

To: Calaveras County Planning Director Gabriel Elliott
From: Muriel Zeller, 2640 Stagecoach Drive, Valley Springs, CA 95252
Regarding: Combined Draft Copperopolis Community Plan 8/11/23
Date: August 24, 2023

Via email

Dear Director Elliott,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Copperopolis Community Plan. I support the comments of the Calaveras Planning Coalition and MyValleySprings.com. Please forgive any overlap, but my comments are brief.

I know I mentioned this in previous comments, but, obviously, I think it is important. If the community plan is going to discuss what's **not** in the region, i.e., prime farmland, it seems that should be balanced with a discussion of what **is** in the region, i.e., farmland of local importance. As in previous comments, I recommend (slightly different) changes under "Location and Community Description:"

Copperopolis was historically agricultural land primarily used for cattle grazing and certain mining activities prior to the 1950s, when numerous subdivisions near and/or adjacent to Lake Tulloch were approved. The region is classified as the Sierra Foothills ecological region.

*Class I and II Prime Farmland is scarce, with less than 5% of the County containing prime soils, ~~(Prime soils~~ **which** are defined as those suitable to maintain extended production of sustainable crop yields over a prolonged ~~period~~ **period**. Weathered rock is primarily present, with a thin soil mantle of less than 6 inches covering much of the Planning Area.*

However, ranching still thrives adjacent to Copperopolis. Farmland of Local Importance, as determined in accordance with the state's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, surrounds much of Copperopolis in the form of rangeland. Farmland of Local Importance includes "lands zoned General Agricultural (A1) and/or enrolled in the California Land Conservation Act."

The Copperopolis Community Plan Area was historically mined for copper in the 1860s with gold and silver mines also established during the Gold Rush. Tailing piles, remnant mineshafts, and other structures are present within the area.

I also urge changes to the "Physical Description of the Planning Area as the list of subdivisions erroneously includes Oak Canyon Ranch, which is a working cattle ranch of 3,256 acres that is outside the community plan boundaries. The ranch is protected with a perpetual agricultural conservation easement held by the California Rangeland Trust, so there is no possibility of its development. It is, however, one of the reasons to make the changes I suggest above.

Copper Valley Ranch, formerly owned by Castle and Cooke Development, is also outside the plan boundaries and is currently zoned A1. In 2007, Castle and Cooke, split the ranch into three parcels of 1,770.13 acres, 2,497.07 acres, and 82.80 acres and set aside 561 acres as “zero density” as part of a density transfer for the Tuscany Hills project. I assume the zero density exists on the largest parcel.

Subsequently, Copper Valley Development (CVD), LLC, bought all or most of Castle and Cooke’s holdings in Copperopolis and the surrounding area. CVD now refers to Copper Valley Ranch as 1,770 acres adjacent to Tuscany Hills (see attached Appraisal Report and CVD promotional website: <https://vintuscanyhills.com/projects/>). The A1 zoning would permit a density of 88 lots of approximately 20 acres each on the 1,770 acres. There has not been any type of amendment to create 88 lots, because no lots ever existed. It is no longer even clear what Copper Valley Ranch means. What is clear is that the three parcels previously known as Copper Valley Ranch are not inside the Copperopolis Community Plan boundaries. Therefore, please consider the following changes:

The Copperopolis Community Boundary is depicted as a broad red line on the map of the Community Plan Area ~~The map for the Copperopolis Community Plan Area~~ that was adopted as part of the County’s 2019 General Plan. and The red identifies the following areas: Historic Copperopolis, near the intersection of Main Street (O’Byrnes Ferry Road) and Highway 4 and existing and proposed residential subdivisions. These subdivisions include Sawmill Lake, Copper Valley Ranch (amended to 88 lots), Copper Valley, Copper Cove, Oak Canyon Ranch (dedicated as permanent open space), the Copperopolis Town Square, Sanguinetti, Diamond XX, Calypso Bay, Tuscany Hills, Bridlewood Estates, Black Creek, Poker Flats, Connor Estates, and Peninsula Estates.

Copper Valley Ranch brings me to my final comment. I was struck by a question from another commenter. She asked, “Is Copper Valley a different development than Copper Valley Ranch?” According to CV Developers, Copper Valley is not a development. It is “the lifestyle you deserve.” It is “a four-season world of wonder just a two-hour drive from the Bay Area. This Calaveras County masterplan community **includes the historic town of Copperopolis...**” and “The picturesque Copper Valley... offers all aspects of a **fully integrated community** located in the rolling foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.” I hope Copperopolis doesn’t exist just to make CV Development’s dreams of beach clubs and landing strips come true.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Muriel Zeller

Attachment: Appraisal Report

CC: Tom Infusino, Calaveras Planning Coalition Facilitator
Megan Fiske, CAP/CPC Outreach Coordinator
Colleen Platt and Joyce Techel, MyValleySprings.com