



**2004 EL DORADO COUNTY GENERAL PLAN
A PLAN FOR MANAGED GROWTH AND OPEN
ROADS; A PLAN FOR QUALITY
NEIGHBORHOODS AND TRAFFIC RELIEF**

ADOPTED JULY 19, 2004



EL DORADO COUNTY GENERAL PLAN

INTRODUCTION

PLAN PURPOSE

The General Plan provides for long range direction and policy for the use of land within El Dorado County. It provides a mechanism through which the County can focus on the issues of greatest local concern as well as a basis for rational decision making regarding long-term physical development. It provides for growth in an environmentally balanced manner, maintains the rural character and quality of the living environment, providing adequate infrastructure while conserving agricultural lands, forest and woodlands, and other natural resources.

The County has a responsibility to develop, adopt, and maintain a legally adequate general plan pursuant to State planning law. A general plan by definition looks into the future and attempts to make land use, economic, social, and environmental choices based on assumptions and analysis of existing conditions. These choices will shape the direction of growth to achieve the goals expressed through the vision that the County has established. This General Plan was directed by a public process which defined a collective long-term vision for the future of El Dorado County.

The Plan must also reflect technical and financial realities and meet legal State planning requirements and other State and Federal mandates for the management of regional resources. The General Plan must be in conformance and compatible with numerous State laws and regional plans. Specifically, the General Plan itself must conform to standards set forth in the State Planning and Zoning Law. Moreover, the General Plan must be consistent with the Integrated Waste Management Act and the County's plan to implement it, the Hazardous Waste Management Act and the County's plan to implement it, the Regional Transportation Plan, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's Regional Plan for the Lake Tahoe Basin, regional housing allocation requirements, and other regional plans. Finally, the General Plan should not contradict efforts to achieve Federal and State ambient air quality standards and other air quality goals mandated by the Federal Clean Air Act and the State Clean Air Act, although those two statutes do not directly regulate local land use decision making by counties and cities.

CUSTOM, CULTURE, AND ECONOMIC STABILITY

Public land within El Dorado County provides economic and ecological value to the County, State, and Nation. Since the Eldorado Forest comprises about 57 percent of El Dorado County's land base, and these Federal lands are exempt from local property taxes, the County

requires Federal and/or State compensation to offset the loss of potential tax dollars to the County's economy.

Activities on public land include but are not limited to timber harvesting, grazing, mining, tourism, recreation, and the production of clean water within a healthy forest environment.

El Dorado County is blessed with abundant natural resources and has long been recognized for its spectacular beauty. While impacted, these same attributes exist today. The County has a tradition of appreciating and conserving these resources, using them wisely, and upholding a strong ethic of stewardship over these assets. It is the combination of these features that are now referred to as rural character.

The value and historical productivity of the Eldorado National Forest is associated with commodity production, ecological diversity, and geological significance. Its long-term economic and environmental value depends upon overall forest health.

There is an abundance of non-timber oriented natural resource lands in the County. Some of these lands have produced, and will continue to produce, a variety of agricultural products. Others are inherently valuable for their natural environmental characteristics. All of the County's natural resource lands are important to the local and regional economies due to their availability for crop production, recreational opportunities, watershed values, and contributions to the tourism industry.

In general, in order for these resources and opportunities to be available in the future, these important lands require sound management. The General Public specifies the manner in which the historic culture, custom, and economic importance of these lands can be sustained in the future. Conflicts do exist as a result of population expansion into resource rich lands. This Plan provides policy guidance and direction on how to avoid and/or minimize these conflicts. Careful management applies especially to the County's abundant water resources and watershed areas. Healthy economies cannot be maintained without a reliable and clean water source.

This Plan also acknowledges that the County will continue to grow but will attempt to retain the qualities of its natural resource base, both consumptive and environmental, in order to maintain its custom and culture and to assure its long-term economic stability. This Plan acknowledges the ecological and historic values of these lands while saving and conserving the lands for future economic benefits for all the purposes stated in this section. The rural character of the County is its most important asset. Careful planning and management can maintain this character while accommodating reasonable growth and achieving economic stability.

The County will actively participate with Federal and State agencies in the development and implementation of policies that affect our custom, culture, and economic stability.

To facilitate this participation, the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors shall establish Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with the United States Forest Service, the Bureau

of Land Management, the California Department of Forestry, the California Department of Fish and Game, and other agencies as the need arises.

STATEMENT OF VISION

The vision and goals for future growth in El Dorado County were the focus of the Round 1 Community Workshops held on July 9, 12, 16, 17, 19, and August 7, 1990. Those comments, which were recorded and appear in the *Summary of Comments: Round 1 Community Workshops* (August 1990) illustrate a broad consensus on a number of issues. The vision and goals were further refined in recognition of significant oral and written input received between October 1992 and March 1995. The vision for future growth in the County includes the following:

1. Maintain and protect the County's natural beauty and environmental quality, vegetation, air and water quality, natural landscape features, cultural resource values, and maintain the rural character and lifestyle while ensuring the economic viability critical to promoting and sustaining community identity.
2. Where appropriate, encourage clustered development as an option to maintain the integrity and distinct character of individual communities, while protecting open space and promoting natural resource uses.
3. Make land use decisions in conjunction with comprehensive transportation planning and pursuing economically viable alternative transportation modes, including light rail. Adopt a Circulation Element providing for rural and urban flows that recognize limitations of topography and natural beauty with flexibility of road standards.
4. Promote a better balance between local jobs and housing by encouraging high technology activities and value added activities tied directly to available resource based industries such as the timber industry, tourism, agriculture, mining, and recreation.
5. Increase the amount of affordable housing by providing a variety of housing types and encouraging residential projects to reflect affordability in light of the existing local job base and/or infrastructure.
6. Encourage efforts to locate a four-year college and support the ability of elementary, middle, and high schools to keep pace with population growth.
7. Improve and expand local park and recreational facilities throughout the County.
8. Recognize that the General Plan is a living document which must be updated periodically, consistent with the desires of the public, and provide for public involvement in the planning process.

PLAN ASSUMPTIONS

Planning is an art as well as a science, and even with the best information, the future is difficult, if not impossible, to accurately predict. The following assumptions were developed in consideration of the physical, economic, and political conditions of the past, present, and

future. These assumptions provide a basis for the physical planning policies of the General Plan.

1. Population Projections

The projected growth for the County, as determined by the State Department of Finance, can be accommodated over the 20-year planning time horizon. However, the actual number of years to reach a particular population projection is not critical to the validity of this Plan. Many other factors, such as water availability, creation of local jobs, economic conditions, etc., will determine the period of time over which this Plan remains valid.

2. Auburn Dam

Authorization for construction of the Auburn Dam is currently not addressed in this Plan; however, if authorization for the construction is approved, the Plan must be updated within a reasonable time to accommodate this significant change.

3. Jurisdiction of Other Government Agencies

Other agencies will continue to exercise significant policy control over lands within El Dorado County.

4. Agriculture and Timber

The agriculture and timber industries will remain economically viable during the 20-year planning time horizon of the Plan. The viability of these industries is critical to the maintenance of the County's customs, culture, and economic stability.

5. Water Supply

- A. An adequate supply of water will be available to serve the County's current population.
- B. Additional water supplies will be developed to support the projected growth.
- C. Lack of water availability may change the period of time over which this Plan remains valid.
- D. The designation of the American or Cosumnes Rivers as "Wild and Scenic" or their drainage basins as "National Recreation Areas" would be incompatible with the County's water storage objectives.

6. Housing

Policies in this Plan and their implementing directives will acknowledge and attempt to minimize their cost impact on the County's affordable housing goals and objectives. The housing needs for all economic segments for the unincorporated portions of the County may be achieved if the Housing Element is implemented.

7. Traffic Level of Service

In determining what levels of growth-related traffic are acceptable, the Plan balances a number of competing considerations. If the County sized its roadways solely to guarantee the smooth flow of traffic during limited peak periods in which commuter trips push traffic to maximum levels, one result would be the need to modify many rural two-lane roads by adding new lanes, thereby reducing the rural character of the affected adjacent lands. Such modifications would also entail enormous expense, while generating benefits only realized during limited periods. In addition, County revenue financing mechanisms, such as user fees in the form of gasoline tax or a road benefit assessment, are limited. In light of these considerations, the Plan has been designed to match any increases in the size of roadways to those necessary to meet the Level of Service and concurrency policies included in the Transportation and Circulation Element.

PLAN STRATEGIES

The following is a list of strategies to provide for methods of achieving the visions and goals and to carry forward the Plan's principle purposes:

1. Recognize urban growth in Community Regions while allowing reasonable growth throughout the rural areas of the County.
2. Promote growth in a manner that retains natural resources and reduces infrastructure costs.
3. Encourage growth to reflect the character and scale of the community in which it occurs and recognize that planned developments are an effective planning tool to maximize community identity and minimize impact on the surrounding area.
4. Require new growth to fully fund its on-site services and apportioned share of off-site services.
5. Provide that Plan goals, objectives, and policies reflect the significant differences in characteristics between the principal land use planning areas of Community Regions, Rural Centers, and Rural Regions.
6. Provide sufficient land densities and land use designations throughout the County to accommodate the projected growth for all categories of development.
7. Support the ability of the private sector to create and provide housing for all residents regardless of income, race, sex, age, religion, or any other arbitrary factor to accommodate the County's projected share of the regional housing needs.
8. Recognize economic development as an integral part of the development of existing communities and new communities by allowing for a diverse mix of land use types which would facilitate economic growth and viability.

PLAN CONCEPTS

The development of these visions and strategies serves to provide for the underlying approach of the General Plan. This approach is the identification of distinct planning concept areas where growth will be directed as a means of providing for a more manageable land use pattern. The concepts of the Plan also recognize that differing levels of service will occur within community and rural areas.

Flexible boundaries shall be provided identifying Community Regions, Rural Centers, and Rural Regions on the General Plan Land Use Map for clear distinction between:

- A. Community Regions where growth will be directed and facilitated;
- B. Rural Centers where growth and commercial activities will be directed to serve the larger Rural Regions; and
- C. Rural Regions where resource based activities are located will be enhanced while accommodating reasonable growth.

Higher levels of infrastructure and public services of all types shall be provided within Community Regions to minimize the demands on services in Rural Regions. The Capital Improvement Plan for the County and all special districts will prioritize improvements.

It is the explicit intent of the Plan, through the appropriate application of these planning concept areas, to: (1) foster a rural quality of life; (2) sustain a quality environment; (3) develop a strong diversified, sustainable local economy; (4) plan land use patterns which will determine the level of public services appropriate to the character, economy, and environment of each region; and (5) accommodate the County's fair share of the regional growth projections while encouraging those activities that comprise the basis for the County's customs, culture, and economic stability.

PLAN OBJECTIVES

Through the appropriate application of the above statements, the objectives of the General Plan are:

1. To develop a strong diversified and sustainable local economy;
2. To foster a rural quality of life;
3. To sustain a quality environment;
4. To accommodate the County's fair share of regional growth projections and affordable housing while encouraging those activities that comprise the basis for the County's customs, culture, and economic stability;
5. To oversupply residential and non-residential land use designations in order to provide market and landowner flexibility to more feasibly accommodate the market;

6. To concentrate and direct urban growth where infrastructure is present and/or can be more feasibly provided;
7. To recognize that funding limitations for infrastructure and services will result in lower levels of service while the County improves employment and housing opportunities;
8. To conserve, protect, and manage the County's abundant natural resources for economic benefits now and for the future;
9. To encourage infill development that more efficiently utilizes existing infrastructure and minimizes land use conflicts while avoiding the premature development of non-contiguous lands where direct and life cycle costs are greater;
10. To accomplish the retention of permanent open space/natural areas on a project-by-project bases through clustering;
11. To minimize down planning and/or down zoning where feasible;
12. To improve the jobs-to-housing ratio by giving preference to the development of high technology and value added employment centers and regional retail and tourism uses; and

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

This General Plan relies upon measures identified in each Element that implement the policies. These implementation measures identified throughout this Plan carry the same weight as policies in terms of guidance for County decision-making. Modification of the text of these measures would require amendment of the General Plan. "Responsibility" assignments and "time frames" for each implementation measure are advisory only. Modifications to responsibility assignments and/or timeframes do not require amendment of the General Plan.

USING THE PLAN

In implementing the General Plan, it must be applied comprehensively. No single component (map, goal, objective, policy, or map) can stand alone in the review and evaluation of a development project. Conversely, the absence of a specific policy enabling a particular aspect of a project (exclusive of basic density consistency) is not to be grounds for a finding of General Plan inconsistency. Projects inherently raise policy issues. It is the task of the decision makers, consistent with State law, to weigh project benefits and consequences up against the General Plan as a whole. The merits of a project should ultimately be determined by its consistency with goals, objectives, and policies of all the elements and the land use map. Development standards as set forth in the Zoning Ordinance and other County policies must be consistent with the standards in this Plan. The Plan standards represent a careful balancing of competing economic, social, and environmental interests. Background information concerning the planning issues addressed in the Plan is contained in the Environmental Impact Report certified by the Board of Supervisors in connection with adopting the Plan. Exclusive of specific plans, community plans, and planned developments, these policies shall not be implemented in a manner that will effectively shift the balance

further in the direction of any one set of interests, except where the applicant for a land use approval advocates more environmental protection than required by the General Plan policies.