



The *Business Alliance...Update* is a bi-monthly publication of the El Dorado Business Alliance (BA). The BA is made up of the following organizations: El Dorado Builders' Exchange, El Dorado County Association of Realtors (EDCAR), El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce, North State Building Industry Association (NSBIA) and Shingle Springs-Cameron Park Chamber of Commerce. Web Address for Subscription Info: [KathyeRussell@gmail.com](mailto:KathyeRussell@gmail.com)

## *"Developing Mutual Support on Community-Wide Issues"*

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### CURRENT NEWS

**Oak Protection Plan – Recent Court Ruling:** A court decision has found that the El Dorado County (EDC) Oak Woodlands Management Plan (OWMP) is not adequate to support off site (Option B) oak mitigation. We will discuss this in greater detail in the next issue of this newsletter.

**Supervisors' Hearing on Traffic Fee:** The Board of Supervisors (BOS) is scheduled to consider the Department of Transportation's (DOT) response to prior BOS direction to lower the county's Traffic Impact Mitigation (TIM) fees by a targeted 15%. Initial drafts indicate DOT has come close to accomplishing the reductions, just falling short of the 15% target. Controversy continues from both sides of this issue: Various members of the public claim the fee is not high enough to fund necessary traffic improvements; others state the fee is too high and doesn't account for current economic trends and job losses resulting in fewer trips overall, by commuters. The Board will review DOT's response and hear public input on **February 7, 2012 at 2:00 pm.**

### GENERAL PLAN BALANCES LAND USE

Members of the EDAC Regulatory Reform Subcommittee made an interesting discovery in doing research on implementation of the 2004 General Plan. Not only was the General Plan well thought out as conceived and adopted by the Board of Supervisors, but they also discovered an unexpected balance of lands in the GP. As discussed in recent newsletters, the General Plan sets forth Land Uses that balance rural and urban uses. This is more clearly reflected in the number of acres set aside for those uses.

For example: More urbanized land uses that were earmarked for higher density housing as well as commercial and industrial activities, are called Community Regions (CR) and more rural economic areas are Rural Centers (RC). **There are roughly 70,000 acres (less than 7% of the county) set aside as CR lands;** and 7,000 acres set aside as RC lands (or less than 1% of the county!). Rural Center lands are located within the more rural parts of the community such as South counties' Fairplay; North counties' Divide area; and Central counties' Coloma valley area. These lands also contain the bulk of the county's agricultural lands and the General Plan, in its' wisdom, designated agricultural lands that have unique soils as agricultural preserves or Ag Districts.

Currently there are 49,141 acres of land already identified as Agricultural Districts (defined as productive croplands) with another 16,164 acres of land mapped for Ag District expansion. The expanded ag lands are intended to meet the county's need for agricultural uses in the future. Thus the GP allows for at least **65,000 acres of agriculturally-protected land** and balances the 70,000 acres deemed appropriate for development (a 1:1 ratio of ag lands to higher density areas overall). Note: This does not discuss the 750,000 acres of *designated* Natural Resource lands, which includes national/state forest/timber lands (of which 200,000 acres are in private ownership).

Thus the GP has balanced the higher growth areas of Community Regions such as El Dorado Hills, Cameron Park, Diamond Springs and Placerville, with almost the same number of acres preserved for agricultural uses to meet our areas' agricultural needs for the foreseeable future, based on historical use.

### RURAL LANDS

EDC consists of 1,100,000 total acres of land of which approximately 1,023,000 acres are contained within the concept area of "Rural Regions".

Rural Regions are defined as “all those lands not included in the Community Regions (CR) or Rural Centers (RC)”. Thus Rural Regions, or Rural Lands, defines the intended use for the largest number of EDC acreage throughout the county by far. The General Plan further defines uses within Rural Regions as appropriate for *both* residential and agricultural uses.

The review of identified land uses can be defined, as the GP attempted to do, based on a simple snapshot in time (such as the number of acres currently defined as residential/developable land, and the current number of acres now in crop production.) But the GP is not a static document. By its' very nature it's a living changing document that must anticipate, by making assumptions and incorporating state laws and jurisdictional mandates, how future lands will be utilized, while protecting those areas as set forth as Objectives within the GP.

We can make fair assumptions that a certain number of acres will be required to accept the regions “fair share” of residential growth as mandated by state law, based on how many residential units we are averaging per acre. This effort was undertaken as part of the original General Plan and has been updated in the GP Update process through a Land Feasibility study.

We also now know, based on our original GP Objective to preserve quality agricultural soils and lifestyles, we are setting aside 65,000 acres of land that might serve future agriculturalists. And we know where such soils are, as mapped by the county based on criteria provided by the Agricultural Commission.

**What we haven't determined to date – is what those roughly 250,000 acres of remaining Rural Lands will become.** Though controversial (the process is like making sausage – hard to watch) the community must engage in the discussion to assign zoning that complies with the 2004 GP. As noted in the past, our Zoning Ordinance is over 30 years old and must be brought current.

As a means of understanding the needs of the Rural Land owners, Reg Reform reached out to many rural land owners, recreational and agriculture representatives to discern what the needs were of all. This effort will continue as county staff prepares to go into the various communities to conduct outreach and collect input from the public at large. What has surfaced already is the understanding that rural lands are viewed by some as “open space” for tourists and neighbors. However, such “use” does not consider the rights of private property owners, who must find a way to realize some income from their land.

## **RURAL COMMERCE = RURAL LANDS**

Rural Commerce is essential to sustain, preserve and protect EDC's rural lands and lifestyles. Establishing the economic means by which rural lands can be productive working landscapes will dis-incentivize land splits and provide incentives for land owners to retain larger parcels, as well as bring much needed income to residents living on rural lands, bring revenue to county coffers, as well as maintain valued open space view sheds.

At a presentation before Supervisors on November 14, 2011, Reg Reform offered the following areas for BOS consideration to promote commerce in rural areas. One slide showed constraints to rural commerce as proposed in the Zoning Ordinance and compared those to concepts that could be analyzed in the GP Update EIR (being conducted throughout 2012) as a range of options. Supervisors indicated support for the range of options, knowing their final decision would come *after the analysis is completed*, projected in late 2012. Areas to be analyzed include: Allowing some Commercial and Industrial uses in Rural Regions; Expansion of current Rural Land uses; allowing some (number to be decided) employees under a new Home Occupation Ordinance; and Provide options for landowners who roll out of Williamson Act contracts.

Supervisors will also consider a process conceived by agricultural representatives that provides a process for property owners to “Opt In” to ag protections if their land is zoned for residential use but slated for agricultural use, and for agricultural land owners to “Opt In” to residential land uses, as appropriate. This process recognizes the need to consider what is financially feasible and desirable to property owners.

**Next Issue:** *More details on the proposed Home Occupation Ordinance (HOO).*