

# *Business Alliance...Update*

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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](mailto:KathyeRussell@gmail.com)

*“Developing Mutual Support on Community-Wide Issues”*

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## **SUPERVISORS MOVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FORWARD**

On February 25, 2013 the Board of Supervisors held another workshop addressing how to move forward on the Land Use Policy Programmatic Update (LUPPU) process. The Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) provided a power point slide presentation to the BOS and members of the public. In the last few years of making such presentations this process has required constant reiteration of what LUPPU actually is and what the process is trying to accomplish. The February 25<sup>th</sup> session was a primer on how volunteers working on LUPPU envision moving forward.

When LUPPU was first conceived by the genius of the community, it occurred, in part, as fallout from a staff report that laid out projected budget needs to implement the variety of mitigations and programs contained and detailed in the 2004 General Plan (GP). The BOS and public were stunned and concerned at **staff projections of \$80 million in budgetary costs to fully implement the General Plan!** Additionally, the mitigation measures and programs carried a timeframe within which each measure was to be accomplished, and the County had already exceeded most, if not all, of those timeframes. The El Dorado County (EDC) budget (county taxpayers) simply couldn't fund the costs of hiring the necessary consultants or staff projected.

About this same time, a group of volunteer land use professionals that included engineers, land planners, surveyors and land use attorneys (all with too much time on their hands due to the nationwide recession) began reviewing local land use policies. Complaints were common about the negative regulatory climate of EDC and under the “new” General Plan nothing was improving. These professional volunteers soon earned the support of the BOS and the group became a “working group” under an active EDAC subcommittee known as Regulatory Reform. A key finding of this group pointed to the failure of EDC to revise its archaic Zoning Ordinance (ZO) to make it consistent with the adopted General Plan (GP). It was impossible to work with a new GP vision using old regulations based on a long-past vision. The group proceeded to suggest appropriate changes and with BOS support a revised, consistent ZO is now being analyzed as part of the LUPPU Environmental Impact Report (EIR) process.

The focus of Reg Reform has since changed from the involvement of mostly land use professionals, as some tasks were accomplished (ZO Update), but new issues and people came forward. This ongoing process basically elevated the community of volunteers to a high level earned by each in community involvement. Reg Reform began attracting more community-based volunteers with concerns about how they could engage to plan areas of the community. Today it has morphed into a consistent meeting format that brings together volunteers from throughout the county, and a variety of interests, to participate in the LUPPU *community* process, to explore ways to stimulate county economic development.

During EDC's mandated 5-year GP review, the BOS concluded that a full EIR was likely necessary to complete General Plan (GP) mitigation and implementation programs, from revising the county's Zoning Ordinance to be consistent with the GP, to refining transportation programs, funding and improvements, to enacting Community Identity guidelines (GP Policy 2.4.1.2). The phrase “*Don't waste a good EIR*” was coined when it was accepted that combining the required land use update policies and processes could be handled with a *programmatic* approach – instead of the county funding separate Environmental Impact Reports/reviews (EIRs) on each land use process. This action became the impetus for fueling community ID projects: If an area had design standards and guidelines ready for environmental review, the LUPPU EIR could include that areas' proposals.

Thus the Land Use Policy *Programmatic* Update (LUPPU) approach was founded and community involvement has grown, reaching more people monthly. The LUPPU process has continued to evolve and with BOS support the county has dedicated a webpage to LUPPU, which includes links to a variety of past white papers, power point presentations, BOS votes, and public information. The webpage for the county's Land Use Policy Programmatic Update (LUPPU) website is <http://www.edcgov.us/landuseupdate>

**Following the EDAC presentation on February 25, 2013, the BOS took the following actions:**

- Support and authorize staff to begin the process for development of a Central Web Portal (use of existing funds within Economic Development budget);
- Include funding for an External Grant Assistance program in Fiscal Year 2013/14 Economic Development Budget;

- Develop future promotions Request for Proposal (RFP) process to reflect funding of programs versus projects;
- A follow-up EDAC report is due back to the BOS on March 25th to establish a process for Community Organization and Economic Development program funding.

## **BOS TARGETS COMMUNITY ECONOMIC FUNDING SUPPORT**

The February 25<sup>th</sup> action takes LUPPU into a new arena of local economic development strategies; one that recognizes and supports the vast number of invaluable volunteers involved throughout the county. The community of volunteers has responded with excitement and participation **as those attending now recognize that without a process and some financial support from the county, their activities are limited.** This is where the concept of grants took hold. Local businesses are struggling in the protracted national recession, and those same businesses have, in the past, been the backbone of financial support for volunteer and charitable organizations. Suddenly there is a new appreciation for the enormous positive impacts volunteers and their activities have had in making EDC so special and in generating revenues that benefit business, individuals and local government. EDAC has now changed its name and focus to “CEDAC” (Community and Economic Development Advisory Committee). However, Reg Reform’s original Working Groups still have work pending on developing land use regulations and standards. Although there is a lot more work – new volunteers are stepping up! And, out of this new group has come a new concept called the “Tom Sawyer” effect.

County and City financial support for local volunteer organizations is not a new or unknown concept. In the last issue of this newsletter we reported on **numerous grants recently awarded to cities and counties throughout the State, including rural and urban areas, for the exact same economic and land use planning programs that local volunteers have been financing on their own.**

For example: CEDAC showed where other areas had received tens of thousands of dollars in 2011 alone, to determine how their neighborhoods would look and function (community design); to update their zoning ordinances (*volunteers* worked on EDC’s zoning update); and to design their transportation system (EDC *volunteers* laid the groundwork by developing the necessary land feasibility study so experts had a viable baseline to start with). **Each of these examples resulted in savings to the General Fund,** by offsetting the need to hire consultants to do all the work - were it not for volunteers!

Still, many in this community have been proud of never requesting or taking outside funding (grants) in the past. But current economic times and continuing federal and state mandated programs have made it necessary to find new ways to improve EDC’s economic stability, attractions, potential, programs and activities. Thus the “Tom Sawyer” effect: **If volunteers are willing to assist (labor) in painting the economic fences of EDC – can’t the county at least buy the paint?**

Put another way: The EDC General Plan *requires* that “*The County shall develop community design guidelines in concert with members of each community...*” and “*Each plan shall contain design guidelines to be used in project site review of all discretionary project permits.*” (GP Policy 2.4.1.2) The BOS and public adopted the General Plan: the BOS is responsible for enacting the implementations measures of the GP: The BOS is responsible for funding GP mandates. With the high-energy volunteer workforce we’re now seeing – we should enable volunteers to do what has been directed and use their efforts to save county money in the long run. That’s what is being requested now! Our “process” is to garner widespread community support to seek and obtain grants to help fund mandated programs and land use planning.

## **BEYOND LUPPU**

Using EDC General Fund “seed” money to support volunteers working on programs required in the GP has been called a “no brainer” to those aware of how much EDC has left on the table financially compared to other jurisdictions. In fact many jurisdictions fund economic activities with the general fund. This makes sense when one understands that much of ***the income produced by a strong local economy goes back into the general fund.*** EDAC is focused on bringing more revenues into the county by parlaying grants (seed money to obtain grants) into programs and activities that benefit the local economy and taxpayers, by implementing the GP vision by and using volunteers where possible!

Adopting a very tiny amount of our total \$220 million annual general fund as seed money, and parlaying it into programs and activities to assist volunteers in promoting events and activities to bring revenue to businesses and the county coffers, will grow the general fund and local business will thrive. That is how economic investment works and it is how other jurisdictions succeed in economic development.

We applaud the Supervisors for their expressed support for an electronic portal that promotes all local activities, programs and events. We also ask for seed money to grow our local economy through financial support of our active local volunteers – our real leaders. Help these people to seek the expertise needed to plan their neighborhoods and write regulations to implement the GP with their vision in their neighborhoods: Help them to do the county’s work when volunteers are willing; Buy them paint so they can make this area a shiny, bright example of a community working together for the good of all. Invest in the community people who live, work and play in El Dorado County.