

Community Planning Guide

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 efforts and help to realize these visions. A Community Vision and Implementation Plan (VIP) offers interested community members an easy to follow template to initiate, collaborate and implement a community vision.

Whether the vision is large or small, or involves comprehensive or incremental improvements, the County wants to work with community members to realize a vision that fits within a community's values and dreams. The Community VIP and guidelines will help a community navigate through a community-based process and assist in implementing a community vision.

A Community Plan is one optional outcome of the Community VIP. It 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.

If a community's vision would be supported by the creation of a comprehensive plan for the community, then this process will provide the opportunity to receive early feedback and allow any modifications, as needed, to ensure that a final plan can be considered for adoption by the 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.

How Does the County Get involved?

The County will be a valuable partner throughout the Community VIP process.

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 project. 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.
- **Mandatory Requirements:** A full Community Plan is an official document adopted by the County therefore the process requires County involvement, with the final stages being led by the County. This ensures the community vision is consistent with all of the current laws, regulations and 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.



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 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 Road Map will be supplied by the County and additional guidance will be provided
- 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.

Mandatory Requirements:

- The County will provide a link to related Board-appointed advisory committees and commissions and the Board of Supervisors to assure appointed and elected countywide leaders are aware of the community's interest and that it is embarking on a planning process.



OPEN MEETINGS AND OUTREACH

In this step the community begins the formal outreach process, reaching out to a wide swath of the 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.

Now is a good time to consider the community's preferred plan boundaries for the planning process. Although formal mapped boundaries exist and communities can use them as a guideline, community plans can create custom boundaries, both including parts of other communities, and/or focusing on selected areas within a community such as around commercial/downtown areas. Just keep in mind that 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.

Outreach:

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. The process to reach out to the community and make decisions on the input is developed in this step.

County Involvement

Helpful Resources:

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

Partnership Requirements:

- Involvement of the public, the community planning group and the County

Mandatory Requirements:

- Workshops to inform and engage the community (see appendix)
- Use of Community Planning Guide roadmap and framework
- Board appointed planning group to act as a steering committee if proceeding to a formal plan
- ***Present community preferences to the Board of Supervisors if taking the off-ramp***

Stop here if the goal(s) do not require any county enforcement
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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 group should also reach out to experts, hold focus groups, use online tools and ensure that public is kept involved in and informed of the work of the committees via regular notifications. The 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

Mandatory Requirements:

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

KEY QUESTIONS GUIDE

At this point the community has reached a critical juncture in the process where the community must determine the direction for the planning process that 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? (see appendix)
- Do we have a final preferred planning boundary?
- 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 process is an important part of this step as the pieces begin to form into a whole.

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 planning boundary maps and advice
- Help integrating Community ID if applicable

Mandatory 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. The Draft Plan must be comprehensive, long-range, related to the planning boundary, and include an implementation plan. This is the community's vision for the future, informed by the community outreach in all the previous steps.



CREATE THE DRAFT PLAN

This step is led by the County in partnership with the community planning group.

Outreach:

In this step the County will work with the planning committee directly but the step does not require any additional outreach until the draft plans are 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 leadership

Mandatory 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***

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.



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. 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 all of those 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 provide both technical assistance and grant applications to obtain resources, if needed
- County can provide the El Dorado County Community Workshop Handbook to help guide the steps to a successful Workshop

Partnership Requirements:

- County will lead the public planning process with community participation

Mandatory Requirements:

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

FINALIZE PLAN

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

After the Workshop, the plan will be modified to incorporate the input of the community. 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.

Outreach

The governance guidelines should include a plan to engage the 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

Mandatory 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!