American Flat
Spanish Flat
Bear Creek Area Plan

El Dorado County Planning Department
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

The following dates and resolution numbers reflect the time at which action was taken by the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors.

The official file containing all of the background information for the Plan formulation is on file with the El Dorado County Planning Department. The final Environmental Impact Report and associated notices and correspondence are also on file at the El Dorado County Planning Department.

DATE:

Area Plan Adopted: 10-21-75 (date) 370-75 (Resolution #)

Kenneth L. Milam
Planning Director

KLM:JR:kc
COUNTY OF EL DORADO

SUMMARY OF THE CITIZENS PLANNING
ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT FOR
THE LAND USE PLAN OF THE
COMMUNITIES OF BEAR CREEK,
AMERICAN FLAT AND SPANISH FLAT

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
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PLANNING COMMISSION
Al Lowe
Robert Nordgren
Kenneth Collins
Joseph Flynn
Joseph Imbach

Prepared By
EL DORADO COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
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CITIZENS PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEMBERSHIP

Maybelle Timm, Chairperson (deceased)
Robert Greenwood
Clay Dieckmann, Secretary
Helen Dieckmann
Kathryn Porter
Mrs. Eula B. Kirchner
Grace Leonard
William Bastien, Chairman
Donald C. Gernes
Lois Rankin
Jim Green, Vice-Chairman
Bob McGowan
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CHAPTER 1

POLICY STATEMENT OF THE COMMITTEE

Since this Plan is among the first developed for an area that has no town center or high density pattern, and is essentially rural in character, this Committee endorses the concept of low density for rural areas that is proposed in THE GENERAL PLAN FOR EL DORADO COUNTY, August 1969, and more precisely, that the designation of low density apply to the geographical area of this particular plan. Such references in the 1969 GENERAL PLAN FOR EL DORADO COUNTY may be found on Page 1, Item 6, and on Page 3, under "Goals and Objectives", items 12 and 13.

This Committee believes that planning by remote administrative agencies affords little or no local participation, and is less desirable than planning with local representation and participation at the local level. To that extent, this Committee is opposed to regional planning. It is the opinion and contention of this Committee, which is composed entirely of residents of the area involved, that the desires and objectives of a given geographical area can best be understood and interpreted by those people living in that area. This Committee further believes that local participation and representation in planning is consistent with the autonomy of local government and the philosophic principles of local government providing for close working relationships with the public and and the elective process. This Committee views these advantages as distinct and necessary cornerstones in planning procedures, advantages not afforded in the process of regional administrative planning.

It is strongly recommended that any amendments, variances or exceptions to this Land Use Plan be allowed review by this Committee prior to any final decision being made on changes. Additionally, that this Committee provide for the election of a chairman, vice-chairman and secretary each year on the anniversary of its founding, and that as members resign from the Committee, new members (being residents of the Area encompassed by the General Plan) be recruited to fill vacancies. Each year the General Plan should be reviewed and an evaluation
POLICY STATEMENT OF THE COMMITTEE (cont.)

report prepared. The evaluation report should address itself specifically to the question of whether or not the recommendations of this Plan are in fact being observed. Any violations of this General Plan, after its adoption, should be described in the evaluation report. A copy of the evaluation report, together with any recommendations the Committee should choose to make, will be sent to the Planning Commission of El Dorado County.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Bear Creek

Bear Creek was a satellite mining camp of Spanish Flat, one of a number in this Area. There was some placer mining along the gulch, roughly parallel to the present day County road, as early as 1852. But indications suggest these operations were short-lived and could not compete with the richer prospects at Spanish Flat. The main activity in the Bear Creek area was centered around a sawmill on Bear Creek in 1853 by Mr. Reuben Demuth. Parts for this sawmill were purchased from Mr. William Foster, owner of a large orchard and winery at Columbia Flat, and included parts from the original Sutter's Mill at Coloma. The sawmill was operated into the 1880's supplying timbers for mines in the area, and to water companies for construction of flumes. The sawmill was operated by Reuben Demuth and his sons during its later period. There was a school at Bear Creek, simply called the "Bear Creek School", that had, in the year 1880, a total of fifteen (15) students. The teacher at that time was Miss Mollie Wagner. The school continued to serve the area until shortly after the turn of the century. When the sawmill was shut down around 1885, the community was composed largely of small farms and ranches, with agriculture.

Letter printed in the Georgetown Gazette, May 5, 1980, from a Bear Creek resident
Statement of Mr. Oliver Demuth, 1963.
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (cont.)

Bear Creek (cont.)
the main pursuit. As there was no store in Bear Creek, most of the trading by local residents was done either at Spanish Flat, Kelsey or Georgetown. One of the first houses built in the Area was put up by Mr. Bingham, who early in 1852 was a partner of Reuben Demuth in a general store at American Flat.

American Flat

American Flat was also a satellite mining camp of Spanish Flat. It was named American Flat after a company of Americans who first occupied the diggings, according to the Rev. John Steele, author of *In Camp and Cabin*, who worked as a miner in 1850.

The area was sufficiently rich in gold to support a small town for only a period of about four years. Records show that in 1853 there were at least two small hotels there, one bowling alley and one general store. Today there are no remains of the original community, it has completely vanished as a townsites. But the main part of the community seems to have been situated along the banks of Dry Creek. When the area was abandoned by the miners, the land use was given over to agricultural purposes, pasturing and cutting timber. Most of the site of the original community was located on what is today known as the Porter Ranch, and on other parcels close to State Highway 193, near the junction of Traverse Creek Road.


El Dorado County Assessor's Office, License Fee Book, 1853.

Spanish Flat

The name of this town is said to have come from a company of Mexican miners who worked the area for gold deposits in the early days. Later, they were joined by a party of Chilean, according to Rev. John Steele, a miner in the area in the 1880's, and author of In Camp and Cabin. The origins of this settlement are directly related to the extension of gold mining activity to the Georgetown Divide after the placer deposits in the Coloma valley became exhausted. The character of the community, like most settlements in El Dorado County in the early 1850's, was typically that of a mining town. The first store in Spanish Flat was opened by Mr. Frank Johnson in 1849. In the 1850's, Spanish Flat became the most important trade center between Georgetown and Kelsey, achieving all the aspects of a community, complete with commercial services. The town was also a regular stage stop on the stagecoach route between Georgetown and Placerville. By the mid 1850's, there were several mining operations of the more permanent type in the immediate area. There was a school, Masonic order, I.O.O.F. Lodge, and, for a time, a post office. There were two bakeries, two blacksmith shops, an office of the Adams Express Company, two hotels, a saloon, butcher shop, general store, bowling alleys and gambling houses. The town even boasted its own resident physician, Dr. E.M. Alderman. Spanish Flat was the center of its own Judicial District and elected its own Justice of the Peace. The Judicial District continued intermittently as a legally constituted entity well into the twentieth century, until 1945, when it was incorporated into the Georgetown Judicial District. Mrs. Maybelle Timm was the last elected Justice in the Area.

Gold mining provided the economic base for the community well into the 1880's. While the population of the town fluctuated according to the fortunes of the mines, the town continued to retain all the appearances of a permanent settlement. There were several incorporated mining promotions at Spanish Flat, some with substantial capitalizations. For example, the Spanish Flat Quartz Mining
Spanish Flat (cont.)

and Tunnel Company was incorporated in February 1875, with a capital stock of 5 million dollars. James W. Marshall, the gold discoverer, was a frequent visitor to Spanish Flat in the early days, hiring out as a carpenter, or acting on his own as prospector or mine developer. Marshall designed and built the store and home for Louis Poor at the intersection of what is today State Highway 193 and Spanish Flat Road. The building itself has long since disappeared, but the foundation remains. In the early days, this area was known as Louisville and had a freight station, general store, livery stable, bar and card room; the last remaining building, the general store, was destroyed by a fire in 1939. Louisville appeared on the early maps of the area. Marshall prospected in many of the famous mines of the Spanish Flat-Kelsey area, and while he was one of the original owners in the Atlanta Gold and Silver Mine Company, developers of the Atlanta Claim, he was never fortunate enough to make a large strike. He is said to have also prospected the Alhambra Claim, although that property was not developed as a mine until the 1930's. Marshall was also associated with the Excelsior Mine, the Grey Eagle and the Big Sandy.

Spanish Flat was a point of origin and a terminus point for most of the pack trains into the Sierra Nevada Mountains of the North. These pack trains were usually made up of mules and mountain guides and carried supplies into the high country and into remote mining camps.

Probably the most historic of all the buildings in early day Spanish Flat was the famous Parker House Hotel. Built and operated by Lewis F. Parker, who applied for a gaming license as early as 1853, the hotel was later sold to and operated by G.H. Roelke. It was the largest and most imposing building in the town, fronting Quartz Alley from the east, two stories in height, and with a spacious veranda-type porch typical of gold rush architecture. The building, in later days, served as a sort of community center and social center, and in
Spanish Flat (cont.)

In the twentieth century the local Masonic Order regularly met there. Unfortunately, it was demolished in 1953 and 1954; its artifacts and contents either destroyed or since lost. There are today, in Spanish Flat, one or two private homes which date back to the early days, but their architecture to one degree or another has been altered through redecoration so that little or nothing at all is left to represent any architecture of the gold rush era.

In the early part of the twentieth century, the town went into a decline, as mining declined. With a raise in the price of gold in 1934, there was some renewed activity in the area, especially at the site of the old Spanish Flat Quartz Mining and Tunnel property due east of the townsite. But development work proved difficult and costly in terms of ore values discovered. Intermittent prospects have been made on the property, however, even as late as 1964.

In light of the historic importance of Spanish Flat, American Flat, Bear Creek and Louisville to El Dorado County history, this Committee recommends that historical markers be placed at suitable locations to commemorate the sites.

Sources:
Sioli, Paoli, Historical Souvenir of El Dorado County, Oakland, Sioli, 1883.

El Dorado County Assessor's office, License Fee Book, 1853.


El Dorado County Assessor's Office, Poll Tax Record, 1850.


Deeds, microfilm records, El Dorado County, Spanish Flat, University of California, The Bancroft Library.
CHAPTER III
ECONOMIC RESOURCES

The resources of this area in the past were in timber, cattle, orchards and gold mining. At the present time, the timber of commercial value has been removed, and because of a series of forest fires, orchards and grasslands have been largely destroyed. The placer mines of the area have been worked out, and the gold mine closing, order 1,208, of 1948 forced the closing of then operating lode mines. Following the lifting of the closing order, the cost of reconditioning the mines, coupled with the increased costs of labor, supplies and equipment, as compared to the static and unrealistic price for gold, caused all but a few of the higher grade mines to remain closed.

Cattle and sheep are still a source of income to a few of the residents on a limited basis. One gold mine is still in operation, and there is a tree farm. One manufacturing plant is producing automobile mufflers. The Talisman Press is publishing and selling books by mail order.

Several of the people residing in the area commute to employment in nearby cities. But most of the residents of the area are retirees and second-home owners. Many of these residents, tiring of the crowded conditions of urban life, have chosen this part of El Dorado County for its simple charm and serenity and the existing atmosphere of relaxed country life.

The land is best described as open spaces between low hill ranges, presenting attractive lon-range views, with pine trees, oaks and cedars enhancing the natural beauty of the landscape.

The development within the perimeter of the Central Plan has two characteristics. The Spanish Flat, American Flat and Highway 193 area to its northern boundary is given to a somewhat higher density of population on smaller parcels of land. While the land between Spanish Flat and Bear Creek is of very low density on larger acreages of land. This is desirable in order to retain its mountain estate atmosphere, promote quality growth, assure privacy and preserve the rural feeling of open spaces. There could develop at some time in the future
a variety of home occupations and acocational activities. There is no
shopping center in this area nad residents shop in the Garden Valley or
Georgetown districts or travel to nearby cities.

In keeping with its present character of low density residential country
living, and with its open spaces, the near-term potential for the area is
clearly in the development of home sites in generous land parcels.

Should a larger, imported water supply become available from Georgetown
Public Utility District, a stimulating effect on residential home building
and agriculture would occur. Because the area now depends on residential
private wells for a water supply, and because this source of water is limited
by nature, it will be seen that before the area can support any large type
of development it must develop a dependable source of imported water. The
same problems pertain to sewage disposal. At present, residential septic
tanks are the commonplace method. Because of the low density of the area,
no sanitation problems have yet occurred, to the knowledge of this Committee.
But should any large type development come to the area, a sewage disposal sys-
tem must be considered for the density proposed in each instance. In the case
of mobilehome parks, and other proposals of high density characteristics, it
is recommended that the El Dorado County Planning Commission and Environmental
Health explore the matter to determin whether problems might result, and to
carefully consider the proposals.

The area was once the center of considerable gold mining activity. Even
today there are a number of patented mining claims in the district, though
only a few show any activity of a sustaining nature. Most mining operations
were of the lode type, either tunnel or shaft, though there was some dredging
activity along Dry Creek and Traverse Creek in the early days. This Committee
recommends that a mining regulation be incorporated into the General Plan for
the area. In the event of a mining revival, this area would certainly come
in for its share of activity. The Committee looks with favor upon the possi-
ECONOMIC RESOURCE (cont.)

bility, and its view is to encourage and foster responsible mining operations that do not violate the spirit of the General Plan or come into conflict with private property rights.

CHAPTER IV

LAND USE ANALYSIS

The population is widely distributed over the land area among ranches, small acreage estates and residential homes on large acreage parcels. For the most part, the land is either woodland, meadow or brush or a combination of these. The area is of rural characteristics.

The land use table that follows was prepared in the following manner: a detailed map of the area, delineating all property parcels, was drawn by the Planning Department; from the assessment rolls, the Assessor's parcel number was written in for each corresponding parcel on the map. Additional information was also indicated: names of property owners, size of parcel and number and type of improvements. Some of this information was put on cards to develop a card file to reflect further upon the information contained in the map.

In order to determine the land characteristics of different areas encompassed by the General Plan, members of the Committee did a field survey of the area. Working with both the card file and map, the various land characteristics and size parcels were then classified and described in the tables and exhibits that follow.


**TABLE**

**CLASSIFICATION OF LAND USE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dwellings</th>
<th>Acreage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Family a</td>
<td>39.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple unit</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water (reservoirs and ponds)</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Agriculture**

| Grazing                  | 865.7   |
| Timber                   | 420.5   |
| Misc. (orchard, new trees and garden) | 34.8    |

**Woodland**

|                  | 1,754.8 |

**Brush land (includes burned over woodland)**

|                  | 1,313.8 |

**TOTAL under private ownership**

|                  | 4,440.2b |

**Mining claims (unpatented)**

|                  | 500.0    |

**Unclaimed lands (BLM) (estimated at)**

|                  | 250.0    |

---

a. at 0.5 acre per family unit

b. includes land obtained by Mineral Patent.
TABLE
SIZE DISTRIBUTION OF LAND PARCELS
IN PRIVATE OWNERSHIP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size Range of Parcel</th>
<th>Total Land Privately Owned</th>
<th>Non-resident Ownership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of Parcels in each group</td>
<td>Acreage in each group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0 ac.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0 ac.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.0 ac.</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>170.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.0 ac.</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>310.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.0 ac.</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>463.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.0 ac.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>489.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100.0 ac.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>799.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100.0 ac.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2,159.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td><strong>171</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,438.5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage Calculations

1. For data plotted in Figure 2:
   Example: The fifth line in the Distribution Table given above, shows that 526.8 acres of the total acreage is continued in parcels each smaller than 12.0 acres. The percentage of the total acreage is:
   \[(526.8/4438.5) \times 100 = 11.9\%\]

2. For non-resident ownership:
   a) based on number of parcels = \((95.171) \times 100 = 55.5\%\)
   b) based on acreage = \((1750/4438.5) \times 100 = 39.5\%\)
**Fig. 1: Percentage Distribution of Use of Privately Owned Land**

- **Wooded Land** (1754.3 Ac.) 39.5%
  - **Grazing** (855.7 Ac.) 19.5%
  - **Timber** (420.5 Ac.) 9.5%
- **Total Agric.** (1321.0 Ac.) 29.8%
  - **Misc. Agric.** (34.5 Ac.) 0.8%
- **Brush Land** (1313.8 Ac.) 29.6%
- **0.2% Water (ponds)** (10.1 Ac.)
- **0.9% Dwellings**
  
---

*a/ At 0.5 acre per family unit
b/ Includes orchards, small trees and gardens*
FIG. 2, Distribution of Total Acreage vs. Size of Parcel
CHAPTER V
COMMUNITY SERVICES

Fire Protection

In 1973 voters of the area approved the setting up of a tax district to support the Garden Valley Fire Protection District. This agency provides fire protection on a year round basis. The department will answer calls on a 24 hour basis. Pumper trucks are stationed at Garden Valley, American Flat, Kelsey and Greenwood.

The California Division of Forestry maintains a fire station for 5 months during the summer at Garden Valley. This station is concerned mostly with fires in watershed areas, but they will respond to structural fires if they are involved in a watershed fire.

The U. S. Forest Service maintains a fire station on Wentworth Springs Road above Georgetown. In cases of dangerous fires, borate planes are called in to drop borate from the air by the U. S. Forest Service and the California Division of Forestry.

The California Department of Corrections near Georgetown maintain a correctional institution called Growlersburg Conservation Camp. Some of the inmates from this facility have worked at putting in fire breaks in the Traverse Creek area and on the road to Finnon Reservoir. The inmates are also used as firefighters when large fires occur in watershed areas.

Roads

The only State Highway within the perimeter of this Plan is number 193. This is maintained by the California Division of Highways. All the rest of the roads are County roads or private roads, with maintenance done either by El Dorado County or the private sector.
COMMUNITY SERVICES (cont.)

Schools

There is not school located within the perimeter of the General Plan. The Black Oak Mine Unified School district operates a school in Georgetown, grades kindergarten through eight. Children in that grade range are transported to the Georgetown School by bus. Children of high school age are transported to Ponderosa High or Independence High School by bus.

Libraries

There is no library located within the perimeter of the General Plan. Those making use of the El Dorado County Library System either use the main branch in Placerville or the branch library in Georgetown.

CHAPTER VI

LAND USE GOALS

1. The overriding objective to this Plan is to preserve the rural characteristics of the area, to preserve concepts of single family residential homes, together with home occupations, agricultural and mining uses. The intent of the Plan is to preserve the present low-density land use and to recommend against land uses proposing high density.

2. The general appearance of the mountain landscape should be preserved by the elimination of roadside refuse, junk cars and trash along all highways and roads.

3. That the continued participation of this Committee in matters coming before the El Dorado County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors that involve the area encompassed by this General Plan be considered desirable and necessary and consistent with recommendation number 15 in the PRELIMINARY GENERAL PLAN FOR EL DORADO COUNTY, 1965.

4. Provisions of this General Plan shall be reviewed at intervals of not more than five years.
LAND USE GOALS (cont.)

5. That historical markers be placed at suitable locations in Spanish Flat, Bear Creek, American Flat and Louisville to commemorate the historical importance of these sites.

CHAPTER VII
DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

1. The paramount consideration in this Land Use Plan is that of low density, with emphasis upon large, generous size parcels, open lands and the preservation of the rural character of the area. To implement this objective of low density, the type of zoning recommended for the area, in terms of future development, is agricultural or ten acre residential estates.

2. This will not effect any existing parcels under ten acres in size, and is not retroactive. The Committee recommends that the future minimum parcel size be not less than ten acres. Existing parcels less than ten acres in size and the improvements thereon, if any, shall not be affected by the recommendations contained in this plan. But such parcels of less than ten acres in size shall not be divided or split further. That a new zoning classification to be known as "A-M" or "Agricultural-Mining" be created by the Planning Commission and that such zoning classification be considered appropriate to those areas where mineral patent grants exist, or where valid mining claims are being pursued, including BLM lands, or may result where new mineral discoveries are proved.

3. Developments not consistent with the objectives of this Land Use Plan be considered as not benefitting the interests of the community. Specifically, this Committee recommends against the following types of developments as contrary to the intent of this Land Use Plan: those institutions of a correctional nature, or those proposing rehabilitation, custody or confinement, or those that would tend to represent unrelated uses having an adverse
DEVELOPMENT POLICIES (cont.)

3. effect on the orderly and homogeneous development of the area: automobile junkyards, salvage and wrecking yards, dumpsites and solid waste transfer stations, sites for rock music festivals, motorcycle race courses or hill climb courses, commercial recreational facilities, such as campgrounds and trailer camps, including membership and lease-purchase types, proposing a pattern of high density land use.

4. Clear-cutting of trees on small parcels of land is not recommended, except where trees represent a fire-hazard, a disease problem or other danger because of their proximity to existing structures.

5. In keeping with the objective of low density, this Committee recommends against the establishment of multiple family dwellings or mobilehome parks within the perimeter of the plan. Mobilehome parks and other developments proposing a high density land use, if approved ever, be required to submit to the Planning Commission detailed specifications for sewage disposal systems and adequate potable water supply. It is the considered opinion of this Committee that septic tank sewage disposal and private wells are not adequate solutions to answer the needs of high density developments in this particular geographical area. We further recommend that any mobilehome park development be limited to only the five-star type.

6. Because this area is without a community center, prospective commercial facilities other than those compatible with uses heretofore indicated in this General Plan are invited to consider the merits to them, if any, of the town centers of Georgetown, Kelsey and Garden Valley as possible site locations. This is not written with the intent of excluding such prospective facilities, but rather it is written to endorse the intent of item 3 in the GEORGETOWN DEVELOPMENT POLICY, adopted in 1967.
7. With respect to proposals for scenic highways, it is the position of this Committee that such highways should be routed through lands presently owned by governmental agencies and do not take lands privately owned. The Committee feels strongly that the percentage of lands presently owned in El Dorado County by governmental agencies is high enough without pre-empting further private lands, which has the effect of further shrinking an already limited County tax base.