

The banner features a dark blue background with the text 'Butte County' in a large, white, serif font at the top. Below it, the text 'General Plan 2030' is written in a smaller, white, serif font. To the left of the text is the Butte County seal, which is circular and contains a landscape scene with mountains and a river. The banner also includes several small, square images: a waterfall on the left, a cow in a field, a landscape with hills, a sunset over water, a row of trees, a lake, and a wooden barn on the right.

Butte County

General Plan 2030

Butte County General Plan 2030

City of Chico/Butte County Meeting – Summary Notes

June 19, 2007, 9:00 AM

Attendees

- ◆ Andy Holcombe, City of Chico Mayor
- ◆ Ann Schwab, City of Chico Vice Mayor
- ◆ Jane Dolan, Butte County Board of Supervisors
- ◆ Maureen Kirk, Butte County Board of Supervisors
- ◆ Starlyn Brown, County of Butte CAO
- ◆ Greg Iturria, County of Butte CAO
- ◆ Tim Snellings, County of Butte DDS
- ◆ Chuck Thistlethwaite, County of Butte DDS
- ◆ Dan Breedon, County of Butte DDS
- ◆ Steve Peterson, City of Chico Planning Services Department
- ◆ Holly Keeler, City of Chico Planning Services Department
- ◆ Stephen Lucas, Butte LAFCO
- ◆ Stephen Betts, Butte LAFCO
- ◆ Jon Clark, BCAG
- ◆ Chris Devine, BCAG
- ◆ David Early, DC&E
- ◆ Tanya Sundberg, DC&E

1. Introductions and Meeting Overview

Tim Snellings described the goals of this meeting and reported on progress to date for the County General Plan update, highlighting the City/County Summit, issues that were raised at that meeting, the Guiding Principles, and the Existing Conditions Briefing Book.

2. Butte County Regional Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Community Conservation Plan

Chris Devine presented a summary of the Butte County Regional Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Community Conservation Plan (HCP/NCCP), including the project status, plan area, stakeholders, committees, preliminary covered species list, the draft ecological baseline

report, funding and the project schedule and phases. BCAG is developing a Planning Agreement that will be brought before city councils and the Board of Supervisors, likely in August. This document describes the planning area, documents the agencies' support of the plan, and establishes an interim agreement regarding how to address projects until the plan is adopted. BCAG is also about to begin a more detailed vernal pool mapping project for the plan area; this data will likely be ready in about six months, when BCAG will make it available to all of the jurisdictions.

3. Local Agency Formation Commission

Steve Lucas provided an overview of the Butte Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). The Commission has a deadline to review existing Sphere of Influence (SOI) plans by January 1, 2008. However, because each of the municipalities is undergoing a General Plan update, the Commission acknowledges that this deadline will not be met. In the meantime, LAFCO will defer all annexation and amendment requests until the SOI reviews are complete, due to possible litigation if they proceed. The Commission strongly encourages each City to include sphere projections in its General Plan, allowing one EIR to cover the General Plan update and the Sphere amendment. LAFCO would like to work cooperatively with the Cities and the County to ensure General Plan consistency with LAFCO goals.

4. Discussion Period

David Early facilitated the discussion period, during which the following input and comments were made:

A. Areas of Anticipated Growth and Spheres

1. Chico General Plan Status Report and Timeline

- ◆ The City has begun its General Plan Update. Steve Peterson explained that the City has hired PMC as their consultant, and they will be going before the Council on July 16 for the project kick-off and contract approval. As part of the scope of this project, they have included an infrastructure finance plan to consider policies that address the costs of infrastructure associated with new growth. The City is also planning to pursue a few optional general plan elements, including a Downtown Element, Community Design Element, and Historic Preservation Element. Sustainability is a key topic to consider throughout the Update, and it will inform all of the elements.
- ◆ The City's Planning Area encompasses the city limits, the Sphere and areas beyond the SOI that include projects that are being reviewed by the County on the edge of the urban area. This Planning Area is the same as was used for the previous update in 1991.

2. Growth Areas

a. Growth Area Feasibility Study

- ◆ Steve Peterson provided the background of the three growth areas identified in the City's *Growth Area Feasibility Study* (2003). The City conducted extensive studies on ten possible growth areas, after which the Council directed staff to focus on three key areas: Growth Area 1 to accommodate growth, and Growth Areas 2 and 3 as urban reserves. However, further studies on these growth areas were not completed, and the City will now fold those studies into the overall General Plan Update. Supervisor Dolan added that the Council's decisions about these growth areas were contentious, and the vote was not unanimous.
- ◆ Although the three growth areas identified in the report may be studied through the General Plan Update, they may not end up being actual growth areas for the city. There are some issues with these areas not meeting City code standards, as well as issues surrounding on-site septic systems.

b. Bell Muir Area

- ◆ Supervisor Dolan provided a history of the Bell Muir neighborhood. The neighborhood was zoned with five-acre lots in the 1960's, although there were a number of landowners who obtained subdivision approval for quarter-acre lots just prior to the five-acre zoning. In 1983, the Board found the area to be appropriate for urbanization if infrastructure were upgraded. Annexation and development of the area is contentious, which has dissuaded the City from pursuing an annexation here thus far.
- ◆ At the recent Area-Wide Workshop for the unincorporated Chico area, residents of this area generally supported half-acre lot sizes in this neighborhood. Mayor Holcombe stated that the City is beginning to develop urban infill standards, and this neighborhood is an urban infill area. However, others feel that this area should remain at rural residential densities. The land use alternatives for this area should include both urban infill and rural residential options; it is important for the City to support the County's land use designation for this area, in order to promote a consistent General Plan vision.
- ◆ Supervisor Dolan indicated that an important element to consider is the design standards for this neighborhood. Residents may support higher densities if development preserves existing trees and grid street systems.

c. North Chico Area

- ◆ The County has identified this area for urbanization, and it is on the inside of the Greenline. However, at the Area-Wide Workshop, there were concerns raised about

growth in this area due to land use incompatibility to the airport and threats to the aquifer.

- ◆ The City has not pursued development in this area due to sewer issues, circulation issues, and environmental constraints (meadowfoam habitat). There are also concerns about whether the amount of residential development in this area is adequate to support the commercial part of the North Chico Specific Plan. Holly Keeler indicated that the City is looking for additional industrial land areas, which might be appropriate adjacent to the airport.
- ◆ It will be important for the County's General Plan to be consistent with the City's General Plan for this area; this will require cooperative planning between the two. The meadowfoam issues here are significant, and may be a deciding factor, although the area could possibly be designated a take area.

d. East of Chico Near the Skyway

- ◆ Landowners have indicated that this could be a potential growth area for Chico.
- ◆ Vice Mayor Schwab is concerned about aquifer issues in this area, about which studies are underway.
- ◆ The Schuster property is approximately 1,500 acres; the property owner is proposing a large park, golf course, and 1,500 homes. Development constraints exist on approximately 700 acres of the property.
- ◆ The City and County discussed a possible agreement on general policies regarding a gold line, viewsheds and meadowfoam that could help guide development decisions for this and similar sites.

e. Nance Canyon and Horning Properties

- ◆ Steve Peterson has met with a Nance Canyon property owner. From the perspective of the City, this could supply needed industrial land; this project would supply employment opportunities and the City is interested in considering it as a growth area for its General Plan Update.
- ◆ Supervisor Kirk raised concerns about environmental issues; Supervisor Dolan indicated that an on-site creek is the main constraint.
- ◆ Supervisor Dolan described a draft policy developed by a subcommittee (with Supervisor Yamaguchi) intended to protect the landfill. The draft policy, which has not yet been approved by the Board, states that the landfill is the dominant land use in the area and that any change from the current grazing land use will need to be compatible with the landfill. Housing would not be compatible due to issues with noise, odor and aesthetics, and would therefore be pushed towards the Skyway for the Nance Canyon proposal.

- ◆ The County is planning to hire a consultant to study expansion areas for the landfill, which will likely not occur towards Highway 99. The landfill will remain in place for at least the next 30 years, after which it will likely expand and/or utilize new technology.

f. Other Growth Areas

- ◆ Supervisor Dolan suggested that growth should not occur southwest of the city. Growth Areas 2 and 3 from the City's *Growth Area Feasibility Study* are less appropriate for growth. The area east of the railroad tracks in Growth Area 2 has some development potential, but anything west of the railroad tracks would require a railroad crossing. In Growth Area 3, there are some groundwater pollution and circulation issues, and the cemetery would be displaced.
- ◆ Supervisor Kirk mentioned the area at the end of California Park at the north side of Highway 32. This was considered in the larger analysis of growth areas conducted by the City, but was removed due to concerns about possible recharge value. However, better information may be available now, which could change that assessment.
- ◆ Chuck Thistlethwaite mentioned the area just east of the airport along Sycamore Creek, which was raised at the Unincorporated Chico Area-Wide Workshop.

3. Island Annexations

- ◆ Steve Peterson indicated that there are only three main islands left unincorporated, including Chapman/Mulberry, Forest Avenue and an area just to the north of Forest Avenue. The City Manager is interested in revisiting the annexation policy. Because of financing issues and the costs associated with providing services to annexed areas, the City may hold off on larger annexations (such as Chapman/Mulberry) for now, although smaller annexations will likely continue. These larger islands will be annexed at some point during the life of the General Plan, but it may take some time, so that services may be provided.
- ◆ David Early suggested that these island annexations occur concurrent with other growth area annexations to make them more revenue-neutral; Tim Snellings indicated that this is a strategy emerging with other cities. Greg Iturria highlighted that this is an issue of cooperative planning and revenue-neutrality.

B. Agricultural Preservation, Greenline and Buffers

- ◆ Supervisor Dolan summarized the County policy regarding agricultural buffers, which is that land that is urbanized shall provide an adequate buffer, which begins with 300 feet. This policy should apply to City decisions.
- ◆ The County is developing buffer guidelines to indicate what is appropriate within the buffer area.

- ◆ Steve Lucas highlighted LAFCO's agricultural preservation requirements.

C. Government Services Funding

- ◆ Tim Snellings described a recent article about the fiscalization of land use, indicating that good land use policy should drive land use rather than fiscal decisions.
- ◆ Greg Iturria described the County's role in funding services throughout the county, including incorporated areas, mentioning revenue-sharing agreements and impact fees as possible tools to address this issue.
- ◆ Steve Peterson mentioned that the City's General Plan includes an Economic Development Element, which is an opportunity for cooperation with the County.
- ◆ The group discussed additional meetings to share more information about such agreements and to develop continue the dialog, involving the City Managers Office and County Administrators Office.