



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 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”

EL Dorado Builders Exchange Under New Ownership

Editorial: In a notice sent to all members of the El Dorado Builders Exchange (EDBX) on June 16, 2014, the El Dorado Builders Exchange Board of Directors announced the acquisition of El Dorado County’s construction industry association, effective July 1, 2014. The EDBX has been acquired by the Placer County Contractors’ Association (PCCA). Although it remains a local presence (the EDBX owns the building that has served as its office for years) to serve the needs of this county’s construction industry, it is now under PCC leadership. Only time will tell if the EDBX looks out solely for the local interests or becomes mired in the dysfunctional politics that have poisoned so many here for years. For more information contact: Jeff Henry, Placer County Builders’ Exchange (PCCA) at (916) 771-7229.

The local Builders Exchange was established in 1959 and has been operating continuously since that time. The fact that this closure went unnoticed by the community as a whole is bittersweet, with more bitter than sweet. This writer proudly served the industry for 12 years as the Executive Director. Few days pass that I don’t think of lessons learned and feel a fond connection still to those I worked with, and from whom I learned so much.

It’s hard to forget the years when healthy and vibrant local construction industries and timber/logging firms were the major local employers, as well as key contributors to every charitable event held locally. Somehow, even as the way of doing business changed to being more “on line” than “in person”, and to embracing environmentalism over resource production, it’s hard not to recognize that something important has been lost.

A sea of faces, battles, celebrations, meetings and events race through my mind as I recall how things worked back then. The contractors were the community leaders. They were intellectually honest and fiercely proud. If they said it – they stood by it. I went through some medical treatment 1996 and couldn’t work for over seven months. The Exchange paid my full salary during that entire time, although I qualified for temporary disability: the Exchange leaders wouldn’t hear of that. Now, after all these years, I understand why: **These were people who were used to giving – not taking.** How times have changed.

When I was very young I made a pact with myself to never become stubbornly rooted in “old ways”: To embrace the new and find joy in the way life always changes. Still, I cannot find much good to come from the loss of so many hard working construction, logging and timber industry men and women, and the thriving organizations they so proudly served. In my heart I know these people really “got it” as they understood that joy comes in the *process* of working together and helping others, in a positive, not destructive, way. Some things will never change.

The legacy left by the El Dorado Builders Exchange will be found in the many lessons taught and still being learned: the knowledge passed on to children and employees about how to grow an honest company where your word is gold; the wisdom demonstrated by example about giving ceaselessly and staying involved in industry issues; the satisfaction of helping others and putting our community first, while remaining positive and productive. Aren’t these the traits we should expect in all of our leaders?

The Local Real Estate Climate

One Man’s View: The real estate market feels tenuous this summer: It feels like it’s trying to get better, but with a sense of caution we haven’t always seen in decades past. We’ve looked at housing costs recently, but now let’s look at what’s happening with local land. Jim Copeland, a local broker, has gathered some opinions as to the public’s desires to buy raw land, based on conversations with clients. There are some noteworthy points covered.

Copeland reports a large number of his clients are looking for local land, as they consider it to be a means to establish a “store of value” that has the potential for appreciation. This buyer base is looking for 40-60 acre parcel(s) with varied topography of meadows, grazing land, preferably –year-round creek or stream. They don’t want to be remote, but want privacy. They also want services such as hospitals and major shopping to be within an hour drive. They want the land to provide for the physical basics of shelter, food and safety for their families – if necessary. And they want an option for a garden and/or room to raise a few head of cattle. Finally they want recreational options. Like all real estate ventures, in this area buyers may have to settle for only a portion of what they “want”.

“Prime farmland has greatly increased in value; however scarcity is a real issue” according to Copeland. In El Dorado County the percentage of land controlled by government runs anywhere from 50 to 60 percent. Much of that land is in forests and wilderness areas or in protected agricultural or range land. When one removes urban and suburban areas, the supply continues to shrink. When one applies current GP land use and zoning designations, the private land base is further depleted. **Note: One of the current voter ballot initiatives is targeting removal of people’s right to apply to rezone their private property!**

Copeland concludes, *“It is in scarcity that value is born in rural, ranch, farm and recreational land. It is in that scarcity that people are realizing they can still find what they seek. The increase in value of farmland in the last five years underscores this fact.”*

A final note: The report points out a major red flag to buyers and sellers: **California has seen a huge reduction in the number of families who can qualify for a median priced home – dropping from 50% of families two years ago to a mere 33% statewide today.** In El Dorado County, qualifying for medium-priced housing requires a family income of \$74,000 to \$90,000. In reality, and with the ongoing recession, there are many families locally making under this salary range that still need housing options.

Locally the options for buying homes to medium-income earners are more grim, according to information/ inventory statistics gathered in the LUPPU process. It showed that EDC has built only a handful of median-income level homes in the past decade, under this General Plan. **Although Supervisors are accused of “...planning for 33,000 more new homes...” by political anti-growth advocates, that claim is simply not true!** In reality no major residential subdivisions have been approved by the BOS in the last ten or so years, certainly not under the current General Plan. Any growth now taking place was likely approved decades ago and will be built whether the initiatives pass or not.

Reading this report brings us to the reality of local political activism: Currently four initiatives have qualified for the November 2014 ballot. Each of these initiatives can determine and/or change the rights and freedoms that local property owners have to use their own private land. Do not believe the hype that only “big developers” will be impacted. *(Recall that was exactly what voters were told about Measure Y).* We are all impacted.

GENERAL PLAN & ZONING ORDINANCE PUBLIC HEARING SCHEDULE

Long time readers will recall how many times we wrote about the Land Use Policy Programmatic Update (LUPPU) process. In those publications we reported that issues were being discussed at the BOS level, to decide which to include in the Environmental Impact Report analysis. At that time we correctly reported, *“No decisions were being made, at that time.”* Fast forward: **NOW DECISIONS ARE GOING TO BE MADE** following public hearings to take input on the EIR and analysis released last month.

Let’s be clear: **The voter initiatives that qualified for the November 2014 election are aimed at undermining the LUPPU process and thus implementation of the General Plan.** The LUPPU process simply allows for full implementation of the adopted General Plan. It also revised the EDC Zoning Ordinance to bring it into consistency with the GP, which is a legal requirement. LUPPU is the essence of a well-planned growth process. To those that oppose all growth, LUPPU is simply a problem because it doesn’t stop all growth.

Today the basics necessary for updating the General Plan Amendment (GPA) and Zoning Ordinance Update (ZOU) process has been accomplished, with the environmental analysis on proposed changes out for public review and input. **The public hearing schedule for the PLANNING COMMISSION input is set as follows**

Monday August 4 th	5:00 pm -7:00 pm
Wednesday, August 6 th	8:00 am – Noon
Wednesday August 13 th	Noon – 4:00 pm and 6:30 – 8:00 pm @ Regular scheduled Ag Commission Meeting
Thursday August 14 th	8:30 am - 3:00 pm @ Regular scheduled Planning Commission Meeting
Monday, August 18 th	8:00 am – Noon
Wednesday, August 20 th	8:00 am – Noon (Reserved Time: As Needed)

NOTE: The Planning Commission will make recommendations for the Board of Supervisors’ consideration during the October 2014 public hearings. **All public meetings will be held at the Board of Supervisors’ Chambers @ 330 Fairlane Court, Placerville, Ca (Building A).**