staff negotiated with Sheep Ranch so that only policies specifically applicable to Sheep Ranch were left as included in the current version of the Sheep Ranch Community Plan. Thus these policies are appropriate for inclusion under LU 6SHR. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. There are five Sheep Ranch area parcels that were designated "Working Lands" in Land Use Map Draft #2, but that are now designated "Resource Production" in Land Use Map Draft #3. The County's GIS application shows them as all close to but less than 40 acres, within the Working Lands designation's acreage range. Perhaps the Planning Department now has better information indicating that one or more of them are 40 acres or more, or that the lot was better described under the Resource Production description entry, which would mean any such parcel should be designated as Resource Production. The parcels are: 20034013, 20034014, 20034015, 20034018 and 20034027. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)