



*"Jobs, Housing & Property Rights"*

March 14, 2012

Mrs. Mary Gearheart, Chair  
Planning Commission  
County of Humboldt  
825 Fifth Street, Room 111  
Eureka, California 95501

Subject: General Plan Update – DEIR

Dear Chair Gearheart and Planning Commissioners:

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the General Plan Update Draft Environmental Impact Report.

It is important that we go on record, once again, that we are being asked to comment on the potential impacts of an illegitimate document (proposed General Plan update). In fact, the GPU is a farce. We recognize these are harsh words, however they represent the harsh reality that from the beginning of the General Plan update during year 2000, there was no sincere effort to reflect input from all private sector citizens.

Humboldt Economic and Land Plan (HELP) is a group of volunteer citizens of Humboldt County who came together in January 2004 because we and others, were being ignored by County planners. Yes, County planners held many outreach meetings. Yes, many people attended the meetings. Yes, the citizens expressed their opinions and vision for the County. Did the majority of the public's input get recorded and reported? No. The message of many was sabotaged and ignored by a few with their own agenda.

We take this opportunity to revisit the history of the GPU's evolution for the benefit of those newer members of the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. To provide those of you who were not a part of the process from the beginning, we offer proof that our perspective is not just a matter of opinion, but one of fact. For example:

State Office of Planning and Research (OPR) General Plan Guidelines, page 10 Section on **General Plan Basics** states: *"The General Plan expresses the community's development goals and embodies public policy relative to the distribution of future land uses, both public and private."*

State OPR General Plan Guidelines, page 23 Section on **Public Participation** states: *"Cities and counties should develop public participation strategies that allow for early and meaningful community involvement in the General Plan process by all affected population groups."*

The foundation of the County's General Plan is captured in the **Critical Choices Report** completed March 2001. It states on page 3: *"This first phase successfully captured many key concerns on a broad range of topics. To highlight some key findings:*

- *There is a sense that we are at a critical phase in the growth and development of Humboldt County.*
- *Maintaining quality of Life is of prime importance, even with respect to our economic well being.*
- *There is a strong interest in defining and maintaining community character.*
- *There is a strong desire for more proactive approaches to planning issues.*
- *Loss of resources lands is a growing concern.*
- *There is a renewed interest in land use planning.* (Emphasis added)

**Critical Choices:** *"Eighty-six percent (86%) of respondents felt that the surrounding natural environment was extremely important to the quality of life in Humboldt County."* It goes on to say:

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***“A community survey was conducted to get an idea of the reasons why people choose to live in Humboldt County, what they value about the area and what needs improvement. This survey was available at public meetings, on the website and at the counter of the Planning Division. While it is not statistically valid, it does offer a snapshot of the views of county residents interested in the General Plan.”*** (Emphasis added)

This clearly was not the expression of many of those who attended and gave their input during the outreach meetings from the very beginning. The report itself states the County’s survey, “...is not statistically valid....”

Two (2) years later, in 2004, a professional polling company, Moore Information, with offices in Portland, Oregon and Washington D.C., conducted a poll of Humboldt residents. When asked what their major concerns and issues were, they responded as follows:

<b>Issue</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Jobs &amp; Economic Development</b>	<b>87 %</b>
	<b>2</b>	<b>Housing</b>	<b>69</b>
	<b>3</b>	<b>Crime / Safety</b>	<b>66</b>
	<b>4</b>	<b>Growth / Land Use</b>	<b>64</b>
	<b>5</b>	<b>Taxes &amp; Government Spending</b>	<b>60</b>
	<b>6</b>	<b>Health Care for the Needy</b>	<b>60</b>
	<b>7</b>	<b>Protecting Open Space</b>	<b>57</b>
	<b>8</b>	<b>Traffic / Transportation</b>	<b>50</b>

This is in stark contrast to what County planners assert in the Critical Choices Report (as noted on page 1 of this letter). Who are we to believe....the County’s survey which is admittedly “not statistically valid”, or the professional pollster whose findings are very different and **are** statistically sound and scientifically legitimate? Any reasonable person would have to arrive at the same conclusion as the Moore Information survey.

It is clear, the very foundation of the General Plan update is based on false assumptions and miss-representations of the Humboldt “community’s vision” for their twenty-year plan. Therefore, any potential or real environmental impacts expressed in the DEIR, are based on flawed policies, standards, implementation and mitigation measures because they do not represent the majority of its citizens’ thinking and desires.

We would be glad to provide additional examples. The members of HELP, and others, have been living this distortion being orchestrated by County planners for the past decade. Please don’t hesitate to contact us if we can answer any questions. Thank you for taking the time to consider these very serious issues.

Sincerely,  
*Kay Backer*  
Kay Backer, representing  
Humboldt Economic and Land Plan

cc: Board of Supervisors  
Phillip Smith-Hanes, County Administration Officer  
Wendy Chaitin, County Counsel  
Carolyn Ruth, Assistant County Counsel  
Kirk Girard, Community Development Services Director  
Martha Spencer, Supervising Planner  
Tom Hofweber, Supervising Planner  
John Miller, Senior Planner  
Michael Richardson, Senior Planner  
Kathy Hayes, Clerk of the Board  
Norma Lorenzo, Planning Commission Clerk

helpcountygearheart25

**P O Box 1028, Eureka CA 95502 + 707.834.8006 + [help@helphumboldt.com](mailto:help@helphumboldt.com) + [www.hellphumboldt.com](http://www.hellphumboldt.com)**