

**Butte County General Plan 2030 Citizens Advisory Committee  
Meeting Summary –North County  
April 24, 2008**

The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) held meeting #4-2C on Thursday, April 24, 2008, the third of four CAC meetings (later updated to include 1 additional meeting) in Meeting Series #4 (Selection of a Preferred Land Use Alternative). The meeting was held at Little Chico Creek Elementary School in Chico. According to the sign-in sheet, there were 94 attendees at the meeting, 24 of which were representatives of the Citizens Advisory Committee and 70 of which were members of the public.

This CAC meeting focused on the selection of a preferred land use alternative for the following study areas in the Chico area and central Butte County:

- 2 North Chico Specific Plan
- 3 Bell Muir
- 4 Forest Ranch
- 6 Upper Stilson Canyon
- 9 Doe Mill/Honey Run
- 14 Nance Canyon/Highway 99
- 15 Hamlin Canyon/Highway 99
- 16 Oroville Chico Highway/Highway 99
- 17 Durham
- 18 Durham Dayton/Highway 99
- 19 Durham Pentz/Highway 99

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. Also included in the CAC agenda packet were a memorandum correcting errata in the Alternatives Evaluation Report pertaining to north County study areas, and a memorandum from DC&E describing coordination efforts between the County and the City of Chico.

**Introduction**

After a brief welcome by Tim Snellings, Butte County Development Services Director, Supervisors Jane Dolan and Maureen Kirk addressed the CAC and members of the public. Supervisor Dolan described the history of the Greenline and the intentions of the Board of Supervisors to preserve it. Supervisor Dolan also discussed the original intent of the North Chico Specific Plan to provide good planning for this area and discussed the potential for future growth in the Bell Muir Study Area. Supervisor Kirk thanked the Citizens Advisory Committee members for their work and also thanked the public for their participation in the process. Supervisor Kirk remarked on the importance of water as a primary influence on land use decisions.

**Presentations: Meeting Overview, Packet Overview, Review of April 17 CAC Meeting**

David Early of DC&E presented a review of the results of the April 17 CAC meeting, which covered 13 study areas in southern Butte County. He also walked the CAC through each of the components of their packet and each of the letters from the public that had been received too late to be distributed prior to the meeting.

**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:

- The Alternatives Evaluation Report assigns an “A” to alternatives that would be served by existing school capacity, and assigns a “B” to alternatives that could be served by capacity which is planned but not yet built.
- In response to a question about the County’s allotment of water from Lake Oroville, Paul Gosselin, Director of Butte County Department of Water Resource Conservation (DWRC), stated that the State is currently requiring Butte County to pay for all of its 27,500 acre-foot allotment, even though the County does not use all of that water. However, the County is currently increasing the amount of the allotted water that is used within the County, and plans to use the water completely within the County within the next seven years. DWRC is currently studying the feasibility of sending water from Lake Oroville to Chico and Durham.

**Public Comment Period**

The agenda included 30 minutes for comments from the public. In addition, both Andrea Redamonti, City of Gridley Community Development Director, and Steve Peterson, City of Chico Planning Services Director, spoke briefly about their cities’ preferences.

Ms. Redamonti stated that Gridley is halfway through its General Plan Update process. On Monday, April 21 the Gridley City council confirmed a Preferred Land Use Alternative for the City, including the land in Study Area 34. The City would like for the County to designate this area Urban Reserve. The City also submitted a letter and map that were distributed to the CAC.

Mr. Peterson stated that the City of Chico is also underway with its General Plan Update, but does not expect to identify a Preferred Land Use Alternative until September. He advocated that the City and County continue to pursue collaborative planning for study areas near the City of Chico and requested that a final decision on a Preferred Land Use Alternative for Study Areas 2, 3, 9, 14, 15 and 16, which area all within the City’s Plan Area, be considered within context of the City’s Preferred Land Use Alternative. He referenced a City memorandum presenting written comments, which was distributed at the meeting. In response to questions from CAC member Tovey Giezentanner, he clarified that the memo was developed by staff and had not been based on City Council direction.

Approximately 70 members of the public were present, and 39 people offered comments. Comments were limited to 1 minute each in order to afford time for all to speak. The following is a summary of the public comments received.

*General Comments:*

- The County should have a water budget for the use of water from Big Chico Creek.
- Deer herd winter range is declining. Deer and migratory birds prefer ridgelines. Adding houses and dogs in these areas stresses wildlife. To minimize impacts on ridgelines, the County should grow up, not out, for example through tall multifamily condos.
- The County needs a Water Element, and the public has expressed overwhelming support for this idea. There is a permanent cone of depression under Chico. The County needs a water budget.
- Butte Creek is the home of endangered spring-run salmon. Study Areas 6, 9, 14 and 15 all touch the creek and should be left as they are in, agriculture and open space. The environmental impacts from development would impair Butte Creek.
- The Alternatives Evaluation Report claims that grazing can have a negative impact on biological resources because of fertilizer use and disking. These practices are not done in Butte County. Instead, grazing can improve the biological value of the land by keeping out exotic grasses. Study Areas 9, 14, 15, 16, 18 and 19 should be left as agricultural land.
- A representative of the Butte Environmental Council stated that all study areas should be removed and any developers should be told to go to the cities with their proposal. The County should not build housing. The Glenn Colusa Irrigation District has a contract to remove everyone currently depending on Tuscan groundwater. In response to a question from the CAC, this commenter clarified that under an existing contract signed in 2006, the Glenn Colusa Irrigation District and the US Bureau of Reclamation are looking for alternate sources of water for all people currently dependent on groundwater from the Tuscan aquifer, in preparation for aggressive groundwater pumping. Both the National Homebuilders and the American Planning Association magazines predict that by 2025 the demand for new homes will be primarily from 1 to 2 person households. Home sizes will decrease as fuel costs increase. There is already a surplus of homes on large lots. Don't develop within the County; let Chico plan to accommodate future growth. Developers should show not only that they have access to a water source, but should show that their use would not impact others using that same source. Development should occur within cities to prevent the use of cars and decrease air pollution and climate change. A vision for the County should precede development so that development proposals can be measured against that vision.

*Study Area 2 North Chico Specific Plan*

- The CAC should support Alternative 1, the North Chico Specific Plan. Alternative 3 has too much commercial and industrial.

*Study Area 3 Bell Muir*

- This area is surrounded by high-density residential development to the east and north. The island of one- to five-acre zoning doesn't make sense. Quarter-acre lots should be allowed.
- Hmong farmers in Bell Muir are currently growing walnuts and almonds, which seem to be viable. Even 100 or 200 new homes here would be excessive.
- A group of Bell Muir residents, representing the owners of about 40 percent of the property in the area, supports Alternative 2. While 3,000 new homes may sound like a lot, people want the ability to develop their land. Bell Muir is totally surrounded by urbanization.
- The CAC should select Alternative 1 in Bell Muir because this area can't support more housing, and allowing housing here would move the Greenline. Current landowners are just trying to make a profit.
- The Bell Muir Neighborhood Association represents the owners of only 40 percent of the land in Bell Muir, not enough to represent the neighborhood as a whole. There is a big difference between 100 new homes and 3,000 new homes, and the appropriate amount of development would be something in between. The people who signed the petition in support of Alternative 2 are realtors and developers, not Bell Muir residents.
- The Greenline was not intended to restrict growth in Bell Muir. Landowners there are not trying to get rich, they just want to send their kids to college. Bell Muir is surrounded on three sides by the City and is the best place for City growth.
- A petition in support of Alternative 1 and in support of the Greenline has 133 signatures.
- Mud Creek makes a natural Greenline boundary. The CAC should support growth in Study Area 3.
- A farmer operating in Study Area 3 stated that when he sprays, burns and chops, people complain. Farming is not viable in Bell Muir. He supports Alternative 2. The City of Chico faces a housing crisis when the existing land supply runs out within 5 to 10 years. The CAC should support growth in Bell Muir.
- Another farmer said she saved \$4,000 in insurance by not farming. Farming on small parcels is not feasible.  
Don't wait for the next planning cycle to decide what to do in Bell Muir. People will do what they need to do to survive.

*Study Area 6 Upper Stilson Canyon*

- Several members of the Hall family spoke in support of their proposed project, saying that the land in this study area has been family-owned since 1968 and offers an opportunity for incredible things, including 2,000 acres of open space, a winery with tasting rooms, trails, hunting, fishing, and clustered homes. Farming could continue. Allowing the project would solve concerns about inadequate roads and fire safety, and would allow public access to the land. Three wells on the property would provide water.
- Other speakers expressed concerns about water, fire hazards, lack of access, and visual impacts from development.

*Study Area 9 Doe Mill/Honey Run*

- Jody Gallaway, a biologist working for the property owner, stated that no Butte County meadowfoam and no other endangered species have been found on the site after three years of site surveys. (Note: Ms. Gallaway's firm is also a technical consultant on the DC&E General Plan team, assisting with deer herd mapping. At the request of facilitator David Early, Ms. Gallaway clarified that she was not speaking as part of the DC&E team but as a consultant to a private landowner.)
- The CAC should choose Alternative 1 and keep this area rural.
- The landowner stated that he has led tours of the site with over 130 people. His project would allow for a new park of 60 to 90 acres, and an additional 900 acres of open space. The remaining 490 acres would be used for residential development at an average of 4 dwelling units per acre, up to a maximum of 1,500 units. These would be sensitively clustered. He referred the CAC to a bound packet presenting his Alternative 4 for their consideration. A master plan for this area provides an opportunity to do something unique and give parks and amenities back to the community.
- The Chico Area Recreational District (CARD) is excited about the recreational opportunity on this site, since growing population in Chico will mean growing pressure on Bidwell Park.

*Study Area 14 Nance Canyon/Highway 99*

- The CAC should select Alternative 1 in Study Area 14 to send a message to the Board of Supervisors that the Skyway should be preserved.

*Study Area 15 Hamlin Canyon/Highway 99*

- The landowner and his representative explained that this area was designated as a location for a research and business park in 2001 to draw new technology to the area and create new businesses. This would be a great opportunity to create new jobs and build public-private partnerships with educational institutions. Alternative 4 in this area would allow a 300 to 400-acre research and business park in one section (Area A), clustered residential development in a second section (Area B), and a working ranch in the third section (Area C).
- The County doesn't need a research and business park - put it in Oroville instead and leave Study Area 15 in open space. Also, the City of Oroville should provide housing, not the County. The City has enough housing for 100 years.

*Study Area 17 Durham*

- Water is available to serve this area through the Durham Irrigation District, which serves existing residents. The Very Low Density Residential designation in Alternatives 1 and 2 is not consistent with the D2N (Durham-Dayton-Nelson) Plan.
- The Durham Area Action Team supports Alternative 1, which complies with the existing Durham, Dayton Nelson Plan. They see no need for change in Durham and don't want to see ag land converted to housing. (At the request of the

speaker, approximately 10 people from the audience stood to show support for her statement.)

*Study Area 19 Durham Pentz/Highway 99*

- This area already includes land zoned M-1, is served by existing water and existing roads, including an improved overpass, and would be a good location for jobs.

**Large Group Discussion: Creating A Preferred Alternative for Study Areas 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19**

The final four hours of the meeting were 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 2 North Chico Specific Plan*

CAC members expressed concern that the Very Low Density Residential component present in each alternative is inconsistent with the Chico Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP). The Public designation, which was originally intended to be used for a school site, would not be able to be used for a school due to the airport proximity. CAC members also discussed the negative impact potential development might have on groundwater recharge and flooding in the area, and whether new development could be designed to safely prevent or accommodate flood flows.

The CAC unanimously supported Alternative 1, the current North Chico Specific Plan, and directed staff to keep the Public designation if a use compatible with the ALUCP can be identified.

*Study Area 3 Bell Muir*

The CAC discussed extensively whether Bell Muir is an appropriate area for additional growth. CAC members in support of additional development here generally pointed out that Bell Muir adjoins an existing urbanized area and is a good location for City-focused growth. It was generally acknowledged that development at a greater density than present densities would require a level of water and wastewater service that would be provided by the City, not by the County. Many felt that 1,200 or 1,500 new units would be a more realistic number than a full buildout of 3,000 new units. CAC members who did not feel that Bell Muir is an appropriate area for further growth pointed out that over 100 Bell Muir residents signed a petition against allowing 3,000 new units in the area (as would be allowed under Alternative 2), and that allowing increased development in Bell Muir would require moving the Greenline. In addition, several CAC members suggested

that this area should be planned through a collaboration of area residents and the City of Chico, and the area should be designated Urban Reserve until those parties develop a more refined plan through the Chico General Plan Update process.

8 CAC members supported Alternative 1, which would be consistent with the existing General Plan and Zoning Ordinance, designating the entire study area as Rural Residential. Alternative 1 would allow approximately 100 new homes. Those who supported Alternative 1 would also have allowed additional development if Bell Muir is annexed by the City of Chico.

15 CAC members supported a modified Alternative 2, which would designate the majority of the Bell Muir study area for a mix of residential densities, allowing approximately 3,000 new homes. This Alternative also designates 10 acres for retail uses. Alternative 2 was modified to state that development would occur either under the auspices of the City of Chico or in close coordination with Chico.

*Study Area 4 Forest Ranch*

The discussion of Forest Ranch focused on the appropriate amount of retail land. Some CAC members felt that the retail designation should be restricted to the site of the general store, while others felt the larger, circular retail designation from the current General Plan should remain. All agreed that Agriculture would be an appropriate designation for the remainder of the study area.

The CAC unanimously supported Alternatives 2 and 3, which designate the majority of the study area for agricultural uses and maintains the 20 acres of Retail from the existing General Plan.

*Study Area 6 Upper Stilson Canyon*

The major landowner in this area presented the CAC with a bound document presenting their proposed project concept with maps and images of similar projects. Some CAC members felt that development should not be encouraged in Study Area 6 because of potential impacts to deer herds and special-status species, and the concern that remote homes will be less attractive in the future due to rising fuel costs. Other CAC members believed the landowner proposal illustrated high-quality rural residential development, which is and will continue to be an appealing type of home in Butte County. However, they were concern about how to ensure that the type of project presented by the landowner would actually be what was built. Facilitator David Early suggested utilizing a Specific Plan overlay to require more detailed planning for this area.

3 CAC members supported Alternative 2, which would designate the entire study area as Resource Conservation and would not allow any new homes.

14 CAC members supported a modified Alternative 3, which would be roughly similar to the landowner proposal. The modified Alternative 3 would designate the study area as Resource Conservation, but would also apply a Specific Plan overlay to a portion of the

study area. The Specific Plan would be required to include Very Low and Low Density Residential, allowing approximately 600 new homes, as well as about 30 acres of Retail.

4 CAC members supported Alternative 4, which would be identical to Alternative 3 but would allow only 300 new homes to be developed through the Specific Plan.

CAC member Todd Hall, whose family members own land within this Study Area, abstained from the vote.

*Study Area 9 Doe Mill/Honey Run*

The landowner in this study area also submitted to the CAC a bound document presenting their proposed project concept with maps and images of similar projects. Several CAC members stated that they were impressed with this packet and the type and quality of development it portrayed. Some CAC members felt this study area is a good location for additional development because of its proximity to Chico, and believe that careful site planning and clustering can prevent impacts to biological and visual resources. Those members who supported development were relatively evenly divided over whether this development should happen under the County's jurisdiction or only after annexation to the City of Chico. Other CAC members stated that even clustered development would bring people, cars and pets into a biologically-sensitive area, expose property to wildland fire hazards, and negatively affect groundwater recharge in the area.

4 CAC members supported a modified Alternative 1. Under this modification, the entire study area would be designated for Agriculture, but the County's policy would be that it would not object to development happening under the auspices of the City of Chico.

9 CAC members supported Alternative 4. Alternative 4 would designate the study area for Agriculture and apply a Specific Plan overlay. The Specific Plan would be required to plan for the parameters of the landowner's proposed project, which would include a 30-acre Village Core with mixed retail and office uses; 1,500 new homes; and 665 acres designated Resource Conservation.

5 CAC members supported Alternative 5, which would be identical to Alternative 4 but would require that development occurs under the auspices of the City of Chico.

3 CAC members supported a modified version of Alternative 2. Under this modified alternative, approximately 500 acres would be designated for Medium Density Residential, allowing about 3,000 new homes, and the remainder of the study area would be designated for Resource Conservation. However, growth would be focused in the west and north of the study area, near the existing Doe Mill development. Development would be required to occur through the City of Chico.

It is important to note that Alternatives 4 and 5, which together received support from 14 CAC members, would result in the same type and amount of development in Study Area 9, and differed only on whether this development would occur under the County or under the City of Chico.

*Study Area 14 Nance Canyon/Highway 99*

The CAC acknowledged that the landfill, which is surrounded by this study area, should be protected from encroachment by incompatible uses and requested to return to that topic during the policy discussion in Meeting Series #5. Some CAC members advocated Alternative 1, which would keep the existing Agriculture designation, stating that development in this area would go against the Guiding Principles and citing concerns about inadequate water supply, inadequate roadway access, impacts to biological resources, and lack of infrastructure or services. Although some CAC members supported the idea of a research and business park in this study area that may offer jobs to help retain college students in Butte County, others asserted that to be successful, a research and business park would need to be closer to a city, or at least have access to a freeway interchange, as in Study Area 15. Other CAC members pointed out that Study Area 14 is adjacent to Chico's SOI and so is not far from a city.

11 supported Alternative 1, which follows the existing General Plan, designating the entire study area for agriculture.

4 supported a new alternative that would designate 1,100 acres of the study area for Industrial use, in order to allow a research and business park. This alternative was closest to the landowner's proposed alternative.

5 supported a modified version of Alternative 2, which would also designate about 1,100 acres for industrial purposes, but would also allow some Medium and High Density Residential

*Study Area 15 Hamlin Canyon/Highway 99*

As with Study Area 14, although CAC members supported the idea of a research and business park, several suggested that locating one here would be leapfrog development, and that sites in or near Oroville would be more appropriate. These members tended to support continued grazing as the best use for this study area in order to preserve the existing landscape and views, while maintaining the existing General Plan's 50-acre M-1 designation in the southwest of the study area. Other CAC members pointed out the existing industrial and light industrial operations immediately west of Study Area 15 and the access provided by the existing freeway interchange.

10 supported Alternative 4, as put forth by the landowner. This would include 400 acres of Industrial designation along Highway 99 and Durham Pentz Road, with the remainder of the study area in Resource Conservation.

7 supported Alternative 1, designating the entire study area as Agriculture, with the modification that it be corrected to include existing M-1 designation from the existing General Plan.

2 supported the original Alternative 1, which designated the entire study area as Agriculture and would not carry forward the M-1 designation.

*Study Area 16 Oroville Chico Highway/Highway 99*

Discussion of this study area was very brief.

18 CAC members supported Alternatives 1 and 2, which follow the existing General Plan, designating the entire study area for Agriculture.

*Study Area 17 Durham*

The CAC unanimously supported Alternative 1, because it is consistent with the Durham Dayton Nelson Plan developed through a community planning effort and adopted in 1992. Alternative 1 would designate the center of Durham for Medium and Medium-High Density Residential, Retail, Industrial and Public. The outer portions of the town are designated for Very Low Density Residential, and the remainder of the study area is designated for Agriculture. This alternative would allow approximately 50 new homes and about 50 acres of retail/industrial uses.

*Study Area 18 Durham Dayton/Highway 99*

Several CAC members stated that this area should remain in agriculture to protect existing open space and viewsheds that express the character of Butte County, and did not support commercial or industrial development in Study Area 18 or other study areas along 99 because they feared creating a corridor of development that would negatively impact existing views of agricultural land and open space. The importance of the site to sandhill cranes was also mentioned. However, other CAC members argued that good freeway access and the existing light industrial businesses immediately north of this study area create a good opportunity for additional commercial or industrial development here.

14 supported Alternative 1/2, which would follow the existing General Plan, designating the entire study area for Agriculture.

4 supported Alternative 3, which would designate the majority of the study area for industrial uses and would also allow about 15 acres of retail uses.

1 supported a modified Alternative 3, in which the easternmost corner would be designated for a combination of Industrial and Retail uses, while the rest of the area would remain in Agriculture.

*Study Area 19 Durham Pentz/Highway 99*

In response to a question from the CAC, the landowner for this area clarified that his proposed project would not include any new homes, and would be limited to 400 acres of Industrial designation. Some CAC members were concerned about impacts to biological

resources in this area, while others supported additional job-generating uses here that would build on existing light industrial uses to the northeast.

13 CAC members supported Alternatives 1 and 2, which would follow the existing General Plan, designating the entire study area for Agriculture.

6 CAC members supported Alternative 4, the landowner's proposal, which would allow 400 acres in the northwest of this study area to be designated for Industrial uses.