



## THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF HUMBOLDT COUNTY

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Date: November 17, 2011

To: Humboldt County Board of Supervisors  
Humboldt County Planning Commission

From: League of Women Voters of Humboldt County  
Dr. Nancy Nieboer, President

Re: Public Participation Policy in the General Plan Update

The League of Women Voter believes that democratic government depends upon informed and active participation at all levels of government. The League further believes that governmental bodies must protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings and making public records accessible.

The League of Women Voters of Humboldt County expressed our concerns about the absence of a comprehensive public participation policy in the draft housing element in a letter dated March 21, 2010. In addition, the League is concerned about the apparent lack of comprehensive public participation policy **in Part 1, Chapters 1, 2, and 3** of the **General Plan Update**.

In reviewing these three documents, along with the **User Guide, 2009 Hearing Draft vs. 2007 Preliminary Hearing Draft Comparison Chart** and **Summary of Key Issues and Review of Alternative to Chapter 3 Governance Policy**, we believe the discussion is too complicated and important to be relegated to a single meeting.

It appears the entire 1500 Section of the current General Plan is being reduced to a Single Goal (G3); a corresponding Priority (P10); **no** corresponding Standard, and an Implementation Measure (IM5) that is non-specific and reads more like a goal statement. Including the process to amend the General Plan, we have concerns too lengthy to include in a three minute statement.

The League has in its files a quote from the Office of Planning and Research, General Plan Guidelines, page142, that seems especially appropriate:

People have come to expect that public participation - the process by which the public can give input and otherwise participate in decision-making - will be a part of any planning process. Excluding the public can be time consuming, expensive, and divisive. Failure to allow the public to meaningfully participate in planning decisions that affect their communities can result in litigation or ballot initiatives that may overturn the results of a general plan process.

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

The League believes this part of the General plan is so important that it should be given undivided attention and maximum input from the community. The League asks that consideration of Part I be continued until **after** the holiday season, a workshop be scheduled and meaningful time be allotted for public determination of the contents of Part I. We believe Part I should have been reviewed first, not last, and after a twelve year process, should be given ample time and thoughtful consideration before finalizing the General Plan Update.

Thank you for your consideration.



Anne Hartline, Secretary  
for Nancy Nieboer, President



Kay Escarda  
LWVHC Action Chair