

## **New GP map draws divisions over lot size minimums**

By Nick Baptista

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Calaveras County's long overdue General Plan update took a step forward Tuesday as the first draft of a new land use map came under public and Board of Supervisor scrutiny.

The General Plan update has been in the works since Dec. 4, 2008. Back then the board set a two-year timeframe to complete the task.

County Planning Director Rebecca Willis made a nearly 45-minute Powerpoint presentation at Tuesday's board meeting outlining the process that is under way.

The map is posted on the county website and an email address has been established to receive General Plan comments and questions. All General Plan comments can be addressed to [gpupdate@co.calaveras.ca.us](mailto:gpupdate@co.calaveras.ca.us). Comments on "Draft No. 1" during the next month will be considered in Draft No. 2.

The county within the next few days hopes to complete work so property owners can go to the county website, type in their assessor's parcel number, and see their current land use designation along with any proposed changes, she added.

An item gathering great attention at the General Plan study session was a planning staff suggestion to consider a technique called clustering.

The proposal would allow a large property to be subdivided based on density and at the same time provide flexibility in lot sizes.

Willis' presentation had a cluster scenario where instead of subdividing a 320-acre ranch into eight 40-acre parcels, it could be divided into a 280-acre ranch and eight 5-acre parcels.

The rancher would be able to keep the integrity of a working ranch intact and not be deprived of the ability to subdivide, she said.

District 4 Supervisor Tom Tryon, who represents Angels Camp and Copperopolis, balked at the idea.

"In my opinion that doesn't work," he said.

It would create more small parcels dependent upon wells and septic tanks.

He advocated the county consider even larger minimum lot size of 100 or 150 acres in ranching zones and around the county's community centers. Such a policy would make it easier for orderly and cost-effective subdivision development around the county's

existing communities with enough “of a critical mass” to pay for infrastructure improvements such as water and sewer services.

Tryon added there would be pressure down the line to continue subdividing ranches even after they had gone through the clustering process.

District 2 Supervisor Steve Wilensky said the clustering idea could be a good planning tool.

“I worry we’re trying to be too formulaic,” he said.

District 1 Supervisor Gary Tofanelli questioned the move toward larger minimum lot sizes.

“I don’t feel one size is going to fit all here,” Tofanelli Said.

Many people in his district, which includes Burson, Valley Springs and Wallace, bought their property with lot splits in mind, Tofanelli said, and they still have the intention to do so. Increasing the minimum lot size would make many of those lots undevelopable.