



www.MyValleySprings.com

email: info@myvalleysprings.com

P.O. Box 1501

Valley Springs, CA 95252

For Immediate Release

July 7, 2008

Valley Springs. On June 26, Colleen Hiner, a graduate student intern from the University of California, Davis, presented her Valley Springs Community Planning Baseline Report to area residents at a meeting of the Greater Valley Springs Advisory Group (GVSAG). The report is the culmination of six months of research and concludes, “If both the County and the community remain committed to the inclusive and democratic processes that have occurred thus far, both should emerge better off from the project of community planning in Valley Springs.” The report may be accessed at www.myvalleysprings.com.

Hiner’s work was funded through the U. C. Davis California Communities Program, and she did her community-based research at the invitation of MyValleySprings.com (MVS.com). Hiner worked under the supervision of the local U. C. Agricultural Extension Office. Her report “describes the transition from initial community efforts to update the existing Community Plan in Valley Springs to instead crafting a broadly based Vision in response to County government encouragement.” The report documents the call to action from MVS.com, which resulted in the creation of the GVSAG and the crafting of a vision for the future of Valley Springs. The Vision will “provide the basis for community-specific language to be included in the new Calaveras County General Plan.”

The report also documents that the GVSAG has made a “concerted and continued effort to be inclusive” and to avoid the impression that “personal interests” are “driving the process.” Although the GVSAG is not officially sanctioned by the county, Hiner notes “they do have the legitimacy and weight of countless hours of outreach and public discussion around issues of local import,” which the report asserts is “insight the County is happy to discover,” even though “the timeline and proposed structure for the County-initiated Community Planning is still undetermined.”

According to Joyce Techel, MVS.com President, “MyValleySprings.com is very pleased with Colleen Hiner’s work. Her report provides excellent documentation of the ongoing citizen effort in Valley Springs to plan a better community.” However, Techel said there was some disappointment, because the report is not the document MVS.com originally anticipated. “When we first talked about working with an intern, it was to compile a Baseline *Data* Report,” Techel said. “Unfortunately, Colleen was unable to access the information necessary to report on baseline data and, so, had to shift her focus.”

As the report itself states, “The original intent of the Baseline Report included the compilation of data specific to Valley Springs such as community plan, land use and zoning documents and maps, seeking information about developed land, the community plan study area, water/sewer availability, Level of Service (LOS) for roads and highways, planned road projects, current and future land developments, etc. The purpose of this work was to also identify data

gaps.” Unfortunately, “the scope of the work changed as it became clear that much of this data, while theoretically available, was either outdated, difficult to access, or both. Direct attempts to collect public information including developed and approved-for-development land and parcels transitioning out of the Williamson Act status failed due to incomplete county records and an apparent lack of attention to the requests” for information. Hiner concluded, “it is clear data collection and compilation by the County and other entities should be a high priority.” MVS.com is in the process of making an official public records request to obtain current information on developed and approved-for-development parcels in the greater Valley Springs study area.

Hiner’s report offers several recommendations: increase and clarify communication between the County and the community; foster a unified sense of community in the Valley Springs area; maintain and improve the quality of life for current residents concurrently with planning for a pleasant and viable future; provide for the production and dissemination of adequate, up-to-date planning information; include, at minimum, community specific language for Valley Springs in the General Plan to demonstrate County valuation of community planning efforts; and encourage inclusive community participation by continuing existing—and developing new—outreach strategies.

The Valley Springs Community Baseline Report fulfilled its purpose, which was “to document current progress on community planning in Valley Springs while identifying productive pathways for expressing community voices and preferences within the County’s planning processes.” MyValleySprings.com wishes to thank the University of California, Davis and their California Communities Program; faculty sponsor, Dave Campbell, Department of Human and Community Development; Ken Churches, Director, Calaveras County Cooperative Extension; and, of course, Colleen Hiner.