

Coalition upset with General Plan update

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Members of the Calaveras Planning Coalition (CPC) asked the Board of Supervisors to improve the county and the General Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report at the Board meeting on Tuesday, January 22.

Neil McKeown noted that, "By mitigating the significant environmental impacts of development at the general plan level, the County would expedite lawful future approvals of specific plans, subdivisions, and use permits."

Finding fault with the notion that Calaveras County's vague and sometimes non-existent rules are helping to protect property rights, he noted that they have resulted in "an average home value that is \$150,000 below the statewide average."

According to CPC Facilitator Tom Infusino, "The County can do more to avoid the 25 potentially significant impacts of the General Plan," simply by following the recommendation of local and regional agencies, organizations, and individuals who have proposed ways to reduce the impacts of future development."

During the course of the General Plan Update, such recommendations have poured in from the Agricultural Coalition, the Local Agency Formation Commission, and from regular folks who worked on their local community plans.

CPC member Jack Norton described programs from Cal Fire, the United States Department of Agriculture, Caltrans, and the Department of Water Resources that fund local improvements in participating counties. He concluded, "Please commit to seeking these funds to help mitigate the impacts of development when you approve the General Plan Update."

Tom Griffing explained that, "By participating in the programs noted above, Calaveras County can get back some of our state and federal tax dollars, and put them to good use in our communities." Griffing estimated that the households of Calaveras County combined pay an average of 187 million dollars in local, state and federal taxes annually.

Last week, Planning Director Peter Maurer contended that the General Plan Update would be followed by the "inevitable" litigation, and the Board of Supervisors declined to schedule a study session on the General Plan Update. The notion that the County had given up on doing the plan correctly upset Joyce Techel from Valley Springs. She pointed out that she and her friends had worked hard over the last twelve years to get the County to complete a legally valid general plan and EIR. As to Director Maurer's assertion that litigation was inevitable, Ms. Techel concluded by quoting Inspector Harry Callahan in the 1983 movie *Sudden Impact*, "Go ahead, make my day."

These comments followed delivery of a 12-page memo to the Board of Supervisors listing the improvements needed in the General Plan Update Draft EIR. According to the CPC, these improvements would promote economic development, ensure environmental protection, support the exercise of property rights, and secure outside funding to improve local conditions. In the memo, CPC Facilitator Tom Infusino warned that, "These benefits of the general plan will only happen if the Board of Supervisors engages now to direct its staff and consultants to fix the plan and EIR."

The Calaveras Planning Coalition is the flagship endeavor of the Community Action Project (CAP). CAP's mission is to protect and improve the natural and built environments in Calaveras County by empowering people to claim their rights and participate in local government. You can view the CPC's 12-page memo to the Supervisors, and all the supporting attachments, at their website: www.calaverascap.com.