



**TO: Butte County Board of Supervisors**

**FROM: Tim Snellings, Development Services Director**

**CC: Butte County Planning Commission**

**SUBJECT: October 9, 2007 Progress Report #20 on Butte County General Plan 2030**

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This memo is the twentieth in a series of updates provided to the Board of Supervisors at the beginning of each meeting to assist Board members in staying apprised of the progress on the Butte County General Plan 2030 process.

I have the following to report concerning progress on the Butte County General Plan 2030 process:

**1. September 28, 2007 Butte County Planning Commission Study Session**



Butte County General Plan 2030 Planning Commission Study Session

The Planning Commission held a special study session devoted to General Plan 2030 Alternatives Development (Meeting Series 2/3-3A) on Friday, September 28, 2007. Presentations were made by Development Services staff and the County's lead General Plan 2030 consultant, Design, Community & Environment. A brief discussion was held with Commissioners and staff, which was followed by a Public Comment period where a number of people spoke regarding the process to date.

Opinions varied as to the effectiveness of communication, the role of the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), the method of integrating public participation with the CAC member

participation and the sequence of the meeting series (different perspectives about when Policy issues should be discussed relative to the creation of a Preferred Alternative). Several CAC members expressed frustration with the process citing a need for a greater role of the CAC in evaluating constraints, considering policies and overall vision for the County before proceeding. Others felt that the process is working well and the time for detailed evaluation of the range of alternatives will be in the next meeting series.

The Planning Commission closed public comment for the day and continued the discussion to Thursday, October 11, 2007 at 10:00 a.m. with the intent of reviewing each study area, included in the range of alternatives, and the Policy Alternatives document. There will be additional opportunity for public comment at the October 11, 2007 meeting. A more extensive summary of this meeting is available for viewing on the County's General Plan 2030 website.

The October 11, 2007 Planning Commission Study Session will continue with a review of all Information from previous meetings, including a Public Workshop and three Citizen Advisory Committee Meetings. The Planning Commission will review and finalize:

- Three alternative land use scenarios that provide differing approaches for over 40 individual areas proposed for study. Alternative 1 provides for minimal change in land use and intensity and would be consistent with the existing General Plan designations. Alternative 2 directs growth to the existing urban areas while retaining agricultural and open space areas. Alternative 3 provides for development that is distributed more widely throughout the county, with less emphasis on existing urban areas.
- Three land use alternatives proposed for County Roadway Improvements and Bicycle Improvements.
- A Policy Alternatives document that has been created from input received from a Public Workshop and the Citizens Advisory Committee. The final Policy Alternatives document will be used during the General Plan 2030 process to help focus debate around policy issues that have arisen during the General Plan update process.

This Study Session will be used to provide final direction from the Planning Commission on the development of the three land use alternatives, which will be provided to the Board of Supervisors during their Study Session yet to be scheduled (see item #2 below). As with all Meeting Series Meetings, this Study Session will be taped for later broadcast on Community Access Channel 11, and posted on the Butte County General Plan 2030 website.

## **2. Schedule Change: Board of Supervisors Study Session, Meeting Series #2/3-4, Alternatives Development**

Due to an additional Planning Commission Study Session scheduled for Thursday, October 11, 2007 devoted to Alternatives Development, the Board of Supervisors Study Session originally scheduled for Tuesday, October 16, 2007 has been cancelled. A new date will be forthcoming and posted to the General Plan website. This change will provide the Board of Supervisors with additional time to review the Agenda Report and supporting material

generated from the Planning Commission Study Session and all of the prior meetings held in conjunction with Meeting Series 2/3.

### **3. Development Services Staff Revising Scope of Work for General Plan 2030**

Development Services staff has worked with the General Plan consultant, Design, Community & Environment to address several areas of work that are not currently part of the existing Contract. A contract amendment will be provided to the Board of Supervisors for consideration in the near future. The subject areas of this amendment include:

1) A change to Task F of the Contract –Alternatives Evaluation and Selection. Staff is recommending that additional topics be included to evaluate the alternatives including:

- Water Supply
- Wastewater Infrastructure
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Public Services (fire protection, emergency response, schools, police and parks)
- Safety and Hazards

2) Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change –With the signing of Assembly Bill (AB) 32 (Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006), greenhouse gas emissions have become a high-profile issue in California. The Attorney General has also settled a lawsuit with San Bernardino County concerning this issue. A contract amendment is proposed to have General Plan 2030 subconsultant Jones & Stokes evaluate climate change impacts associated with Butte County General Plan 2030.

3) Updating of General Plan Exhibits –Erosion and Expansive Soils. The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) recently completed a new and comprehensive soil survey of Butte County (“Butte Area, California, Parts of Butte and Plumas Counties”). Information from this survey can be utilized to update both the Erosion and Expansive Soil exhibits of the current General Plan.

### **4. Clarification on General Plan 2030 Process and Procedure from General Plan 2030 Consultant Design, Community & Environment**

The following information is provided from Design, Community & Environment Principal David Early concerning some of the comments and concerns that have arisen during the September 6, 2007 Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting and the September 28, 2007 Planning Commission Study Session regarding the General Plan 2030 process:

#### General Plan 2030 Process

“The following information responds to two related concerns that have been raised regarding the Butte County General Plan 2030 process. These concerns are:

- Some people suggest that the General Plan process is "backwards." They suggest that more work should have been done regarding policies before beginning to look at land use changes on the ground.
- Some people suggest that the General Plan process has not been adequately shaped by a vision and policies.

Here are some responses:

Butte County has established an overarching vision for the County's future, which is expressed in the Guiding Principles. These have been in place since the outset of the process. They have informed each step of the process to date and will continue to guide the process through upcoming phases.

In DC&E's experience guiding other communities through similar processes, we have found that conversations about policies beyond those expressed in the Guiding Principles can be very difficult without the concrete questions that are posed by specific land use decisions. When we speak about land use policies in a vacuum, it is often easy for people to come to agreements, like the notions that development should be "sustainable" and should minimize resource impacts. But people can interpret these policies in various ways. The meaning of these policies, no matter how specific they are made, often does not become clear until we look at specific cases on the ground. Thus we are concerned that debates about policies, without reference to specific study areas, could result in a significant expenditure of time and resources while creating policies that are too vague to guide land use decisions effectively.

We would offer one example of this phenomenon, which can be extrapolated to many other cases. One possible policy might be that "No development shall be permitted on steep slopes." It's easy to imagine this suggestion leading to a questions like "How steep is steep?" "Should the cutoff be 20 percent? 30 percent?" "How does the type of soil overlaying the slope affect its stability?" "What if a steeply sloped site is also an infill site in a neighborhood already served by sewer and water?" "Innovations in geotechnical and structural engineering have made construction possible on sites that would have been considered unbuildable in the 1960s or 1970s. Isn't it probable that we'll be able to build safely on these sites now or in the very near future?" "Why should we eliminate a site with 21 percent slope from consideration now?" It is very unlikely that Butte County citizens would be able to come to a consensus on all of these questions and develop a single policy that would apply evenly to the entire County. It's much more likely that, after a long discussion about all the various aspects of development of different types of steep slopes, we would end up with a vague policy, and/or we would find out that many of the steeply-sloped sites in the County would require an exception to the policy that was created. We believe that it makes more sense to look at the various sites individually now, as part of formulating the preferred land use alternative, which will allow us to understand the varying geotechnical conditions in proposed study areas and then to create a policy that accurately reflects conditions in Butte County.

Thus we believe that it is much more effective, with the Guiding Principles already in place, to now turn our attention to specific study areas. When people look at a map and consider specific ideas of how to develop or conserve a particular area, then the policy choices that need to be made become much clearer. As land use decisions are made, these decisions create a framework that points to a set of development policies. Once community members have had a chance to consider different development scenarios, they are more able to translate their opinions about what should or should not be allowed into policies that correspond to the type of development and conservation they want to see.

It is important to remember that the General Plan Update process, after finalization of the study areas, will include a full analysis of environmental and planning constraints and the development implications of the alternatives in every study area. The information generated through this analysis will enable the public and the decision makers to make their own determinations about the best conservation or development scenario for each study area.

As the land use alternative process moves forward, some community members, CAC members, Planning Commissioners or Supervisors may propose policy bases on which they or others would make decisions regarding development and conservation options. This would be perfectly appropriate, since it could help to guide people as they make their own choices regarding land use decisions. However, we believe that it would be an unwise use of time and resources to try to reach decisions about policy details until after land use decisions are made.”

5. **Reminder: Butte County General Plan 2030 Economic Summit**  
**An Opportunity for Butte County's Economic Future and You!**



From: Butte County General Plan 2030 Economic Summit Brochure

The Butte County General Plan 2030 Economic Summit will be held at the Sierra Nevada Brewery in Chico from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm on Monday, October 15, 2007. All who are interested in Butte County's economic future are invited to come and. . . **Listen** to presentations on economic development trends and case studies. . . **Learn** from panelists and speakers on county and regional economies. . . **Link** economic development to land use through shared experiences. . . **Look** forward to a diversified Butte County economy that fosters emerging industries and skilled workforces. Tickets for the event are \$35, to include lunch and all refreshments. On-line registration for the Economic Summit and the meeting's agenda is available at [www.buttegeneralplan.net](http://www.buttegeneralplan.net). Development Services staff has begun an outreach effort for this event that includes press releases, email, and direct mail with a brochure (see banner above).