

POLICY ALTERNATIVES

As Butte County updates its General Plan, a series of policy statements for topics such as land use and rural development, transportation, agricultural preservation, and economic development will be developed. During Workshop Series #1, and in the first two meetings in Workshop Series 2, a series of policy questions were identified, and ideas were put forth about how these questions should be resolved through the General Plan Update.

These ideas were refined and condensed into a list of policy questions and solutions, focusing on those where there was both a high level of community concern and a broad range of suggestions and ideas. The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) reviewed this list on September 6, 2007; this document presents the revised policy questions and solutions based on the CAC and public input at that meeting.

Please review the policy ideas described below, and consider the following questions for each topic area:

1. Does the range of questions under each topic adequately cover the issues related to that topic?
2. Does the range of solutions to each question reflect an appropriate set of response choices?

These policy ideas will set the framework for the more extensive and detailed goals and policies development that will occur during Meeting Series #5.

Greenlines and Buffers

1. Should the County implement additional or modify existing urban limit boundaries, and if so, how?

- Work with the City of Chico to maintain the Chico Greenline.
- Work with the City of Oroville to develop a greenline for Oroville.
- Work with the Town of Paradise to develop a greenline for Paradise.
- Work with the City of Biggs to develop a greenline for Biggs.
- Work with the City of Gridley to develop a greenline for Gridley.
- Work with the Cities of Gridley and Biggs to create an open space buffer between Gridley and Biggs.
- Create an open space buffer around the Neal Road Landfill.
- Involve the community in any discussions about modifications to existing urban limit boundaries through workshops and meetings.
- Establish an initiative process for the creation of urban limit boundaries, allowing the public to vote on the matter.
- Other _____

2. What modifications, if any, should be made to the Chico Area Greenline, which establishes a boundary between urban and agricultural uses in the area west of Chico?

- Adjust the Greenline to follow natural boundaries, such as creeks.
- Change the Greenline from a line to a 300-foot buffer area, located on the urban side of the existing Greenline.
- Establish the pattern of development within the Greenline.
- Other _____

New Development and Housing

3. How should the County improve the design and architectural quality of new development?

- Develop illustrated design guidelines for single family residential development.
- Develop illustrated design guidelines for multi-family development.
- Develop illustrated design guidelines for commercial development.
- Develop illustrated design guidelines for industrial development.
- Develop illustrated design guidelines for all development occurring along major corridors and important intersections.
- Develop illustrated design guidelines for streetscapes.
- Develop illustrated design guidelines addressing viewshed protection for all development occurring in scenic areas.
- Ensure design guidelines are appropriate and do not burden developers.
- Establish a design review board or other body responsible for reviewing the design of major projects.
- No additional design regulation is needed.
- Other _____

4. How should the County work to provide more affordable housing?

- Require a certain number of affordable housing units in larger residential developments.
- Provide incentives for developers to build more affordable housing as part of a project (e.g. through streamlined permitting, reduced development fees, exchange for concessions regarding density or site design).
- Require new development to pay fees that can fund construction of affordable housing.
- Build new affordable housing itself, seeking funding from grants and other available sources.
- Provide options for types of affordable housing regulations, from which developers can choose based on the needs of individual projects.
- Maintain adequate infrastructure and supply of residential land.
- Other _____

Regional Coordination

5. How should the County more effectively coordinate its planning efforts with those of the five incorporated cities, and with other Counties?

- Hold annual or more frequent meetings with each of the municipalities to discuss planning and land use issues of concern, and publish an annual report of the findings of those meetings.
- Hold public meetings with each of the municipalities to discuss planning and land use issues of concern, and air recordings of these meetings on public access television.
- Work with the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) to develop a coordinated, countywide growth and annexation strategy.
- Negotiate revenue sharing agreements with each of the cities.
- Cooperate to create a broader regional planning authority covering Butte County and its neighboring counties, and identify strategies for coordinated planning in the region.
- Identify successful models of regional planning approaches, and build a strategy for the Butte County region based on those models.
- Explore the economic benefits of regional planning, such as increased access to grant funding.
- Collaborate on planning and building within the Spheres of Influence, and ensure that services are available prior to approving new development.
- Other _____

Agriculture

6. What, if any modifications are needed to General Plan Program 2.2 (the Agricultural Buffers policy, which requires a buffer to be established on property proposed for residential development in order to protect existing agricultural uses from incompatible use conflicts)?
- Refine buffer requirements to correspond to different agricultural zoning districts.
 - There is no need to amend Program 2.2.
 - Other _____

7. How should the County help to conserve and enhance its agricultural resources?

- Develop stronger protections for important timber harvesting areas through changes in zoning.
- Work to develop timber harvesting as a sustainable resource.
- Require developers to pay an impact fee or conduct other mitigation when agricultural land is converted to non-agricultural uses, which would fund programs to protect farmland elsewhere in the County.
- Develop a transfer of development rights program that would allow agricultural landowners to sell the rights to develop their land to urban landowners in unincorporated and incorporated Butte County, who would get the right to develop their properties at higher densities than normally allowed under base zoning.
- Work with a land trust, such as Northern California Regional Trust or Butte County Agriculture and Farmland Trust, or similar organization that can permanently protect farmland in Butte County.
- Encourage the development of niche and specialty agriculture, such as organic products, heritage livestock, and heirloom crops.
- Reduce County-imposed fees and taxes for agricultural properties.
- Work to establish a sales tax that would fund open space and agricultural lands protection.
- Continue to work with landowners in establishing new and maintaining existing Williamson Act contracts.
- The County should not help to conserve and enhance its agricultural resources.
- Other _____

8. How should the county address the conversion of smaller agricultural parcels to non-agricultural uses?

- Increase minimum parcel sizes from 5 acres in areas with valuable agricultural lands; minimum parcel sizes should be set to 20 or 40 acres, depending on the physical characteristics of the area and the dominant type of agricultural use.
- Impose stricter regulations to avoid conversion of 5 acre parcels from viable agricultural uses.
- Allow 5-acre parcels for specialty crops in transition areas between agricultural and urban uses.
- Develop stricter site design standards for development on agricultural parcels, to allow for the continuation of viable agricultural uses.
- Do not prevent the conversion of smaller parcels from non-viable agricultural uses to non-agricultural uses.
- Other _____

9. The Board of Supervisors recently approved changes to the Right to Farm Ordinance to address conflicts between agricultural and non-agriculture land uses. What other strategies should be pursued to address these conflicts, if any?

- Develop a dispute resolution process to resolve conflicts between agricultural and residential land owners.
- Increase educational efforts of the County to inform residents about rural living, such as the County's Realities of Rural Living brochure, which describes issues such as road maintenance, equipment noise, and fire hazards that new residents in rural areas may not have considered. The Realities of Rural Living brochure is available at <http://www.buttecounty.net/dds/rural/>
- Other _____

10. What strategies would be most effective in supporting the County's agricultural economic sector?

- Develop a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program. (Community Supported Agriculture consists of a community of individuals who pledge support to a farm operation so that the farmland becomes, either legally or cooperatively, the community's farm, with the growers and consumers providing mutual support and sharing the risks and benefits of food production. Typically, members or "share-holders" of the farm or garden pledge in advance to cover the anticipated costs of the farm operation and farmer's salary.)
- Develop a marketing plan to promote agricultural products that are grown in Butte County and develop a "brand recognition" for these products.
- Promote agritourism and themed "farm trails" and routes within Butte County's agricultural areas.
- Encourage development of food processing and other facilities that could support production of "value-added" farm products from Butte County.
- Whenever a new water supply becomes available or a decision regarding water allocation is made, agricultural water needs will be prioritized.
- Support existing grower cooperatives in Butte County.
- Support existing export markets for Butte County products.
- Other _____

Scenic Highways

11. How should the County protect and enhance its network of scenic highways and/or create additional scenic highways?

- Designate additional scenic highways in the County.
- No new scenic highways should be designated in Butte County.
- Develop additional design guidelines for development located along scenic highways.
- Strictly regulate signage, including prohibitions on installation of billboards along scenic highways.
- Remove existing billboards along scenic highways.
- Clearly identify scenic highways on maps and through appropriate signage.
- Enhance the County's Scenic Highway zoning classification to provide for additional protection.
- Other _____

Trails

12. How should the General Plan address recreational trails facilities, such as hiking, bicycle and equestrian trails, in the County?

- Conduct a countywide trails study to identify new needed routes and connections to the existing trails network.
- Work with the cities to provide connections between trails in incorporated and unincorporated Butte County.
- Designate additional trails along unpaved County roads and fire roads.
- Pursue development of railroad right-of-way, levee tops, utility easements and waterways for new trails.
- Develop additional equestrian trails, including safe routes along roads.
- Other _____

Natural Resources and Habitat

13. How should the General Plan address preservation of important habitat areas, including riparian (river and stream) corridors, oak woodlands and deer migration routes?

- Utilize conservation easements to protect habitat areas and corridors.
- Encourage clustered development in areas of known sensitive habitat and deer migration areas.
- Require 100-foot setbacks and buffers for new development along riparian corridors and adjacent to sensitive habitat.
- Provide incentives to developers to preserve important habitat areas.
- Develop a heritage tree ordinance that protects significant specimen trees and tree groves.
- Create guidelines for evaluating project impacts to habitat, including specific mitigations for impacts that are identified.
- Coordinate with the Butte Regional Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Communities Conservation Plan.
- Coordinate with federal and State agencies that protect natural resources to ensure that their input is received in a timely manner.
- Coordinate with the cities and other jurisdictions on natural resources and habitat planning.
- Establish a minimum percentage of habitat mitigation that must occur within Butte County.
- Establish a resource depletion surcharge for mining activities to fund restoration efforts.
- Encourage defensible space and projects which remove ladder fuels to reduce the risk of wildfire damages to watersheds and natural resources.
- Other _____

Water Resources

14. How should the General Plan protect Butte County's groundwater supply?

- Seek funding for and conduct comprehensive, countywide mapping of groundwater resources.
- Seek funding for and conduct scientific analysis of the costs and water supply impacts of groundwater pumping.
- Cooperate with adjacent counties to plan for and manage groundwater resources.
- Require metering of non-domestic wells to allow the County to fund aquifer recharge programs.
- Sell some or all of the County's remaining State Water Project surface water allocation to urban or agricultural water districts, so that reliance on groundwater can be reduced.
- Provide stricter regulations to limit paving and increases in impermeable surfaces that reduce groundwater recharge, or require permeable surfaces to be installed for new development.
- Other _____

15. How should the General Plan protect Butte County's water supply?

- Establish a water budget for Butte County, balancing water input and its use.
- Provide stricter limits on exports of agricultural water.
- Increase water conservation through incentives and regulations concerning aspects such as use of water efficient fixtures and landscaping, as well as educational programs.
- Other _____

16. How should the General Plan maintain and enhance Butte County's water quality?

- Expand monitoring and reporting efforts of the Water Resources and Conservation Division.
- Promote low impact development that is high density, has low amounts of impervious area, incorporates best management practices, and is walkable.
- Limit pollution from pesticides and nutrients through incentives and regulations related to stream buffers and educational programs.
- Address flooding and erosion issues.
- Promote the recharge of wetland areas.
- Require water quality testing prior to drilling new wells.
- Other _____

Transportation

17. How should the County address road conditions?

- Seek local, State and federal funding for increased road maintenance service.
- Increase development fees to fund road maintenance.
- Create additional assessment districts to fund road maintenance.
- Assess road capacity and ensure it is adequate prior to approval of new development.
- The County should not prioritize road maintenance because the road conditions contribute to the county's rural character.
- Other _____

18. How should the General Plan address bicycle issues?

- Work with BCAG to implement new bike facilities identified in the 1998 Bicycle Master Plan, including new facilities (see also Figure 5, Transportation Alternatives – Bicycle Improvements):
 - Along River Road, Chico River Road and Old Humboldt Road in the Chico Area.
 - Along Skyway, Neal Road, Pentz Road, and Midway to connect Chico with Paradise and Durham.
 - Along Table Mountain Boulevard, Larkin Road, Gridley-Colusa Highway, Olive High-way, and Miners Ranch Road.
- Create and maintain a countywide map of bicycle routes and facilities.
- Seek local, State and federal funding for new bicycle facilities.
- Require new development to provide bicycle facilities.
- Ensure new bicycle routes and paths create a safe bicycle environment.
- Other _____

19. How can the County help decrease reliance on automobile travel?

- Support walkable and mixed use neighborhoods that provide shopping, services and jobs near to housing.
- Encourage satellite retail areas to reduce the need for trips from rural to urban areas.
- Require new neighborhoods and subdivisions to utilize a connected grid, or modified grid pattern of streets including short block lengths.
- Support better public transportation to rural areas of the county, including expanded service geographically and more frequent buses at key times of the day.
- Support improved bus service to major cities and destinations outside of Butte County.
- Support improved connections to other regional transportation services such as rail and regional/national bus lines.
- Work to find areas in need of infrastructure for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Establish “slow streets,” alternative routes to fast roadways that utilize signs and physical barriers to slow down traffic.
- Other _____

Utilities and Public Services

20. How should the County ensure that the infrastructure needs of new development are met?

- Increase development fees so that needed infrastructure is adequately funded.
- Require new development to provide its own infrastructure in conjunction with its each project as it is built.
- Create additional assessment districts to fund new and improved infrastructure.
- Assess infrastructure capacity and ensure it is adequate prior to approval of new development.
- Other _____

21. How should the General Plan address the provision of police and fire service in rural areas?

- No changes should be made to levels of police and fire service, instead, residents should be educated about the realities of rural living and expectations regarding response times for critical services.
- Increase taxes and assessments to provide additional funding for police and fire services.
- Encourage expansion of volunteer support for fire and police.
- Create new funding mechanisms for new development to pay for expanded police and fire services.
- Work cooperatively with CAL FIRE on any adopted Standards of Cover for fire protection.
- Encourage defensible space, fire safe building construction and wildfire preparedness in collaboration with the Butte County Fire Safe Council.
- Other _____

22. How should the County work with schools to minimize the impacts of new development on school facilities?

- Incorporate new school sites into future growth areas as appropriate.
- Consider safe routes to school in new infrastructure development.
- Coordinate infrastructure development projects to minimize cost to the public of building schools as needed.
- Approve new development only if the County finds that existing or planned schools will be adequate to serve it.
- Approve new development only if the applicable School District states that it will be able to serve it.
- Other _____

Parks and Recreation

23. How should the General Plan address parks and recreation issues?

- The County should work with the park districts to develop additional regional parks.
- The County should work with the park districts to develop additional dog parks.
- The County should work with the park districts to develop additional river- and water-related recreational sites and facilities.
- The county should encourage parks and recreation districts to adhere to their stated service standards for provision of parks facilities.
- Other _____

Airports

24. How can the County most effectively limit land use conflicts around its airports?

- Revise the General Plan to match the adopted 2000 Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan.
- Impose stricter regulations on the amount of residential growth occurring near the county's airports.
- No changes are needed with regard to land use around the county's airports.
- Other _____

Economic Development

25. How should the County seek to improve the local economy, attract higher wage jobs, and improve its fiscal health?

- Create a countywide Economic Development Strategy that identifies key sectors for business expansion in the county and programs to achieve that expansion.
- Partner with educational institutions and businesses to develop flexible Research & Development and incubator space in the county.
- Develop a program to retain graduates of CSU Chico and Butte College as county residents.
- Provide additional support for local Chambers of Commerce and organizations that support small businesses.
- Promote local tourism and visitor-oriented recreation through more aggressive marketing programs.
- Promote the agricultural sector through adoption of various policies (see question 9).
- Promote sustainable business and the development of new economic opportunities related to renewable energy.
- Work with the cities to establish revenue-sharing agreements.
- Other _____

Green Building and Sustainability

26. How should the County encourage the development of sustainable communities and energy-efficient and cost-savings buildings?

- Expand General Plan policies to include green building principles.
- Provide incentives for the construction of green buildings.
- Require developers to give homebuyers the option of having solar paneling incorporated into new homes.
- Encourage solar-oriented design in new residential development.
- Encourage new development to provide above-ground and natural stormwater facilities.
- Require that new development meet the guidelines of the California Energy Star New Homes Program by exceeding the State standards for energy efficiency by at least 15 percent.
- Require all new public buildings to adhere to green building standards.
- Review zoning ordinance and building codes to allow for energy efficient technologies so long as they do not conflict with other goals in the General Plan.
- Require developers to use low- or no-toxicity building materials in new construction.
- Encourage the use of pervious concrete on asphalt to assist with groundwater recharge.
- Address existing problems by pursuing grants for energy efficiency.
- Other _____

27. In what specific ways could the County, and county residents, help to minimize contributions to global warming and depletion of natural resources?

- Provide tax incentives for homeowners to install renewable energy systems such as solar and wind power.
- Tax incentives or sponsorship for purchase of energy efficient appliances.
- Tax incentives or sponsorship for building retrofits, such as installation of thermally efficient windows and extra insulation.
- Where appropriate replace the County's vehicle fleet with alternative fuel or hybrid vehicles.
- Set and develop an action program to achieve more aggressive recycling goals.
- Develop and publicize a certified green business/institution program for the County.
- Establish a motor vehicle emissions budget, including a plan to reduce motor vehicle emissions.
- Other _____