



**Calaveras County**

**General Plan Issues and Opportunities Report**



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# **General Plan Public Review Draft Issues and Opportunities Report**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

State law requires every city and county in California to prepare and maintain a planning document called a general plan. A general plan is a “constitution” or “blueprint” for the future physical development of a county or city. The general plan establishes a baseline for understanding the challenges facing the community and provides an opportunity for citizens and policymakers to come together in a process of developing a common vision for the future.

The Calaveras County General Plan Update (GPU) project is a two-year multi-phase process that will comprehensively update the existing 1996 Calaveras County General Plan. The GPU started in early 2007 and is scheduled to be completed in 2009.

The General Plan must address at least seven issue categories or elements, to the extent that they are relevant locally: land use, circulation, housing, open space, conservation, noise, and safety. The County may also address other topics of community interest, such as economic development or historic preservation in the General Plan. The General Plan sets out the goals, policies, and programs in each of these areas and serves as a policy guide for how the County will interact with the City of Angels and other local, regional, State, and Federal agencies, and surrounding counties.

**A general plan is a “constitution” or “blueprint” for the future physical development of a county or city. The general plan establishes a baseline for understanding the challenges facing the community and provides an opportunity for citizens and policymakers to come together in a process of developing a common vision for the future.**

State law requires zoning to be consistent with the General Plan and prohibits the approval of subdivisions that are inconsistent with the Plan. Virtually all other regulatory actions and capital expenditure decisions by the County must also be consistent. For example, all specific plans and public works projects must be consistent with the General Plan.

The updated Calaveras County General Plan will consist of two documents: the Baseline Report and Policy Document. The following is a summary of these two component documents:

- **Baseline Report.** The Public Review Draft Baseline Report, published February 2008, provides a “snapshot” of Calaveras County’s existing conditions and trends. It provides a detailed description of a wide range of topics within Calaveras County (i.e., Planning Area), such as demographics, land use, public facilities, and environmental resources. The report provides decision makers and the public with the context and background for making policy decisions. Unlike the Policy Document, the Baseline Report is objective and policy-neutral. The document also will serve as the “Environmental Setting” section of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) that will be prepared for the GPU.
- **Policy Document.** The Policy Document is the core of the General Plan. It contains the Land Use Diagram, the Circulation Diagram, the goals and policies that will guide future decisions within the county, and also identifies implementation programs that will ensure the goals and policies in the General Plan are carried out. The Policy Document will be drafted after the Board of Supervisors selects a “preferred land use alternative.”

As part of the Calaveras County GPU, the County will prepare several General Plan support documents that will serve as the building blocks for the Policy Document and will analyze the environmental impacts associated with implementing the General Plan, as follows:

- **Issues and Opportunities Report.** This Issues and Opportunities Report is an important intermediary step in the GPU process that synthesizes Baseline Report data and community input to frame key policy questions for the alternatives phase.
- **Working Draft Vision Statement and Guiding Principles.** The Working Draft Vision Statement and Guiding Principles document, released simultaneously with the Issues and Opportunities Report, was developed based on input received at the second round of community workshops held in December 2007. This round of workshops focused community attention on crafting guiding principles statements for nine broad topic areas. The document will be refined following the selection of the preferred alternative, and will ultimately be included in the preface of the Policy Document.
- **Alternatives Report.** The Alternatives Report will consist of an evaluation of multiple land use and policy alternatives. The report will be designed to facilitate discussion among stakeholders, community members, County staff, the Planning Commission, and the Board of Supervisors so that a preferred land use alternative can be chosen for the General Plan Land Use Diagram.
- **Environmental Impact Report.** The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be prepared in response to requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The public, other public agencies, the Planning Commission, and Board of Supervisors will use the EIR during the GPU process in order to understand the potential environmental implications associated with implementing the General Plan.

The major objectives of the Calaveras County GPU set out in the Scope of Work for the project are as follows:

- Involve a broad range of the community and stakeholders throughout the entire GPU process;
- Create a new community vision that will guide decisions about development, redevelopment, and resource protection over the next 25 to 30 years;
- Revise the General Plan Policy Document to realize this new vision;
- Ensure the consistency of the General Plan with State law;
- Make use of the informational Baseline Report produced in Phase 2 of the GPU process to help guide planning decisions;
- Refine and, where necessary, develop GIS information that will be used during the GPU as well as after the General Plan has been adopted; and
- Produce a General Plan that is both functional and user friendly.

## **PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT**

The purpose of this Issues and Opportunities Report is to focus community attention on key physical, environmental, economic, cultural, social, and planning issues and opportunities that have major policy implications for Calaveras County. In the context of this report, an “issue” is defined as an important condition or problem that needs to be addressed through the GPU process. An “opportunity” is defined as a unique, favorable, or advantageous condition that the County can capitalize on through the GPU process.

Based on input from community workshops, the Board of Supervisors, County staff, and information from the Draft Baseline Report, this report summarizes the range of issues and opportunities that will likely shape growth and determine quality of life in Calaveras County over the next 25 to 30 years. This report serves as a basis for the Working Draft Vision Statement, and will inform the development of General Plan alternatives, and ultimately, the General Plan goals, policies, and programs.

## **HOW THE ISSUES WERE IDENTIFIED**

The issues and opportunities described in this report were compiled from a wide range of sources including public input at two rounds of community workshops that were conducted during the initial phases of the GPU process.

All the issues and opportunities described in this report meet the following criteria: they can be influenced by the General Plan; they are subject to the legal authority of the County; the General Plan is an appropriate forum for addressing the issue; and they can be addressed as a policy issue. This report does not reach conclusions or suggest the manner in which the County should proceed in the development of the General Plan. Rather, it provides a framework for future discussion of issues that are of key importance, and opportunities that could help shape future growth.

Please visit the Calaveras County  
Community Development Agency  
website for additional information  
about upcoming workshops and  
recent reports.

[www.co.calaveras.ca.us](http://www.co.calaveras.ca.us)

The major information sources used to compile this report are summarized below. Additional sources are listed in the last section of this report.

**General Plan Baseline Report.** The Public Review Draft General Plan Baseline Report was published February 2008. The Baseline Report provides information on a wide range of topics including land use, public safety, parks and open space, and transportation. The Baseline Report does not contain policy; it is solely intended to provide a foundation or context for making policy decisions. Major findings listed at the beginning of each Baseline Report chapter summarize the key conclusions within each topical area.

**Community Workshop Round #1.** During May and June 2007, the Calaveras County Community Development Agency held seven public workshops to help kick off the GPU. Over 500 people attended workshops in San Andreas, Murphys, Copperopolis, Arnold, Rail Road Flat, Valley Springs, and Jenny Lind. The workshops provided an opportunity for the public to offer their thoughts on what they like and do not like about their communities and the county as a whole, and what issues should be addressed in the GPU process. Following the opening presentations, the participants broke into discussion groups and each group was asked what they thought the top assets and problems are for the county and their community. The overall results from the workshop are shown below. A more detailed workshop summary report is available on the County GPU website.

**1. What are the top three assets in Calaveras County?**

- Natural resources;
- Rural/open space;
- Tourism and recreation (tie #3); and
- History (tie #3).

**2. What are the top three problems in Calaveras County?**

- Planning and leadership;
- Roads and traffic; and
- Economic development.

**3. What are the top three assets in your community?**

- Recreation;
- Rural atmosphere;
- Open space (tie #3); and
- History (tie #3).

**4. What are the top three problems in your community?**

- Roads and traffic;
- Economic development; and
- Public safety.

**Community Workshop Round #2.** During December 2007, the Calaveras County Community Development Agency held a second round of six public workshops; approximately 300 people attended workshops in Arnold, Copperopolis, West Point, Murphys, San Andreas, and Valley Springs. The workshops provided an opportunity for the public to brainstorm guiding principles for the following topic areas: land use, community design, housing, transportation/circulation, economic development, environmental resources, safety and hazards, public facilities and services, and parks and recreation. Sample vision statements and guiding principles from other communities along with the Ahwahnee Principles were handed out, and participants were asked three questions to consider:

- 1. What is your vision for what Calaveras County should be in 10 to 30 years regarding each topic area?**
- 2. What would you like to see improved regarding each topic area? What choices have to be made?**
- 3. What Ahwahnee Principles would you support in each topic area?**

Input from the second round of workshops has been incorporated into this Issues and Opportunities Report and the Working Draft Vision Statement. The Board of Supervisors will be conducting a workshop on the Issues and Opportunities Report and Vision Statement in August 2008.

## **ORGANIZATION AND CONTENTS**

This report discusses issues and opportunities for eight key topic areas. These topic areas are not intended to match the Baseline Report chapters or the proposed Policy Document elements, but instead are based on the key points of discussion in the community workshops. The topic areas are as follows:

- Community planning and open space protection;
- Economic development, opportunities, and markets;
- Infrastructure capacity, financing, and maintenance;
- Transportation and mobility;
- Public health and safety;
- Housing affordability and diversity;
- County government operations; and
- Social infrastructure

Each topic area section begins with a brief description of background information and a summary of the issues identified by participants at the two rounds of community workshops. Each topic area section is subdivided into subsections that discuss specific issues and opportunities. Finally, each topic area section concludes with a list of questions that frame the key policy considerations and choices. The key policy questions will be used to develop and evaluate General Plan alternatives and General Plan goals, policy, and programs.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Building on the information contained in this report, the County and Consultants will begin the General Plan alternatives analysis phase of the GPU. Once a preliminary technical analysis of alternatives has been completed, the County will conduct a third round of community workshops. Input received in the alternatives workshops will build on this Issues and Opportunities Report and the Working Draft Vision Statement, and continue to guide the GPU process. In addition to land use and circulation alternatives, the County will also develop alternative policy approaches to address the key issues and opportunities identified in this report.

## COUNTYWIDE TOPIC AREAS

The Calaveras General Plan Update (GPU) alternatives and policy decisions will be shaped by the major issues and opportunities described in this report. Each topic area section includes issue and opportunity subsections that describe conditions in Calaveras County and summarize input received at community workshops. Key questions listed at the end of each topic area will be addressed in the General Plan alternatives analysis.

### WHAT IS AN ISSUE?

“Issue” is defined as an important condition or problem that needs to be addressed through the GPU process.

### WHAT IS AN OPPORTUNITY?

“Opportunity” is defined as an unique, favorable, or advantageous condition within the county’s planning area that the County can capitalize on through the GPU process.

## TOPIC 1: COMMUNITY PLANNING AND OPEN SPACE PROTECTION

The rural atmosphere, open space, working landscapes, and scenic vistas of Calaveras County are some of the county’s greatest assets. These assets provide a natural resource base for agricultural and forest industries, tourism and recreation, wildlife habitat, watershed storage and water quality protection, and a high quality of life for residents.

Calaveras County’s open space is under significant pressure from development due to market demand and limited protection of open space by the existing General Plan. In many rural counties, weak regulations have allowed a sprawling pattern of land use that disperses houses along rural roads, fragments open space, and creates a nuisance for working landscapes. Rural residential development creates conflicts with farms and ranches by introducing pests such as cats and dogs, restrictions on the use of agricultural chemicals, and complaints regarding noise and dust. While General Plan land use designations and zoning regulate the amount, density, and type of development, other techniques can be employed by the County to protect open space, working landscapes, and scenic vistas, and redirect development pressure. In particular, the GPU can direct growth toward existing communities instead of allowing low density development in open space areas.

This section discusses the relationship between the preservation of open space and community planning. Participants in two rounds of community workshops identified the need for protection of open space and community planning as some of the major challenges facing the county. They identified the need for:

- Protection of rural atmosphere, working landscapes, and scenic highways;
- Preservation of open space by conservation easements;
- Protection of wildlife corridors, heritage oaks and oak woodlands; and
- Buffering open space from development.

Additionally, they identified the following issues for community planning:

- Need for updated and new land use designations;
- Need for smart growth and concentrated development in existing communities to preserve open space;

- Need for protection and enhancement individual community identities;
- Limited community control over local design and land use decisions;
- No plan to accommodate growth;
- Undefined community centers, boundaries, and sense of place;
- Need for design review to ensure historic consistency and unique community character;
- Need for community gathering places and recreation spots (e.g., plazas, town centers, community centers, neighborhood parks, skate parks, swimming pools, senior centers, youth centers, gathering halls, and common areas); and
- Limited County services, facilities, and funding for existing communities.

The existing Calaveras County General Plan (1996) land use designations will be revised in the new GPU. The following issue and opportunity subsections explore how the General Plan can affect patterns of land use and provide additional protection for open space and communities. The first subsection below describes current county land use patterns and how these can be shaped by the GPU. The second subsection discusses the major threats to open space. The third subsection discusses issues that existing communities are facing with services and facilities. The fourth issue section describes opportunities for open space preservation using tools and techniques such as transfer of development rights and conservation easements.

## **ISSUE: COUNTYWIDE LAND USE PATTERNS**

Land use planning in Calaveras County has to take into account a diversity of land uses, ownerships, and development patterns. About one-fifth of county land is owned by State and Federal agencies. In terms of acreage, the General Plan can have the most impact on the two-thirds of county land that is currently classified as “unimproved,” by the County assessor, meaning it is used for ranching, agriculture, forestry, or mining. About half of this is designated for 5- to 20-acre single family residential uses, the majority which is undeveloped but has significant potential for low-density residential development. Currently, residential uses take up only about two percent of the total land area in the county with highest densities located in communities.

The GPU will need to address the conflict between low density rural residential development patterns, preservation of open space, and provision of County services. Rural residential development patterns fragment landscapes and encourage development outside of community centers. It creates small pockets of development that are far from daily services and jobs that burdens the road network with commuting and day-to-day trips to distant destinations. Yet for many residents, this pattern of development is seen as one of the primary assets of a rural lifestyle

If the County promoted infill development or development within the boundaries of existing communities, new development would be able to take advantage of existing water and sewer infrastructure, roads, and centrally-located retail services and schools. Infill development can rejuvenate existing communities while protecting open space.

The GPU will have to take into account existing patterns of development in addition to uses that should be protected. The GPU will have to address conflicting uses, projected growth scenarios, traffic patterns, infrastructure capacity, and the overall vision for the community. Additional considerations include providing sufficient land for industrial and commercial uses, allowing for housing type diversity, not overburdening infrastructure or road capacity, and protecting open space.

The GPU will include an analysis of current land use patterns to assess the degree to which current land use designations are creating sprawling patterns of land use, fragmenting agricultural or forestry land, and discouraging development in community centers. A set of three alternative land use designations will be created that will provide options for how the county land use can develop over the next 25 to 30 years. The County will select a preferred land use alternative based on this analysis, and all land use designations will be updated to reflect the change. Existing community land use designations and plans will need to be updated to reflect the new countywide land use designations.

## **ISSUE: PROTECTION OF OPEN SPACE AND EXISTING LANDSCAPES**

The terms open space, working landscapes, agricultural land, and rural are used interchangeably to describe the character of Calaveras County's ranch land, farmland, and forests. For the purposes of this report "open space" is a broad category that includes: working landscapes (e.g., agriculture, forest, and mining); rural landscapes (e.g., undeveloped or sparsely developed lands); scenic vistas (e.g., scenic highways and oak woodland); natural resource lands (e.g., lakes, rivers, forests, oak woodlands, preserves); and recreational lands (e.g., reservoirs, parks, and trails). Also, in this report the term agricultural land broadly refers to land used to raise crops along with land used for ranching or grazing livestock.

Open space can perform multiple functions and benefits. For example, it can serve as wildlife habitat while buffering development (around communities, industrial areas, or airports) and providing recreational opportunities in the form of trails. The primary for food production but also can provide wildlife habitat, watershed recharge area, local jobs and revenue, and add scenic value (e.g., greenbelts or transition zones). The loss of these benefits has broad implications. For example, the conversion of open space to other uses has hydrological implications because of impacts on the existing watershed and reductions to groundwater recharge rates.

Fragmentation of open space, especially agricultural lands, increases the likelihood of conflicting uses and nuisances. For agricultural operations, conflicts with development can result in restrictions on the use of agricultural chemicals, complaints regarding noise and dust, trespass, vandalism, and damage from domestic animals such as cats and dogs. These conflicts may increase costs to the agricultural operations and combined with rising land values for residential development, encourage the further conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses.

Some Calaveras County agricultural and forestry operations are facing an additional threat. Many of the family farms and ranches in the county are facing a generational change, with some families opting to sell or considering selling their land rather than continuing to farm or ranch upon the death or retirement of the primary owners. When this transition occurs, land can be divided into smaller parcels and converted to other uses, which contributes to fragmentation of agricultural land use patterns and impacts other agricultural operations.

## **ISSUE: COMMUNITY IDENTITY, SERVICES, AND DESIGN**

Communities in Calaveras County are excellent examples of California Gold Rush Era history in the Mother Lode. Each has a unique identity that is defined by its history, landmark buildings, design, or surrounding landscape. Many communities have downtown districts with intact Gold Rush Era architecture, and a distinct historic character. Participants at two rounds of community workshops stated that protecting the existing character and historic resources of these communities was a high priority. They discussed issues with existing policies, regulation, and community plans, that do not afford enough

protection or design review. While the majority of planning concerns can be addressed on the countywide level through the GPU, some concerns are best addressed at the community level.

From the late 1960s through the early 2000s, a series of community plans were developed and adopted to guide the pattern of growth in most of Calaveras County's communities. However, the majority of the community plans pre-date the 1996 General Plan and use land use designations that are different from the countywide General Plan. New community plans are currently (2008) under development within the county.

Many of the communities need additional investment in facilities such as parks and sidewalks; and services such as public transit, water, sewer, and trash collection (discussion of service issues such as provision of water and sewer is covered by in other topic sections in this report). In the first two rounds of workshops participants identified issues with inadequate the protection of community identity and provision of adequate services. Additional needs were identified as follows:

- Parks, playgrounds, and recreational areas;
- Community control over local design and land use decisions;
- Definition of community centers, boundaries, and sense of place;
- Design review to ensure historic consistency and unique community character; and
- Preservation of historic buildings and resources.

One of the major deficiencies within communities is a lack of parks, playgrounds, swimming pools, and similar facilities devoted to active recreation. Calaveras County does not directly maintain a system of park and recreation facilities. The ownership of these facilities is divided among a wide variety of public agencies, such as school districts, and private foundations/clubs. There is a shortage of facilities devoted to active recreation such as playgrounds and ball fields which especially affects children, teens, and persons with disabilities.

Community design, historic resources, and cultural amenities are essential to protecting community character and generating visitors and tourism. The GPU can create policies and implementation programs that can protect community identity, and historic and cultural resources. The GPU can also create policies and implementation programs that encourage new development to locate in well-defined community centers.

Often rural communities are not interested attracting new development to existing centers. However, new development can provide benefits beyond the additional housing or retail space that is constructed. With sufficient guidance from the GPU, new development can also provide community gathering places like plazas, community centers, or parks; and new infrastructure like sewer and water, bike paths, sidewalks, and bus routes.

## **OPPORTUNITY: TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES FOR OPEN SPACE PROTECTION**

Protection of working landscapes, rural landscapes, scenic vistas, natural resource lands, and recreational lands can be accomplished through a wide variety of tools and techniques. General Plan land use designations and development regulations afford a certain degree of protection for open space through regulation of density, land use, and infrastructure investments. Other tools and techniques can also be employed for the preservation of open space such as:

- Partnering with State and Federal agencies to develop habitat conservation plans or other strategies;
- Protecting picturesque highway corridors with State Scenic Highway designations;
- Collaborating with land trusts to identify priorities for protection;
- Developing a land bank that purchases development rights (i.e. conservation easements) from agricultural and forestry lands to protect key parcels;
- Developing a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program; and
- Educating private landowners about the methods by which they can create voluntary conservation easements on lands with significant conservation values, such as wetlands, riparian corridors, and special-status plant and animal species habitats.

A Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program has been suggested as a possible answer to the county's need for open space preservation, protection of property values, and reinvestment in existing communities. TDR programs let property owners move or transfer a development unit (i.e., the right to build one housing unit) from one parcel of land (a sending site) to another parcel (a receiving site) that can accept higher density. For example, if Calaveras County were to set up a TDR program, land that is currently zoned for rural residential uses could be designated a sending area; existing communities could be designated receiving areas. Property owners in the sending areas would be able to transfer development units by selling them for a fair market value to a developer, placing them in a "bank" of other development units, or by reallocating them in a development process. While TDR programs can contribute to the preservation of open space and property rights, they are often difficult to track or administer. Because of this, they are best done at a countywide or regional scale so that adequate supply and demand is ensured.

Many of these tools and techniques can be institutionalized through GPU policy and programs. For example, the General Plan can include policies and programs that promote coordination with State and Federal agencies that manage resources lands. Through a combination of regulation and land conservation techniques the County can protect working and rural landscapes, scenic vistas, and recreation and natural resource lands.

## **KEY POLICY QUESTIONS**

- What is the appropriate minimum parcel size in rural areas that will discourage sprawl and protect open space and working landscapes?
- How can Calaveras County support infill development that offer a small-town, rural atmosphere and lifestyle in existing community centers?
- How can the County protect and preserve historic centers?
- How can the GPU provide sufficient local control over planning decisions?
- How should County retain distinct community identities while stimulating growth and reinvestment in the communities?
- How should the County best provide unique community gathering places and recreation areas?
- How can the County work with farmers, ranchers, non-profit organizations and other partners to preserve agricultural land?

- Should the County consider a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program to protect open space?

## **TOPIC 2: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, OPPORTUNITIES, AND MARKETS**

There is significant opportunity for Calaveras County to diversify its economic base by increasing the number and quality of jobs, promoting small-business growth, and capitalizing on agricultural industries and tourism. While the county has a strong base for economic diversification, there are still significant challenges to overcome, including a high rate of travel out-of-county due to a lack of job opportunities and limited retail options. The GPU will need to provide strategies to increase job opportunities with living wages and to continue to educate the next generation of the workforce.

Participants at the first two rounds of community workshops identified the need to diversify the local economy and provide living wages for residents. They stated that new local industries should include clean and diverse industries (e.g., high-tech, engineering, recycling), cottage industries, light industrial, and other local entrepreneurial endeavors. Participants also stated that wineries, tourism, recreation, and historic preservation should continue to play a strong role in the economy and continue to attract visitors to the county. They stated that the county has limited retail options (i.e., grocery stores, clothing stores, restaurants, dry cleaners, dentists, pharmacies, home stores) for shopping at either local or big-box stores. The following are guiding principles for economic development identified by workshop participants at the second round of workshops:

- Invest in infrastructure like mass transit and communications infrastructure;
- Promote local businesses, especially small local businesses in historic districts;
- Use zoning to control development;
- Use incentives for economic development;
- Ensure adequate revenue streams for County services;
- Focus on workforce development and job creation;
- Set up an economic development department;
- Create a jobs/housing balance;
- Limit the impact of big box retail;
- Ensure living wages for residents;
- Retain the natural resource production chain in the county; and
- Develop agriculture markets including value-added farming and sustainable forestry.

The GPU has started to address these issues and opportunities by gathering additional information at workshops, stakeholder meetings, and through research for the Economic Development chapter of the Baseline Report. Additionally, the development of a comprehensive economic development strategy will support GPU goals, policies, and implementation programs. The following issues and opportunities subsections discuss key factors that contribute to economic diversification. The first subsection discusses the impact of commuting on the local economy. The second subsection describes the problems with limited retail options and how “retail leakage” impacts the local economy. The third subsection discusses issues with workforce training and education. The fourth subsection discusses the role of small

businesses and sole-proprietors in the local economy, and how the County can help strengthening these businesses by fostering regional connections. The fifth subsection discusses opportunities for the tourism industry. The final subsection discusses opportunities for expansion of agricultural and forestry industries.

## **ISSUE: JOBS-HOUSING BALANCE**

The term “jobs-housing balance” refers to the ratio of available jobs to available housing in a community or a region. A low jobs-housing ratio is an indicator of a housing-rich “bedroom community” where many people commute to jobs outside of the community, while a high jobs-housing ratio indicates an employment center that provides jobs for many people who live in other communities.

The idea of balancing jobs and housing extends beyond a simple numerical balance. The jobs in a community also need to be balanced with labor force skills and training, and housing should be available at prices, sizes, types, and locations for workers who desire to live in the area.

In a community with a balanced jobs-housing ratio, residents have the potential to work relatively close to home, while out-commuting and in-commuting will be relatively reduced compared to communities with a jobs-housing imbalance. Even though many residents would still commute out of the area by choice or necessity, overall commute times would be shorter, reducing traffic congestion and transportation-related environmental impacts such as air pollution, and providing an improved quality of life.

Calaveras County has recently experienced large amounts of population and housing growth, but local jobs have not grown at the same pace. While there has been an increase in retirees and second homes in the county, Calaveras communities are also increasingly serving as bedroom communities to residents commuting to jobs outside of the county. The GPU provides an opportunity to implement economic development policies and programs to create and maintain additional quality jobs in the county to provide an improved balance jobs and housing within the county.

Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32) was passed in August 2006. The legislation requires California to reduce its global warming emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2020. Each jurisdiction must do its part to reduce its impacts on global warming. Providing jobs near housing can reduce vehicle miles traveled and decrease the automobile emissions that impact global warming.

## **ISSUE: LIMITED RETAIL AND SERVICE OPTIONS**

Sales tax revenues are an important income source for County operations and services. Taxable sales include transactions from both retail establishments and “other” sales that include business to business sales in services, manufacturing, contracting, or wholesaling. Calaveras County per capita retail sales are significantly less than other San Joaquin Valley counties.

In economic terms, Calaveras County has a large amount of “leakage” of retail sales, or dollars that could be spent at local stores that are being spent at other businesses outside of the county. The leakage is due to a variety of factors, including limited retail options in the county, expenditures by workers who commute out the county, and lack of aggregate income to support certain types of establishments. Retail sales data shows that residents spend money outside of the county at general merchandise stores, eating and drinking places, auto dealers and supplies, and other retail stores. Considering the high percentage of commuters living in the county, it makes sense that residents are shopping at retail locations in areas closer to work.

Participants at community workshops identified limited service and retail options as a problem in Calaveras County and stated that they have to leave the county for a majority of their shopping needs. While many identified a need for more retail stores that sell basic items like groceries, clothing, and home products, there was a general consensus that these should be provided by locally-owned businesses, not national chains or “big-box” stores due to the impact of big box stores and chains stores on local businesses. Many residents felt that existing communities should be centralized hubs for shopping and services, so that residents do not have to travel far to purchase needed items.

## **ISSUE: EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND JOB TRAINING**

Diversifying educational opportunities, job training, and skill development will be increasingly important for Calaveras County as the population ages and residents retire or migrate out of the county. If current population trends in the county continue in terms of growth in older age groups without growth in younger age groups, the size of the labor force will decrease, impacting the quality of jobs and industries available.

Participants at the first two rounds of community workshops identified a need for youth workforce readiness programs and educational alternatives to provide a wider variety of post-secondary educational options for county residents. In particular, the need for additional community college satellite campuses, trade schools, and internship programs was emphasized. Currently, the county has limited opportunities for post-high school education and job skills training. There are no degree-awarding institutions in Calaveras County. The closest institutions are Columbia College in Sonora; Modesto Junior College, Andon College, and University of Honolulu School of Law located in Modesto; San Joaquin Delta College and University of the Pacific in Stockton; and University of Integrated Studies in Tuolumne County. Columbia College has a satellite campus in Angels Camp where students can attend classes and earn credit for an Associates degree or gain job skills.

In order to compete in regional job markets, county residents need more opportunities for further educational attainment and job skills development. If there are not sufficient numbers of younger workers to take the places of older workers who are retiring, workforce shortages can occur, especially in skilled occupations, that will lead to difficulties in attracting and retaining quality industries and jobs.

## **OPPORTUNITY: LOCAL ECONOMY AND SMALL-BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**

Small businesses and sole-entrepreneurs are the mainstay of the Calaveras County economy. About 70 percent of the total jobs in the county are held by self-employed workers (28.2 percent) or small businesses with an average of 5 workers (52 percent). The most prevalent small businesses are in recreation and tourism (e.g., hotels and tour operators) industries, or retail services (e.g., grocery, hardware, and drug stores). The majority of self-employed workers are in construction, real estate services, consumer or personal services, or professional and technical services.

Calaveras County is not a major job center for the region, but some industries are growing. The largest employers in Calaveras County are in government and at corporations like Mark Twain St. Josephs Hospital and Convalescent Center. Smaller industries traditionally found in the county, like manufacturing (i.e., wood products, metal products, and furniture) and mining grew steadily from 2000 to 2005. However, trends in sectors such as construction, architectural and engineering services, computer systems, consulting, research and development, and other professional and technical services grew quickly in recent years, even while industries statewide were losing employment.

Calaveras County could consider a broader market area for its business attraction efforts. Making connections to larger regional markets such as the San Joaquin Valley, Sacramento, and San Francisco Bay Area could benefit local businesses by opening markets for products and services. For example, the county could host manufacturing industries that supply components to larger manufacturing processes in other regions. Also, some northern California businesses might find Calaveras County an attractive location to relocate their operations. Calaveras County offers many benefits such as a rural atmosphere and high quality of life that would be enticing for professionals, and could prompt businesses to relocate or open satellite offices in the county.

The GPU policies and implementation programs can support regional marketing and business attraction efforts as well as small business startups and development. Strategies for expanding small business in the county might include efforts at strengthening tourism and tourism-related industries, and retail services that provide for local residents.

## **OPPORTUNITY: TOURISM AND RECREATION**

Tourism and travel-related businesses play a major role in Calaveras County's economy. Calaveras has many historical and recreational assets, including national forests and State parks, lakes, rivers, caverns, a major ski resort just over the county line in Alpine County, several golf course resorts, the Gold Rush legacy and historic Gold Rush-era towns, wineries, and a growing number of events, music, and other arts and culture-related programs and facilities.

Calaveras County attracts many tourists throughout the year for a number of recreational activities, such as golfing, boating, hiking, spelunking, camping, off-highway driving, and snow sports. In addition, tourists travel to Calaveras County to visit local wineries. Eight reservoirs offer a variety of recreational opportunities such as boating, swimming, fishing, picnicking, camping, rock climbing, and hunting. The county hosts seasonal special events such as the Calaveras County Fair and Frog Jump Jubilee, Murphys Irish Days, Murphys Grape Stomp, and music concerts located at the Ironstone Amphitheater. These include events related to the wine industry and specialty "Calaveras Grown" products.

Tourism is a means of capitalizing on the county's abundant natural resources, agricultural landscapes, and historic character. There are opportunities to expand the tourism base, including developing an agri-tourism industry and attracting more tourists to visit the county's natural resource areas and historic communities. The County can build on these assets by aggressively promoting its natural resources to attract tourists from around the state. As stated in the Economic Development chapter of the Baseline Report, business owners for major tourist destinations in the county have made the following observations:

- The county is becoming more well known as a recreation and tourism destination;
- Visitor trends have continued an upward, including repeat visitors who are staying longer;
- Existing venues are improving with value-added experiences and products;
- Wine and food-related events are increasingly popular;
- There is increasing diversity in the type and age of visitors, with more younger couples in addition to families and older couples;
- Stanislaus and San Joaquin Counties are major markets, as well as the Bay Area, especially the East Bay and South Bay;
- Local tourism by Calaveras County residents is an under-tapped market;

- Tourism and recreation experiences provide a strong draw for many visitors who eventually move to the county, buy a second home, or spend more time in the county, they are an important element of marketing the county.

The level of tourism in the county has economic impacts beyond just the dollars spent by visitors to the area. Visitor spending also impacts tax receipts such as sales taxes and transient occupancy taxes; revenues which can be used for a variety of activities, including improved infrastructure, facilities, and services. Another important benefit of tourism is the awareness created of the county's assets, which has spurred many visitors to return, to invest in second homes, and/or move to the county, bringing additional revenues and resources, including intellectual and business experience assets.

## **OPPORTUNITY: AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES AND WINERIES**

Agriculture is an important economic sector with multiple values, including jobs and revenues, locally grown food products, support for other industries (e.g., tourism), community identity, aesthetics, biological (e.g., species habitat), and hydrology (e.g., watersheds and groundwater recharge areas). Consistent with other rural regions, Calaveras County agricultural operations are in transition due to several factors, including changing demographics; regional population growth; weather conditions; changes in commodities markets; interest in value-added specialty products and services; and linkages with tourism, recreation, and other aspects of the economy. While there are significant threats to the vitality of agricultural operations, there are also significant opportunities for growth and diversification.

A wide variety of agricultural products are grown and produced in Calaveras County that continue to contribute to the rich agricultural tradition of California. Many fruit and nut crops, field crops, vegetable crops, wine, olive oils, nursery crops, livestock and poultry, and timber are part of the Calaveras agricultural industry. Cattle and calves are the county's leading agricultural commodity. Poultry and wine grapes, and timbers are major sectors in county agricultural production, although timber production has been declining in recent years. The growth of the wine industry is rapidly contributing to the transformation of agriculture in the county.

There are opportunities to build upon the forest-based assets of the county in areas such as sustainable forest products, renewable energies, and environmental restoration. The Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions (CHIPS) program was created in 2005 to build on existing job skills of displaced lumber workers, find new markets for natural assets after the closing of eight area lumber mills, address local fire threats. It is a public-private partnership that brings together funding, technical assistance, and resources from diverse agencies including Central Sierra RC&D, USDA Rural Development, USFS, Calaveras County Public Works and Probation Department, Sierra Forest Legacy, Mother Lode Job Training, the California Indian Manpower Consortium, several Tribal Councils, and others.

CHIPS is in its first stages of developing local business solutions that provide chipped wood products from small diameter wood and underbrush on private and public lands. The program is anticipated to develop manufacturing of wood pellets, posts and poles, pressed logs, craftsman woodworking products, and energy generation business opportunities in future phases. The CHIPS program promotes itself as an example of "New Forest Economy" where "ecological, economic, and social issues are combined into a successful outcome for the environment, the community and the economy."

The Calaveras Visitors Bureau is working with the University of California Cooperative Extension Service and other partners to promote agriculture and nature tourism and enhance the "Calaveras GROWN" program. Calaveras GROWN is a countywide marketing and education program to assist local agricultural producers to market their products, to support the growth of agriculture and agri-tourism, and

preserve open space in Calaveras County. Program goals include the development of an expanded demand for locally grown and processed foods, increased agricultural production and profitability, and enhanced community sustainability. To date, promotional materials such as a farm trails map have been developed. A survey is underway to identify every agricultural producer, related business, and supporter (e.g., wineries, markets, and lodging providers) to better organize the market and process.

These efforts, combined with the growing popularity of food and wine related events, wineries, and specialty agricultural farms are a significant opportunity for new natural resource markets and contribute to the reputation of Calaveras County as a tourist destination.

## **KEY POLICY QUESTIONS**

- How can Calaveras County attain a better job-housing balance?
- How should the County expand retail options for local residents without developing big-box stores?
- How should Calaveras County provide opportunities for post-high school job training and higher education opportunities?
- How can Calaveras County establish stronger linkages with other economies in the region such as the Bay Area and Sacramento?
- What is the best strategy for Calaveras County to support small business growth?
- What quality of life features and other incentives can Calaveras County leverage to attract new industries and jobs?
- How should Calaveras County increasingly capitalize on the economic benefits of tourism?
- How can the County strengthen agriculture as a mainstay of the economy?

## **TOPIC 3: INFRASTRUCTURE CAPACITY, FINANCING, AND MAINTENANCE**

Calaveras County's infrastructure is underdeveloped, under funded, and poorly maintained. Participants in the first two rounds of community workshops identified the following infrastructure issues:

- Inadequate infrastructure fees to cover services;
- Need for maintenance of and investment in existing infrastructure;
- De facto moratorium on development due to limited sewer capacity in certain areas;
- Prohibitive restrictions on well-water and septic;
- Need for joint-use of drainage and recreation areas;

Calaveras County infrastructure has been further impacted by new development in areas that have limited capacity and under-financed maintenance backlogs. In areas without water and sewer connections there is the potential for groundwater contamination due to septic systems. Participants at the first two rounds of workshops also identified the following guiding principles for infrastructure:

- Development should fully mitigate all impacts associated with all new developments such as fire, law enforcement, water, wastewater, schools, roads, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities;
- Adequate systems should be in place before plan approved (infrastructure before development);
- New development should connect to the sewer system, not use septic systems;
- Broadband access should be provided throughout the county;
- Natural systems should be used for runoff management and water treatment; and
- Development should not be approved until public facilities fees are in place.

The following issues and opportunities subsections discuss the major challenges with developing and maintaining infrastructure to support residential and commercial uses. The first subsection discusses infrastructure capacity, financing, and maintenance. The second subsection discusses challenges to protecting water quality, supply, and rights. The third subsection discusses telecommunications and opportunities to increase broadband coverage.

### **ISSUE: INFRASTRUCTURE CAPACITY, FINANCING, AND MAINTENANCE**

Calaveras County's wastewater, water and energy infrastructure is owned and operated by water districts, sewer districts, and corporations such as PG&E. Generally, existing wastewater systems in the county are in need of improvement to meet current State standards. Several areas of the county have limited capacity to meet the wastewater needs of future growth. While there are plans for expansion and upgrade of the San Andreas Sanitary District's existing operations, there is limited funding for the project. Consequently, there is a moratorium on new development (except for limited infill) utilizing the San Andreas Sanitary District facilities until needed expansion is completed. Additionally, due to lack of available facilities and capacity, Calaveras County Water District (CCWD) Forest Meadows and Vallecito/Douglas Flat wastewater service areas are under moratorium for new development. The community of Sheep Ranch lacks water capacity for new residential development.

Natural gas and electric services are primarily provided by PG&E. However natural gas connections are only available in the northwestern portion of the county. Additional connections to residential areas south of Valley Springs are provided by Alpine Natural Gas Operating Company. The company was formed to provide service to the subdivision communities along Highway 26, including Gold Creek Estates, that formerly relied on propane tanks for natural gas needs.

## **ISSUE: WATER QUALITY, SUPPLY, AND RIGHTS**

Calaveras County continues to experience localized problems with both water supply and quality. Water quality varies across the county. The county's most significant water quality concerns are sediment, nutrients, pathogens, litter, pesticides and herbicides, and oil and grease. These pollutants have been identified as having the greatest potential to adversely impact receiving water quality within Calaveras County. The quality of the groundwater found throughout the county may be affected by activities that include injection wells, abandoned mines, abandoned wells, underground storage tanks, hazardous waste sites, on-site and failing septic systems, and solid waste sites.

Protection of water quality, water supply, and water rights covers a range of topics including watershed protection, water efficiency and recycling, climate change adaptation, water demand, wastewater infrastructure, and water storage. Participants at community workshops identified the following guiding principles related to water quality, supply and rights:

- Protect regional and county watersheds for groundwater recharge and continued water quality.
- Require water efficiency methods including water conservation, and greywater recycling and reuse. Require greywater for irrigation in new housing developments.
- Balance water demand across watershed boundaries in the county and accommodate future demand for water with efficient patterns of development.
- Protect water rights for future generations.
- Develop more surface water supply and distribution.

Groundwater overdraft, a condition created when extraction by pumping exceeds groundwater recharge rates, has been a long-term, recurring problem in specific areas of the county. Water purveyors currently utilizing groundwater have been encouraged by the State to explore the use of surface water supplies. Of the county's five major water purveyors, two obtain water supplies from groundwater (Wallace Community Services District and Valley Springs Public Utility District). The remaining three obtain water supplies from surface water (Calaveras County Water District, Calaveras Public Utility District, and Union Public Utility District). Currently, there are adequate supplies of water to meet the needs of existing and near future domestic water needs, but there is a lack of infrastructure to deliver it.

Calaveras County has developed a comprehensive program that includes "best management practices" designed to protect water quality and reduce the discharge of pollutants into the county's storm drain systems to the "maximum extent practicable." High priority has been given to the implementation of measures necessary to control soil erosion and sediment discharges from construction sites in high-growth areas of the county. High priority has also been given to the implementation of land use guidelines and design standards for new developments and redevelopment projects.

## **OPPORTUNITY: TELECOMMUNICATIONS CAPACITY**

High speed broadband access is considered to be a foundational 21<sup>st</sup> century infrastructure, as important as the adoption of telephone service was in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Telecommunications capacity is rapidly becoming a fundamental requirement to ensure that rural communities can compete in the global marketplace and provide services and information for businesses, residents, and institutions, including local government. In addition to economic development, high speed broadband is essential for such applications as e-health and telemedicine, education, e-government, and emergency services.

Calaveras County's scattered broadband coverage limits, among other things, the ability of workers to telecommute, businesses to compete with other regions, and emergency and medical services to respond. Participants at the first two rounds of community workshops identified issues with internet connection availability, speed, and cost in addition to limited cell phone service coverage.

Broadband deployment and access to technology is a common economic development issue for rural counties like Calaveras County. The California Governor's Broadband Task Force 2008 report, "The State of Connectivity: Building Innovation through Broadband," identifies underserved areas based on connection speed and availability. In addition, the California Emerging Technology Fund Foundation is conducting a study for Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, Mariposa and Tuolumne Counties to identify gaps and needs, aggregation demand, and options and strategies to expand broadband infrastructure. The results of this study will help these counties negotiate with broadband providers and improve opportunities for broadband access for residents and businesses.

## **KEY POLICY QUESTIONS**

- How should water and wastewater capacity influence growth and land use decisions?
- Does the County need to restructure infrastructure fees to better accommodate services and provide infrastructure?
- What land use patterns will provide the best watershed protection and prevent groundwater overdraft?
- How can the County better encourage the efficient use and re-use of water?
- Should Calaveras County phase out septic systems and require sewer standards for all residential and commercial development?
- Where is it appropriate to allow for private water wells and septic systems?
- How can the County encourage the expansion of telecommunications capacity?

## **TOPIC 4: TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY**

The transportation system in Calaveras County comprises a network of State, regional, county, local, and private roads that are heavily used by commuters, tourists, and trucks. Road care and maintenance is a constant struggle due to limited Federal and State funding for projects; deferred maintenance for rehabilitation; limited transit service; and lack of interregional coordination. Generally, transportation systems in Calaveras County are challenged by increasing local, regional, and interregional traffic; multiple closely-spaced unplanned access points; poorly configured intersections; inadequate funding to expand facilities; and a lack of extensive local road network. Participants in the first two rounds of community workshops identified the following issues related to transportation and mobility:

- Negative traffic and visual impacts from new development on roads;
- Insufficient road maintenance;
- Need for adequate public or private transit for residents, especially seniors and youth;
- Need to invest in infrastructure in existing communities before developing new infrastructure;
- Need for community by-pass roads to relieve congestion in centers;
- Too much traffic congestion on county roads;
- Too many encroachments on highways and need for frontage roads;
- Need for pedestrian facilities (e.g., sidewalks, crosswalks, walking trails) and bikeways (e.g., trails, bike lanes);
- Limited secondary and emergency access; and
- Inadequate community transportation facilities and services (e.g., bus routes, shuttle services).

The following issues and opportunities subsections discuss challenges to transportation and mobility in Calaveras County. The first subsection discusses issues related to traffic congestion and road maintenance. The next two subsections discuss deficiencies in the public transit system and bike and pedestrian facilities. The final section describes opportunities for improvements to the County's airport.

### **ISSUE: TRAFFIC CONGESTION AND ROAD MAINTENANCE**

Traffic congestion on major highways through Calaveras County has been increasing due to commuting, tourism, and heavy truck traffic. With a significant percentage of county residents commuting out of the county to work, the GPU will need to address the congestion, air quality, noise, and road maintenance impacts that are a result of these travel patterns. Further complicating the situation, the County is also attempting to increase the amount of tourism, or in transportation terms, the number of trips into the county by visitors. Truck traffic, a major source of congestion on highways, is a product of industrial, commercial, and agricultural operations. Without an efficient, well-maintained road network that is capable of handling truck traffic, the county economy will suffer. Overall increased traffic is placing a heavy burden on road conditions, and aggravating a backlog of normal maintenance with the additional wear and tear.

Calaveras County's economic vitality relies heavily upon the efficiency of freight transportation to move goods throughout the region. Goods movement, or the transportation of materials within the county, originates from a few main sources: timber harvesting, mineral extraction, waste management, and

agricultural products. Goods movement by truck is popular because of its flexibility and speed. However, trucking has also created serious adverse impacts on the county including:

- Conflicts with recreational vehicle traffic;
- Impeding commuter travel during peak hours;
- Raising safety concerns due to minimal shoulders and passing opportunities ; and
- Requiring additional road maintenance (e.g., paving, stripping, signage).

Truck traffic has a disproportionate effect on road conditions due to the substantial weight and size of the trucks. One fully-loaded truck (80,000 pounds) has a significant impact on a roadway roughly equivalent to the weight/impact of 9,600 cars. Local transportation officials have stated that trucks do not pay their fair share of roadway maintenance for pavement deterioration (e.g., potholes).

Efficient operation of the roadway network is critical to the economic vitality of the county. Beyond the State highway system, Calaveras County has an extensive road network composed of County-maintained roads and private roads that are in need of funding for maintenance. Most County-maintained roads were not originally constructed to current road standards and create impediments to truck movement with narrow lanes and bridges, and a safety concern for other users. The private road system, which includes most subdivision roads, is an important and substantially unregulated, and under-funded, component of the road system. The County requires roads within new development be built to County standards.

Despite establishing a county-wide road impact fee program (2004) to address new development impacts to regional roads in the county, and a fee program for areas with above average growth rates, the County is still unable to adequately fund all of the transportation improvements necessary to accommodate growth. The Calaveras County Regional Transit Plan (RTP) published in 2007 by the Calaveras County Council of Governments (CCOG) identified the following key funding problems for local and regional transportation: limited State budget for local transportation projects; deferred maintenance on local and county roads due to difficulty in obtaining State or Federal funds for local road rehabilitation; difficulty providing high quality transit service in a cost-effective manner with the wide dispersion of the county population; and lack of financial support for interregional service from other counties.

In short, the County is unable to adequately maintain existing transportation facilities with available funding. While the County could require roadway improvements to be in place before the project is constructed, the County must be able to reimburse the developer from local funding programs for the County's fair share in advance. To date, the County cannot require improvements to be in place because it does not have funding available to compensate for existing deficiencies or reimburse developers. This means that there is a continual backlog of improvements on local and regional roads.

## **ISSUE: LIMITED PUBLIC TRANSIT SERVICES**

According to the 2000 Census, 4.9 percent of Americans and 5.3 percent of Californians travel to work on public transit. By comparison, only 0.3 percent of the Calaveras County population (approximately 42 people) used public transit to get to work in 2000. Calaveras County has limited public transit services available for travel between existing communities, within the county or to surrounding destinations. There is no public transit connection to regional transit such as Amtrak.

The Calaveras County Department of Public Works oversees the operation of Calaveras Transit. Calaveras Transit operates five deviated-fixed routes during the week and ten fixed route buses with ADA

service lifts for wheelchair passengers. The County does not provide specialized Paratransit services, but accommodates the existing need through deviated-fixed services.

Few programs currently exist to manage demand in the transportation system. A ride-sharing program exists, but is not as successful as it could be with additional park-and-ride lots and connectivity with public transit. Park-and-ride lots can decrease single-occupant vehicle trips on the road system. Currently, there is only one park-and-ride facility in the county. Numerous locations throughout the county serve as informal park-and-ride lots, which demonstrates the need for additional facilities.

### **ISSUE: LIMITED BIKE AND PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES**

The draft Calaveras County Bikeway Master Plan (2007) states that there is great potential to increase the number of people who cycle to work or school because of the small size of communities, moderate density surrounding downtowns, a favorable climate for year-round cycling, and a culture that values fitness, outdoors, and nature.

During the first two rounds of community workshops, residents expressed the need for the expansion of existing bike and pedestrian trails and new trails that connect major destinations. Existing Calaveras County bikeway facilities consist of an incomplete system of just over 4.1 miles of bikeways, including about 1 mile of Class I multi-use pathway, 0.12 miles of Class II bicycle lanes, and approximately 3 miles of Class III signed bicycle routes. The existing facilities in Calaveras County are not continuous and do not provide direct access to most major destinations. Communities have varying ranges of pedestrian facilities, from sidewalks in walkable denser historic centers to single crosswalks near schools.

Currently, bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the county are few and poorly connected. CCOG developed the Bikeway Master Plan) to improve bicycling conditions in Calaveras County communities. The plan promotes access to popular destinations countywide and sets design standards to ensure consistency. The Plan proposes a countywide bike trail system and outlines specific improvements for San Andreas, Angels Camp, Arnold, Murphys, Valley Springs, Copperopolis, and West Point. The plan is a first step to secure funding for implementation and ultimately construction of a countywide bike system.

### **OPPORTUNITY: MAURY RASMUSSEN FIELD AIRPORT**

The Calaveras County Maury Rasmussen Field Airport, the county's only public airport, is located off SR 49, four miles southeast of San Andreas. The airport is classified as a General Aviation Airport. The facility can currently accommodate single-engine and twin-engine aircraft, small business jets and helicopters. The airport plays an important role in the event of emergencies such as forest fires, flood, or medical rescue. It is available for emergency evacuations. The airport is used by tourists, businesses, seasonal residents, and commuters who live in Calaveras County and work elsewhere. It contributes to the county economy and could potentially be expanded to serve larger aircraft. The closest international airport is located in Sacramento, roughly 70 miles away.

Since the airport is located on a ridge and surrounded by private property, airport staff have found it difficult to acquire additional land to expand the runway. There is also a need to protect land currently owned by the airport for future improvement projects. If the County wishes to expand the runway to greater than 4,000 feet to accommodate larger aircraft, that action would place Maury Rasmussen Field in a different airport class level. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) would then require additional modifications to the airport such as a wider runway, more space between the runway and the taxiway, and a wider taxiway.

The RTP (2007) identified capital improvements for the Airport including projects that expand the runway an additional 400 feet, add hangar space, improve existing taxiways and ramps, and remodel the administrative building. Estimated airport capital improvement costs total \$2.7 million over a 20-year period (2006-2026). These improvements were first identified in the Calaveras County Airport Land Use Special Plan (1992).

**KEY POLICY QUESTIONS**

- How can the County mitigate the effects industries that generate significant amounts of truck traffic but provide significant economic benefit (i.e., timber, agricultural, mineral extraction)?
- How can the County restructure its transportation fee program to adequately maintain existing transportation facilities and to adequately fund the transportation improvements necessary to accommodate growth?
- Should the County expand its transit services and transportation demand programs?
- What public transportation programs should the County prioritize (i.e., a broader transit schedule, more transit routes, more park and ride lots, etc.)?
- How can the County fund bike and pedestrian improvement projects?
- How can the County better capitalize on the economic development opportunities of the airport?

## **TOPIC 5: PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY**

While a rural lifestyle is one of Calaveras County's primary assets, there are challenges that it presents for emergency responders, fire departments, and police departments. Low density development increases response times and the likelihood of injury, death, and property damage from wildfires. Participants in the first two rounds of community workshops identified law enforcement, fire, and other emergency response times and capacity as a significant issue facing Calaveras County. They stated that while Calaveras County needs to prepare for local emergencies, it should also plan to act as a refuge for surrounding counties in the case of a regional or statewide emergency. Workshop participants requested that that evacuation routes be identified through the GPU process. The following lists describe the main issues that were identified for medical services and emergency response, fire, and police:

### ***Medical Services/Emergency Response***

- Need to improve response time (to 7-10 minutes) and services;
- Need to match services with population/infrastructure;
- Need for additional services for outlying and rural areas;
- Inadequate medical facilities (e.g., maternity ward);
- Need for new development to pay for facilities/services;
- Inadequate secondary and emergency access and evacuation routes (into and out of the county)

### ***Fire***

- Need for enhanced fire protection, enforcement, and safety;
- Unenforced building and fire codes (no penalties);
- Need for fire safety education for communities;
- Inadequate staffing;
- Insufficient on-site water storage in rural areas;
- Need for a county-wide fire plan that addresses standardizing policies and consolidating departments; and
- Insufficient brush control/timber harvesting for fire safety.

### ***Police***

- Insufficient law enforcement recruitment and capacity;
- Need for tougher enforcement for drug/alcohol abuse;
- Increase in crime;
- Inadequate pay to keep local officers; and
- Need for additional facilities.

The first issues subsection describes challenges to increase emergency response times and capacity in police and fire departments. The second subsection discusses flooding and fire safety in the County. The final section discusses Calaveras County air quality and emissions.

### **ISSUE: EMERGENCY RESPONSE TIMES AND CAPACITY**

Rural or low density development strains limited police, fire, and emergency services by dispersing development and population throughout the county, which increases travel and response times. In addition, there are many areas in the county that have limited cell phone service, which further hinders emergency responders.

For many areas of the county, fire departments are the only source for emergency response, although American Legion Ambulance Services serves parts of Calaveras County. Each of the eleven fire districts in Calaveras County are dependent on volunteer fire fighters for either partial or full staffing of fire fighting and emergency response operations. Volunteer fire fighters are fully-trained professionals, equal in skill to a paid employee, but departments find that it is difficult to maintain experienced volunteer responders due to all of the mandated training requirements and the hours of commitment required away from families and paying jobs. In a department that has mostly volunteers, calls can go un-responded because volunteers are employed at jobs with long commutes.

Emergency medical services are available at Mark Twain St. Joseph's Hospital (MTSJH) located in San Andreas and at Sonora Regional Medical Center clinics. MTSJH is the major medical center in Calaveras County and has on-site services that include: 24-hr ER physicians, birthing unit, cardiac and pulmonary unit, full service clinical lab and diagnostic imaging, inpatient/outpatient surgery, intensive care unit, nurse call center, physical therapy services, and respiratory therapy services.

The Sherriff's Office has had difficulty recruiting and retaining police officers due to low salary levels. A study to identify department needs was undertaken in 2007 and will be available for inclusion in the GPU. The GPU policies and implementation programs will address the funding and staffing challenges for fire and police departments, and how response time and capacity can be maximized.

### **ISSUE: FLOODING AND FIRE SAFETY**

Throughout California, communities are increasingly concerned about fire safety as residential development increases in foothill and mountain areas, and fire control measures have affected natural fire cycles. Calaveras County has urban and wildland fire hazards, both of which create the potential for injury, loss of life, and property damage. Such fires can result from either human-made or natural causes. According to the California Department of Forestry and Fire, in 2004 about half of the county was classified as Very High fire threat and another third was classified as High fire threat.

The county also has significant threats from flooding, particularly in areas downstream of larger reservoirs and areas immediately adjacent to Camanche Reservoir, New Hogan Lake, New Melones Reservoir.

Participants in community workshops identified specific concerns related to flooding and fire safety. They said that development should be designed for maximum fire protection and developers should be required to pay proportional share of improvements needed for fire protection. Likewise, they stated that land use regulations and zoning should prohibit or restrict development in floodplains and other natural hazard areas.

In nearly all fire districts, a lack of adequate funding and current growth within the district is outpacing fire district capacity. Fire protection services in the county are funded from a variety of sources depending on the district. Much of the funding is obtained from fees that are collected with property taxes on a per-parcel basis, but some districts obtain funding through service charges and development impact fees. Additional challenges to meet the current fire fighting and emergency services demand include: inadequate water and fire flow from non-hydranted areas; inadequate infrastructure to support large developments that require sprinklers and other fire safety measures; increased fuel-loading due to build-up of brush; unreliable cell phone service; training for volunteer responders; and availability of volunteer firefighters.

The GPU policies and implementation programs will address fire and flood safety to ensure adequate protection for Calaveras County residents.

## **ISSUE: AIR QUALITY**

There are six categories of criteria pollutants that are measured in Federal and State standards: particulate matter (i.e., PM10 or PM2.5), ozone (O3), sulfur dioxide (SO2), carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen dioxide (NO2), and lead. From 2004 to 2006 Calaveras County exceeded the Federal and State Standard for ozone but was in compliance for the other criteria pollutants.

A significant portion of poor air quality is transported into Calaveras County from the Central Valley, but increasing levels of pollutants are produced locally by county growth. Emissions from automobiles, confined animal facilities, on- and off-road vehicles, and industrial activities in Calaveras County are the main sources of air pollution. In particular, emissions from trucks have an adverse affect on air quality, due to the use of diesel fuel which releases more emissions in some categories (e.g., particulate matter) than regular unleaded gasoline. A larger population traveling more miles per year, congestion, increased construction and grading activity, and heavier truck traffic all contribute to poor regional air quality.

Given the existing air quality conditions in Calaveras County, new development will be required to comply with various complex air quality permits and regulations and required to reduce air pollutant emissions. Since the regulations can serve as an impediment to economic growth, the County must identify ways to meet State and Federal standards.

One of the purposes of air quality standards is to protect sensitive populations and sensitive land uses from the adverse health effects of air pollution. Commonly identified sensitive population groups include children, elderly, acutely ill, and chronically ill. Commonly identified sensitive land uses include residences, schools, playgrounds, childcare centers, retirement homes or convalescent homes, hospitals and clinics. The GPU land use designations regulate the proximity of sensitive populations and land uses to large emitters.

In 2006, the California legislature enacted Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32), the California Global Warming Solutions Act. They stated that “global warming poses a serious threat to the economic well-being, public health, natural resources, and the environment of California.” The California Air Resources Board (CARB) will be developing the regulatory framework for implementing AB 32, which will provide both challenges and opportunities to reduce emissions. Once greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions standards are developed by CARB, the Calaveras County will work with State agencies to meet the new emissions standards. Gaining efficiencies in energy consumption and improved air quality will have a beneficial impact on households, businesses and the public sector and will contribute to Calaveras County’s reputation as a desirable location for residents and businesses.

**KEY POLICY QUESTIONS**

- What land use patterns should the County encourage to improve emergency response times?
- How can the County increase revenue to fund additional law enforcement and emergency services facilities, personnel, and services?
- Are changes to County development standards necessary to decrease the risk from natural hazards such as wildfires and flooding?
- What land use and transportation options have the best potential to improve air quality?

## **TOPIC 6: HOUSING AFFORDABILITY AND DIVERSITY**

Calaveras County adopted its current Housing Element in 2005. The Housing Element must be updated by 2009, but is not scheduled to be updated as a part of the GPU. However, the Land Use Element of the General Plan affects certain aspects of housing affordability and diversity, mainly through land use designations that promote efficient development patterns. The first two rounds of community workshops identified the availability of affordable housing as major issue for the GPU. Participants in the second round of community workshops identified the following guiding principle for the county:

- Ensure a diverse housing stock that is affordable to all incomes levels (e.g., inclusionary housing);
- Encourage non-profit agencies to develop housing stock (e.g., Habitat-for-Humanity);
- Promote sustainable and/or green housing design and construction;
- Limit the size of housing developments to be consistent with community character; and
- Encourage clustering of multifamily development in community centers.

This section discusses the challenges the County faces with facilitating housing development to accommodate all income levels, ages, and needs. The first subsection addresses challenges associated with development of workforce housing and housing diversity. The second subsection discusses availability of affordable housing for seniors. The third subsection describes the issues and benefits of new master planned developments.

### **ISSUE: WORKFORCE HOUSING AFFORDABILITY AND DIVERSITY**

The 2008 median household income for a family of three in Calaveras County is \$55,300. This is below the income needed to purchase a median-priced house without causing overpayment for housing. While this provides an indication of housing affordability issues, this data does not give a complete picture of the dynamics of the local housing market because of the ranges of value for existing housing stock, new vacation or second home construction, and golf course community developments. Many house buyers in 2008 reside outside the county, and presumably have higher incomes. It is a possible that with the continued slow down in the state and regional housing markets, median housing prices might be more affordable for Calaveras County households.

In Calaveras County the housing market has produced few affordable units and an over-supply of single-family units, many of which are currently priced above the median income for the county. External factors such as the regional housing market, bank and loan practices, and commuting patterns have affected the availability and affordability of units in the county. According to the 2005 Housing Element, the expansion of capacity for wastewater facilities sufficient to serve development is one of the primary deterrents to the development of housing for all income levels.

Housing diversity refers to the provision of a wide range of housing types for all income brackets. This includes the availability of studios, live-work units, apartments, duplexes, townhouses, and single-family homes. Currently, single-family housing constitutes the majority of residential development in the county. The county has a very limited supply of medium- and high-density residential housing. As of January 2008, Calaveras County had 651 multifamily units, 2,580 mobile homes, and 22,760 single family units. As of 2007, only 396 of the 662,791 total acres in the unincorporated county were designated for medium-density and high-density residential uses.

Housing construction has been a major economic and employment sector in Calaveras County, and has been driven by population growth, the demand for second home and recreational housing, and the affordability of the Calaveras County compared to the Bay Area. Calaveras County has recently experienced high levels of residential construction with more than twice the number of building permits issued from 2000 to 2007 than in Amador County and in Tuolumne County. In all three counties, the majority of building permits were for single family houses which is typical for rural counties.

The Housing Affordability Fund (HAF) was created by the Calaveras County Association of Realtors in order to provide assistance to qualified local work force residents that do not qualify for low income assistance but need limited assistance with homeowner loans. The HAF was started with private donations and will continue to be funded by voluntary donations from Realtor commissions. The Calaveras County Association of Realtors formed a Housing Affordability Committee to administer the program so that all funds and services donated can go directly towards home buyer assistance.

As the County plans for the next 25 to 30 years it will be important to analyze how land use patterns, demographics, and employment affect the availability and diversity of housing stock.

### **ISSUE: SENIOR HOUSING**

Since 1990, the average age of Calaveras County residents has increased due to both the aging of the Baby Boomer population and an in-migration of retirees. Changing demographic patterns impact the demand for housing and services. Communities with the oldest residents (i.e., Forest Meadows, Dorrington, and Arnold) will have a different need for senior care services than communities with the youngest residents (i.e., Valley Springs, Rancho Calaveras, Angels Camp, and San Andreas). As a population ages, requirements such as transportation, educational facilities, housing, parks and recreation, business services, and health and medical services change.

Calaveras County has opportunities to expand existing senior services and provide additional senior housing in new senior residential communities. The Area 12 Agency on Aging is a five-county (Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, Mariposa, and Tuolumne) joint powers agency that provides funds to community senior service providers in order to ensure opportunities for independence and a high quality of life for residents aged 60 years and older. In Calaveras County, the Agency on Aging 12 provides funding for:

- Mother Lode Seniors, a senior center in San Andreas ;
- Altaville Apartments and Bear Mountain Apartments, senior housing in Altaville;
- Mark Twain Convalescent Hospital in San Andreas;
- Murphys Senior Apartments, senior housing in Murphys;
- Diamond Place Apartments, Pioneer Apartments and San Andreas Apartments, senior housing in San Andreas;
- Sierra Meadows Apartments, senior housing in Arnold;
- Sunrise Country Manor, senior housing in Valley Springs;
- Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program, a company that provides health insurance counseling at the San Andreas Senior Center; and
- Common Ground Senior Services, a company that provides congregate meals in Arnold and Burson; home delivered meals in Angels Camp, Murphys, and San Andreas; restaurant meals in Angels Camp, Valley Springs, and West Point.

Infill development can provide senior residential units that are: affordable due to lower costs associated with infill; within walking distance or a bus ride to services like grocery stores; close to medical centers and emergency responders; and near community centers, schools, parks, and libraries where seniors can participate in the community. The GPU policies and implementation programs can address how to provide adequate housing options for aging residents.

## **OPPORTUNITY: RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS**

This section describes some of the new developments that affect the local housing market. Priced above what is generally affordable for workers in the county, these developments drive up the median housing price and property values. Depending on whether the units are for seasonal use (i.e., vacation homes or second homes) or year-round, residential occupation affects traffic patterns and local businesses. Participants at the first two rounds of community workshops discussed concerns with how these new developments impact existing community character, and whether they are overburdening the County departments' capacity to provide services like water and sewer.

There are advantages to having master planned communities over haphazard development in rural areas. The County has more control over density, design, infrastructure, and impacts on the road network. The influx of seasonal residents has the potential to positively impact the local economy with new dollars spent at local stores, or local tourist destinations.

A development like Copperopolis Town Center could increase the quality of retail options in Calaveras County. This is a mixed-use retail project that will include boutique shops, restaurants, galleries, regional businesses, financial businesses, a specialty grocery store, an inn, a medical building and, residential lofts above retail shops. This development will benefit the nearby Saddle Creek residential and golf course community that was constructed by the same developers. Also, Oak Canyon Ranch, located just north of Saddle Creek, is envisioned to become "one of the first exclusive residential-resort-golf course-conference center communities in the Central Sierra Nevada," catering to "the newly evolving market of visitors and residents with high disposable incomes."

A new senior residential community, Foothill Village Lodge & Inn, located in Stelte Park, Angels Camp offers both independent and assisted living units for active retirement. This project, the first of its kind in Calaveras County, has positively affected the local economy, with approximately 90 percent of project funds channeled to local businesses for construction and approximately 38 to 50 new positions that will be available when the facilities open. Active retirement developments like Foothill Village Lodge & Inn, might be considered for other communities in Calaveras County because of the quality of senior housing and services that they provide.

The GPU policies and implementation programs can impact how new development addresses issues related to community design, land use designations, traffic and circulation, public facilities and services, and site and resource management.

## **KEY POLICY QUESTIONS**

- Should the County encourage the development of more multifamily and higher-density housing in order to provide affordable and diverse housing choices?
- How can the County promote affordable senior residential developments within existing community centers?

- Should the County encourage master planned communities and/or resort developments to locate in Calaveras County?

## **TOPIC 7: COUNTY GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS**

Participants at the community workshops identified a wide range of issues and opportunities that they believe are hindering the effectiveness of County government. A consistent concern was that the County government does not have sufficient resources (i.e., staffing, facilities, and funding) to meet the demands of county residents. Aging facilities and overlapping service districts have created institutional inefficiencies that require either consolidation or reorganization. Staffing resources have been limited in the past by budget constraints and retention of personnel, especially for police and fire departments. Funding is a limitation for all County departments, including police, fire, transportation, and planning.

Increasingly, local governments are turning to more innovative techniques such as partnerships with private organizations, non-profits, and corporations, and e-government (i.e., online administration services) in order to provide services in a more efficient manner. Calaveras County currently partners with other jurisdictions and government agencies where programs or mission statements overlap. For example, the City of Angels City Council and Calaveras County Board of Supervisors have recently (March 2008) begun to hold joint meetings to discuss major issues like economic development. These joint meetings will facilitate collaboration on county-wide issues and encourage comprehensive decision-making.

### **ISSUE: COUNTY GOVERNMENT RESOURCES AND FUNDING**

Funding shortfalls, now complicated by statewide budget cuts, have been historically a result of low sales tax and Transit Occupancy Tax (TOT) (i.e., hotel tax) revenues. Many critics point to low impacts fees for new developments that do not offset the full costs associated with constructing and maintaining new infrastructure.

In May 2008 the County Board of Supervisors voted to raise fees for all County planning services to match the actual cost of providing those services. When builders and developers submit applications or require administrative services they should be paying for the staff time required to process applications. The County is currently expending \$3.23 million on user fee services, while it recovers only \$1.61 million. If the County has the same level of service activity as it has in the past, then the County would realize annual revenue increase of approximately \$1.62 million.

Critics of the user fee increases state that staff costs are high due to inefficiency. Developers cite a backlog of development applications as evidence that planning and building departments could be working more effectively. The GPU policies and implementation programs will not directly address user fee structures or staffing.

### **KEY POLICY QUESTIONS**

- How can the County ensure that it is adequately funding services?

## **TOPIC 8: SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

Social infrastructure can be defined as the range of activities, organizations, and facilities that develop and maintain services that care for special populations (i.e., children, seniors, persons with disabilities) and contribute to community cohesion. Not planning for adequate social infrastructure or providing the necessary services for populations like children and seniors is detrimental to the social fabric of the community. Much of this work in Calaveras County is being done by partnerships, collaborations, committees, and non-profit organizations that are dependent on grant funding and government sponsorship. And while the county is fortunate to have a contingent of dedicated volunteers their collective availability is limited.

The GPU can impact the availability and location of sites to support child care centers, youth centers, senior centers, senior housing developments/assisted living facilities, and community centers. These uses must be cited in a convenient, safe location near major commuting areas, work, home, school or grocery store.

### **ISSUE: CHILDCARE**

Participants at the first two rounds of community workshops identified a lack of childcare services as a major issue for the county. A study conducted in 2003 by two non-profit coalitions, Our Children, Our Community, and Calaveras First 5 identified the major concerns for the children (ages 0 to 18) in Calaveras County as: lack of educational/care facilities; lack of opportunities and relationships; use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs; lack of access and availability of medical, dental, and mental health providers and facilities. The highest priority concern for children ages 0 to 5 is lack of facilities and supervised activities (i.e., child care centers).

Several social-service organizations are actively addressing these concerns, and many of their efforts are being coordinated by two non-profit coalitions, Our Children, Our Community and Calaveras First 5. In 2003 they developed a 10-year Master Plan for children and youth in Calaveras County to organize social service organizations and outline goals and strategies to strengthen communities and support services. The 10-year Plan is used by a wide range of groups, including public and private agencies, business and government leaders, planning groups and others engaged in implementing the strategies.

Many social service organizations in Calaveras County are dependent on State funding to maintain programs that provide education, health care, and nutrition for children, parents, and close family members. Calaveras First 5 is one of the primary sources of funding in the county. They grant local and State funds on an annual basis to support other early-care programs. The Calaveras First 5 funds support for programs that protect children from harmful exposure to tobacco, drugs, or alcohol in addition to providing pre-natal care for expecting mothers. Calaveras First 5 Calaveras, located in San Andreas, also has regularly scheduled playgroups and pre-natal socialization groups.

The Our Children, Our Community coordinating council on February 27, 2007, recommended that the Calaveras General Plan Update include language from the 10-year Master Plan concerning child care facilities and community development standards.

### **KEY POLICY QUESTIONS**

- How can the County facilitate the efforts of social service organizations?

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