

Valley Springs Community Design Workshop

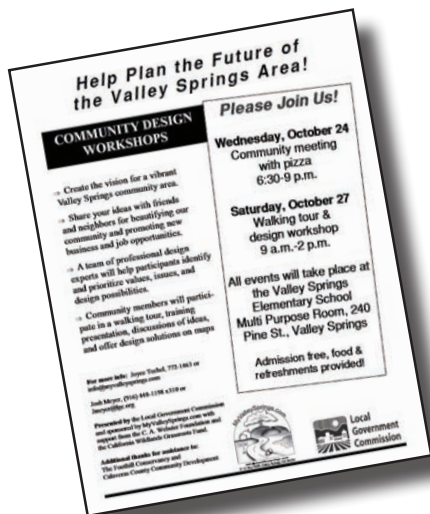
Summary of Results

Introduction

This report summarizes the process and results of a two-part community design workshop for Valley Springs, an unincorporated community of approximately 2,600 residents in Calaveras County. The workshop took place Wednesday, October 24 and Saturday, October 27, 2007. The purpose was to bring together residents and other stakeholders from the greater Valley Springs area to initiate discussion toward a common vision for the future of the community. It is hoped that this report can help inform the update of the Valley Springs Community Plan and the County General Plan.

This project was made possible through funding received by MyValleySprings.com (MVS), a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting responsible growth and development through public participation in community planning in order to preserve the quality of rural life in the greater Valley Springs area. The project sponsors included the C.A. Webster Foundation and the California Wildlands Grassroots Fund of Tides Foundation. The Foothill Conservancy and the Northern California Environmental Grassroots Fund provided additional support.

MVS retained the Local Government Commission (LGC) to assist with the project. The LGC is a Sacramento-based nonprofit organization dedicated to helping local governments and their constituents build livable, resource-efficient communities. MVS publicized and hosted the workshop. LGC facilitated the workshop and produced this report.

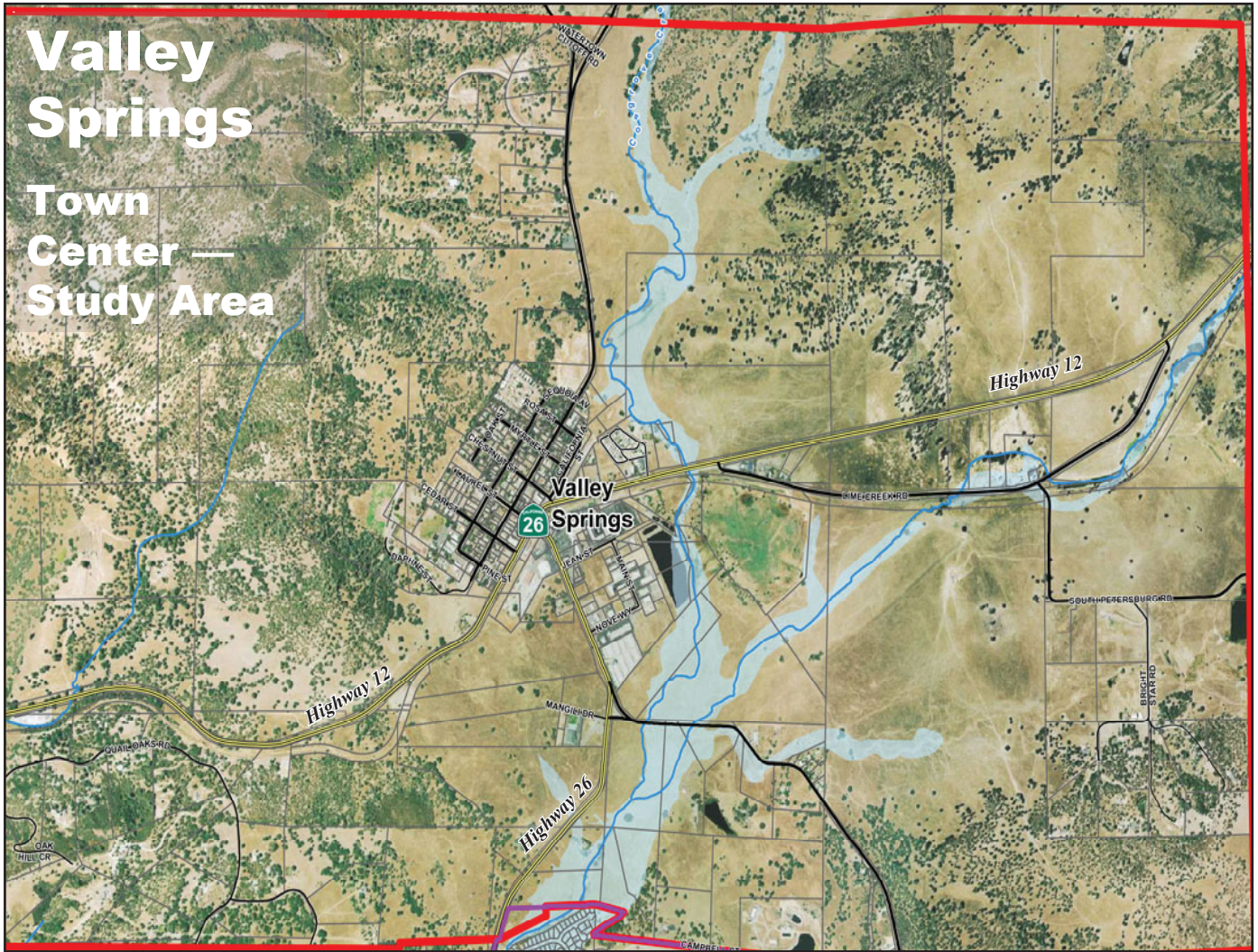


Project Area

For purposes of the workshop, the greater Valley Springs subject area boundaries were Toyon/ Highway 26 to the east, the Paloma Community boundary to the north, Rancho Calaveras/Hogan Reservoir to the south, and Burson Road to the west (see map on next page).

Valley Springs is located in the Sierra foothills at the junction of California State Route 12 and Route 26 in the northwest corner of Calaveras County. The town was originally platted in the late nineteenth century on an eighteen-block grid network of streets.





The town block structure is still intact, with residential neighborhoods located between Highway 12 and the base of steep terrain to the northwest.

Highway 12 runs generally east-west, serving as the town main street, and is intersected by Highway 26, which runs in a southwesterly direction. Smaller stores, restaurants, and services line Highway 12, with the majority located on the north side of the road. Newer, larger format commercial development (including a shopping center) is located on the south and east sides of the Highway 12/26 junction.

Newer residential development in the Gold Creek Estates, La Contenta and Rancho Calaveras areas is located south of the historic town center and east of Highway 26. While these neighborhoods are

not within the old Valley Springs Community Plan boundary, residents of these areas consider them a part of the Valley Springs community.



While 2000 census data reports 2,600 residents in Valley Springs, the greater Valley Springs area encompasses a much larger population.



Valley Spring's natural features, rural character and proximity to recreational destinations have spurred interest in new development to serve visitors, seasonal residents, tourists and retirees drawn to these amenities. Open grasslands, oak trees and rolling hills predominate the landscape. The New Hogan and Pardee reservoir recreation areas are both located within 5 miles of the town center. Highway 12 carries travelers through town eastward en route to mountain destinations. Valley Springs is also located 35 miles from Lodi and Stockton, driving interest in new housing construction for residents within commuting distance of these urban centers.

The demand for new housing and local retail and services presents an opportunity to breathe new life into the old urban core. Revitalization of the town center and carefully planned new neighborhoods can support the creation of more affordable housing opportunities, the creation of newer and higher paying jobs, and the ability to meet more daily needs locally, including health care and education.

At the same time, recent growth in Valley Springs has caused strain on public infrastructure (e.g., congested roadways and inadequate water and sewer systems). Other challenges related to growth now and in the future include encroachment on agricultural land, scenic views and the natural environment, as well as loss of open space, pollution, flooding and flood control, changing community character, loss of sense of place, and competition for traditional, small business from large chain stores.

Left, top two images: rural open space and water features help define the community character; bottom two images: a new shopping center is proposed; congestion at the intersection of Highway 12 and 26.

Community Design Workshop

In coordination with MyValleySprings.com, the LGC organized the public design workshop to help the community consider strategies to accommodate new growth in the area. The two-part workshop engaged participants in a variety of activities to elicit hopes and concerns, draw out ideas about possible solutions, and foster collaborative development of a community vision.

MVS conducted community outreach in advance of the workshop. Over 5,000 flyers were distributed at local businesses, handed out in person at the shopping center and sent home with elementary school students. Email invitations were sent to MVS registrants (275 people) and separate ones to elected officials, agency officials and community service organizations. Press releases appeared in *Valley Springs News*, the *Calaveras Enterprise* and the *Record*. Advertisements were also placed in *Valley Springs News*.

The two-part workshop took place Wednesday, October 24 and Saturday, October 27, 2007 at Valley Springs Elementary School. The event kicked off with a Wednesday night town meeting, and continued with a community walk audit, training and collaborative design tables on Saturday.

Wednesday evening, approximately 75 people viewed a presentation that showed existing physical conditions, assets and challenges, and potential solutions used in other communities. Paul Zykofsky of the Local Government Commission explained the principles involved in creating walkable, livable places using images to illustrate his points. They also participated in activities to identify common values held in the community and to determine priorities to address at the Saturday workshop and other planning efforts.

Top values included:

- Family, friends, neighbors, community
- Open space



Above: evening workshop participants place dots on map indicating where they live; Middle: participants view presentation on possibilities for their community; Bottom: people group like values together on wall.



- Rural character/lifestyle
- Peace and quiet
- Recreation
- Trees
- Climate

Top priorities by votes included:

- Rural atmosphere and agricultural preservation: 25
- Traffic, improve roads: 23
- Preserve oaks: 21
- More housing options, senior housing: 21
- Water conservation: 20
- Code enforcement: 20
- Design guidelines: 17
- Parks & recreation: 17
- Wildlife habitat & conservation: 16
- Jobs: 16
- Mixed use development: 15
- Government services (police, fire, jail, parks): 14
- One town center: 13
- Development fees for new growth: 13
- Shopping: 12
- Trails: 12
- Walkways & sidewalks: 11
- Youth/community center: 10
- Cell phone service: 7
- Childcare: 3
- High school: 3
- Drug treatment for teenagers: 3
- Social services center: 2



Saturday, approximately 40 people attended facilitated walk audits in the morning to review and discuss conditions in the neighborhood surrounding Valley Springs Elementary School and commercial area at the Highway 12/26 junction.

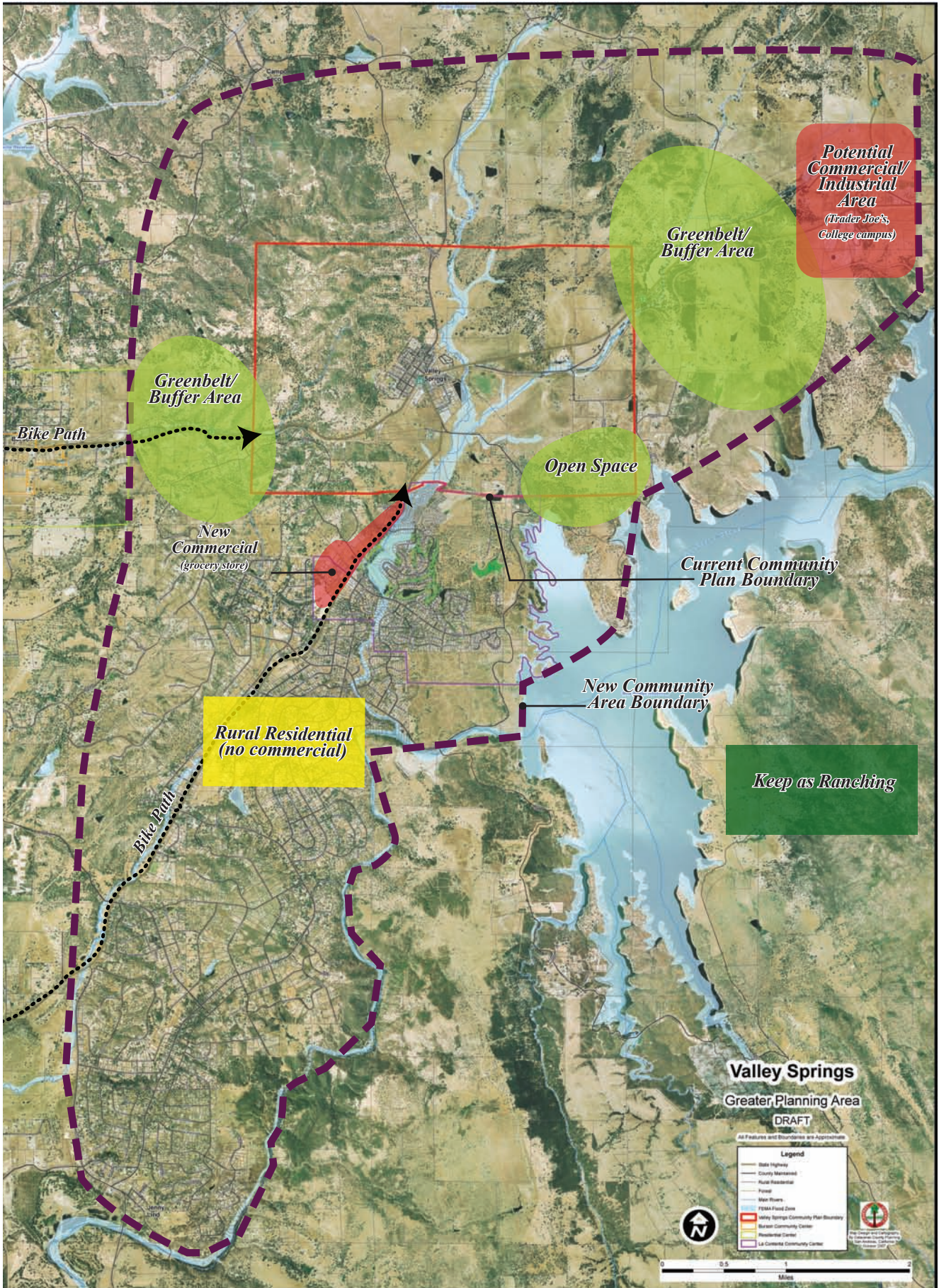
Above left: participants vote on their priorities; Middle and bottom right: participants walk the downtown area to identify assets and discuss problems and possible solutions.

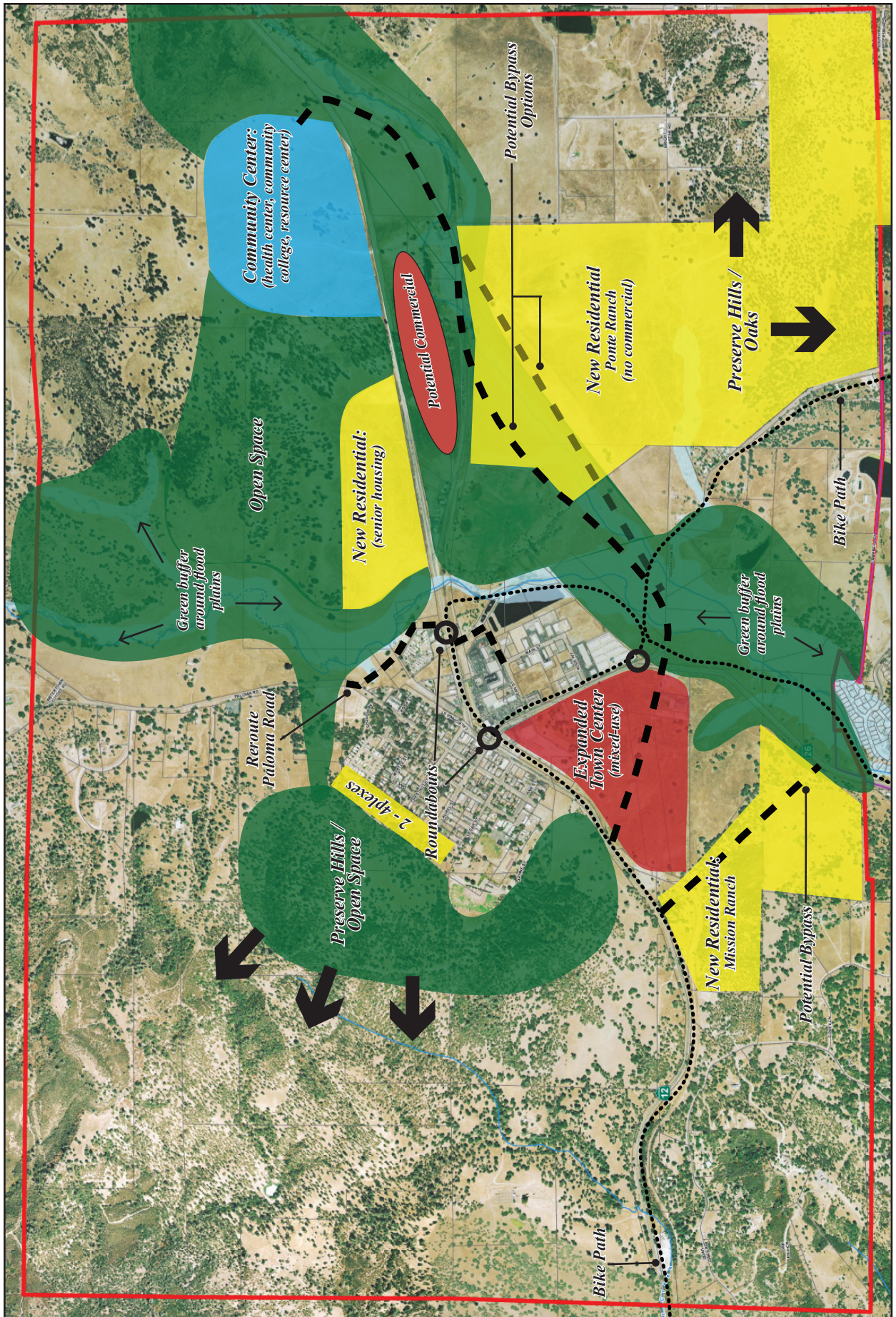
After the walk audits, participants learned about tools and techniques to design streets and neighborhoods. People then worked in groups using maps of the study area prepared by Calaveras County planning staff to develop ideas to revitalize the town center and accommodate future growth. The recommendations are listed below and summarized in the maps that follow:

- Create mixed-use village in downtown area.
- Continue grid street and short block pattern in new development adjacent to downtown.
- Consider roundabout at the 12/26 junction.
- Maintain Highway 12 view corridor heading east into downtown.
- Add trees, improve entry statement into downtown.
- Put one-way through road by Starbucks, connecting Jean Street to Highway 12/26 to alleviate congestion.
- Provide storm drainage in Valley Springs.
- Develop depot area with small boutiques, cafes and visitor center.
- Encourage a restaurant on the water at the Marina on New Hogan Lake.
- Address Cosgrove Creek for trails/recreational use.
- Complete sidewalks and add planting strips on downtown streets.
- Add street trees and thematic light posts to downtown streets.
- Beautify downtown building facades and provide covered overhangs.
- Consider a town “western” theme.
- No new strip malls.
- Avoid development and create greenway/park space in Cosgrove and Spring Valley Creek flood area.



Right: Saturday workshop participants draw ideas at design tables and report results.





Next Steps

Report Workshop Results

MVS will share the results of the community input with Calaveras County staff and elected officials to help inform the General Plan Update.

Community Image Survey

MVS is pursuing a small grant for preparation of a Community Image Survey (CIS) with LGC. The CIS consists of slides, with the majority taken from the community or region. They present contrasting images of the built and natural environment. Sets of side-by-side slides are used to illustrate typical features of both traditional towns and of new suburban development. Participants are asked to rate these images, according to both their visual appeal and their appropriateness to the community. They are then engaged in a discussion on the results. This helps provide planners, elected officials and developers with feedback on what residents like or dislike in their communities and also serves as an educational discussion for the participants who begin to identify the planning and design features that help make a place more attractive, comfortable, safe and livable.

Based on the results of the Community Image Survey and prior input from the October community design workshop, LGC will compile examples of compact, mixed-used development, walkable main streets, safe, efficient and attractive highway corridors, and projects that both conserve and incorporate open space.

Caltrans Community-based Transportation Planning Grant

LGC, MVS and the Calaveras Council of Governments will prepare a proposal for a larger grant from Caltrans to conduct an extensive multi-day community planning process known as a “charrette.” An LGC consultant team will conduct presentations, public workshops and stakeholder meetings involving agencies, elected

officials, residents, developers and property owners to develop more detailed community design recommendations to accommodate future growth in the Valley Springs area.

Participant List

Dr. Alvarado
Nathan Atherstone, Calaveras County Public Works
Kenneth Airola
Pat Bailey, WCSR
Nick Baptista, Valley Springs News
Carol Barzee, MVS.com
Joe Bechelli
Mary Boblet
Pat Brantley
Charles Brenner, Valley Springs Home Center
Tracy Busby
Butterfly
G.L. Caldwell
Marlea Caldwell
Bill Claudino, County Board of Supervisors
Ron Cleland
Tom Coe
Eduardo Corneas
Marti Crane, Volunteer Center
Jeff Davidson, Mission Ranch Project
Bob Dean
Gavin Dluhosh, Good Samaritan Church
Sandra Dudley
Al Duncan
Carolyn and Bill Edwards
Jean Fox, Real Estate
Gary Peter Glavinonich, Castle Rock Ranch
Barbara Grogan, Mountain Ranch Reality
George Harris
Mike Hazelhofer
Dave Hellyer
Pamela Hill
Nick Hodgson, Bank of Rio Vista
Tom Infusio, Calaveras Planning Coalition
Glen Inouye, Go Green!
Cathryn Jackson, Wallace Citizens Serving Residents
Bob and Marie Jacobson
Mark Jones, MVS.com
Melanie Jones
Jim and Barbara Kavanagh
Diane Keane
Kathy Kelley
Don Kuhn, Retired
Bill Magladry, Financial Advisor
Espe Marquez, Accounting
Elaine Maxwell
Lew Mayhew, Keep it Rural Calaveras
Kathy Mayhew, Keep it Rural Calaveras
Holly Mines
Julie Moore, First American Title
Lora Most, Retired
Sharon and Dave Moyles
Jackie Neill, WCSR
George Nelson
Elaine Northcote
Lynn O'Connor, Calaveras County General Plan Coordinator
Renee Olson
Ed Pattison, Calaveras County Water District
Carla Pedrini
Karen Pekarcik
Colleen Platt, MVS.com
Barbara Puppo
Dennis Puppo
Ron Randall
Colin Rigley, Calaveras Enterprise
Lorri Rollins, Rancher
Ella Runyan
David Saclowski
Adele Salazar
Penny Sarvis, CPC
Katie Scott
Don Siemens
Steve Schadlich, Castle Rock Ranch
Tillman Sherman
David Silva, Coe Center
Betty and Palan Smith
Kevin Squire, Valley Springs Home Center
Russell Stephens
Mick Stockard
Tyler Summersett, Calaveras Council of Governments
Dave Tanner, Ponte Ranch Project
Joyce Techel, MVS.com
Don Urbanus, Rising Sun Nursery
John Walker
Catherine Webster, C.A. Webster Foundation
Kerry Williams, Child Care Council
Mickey Williamson, Calaveras Planning Coalition
Chris Wright, The Foothill Conservancy
Muriel Zeller, MVS.com