



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

“Developing Mutual Support on Community-Wide Issues”

Welcome past and new readers of *The Business Alliance...Update*! This electronic publication has been dormant for a few years after years of following the 2004 adoption of the El Dorado County (EDC) General Plan (GP).

Although it may appear that not much, if anything, newsworthy is happening in the local economic, land-use, regulatory arena – that perception is not accurate. In reality a groundswell of volunteers have seized on the economic downturn and subsequent free time available, to tackle significant changes in how EDC does business. The result has been a tremendous effort that inspired the El Dorado Business Alliance leadership to revive this bi-monthly newsletter.

What is going on in El Dorado County?

In May 2009 the Board of Supervisors convened an Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) tasked with assisting the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) for the county, to, in part, *“Recommend ways to reform and improve regulatory processes relating to business....and recommend procedures to eliminate contradictory, unneeded requirements of the county....”* To this end an EDAC Regulatory Reform Subcommittee (Reg Reform) was formed specifically to review local land use and land entitlement processes.

To date “Reg Reform” has held over 394 meetings with private business experts, engineers, architects, advocacy groups, local county department leaders and staff. In addition, the subcommittee convened study groups and sought input from local commissions including the Planning, Agricultural and Transportation Commission representatives.

Through public workshops on six different occasions this year alone, EDAC/Reg Reform has produced and presented issues with detailed analysis and background to the Board of Supervisors. Each time Supervisors encouraged participation and input from all interested individuals, groups, departments or agencies. The results have been rewarding.

Issues covered were extensive and time consuming as Reg Reform did not simply accept opinions or views of why things were a certain way, but rather volunteers delved into each subject with tenacity to understand comprehensively where ongoing land entitlement processes were getting bogged down. The results were often surprising. To date over 250 individuals have participated in this “discovery” process and offered to help, provide research support and often recommendations.

What issues have been addressed?

The process Reg Reform engaged in once seemed overwhelming as one issue led to another and all issues had to be pursued and studied to gain an understanding of where they intersected and impacted county policies and individuals' concerns. Areas studied included: the 2004 General Plan (GP) through a required 5-year review, existing and proposed new Zoning Ordinance (ZO), draft Land Development Manual (LDM), California Map Act, Highway Design Manual (HDM), Fire Code and Fire Safe Regulations, high local fees, agricultural policies including the local Winery Ordinance, Ranch Marketing, Standard Practices, traffic standards and policies including locally-adopted Measure Y, State laws governing county regulations, Community ID/Design Ordinance and processes, Home Occupation Ordinance (HOO), Jobs/Retail Sales Revenue leakage, Design Improvement Standards Manual (DISM), Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP), Oak Resources Management Plan (OWMP), Timber and Forest Resource regulations, and many more.

Once these issues were reviewed and a basic comprehension of each issue was gained – the challenge was to understand where and how policies, procedures, regulations and rules overlapped and possibly conflicted with one another, or were found to be unnecessary or unworkable.

For example, one “issue” identified early in the process was the failure of the county to adopt a new Zoning Ordinance (ZO). Under state law the ZO must be consistent with the General Plan – not visa versa. The existing EDC ZO is over 30-years old and was never brought into conformance with the adopted GP. The result has been chaotic: Project proponents are required to develop projects consistent with the GP but policies often conflict with archaic zoning. Where conflicts exist it takes time and money to sort out the issue and find an acceptable solution. When these two documents are not in conformance, a rezone is required. The process often causes unnecessary confusion, concern and frustration with neighbors. Thus the time spent reviewing and creating a new ZO that adheres to policies and requirements of the GP became a necessity to streamline this regulatory process and comply with state laws.

The result of EDAC/Reg Reform efforts was to present options to Supervisors to assist in a systematic approach to: the required 5-year review of the General Plan; the prior Board directive to consider ways to reduce fees; the creation of a new Zoning Ordinance; as well as implementation of critical programs required by the GP but not yet completed, such as the INRMP. Completing these tasks in a timely manner, while reducing county costs to accomplish these tasks, was a top priority for the Supervisors. EDAC’s recommendations included the concept of combining the environmental review/EIR processes where feasible, allowing for a true programmatic approach to the entire effort, which would also reduce some County costs overall.

This process is now moving forward under the professional coordination of the CAO’s office and with full support of the Board of Supervisors. (See project timeline attached).

What are the early results of this effort?

The vast majority of the many participants in Reg Reform concurred that the overall vision and authorities established in the 2004 General Plan were workable! As the saying goes, “The devil was in the details” and how the county enforced issues without always first understanding the potential for unintended consequences quickly surfaced. The inclusion of so many business and issue experts in the process served the Board well and a big picture finally came together. Still, the question remained: How could each issue be processed for consideration of potential impacts of any final decision the BOS might make?

The result of work done to date was presented to the Supervisors in a public workshop on November 14, 2011. Decisions were not made at this meeting: Options were presented that outlined the communities’ concerns and input on each issue, establishing a range of options for proposed modifications to failed or conflicted policies, and providing the necessary framework (or range of possible solutions) to move forward with an analysis, as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) EIR process. Moving forward with this programmatic approach will give Supervisors a full range of potential outcomes on each issue with which to make educated and informed decisions, due approximately this time next year.

An unanticipated result of the inclusive Regulatory Reform process was a coming-together of vast segments of the community that had previously been at odds. All did not necessarily agree on a solution, but all participants have responded by giving their time, expertise, and personal commitment to resolving the issues. The result was a united effort to improve the local economic climate and processes, based on personal respect, willingness to listen and be educated, as well as a willingness to adjust views and even abandon prejudices, to eventually change when it resulted in a more cohesive and successful business environment for all those who share this community.

In subsequent newsletters we will be examining in detail the variety of issues reviewed to date. We plan to keep our readers informed of upcoming meetings as well as county progress as the process moves forward.

Attached is a timeline showing how the various processes are set to be reviewed, analyzed, integrated and ultimately resolved.

PROGRAMMATIC WORK FLOW

