

**Butte County General Plan 2030
Public Workshop
September 8, 2008
Oroville, CA
Goals & Policies Development (Meeting Series #5)
Summary of Input Received**

This is a summary of the overall themes of the public input received at the General Plan 2030 public workshop held on September 8, 2008 at the Southside Community Center in Oroville. The public workshop included three main components:

- an Open House, during which participants visited Policy Stations, the Preferred Land Use Alternative Station, and the Draft General Plan Outline Station;
- a presentation explaining the General Plan process and describing recent outcomes; and
- 28 small group discussions facilitated by County staff from a number of departments, in which participants shared ideas about goals and policies related to specific issues.

Approximately 50 members of the public participated at the workshop.

Public input from this workshop is derived from the following sources:

- Written comments submitted on comment cards and the Policy Alternatives handout, which were available throughout the workshop
- Verbal comments made during the three small group discussion sessions and recorded by the group facilitators.

In addition to input received at the public workshop, CAC members will be provided with raw data, including transcriptions of the facilitators' notes from the small group discussions and scans of the written comments submitted via comment card or on copies of the Policy Alternatives handout.

This summary is organized according to the policy topics that were discussed at the workshop. In each small group discussion, participants were asked to begin by stating goals they feel General Plan 2030 should include, and then to focus their input on the Policy Alternatives handout. The Policy Alternatives handout addresses specific policy questions grouped together by overall topic. Numbered questions below are keyed to the question numbers in the August 2008 Policy Alternatives handout.

Topic #1: Urban Growth Boundaries

Two groups discussed the need for additional urban growth boundaries, public involvement in setting urban growth boundaries, the Chico Area Greenline, and how to protect the Neal Road Landfill, as well as more general policy guidelines for urban growth boundaries.

1. Should the County implement additional urban growth boundaries, and if so, how?

Several comments were made about the need to establish urban growth boundaries around Paradise. In particular, participants felt that the areas south of Paradise and southwest of Paradise along the Skyway require urban growth boundaries to facilitate more efficient service provision and to protect viewsheds.

3. How should the public be involved in setting urban growth boundaries?

Both groups indicated that a voter initiative process would not be appropriate for the creation of new urban growth boundaries, in part because agriculture interests would not be adequately represented. Both groups felt that the Board of Supervisors should instead make such decisions.

4. How should the public be involved in setting urban growth boundaries?

Several participants expressed support for modifying the Greenline to follow natural boundaries, noting Mud Creek as a reasonable boundary. Other participants suggested that the Greenline boundary be moved to the northwest boundary (instead of following Bell and Muir Roads as specified by the Preferred Land Use Alternative) of Study Area 3 (Bell Muir), and that the 300-foot agricultural buffer policy be enforced along this boundary. There was also support for renaming the Greenline to an Urban Boundary. Participants also suggested new policy options, including requiring periodic reviews and reauthorizations of the Greenline and creating a transitional agriculture/suburban zone that could incorporate the small parcels that currently exist inside the Greenline.

5. How should the County protect the Neal Road Landfill?

Participants suggested that a buffer should be established around the Neal Road Landfill, allowing open space and grazing uses. In addition, there was one suggestion to establish multiple buffer zones that allow different types of uses, similar to the Airport Land Use Compatibility Zones around the airports.

General Urban Growth Boundary Policies

Participants suggested that all future urban growth boundaries follow physical boundaries, such as creeks, drainages and roads. There were also suggestions to establish and enforce large minimum lot sizes outside of urban growth boundaries and in the urban areas immediately

inside of the boundaries. Some comments emphasized the need to enforce the 300-foot agriculture buffer, to make zoning consistent with the General Plan, and to review each general plan element every 5 to 10 years and update as necessary.

Topic #2: County Character, New Development and Housing

Two groups discussed general goals related to this topic, as well as policies related to building design and affordable housing. There was also a written comment pertaining to constraints to new development. Participants suggested that the General Plan include goals to preserve natural viewsheds, improve design in urban and rural areas, and establish broad design guidelines that provide flexibility to developers and that balance economic viability and good design. Support for design guidelines generally increased with increases of residential densities and intensities of the use.

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

Participants were generally supportive of establishing some design guidelines. Many distinguished between residential and non-residential, or single-family and multi-family residential, indicating that residential in general or single-family residential development should not be subject to design guidelines. Participants stressed that design guidelines should not burden developers, and opposed the creation of a design review board. Participants also indicated that design guidelines should be intended to preserve ridgeline views and mitigate viewshed impacts.

7. How should the County work to provide more affordable housing? (For the purposes of the General Plan, “affordable housing” is defined as housing that is affordable for “very-low” and “low” income households, which are households that earn no more than 50% and 80% of the County’s median income, respectively. “Affordable housing” does not cost more than 30 percent of a household’s income.)

Some participants were opposed to requiring that a certain number of units be affordable in larger residential developments, while others suggested that completion bonds be used to ensure that they are built. Several comments supported using incentives for affordable housing. In addition, participants supported using grant funding for affordable housing and coordinating with the cities to locate affordable housing in spheres of influence rather than in agricultural land. There were also a couple of comments that opposed mixing affordable and market rate housing. Inclusionary housing policies were not supported by the groups.

Topic #3: Regional and Local Coordination

Three groups discussed coordination with incorporated and unincorporated municipalities, and there was one written comment regarding the topic.

8. How should the County more effectively coordinate its planning efforts with those of the five incorporated municipalities, other Counties and other planning and regulatory agencies?

Participants generally supported policies to establish regular and open meetings between County and City staff and elected officials. There were also suggestions to concentrate County and City resources on clearly defined issues within the spheres of influence (SOIs). In addition, there was support for establishing consistent development standards in the SOIs that aim to minimize environmental impacts and conflicts between adjacent uses.

9. How should the County work with local unincorporated communities in planning for their futures?

Participants also supported a policy that the County should provide staff support for community planning efforts in unincorporated areas, and there was a suggestion to establish a policy for the County to also provide physical support in unincorporated areas, such as fire and water service. In addition, there were comments that the Upper Ridge should be recognized as an unincorporated community.

Topic #4: Agriculture

Three groups discussed agricultural policies. There were also a number of written comments submitted about this topic.

10. 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, maintain, promote and enhance agricultural uses and resources)?

Participants supported a policy that would refine the buffer requirements based on natural site features, including topography, and suggested that buffer design policies be established in coordination with all relevant entities, including Cities. Participants also suggested that the buffer requirements consider pesticide exposure and the requirements of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA).

11. How should the County help to protect, maintain, promote and enhance its agricultural uses and resources?

Many participants focused on water supply for agricultural uses. Participants supported policies to protect access to water for agricultural purposes and to the existing ditch system, and suggested new policies to improve the distribution of water in the southern portion of the county for agricultural uses, and to seek grants and other funding to fully utilize surface water resources for agriculture. Some participants were opposed to allowing development offsets that would result in any conversions of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses because land cannot be returned to agriculture once it is developed. Participants also supported flexible building code regulations to provide housing for agricultural employees, but suggested that the County Health Department be required to conduct site inspections of agricultural worker housing for fewer than six individuals, and for farms over a certain size before new housing is allowed. There were also suggestions to establish different zoning regulations that pertain to agricultural animals and recreational-use animals, such as horses; ensure that agricultural uses are maintained after natural disasters; and ensure that all Agriculture Element policies are applied across the county uniformly. Several participants were in favor of a policy to support agricultural education and research, and one suggested that agricultural education efforts include outreach to the general public.

12. How should the County help to protect, maintain, promote and enhance its timber uses and resources?

Participants indicated that a goal should be to support sustainable timber harvesting as an important local industry.

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

Several participants supported policies that would increase minimum parcel sizes on agricultural lands and discourage the conversion of 5-acre parcels from agricultural uses. Participants also supported policies that would allow specialty crops on 5-acre parcels, establish different policies on small farms than large farms and allow agricultural support uses in agricultural zones

14. How should the County encourage and enhance niche and specialty agriculture, such as organic products, heritage livestock, and heirloom crops?

Many participants supported policies that provide for agritourism uses, although some felt that policies should also establish limitations to minimize impacts on surrounding uses. Several participants also supported a policy that recognizes local climate conditions as they relate to agricultural uses in the Zoning Ordinance, with one comment adding that historical uses should also be recognized. Participants also suggested new policies, including requiring

smaller buffers around specialty small crops, supporting agricultural research focused on small sustainable agriculture and agritourism uses, and that the Winery Ordinance be reviewed. In addition, many participants felt that the unique agriculture area identified in Study Area 23 on the map of the Preferred Land Use Alternative be reviewed and refined to reflect current uses and conditions.

15. What strategies should the County use to support the local agricultural economic sector?

Participants supported policies to establish an agricultural marketing and tourism program and to promote agritourism and themed farm trails. Participants also suggested a policy to allow or encourage special events in agricultural areas.

Topic #5: Water Resources

Three groups discussed water policies. There were also a number of written comments submitted about this topic. Participants suggested a number of water supply goals: promote water conservation; protect prime recharge areas; strengthen basin management; strengthen groundwater permitting policies; and establish long-term water planning procedures.

16. How should the General Plan protect and enhance Butte County's water supply?

Participants supported policies to map groundwater resources and recharge areas, as well as to establish groundwater recharge zones. Participants also supported policies to cooperate with other agencies, including water districts, and to only allow development where it can be shown that adequate water services exist, especially in the Upper Ridge area. Many participants supported policies to use the County's State Water Project Allocation, with one comment to ensure that all areas of the county benefit from this source.

Participants suggested many new policies, including the following: protect areas with known groundwater depletion; promote or require the reuse of wastewater; incentivize the consolidation of small water systems; discourage parcelization that disrupts the existing water distribution systems; establish a program to construct facilities that will capture runoff; respect historic ground and surface water rights; and maintain an agricultural water supply, including for foothill agriculture.

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

Participants supported a policy to develop a watershed management plan in Butte County, as well as in the Upper Ridge. There was also a suggestion to include a program to establish a

septic monitoring committee in the Upper Ridge. Participants also suggested that timber harvest regulations be established to minimize erosion.

19. How should septic systems and package sewage treatment plants be regulated to support water quality?

Participants suggested a new policy that all wastewater treatment systems be designed, constructed and maintained to protect water quality, as well as to consider effluent discharge in septic system reviews. Many participants supported a policy that would allow or encourage the use of new technologies to treat wastewater. There were several suggestions for new policies, including the following: conduct education and outreach to homeowners about wastewater and its impacts on water quality; support the appropriate management and oversight of wastewater systems; and follow the Paradise model for wastewater treatment in high density and sensitive areas where a sewer system is not feasible.

20. How should the County minimize flood hazards?

Participants supported a policy to prohibit development in flood plains. There was also a comment that local knowledge about flood areas should also be incorporated into planning efforts, rather than only relying on the FEMA maps.

Topic #6: Economic Development

Three groups discussed economic development. There were also a number of written comments submitted about this topic. Participants suggested many goals pertaining to economic development. These goals include the following: coordinate with cities for economic development; attract business, including both large and niche businesses; attract high tech jobs; promote economically sustainable and quality development; respond to opportunities for new industries, including green businesses, green energy markets and eco-tourism; enhance vocational training; encourage agriculture tourism; make small-scale agriculture viable; improve water distribution system and coordination; and improve and protect infrastructure, including telecommunications, airports and industry parks; promote recreation infrastructure.

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

Participants were supportive of policy options to create a countywide Economic Development Strategy; create a County-level economic development function; promote local tourism and visitor-oriented recreation through more aggressive marketing programs; partner with educational institutions and businesses to develop flexible Research & Development and incubator space in the county; promote the agricultural sector through adoption of various

policies; and promote sustainable business and the development of new economic opportunities related to renewable energy.

In addition, participants suggested a new policy to provide fiscal incentives, such as tax holidays, to attract industry.

22. What strategies should the County use to support the local tourism economic sector?

Participants were supportive of policy options to encourage the redevelopment of historic sites as tourist destinations; identify and protect all sites of cultural and historical interest; promote Butte County as a destination for large events such as conferences and sporting events; promote Butte County as a destination for recreational, cultural, and amenity-based tourism; create a County-level function to increase coordination of tourism and recreation development at a range of scales; prioritize transportation infrastructure improvements that would support tourism, such as improved roadway access to Lake Oroville; and promote the development of high-quality tourist amenities, such as hotels and restaurants, in scenic areas.

In addition, participants suggested new policies to encourage tour bus visits to historic sites and to establish a visitor center in each County library.

23. What strategies should the County use to support the local manufacturing, office and commercial sectors?

Participants were supportive of policy options to ensure land is “shovel-ready” by allowing an increased range of light industrial uses by right in Industrial zones; support training at trade and professional schools; improve infrastructure to support manufacturing, office and commercial development, and encourage airport, highway and rail development; support small businesses and entrepreneurs by streamlining permit processes and reducing permit fees for small business owners; provide housing affordable to the workforce; and address new and emerging green technologies and businesses in the Zoning Ordinance such as biodiesel and ethanol production and distribution.

Topic #7: Transportation, Circulation and Scenic Highways

Three groups discussed transportation, circulation and scenic highways. There were also a number of written comments submitted about this topic. Participants suggested a number of goals pertaining to transportation and circulation, including the following: establish a regional traffic plan; improve bicycle and pedestrian safety along roadways; provide adequate public transit to serve daily needs; and provide adequate funding for transportation-related policies.

24. How should the County maintain and improve road conditions, and safe traffic flow?

Participants supported policies that ensure road capacity is adequate prior to new development, impose traffic impact fees on new development, and pursue funding for improvements to Safe Routes to Schools. Participants supported a policy to seek and protect funding for road maintenance, calling out the need for a secondary access road between the Upper Ridge and Chico. Participants also supported a policy to re-examine road standards, calling out the Firhaven subdivision as being substandard. In addition, participants suggested a policy to work with Caltrans and BCAG to improve access to Highway 5 via Highway 162.

25. How should the General Plan address bicycle issues?

Participants suggested that utility corridors be considered for the development of bicycle and pedestrian routes and that bicycle amenities be provided at all County facilities and park-and-ride lots, including bicycle racks, showers and lockers.

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

Participants supported a policy to support better public transit, noting the need to also improve amenities, such as bus shelters. Participants also suggested that rail service to connect Butte County with other regions be promoted, and that other sources of funding for public transit be explored, such as advertising funds. Participants also supported policies to encourage carpooling and telecommuting, as well as to provide services and amenities within existing communities.

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

Participants supported a scenic highway designation along the Skyway between Paradise and Chico. Participants also suggested a policy to ensure that scenic highway designations are reserved for truly scenic areas, and not intended to only limit uses.

Topic #8: Utilities, Services & Airports

One group discussed utilities, services and airports. There were also a number of written comments submitted about this topic.

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

Some participants supported a policy to require an independent fiscal impact analysis for large development projects. Other participants questioned many of the policy options. Specifically, participants indicated that ensuring infrastructure capacity is adequate and services are available prior to approval of new development is not feasible; rather, such policies should ensure adequate capacity and services prior to construction.

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

Participants supported the policy to encourage defensible space, fire safe building construction, fuel management and wildfire preparedness, but specified that the policy should be strengthened to require rather than encourage these methods. To do this, the following policies were suggested: adopt, apply and enforce defensible space standards for high fire hazard areas; adopt fire safe building construction standards; and work collaboratively with fire safe councils, municipalities, and State agencies to mitigate wildfire threats.

30. How should the County work with schools to ensure adequate provision of schools and to minimize the impacts of new development on existing school facilities?

Participants supported a policy to approve new development only if adequate school facilities exist. Participants also suggested a policy to coordinate with school districts to determine capacity issues over time.

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

Several participants supported the policy to revise the General Plan and zoning to be consistent with the adopted Airport Land Use Capability Plan.

Topic #9: Parks, Recreation and Trails

Two groups discussed parks, recreation and trails. There were also several written comments submitted about this topic.

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

Some participants supported the establishment of new community, regional, neighborhood and dog parks, as well as additional river- and water-related recreational facilities, suggesting in

particular the need for a new regional park in Butte Creek Canyon. There was also the suggestion that the County adopt a policy to develop parks where they are most needed, rather than only developing new parks through master planning efforts. Other participants felt that existing parks should be better utilized rather than creating new parks. Participants also supported policies to encourage coordination of recreation programs and facilities and to allow the collection of Quimby Act fees to support park development. A number of new policies were also suggested, including the following: incorporate recreational facility planning in the development approval; allow density increases when small parks are incorporated into development projects; encourage new regional- or national-level recreation events, like the Wildflower Race; promote ecotourism, which would increase revenue while maintaining open space and habitat; develop recreational vehicle parks, which would improve recreation and bring jobs to Butte County; clearly post park policies at park facilities; and increase park safety by providing resources for adequate park supervision.

33. How should the General Plan address recreational trails facilities, such as hiking, bicycle, equestrian and off-highway vehicle trails?

Participants supported policies to identify needed connections in the existing trails network, noting in particular the need for continuous bicycle paths and sidewalks to link residential areas with schools, and to pursue the development of utility easements for new trails. Additional goals and policies were suggested, including the following: improve safety along trails; publish trail maps for the public; require that new development incorporate bicycle trails; and provide a public ice-skating rink in Butte County.

Topic #10: Habitat Conservation

Two groups discussed habitat conservation. Participants identified a number of goals related to habitat conservation. These goals include the following: protect deer herd migration and oak woodland areas; provide a balanced approach to development in conservation areas; promote stewardship of natural resources; and establish predictable conservation standards.

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

Participants supported policies to utilize conservation easements and encourage clustered development to protect habitat areas, as well as to establish flexible development standards, specifically suggesting clustered development, transfer of development credits and mitigation banking. Several participants also supported policies to coordinate with the Butte Regional Conservation Plan, as well as to coordinate with other agencies on natural resources and

habitat planning. Participants also suggested new policies to encourage the rehabilitation of creeks, wetlands and other natural areas, and to develop passive recreation uses, such as wildflower viewing on Table Mountain and hiking.

Topic #11: Green Building, Greenhouse Gases & Energy

Group members indicated that no green building requirements should be mandated by the County; instead, any programs should be voluntary only. The County should provide education regarding green building practices and set the example by making County projects conform to green building practices. Members also indicated that the County should continue to use alternative energy sources such as solar for county facilities, which also sets an example for others to follow.

Topic #12: Cultural Resources & Tribal Coordination

The chairperson of the Enterprise Rancheria was the sole participant for this topic. Her comments pertained to the Tribe's goals for tribal coordination with local jurisdictions, including the County. The County has invited Enterprise Rancheria and other local tribes to consult on Butte County General Plan 2030. The Enterprise Rancheria Tribal Council will review the Policy Alternatives handout and provide specific comments at a later date as part of this process. The Tribe also plans to participate at future Butte County General Plan 2030 tribal update meetings held by the County.

37. How should the County respect Native American culture and planning concerns?

Enterprise Rancheria supports policies to promote tribal consultation and to protect cultural heritage while allowing community growth. The Tribe often coordinates its input on local planning efforts with the Berry Creek and Mooretown Rancherias through a Unity Council.

Topic #13: Community Health & Safety

Three groups discussed community health and safety. Participants identified two goals related to community health and safety: reduce obesity in Butte County and improve air quality.

38. How should the County address community health and safety?

Participants suggested the following policies: provide development incentives to provide access to markets, gardens, parks and transportation in low-income neighborhoods; encourage community gardens and farmers markets; promote physical recreation events; limit fast-food restaurant uses; and require water fountains in new buildings.

39. How should the County address youth services?

Participants supported the policy to outreach to youth and include youth in planning efforts. Participants also suggested a policy to distribute recreational opportunities throughout the county for low-income youth.

40. How should the County address Noise?

Although the Policy Alternatives handout did not address noise issues, participants suggested a number of policy options pertaining to noise, including the following: enforce the noise ordinance; provide staffing and funding to measure and enforce noise levels during nights and weekends; establish noise regulations for all uses; limit noise levels to 60 decibels; allow temporary residential generator uses, such as during power outages; prohibit generator noise beyond property lines or at night; and prohibit motocross uses in residential areas.