

Supervisors approve Copperopolis community plan

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The Calaveras County Board of Supervisors, on Feb. 11, unanimously voted to adopt a general plan amendment for the establishment of the Copperopolis community plan.

This plan, which became part of the general plan's community planning element, incorporates the town residents' desire for Copperopolis to include a multipurpose community center with sports facilities, a playground, a dog park, a cooling shelter, senior citizen activities, and a swimming facility.

The stated community vision for the plan notes: "Copperopolis will retain its small town, rural community identity, preserve its natural beauty, and protect its vast recreational opportunities while embracing diverse housing, commercial, recreational and employment opportunities integrated with the natural resources and open-space elements of the community. Lake Tulloch will flourish as a safe and uncongested community attraction."

According to a county staff report, this community's planning area is located north of and adjacent to Lake Tulloch, with O'Byrnes Ferry Road and Highway 4 serving as the primary transportation routes.

The area is 12 miles south of Angels Camp, along Highway 4, separated by Bear Mountain, Copperopolis Mountain, Lightner Peak, and many ridges with elevations ranging from 1,100 feet to 1,800 feet.

It is recognized in the staff report that Copperopolis is a unique community that includes a historic section and a newer town center, which has shifted some of the commercial activity away from the historic part of the town.

The report additionally mentions significant growth around Lake Tulloch and further to the southwest.

The vision, goals and policies of this community plan intend to provide more cohesion and interconnection between the physically separated areas of Copperopolis, the staff report notes.

Last week's general plan amendment adoption followed the county Planning Commission's 3-1 vote last month to support this amendment.

The Copperopolis plan's adoption into the general plan's community planning element was the culmination of a long process.

While the community planning element, which contains a description of and policies relating to several of the unique communities in the county, did not originally include Valley Springs nor Copperopolis at

the time of the general plan's adoption in 2019, the element included the opportunity for latter inclusions of those towns' community plans.

After both communities expressed an interest in being included in the community planning element, Valley Springs was added to the element in 2020. However, Copperopolis' inclusion did not occur until last week, following many years of efforts by residents of that community and the county's staff.

The development of plan policies for Copperopolis predates the 2019 general plan, going back to the 1990s through many community meetings and workshops.

Supervisor Amanda Folendorf, whose supervisorial district includes Copperopolis, recognized the longtime efforts of Copperopolis residents to have a section for their town included in the community planning element.

"Thank you to the community (of Copperopolis)," she said. "This has been multiyear town halls. Really, they navigated this really well in helping also bring this to fruition and finally get across the finish line.

"So, a couple of them are here in the audience today. I know some couldn't join, but a big, heartfelt thank you to the community for participating and getting this complete. I don't think myself or (the county's) staff could have done it without you guys. So, thank you, and I'm just really excited to finally see it in front of us, so we can get on to the next part of a strategic plan, too."

In his presentation to the board, Peter Maurer, the county's special projects administrator, stated that the Copperopolis community plan is a long-awaited community planning element addition that he believes has the full support of the Copperopolis community.

"It's probably not as robust as some of the community members would like, but I think we have full support of the community and the disparate parts of that community, as well," he said.

Maurer also reviewed the Planning Commission's support of the plan last month, and its approval of several moderate, minor modifications.

During the public comment period of this agenda item, Janet Sterling, who identified herself as a 25-year resident of Copperopolis, echoed Maurer's comment that the plan had been a long time coming.

Sterling also acknowledged the work of Folendorf in helping to move the plan forward.

"We appreciate the fact that our supervisor, Amanda Folendorf, has been with us the entire journey through this process," she said. "We've had several town hall meetings, several meetings with various folks. So, as was stated, we didn't get everything we wanted, but we do feel that everybody had input, from the community to the developers.

"We feel it's going to be a plan that's going to be very beneficial to the town of Copperopolis. And I just wanted to thank, again, our supervisor for sticking to her promise of saying when she was elected and running that she was going to get this plan through."

Nancy Henderson, a 13-year Copperopolis resident, also expressed appreciation for Folendorf's commitment to having the plan approved by the board.

"I want to say thank you, Amanda," she said. "It's been a struggle."

Another public speaker, Tom Infusino, facilitator with the Calaveras Planning Coalition, expressed that organization's support of the Copperopolis community plan.

"The planning department staff report and the Planning Commission recommend that the Board of Supervisors adopt the Copperopolis Community Plan," he said. "The Calaveras Planning Coalition is pleased to support those recommendations."

Infusino additionally thanked the county's staff and Copperopolis residents for their "hard work" on the community plan.

Regarding that work and the long process to have that plan become part of the general plan's community planning element, Vice Chair Benjamin Stopper noted "there was no easy climb."

"I think at this time, the (Copperopolis) community as a whole is not as conflicted on the issue and that shows the good work that has gone in by the (county's) staff, you, the people following you to coming to this point," he said while speaking to Maurer. "So, I just want to say, good job of getting here, and because there was no easy climb to come to this culmination."

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