



# Community Planning Guide



El Dorado County  
Community Development Agency



October 2014



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# Community Planning Guide

## *Overview of the Process*

El Dorado County is fortunate to have community members who are fully engaged in the pursuit of enhancing the quality of life for all residents. Whether their goals are creating a community that offers good paying jobs, improving the ability to age-in-place or preserving the historical and rural character, citizens are striving collaboratively to create communities throughout the County that build for the future while featuring and enhancing their distinctive community character.

El Dorado County wants to encourage these independent community-initiated, “grass roots” efforts and help to realize these visions. This Community Planning Guide offers interested community members an easy to follow template to initiate, collaborate and implement a community vision.

Whether the goals are large or small, or involve comprehensive or incremental improvements, the County wants to work with community members to realize a vision that fits within a community’s values and goals. This Community Planning Guide will help a community navigate through a community-based process and assist in implementing a community vision. There are no predefined geographic boundaries for each community in this process. Instead each community may determine the planning area that makes sense for their community goals.

The planning process covered in this Guide includes those items that fall under the jurisdiction of the County’s adopted General Plan. This Guide is intended to provide specifics on how the broad outlines of the County General Plan can be customized for each community. (See Appendix D for a list of the main elements of the General Plan.) The plans covered by this Guide include many possibilities, from just one aspect of the General Plan to a comprehensive “mini” general plan that covers all elements of the countywide General Plan. Each community has the opportunity to decide the scope of planning that fits for its goals. Community events and other activities such as clean up days, even if they require the assistance of some County departments, do not fall under the Community Planning Guide umbrella.

This Guide is purposely broad to make it useful across a variety of scenarios. However, it also includes the main steps to ensure a successful community planning process. It is a living document that County staff will refine as needed, without the requirement for formal approval by the County Board of Supervisors.

# Why Have a Community Plan?

A Community Plan allows a community to make General Plan implementation work for the community. The General Plan is purposely broad so that communities can shape the guidelines in unique ways. A Community Plan can enhance economic development opportunities and refine other countywide goals and policies to address a community's unique needs or requests. With a robust Community Plan, the implementation of the General Plan is tailored to follow the vision created by the community in the planning process.

A formal Community Plan is one optional outcome of the Community Planning Guide. The Guide also offers pathways to varying levels of "guidelines only" plans that do not require the level of technical detail provided for a formal plan, but still makes elected leaders aware of community preferences as they make decisions.

A formally adopted plan is a comprehensive planning document for a specific area that addresses a variety of land use related subjects in more detail than the General Plan. It is consistent with the General Plan but adds more specificity. Within the broad framework of the General Plan, a Community Plan is built with community preferences and reflects the community's goals for its future. Once adopted by the Board of Supervisors, the provisions in the plan are codified, making them enforceable.

If a community's vision would be supported by the creation of a comprehensive plan for the community, then this Guide will help ensure that all the needed steps are followed so that a final plan can be considered for adoption by the Board of Supervisors.

# How Does the County Get Involved?

The County will be a valuable partner throughout the community planning process. The County's Community Development Agency (CDA) will be the primary point of contact for the community planning process. CDA staff will be happy to bring in other County resources as needed, and help to connect community-based planning groups with the Board of Supervisors for "check-ins" as plans progress. County staff can also connect community-based planning groups with any important outside agencies that may be required to participate in the process, and make the appropriate linkages to County Committees and Commissions. A full list of these can be found on the County website at <http://www.edcgov.us/Commissions.aspx>

If community-initiated efforts determine the need for a County-adopted Community Plan, the County will assist with all aspects of the formal adoption process, beginning with community outreach and culminating with the County's preparation of final documents for Board of Supervisors' consideration.

Each step in this guide will identify available County resources and require County interaction using the following categories:

- **Helpful Resources:** The County can provide technical expertise and data, and assistance with connecting the community to a wide variety of government resources available for the plan. It is not required to use these resources, but they can get the community off to a great start.
- **Partnership Requirements:** Most of the steps in this guide require the community and the County to work together, jointly completing each step in the community planning process. This will ensure the process is efficient and does not have to be revised in later phases.
- **County Led Technical Requirements:** A full Community Plan is an official planning document adopted by the County. Therefore, the process requires County involvement, with the final stages consisting of highly technical work, led by the County. This ensures the community vision is consistent with all of the current laws, regulations and relevant planning documents and that the plan can be implemented. Requirements to periodically present the current status of the planning effort directly to the Board of Supervisors will be indicated in the section and underlined for emphasis.

# JOIN TOGETHER

## *Begin the Journey*

Any community members that care about the community they live in, and want to secure their community's future can initiate the process. Prior to initiating any changes within their communities, it is vitally important for community members to take leadership within their communities by identifying and engaging many diverse groups of interested community members, not just a select group. This group should research existing and past plans and efforts so they can build on what is currently in place. This step is led by the community with the County providing resources including necessary links to local government required processes and procedures.

### **Outreach:**

The first step is for the community to identify diverse community perspectives, gather existing mailing lists and build a master contact list. Then planning can begin for the first outreach steps, to discover the community values and priorities; what does the community care about the most?

### *County Involvement*

#### **Helpful Resources:**

- The Community Planning Guide, including helpful charts like the "Roadmap" to the community planning process (page 14).
- The County has a wide variety of technical abilities to assist communities, access to studies and reports, and lists of interested citizens from each community to add to the outreach efforts.

#### **Partnership Requirements:**

- The County's awareness of who is involved and will be included to ensure comprehensive community representation.

#### **County Led Technical Requirements:**

- The County will provide a link to related Board-appointed advisory committees and commissions and the Board of Supervisors to ensure appointed and elected countywide leaders are aware of the community's interest and that it is embarking on a planning process. Any entities that are central to the desired goals of the community will be brought in at this point to participate and/or advise.

# CAPTURE UNIQUE CHARACTER

## *Open Meetings and Outreach*

In this step, the community planning group begins the formal outreach process, reaching out to the broader community asking questions like:

- Where have we been?
- Who are we now and where should we go as a community?
- What are our assets?

Begin the process by gaining an in-depth understanding of the short and long-term future the community wants for themselves. This is the visioning stage, where the community clarifies its values and goals.

Now is a good time to consider the community's preferred planning area for the planning process. Communities can use the General Plan as a guide to create custom planning areas focusing on selected areas within a community such as around commercial and downtown centers. Just keep in mind that participation in the planning process needs to be inclusive - everyone needs to have a voice in the process.

This is the time when the community should work with the County to decide how best decisions will be made in the planning process to ensure the direction remains consistent with the General Plan and that it is inclusive of all the varying viewpoints.

This step is led by the community with the County providing guidance on public outreach and decision frameworks.

*(continued on next page)*

# CAPTURE UNIQUE CHARACTER

## *Open Meetings and Outreach*

### Outreach:

The process to reach out to the community and make decisions on the input is developed in this step. The most common form of outreach in this step is a facilitated open meeting or series of meetings with surveys and other outreach tools to assist. At this stage, the Community should begin creating a dedicated website to inform the community of process and store the elements of the plan.

### *County Involvement*

#### Helpful Resources:

- Zoning, standards, and guidelines to inform the public process
- Media and public involvement resources

#### Partnership Requirements:

- Involvement of the community at-large, the community planning group and the County

#### County Led Technical Requirements:

- Workshops to inform and engage the community (see Appendix C)
- Use of Community Planning Guide roadmap and framework
- Board appointed planning group to act as a steering committee if proceeding to a formal plan

*If no county enforcement is required in order for a community to achieve its goal(s), the community may now present its preferences to the Board of Supervisors (“taking a Roadmap off-ramp”).*



**Stop here** if the goal(s) do not require any county enforcement.



# GATHER AND SHARE DATA

## *Sub-Committees Are Formed*

In this step, the planning group forms sub- committees to dig deeper into all of the topics of interest identified in the public meetings. Committees usually fall into the areas of social, fiscal and economic issues, and the character, aesthetics and environment of the community. Specific considerations include:

- Commercial and multifamily areas
- Historical and cultural assets
- Unique community resources
- Walk/bike, automobile, and transit

This step is led by a partnership between the Community and the County.

### **Outreach:**

Data can be gathered from the County, but the community planning group should also reach out to experts, hold focus groups, use online tools and ensure that the broader community is kept involved in and informed of the work of the committees via regular notifications. Website updates and email blasts are important components of the public notification process.

### *County Involvement*

#### **Helpful Resources:**

- The County can help both with direct data and in finding data sources

#### **Partnership Requirements:**

- Certain data is key to the process and the County will provide what is available

#### **County Led Technical Requirements:**

- The County must review the data presented to ensure accuracy and consistency with the General Plan

# FORMAL PLAN PROCESS

## *Key Questions Guide*

At this point, the community has reached a critical juncture in the process where the community must determine the direction the planning process will follow. After documenting the progress to date, the community planning group can choose to end the process and simply provide elected leaders with preferred guidelines, instead of a formal and enforceable plan. If a decision is made to proceed to a full community plan, then other questions must be addressed:

- Are all of our preliminary plans consistent with the General Plan?
- Are we in a designated Community Identity area?
- Do we have a final preferred planning area?
- How should the process and ultimate implementation of the Plan be governed at the community level?

This step is led by a partnership between the community and the County.

### **Outreach:**

Input from the larger community is critical at this juncture. Surveys, other community engagement and facilitated meetings can help to consider, evaluate and prioritize options. A synopsis of all stakeholder input to date should be publicly available and comments considered as the details are finalized. A transparent and inclusive process is an important part of this step as the pieces begin to form into a whole.

*(continued on next page)*

# FORMAL PLAN PROCESS

## Key Questions Guide

### County Involvement

#### Helpful Resources:

- The County can help in navigating the decisions
- The County can prepare a Consistency Finding report

#### Partnership Requirements:

- Assist with governance structure guidelines
- Assist in determining planning area
- Help integrating Community ID if applicable

#### County Led Technical Requirements:

- Identify any amendments needed to the General Plan
- *Present decisions to the Board of Supervisors*

The community should begin to turn decisions into draft plans. Options for Capture Unique Character should be created with visuals such as maps and photos. The criteria for governance should be outlined. This is the community's vision for the future, informed by the community outreach in all the previous steps.

# PUT IT ON PAPER

## *Create the Draft Plan*

This step is led by the County in partnership with the community planning group. The Draft Plan must be comprehensive, long-range, related to the planning area, and include an implementation plan.

### **Outreach:**

In this step the County will work with the community planning group directly, but the step does not require any additional outreach until the draft plan is finalized.

### *County Involvement*

#### **Helpful Resources:**

- The County can help with both technical assistance and grant applications to obtain resources, if needed.

#### **Partnership Requirements:**

- The Draft Plan will be done together with the community planning group

#### **County Led Technical Requirements:**

- The County will determine the final Community plan elements. Some examples of commonly used elements are:
  - Transportation
  - Design
  - Public Facilities and Services
  - Economic Development
- *Present decisions to the Board of Supervisors if taking the off ramp (See Roadmap)*



**Stop here** if the community is to be self-organized with an agreement on guidelines. Board awareness of preferences, but no enforceable plans will be adopted.

# PRESENT THE DRAFT

## *Time for a Workshop*

A workshop is a special kind of community meeting, designed for community members to discuss and “weigh in” on the proposed community plan that is anticipated to be adopted. A workshop is filled with visual displays, experts and creative ways for community members to give their input on the proposed plan, ask questions and discuss trade-offs and priorities. This takes a plan from draft stage to an adoptable plan. The Workshop makes the planning choices clear, and also provides suggested governance options.

This step is directed by County with Community participation.

### **Outreach:**

The workshop is the outreach vehicle for everyone who participated in the previous steps. Also it is important to devise a way to discern the input of the actual residents of the planning area. The plan should reflect the whole county context that can be provided by countywide stakeholder groups, but prioritize the input of the residents living and working within the plan area.

### *County Involvement*

#### **Helpful Resources:**

- County can assist with the necessary steps to a successful workshop
- County can provide both technical analysis and grant application assistance to obtain resources, if needed

#### **Partnership Requirements:**

- County will lead the public planning process with community participation

#### **County Led Technical Requirements:**

- The Workshop is a required step in the process
- *Members of the Board of Supervisors will be invited to attend the Workshop*

# FINALIZE THE PLAN

## *Who is Responsible?*

After the workshop, the Draft Plan will be modified to incorporate the input of the workshop participants. The last step is to finalize the governance structure of the proposed community plan. There are many ways to govern a Community Plan, ranging from allowing the Board of Supervisors to directly manage the Plan, using the Plan guidelines for enforcement, to the creation of a Board-appointed Community Advisory Committee (CAC) to meet regularly and oversee routine enforcement of the Plan. On a regular basis, the CAC could also hear testimony from the public and make recommendations to the Board regarding significant governance issues or proposed development projects within the Plan area. In any case, guidelines for governance will need to be created and approved by the County Board of Supervisors.

### **Outreach:**

The governance guidelines should include a plan to engage the broader community on a regular basis, beyond the open meetings of the governing body.

### *County Involvement*

#### **Partnership Requirements:**

- County will lead the preparation of Community presentations

#### **County Led Technical Requirements:**

- CEQA requirements will be led by the County
- Board resolutions for governance will be prepared by the County
- *The final Plan and governance structure will be presented to the Board of Supervisors. The governance plan requires approval, and the Plan can be adopted once all the regulatory requirements are met.*



***Adopt the Plan and Celebrate!***

# Community Planning Guide Roadmap

## LEGEND

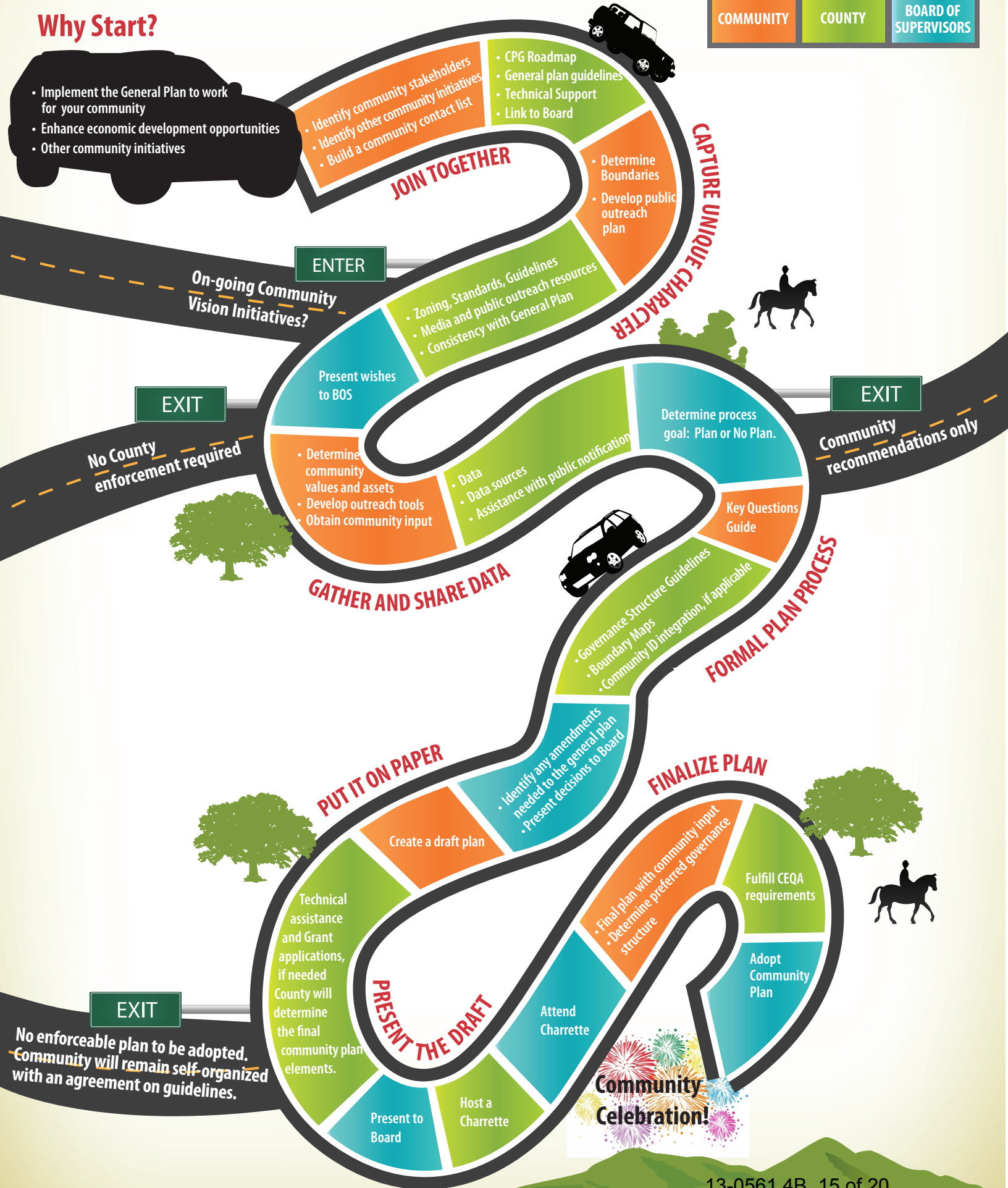
COMMUNITY

COUNTY

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

## Why Start?

- Implement the General Plan to work for your community
- Enhance economic development opportunities
- Other community initiatives



### JOIN TOGETHER

- Identify community stakeholders
- Identify other community initiatives
- Build a community contact list
- CPG Roadmap
- General plan guidelines
- Technical Support
- Link to Board
- Determine Boundaries
- Develop public outreach plan

### CAPTURE UNIQUE CHARACTER

- Zoning, Standards, Guidelines
- Media and public outreach resources
- Consistency with General Plan

- Determine community values and assets
- Develop outreach tools
- Obtain community input
- Data
- Data sources
- Assistance with public notification

### GATHER AND SHARE DATA

Determine process goal: Plan or No Plan.

- Governance Structure Guidelines
- Boundary Maps
- Community ID integration, if applicable

### FORMAL PLAN PROCESS

### PUT IT ON PAPER

- Create a draft plan
- Identify any amendments needed to the general plan
- Present decisions to Board

### FINALIZE PLAN

Technical assistance and Grant applications, if needed County will determine the final community plan elements.

### PRESENT THE DRAFT

- Final plan with community input
- Determine preferred governance structure
- Fulfill CEQA requirements
- Adopt Community Plan
- Attend Charrette
- Host a Charrette
- Present to Board

Community Celebration!

On-going Community Vision Initiatives?

EXIT

No County enforcement required

EXIT

Community recommendations only

EXIT

No enforceable plan to be adopted. Community will remain self-organized with an agreement on guidelines.

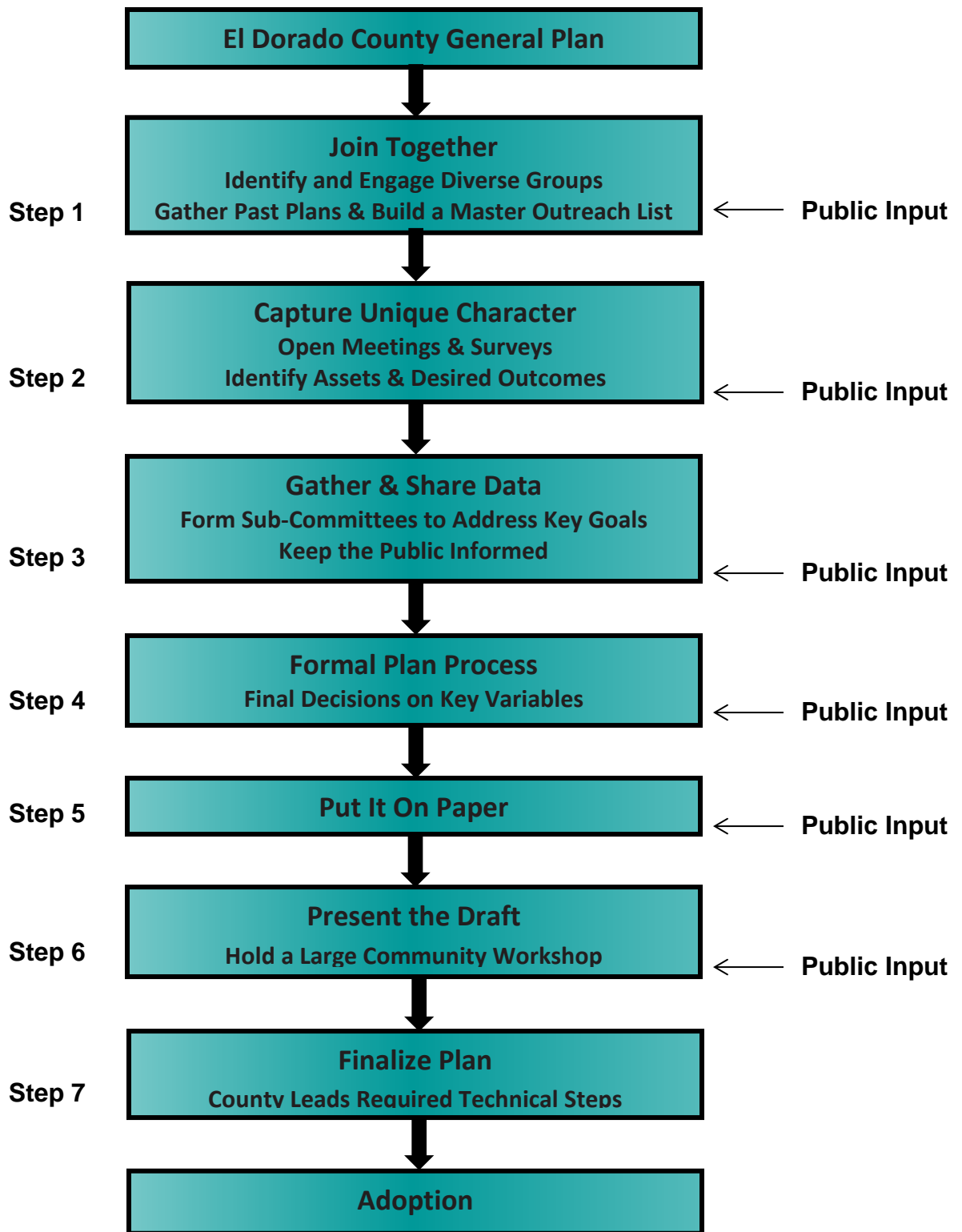
# Appendix A: Planning Timeline

General Community Plan Update Timeline <i>(Actual duration of update components will vary)</i>										
Possible Community Plan Update Components		Phase I: 6 months		Phase II: 1 <sup>st</sup> Year			Phase III: 2 <sup>nd</sup> Year			
Community Plan <i>(New or Update)</i>	30 months									
Contracting	3–6 months									
Establish a Community Planning Group & Develop a Public Outreach Strategy	3 months									
Public Meetings and Planning Commission Workshops <i>*Community Workshops/Charrette</i>	24 months				*	*	*		*	
Existing conditions data gathering and analysis	3 months									
Mobility/Traffic Studies and Forecasting	15 months									
Developing and drafting plan policies <i>*Drafts of Community Plan</i>	12 months							*		*
Identify and prepare Zoning Updates <i>(if necessary)</i>	5 months									
Environmental Impact Review (EIR) process – screenchecks, Draft EIR, public review and Final	10 months									
Public Facilities Financing Plan <i>(if necessary)</i> – Conducted on a separate timeline, but concurrent with Community Plan Process	5–7 months									
Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors approval Process. <i>*Schedule first hearing</i>	3–4 months									*

*\*The 2 month hearings timeline is not included in the plan update schedule.*



# Appendix B: Process Steps



# Appendix C: Outreach Strategy Schedule

Outreach Strategy Schedule						
Outreach Effort	Timeframe	Phase I: 6 mos.	Phase I: 6 mos.	Phase II: 1 <sup>st</sup> Year	Phase III: 2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	Public Hearings <sup>1</sup>
<b>Establish a Community Planning Group</b>	<b>3 months</b>	*				
<b>Weekly subcommittee meetings</b> 1st: Kick off meeting See Table 2-2: for subsequent subcommittee meeting topics	<b>1 meeting/month</b>					
<b>Subcommittee Focus Group Meetings</b>	<b>varies</b>					
<b>Community Planning Group</b> Progress reports and updates Formal Recommendation	<b>Every 1–3 months</b>			*		
<b>Community Surveys</b>	<b>1–5 months</b>					
<b>Public workshops</b>	<b>5 workshops minimum</b>					
Visioning (2)	2 workshops					
Goal setting (2)	2 workshops					
Alternatives (2)	2 workshops					
Special Issues	varies					
Intense charrette process (up to six days in the length)	2–6 days					
Walk audits	1 day					
<b>Presentations to appointed and elected boards – updates/workshops</b>	<b>6 meetings minimum</b>					
Planning Commission	2 workshops average					
Board of Supervisors	2 workshops average					
Tribal Noticing and Consultation	90 day notice					
<b>Public Hearing Process</b>	<b>3–4 months</b>					
<b>Planning Commission</b>	<i>1 month</i>					
Noticing	10 business days					
Report	6 wk from docket date					
<b>Board of Supervisors</b>	<i>2 months</i>					
Noticing	10 business days					
Report	6 wk from docket date					

1. The hearings timeline is not included as part of the official 2½ year plan development/update schedule.

# Appendix D: **General Plan Elements**

There are nine elements in the El Dorado County General Plan. Community Plans can cover anywhere from one of these to all nine.

1. Land Use
2. Transportation and Circulation
3. Housing
4. Public Services and Utilities
5. Health, Safety and Noise
6. Conservation and Open Space
7. Agriculture and Forestry
8. Parks and Recreation
9. Economic Development

## **County General Plan:**

[http://www.edcgov.us/Government/Planning/Adopted\\_General\\_Plan.aspx](http://www.edcgov.us/Government/Planning/Adopted_General_Plan.aspx)

# Appendix E: Links to Sample Community Plans

El Dorado County Meyers Area Plan (Third Draft, June 2014):

[http://www.edcgov.us/Government/Meyers/Documents/Meyers\\_Area\\_Plan\\_Revised\\_Draft\\_June2014.aspx](http://www.edcgov.us/Government/Meyers/Documents/Meyers_Area_Plan_Revised_Draft_June2014.aspx)

Prior Meyers Community Plan (October 27, 1993):

<http://www.edcgov.us/Government/Planning/LandUsePlans/MeyersCP.aspx>

Meyers Community Plan Main Page:

<http://www.edcgov.us/Meyers/>

Grass Valley's Community Design Guidelines:

[http://www.cityofgrassvalley.com/services/departments/cdd/pdf/Community\\_Design\\_Guidelines/CH7.pdf](http://www.cityofgrassvalley.com/services/departments/cdd/pdf/Community_Design_Guidelines/CH7.pdf)

Nevada County Area Plans

<http://www.mynevadacounty.com/nc/cda/planning/Pages/Nevada-County-Area-Plans.aspx>

Nevada County's North San Juan Rural Center Area Plan

<http://www.mynevadacounty.com/nc/cda/planning/docs/Area%20Plans/North%20San%20Juan%20Rural%20Center%20Area%20Plan.pdf>

Placer County's Sheridan Community Plan

<http://www.placer.ca.gov/sheridan>

Placer County's Tahoe Basin Area Plan

<http://www.placer.ca.gov/departments/communitydevelopment/planning/tahoebasinareaplan>

For more information on El Dorado County's community planning process, contact:  
Community Development Agency, Long Range Planning Division  
(530) 621-4650 or [www.edcgov.us/LongRangePlanning/](http://www.edcgov.us/LongRangePlanning/)