

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

COUNTY OF EL DORADO

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TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Peter N. Maurer, Principal Planner
DATE: June 17, 2009
RE: General Plan 5-Year Review

Background

Policy 2.9.1.2 requires a periodic review of the general plan. Previous reports have focused on the implementation program contained in the plan and housing information relative to meeting the County's share of regional housing needs. This report is intended to be a more comprehensive review of the assumptions of the plan, population and job growth trends, and to provide an opportunity to discuss desired amendments and program directives. Issues discussed in this report and to be presented to the Board of Supervisors on June 22, 2009 include the following:

- Overview of general plan assumptions and objectives
- Assessment of whether those assumptions are still valid
- Implementation measures that have been adopted and major programs instituted
- Policy amendments made
- Identification of changes desired by the public
- General Plan priorities

Discussion

General Plan Assumptions and Objectives

Chapter 1 of the General Plan contains an introduction to the plan, including statements of purpose and vision, description of the custom culture and economic stability, plan assumptions, strategies, concepts and objectives. We will focus on the plan assumptions in this report, and consider if they are still valid. The Plan identified seven assumptions on which its goals, objectives and policies were based. These are summarized below:

1. Growth rate based on 20-year population projections; no actual time frame to reach buildout
2. No Auburn Dam
3. Other jurisdictions also have land use authority in county

4. Agriculture and timber industries will remain economically viable
5. Adequate water supplies will be available or developed to support projected growth; shortage could change time horizon
6. Policies are intended to minimize housing costs to meet housing needs for all economic segments
7. Balanced traffic level of service for peak hours against costs for limited time benefits

The full text of each assumption is available at:

http://www.co.el-dorado.ca.us/Planning/AdoptedGeneralPlan/1_introduction.pdf

1. Growth Rate – The growth that the County has seen since the adoption of the plan has been consistent with the population forecasted in 2001 in the study prepared by Economic and Planning Systems (EPS), “El Dorado County Land Use Forecasts for Draft General Plan”, March 5, 2002. EPS estimated that growth would remain steady at 2.4% annual increase through 2010, slowing to 2.3%, and gradually tapering off to 1.6% by the end of the plan horizon. Actual growth, as reported by the State Department of Finance (DOF), averaged about 2.5% through 2006, then dropped dramatically to about 1.1% the past two years. However, it is believed that this is a temporary situation, and that growth will pick up again once the current economic crisis is behind us. See Table 1 for more detailed data.

2. Auburn Dam – Since adoption of the plan, Congress has de-authorized the construction of the Auburn dam, and it is unlikely that such a dam will be built in the foreseeable future.

3. Other Jurisdictions – The federal and state governments control land use authority on large portions of El Dorado County, including the national forests, state parks, and BLM lands. Additionally, the Miwok tribe’s Shingle Springs Rancheria/Red Hawk Casino has significant land use impacts on the County. These were taken into consideration when the plan was developed, and, as demonstrated by completion of the casino, continues to impact the County’s planning efforts. This situation has not changed since adoption of the plan. Additionally, the state legislature and various agencies continue to impose requirements on the County, including air quality standards (AB32), possible regional planning requirements (SB375), septic system regulations (AB885), gray water standards (SB1253), as well as stormwater requirements, oak protection standards, and endangered species protection. These, too, will continue to effect the County’s planning efforts.

4. Agriculture and Timber Industries – While the agriculture industry remains strong in the County, the effect of the Wetzels-Oviatt and SPI mill closures should be watched carefully over the next few years. This could lead to a fundamental shift on how timberland is managed, both at the county level as well as on federal land. However, until the effect of the mill closures can be assessed, maintaining timberland as a resource should continue as a basic general plan objective. The timber industry is also affected by federal timber harvest policies. If so directed, Planning and Agriculture staff could investigate this issue further, and report back to the Board with any findings made, and how it may impact the General Plan.

5. Water Supplies – The County continues to work with EID, GDPUD and other purveyors of public water to ensure that the demand does not outstrip long term supply of potable water. With the fastest growing region of the county within the EID service area, close coordination with that agency is critical to ensure that long-term supplies will be available. To date, the water purveyors have managed their supply, through acquisition of new water rights, and treatment and transport capacity, and system improvements to meet current and expected demand. Additional information may be desired by the Board, working with the County Water Agency, to

evaluate future demand and water supplies and to determine if a more proactive approach is necessary to ensure sufficient water will be available to meet future demand.

6. Minimize Housing Costs – The County, through a variety of programs has tried to minimize the effect of fees and other costs to affordable housing. The County has adopted two specific programs to reduce costs for affordable housing. These are provisions in the TIM fee program to offset road fees using state and federal grant money and the affordable housing density bonus program. While the TIM fee is the largest of fees paid by new housing, many others are beyond the County’s control (water and sewer, schools, fire protection), and land and construction costs are primarily functions of the market. That is not to say, however, that County General Plan policies do not add to the overall costs. Resource protection strategies, public and environmental review, and infrastructure improvements all add to the base costs of housing. Some of the amendments and implementation measures listed later in this report, and suggestions made by the public may address this concern.

7. Traffic Level of Service – The County has attempted to balance the needs of commuters travelling during peak hours against the overall costs of road construction capital improvement projects.

Conclusion: All of the basic assumptions of the 2004 General Plan are still valid, although it will be important to monitor trends in the timber industry, water supply, and growth rates.

General Plan Monitoring

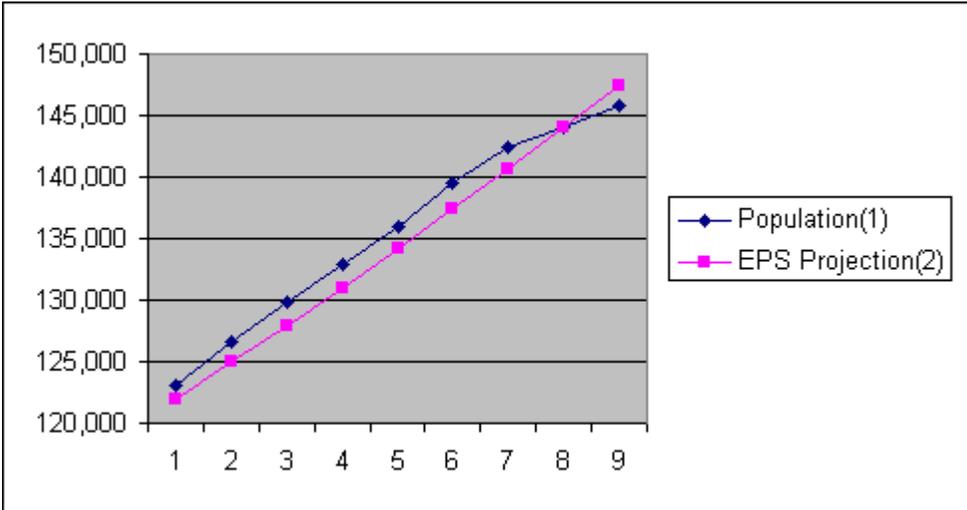
Residential Development – Utilizing the tracking of different kinds of permits that have been issued over the years, the Development Services Department has been able to monitor residential growth and compare it with the projections made in 2001 for the General Plan by Economic and Planning Systems (EPS). The table and graph below show the population change county-wide since 2000 (the base year for the EPS report was 1999) and compares it with the projections made for the General Plan.

Table 1 – Population Growth 2000-2008

Year	Population(1)	EPS Projection(2)	Actual Increase	% Increase
2000	123,080	122,000		
2001	126,546	124,930	3,466	2.74%
2002	129,777	127,930	3,231	2.49%
2003	132,906	131,000	3,129	2.35%
2004	136,040	134,140	3,134	2.30%
2005	139,505	137,350	3,465	2.48%
2006	142,439	140,660	2,934	2.06%
2007	143,997	144,030	1,558	1.08%
2008	145,726	147,490	2,422	1.17%

1. Department of Finance population estimates

2. El Dorado County Land Use Forecasts for Draft General Plan, 2002, based on 2.4% annual increase through 2010

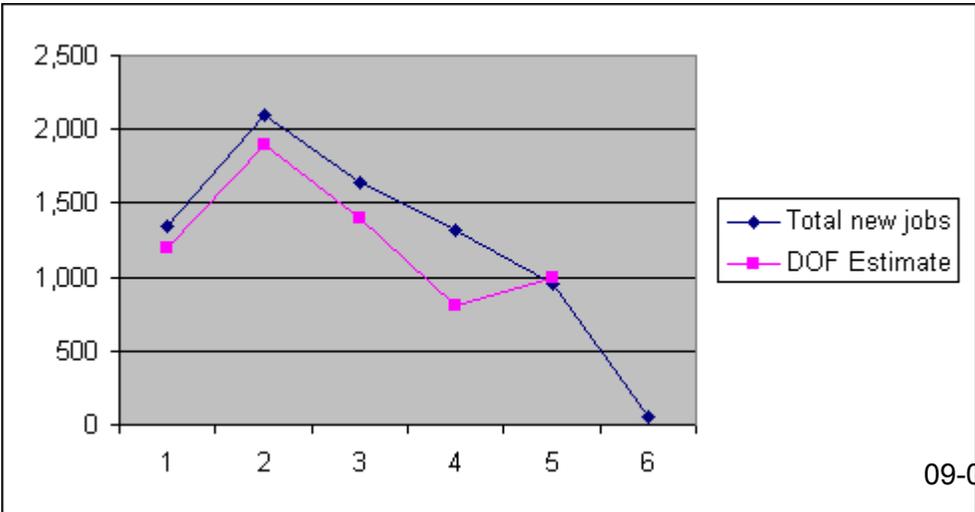


One of the key objectives of the General Plan that affected land use designations and distributions was that the County would “oversupply residential and non-residential land use designations in order to provide market and landowner flexibility to more feasibly accommodate the market.” (Objective 5) What this means is that more land than was necessary to accommodate the expected growth was designated for residential and commercial development. The population growth rates shown above have corresponded quite closely with the projections, until the recent economic downturn significantly reduced the growth rate.

Non-Residential Development – Employment growth rates have declined in recent years, as shown on the table and graph below.

Table 2 – New Employment Based on Non-Residential Square Footage

Year	Square feet	Retail and Service 70%	New jobs 400 sq.ft./employee	Other 30%	New Jobs 500 sq.ft./employee	Total new jobs	DOF Estimate
2003	570,027	399,019	998	171,008	342	1,340	1200
2004	889,460	622,622	1557	266,838	534	2,090	1900
2005	698,789	489,152	1223	209,637	419	1,642	1400
2006	559,182	391,427	979	167,755	336	1,314	800
2007	407,767	285,437	714	122,330	245	958	1000
2008	22,279	15,595	39	6,684	13	52	
Total	3,147,504	2,203,253	5508	944,251	1889	7,397	



The EPS report based its job growth estimates on the number of new households, which resulted in a total of 42,200 new jobs through the end of the planning horizon. Each different market area of the county had a different jobs-to-household factor, based on a number of different parameters, with Placerville being the highest as 2.14 and the upper American River Canyon area the lowest at 0.16. Other examples are El Dorado Hills at 1.69, Cameron Park/Shingle Springs at 1.10, and Diamond Springs/El Dorado at 1.39. County wide the numbers correspond to some degree with housing growth. Figures provided by the DOF and estimates based on permit activity, show steady increase in new jobs, but a downward trend in the rate of job growth the past few years. For more information on how the employment growth was estimated, please see the EPS report, which is available on the Department's web site at:

<http://www.co.el-dorado.ca.us/Planning/pdf/Forecasts.pdf>

Future Monitoring and Tracking – Policy 2.9.1.4 states that Community Region and Rural Center boundaries may be amended and expanded as a part of the periodic review required by Policy 2.9.1.2. Planning staff has been developing a monitoring and reporting program that will track the consumption of available land by Community Region to help identify where the greatest demand has been, how much land will still be available, and work with Economic Development to determine if additional commercial or industrial land needs to be identified. This is also necessary for meeting the housing element RHNA numbers.

An additional policy (2.6.1.4) directs the County to consider designating land near interchanges on Highway 50 as Commercial as a part of this periodic review process. Most of the interchanges have commercially-designated land, with the exception of Bass Lake Road and Greenstone Road. There is sufficient undeveloped commercial land at the El Dorado Road, Shingle Springs Drive, Cambridge Road, and the future Silva Valley Parkway interchanges, as well as the other developed interchanges to support commercial needs in the foreseeable future.

Policy 2.9.1.5 requires that the County also track the effectiveness of the mitigation measures that were adopted at the time of certification of the General Plan EIR and incorporated as policies or implementation measures in the plan. This is a task that Development Services Department intends to take on this next fiscal year, and will report back to the Board when it is complete.

Adopted Amendments and Implementation Measures

Through day-to-day implementation of the General Plan, the County has found the need to amend several policies, due to changing needs of the County, or the lack of clarity in the original policy language. These include:

- Resolution No. 061-2006 – Modified FAR requirements; increase commercial FAR to .85
- Resolution No. 184-2007 – Modified restrictions in airport overflight area
- Resolution No. 061-2007 – Modified time limits for conversion of rental apartments to condominiums
- Resolution No. 167-2008 – Raised threshold for general plan consistency review for single family dwellings
- Resolution No. 193-2008 – Measure Y revisions

- Resolution No. 194-2008 – Objective TC-X modifications related to road improvements and timing
- Resolution No. 191-2008/083-2009 – Housing Element Updates
- Resolution No. 335-2008 – Parcel size exception

In addition, several implementation measures have already been adopted. Some of the more significant measures include:

- TC-A – 10-year transportation capital improvement program
- TC-B – TIM fee revision
- HO-H – Affordable housing density bonus ordinance
- CO-P – Oak Woodlands Management Plan
- AF-A – Winery Ordinance component of the zoning ordinance update

Existing Board Direction and Commitments

General Plan Implementation – The Board has held a series of workshops the past few months to focus staff's efforts on the implementation program identified in the General Plan and to identify the County's highest priorities. With a total of 228 measures, implementation will be ongoing probably through the life of the plan, although clearly some measures are more critical and time sensitive than others. Through the aforementioned workshops, the top priorities were identified as:

- Biological Resources
 - Zoning Ordinance update (LU-A & CO-A)
 - Gabbro soils/rare plant issues (CO-K)
 - Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan Phase 1 (CO-M, CO-N & CO-U)
- Agriculture
 - Zoning Ordinance update (AF-A)
 - Update Agricultural Districts (AF-J)
 - Grazing land/livestock industry provisions (AF-D & AF-E)
- Economic Development
 - Regulatory reform
 - Improve permit process (ED-I & ED-M)
 - Zoning Ordinance update (ED-P)
 - ID resources to accelerate zoning ordinance update (ED-Q)
 - Review fee schedule (ED-K, ED-NN, ED-PP & ED-QQ)
 - Work with EDAC to identify other General Plan opportunities (ED-L)
 - Transportation Infrastructure
 - Increase revenues/decrease project costs (ED-SS)
 - Explore project funding (ED-UU)
 - Align economic development opportunities with 20-year CIP (ED-UU)
 - Economic Development Tools
 - Brand and marketing campaign (ED-G)
 - Economic and demographic profiles (ED-V, ED-Z, ED-AA, ED-EE & ED-GG)
 - Community economic development grants for community design guidelines (Policy 2.4.1.2, 10.2.4.3 & 10.2.4.4)
 - Inventory of vacant and underutilized commercial, industrial and R&D land (ED-AA, ED-DD & ED-HH)
 - Regulatory and fiscal incentives for new and existing businesses (Policy 10.2.1.2, 10.2.2.1, 10.2.2.2 & 10.2.6.2)
 - Identify key economic development projects (ED-HH)

In addition, Planning Services is focusing on the zoning ordinance update as its top priority and the Department of Transportation will be working on the annual update of CIP and TIM fee program (TC-A & TC-B), the Design and Improvement Standards Manual revision (TC-C), and an update to the traffic model.

Each of the affected departments will be focusing on the items listed above for the next year and for which funding and staff resources has been identified and/or allocated.

Other Issues and Concerns

The passage of AB32 and SB375 by the State Legislature has raised the potential that land use decisions may change dramatically in the future, as these new laws are implemented. AB32 mandates the reduction of carbon emissions to 2000 levels by 2010, 1990 levels by 2020 and 80% of 1990 levels by 2050. The state Air Resources Board is expected to provide regional targets to achieve these reductions in 2010, at which time SACOG is required to develop a “Sustainable Community Strategy” (SCS) to be implemented on the local level to meet the targets.

SB375 was adopted as an attempt to achieve AB32 goals by reducing vehicle mile traveled (VMT) through linking the Regional Transportation Plan with land use decisions and housing elements. The legislation encourages infill development with the potential for a higher level of regional planning. It also directly ties the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (the housing numbers provided the County for the Housing Element update) and the SCS to the Sacramento Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

County staff is presently waiting on the regional targets and the SCS being developed by SACOG, and which is expected to be out in 2010. The outcome could be nothing more than more feel-good legislation from the state, but could just as well have far-reaching impacts on the County’s land use decisions.

Other Implementation Measures and Programs – The Board, the Planning Commission and the staff of several departments have identified a number of other measures and General Plan amendments as important. These were not placed on the list of top priorities, and due to limited staffing and fiscal resources must be deferred until after the above list can be completed. These include:

- Open space/planned development policies amendment (Policy 2.2.3.1 & 2.2.5.4)
- Pollock Pines Community Region Boundary amendment
- Mixed Use Development Phase 2
- INRMP Phase 2
- Ranch Marketing Ordinance update (LU-A & AF-A)
- Agricultural land threshold and evaluation system (AF-F)
- AB32/SB375 Implementation – Could include development of an infill ordinance, adoption of bikeway master plan, or other VMT-reduction programs
- More effective tracking of land use absorption for monitoring purposes and apply it to each Community Region, Rural Center, and the Rural Region
- Mitigation measure monitoring and reporting

A number of other amendments have been suggested by members of the public and are important to address. These include:

- Maximum slope restrictions (Policy 7.1.2.1)
- Density bonus (Policy 2.2.4.1)
- Fiscal Impact Analysis requirement for large development projects (Policy 10.2.1.5)

- Wetland setbacks to correspond to federal requirements under the Clean Water Act (Corps permitting process) (Policy 7.1.2.1)
- Include as a part of the traffic modeling update an analysis of the Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZ)
- Analyze the effect of fire standards on development potential in the more remote areas of the county.

Request for Board Direction

Staff requests that the Board confirm the following:

1. The assumptions made with the adoption of the 2004 General Plan are still valid;
2. Staff should monitor trends in the timber industry, water supply, and housing and employment growth rates for changes that could effect the General Plan assumptions;
3. The priorities for General Plan implementation and amendment are:
 - Development Services Department
 - Zoning Ordinance update
 - Gabbro soils/rare plant issues
 - Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan, Phase 1
 - Agriculture Department
 - Update Agricultural Districts
 - Grazing land/livestock industry provisions
 - Economic Development
 - Regulatory reform
 - Improve permit process
 - Zoning Ordinance update
 - ID resources to accelerate zoning ordinance update
 - Review fee schedule
 - Work with EDAC to identify other General Plan opportunities
 - Transportation Infrastructure
 - Increase revenues/decrease project costs
 - Explore project funding
 - Align economic development opportunities with 20-year CIP
 - Economic Development Tools
 - Brand and marketing campaign
 - Economic and demographic profiles
 - Community economic development grants for community design guidelines Inventory of vacant and underutilized commercial, industrial and R&D land Regulatory and fiscal incentives for new and existing businesses
 - Identify key economic development projects
 - Department of Transportation
 - Annual update of CIP and TIM fee program
 - Design and Improvement Standards Manual revision
 - Update to the traffic model.
4. Future tasks to be taken up after the priorities in Item 3 are completed:
 - Open space/planned development policies amendment (Policy 2.2.3.1 & 2.2.5.4)
 - Pollock Pines Community Region Boundary amendment

- Mixed Use Development Phase 2
- INRMP Phase 2
- Ranch Marketing Ordinance update (LU-A & AF-A)
- Agricultural land threshold and evaluation system (AF-F)
- AB32/SB375 Implementation – Could include development of an infill ordinance, adoption of bikeway master plan, or other VMT-reduction programs
- More effective tracking of land use absorption for monitoring purposes and apply it to each Community Region, Rural Center, and the Rural Region
- Mitigation measure monitoring and reporting
- 2013 Housing Element Update (to begin in 2012)

Staff further requests that if additional tasks such as those identified by members of the public, other departments, or Board members are determined to be a priority, that they be added to one of the above lists. New ideas for amendments should be routed through EDAC for further consideration.

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