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To: Calaveras County Planning Director Gabriel Elliott

From: Colleen Platt, Secretary, MyValleySprings.com

Re: Public Comments on "Combined Draft Copperopolis Community Plan 08 11 23" from MyValleySprings.com

August 22, 2023

Planning Director Elliott,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the August 11 Combined Draft Copperopolis Community Plan. MyValleySprings.com has been tracking land use planning and development in Calaveras County since 2005, and it is our mission to promote responsible growth and development through public participation in community planning in order to preserve the quality of rural life. As you know from our previous comments, we are very interested in, and support, the development of a Community Plan for Copperopolis. This current August draft seems to have made good progress reflecting Copperopolis community feedback. Thank you, Gabriel, for holding community meetings and incorporating comments.

You likely do not know all the history of Calaveras County land use planning and development. It has been complicated! We have some concerns about inaccuracies in one paragraph in the Copper draft plan. The "Physical Description of the Planning Area" paragraph lists "existing and proposed residential subdivisions" and "these subdivisions include", but then **inaccurately includes two large ranches that are *not* residential subdivisions (either existing or proposed). They are also *not* within the Boundary of the Copperopolis Community Plan Area, so should not be included as such.** See the attached Copperopolis Planning Area Map, showing ranches not within boundary (Copperopolis Planning Area Map_OC-CV Ranches not within boundary.jpg).

The two ranches that should not be included as "subdivisions", and should also *not be included in the Planning Area* are: 1) Oak Canyon Ranch, and 2) Copper Valley Ranch. The combined acreage of the two ranches is over 7,500 acres. This is a large area; misleading text as drafted could set unwarranted expectations for growth in the Copper Planning Area, and/or encourage future subdivision development where it is not approved or possible.

We suggest some simple corrections to the paragraph for clarity; see the Draft below with suggested edits in red (some emphasis added). Explanations, documentation, and attachments to support follow.

Physical Description of the Planning Area

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 was adopted as part of the County's 2019 General Plan and 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)~~, The Golf Club at Copper Valley (formerly Saddle Creek Golf Resort), 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.

Explanations & Documentation

1) **Copper Valley Ranch is NOT a "subdivision"--it is a 3-Parcel Map only.** See attached "Minutes of the March 6, 2008 Planning Commission Meeting", approving **Resolution 2007-088 Parcel Map for Copper Valley Ranch** (see attached Copper Valley Ranch Parcel Map appr_PC_080306m.pdf). These three parcels are APNs 053-020-005, 053-020-008, and 053-021-005, consist of 4,350 acres of open space undeveloped lands, and are currently designated General Plan Resource Production and Working Lands, with A1 Zoning. **Copper Valley Ranch is *not* a subdivision, either existing or proposed. Copper Valley Ranch has NOT been "amended to 88 lots", because a subdivision never existed.** It is three parcels designated RP and WL LUD (Land Use Designation) in the Calaveras County General Plan, which clearly "identifies those **lands capable of and primarily used for agricultural operations**" (Calaveras County General Plan Page-LU6).

Developers may have *desired* to develop part of the Copper Valley Ranch in the past but it was not feasible and it did not occur. It is completely outside of the Copper Planning Area. There are no services available, no roads or infrastructure, and Little John Creek habitat runs through the property. There may be "theoretical potential" to subdivide 4300+ acres of undeveloped open space (or a portion), but development is unlikely. A detailed application, detailed environmental studies, and CEQA review would need to occur before an application could even be considered by Calaveras County Planning, much less approved by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. And what is the need? Population in Calaveras is declining. **Development seems highly unlikely in this remote area. It is incorrect to list Copper Valley Ranch as a "subdivision."**

2) **Oak Canyon Ranch is also NOT a "subdivision"—it is a working cattle ranch under a Perpetual Conservation Easement.** This ranch also should not be included in the Copperopolis Community Plan "Physical Description of the Planning Area" and the paragraph describing "existing and proposed residential subdivisions." **Oak Canyon Ranch is a protected Open Space working cattle ranch of approximately 3,256 acres, with no existing residences. Oak Canyon Ranch is protected from development under a Perpetual Conservation Easement.** See the attached 2020 Deed from the

landowner, the Airolas, to the California Rangeland Trust (DEED 2020-000515-1 CA Rangeland Trust_Airola.pdf).

The original development agreement for Oak Canyon Ranch Specific Plan was rescinded by the Calaveras County Planning Commission in October, 2018 (see attached PC Resolution 2018-16), and in December, 2018, by the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors, along with a General Plan Amendment to Natural Resource Lands, and a rezone to Ag Preserve (AP). See attached BOS Ariola Agenda Submittal 23 GPA_Dec 4_Snapshot-19475.

3) Both Copper Valley Ranch and Oak Canyon Ranch are located outside the Copperopolis Community Planning Area Boundary, and should not be included in the Physical Description. See the attached Copper Planning Area Map and Boundaries, with ranch locations shown (Copperopolis Planning Area Map_OC-CV Ranches not within boundary.jpg). **This Copperopolis Community Area boundary was adopted in the 2019 Calaveras County General Plan.** Oak Canyon Ranch was specifically *excluded* from the community development area, as it will never be developed. Copper Valley Ranch was specifically NOT included in the community development area, as it is too far away and has no services. **According to the Calaveras County General Plan, development should not be encouraged outside community centers. The General Plan is clear—Community Area boundaries are important, “The boundaries of the Community Areas are intended to be specific, since some policies differentiate between being within or outside of the Community Area.”** (Calaveras County General Plan Page- LU5).

Thus, it is incorrect to include either Oak Canyon Ranch or Copper Valley Ranch in the “Physical Description of the Planning Area.” If there is a need to mention these two large ranches, it should be in a separate area, discussing surrounding ranch and grazing lands, clearly stating these ranches are *outside the planning area and not planned for development*, and describing Oak Canyon Ranch’s status as a working cattle ranch under protection of a perpetual conservation easement.

Thank you for consideration of our comments, Director Elliott. We look forward to the Draft Copper Community Plan moving forward.

Regards,



Colleen Platt, Secretary
MyValleySprings.com

Cc: Joyce Techel, President, MyValleySprings.com
Ralph Copeland, Copper Resident
Tom Infusino, Calaveras Planning Coalition

Attachments:

- Copperopolis Planning Area Map_OC-CV Ranches not within boundary.jpg
- Copper Valley Ranch Parcel Map appr_PC_080306m.pdf
- DEED 2020-000515-1 CA Rangeland Trust_Airola.pdf
- PC Resolution 2018-060 Oak Canyon Ranch_Attachment-7013.pdf
- BOS Ariola Agenda Submittal 23 GPA_Dec 4_Snapshot-19475.pdf