



The *Business Alliance...Update* is a bi-monthly publication of the El Dorado Business Alliance (BA). The BA is made up of the following organizations: El Dorado Builders' Exchange, El Dorado County Association of Realtors (EDCAR), El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce, North State Building Industry Association (NSBIA) and Shingle Springs-Cameron Park Chamber of Commerce. Web Address for Subscription Info: KathyeRussell@gmail.com

"Developing Mutual Support on Community-Wide Issues"

PAINTING PLACERVILLE PROJECT DELAYED

Faithful readers will recall the huge community support that won Placerville's downtown Main Street an honored spot among 20 towns chosen to benefit from Benjamin Moore's "Paint What Matters" project. Since that victory many have been waiting for progress and ultimately the final results that will transform part of the downtown streetscape. Positive actions like these are likely to jump-start others' efforts to further improve their buildings as well, which will be exciting for residents and visitors alike.

Business and property owners have been waiting to find out when painting will commence, how it will be done and which buildings will be painted, which may be the hardest decision Benjamin Moore will make. The local Project Manager, Matt Boyer, originally cited a kick-off date of April 14th to 16th but that date has been changed. Painting will now commence at the beginning of June with a completion target of mid-June. Revised plans include a "kick off" event, now set to be "final reveal" celebration slated for June 21st. So be patient and expect changes as plans are finalized: The results are sure to be worth the wait.

PLAN FOR GROWTH or PLAN FOR FAILURE ?

In a formal statement issued in February 2014, Tom McCintock, R-Elk Grove, who represents the (our) 4th Congressional District, commented on a recent visit President Obama made to the drought-stricken Central Valley of California. Farmers fear for this year's crops, as once again water is funneled to sources other than agriculture. According to McClintock, Obama announced his administration's response would be to, "...*spend another billion dollars to study climate change.*"

A television interview with the founder of Greenpeace caught our attention when it recently aired, after the Greenpeace expedition, funded to explore "global warming", became stranded for days after being mired in ice, as cold temperatures caused the ice to engulf and immobilize the ship. Is it troubling to others that originally the "threat" was aimed at "global cooling", which became "global warming", which has morphed into "climate change"? (now covering all possible changes.) The Greenpeace founder is a trained scientist who left the organization when science became secondary to the political movement and numerous government grants awarded to study, study again, then re-study man's contributions to worldwide climate changes. This scientist provided his opinion that there is no scientific proof for the theory (based on a model) that man's activities are contributing to changes in climate. He further stated that Greenpeace had been usurped when it became politically and financially driven instead of science-based, when he left the organization.

According to Congressman McClintock's press release, "*The planet has been warming – on and off – since the last ice age, when glaciers covered much of North America. The climate has been changing since the planet formed, often much more abruptly than it has in recent millennia. Until the Earth begins moving into its next ice age, we can reasonably expect it to continue to warm. That will mean less water can be stored in snow packs and ...more will need to be stored behind dams.*" As a strong supporter for water storage projects in lieu of endless studies trying to prove man is bad, McClintock isn't alone in his assessment. A growing number of scientists are taking the painful dive into the waters of truth and disavowing environmental activists gone wild and stepping forward with fresh opinions.

Droughts are beyond our control, but water shortages are a choice. As we face late rainfall this year, the threat of drought remains cause for angst. EDC water doesn't come cheap, and being forced to again consider abandoning costly investments in landscaping alone, should be a wake-up call for residents.

McClintock continues, "*...we've not built major water storage on the Sacramento system since 1979 because of opposition from the environmental left, and most recently from this administration....we have had to fight back against attempts to destroy perfectly good existing dams...devastating the economy, drying up a quarter million acres of fertile farmland and throwing thousands of Californians into unemployment....we have been unable even to raise...spillways to add to existing storage due to radical environmental regulations.* Strong words but locally we must recognize that we are either planning solutions or we're planning for failure.

FIFTH LAND USE INITIATIVE FILED

Another land-use voter initiative has been filed by those who believe they are more qualified than professional staff and planners to dictate how El Dorado County (EDC) accommodates annual growth rates, historically 1.03%, as required by State regulations. To date we've heard no discussions by initiative creators as to how EDC will handle state mandates that require counties to accept a portion of the Sacramento regions' future residents. Sorry to be cynical, but ever since the 1970/80s when many people "discovered" this area and subsequently moved here, this area has had an active coalition of individuals trying to stop growth. The fundamental effort behind the messaging seems to remain: Stop local planning for growth and it won't come. This mentality is consistent with Congressman McClintock's assessment about water storage for the State and region as noted above. The failure to resolve problems is putting a measureable tarnish on this once golden state.

Veterans of years of these local growth wars, including Business Alliance members, naively thought that with the adoption of a General Plan ten-years-in-the-making, an extensive Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and legal challenges the county was forced to defend, costs to local taxpayers soared into the millions with little if any resolution acceptable to all. It's particularly disheartening that some have now chosen to attack professional county staff and others who factually disagree with them.

The hearings of February 24th and 25th were disappointing overall as the BOS seemed to have forgotten their prior direction to staff, as well as significant data provided during the past 4 years (to be recapped in the next issue) focused on GP implementation of existing policies. The Land Use Policy Programmatic Update (LUPPU) was simply the tool for implementing what was already adopted. Many who never supported that GP now are waging all-out war to win public sympathy by threatening uncontrolled runaway growth and mis-using data widely accepted by a diverse number of professionals and consultants *who have no pony in this race*. The prior BOS correctly reached out to hire firms beyond reproach so they would not be influenced by personal or political interests as has occurred in the past.

The fifth (and dare we dream – final?) voter initiative was filed on February 25th and signed by Sue Taylor of "Save our County" (SOC) and Laurel Stroud for "Residents Involved in Positive Planning (RIPP)". It appears this initiative recognizes zoning must be consistent with a county's GP and not visa-versa, by attempting to retain archaic zoning by changing GP Land Use Designations when zoning and land use designations are not consistent. We await legal opinions on all the initiatives, and ponder whether such maneuvering is likely to work. California has mandated growth requirements and planning laws/regulations aimed at overcoming anti-growth efforts that flourish in the 1980s. The State had recognized the vitality of California's economy was deeply compromised by a lack of residential housing to meet all income level needs: from very low, to low, to moderate, to high-income levels. EDC is sorely lacking in even moderate-income level housing while high-income home numbers have grown disproportionately.

The scenarios reviewed at February's hearings can be simplified: Does EDC direct growth to the areas with infrastructure, predominantly along the Highway 50 corridor's "Community Regions" (CR), OR channel it into rural and agricultural areas?

Market demand for new homes in planned developments (CRs) is stronger due to a range of cost options provided, proximity to jobs and availability of services and amenities. Forcing higher density growth into rural often remote areas without support services and adequate roads means higher transportation costs as jobs remain predominantly along Highway 50.

Developable land in CRs is typically held by entities with resources and the capability/capital to develop the land (EDC's GP is expensive to implement), though rural land development is much costlier. Rural (including agricultural) lands are predominantly held by small, fractured owners which has compromised EDC's ability to plan for service extensions and utilities with so many stakeholders. Since build-out entails many incremental public decisions, it's common for such projects to become impossible to meet all property owners' demands.

Projects in designated Community Regions provide more complete communities including mixed uses for residential, retail and employment, thus reducing traffic overall. Traffic generated there is more internal to the projects and doesn't use nearly as much public roadway as does rural expansion, but even the rural distribution ends up with the majority of trips also using Highway 50. Rural development must use existing public streets and roads *yet one initiative seeks to remove the funding sources for rural road improvements*.

An effective anti-growth strategy is to force growth into areas/situations that are not viable and thus, like we're seeing now, planning efforts can again be attacked as the land wars continue. The EDC Chamber of Commerce is correct: The risk is real that the State could remove EDC's local land-use authority altogether if EDC fails to comply with State mandates and laws.