

**Butte County General Plan 2030 Citizens Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary (South County Areas)
April 17, 2008**

The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) held meeting #4-2B on Thursday, April 17, 2008, the second of four CAC meetings (later updated to include 1 more additional meeting) in Meeting Series #4 (Selection of a Preferred Alternative). The meeting was held at Checkers Restaurant in Oroville. Of the 93 attendees at the meeting, 28 were representatives of the Citizens Advisory Committee and 65 were members of the public.

This second CAC meeting focused on the identification of a preferred land use alternative for the following Study Areas in the Oroville and Biggs/Gridley area:

- 8 Berry Creek
- 21 Thermalito
- 23 Eastern Oroville/Oroville Hills
- 24 Stringtown Mountain
- 25 Thermalito Afterbay Area
- 26 Las Plumas/Southside/Ophir Road
- 27 Pacific Heights Road/Highway 70
- 28 Southern Oroville
- 29 Palermo
- 30 Bangor
- 31 Biggs Area
- 33 South of Biggs
- 34 North of Gridley

CAC members were presented with commentary collected at the March 27 public workshop, letters and reports submitted to the County by residents and landowners, and feedback from the General Plan 2030 web forum to assist their discussion and selection of a preferred alternative for each study area.

Introduction

Butte County Supervisor Bill Connelly welcomed the CAC and members of the public to the meeting, and thanked CAC members for their continued commitment to the General Plan 2030 process. He recognized Oroville, in particular, as an important place for growth since the decline of local employment following construction of the Oroville Dam, and urged CAC members to make job creation in the unincorporated County a priority.

Butte County Supervisor and Board Chairman Curt Josiassen also welcomed the CAC and members of the public, recognizing the challenges of this process. Supervisor Josiassen stressed that participants should focus on job creation, not just homes. Butte County has a low average income; the General Plan should work towards economic viability and a diverse economy.

Tim Snellings, Butte County Development Services Director, echoed Supervisor Connelly's welcome address. In response to a request from the CAC, Mr. Snellings held a vote on the option to hold an additional meeting of the CAC to review the preferred land use alternative

comprehensively prior to forwarding their input to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. The CAC voted in favor of holding this meeting on Thursday, May 1, at a location to be determined. At this fourth meeting, the CAC will determine whether the preferred alternatives that received the most support for each study area make sense as a cohesive Preferred Alternative for the County as a whole. This meeting is not intended to reconsider past decisions about a specific study area unless 10 or more CAC members vote to re-open discussion.

Presentations: Meeting Overview, Review of April 10 CAC Meeting

Mr. Snellings then provided an overview of the General Plan 2030 process, including a list of the major products to date, a list of the CAC meetings and Area-Wide workshops to date, and provided a preview of the important dates upcoming in Meeting Series #5.

David Early of DC&E presented a review of the results of the previous CAC meeting, which covered Study Areas 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 20.

CAC Question and Answer Period

The brief presentations were followed by time for questions from CAC members. The following is a summary of the information provided in response to these questions:

- Members of the public who wish to comment will be asked to clearly state what Study Area they are commenting on.
- It's not possible for the consultant to say how the Planning Commissioners and Board of Supervisors will weigh the input from the CAC against input from other sources, since they are individuals and will have to make their own decisions. However, it would be expected that the CAC's input would be given very careful consideration, in light of the role the Board of Supervisors has asked the CAC to fulfill.
- The EIR on the County's General Plan 2030 will not be adequate for project-level approval of any project proposed in any of the study areas. All proposed projects, even if consistent with the General Plan, will still be required to undergo separate environmental review.
- Although it is probable that the County will see some growth outside of the study areas (for example, through building a new single-family home on an existing lot), Meeting Series #2/3 was designed to identify all the locations where major growth might be expected to occur. However, it's also possible that General Plan 2030 could be amended over time to allow additional growth.

Public Comment Period

The agenda included 30 minutes for comments from the public. Approximately 65 members of the public were present, and 27 people offered comments. Comments were limited to one and a half minutes each in order to afford time for all to speak. The following is a summary of the public comments received:

General Comments

- Research and Business Parks are compact economic engines for growth and will help the County retain graduates.
- Case law supports property rights. IF the CAC chooses to stop growth, the result will be a negative economic impact, costly lawsuits and higher taxes, and the General plan will have to be redone.
- There are issues with the grading and analysis in the Alternatives Evaluation Report.
- Trails are important and should be included throughout the County.
- Open space and wildlife corridors should be preserved throughout the County. Department of Water Resources and PG&E lands in particular should be protected from development.
- Equestrians make an important economic contribution through taxes and job creation. Butte County should keep this economic contribution in mind and preserve recreational opportunities.
- Watersheds should be preserved, and there should be a separate Water Element in the General Plan. Water should be treated as a natural resource, not as a commodity.
- Oroville is a great place for growth.
- Compact urban development is more equitable, especially for people who don't have cars.

Study Area 8, Berry Creek

- Berry Creek residents want a comprehensive plan not just for the identified study area but for their entire watershed.
- Berry Creek's rural character should be preserved, and nature and human needs should be balanced.
- Berry Creek needs some commercial zoning in order to allow existing commercial establishments to continue.
- Alternative 2 will help preserve open space and prevent rural sprawl. Water supply, septic and fire safety issues are a big concern, as is wildlife. The solitude and quality of life there should be preserved.

Study Area 21, Thermalito

- Detention ponds should not be allowed to drain into Ruddy Creek. These ponds are contaminated, and the contamination affects aquatic life in Ruddy Creek, which discharges into the Feather River. Friends of Ruddy Creek are opposed to a subdivision with 100 or 200 new homes.

Study Area 23 Eastern Oroville/Oroville Hills

- Study Area 23 is great the way it is. The open space there now is a big asset. Oroville should grow like European cities with a dense core surrounded by beautiful countryside.

- The existing agricultural lands in Study Area 23 provide local, small-scale food production that will be important in the future. As stated in the errata, the Alternatives Evaluation Report overlooked the critical category of “Unique Farmland.” None of the alternatives would preserve and more than 2 percent of the existing farmland, so none should be seriously considered.
- Alternative 1 would allow small infill projects. The large lot sizes in Alternatives 2 and 3 do not match what is there now.
- Residential and commercial mixed use should be extended along Miners Ranch Road. The Miners Ranch Road/Ophir Road/Lower Wyandotte Road route is the best economically-viable route from Highway 70 to the lake.

Study Area 24 Stringtown Mountain

- The comments below are from the owners and owners’ representatives from the Stringtown Mountain Resort:
- The landowner has suggested an “Alternative 4” for this Study Area and completed his own constraints analysis. Alternative 4 is very doable and makes sense. It is superior to any of the three alternatives proposed.
- Outdoor recreation is a growth industry.
- Support tourism in Study Area 24. The County’s transient-occupancy tax will bring in 6 percent revenues and the Stringtown Mountain resort will generate 200 jobs directly and 1,400 jobs indirectly.
- The Stringtown Mountain Resort will be an amenity that supports all other economic growth engines in the County. Study Area 24 contains marginal land. Clustered development would help preserve open space. The area has its own sewer, water and power.
- Many Kelly Ridge residents want new prosperity in the area. More retail here will mean less traffic since residents can shop close to home. Alternative 4 represents quality growth.

Study Area 25 Thermalito Afterbay Area

- This area is a good buffer between industrial uses to the east and water supply/food-growing land to the west. Support Alternatives 1 or 2, not high density housing.

Study Area 26 Las Plumas/Southside/Ophir Road

- The land in this study area is dead and not viable for agriculture. Residents want to grow, but do not want to be part of the City.
- Several commenters supported the City of Oroville General Plan designations for this area.
- Study Area 26 and its environs are changing with the casino, new hotel, Highway 70 improvements and new traffic signal at Ophir Road and Lincoln Boulevard. It’s a great infill area. The City’s General Plan should be supported in this area.

Study Area 27 Pacific Heights Road/Highway 70

- The proposed project in this area would be sustainable. Alternative 3 should be supported because it supports the City of Oroville’s General Plan.

- Industrial development should not be allowed along Wyman Creek. This area is already a dumping ground.
- A representative of the developer JKB Homes stated that her client has no plans for industrial development in Study Area 27.

Study Area 31, Biggs Area and Study Area 33, South of Biggs

- Pete Carr, the Biggs City Administrator, explained that the Cities of Biggs and Gridley are working together to plan for orderly, balanced growth in this area. None of the three alternatives reflect the City of Biggs's desires. Alternative 2 is okay, but the CAC should consider an "Urban Reserve" designation instead.

Study Area 34 North of Gridley

- The City of Gridley wants to expand northward and sees this as a new growth area. Alternative 3 is best.

Large Group Discussion: Creating a Preferred Alternative for Study Areas 8, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33 and 34

The bulk of the meeting was devoted to CAC discussion of each of the Study Areas listed above, facilitated by David Early. The goal of the discussion was to determine the CAC's recommendation for a preferred alternative for each area. In general, discussions of each Study area began with a proposal by one CAC member for a specific alternative that should be supported. In some cases, this was one of the three land use alternatives developed during Meeting Series #2/3. In other cases, CAC members proposed new alternatives. CAC members then deliberated on the pros and cons of the alternatives. Mr. Early would then take a straw poll to gauge CAC input.

The following summarizes the outcomes of the large group discussion:

Study Area 8 Berry Creek

In general, CAC members were somewhat divided on whether to limit new development based on concerns about fire danger and lack of access, or whether to allow some additional development in order to provide economic opportunity for Berry Creek residents and landowners.

Sixteen (16) supported a modified version of Alternative 2, which would designate the entire study area for agricultural purposes, but would maintain the 30-acre retail designation in the existing General Plan.

Ten (10) supported Alternative 1, which follows the existing General Plan, designating a large portion of this study area as Very Low Density Residential, allowing approximately 300 new homes. This alternative also includes 30 acres of Retail; the remainder would be designated for Agriculture.

Study Area 21 Thermalito

Many CAC members described Thermalito as a good place for increased development since it is served by existing infrastructure and close to existing urbanized areas. The potential for

Thermalito to be annexed by Oroville was discussed, and it was noted that a previous attempt at annexation in the 1980s was soundly defeated by Thermalito voters. Eric Teitelman, Oroville's Director of Community Development and Public Works, discussed the current prospects of annexation and stated it still seems to be opposed by many in the area, although not as strongly as in previous years. Overall, most CAC members tended to support the City's General Plan in this area, which was similar to Alternatives 1 and 2.

Twenty-three (23) supported a combination of Alternatives 1 and 2, which would designate the majority of the study area for Medium Density Residential, as well as some Medium-High Density Residential, and Public, as well as about 110 acres of Retail along Highway 162. This would allow approximately 7,000 new homes.

Three (3) supported Alternative 3, which would decrease residential densities to Rural and Very Low Density Residential, while smaller portions would maintain the Medium Density Residential designation, allowing approximately 1,500 new homes.

Study Area 23 Eastern Oroville/Oroville Hills

A number of CAC members supported the City's desires in this area. Oroville City staff stated that Alternative 1 best represented the City's General Plan. Others felt that there should be a greater emphasis on retail development along Miners Ranch Road in order to take advantage of traffic coming to Lake Oroville and a possible future Stringtown Mountain resort. However, there was some disagreement over whether Miners Ranch Road can safely serve additional residential and tourist traffic.

Nine (9) supported the original Alternative 1 as being most similar to the City's General Plan. Alternative 1 would include a mix of residential densities, allowing approximately 18,400 new homes, as well as about 515 acres of Retail, 10 acres of Public, and 820 acres of Resource Conservation.

Fifteen (15) supported a modified version of Alternative 1 that would add Retail uses along Miners Ranch Road.

Two (2) supported Alternative 2, which would reduce the residential densities from Alternative 1, allowing approximately 2,600 new homes. The Retail, Public and Resource Conservation designations from Alternative 1 would remain.

Two (2) supported Alternative 3, which would also reduce the residential densities from Alternative 1, but to a lesser degree than under Alternative 2. This alternative would allow approximately 5,900 new homes and designates about 480 acres for retail purposes.

Study Area 24 Stringtown Mountain

During this discussion, the landowner presented an Alternative 4 that is similar to Alternative 3, but would allow up to a total of 2,700 housing units in clustered development. CAC members were generally supportive of additional development in this area in order to capitalize on the growing leisure industry and take advantage of services that can be provided by LOAPUD.

Twenty-five (25) supported the new Alternative 4. Under this alternative, the area within the Stringtown Mountain Specific Plan would maintain the existing General Plan designations of residential and 15 acres of Retail uses. The area outside of the study area would be designated for Low Density Residential and Resource Conservation, allowing up to 2,700 new homes.

Study Area 25 Thermalito Afterbay Area

For this area, the majority felt that some development would be allowable, but that 2,400 new units, as proposed by a developer and as allowed in the City of Oroville's General Plan, would be excessive. The minority felt that this area should remain as grazing land.

Sixteen (16) supported Alternative 1, which designates the entire area as Rural Residential, allowing approximately 100 new homes.

Eight (8) supported Alternative 2, which would designate the entire study area for Agriculture.

None supported Alternative 3, which would designate the majority of the study area for a mix of residential densities, allowing about 2,400 new homes, and about 5 acres of retail uses along Highway 162.

Study Area 26 Las Plumas/Southside/Ophir Road

The CAC strongly supported both the City of Oroville and members of the public who spoke in favor of the City's General Plan as the most appropriate alternative for this area. City staff stated that there is interest in annexation into Oroville here, particularly among residents and landowners closest to the existing City limits.

Twenty-six (26) supported Alternative 4, the City's General Plan, which would allow 105 acres of Rural Residential designation, 780 acres of Medium Low Density Residential, 190 acres of Medium Density Residential, and 25 acres of Medium High Density Residential. In addition, the City's General Plan calls for 320 acres of Mixed Use, 30 acres of Retail, 330 acres of Industrial (to be planned as part of a South Ophir Specific Plan), 170 acres of Public land (including the cemetery and existing schools) and 180 acres of Environmental Conservation/Safety along Wyman Ravine.

Study Area 27 Pacific Heights Road/Highway 70

CAC member Michael Evans described the City's planning process for this area and stated that high quality development here could be an opportunity to create a more attractive southern gateway for Oroville than the industrial area that travelers on Highway 70 currently see. Other CAC members regarded development here as leapfrog development and expressed concerns about market viability of residential and/or retail development on this site.

Fifteen (15) supported Alternative 2, which would designate the entire area for Agriculture.

Seven (7) supported Alternative 3, which calls for residential uses at a variety of densities, allowing about 2,700 new homes, as well as about 30 acres of Retail, 50 acres of Public, and 165 acres of Resource Conservation.

None supported Alternative 1, the existing County General Plan, which designates the majority of this study area for Rural Residential, along with about 100 acres of Retail along Highway 70.

Study Area 28 Southern Oroville

After a brief discussion about vernal pools and the presence of existing rural residential development in this area, the CAC voted overwhelmingly in favor of Alternative 2.

Twenty-five (25) voted in favor of Alternative 2, which would designate the area for Rural Residential development, allowing approximately 100 new homes, as well as 440 acres of Industrial along Highway 70 and a Mixed Use designation in the northern section of the study area as called for in the Oroville General Plan.

Study Area 29 Palermo

CAC member Michael Evans explained that the higher-density residential development designations reflected in the current County General Plan (and Alternative 1) are a result of an historical subdivision planned by William Randolph Hearst, but never completed. Most CAC members felt that today's Palermo residents do not want to see a significant increase in density.

The CAC unanimously supported Alternatives 2 and 3, which are identical. Alternative 2/3 would designate much of the areas outlying Palermo for agricultural uses, and would maintain the Very Low Density Residential, Retail, Industrial and Public designations in the center of the town. This alternative would allow approximately 100 new homes and about 20 acres of retail and industrial uses.

Study Area 30 Bangor

CAC members stated that Alternative 2 was most reflective of the public input received from Bangor residents. They also cited concerns about contaminated water in this area. However, the CAC also requested that the circle denoting retail uses be refined to reflect actual parcel boundaries.

The CAC unanimously supported a modified Alternative 2, which would change the residential designation from the existing General Plan to Agriculture. Instead of maintaining the 120 acres of Retail designation from the current General Plan, the modified Alternative 2 would include a smaller amount of Retail designation that is more reflective of current land uses and parcel lines.

Study Area 31 and 33 Biggs Area/South of Biggs

At the suggestion of the facilitator, David Early, the CAC elected to discuss these two study areas simultaneously.

Pete Carr, City of Biggs City Manager, spoke in support of Alternative 2, likening it to a "holding pattern" that would allow existing uses to continue while the Cities of Biggs and Gridley formulate plans for the area.

The CAC expressed some frustration that the Cities of Biggs and Gridley have not made more progress in coming to an agreement about the future of the area between the two cities. CAC members also discussed the possibility of a "community separator" in this area. Some supported reserving a band of agricultural land between the two communities, while others saw this as an

unfair burden on property owners who would be prohibited from developing their land. Several CAC members expressed the need to preserve farmland and supporting industrial uses such as the rice mills in Biggs.

Twelve (12) supported Alternative 2. In Study Area 31, this would increase the industrial area to about 190 acres, and designate the remainder of the study area for Agriculture. In Study Area 33, the majority of the study area would be designated for Agriculture, with approximately 180 acres of industrial and retail uses located along the railroad tracks.

Eight (8) supported Alternative 1. In Study Area 31, this would follow the existing General Plan, designating the majority of the study area for Agriculture. The area close to the City of Biggs would be designated for Very Low and Medium-High Density Residential, allowing about 1,600 new homes, as well as about 40 acres of retail and industrial uses and a small area for public purposes. In Study Area 33, Alternative 1 designates the entire area as Low Density Residential, allowing approximately 800 new homes.

Study Area 34 North of Gridley

Most CAC members agreed with the approach of treating Study Area 34 in a similar fashion as Study Areas 31 and 33. As in those study areas, some CAC members supported continued agriculture in this area, as foreseen in Alternative 1, while others supported allowing Gridley to grow northward into Study Area 34 to preserve more valuable farmland to the west, south and east. Some suggested that the designation should remain Agriculture until and unless the land is annexed by the City.

Thirteen (13) supported Alternative 1, which would follow the existing General Plan, designating the majority of the study area for Agriculture. The existing General Plan also includes about 175 acres of Very Low and Medium-High Density Residential, which allows approximately 300 new homes.

Ten (10) supported Alternative 3. Under Alternative 3, the majority of the study area west of Highway 99 would be designated for Medium Density Residential. There would also be a residential/retail mix along Highway 99, a larger retail area east of Highway 99, and some agricultural uses in the northeast portion of the study area. This alternative would include a Public designation for the existing cemetery along Highway 99. This alternative would allow approximately 5,600 new homes and 230 acres of retail uses.