

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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TO: Planning Commission **Agenda of: May 28, 2009**

FROM: Roger Trout, Director of Development Services **Item #: 8**
James W. Ware, P.E., Director of Transportation

DATE: May 8, 2009

SUBJECT: **Final Drafts of the "Land Development Manual", "Standard Plans" (for road cross-sections), and the "Highway Design Manual"**

Purpose

The Draft Land Development Manual, along with a number of Standard Plans and the Highway Design Manual, are being presented to the Planning Commission in a public workshop for discussion only. A formal hearing on the manuals is scheduled for June 11, 2009.

The primary purpose of these design standards manuals is to provide standards for discretionary development, including all types of Subdivisions, Planned Developments, Use Permits, and Design Reviews.

The manuals also provide an introduction to land use planning and development processes. It is intended to be a resource for residents, business owners, property owners, staff, and developers.

These manuals are intended to replace the current "Design and Improvement Standards Manual" (DISM). However, in some situations, the existing manual will remain in effect for some time:

- Some "Standards Plans" of the current manual will stay in effect until officially replaced by new Standard Plans adopted in the future.
- Subdivision Maps deemed complete prior to the adoption of the new standards will continue to use the standards in effect when they were deemed complete.
- Approved development permits and plans will continue to adhere to the standards in effect when they were approved, unless a subsequent discretionary permit, such as a tentative map time extension request, is considered and approved.

Update Process

The “Design and Improvement Standards Manual” was originally adopted in 1986 and has been amended occasionally. The adoption of the 2004 County of El Dorado General Plan included Implementation Measures LU-E, TC-C, and TC-U which required updating the DISM.

On December 13, 2007, a committee comprised of staff from the Department of Transportation (DOT), Development Services Department (DSD), Environmental Management Department (EMD), and the Surveyor’s Office brought to the Planning Commission a conceptual proposal to rewrite and update the existing DISM and develop a new set of standard plans. After over a year of meetings with interested stakeholders and several revisions, three new manuals, now referred to as the “Land Development Manual” (LDM), the “Highway Design Manual” (HDM), and “Standard Plans” have been drafted.

The LDM is essentially the re-writing of the DISM and was divided between the committee members according to their functional areas of responsibility. Each chapter in the LDM addresses the design standards associated with a different functional area. The LDM includes design standards and the following chapters:

1. Introduction;
2. Subdivision Processes and Standards;
3. Sewage, Water Requirements, and Air Quality;
4. Transportation;
5. Grading, Erosion and Sediment Control;
6. Surveying and Mapping; and
7. Additional Resources (Contacts, Glossary, Abbreviations).

The Standard Plans ready for release at this time include the following road cross-sections (additional standard plans will follow at a later date):

- Six-lane divided roads and bridge sections;
- Four-lane divided and undivided roads, and bridge sections;
- Major Two-Lane undivided roads, and bridge sections;
- Local Roads; and
- Private Roads.

The HDM is a technical reference that gives detailed information on the standards for road design including design speed, highway capacity, horizontal and vertical alignments, sight distance, etc. The HDM is based on the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) “Highway Design Manual” and differences are referenced by exception.

Once the first rough drafts of the LDM and Standard Plans were completed in June 2008, the committee announced the availability of the LDM and Standard Plans for comment. The drafts were posted on DOT’s website and email broadcasts were sent out to all subscribers of several different County notification lists.

The Committee made public/staff presentations in Placerville and in Tahoe, and then started meeting with outside agencies, developers and groups that would have an interest in the LDM

and Standard Plans. Approximately 200 individuals were notified either directly or by email about the availability of the drafts for review and comment. SAGE was kept informed throughout the update process; several meetings were held with the SAGE Executive Committee, the entire SAGE membership, and with applicable SAGE subcommittees.

In August 2008, the Board of Supervisors requested that the committee wait until comments from the Board-appointed "Ad Hoc Committee" could be solicited and taken into consideration. This was accomplished with a second release of the draft LDM and Standard Plans in early October 2008 and an extension of the comment period to approximately the end of November 2008.

The committee has now solicited comments from all the major developers in the County and addressed all of the comments received from both the June and October releases. All comments have been addressed in these final drafts.

SAGE subcommittees and the SAGE Executive Board have submitted letters of approval, as has the El Dorado County Fire Prevention Officer's Association.

The draft of the HDM was circulated to SAGE specifically on December 4, 2008, and to the public generally in December 2008. The SAGE Transportation Committee has reviewed and commented on the document and gave a verbal approval in March 2008. The final draft of the HDM in this package includes the applicable changes to address SAGE's suggestions. Other than SAGE's comments, no other public comments on the HDM have been received.

Environmental Review

On August 19, 2008 the Board of Supervisors took the following action:

"32. 07-1967 Supervisor Sweeney recommending Board direct staff as follows with regards to the proposed design manual:

1) Wait to process the manual through the Planning Commission and Board until the proposals of the Ad Hoc Committee on Development Services processes has made its proposal and incorporate such proposal in the manual as directed by the Board;

2) Be aware that since the manual is an organizational tool to catalogue design information found in ordinances and implementation measures found in the General Plan, there can be no CEQA implications and such manual should be processed through the use of a categorical exception; and

3) Understand that since all design criteria, will be within (that is less onerous or impacting than those standards set forth in the General Plan), no General Plan Amendment will be needed. By example, the road design cross sections in the design manual will carry less traffic than those in the General Plan hence they are less impacting.

A motion was made by Supervisor Sweeney, seconded by Supervisor Baumann to approve this matter.

Yes: 5 - Dupray, Baumann, Sweeney, Briggs and Santiago”

However, a Negative Declaration will be prepared for consideration at the June 11, 2009, Planning Commission hearing. The LDM, HDM, and Standard Plans are not anticipated to cause any direct environmental impacts and in conjunction with other existing policies and ordinances, would not have secondary or cumulative impacts. Notwithstanding the Board of Supervisors direction of August 19, 2008, the CEQA Guidelines do not have an appropriate Categorical Exemption to use in the case of adopting new regulations such as the new LDM, HDM, and Standard Plans. The most appropriate CEQA process is to review the potential impacts through a Negative Declaration. The Negative Declaration prepared by staff indicates that no impacts are anticipated from the adoption of the LDM, HDM, and Standard Plans.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission review these drafts of the LDM, HDM and Standard Plans and provide staff with any recommendations at the May 28, 2009, workshop. No formal action on the LDM, HDM, and Standard Plans can occur until June 11, 2009.

Staff will return to the Planning Commission with revised final drafts on June 11, 2009, and request that the Commission forward a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors. The June 11, 2009, Planning Commission hearing is already scheduled.

Attachments

1. Final Draft - Land Development Manual
2. Final Draft - Standard Plans (for Road Cross-sections)
3. Final Draft - Highway Design Manual
4. Draft Resolution
5. List of Differences (between DISM and proposed new manuals)
6. Approval Letters (SAGE, Fire Protection Districts)
7. Outreach Timeline
8. Notification List
9. First Round of Public Comments and Responses, October 2008
10. Second Round of Public Comments and Responses, May 2009
11. Developer Comments, November 2008.