



Fw: Economic Development Suggestions
The BOSTHREE to: Kathryn L Tyler
Sent by: Karen D Feathers

05/18/2009 08:50 AM

Kathryn,

Can we please post this to 09-0571.

Thanks,
Karen Feathers
Assistant to Supervisor James R. "Jack" Sweeney
District III - El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
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— Forwarded by Karen D Feathers/PV/EDC on 05/18/2009 08:48 AM —



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05/14/2009 10:08 PM

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cc

Subject Economic Development Suggestions

Dear Honorable Supervisors,

Some of us in the community have been compiling a list of items we have identified that present various obstacles to Economic Development in El Dorado County. This is a raw list but we wanted to share it with you now, with the thought that it might be helpful in the upcoming Monday workshop on Economic Development. We understand that the intent of the workshop is to come up with a 12 month action plan. Perhaps some of these suggestions will fit into the discussion. Each item has a brief description of the issue, suggested action(s), and the anticipated savings. In several of them we identified other considerations or impacts to deliberate.

Thank you for taking a few moments to look these over. We look forward to working with you to move El Dorado County toward health and prosperity.

Thaleia

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EDAC Fix list draft.doc

DRAFT!

Economic Development Barriers:

- **Black** = what the problem is
- **Purple** = suggested action
- **Red** = savings & improvements
- **Green** = other considerations or impacts

1. GRADING OF COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL/MFR SITES:

- Prohibiting grading on a commercial/industrial/MFR site unless an applicant has an actual project specific plan, presents significant problems. It is an obstacle to marketing a property when the Buyer can not visualize the site potential.
- Allow for grading of commercial/industrial/MFR sites without a specific project, but with appropriate grading and drainage plans. This will allow a potential user to visualize the potential of the site and give the applicant a jump start on the lengthy development & entitlement process.
- Saves both County & customer time & effort.
- Saves the customer time & money.
- Increases ability to market commercial/industrial sites.
- Streamlines processing.

2. REDUCE ROAD IMPROVEMENT REQUIREMENTS FOR COMM/IND/MFR SITES:

- Road standards currently required as a condition of approval, such as building entire interchanges, are too extreme and costly. This is a major barrier and is counter productive to getting either the needed development or the needed infrastructure.
- Reduce road improvement work being required as a condition of project approval given the fact that resulting tax revenue generation, along with the high TIM fees upon construction, will help pay for the necessary improvements.
- Saves the customer time and money.
- Increases our ability to put tax generating projects on the ground.
- Speeds up the generation of TIM fees and tax revenue.
- Streamlines the process.
- Seek Board and DOT input to determine what the net effects might be.

3. REDUCE ROAD WIDTH STANDARDS:

- Big, wide roads are not only unnecessary and expensive, but they tend to increase speed and consequently accidents. Narrower & winding roads tend to slow traffic.
- Suggest raising the ADT levels for all classifications. Implement traffic calming measures such as narrower streets, curvilinear designs, and no residential streets over 9', etc. Coordinate with fire on this.
- Saves the customer money and land area making projects more feasible.
- Increases the amount of land area available for revenue generation and maximizing density.
- Seek Board, DOT, and Fire Department input to determine feasibility.

4. **LOWER THE PEAK HOUR LEVELS OF SERVICE ON ROADS:**
 - Current peak hour levels of service are unrealistically low and contrived (by design) to stifle development. This is counter productive and presents an inordinate barrier to development unlike any other California County. People here may have to wait a minute longer but the benefits outweigh the pain. Other jurisdictions enjoy health and prosperous communities because they felt a little pain or inconvenience to get there. We are the only County with this restriction due to Measure Y policies. If we want to maintain a healthy community we must allow for a little more growth.
 - Also consider that we are mandated to provide a fair share of housing.
 - Allow for lower peak hour levels of service. The BOS can override this restriction with a 4/5 vote.
 - Increases our ability to produce revenue generating projects like other jurisdictions.
 - Allow more smart growth, mixed use, and moderate income housing developments.
5. **REDUCE EDC WETLANDS SETBACKS TO THE SAME AS CORPS OF ENGINEERS:**
 - There is no requirement and no compelling reason for County wetland setbacks to be greater than the Corps of engineers. If we want to maximize densities, we have to be able maximize the capability of the lands designated for specific allowable uses.
 - Reduce standards for wetland setbacks.
 - Increases the usable land area making the projects more feasible.
6. **CHANGE 30% SLOPE REQUIREMENT TO 40% AS WAS ORIGINALLY INTENDED:**
 - The maximum used to be 40% and was magically reduced to 30%. There is no real justification for the 30% restriction. If we want to maximize densities, we have to be able maximize the use of the land.
 - Amend Policy to allow for development on lands up to 40%.
 - Increases the usable land area making projects more feasible.
7. **ELIMINATE 30% OPEN SPACE REQUIREMENT FOR PLANNED DEVELOPMENTS:**
 - The 30% open space requirement often poses more of an obstacle than a benefit to a well designed project. Small projects find this policy especially problematic and makes no sense.
 - Eliminate the 30% open space as a requirement for Planned Developments. This will allow greater flexibility in design, and allows the applicant to consider specific needs for specific areas.
 - Allow for the density bonus option under the General Plan to apply for the provision of open space or other benefits to the community that are more beneficial.
 - Offers the intended Density Bonus incentive option to applicants.
 - Increases the usable land area making projects more feasible.
 - Allows for greater density and flexibility which ultimately provides for better projects.
8. **ELIMINATE OAK TREE MITIGATION REQUIREMENTS ON COMM/IND/MFR SITES:**
 - On site oak tree retention and replacement on commercial, industrial, mixed use or multi-family sites is impractical. With grading, parking, handicap requirements, and other constraints, somehow increasing the density to maximize the use of the site puts us at cross-purposes with protecting existing trees. Usually, changing the tree's environment puts the tree in jeopardy anyway. Replacing existing trees with trees that will acclimate to the new environment is a far more sound investment. Remember Sunrise Mall in the 60s, when heroic (and expensive) efforts were made to build gigantic planter boxes for the oak trees in the parking lots were made. Not one of those trees survives today.
 - Reduce or eliminate oak tree on-site retention or replacement mitigation on commercial, industrial and multi-family lands.
 - Increases the usable land area making projects more feasible.
 - Still allows for the payment of Option B oak tree mitigation fees.

9. ADOPT COUNTYWIDE FIRE SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS STANDARDS:

- Currently all applicants struggle with disparity between fire districts which creates uncertainty and confusion, slows down processing, and puts DSD & Fire at odds.
- Adopt Countywide Fire Safety Improvement Standards (with allowances for various fire hazard severity zones) to eliminate confusion and streamline processing. Revisit Appendix D of the Fire Code.
- Allow for fire lanes to also serve as secondary access points. This would allow for more usable land area and make projects more feasible. After all, the purpose for the secondary access is the same as the emergency access.
- **Saves the customer time and money.**
- **Eliminates the conflict between County requirements and fire requirements and creates more consistency from district to district.**

10. ALLOW FOR ALTERNATIVE SEWAGE TREATMENT SYSTEMS:

- Currently, the only alternative to a septic system is to hook up to a public sewer system. Often this is impossible or extremely difficult and costly to accomplish. We are missing opportunities to provide viable alternatives. If we want to accommodate density and smarter communities, centralized sewer systems may not be the answer.
- Allow for greater usage of package sewer treatment systems. We will have to coordinate with EID, GPUD, etc.
- There is something to be said for not putting all your eggs in one basket.
- **Opens up new options for quality projects otherwise infeasible.**
- **May require collaboration with EID and other water and sewer providers.**

11. FOLLOW THE LAW: THE PERMIT STREAMLINING ACT:

- It seems that everyone has been ignoring or circumventing this law. There are specific time frames to be adhered to under this act but there are no teeth within the act itself. Staff has been finding other issues, such as CEQA review, to find a way to get around the time requirements, thus presenting delay for the applicant.
- The County should adopt a policy to require that project processing will be completed within the time frames provided in the Streamlining Act or offer the applicant the option to hire outside consultants who can meet the time lines.
- **Saves both the Customer and the County time and money.**
- **Streamline the process.**
- **There may be issues with employee unions. It will be necessary to determine if State Laws or Union contacts prevail.**

12. REVISE GUIDELINES FOR USE OF OUTSIDE CONSULTANTS:

- Under the Subdivision Map Act, applicants are allowed the option of utilizing outside consultants to do certain work if the County is unable to complete the work within applicable time frames. This option has been given and withdrawn periodically and has caused delays, confusion and uncertainty for applicants. County staffing issues should not alter the County's obligation to the applicant to comply with time lines contained in the Subdivision Map Act. Section 66451.1(b) of the Subdivision Map Act
- **Saves both County and the applicant.**
- **Streamlines processing and maintains consistency.**
- **There may be issues with employee unions. It will be necessary to determine if State Laws or Union contacts prevail.**

13. CREATE A MASTER TRAFFIC MODEL FOR PROJECTS TO "TIER OFF" OF:

- Currently every project that "impacts" traffic requires an individual traffic study, even though they may be adjacent. Depending on various factors, these can range from \$8-60,000 or more. Then, the improvement requirements pile on to make the project infeasible and the applicant has lost a huge amount of money for nothing. Currently, the length of time to get to the point of identifying the improvement requirements is so long that, had the applicants known, they would not even have started the process.
- A master traffic model can be generated by the County, tied into the General Plan land use designations, to allow for projects to "plug in" to the model. Cost of the traffic model should come out of the TIM fee program.
- Saves the customer both time and money.
- Initial investment by the County saves everyone time and effort in the long run.
- Provides consistency in the results.
- Implements the intent of the revised Measure Y amendments to the General Plan.
- Streamlines the process.

14. AMEND POLICY REQUIRING STUDY OF ANY STRUCTURE OVER 50 YEARS OLD:

- This one is ridiculous. Every year the 50 year time frame advances. Currently any shed, wall, or home built in 1959 requires historical study.
- Amend this policy to apply only to true historical features or age. Perhaps a date certain such as pre-1900 and provide for updating with each successive General Plan update.
- Saves the customer time, grief, & money.
- Streamlines the process.

15. DEFER STUDY AND ENGINEERING REQUIREMENTS TO ADVANCED PLANNING:

- Currently an applicant is required to invest a huge amount of time and money in studies and engineering just for conceptual review. Often they find that the project is not going to meet with staff approval after having spent a great deal of money.
- Revise requirements that will allow an applicant to defer the need for costly studies and engineering until after initial review.
- Pre-Application Review should also be made more comprehensive and meaningful. Applicants should be given a written summary and direction as a result of review.
- Saves everyone a lot of time and effort.
- Saves the customer money.
- Gives the customer some assurance of their options, direction and encouragement.
- Eliminates uncertainty and confusion.

16. COMPLY WITH THE SUBDIVISION MAP ACT TO ELIMINATE ARBITRARY DENIAL:

- Often times as applicant struggles through a long and costly process only to be denied approval based on the opinion of staff, commissions, or board members based on mere opinion or persuasive arguments from outside parties. This should not be the case as there are policies, laws and regulations that applicants should be able to rely upon when risking great quantities of time and money.
- See Section 66474 of the Subdivision Map act. If a project conforms to the General Plan, there must be a compelling reason for denial. The Subdivision Map Act says the Board must make specific findings for denial so applicants should not be faced with arbitrary denial based on nothing more than opinion or disgruntled neighbors.
- Eliminates uncertainty and assures fair dealings.

17. FIND WAYS TO REDUCE ONE-TIME DEVELOPMENT FEES.

- A myriad of fees have been piled onto new development largely because “the new guy” is viewed as an easy target. Often a developer is held hostage for improvements the existing population is unwilling to fund. These have become so burdensome that new development has been priced out existence. In effect, we’ve killed the golden goose. Our community is shortsighted. The reality is if we don’t grow we will die.
- Streamline processing to reduce County processing fees & eliminate unnecessary services causing other fees. Hard choices and responsible planning must be done.
- For example: TIM fees can be reduced by reducing the size & scope of road projects. Plan to build what we can *afford* as opposed to what would be nice to have. The same applies to fire, schools, parks, etc. We may have to reduce our expectations to meet our ability to pay.
- Save everyone time and money.
- Make projects more feasible.
- As a community we will need to re-examine our wants versus our ability to provide and make adjustments.

18. REFORM THE PROCESS FOR EASEMENTS ACROSS THE JPA (old rail way):

- If the County conditions a project with acquiring an easement crossing the JPA right-of-way, the County should make the easement feasible and permanent. Currently access permits across the JPA are revocable, therefore do not guarantee access.
- The County is a participant in the JPA and should make it possible for an applicant to obtain a JPA crossing that is not merely a “permit” but an actual grant of easement that guarantees access.
- See Subdivision Map Act section 66462.5
- Resolve this issue to provide guaranteed access.
- May require revisiting JPA rights and agreements.

19. CREATE AND MAINTAIN A PROGRESS CHART FOR RESOLVING BARRIERS:

- There should be a mechanism to identify and quantify barriers and to track progress toward resolution.
- Identify barriers to development and monitor progress toward resolution.
- EDD to deliver periodic progress reports to the Board.
- Greatly increases the efficiency and probability of successful reform.

20. REVISE GENERAL PLAN POLICY 2.2.5.20:

- The policy requires all structures over 120 square feet, or a grading permit, to fully comply with all General Plan policies. This extremely low threshold creates a huge barrier to even the smallest project. A small shed, room addition, garage, small grading project to improve an existing business site, or other small expansion project can create enormous compliance issues and prohibitive costs. This policy should be amended to a more reasonable threshold or eliminated entirely. Although an amendment was made to offer relief to residential development, other types of development are still subject to this policy.
- Revise Policy 2.2.5.20 to offer reasonable relief to all types of structures.
- Saves customers time and money.
- Reduces work load on County staff.
- Streamlines processing of site improvement and expansion projects.

21. REVISE REQUIREMENTS FOR TENANT IMPROVEMENTS (TI's):

- Often times a change in a building use can result in excessive fees charged to prospective tenants that make it infeasible. The result is difficulty for Landlords to obtain tenants. This can be particularly painful when it comes to TIM fees as a result of perceived increases in traffic for the new use.
- A great example is the recent issue regarding a day care facility in an industrial park. Some services within a commercial, industrial or MFR development would not be a detriment to the traffic, and would actually result in traffic reduction in other areas.
- There are some uses that should be reconsidered for the purpose of TIM fees depending on the location of the use. Services like child care, eateries, banks, etc., that can be provided close to jobs or high density housing, are actually traffic reducers in certain locations and traffic producers in others. Locations need to be considered in conjunction with uses for TIM fee calculation.

22. CREATE & MAINTAIN AN INVENTORY DATA BASE OF COMM/IND/MFR SITES:

- It's important to know what sites are available for specific uses for economic development planning. It's critical for the Economic Development Department to know what's available for various potential uses, their development potential, and any barriers to their development.
- Create and maintain a data base of available sites along with reasonable information as to their ability to be developed for their intended use(s).
- Recommend land use designation changes to those sites found to be infeasible for their current designation.
- Improves our ability to assist recruitment & retention of business development.
- Presents a more accurate picture of what sites are actually feasible and available for development.

23. NEED TO RE-VISIT THE ALLOCATION OF WATER EDU'S:

- There is some difficulty in the allocation of EDU's to new development. Some projects have been allotted EDU's but are unlikely to be using those in the near future and others may never use them. Although there is a legitimate argument for this method of doing business, there could be a better way.
- Revisit the options available for equitable allocation of water/sewer EDU's to see if there is a way to provide a more practical solution.
- Would allow for projects ready and able to move forward to obtain EDU's not likely to be used by others within a particular time frame.
- Would require a collaborative effort to work through many issues with EID and others.

24. INSIST ON ACCURATE INFORMATION, ESPECIALLY FIGURES, FROM STAFF:

- Often the BOS asks staff for information and/or figures on which they make serious decisions. Far too often they are given guesstimates or incorrect information that can result in bad decisions.
- Often the County officials make bad decisions because they are being provided inaccurate information on which to base their decisions.
- Insist on accurate and verifiable information and figures when making County business decisions as well as decisions that affect the private business people who make the community work. The business and development community does.
- Saves long term grief and bad decisions.
- Saves money.
- Allows the Board and others to make accurate decisions.