

## **PREFACE**

California law requires that every county and city have a comprehensive, long term general plan for its future development.

The Calaveras County General Plan attempts to preserve individual property rights, while attempting to balance other competing interests. In areas where the County's most valuable resources exist, the Plan establishes more restrictive land use policies.

The original Calaveras County General Plan was adopted in 1967. The Board of Supervisors adopted amended versions in 1973, 1974, 1982, 1985 and 1986. This version of the General Plan reflects text amendments approved by the Board of Supervisors through December 9, 1996.

The 1996 edition includes updated statistical data compiled by the land use consulting firm of Crawford, Multari & Starr of San Luis Obispo.

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.0 The Calaveras County General Plan and Related Land Use Documents

All counties in California must comply with state planning laws. They must prepare comprehensive, long term general plans for the development of the county, and approve projects based on consistency with the General Plan.

Although the State establishes statutes governing general plans and their preparation, the policies contained within the plans are left to local discretion. The overall direction of the Calaveras County General Plan is to provide for a balanced plan that effectively meets the needs of the public and is sensitive to environmental, economic and social conditions.

The intent of developing a General Plan is for its use by decision makers, including its diagrams or maps, to coordinate land use and infrastructure decisions. At the same time, given the long-range nature of a General Plan, its text and maps should be general enough to allow a degree of flexibility in decision making as conditions change.

### 1.1 General Plan Elements

California Government Code Section 65302 identifies seven elements which must be included in all general plans. The Calaveras County General Plan consists of these mandatory elements, which are described by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) in its General Plan Guidelines as follows:

- **The Land Use Element** designates the general distribution and intensity of uses of the land for housing, business, industry, open space, education, public buildings and grounds, waste disposal facilities and other categories of public and private uses.
- **The Circulation Element** is correlated with the Land Use Element and identifies the general location and extent of existing and proposed major thoroughfares, transportation routes, terminals, and other local public utilities and facilities.
- **The Housing Element** is a comprehensive assessment of current and projected housing needs for all segments of the community and all economic groups. In addition, it embodies policy for providing adequate housing and includes action programs for this purpose.
- **The Conservation Element** addresses the conservation, development and use of natural resources including water, forests, soils, rivers and mineral deposits.
- **The Open Space Element** details plans and measures for preserving open space for natural resources, the managed production of resources, outdoor recreation, public health and safety, and the identification of agricultural land.

- **The Noise Element** identifies and appraises noise problems within the community and forms the basis for land use distribution.
- **The Safety Element** establishes policies and programs to protect the community from risks associated with seismic, geologic, flood and fire hazards.

The detail that each issue is afforded in the local plan depends on local conditions and the relative local importance of that issue.

In addition to the seven elements of the general plan, an appendix is included as a part of the document containing technical data and a glossary of terms used in the general plan. Some terms are also defined in the various elements.

## **1.2 Internal Consistency**

State planning law requires that all parts of the General Plan comprise an integrated, internally consistent and compatible statement of policies. These standards imply that: 1) all elements of the General Plan have equal status; 2) all goals, objectives, policies, principles, standards, and plan proposals in the General Plan must be internally consistent; and 3) any implementation programs set out in the plan must follow logically from the plan's goals and policies.

Because all elements of the General Plan have equal legal status, the goals, policies, and implementation measures of each element must be integrated and compatible with all other elements. When a new element is adopted or revised, the remaining elements of the General Plan may also need to be changed to eliminate any inconsistencies.

## **1.3 Definitions of Maps, Goals, Policies, and Implementation Measures**

The goals, policies, and implementation measures set forth in each element comprise the heart of the General Plan. The California Government Code states that "the General Plan shall consist of a statement of development policies and shall include a diagram or diagrams and text setting forth objectives, principles, standards, and plan proposals" (Section 65302). The purpose of this section is to define these terms in the context of this General Plan.

### **General Plan Diagrams (Maps)**

The diagrams that are required in a General Plan under the State law have been defined as graphic expressions of the plan's development policies. The diagrams or maps in a General Plan need not be as detailed as other regulatory maps, such as zoning maps, but they should be detailed enough so that the users of the plan, after reviewing all other pertinent maps and portions of this plan, can reach the same general conclusion regarding the appropriate use of any parcel of land.

Due to the scale utilized in mapping the various land use categories, errors are occasionally discovered on the Future Land Use Map. When it is thought that an error may have occurred, the base maps utilized for the individual land use categories as well as relevant zoning amendment files will be researched. Upon a finding by the Board of Supervisors that a mapping error has occurred, the affected land use category shall be corrected on all maps.

When a parcel of land is shown on General Plan maps to be within a particular category or designation, the property owner may rebut the precision of the mapping with site-specific information evidencing the inappropriateness of the designation or category. The General Plan maps are controlling, unless the Board of Supervisors finds that a parcel has been inappropriately mapped, in which case it will be amended.

### **Goals**

A goal statement sets the direction for more specific policies and implementation programs. Goals express ideal future ends, conditions, or states relating to the public health, safety or general welfare, toward which planning measures are directed. Goals are stated in general, broad terms. A goal is a general expression of community values and, therefore, generally is abstract.

### **Policies**

Policies are statements that guide decision making and indicate a commitment to achieving general plan objectives.

Policies are based upon General Plan goals and are arrived at through planning experience, studies, and an interpretation of the best available data and information at a particular point in time. At the General Plan level, policies are not static as ironclad regulation. New and better information will necessarily be presented to the decision makers during the life of this Plan. As an evolutionary document, the policies expressed in this Plan will be evaluated in light of new and better information and, updated when necessary.

Decisions as to whether a particular action, program or project is consistent with this General Plan will consider whether all aspects of a future action will further the objectives and policies of this General Plan without obstructing the attainment of these policies. Policies in this General Plan strike a balance between clarity for guiding decision makers and a framework for comprehensively weighing competing policies in the County. Policies expressed in this General Plan are intended to be part of an integrated document encompassing concerns which are both compatible and competing, and it is inappropriate to assess consistency of a singular policy without reference to this framework. The policies are intended to guide decision makers through this difficult balancing process.

### **Implementation Measures**

Implementation measures are specific actions, procedures, programs or techniques for attaining goals and carrying out policies.

## **GENERAL PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Goal I-1:** Provide a means to correct mapping errors without requiring an amendment to the General Plan.

**Policy I-1A:** Allow corrections to mapping errors through public acknowledgment.

Implementation Measure I-1A-1: Upon presentation of evidence of a mapping error, the Board of Supervisors may direct staff to make the appropriate corrections to the necessary map(s).

## **1.4 General Plan Amendments**

The General Plan must reflect changes in community values and local conditions. Therefore, it is necessary periodically to monitor, review and update the General Plan. Local governments may amend their general plans four times in each calendar year. Calaveras County generally allocates three of the amendment periods for individual applications, and retains one for County-initiated amendments.

## **1.5 Area Plans**

Cities and counties may develop plans for community or special areas within their jurisdiction. These area plans, referred to in this General Plan as Community, Special or Specific Plans, implement the General Plan and must be consistent with the General Plan policies and land use designations. These plans supplement and refine the general plan provisions, but must meet the requirements and intent of the overall general plan itself.

Calaveras County is diverse in climate, topography, and economy. The County's relatively small population is distributed throughout some 1100 square miles. These factors contribute to the County being comprised of communities with differing values and needs. Area plans afford communities the ability to address local issues with greater detail than in the overall General Plan.

Calaveras County has developed area plans for many of the major towns in the County. The majority of the County's population, small lots, industrial, commercial and multiple family residential development is found within these areas. Plans adopted by the County are incorporated into the General Plan, ensuring internal consistency between the General Plan and the various area plans. The result is a single land use planning document containing adopted policies and regulations, with more detailed requirements contained in the separate area plans.

## **GENERAL PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS**

Goal I-2: Develop land use policies that address local issues and respect local preferences.

Policy I-2A: Incorporate area plans into the General Plan to insure consistency.

Implementation Measure I-2A-1: Appoint citizen committees to work with County staff in developing area plans, as budgeting and staffing levels permit.

## **1.6 Zoning, Subdivision and Road Ordinances**

State law requires that all zoning and subdivision approvals be consistent with the adopted General Plan. Therefore, the County's Zoning and Subdivision Codes are important tools with which to implement the General Plan.

Regulation of subdivision and zoning is an exercise of state and local legislative authority (California Constitution, Art. XI, §7; Govt. Code §65800 *et seq.*). Statewide uniformity in local subdivision procedures is established by the Subdivision Map Act (Government Code §66410 *et seq.*). Uses and development standards allowed within particular zones are left entirely to local discretion.

Calaveras County's first Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances, Nos. 250 and 251, were adopted in 1961. In 1978, these original ordinances were repealed and replaced by new Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances, Nos. 945 and 946. The Subdivision Ordinance was rewritten in 1982, and the Zoning Ordinance was substantially revised in 1986, and has continually been updated since. The Subdivision and Zoning Ordinances are codified as Titles 16 and 17, respectively, of the Calaveras County Code.

Road standards were originally adopted in 1969, and amended in 1977. The first Road Ordinance was enacted in 1984 as part of the Subdivision Ordinance (Chapters 16.33 and 16.35 of the County Code). The Road Ordinance has since undergone major revision and is now codified as Chapter 12.02 of the Calaveras County Code.

## **1.7 Other Planning Documents**

In addition to the General Plan and its associated area, special and specific plans, the County has several other major planning documents. They are the Solid Waste Management Plan, the Regional Transportation Plan, and the Hazardous Waste Management Plan. All of these documents are related to the General Plan.

## **2.0 County Description**

Calaveras County is located in Central California along the western slope of the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range. The County's boundaries are the Mokelumne River on the north and the Stanislaus River on the south. The County's eastern boundary abuts Alpine County and the western boundary adjoins San Joaquin and Stanislaus Counties. Total land area of the County is 657,920 acres. The County has one incorporated city, The City of Angels, commonly known as Angels Camp.

The County is approximately 53 miles long from west to east and 20 miles wide from north to south. The western part of Calaveras County is characterized by rolling foothills beginning at an elevation of approximately 300 feet. The terrain rises to the east, reaching a peak height of 8,170 feet near the Alpine County boundary. Deep ravines and steep ridges are found between the foothills and the higher mountains.

### **2.1 Climate**

Calaveras County's climate lies in a transitional zone between the Sierra Nevada and the San Joaquin Valley. Climate varies significantly due to great differences in elevation. Temperatures in the higher country range from the low 20's to the middle 80's. The lower foothills range in temperature from the low 30's to the high 90's, exceeding 100 degrees at times during the summer months. Rainfall generally increases with altitude, and snow accounts for much of the precipitation in elevations above 3000 feet.

## **2.2 History**

Lands in the County were first used by the Miwok and Washo tribes. The lower part of the County was later used by settlers to raise cattle. The discovery of gold along the mother lode in the 1850's and 1870's resulted in the historic towns which, to a large extent, still serve as the County's main townsites.

Changes in land use after the end of the Gold Rush were relatively minor, until the growth of outdoor recreation beginning in the 1960's. Visitors seeking recreation and open space have created major changes in the area's economy and land use patterns. The rapid growth of subdivisions, including both seasonal and permanent homes, has resulted from these demands.

## **2.3 Economy**

The County's economy is generated from six primary areas: tourism and recreation; forest products; mineral extraction and processing; agriculture; private business; and the public sector, including schools.

The scenic and recreational attributes of Calaveras County make the tourism and recreation industries an extremely valuable part of the County's economy. The Stanislaus National Forest, Big Trees State Park, historic Gold Rush towns, rivers and reservoirs, and the generally rural character of the County attract visitors as well as new residents. Proximity to the Mt. Reba Ski Area, just across the Alpine County line, provides excellent winter sport opportunities.

The forested areas of Calaveras County represent another valuable segment of the area's economy. The timber industry has shown a fairly stable pattern of providing local employment and building materials.

Mineral extraction combined with ancillary processing and manufacturing provides both a historic and potential source of industry in the County.

Agricultural production has been a historically stable industry in Calaveras County. Field crops, vineyards, orchards, livestock, and poultry are the categories contributing most to total gross value of production.

Private businesses such as construction, personal services, and retail establishments have grown as the County's population and tourism have increased.

Government is the County's largest employer, accounting for approximately 1/3 of all jobs.

Despite the diversity which exists in the County's economy, overall unemployment in the area currently remains above the state average. Unemployment in the County indicates the need for increased economic activity in the area. The attraction of new industries and businesses to Calaveras County is essential to the County's well-being.

Local land use regulation can be burdensome, deterring new business and industry from locating in a particular area. A streamlined regulatory process can encourage economic development.

## GENERAL PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

Goal I-3: Improve the economy of Calaveras County.

Policy I-3A: Encourage job-generating commercial and industrial developments.

Implementation Measure I-3A-1: Institute a feasible "one-stop" permit process involving the County's Planning, Public Works, Environmental Health, and Building Departments.

Implementation Measure I-3A-2: Develop materials explaining the County's development process, time frames, and similar information that will help property owners, builders, and developers.

Policy I-3B: Encourage projects that aid the travel and tourism industry.

Implementation Measure I-3B-1: When financially feasible, utilize a portion of the Transient Occupancy Tax to promote tourism.

Policy I-3C: Work cooperatively with the Chamber of Commerce, the Economic Development Company, and similar organizations to encourage commercial and industrial development.

Implementation Measure I-3C-1: Arrange periodic meetings between County officials and representatives of business and industry to discuss common concerns.