

History of the Calaveras County General Plan Update & CPC Participation

January 2006

Interim Planning Director Bob Sellman held a study session for the Board of Supervisors. He identified updating the 1996 General Plan as the number one priority for the Planning Department. The BOS was concerned about the scope of the update needed, how development applications would be processed during the update, and how the county would tackle the issue of sprawling development and infrastructure costs. The groups that would later become the Calaveras Planning Coalition supported a comprehensive update of the general plan, prioritizing projects for review during the update, and smart growth to reduce sprawl. (See one CPC comment at http://www.calaverascap.com/docs/2006_docs/2006-01-23_GP_spch-TI.pdf.) Ultimately the County BOS hired Mintier and Associates to evaluate the 1996 Calaveras County General Plan and identify needed updates.

Early 2006

Stephanie Moreno was hired to direct the Planning Department. Under Moreno, the Building Department and the Planning Departments were combined into the Community Development Department.

October 2006

Only after being compelled to release a redacted version by a detailed written public record act request from the CPC, the County released a final version of the Calaveras County General Plan Evaluation, on October 12. It is a 69-page report noting the need for a comprehensive update of the general plan to meet state standards. (See the report at <http://calaverascap.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Attch-16-Calaveras-GP-Evaluation-10-12-06.pdf>.)

On October 16, the BOS agreed to develop community plans for each of the communities in District 2, on the same track as the community plans for Valley Springs and Copperopolis. This was needed to fulfill promises made in the text of the 1996 General Plan. (For CPC comments see http://calaverascap.com/docs/2006_docs/2006-10-16_D2_GPA-Speech-Blue-Mtn-Ctr.pdf.)

December 2006

Mintier and Associates submits a work plan for completing the General Plan Update in two years at a total cost of \$1.35 million including \$1 million for consultants, \$200,000 for County staff, and \$150,000 for Circulation Element work by the Calaveras County Council of Governments.

April 2007

The BOS held a workshop to review the Mintier and Associates work plan. The Board would ultimately hire Mintier and Associates as the general plan consultant. (See the CPC's comments at http://www.calaverascap.com/docs/2007_docs/2007-04-24_BOS-PC_GP_Process.pdf .)

June 2007

Over 500 people, including CAP and CPC members, actively participated in the first round of Community Workshops on the General Plan held by the County and moderated by Mintier and Associates.

The Coalition presented two volumes of detailed input on the General Plan Baseline Report to the County and its Consultants. Comments and documents were submitted for preservation of open spaces, oak preservation, wilderness protection, preservation of natural habitat, and on other issues. (See at <http://calaverascap.com/planning-documents/general-plan-documents/> .)

August 2007

The Board of Supervisors agreed (1) to have the Planning Department provide limited technical assistance to communities developing plans, (2) that Community Plans completed prior to the initiation of the General Plan EIR will be included in the General Plan Update, and (3) that further assistance will be provided if the county receives grant funding, so that other communities can be prepared to adopt their community plans. The CPC facilitator led a group of more than 20 speakers who spoke in favor of concurrently updating the Community Plans during the General Plan Update. (See http://www.calaverascap.com/docs/2007_docs/2007-08-21-07_BOS_Need-for-GP.pdf .)

October 2007

At a Board of Supervisors workshop on the General Plan vision, the Planning Department expressed support for the Awahnee Principles: town-centered development, open space, surface-water supplied developments, balancing growth with infrastructure capacity, mixed use development, regions should be bounded by and provide a continuous system of greenbelt/wildlife corridors to be determined by natural conditions, and other smart growth principles. The Calaveras Enterprise newspaper headline read, "A New vision for Calaveras: No more sprawl."

March 2008

The County took public comments on its draft baseline report. The CPC submitted an approximately 100-page document (including attachments) of comments on the General Plan Draft Baseline Report to help to correct errors and to add documentation not included in the Report. Among the issues addressed were Land Use, Circulation, Safety, Public Services,

Natural Resources, and Noise. (See <http://www.calaverascap.com/docs/CPC%20GP%20baseline%20comments%20searchable.pdf> .)

July 2008

Stephane Moreno, the Community Development Director, was fired. John Taylor was hired to fill the position for a year during the search for a permanent director. Ultimately, after Moreno left, the Planning Department and the Building Department were re-separated.

August 2008

The Board of Supervisors approved the public development of a Water Element for the General Plan Update. This began a seven-month public process that led to the completion of the Water Element. Both CPC staff and members were active in this process. (For CPC comments see http://calaverascap.com/docs/2008-08-05_BOS_Comment_Water_Elem_GP.pdf .)

After two rounds of public workshops, the general plan consultants released a very good report that reflected our input: the Issues & Opportunities Report, which included the Draft Vision Statement and Guiding Principles. The text of some the Guiding Principles paraphrased the CPC's smart growth development principles. (See these documents at http://www.calaverascap.com/docs/GP_Issues-Opportunities_080805bd.pdf and http://www.calaverascap.com/docs/Vision-Principles_080805bd.pdf .)

February 2009

CAP staff and CPC members testified before the Board of Supervisors in support of the Draft Agricultural Element presented by the Agricultural Coalition. The Agricultural Coalition greatly appreciated our support. (See <http://calaverascap.com/docs/Muriel%27s%20Letter%20in%20Support%20of%20Ag%20Element.pdf> .)

CPC staff sent in a letter of support for the draft Water Element, expressing hope that it would be improved by future staff, consultant, public, and environmental review.

July 2009

The BOS again directs staff to use the Ag. Element in the General Plan Update.

February 2010

The new Planning Director, George White, and the new General Plan Coordinator, Brenda Gillarde, met with the CPC and we gave them a briefing on what had transpired regarding the General Plan Update since 2006.

March 2010

The County, and its consultants, Mintier and Associates, moderated the 2-hour GPU Alternative Workshops. Over 200 people participated in five locations throughout the county. Many CPC participants attended GPU Alternatives Community Workshops and supported reasonably paced and community-centered growth (Alternative B). Over half the tables at the workshops supported this alternative. The CPC also submitted detailed written comments on the alternatives. (See the reports at <http://www.calaverascap.com/Alternatives/CountyGPUAlternativesReport-Feb2010.pdf> and <http://www.calaverascap.com/Alternatives/CountyGPUAlternativesReport-Feb2010.pdf> .)

April 2010

A unanimous vote of the BOS supported a general plan preferred alternative which will support community-centered growth, and would change over 130,000 acres (200 square miles) of land from Residential -Agriculture (5-acre minimum parcel size) to Agricultural Lands (40-80 acre minimum parcel size).

June 2010

On June 1, the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors agreed to include the Valley Springs Community Plan, developed through a year of public stakeholder meetings, as an alternative for analysis in the EIR for the General Plan Update.

January 2011

The Planning Director, George White, resigned shortly after the election results, and General Plan Coordinator Brenda Gillarde goes on leave.

November 2011

The CPC met with the latest Planning Director, Rebecca Willis, to give her a history of the previous 5-years of the General Plan Update process.

November 22, 2011

CPC Staff and volunteers testified at the Board of Supervisors in support of the Planning Department's recommendations to draft a general plan map that reduces the build-out capacity of the General Plan that integrates the community plan maps, that promotes clustering of the residual development capacity on agricultural lands, and that embraces citizen input. The Board of Supervisors approved all of these recommendations.

December 2011

CPC secured release of the Draft Economic Development Element. We wrote to BOS, and spoke at BOS General Plan Study Session on the Water Element and the Economic Development Element. The BOS retained water element. Useful parts of Economic Development Element may be added to other elements.

Key Shift: The County ended its planning contract with Mintier at the end of 2011 and began the contract with Raney Planning and Management in November 2012 to write the general plan and the EIR. (See Minutes at <http://calaverascap.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Attch-7-BOS-Agenda-Minutes-11-23-12.pdf>.) The Mintier Administrative Draft General Plan, which cost the county \$909,236, has not been released for public review. Amy Augustine & Associates was later hired in May 2013 to write most of the general plan elements while Raney was to focus on the EIR. The county had previously engaged Raney in a separate contract to complete the Background/Settings document for \$50,000 prior to the \$300,000 general plan/EIR contract. With a contract extension in 2014, Augustine's total compensation was \$113,630.

February 2012

CPC staff and members testified at the BOS Study Session and sent in preliminary written comments regarding the Draft 1 General Plan Maps. We also spoke in opposition to a proposal for an anti-planning Agenda 21 Resolution. Our comments included a sample of a more balanced and accurate statement for the general plan text regarding real estate property rights, the public interest, and government authority. (See BOS videotape for 2/14/12.)

April 2012

The CPC and MyValleySprings.com sent in detailed, parcel specific, comments on the Draft 1 General Plan Map. These comments expressed concerns regarding fragmentation of natural resource lands and the need to reduce the impacts of future development on riparian corridors. They also identified other low impact development principles that would need to be included in the general plan text. CPC community groups in Supervisor District 2 sent in concerns regarding the incorporation of their community plan maps into the general plan map.

May 24, 2012

CPC facilitator Tom Infusino spoke at the May 24 Planning Commission meeting in support of including the Paloma and the Mountain Ranch Community Plans in the Calaveras County General Plan Update. These local plans were hashed out by the local residents, at well attended local public meetings, and were approved by near unanimous agreement of the residents. The Planning Commission supported these community plan maps and the planning process that created them.

December 2012

CPC staff reviewed the County's proposed land use map with the Citizens for San Andreas (CSA). (12/3/12) CPC staff assisted the CSA during its meeting to discuss the map with the Planning Department. (12/10/12) The Planning Director and the General Plan Coordinator identified steps toward adoption of the San Andreas Community Plan and the San Andreas Mobility Plan.

CPC staff, member groups, and volunteers sent in detailed letters to the Planning Commission regarding the Sawmill Project, and spoke at the Planning Commission hearing that had been continued from September. (12/13/12) After an over four hour hearing, the Commission voted 3 to 2 to send the project to the Board of Supervisors with a recommendation for denial without prejudice. This was a vote of support for the Planning Director, a vote to preserve the integrity of the General Plan Update process, and a vote to prevent harm to the Copperopolis community and its environment.

March 2013

The CPC completed and handed in the 36-page CPC comments on the draft environmental setting sections of the GPU EIR, along with a disk of additional background materials (3/12/13). (See at calaverascap.com: Planning Documents; Testimony, Comments and Opinions; Comments on the Preliminary Setting Sections of the General Plan Update DEIR.)

The CPC testified at the BOS hearing regarding the Draft 2 Map (3/19/13). We appreciated the staff review of comments on the Draft 1 map, acknowledged inclusion of community plan maps, supported community centered development, supported reducing the impacts of development on resource production lands, and explained the need to substantiate buildout estimates with evidence in the record. (See at calaverascap.com: Planning Documents; Testimony, Comments and Opinions; CPC General Comments on the Draft 2 Map.)

April 2013

The CPC sent the Planning Department a letter asking that the General Plan Update text be drafted before scoping and before the EIR is prepared (4/12/13). (See at calaverascap.com : Planning Documents, Testimony, Comments and Opinions; GPU Scoping before Policies). We received a thank you call from the Planning Director for the heads up.

May 2013

At the BOS meeting the CPC spoke regarding the need to produce a Public Review Draft General Plan Update text prior to scoping and completing an EIR for the General Plan Update. The BOS gave direction to the Planning Department to do so. Supervisor Callaway publicly thanked CAP for the letter advising the County on this issue (5/14/13).

June 2013

The CPC sent a letter to the Planning Department on the General Plan Update growth projection and its implications (6/27/13). (See at www.calaverascap.com : Planning Documents, Testimony, Comments and Opinions; Final Growth Numbers letter.)

August 2013

By the August 16 deadline, the CPC sent in our General Plan Update topics and text suggestions in response to the County's July invitation to do so. (See at www.calaverascap.com Testimony, Comments, and Opinions, August 2013) First, we summarized the topics that had been identified over the prior 7 years of the General Plan Update process. These included topics we raised in our previous comments, and topics raised by people in public workshops. Next, we noted the need to include county-wide mitigation programs for development impacts. The third section of our comments included the policy input sheets filled out by the Earth Club. The fourth section of our comments made recommendations for properly incorporating the text of the community plans. Our final section identified selected policies from draft optional elements for inclusion in the mandatory elements of the General Plan Update text.

Rebecca Willis resigns as Planning Director, after a verbal beating at the hands of the CAO, two Supervisors, and local developers upset with her recommendations for the denial of development projects. Brent Harrington was hired for the interim during the search for a permanent Planning Director, primarily to keep the general plan update moving forward.

October 29, 2013

The Calaveras High School Earth Club's General Plan Team gave their presentations to the Board of Supervisors.

January 2014

The CPC presented the STARS Project to the BOS. This project would establish clear mitigation standards for project review. It would also include mitigation programs for development applicants to participate in to avoid significant impacts and to reduce community objections. The board was not inspired.

Bren Harrington, who was overseeing the General Plan Update pending the hiring of a new Planning Director, gives his final report with the Board of Supervisors. He recommends that the

Community Plans be dropped from the General Plan Update, or postponed until after the General Plan Update.

March 2014

The CPC met with Peter Maurer, the new Planning Director, to brief him on the history of the General Plan Update.

August 2014

The CPC encouraged the Planning Commission to mine nuggets of useful information from the Mintier General Plan text, or to release it to the CPC so that we could do so. This was a follow up to our prior request of the Planning Director to allow people to review the Mintier Draft General Plan. The Planning Commission, like the Planning Director, declined our request.

December 2014

The Public Review Draft General Plan was released for public review and comment. This document was prepared by Amy Augustine and edited by the Planning Department staff.

March 20, 2015

The CPC turned in over 100 pages in comments (and dozens of attachments) on the 2014 Draft General Plan. (See at <http://calaverascap.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/CalaverasGPComments.pdf> .)

June 30, 2015

The BOS held a workshop to give the Planning Director instructions on how to move forward with the General Plan Update, in the light of major public comments. The BOS indicated that it would not include a Water Element in the General Plan Update, and that it would only include the Community Plans from San Andreas and District 2 in the General Plan Update. The plans from Valley Springs, Copperopolis, and the Highway 4 corridor would have to wait. It directed the Planning Commission to review public comments on the 2014 Draft General Plan with Planning Staff and the general plan consultant and to make changes as needed.

Summer and fall of 2015

Over the course of several meetings the Planning Commission has not actually addressed public comments on the 2014 Draft General Plan, but instead has taken upon itself the job of re-writing the General Plan as it sees fit. The Commission rewrote Vision and Principles, removing language that in its opinion advanced the public interest while adversely affecting property rights. It has refused to include the detail in the general plan called for in the general plan guidelines. It has removed open space protections from the Land Use Element, and is continuing to do so in the Resource Production Element. It has sought to create a general plan that does the

least required by state law. In doing so, it has limited the County's role and efforts to promote the health, safety, and wellbeing of its citizens. It has ignored the County's responsibilities to commit to implement programs to mitigate the environmental impacts of the general plan.

November 2015

The CPC submitted a detailed 17-page public record act request, with 31 attachments, for the Mintier General Plan. The CPC hopes to see if any of the ideas therein should be considered for inclusion in the General Plan Project Description, or if the Mintier General Plan should be considered as an alternative to the General Plan Project Description. (See at www.calaverascap.com Calaveras County General Plan Documents, November 2015.)

December 2015

The County denied the CPC's request for the Mintier General Plan, as well as similar requests from local media. We spoke to the BOS to refute the arguments against the release of the Mintier General Plan. We next filed an appeal with the Planning Commission, challenging the Planning Director's rejection of our Public Record Act Request. The Planning Director rejected that appeal without a hearing, on the ground that it was not the type of decision that the Planning Commission reviews. (See at www.calaverascap.com Calaveras County General Plan Documents, December 2015.)

May 2016

The CPC advised local community groups regarding their proposed community plan's text and map, while the latest Planning Director met with some of them to discuss these plans.

July 2016

The Planning Commission included in the Draft General Plan only a few token policies from the existing and proposed community plans. Whereas the current general plan addresses unique local concerns in some detail, the proposed Draft General Plan is essentially "one size fits all" planning.

August and September 2016

The Planning Commission reviewed site specific land use designation requests to change the draft general plan map. These changes would have allowed the conversion of thousands of acres of natural resource and working lands to residential and commercial uses. Many of these lands are in areas not served by public water and without regional road funding mechanisms. These requests would have created the capacity for many times the amount of development needed during the life of the proposed general plan. We opposed many of these changes. Ultimately, approximately 13,000 acres of the approximately 18,000 acres of requests were denied.

October 2016

The Board of Supervisors designated the Planning Commission edited version of the Draft General Plan as the project description for purposes of the environmental impact report. The CPC submitted our concerns regarding the draft general plan to the Board of Supervisors. Our letter listed the need to include community plans for Copperopolis and Valley Springs, the need to fill the fiscal holes in the plan, the need for an open space action plan, the need for more clarity in plan language, and the need to add more measures to reduce the harm from new development under the plan. (See our comments at www.calaverascap.com Testimony, Comments and Opinions, October 2016.)

January & February 2017

In January, the County issued a notice that it would be completing an environmental impact report for the General Plan Update. In February, CAP/CPC volunteers and staff wrote, edited, printed, and delivered an 80-page general plan scoping document to the Calaveras County Planning Department. The document included a 20-page guide to CEQA compliance, along with specific direction for the analysis impacts to agricultural lands, land use planning, greenhouse gas emissions, circulation, recreation, noise, and growth inducement. The comment also included 15 folders of documents demonstrating how other counties have evaluated and mitigated impacts to agricultural lands, air quality, biological resources, child care, open space, fire safety, climate change, economic development, historic resources, and watersheds. (See our comments at www.calaverascap.com Testimony, Comments and Opinions, February 2017.)