

April 7, 2008

Humboldt County Planning Commission
3015 H Street
Eureka, California 95501

Subject: General Plan Update Public Comments

Dear Planning Commissioners and Staff:

Because McKinleyville's abundant natural resources, mild climate, and diverse geography optimize our potential for a secure, sustainable, and self-sufficient local economy;

Because McKinleyville is a place of supreme natural beauty and outdoor recreational opportunities;

Because the personal, small-town character of our community fosters individual responsibility and concern for the well-being of our neighbors;

Because of the importance of balanced diversity of age and socio-economic levels in the community, and the need for low-income housing;

Because of the proven health benefits of the physically active lifestyle and quality of social life inherent in close-knit communities with easy non-motorized access to services, supplies, recreation, and the natural world;

And because population pressures combined with inadequately planned development have been detrimental to our health, climate, water resources, prime agricultural and forest lands, fisheries, natural ecosystems, historical & cultural resources, scenic beauty, recreational resources, and community identity and character;

We the undersigned residents of McKinleyville support the Guiding Principles adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 2004, and urge the county General Plan Update to adopt and implement principles and policies embodied in the 2002 McKinleyville Community Plan for all unincorporated areas of the County, with particular attention to the following critical issues for our community:

(selected text from McKinleyville Community Plan is taken as is, and italicized)

CLIMATE AND HEALTH

We are concerned about the effects of transportation emissions, petroleum based energy production, natural ecosystem destruction, building & maintenance, waste processing, and other greenhouse gas producing activities on our climate and air quality.

We are concerned about the growing epidemics of obesity, diabetes, alcohol & drug addiction, and other maladies linked to modern stressful and sedentary lifestyles.

We strongly support the following Community Principles which encourage non-motorized transportation, healthful recreation, and easy & safe access to therapeutic activities and services:

A. All planning should be in the form of complete and integrated communities containing housing, shops, work places, schools, parks and civic facilities essential to the daily life of

residents.

B. As many activities as possible should be located within easy walking distance of transit stops.

E. The community should have a center focus that combines commercial, civic, cultural and recreational uses.

F. The community should contain an ample supply of specialized open space in the form of squares, greens and parks whose frequent use is encouraged through placement and design.

I. Streets, pedestrian paths and bike paths should contribute to a system of fully-connected and interesting routes to all destinations. Their design should encourage pedestrian and bicycle use by being small and spatially defined by buildings, trees and lighting; and by discouraging high speed traffic.

K. The community design should help conserve resources and minimize waste.

L. The street orientation, the placement of buildings and the use of shading should contribute to the energy efficiency of the community

- *Support for clustered developments, reduced roadway widths*
- *Integrated pedestrian, equestrian, bicycle, public transit, and vehicular circulation*

ECONOMY

We are concerned that the McKinleyville economy is heavily dependent on employment in Eureka and Arcata, and that our own community is low in locally-owned, high-quality, value-added, non-polluting industry and businesses that would make it a destination for dining, entertainment, recreation, and tourism. We are also concerned about the financial burden to McKinleyville of additional infrastructure and services resulting from uncontrolled growth

We agree with most of the County's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and emphasize the following principles and policies for McKinleyville:

- *Businesses within the community should provide a range of job types for the community's residents. Community Principles D*
- *Encourage development of businesses in the Town Center area that will provide entertainment activities during the evening hours, consistent with community character and noise standards. Policy 2330 - 8*
- *Cottage industries (such as bed & breakfast accommodations, fine arts & crafts, organic foods, day care, and assisted living)... should be encouraged to develop throughout McKinleyville. Policy 2330 - 9*
- *development of appropriate and non-polluting, energy efficient & high value-added manufacturing, light industry, research & development, professional & business offices, and supporting services clustered to minimize auto use at the Airport Business Park.*
- *development of tourist attractions such as interpretive trails dedicated to some of our unique natural areas such as the Mad River estuary/mouth and Sitka Spruce forest, and a ramp for non-motorized boats.*
- *development of a Zero-Waste industry similar to one developing in Del Norte County with an innovative resource recovery station in McKinleyville for reuse & value-added processing, and distribution & marketing of products.*

We also want efficient physical development to minimize expenditures for public safety, streets, utilities, and other publicly financed, operated and maintained improvements. **Focusing the majority of development in areas that already have access to public services and infrastructure would help accomplish this.**

HOUSING

According to California's recently legislated Global Warming Solutions Act and State housing mandates, we are deficient in high density, energy-efficient community designs, and low-income housing.

We strongly support inclusion of the GPU Community Design Element and the following principles and policies from the MCCP:

- *The community should contain a diversity of housing types to enable citizens from a wide range of economic levels and age groups to live within its boundaries. Community Principles C*
- *Provide sites for all types of residential development (e.g., single-family homes, second units, multi-family apartments, mixed residential-commercial development, special needs group residences.*
- *Conserve existing housing through maintenance, rehabilitation, and retention of non-conforming residences in new subdivisions.*
- *Encourage resource-conserving site utilization and dwelling unit construction techniques through discouraging resource land conversion/intrusion, pursuing sensitive habitat protection, promoting energy-efficient design and siting, and encouraging secondary dwelling units.*

The plan should also encourage smaller lot sizes, reduced front porch set backs, and the placement of neighborhood pocket parks in the urban development areas

To increase affordable housing, we hope to see strong working relationships with Local and State Affordable Housing Groups, Land and Housing Trusts that support shared equity with home owners, and promotion of States Housing and Community Development (HCD) rules and regulations providing incentives to developers of affordable housing.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

We would like to promote a democratic, participatory style of government; preserve the independent, traditional, earth-centered character of our rural areas; and develop an innovative, efficient, cooperative, stimulating, and cultured urban center.

We support the following principles and policies:

- *Municipal Advisory Committee for the McKinleyville Community Plan Area. Policy 1720*
- *Town Center ordinance Policy 2352 - 1*
- *The community shall maintain its rural qualities within the Urban Development Area by defining and protecting its streams, riparian corridors and greenbelts, wetlands, open spaces and parks. Policy 2505-1*

- *Rural qualities within the Urban Development Area shall be further enhanced through policies and standards for trail systems, pedestrian walkways, landscaping and tree protection. Policy 2602-2*
- *The Urban Expansion Area shall maintain its current boundaries. The Plan shall not support General Plan Amendments for expansion of this boundary except as provided for in Chapter 2630. Policy 2602-3*
- *All lands within and beyond the Urban Expansion Area shall be deemed rural for development purpose. Policy 2602-4*
- *The costs of expansion of urban services that occur from proposed development shall be borne by the development. Policy 2602-5*
- *The County shall strengthen its Planned Unit Development ordinance to facilitate the clustering of development within major subdivisions where non-development easements are needed to preserve open space, recreational areas, and agricultural lands. Policy 2602-6*

We also request redistribution of high population growth shares which have been allocated McKinleyville. Although we recognize that the County is mandated by the State to provide housing for those at all income levels, we believe there needs to be major revision to how "fair share" housing allocation is distributed to communities throughout the county. For example, in the recent past McKinleyville's "fair share" requirement represented nearly 40% of the the entire county - even though from a population standpoint we represent only 11% of the county. This, to us, does not equate to a fair share. A fair share of new housing should be proportional to population size.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND OPEN SPACE

Our forest and aquatic ecosystems contain high quality habitat for native wildlife and vegetation and form essential parts of the production chain for our fisheries. They are also proving to be essential in maintaining water quality, quantity, storage capacity, and flood control, and moderating our climate. The scenic and open space values they provide are important to tourism and to our personal and community health & well-being.

We are concerned that inadequately planned development is destroying the size, configurations, and connectivity necessary to preserve the integrity and function of these ecosystems which have evolved over millennia and provide many yet unknown benefits and services to the quality and perhaps the viability of human life. And we are concerned about the future availability and safety of our water resources with the growing demands of our own population and that of state.

We strongly support the following principles and policies:

- *Wherever possible, the natural terrain, drainage and vegetation of the community should be preserved with superior examples contained within parks or greenbelts. Community Principles-J.*
- *The maximum amount of forested land shall be conserved and/or maintained in forestry use. Policy 2514-2*
- *The County will develop a Forested-Hillside Combining Z one ordinance recognizing [the eastern hills of the Planning Area currently zoned TPZ] as being primarily intended for timber production. Policy 2514-3*
- policies requiring identification, mapping, and clearly defining limitations and allowable activities in Sensitive and Critical Habitats.

policies establishing permanent preservation of open space through all Standards 2634 with the addition of the concept of community separators to open space uses 2634-1, and the addition of the establishment of an open space district for comprehensive planning and management of open space zones.

We would also like addition of the following:

Establishment of forested buffers between residential areas and industrial timber lands, which provide for open space, public recreation, watershed & wildlife habitat protection, and compatible timber production.

Comprehensive & integrated county-wide and watershed-wide assessment, planning, public education, and policy-making using Best Management Practices developed by Water Quality Control Board and other well-known & proven science-based methodologies to optimize water quantity & quality, and the health of our natural aquatic systems

Encouragement of the development of systems that incorporate natural elements or require minimal input of chemicals or energy (e.g., wetlands vegetation, sand filtration) to treat waste water, storm water and drinking water

WORKING LANDS

Timber, agriculture, fishing, and construction have been our community's primary producers. We are concerned that our prime food and timber producing lands and soils are at risk because of erosion, commercial and residential development.

We strongly advise inclusion of the following goal:

- *To have sustainable resource production without land, water, or habitat degradation. Goal 2513-2*

and the following policies:

- *The community shall maintain its rural qualities on timberlands within and beyond the Urban Expansion Area by protecting its streams, riparian corridors and greenbelts, wetlands, open spaces and dedicated parks. Policy 2514-1*
- *The maximum amount of forested land shall be conserved and/or maintained in forestry use. Policy 2514-2.*

Preservation of agricultural land through:

Execution of an Agricultural Preserve contract with the County of Humboldt. Standard 2634-2A

and policies 2523

The McKinleyville Community Plan represents the efforts of dozens of citizens each donating hundreds of hours of their time, over nearly a decade, and attendance at almost 100 public meetings. The resulting plan was a struggle for compromise between those wanting more development and those wanting less. For the county to substantially change that plan would be a significant disservice to the public process.

Ordinances should be developed as soon as possible to implement the McKinleyville Community Plan, which was approved in 2002. Many of these policies have not yet been implemented, resulting in the continuing loss of wetlands, riparian areas, agricultural lands, and other areas that should be protected from impacts related to development.

In summary, we hope the General Plan Update will remain consistent with the Guiding Principles adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 2004. We believe Alternative A, thus far, best represents the Guiding Principles and those we have outlined above.

Thank you for your dedicated work and the opportunity you have afforded us to participate in planning the future of our community

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