



P.O. Box 935, San Andreas, CA 95249 • (209) 772-1463 • www.calaverascap.com

January 16, 2024

County of Calaveras
Planning Department
(Sent by email.)

Dear Director Elliot,

In January of 2020 and 2021, and February of 2022, the Board of Supervisors completed its annual review of the Planning Department's workplan establishing priorities for implementing the 2019 General Plan Update (GPU) in accordance with the requirements of the Land Use Element (2019 GPU, Implementation Program LU-1A, p. LU 19). These reviews are important because the Board does not always accept all of the recommendations of the Planning Department. For example, in 2021 the Board rejected former Planning Director Peter Maurer's suggestion to add open space place planning to the list of priorities. Regarding the Planning Departments 2024 priorities we have some questions and some suggestions.

1) Will the Board review general plan implementation priorities?

Will the Board of Supervisors hold its annual general plan implementation priority setting meeting this year? Has a date been chosen for this Board discussion? Has the Planning Department completed its proposed annual workplan for implementing general plan programs?

2) Thank you for the progress you made in 2023.

Thank you for the progress you made on the Oak Ordinance, the GHG Reduction Plan, the Zoning Ordinance Update, and the Copperopolis Community Plan in 2023. We at the CPC support making completion of these efforts a priority in 2024. Please consider amending the implementation measure table (see attached) to project when the "remaining programs will be implemented" as required by the 2019 General Plan Update (2019 GPU, Implementation Program LU-1A, p. LU 19). This would give the Board of Supervisors and others useful perspective on your progress.

3) Consider clarifying where the County would prefer to implement clustered development and long-term conservation.

The draft Zoning Code Update already defines an open space zone and discusses the use of clustered development. Some additional clarity in these descriptions would help to alleviate concerns raised by the Board of Supervisors. One of the concerns expressed by Supervisor Folendorf and others is the location where permanent conservation easements are encouraged. She does not like them right on the border of existing communities. She wants communities to have some room to grow at their edges.

As we at the CPC have mentioned before, generally speaking ranches and forest lands near the boundaries of existing communities may be suitable for clustered development nearest the existing community with the remainder of the property put in a permanent conservation easement. This makes sense where it is feasible to extend existing infrastructure and services to these locations near existing communities. However, ranches and forests lands more than a mile from community boundaries are generally not suitable for clustered development. Those more isolated ranches are more often suitable for long term conservation easements to preserve agricultural lands and wildlife habitat, reduce wildfire danger, and sequester carbon. It would be feasible to amend the description of the open space zone and the definition of clustering to address the concerns of the Board of Supervisors.

4) Please post additional general plan information on the Planning Department website.

The 2019 General Plan is prominently posted on the Planning Department website. Each element of the 2019 GPU references many important documents that can be useful to people contemplating economic development, infrastructure expansion, or conservation investments in Calaveras County. (2019 GPU, pp. LU 13, C 3, C 4, C 11, C 12, RP 2 – RP 4, COS 3 – COS 10, N 5, S 4 – S 8, PF 4 – PF 9.) However, searching for and finding these documents on a variety of online sources can be challenging, and studying the hard copies in the Planning Department for long periods of time may be impractical for people currently living or working outside of Calaveras County.

For example, the General Plan Update Background Report includes information on water and wastewater infrastructure, parks, schools, emergency response facilities, wildfire risks, and noise sources, as well as streams, rivers, mineral lands, forestlands, range lands and wildlife habitat. As the 2019 GPU indicates this information “may inform” implementation of the general plan (2019 GPU, p. INT 7). It is true that there are links to the GPU Background Report in the general plan text, but those links have been severed and no longer lead to the GPU Background Report. Nor does using the search engine on the County website lead one to the GPU Background Report.

Please consider posting links to the Background Report and other referenced documents on the County’s general plan webpage. If you are unable or choose not to do so, we at the CPC can post links to some of the general-plan-referenced documents on our website. However, since people are more likely to consult your website for planning documents relevant to Calaveras County, we encourage you to post these useful reference documents.

5) Planning workshops for the Highway 4 corridor communities.

If community planning processes are not going to begin on the Highway 4 corridor, please consider putting on the Board of Supervisors agenda or the Planning Commission agenda three workshops to address planning issues of concern in Arnold, Murphys/Douglas Flat, and Avery/Hathaway Pines. As an alternative, consider holding such workshops in those communities with the local Supervisor and/or Planning Commissioner present to receive the comments. Such workshops could provide these communities the timely attention they deserve in the absence of community plans.

6) Information needed for implementation decisions.

Are there additional Planning Department staff positions that are not yet filled? Could any of them be dedicated to general plan implementation?

The CPC supports you hiring a consultant to evaluate the remaining dozens of general plan implementation measures, to identify some specific implementation targets, and to estimate the cost and person-power needed to accomplish them. This would give you the information you need in the future to suggest funding mechanisms, staffing levels, and implementation priorities to the Board of Supervisors.

7) Conclusion

Thank you for considering our suggestions. We expect that you will provide the Board of Supervisors with the required annual workplan for the Board's review in accord with Land Use Implementation Program LU-1A. If you accept any of our suggestions, we expect that this will be readily apparent from your workplan.

Thank you for all you do to keep the Planning Department functioning in these challenging times.

Sincerely,



Tom Infusino, Facilitator

Calaveras Planning Coalition

Cc. BOS, Planning Commission, Julie Moss-Lewis