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Planning Commission Recommends Approval of Valley Springs Community Plan

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For Immediate Release

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San Andreas. After three hours of deliberations and editing on Thursday, August 27, the Calaveras County Planning Commission unanimously voted to recommend approval of the Valley Springs Community Plan (VSCP). After the plan had passed, Commissioner Brett Henderson commented, "There were lots of people who worked hours, over many years, on the Valley Springs Community Plan, and the amount of correspondence -- I want to thank everybody involved, including staff."

MyValleySprings.com, an organizational member of the Calaveras Planning Coalition, has been working to update the Valley Springs Community Plan since 2005. A member of MyValleySprings.com co-wrote the grant application that resulted in a \$200,000 planning grant from Caltrans plus \$50,000 in matching funds from the Calaveras Council of Governments, which was the lead applicant.

The Calaveras County General Plan includes community plans to address the unique needs of a community. For example, the proposed VSCP purports to address the community's special concerns regarding land use, traffic circulation, economic development, parks and recreation, natural resources, and safety.

Residents from Valley Springs and nearby communities wrote to the Planning Commission in support of the plan. MyValleySprings.com President Joyce Techel was pleased that the plan could "conserve visual character and reduce traffic congestion." Marti Crane thanked the

Planning Commission for “keeping our community work, voice, and vision intact and included in our General Plan document.”

Additional residents from throughout the County sent in written comments to the Planning Commission in support of the plan. Each commenter had a different reason for supporting the plan.

Sharon Romano from San Andreas called approval of the VSCP, which is a combination of two previously competing plans, “a victory for unity over divisiveness.” Zerrall McDaniel from Supervisor District 2 wrote that approval of the VSCP “will go a long way to restore the trust of people in their local government’s ability to follow through on promises.” Penny Sarvis of Murphys hoped that the VSCP approval would “clear the way for other community plans waiting in line to be considered including those on the Highway 4 corridor.”

Some commenters mentioned that it took a long time to get this plan to the Planning Commission for review. Colleen Platt, MyValleySprings.com Secretary, plainly stated that the organization has been working on this plan update for 15 years.

The Valley Springs Community Plan has indeed travelled a long and winding path. The old plan was approved in 1975. In October of 2006, a Board of Supervisors resolution referenced the already ongoing update of the community plan for Valley Springs being spearheaded by MyValleySprings.com. By 2010, two community plans had been drafted for Valley Springs. One plan was the Caltrans funded plan which was based on a public process and Planning Department participation. The other plan was drafted by a committee of citizens appointed by District 1 Supervisor Gary Tofanelli.

The competing plans generated controversy and community divisiveness. In June of 2015, a new Board of Supervisors directed its new Planning Director not to include an updated community plan for Valley Springs in the General Plan Update because of a lack of community consensus. To address this perceived lack of consensus, the two draft community plans for Valley Springs were merged. The so-called blended plan was an attempt to reflect the broad areas of agreement and the full spectrum of unique issues in each plan. A staff report from the Planning Department recommended community plan approval in 2017.

Nevertheless, while approving the General Plan Update in November of 2019, another new Board of Supervisors rescinded the old Valley Springs Community Plan and refused to adopt the new Valley Springs Community Plan. The Board said it preferred to address the Valley Springs Community Plan, the Copperopolis Community Plan, and the many community plans along the Highway 4 corridor at later times. The Board agreed that the Valley Springs Community Plan would be the first in line for consideration.

The plan will now go to the Board of Supervisors for final consideration. You can watch for notice of that Board hearing at www.MyValleySprings.com or at www.calaverascap.com.