

Valley Springs Community Planning Baseline Report:

*From Community Plan to Community Vision:
Progress Made and Recommendations for Future Action*

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Abstract

This report outlines the progress to date of community planning efforts in Valley Springs, California. The project and resulting report had two goals: First, to document community planning efforts for the County; Second, to inform the community of the County's perspective and expectations for community-based planning efforts. As such, the report describes the transition from initial community efforts to update the existing Community Plan in Valley Springs to instead crafting a broadly based Vision in response to County government encouragement. County perspectives on the process and progress of this community project are described followed by community perspectives. Recommendations are then offered for future collaborative action so that the needs of the County and the community can be adequately addressed. Included as an appendix are documents produced by MyValleySprings.com, Colleen Hiner, the commissioned community consultant on the project, and the Greater Valley Springs Advisory Group, the newly formed community group spearheading the visioning process.

List of Acronyms/Glossary

MVS – MyValleySprings.com, a local non-profit organization

GVSAG – Greater Valley Springs Advisory Group, newly formed community group

CDA – Community Development Agency, the department which handles community planning and regulates building for Calaveras County

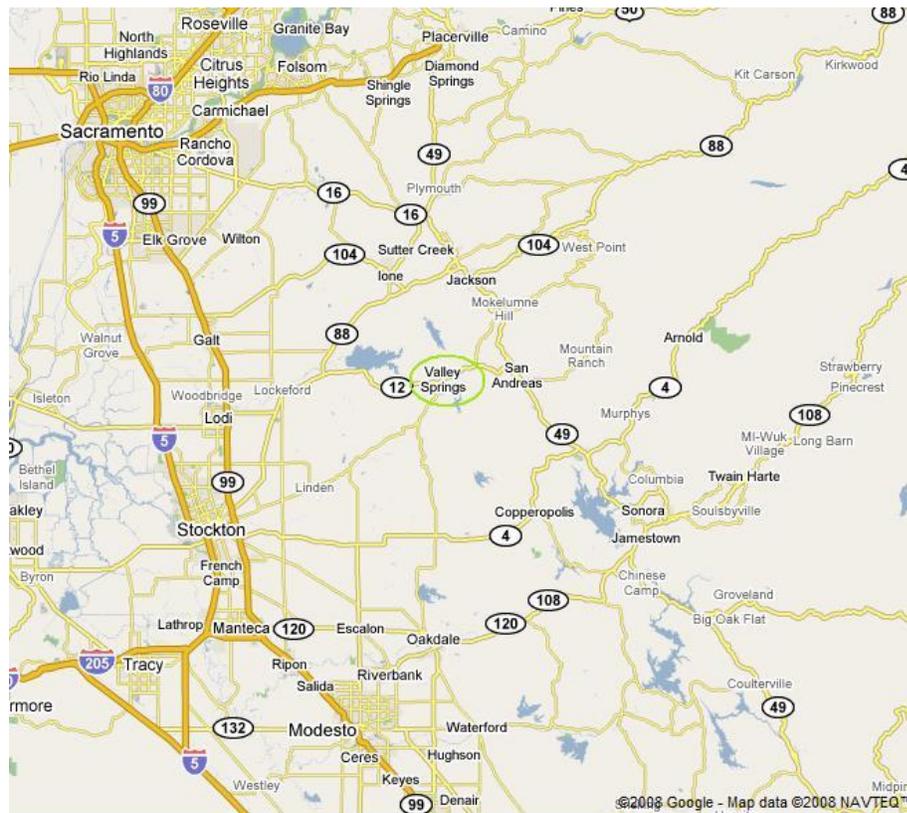
GP – General Plan, a county-wide strategic planning document pertaining to all of Calaveras County

CP – Community Plan, plans created to guide growth and development in unincorporated areas of the county such as Valley Springs

Brief Description of Valley Springs

Valley Springs, California is located in Calaveras County at the intersection of California Highways 26 and 12, in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains (Figure 1). The original infrastructure and town center for Valley Springs included an eighteen block grid laid out in 1884. Since then growth and development has spread outward, seemingly with little forethought about broader community function or design. The 2000 Census places the population at approximately 6742 people, if the original town center, the La Contenta development, the Rancho Calaveras development, and other nearby areas are included. There is a Community Plan in place for Valley Springs, which was developed in 1974, but as planning documents such as Community Plans are supposed to be updated every 20 years, a Valley Springs update is fourteen years overdue.

Figure 1: Map of Valley Springs and Surrounding Area



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Valley Springs is unincorporated, and, as such, is governed along with all of the other unincorporated towns of Calaveras County by the Board of Supervisors. Valley Springs is represented on the Board by two Supervisors, as the town is bisected by two districts, District 1 and District 5. The County carries out planning and development activities through the Community Development Agency. There are several community organizations active in the area including MyValleySprings.com and the Greater Valley Springs Advisory Group, which are

working together and separately on community planning projects in the greater Valley Springs area.

Project Overview

MyValleySprings.com (MVS) initiated a community planning process during the first half of 2007 by holding various educational presentations and hosting a two-day workshop on community visioning in Valley Springs. These efforts were conducted in collaboration with other organizations and groups associated with community planning in Calaveras County and the region more broadly. In January of 2008, MVS began another iteration of community planning in Valley Springs with two actions that became the foundation for the project described by this report. First, MVS invited a graduate student researcher and community liaison from University of California, Davis to prepare a Baseline Data Report on various pertinent pieces of information about the Valley Springs area to inform the creation of an updated Community Plan for Valley Springs. Second, MVS jump-started a community-wide conversation about the need for and process of creating a community plan for Valley Springs by hosting a series of community meetings (See Appendix for the original community invitation). Through these meetings, and due to continuous encouragement from the MVS leadership, a new community organization was formed, the Greater Valley Springs Advisory Group (GVSAG).

Under the guidance of the Community Development Agency (CDA), GVSAG shifted its focus from strictly “updating” the 1974 Community Plan to crafting a broader “Vision” for Valley Springs. This transition was facilitated in part by the involved graduate student, who liaised between the county’s interests and the community’s. This was done by forging links across the community/local-government divide to find out precisely what the county’s needs and limitations were in terms of creating or updating community plans while also honoring the stated goals of the Valley Springs community. While GVSAG may outlive its initial mission, the first identified goal of the group is to produce a Vision for Valley Springs, as encouraged by the CDA leadership. The community Vision will then inform the planning process as it moves forward.

The leadership and experience offered by MVS for community planning is extensive given their strong organizational capacity and previous experiences with successful community outreach in the past. Nevertheless, as members of the Valley Springs community are now essentially creating a viable working group from scratch, there have been some challenges along the way. Nevertheless, the commitment and motivation on the part of involved community members has been impressive. The community planning process moved very quickly from ad hoc proceedings to organized and coordinated community-wide efforts to compile and report community opinions on the preferred future of Valley Springs.

The new organization, GVSAG, and its identified leadership, the Coordinating Committee, took over coordination of the administrative and logistical details of the unfolding community planning process (Figure 2). Seven topic groups were set up to write “topic area visions” relating to specific areas of concern for Valley Springs (Economics, Housing, Boundaries, Safety, Land Use, Circulation and Conservation & Open Space). The intention of this work was to formulate a cohesive Vision for Valley Springs compiled from the topic visions.

The Vision would then provide the basis for community-specific language to be included in the new Calaveras County General Plan. As it became clear that County officials intended to create updated Community Plans alongside the General Plan, the emerging Valley Springs Vision was seen as a logical basis from which to move forward with County-led community planning efforts which would ultimately lead to an updated or altogether new Community Plan for Valley Springs.

Figure 2: GVSAG Community Meeting



C Hiner, 29 May 2008

The purpose of this report is to document current progress on community planning in Valley Springs while identifying productive pathways for expressing community voices and preferences within the County's planning processes. The goal, as such, is to outline the County and Community Development Agency's expectation and guidelines for continued community planning work, such as the production of a Vision for Valley Springs, as well as identifying community hopes, fears and best practices for continued collaboration with the local county government. This information was collected during numerous community, group and one-on-one meetings which took place between January and June 2008.

County and Community Development Agency Perspectives

From the County and Community Development Agency's (CDA) perspective, the Valley Springs Community Vision, which will be the product of the current round of community

activity, is an ideal compromise between the initial community desire to update the vastly inadequate Community Plan and the equally unappealing opposite extreme, a situation wherein the document is written solely by county agencies or consultants without public input or involvement. The CDA Director, Stephanie Moreno, appointed Lynn O'Connor, the Coordinator of the GP Update as the community liaison to work with the fledging GVSAG and their commissioned assistance, a graduate student from UC Davis.

Lynn O'Connor is no longer with the Community Development Agency, but the CDA has promised continued good relations with the community as they move forward designing the official Community Plan process for the interested, unincorporated areas of Calaveras County. In the meantime, residents in Valley Springs have moved forward with their own community planning process. The county is supportive of the community planning, but encourages developing as broad a support base as possible so that many sides of the issues and desires of Valley Springs are represented.

GVSAG is not an officially sanctioned Community Advisory Group and so has no real authority over county decision-making, but they do have the legitimacy and weight of countless hours of outreach and public discussion around issues of local import – insight the County is happy to discover. Although the CDA has indicated that it is not necessary for GVSAG to gain official status at this time, should GVSAG desire to become an official Community Advisory Group, they would need to gather the support of the two supervisors responsible for the Valley Springs area, as the Board of Supervisors is the appropriate decision-making body to appoint such official bodies. After supervisor support was clear, the group would then approach the CDA for full, legitimate status with the County. The County notes, though, that full Community Advisory Group status would require:

1. The development and adherence to more formal rules and regulations, such as:
 - a. The creation of set terms for members.
 - b. Publicly noticing meetings which are then subject to the Brown Act.
 - c. Following Robert's Rule of Conduct for meeting proceedings.
2. Demonstration of the broad range of community interests sitting on the committee.

Although the timeline and proposed structure for the County-initiated Community Planning is still undetermined, GVSAG is laying the groundwork for the County process. Participants in the community planning process spearheaded by GVSAG are learning about the process of creating a Community Plan, learning planning terminology and becoming further acquainted with the county governance structure. As such, Valley Springs residents will be primed for the County's Community Plan process once it does indeed begin.

The County has the difficult task of ensuring that all voices are heard while continuing to moving forward with policy and decision making. Given the local history of the development of other Community Plans, it has been decided that future Community Plans will be written by county staff or their hired consultants, and, thus, will not be "committee-based." This means that while the very valuable work that community groups are undertaking to gather data and preferences is worthwhile, the groups should bear in mind that ultimately the writing will be done by county officials.

CDA staff stress, though, that communities such as Valley Springs should feel secure that if their adopted visions are inclusive of residents' and stakeholders' perspectives, their community vision will be considered in the official Community Planning workshops, which the county expects to hold sometime during summer 2008. Any materials to be considered for inclusion in the Community Plan process need to be submitted prior to the stated deadlines.

The community of Valley Springs, led by GVSAG, is preparing the way for a successful Community Plan process by focusing on creating a Vision for Valley Springs, which will be a major part of the future Community Plan. County staff have indicated that a Vision can be as detailed and visual as the community has the time and resources to produce. The CDA recommends reviewing the San Andreas Vision for ideas. The San Andreas vision has been worked on for some time and is improving, providing a model for the process in Valley Springs.

As the County has a limited budget and short timeline for producing Community Plans, the more people that GVSAG can get engaged beforehand the better. This is an opportunity for GVSAG and Valley Springs community members to be active and engaged, helping to build policy and inform decisions pertaining to planning and development in their area. This community work can inform people on how they can constructively influence public policy decisions regarding schools, streets, sidewalks, places to play, etc., utilizing methods such as public meetings, school-side conversations and door-to-door interactions. From the County's perspective, as long as public opinions are being recorded, those opinions will be considered.

By encouraging an inclusive process and continually reaching out to hard-to-reach sections of the population, GVSAG can increase the input that Valley Springs residents have over local decision-making. Reiterated again and again by county officials was the encouragement to continually seek representation from a variety of different groups in Valley Springs while maintaining a non-threatening and inclusive environment in order to adequately capture the issues of a wide spectrum of the community's population, both demographically and geographically.

In terms of specific suggestions on process and operations for GVSAG, CDA staff suggested several things, including:

- Solicit resources such as funds, in-kind contributions, etc., from local businesses and developers.
- Approach the County for feedback before administering a community survey or poll querying public opinion of the Vision or proposed boundary options in order to increase the likelihood of the results being accepted.
 - In addition, the County has indicated that there may be a limited budget available to assist with mailing costs and the creation of mailing labels if the task of a community poll or survey is undertaken.
- After completing the Valley Springs Vision, GVSAG might then consider more specific implementation measures for consideration in the Community Plan which could then be brought to the table for discussion during the Community Plan workshops.

The CDA also acknowledges that the discussion of boundaries is a particularly important topic. Ultimately the decision about boundaries will be made by a designated decision-making body – either by the County in some fashion or publicly at a county meeting. Having a statement of community preference backed up with verifiable support will help the county to make this decision. The CDA encourages the adoption of a relatively compact boundary and certainly one that makes sense for the community in terms of functionality and common uses. Recognizing that there has been some internal community dispute about whether certain subdivisions, such as Rancho Calaveras, should or should not be included within the boundaries, the CDA notes that the main concerns of Rancho Calaveras residents are already enshrined in their Special Plan and inclusion in the Community Plan area could provide them with further protection.

County staff and elected officials noted multiple times that the benefits of undertaking a broad-based community process such as visioning and, eventually, community planning. One person noted, “You may arm wrestle, but you also teach each other.” Another said, “The more disagreements you have, the more agreements you’ll come to.” Each of these highlights the value placed on public process and should be encouraging to those participating in the process.

Also noted was that a Vision emerging from a good amount of substantiated public participation would be hard to ignore. The County has stipulated however that whatever product emerges from the community process not be a carbon copy of the old Community Plan, simply updated. A repackaged 1974 Community Plan will not get approved. But, clearly, the wealth of public involvement in the community planning and visioning process is good for governance in the area. In other words, the County recognizes that the work of the CDA and Board of Supervisors is easier if the community has clearly expressed some preferences.

Community Perspectives

The purpose of the baseline report, as commissioned by MVS, was to gather reliable, neutral, unbiased information and to provide guidance on how to move forward with broad-based community outreach in regards to the Community Plan and community specific wording for the General Plan update. MVS, which initiated the process, hoped to foster a broad-based stakeholder group for the Community Plan process. GVSAG grew out of this vision and initiative. MVS strove to be “instrumental in providing information to the public.” The MVS membership feels they are fulfilling their civic duties by seeking and enforcing public accountability on the part of local government.

The first Community Plan meeting was organized by MVS, but the structure was left loose so as to leave room for community leadership to emerge. There were approximately sixty (60) people present who offered a diverse range of opinions. The first meeting revealed that there was in fact wider community concern about planning in the area and promoting community participation in the process. The intention initially, as stated, was to gather community support for updating the inadequate Valley Springs Community Plan, but through the meeting and outside consultation between the county and the community liaison, it became clear that the County intended to craft a new Community Plan according to its own design over the summer.

Accordingly, the community transitioned their efforts from conducting a Community Plan update to focusing on crafting a Vision for Valley Springs.

MyValleySprings.com encouraged new leadership to step forward to guide the community planning process in Valley Springs. A new group, GVSAG, was formed along with a Coordinating Committee. A chair and co-facilitator were appointed to facilitate the community process both for the Coordinating Committee and GVSAG more widely. While there have been the understandable “growing pains” associated with getting a new, grassroots organization off the ground, GVSAG has made excellent progress in very short time toward meeting the goal of creating a Vision for Valley Springs. MVS with its greater share of experience has played a supporting role as the enthusiastic leadership of GVSAG has come together.

From the very beginning of the process it has been evident that there is significant motivation to create and maintain a sense of community for Valley Springs. The participants in the process feel that Valley Springs has unique characteristics, which the community and GVSAG hope to highlight for county decision-makers. The community seems motivated to encourage unity despite the presence of administrative obstacles such as a Special Plan that only pertains to one part of the area, an outdated Community Plan with limited scope, and two supervisor districts splitting the area into two. One participant noted, “When the supervisor districts got redrawn, Valley Springs got cut down the middle, but we were assured it is just a line on the map. We are still the same community.”

So while there has been much community and consensus building, there is some disagreement about what exactly constitutes “Valley Springs” given these conflicting administrative and social demarcations. As a result there is uncertainty within the community – and likely among relevant decision-makers, about which areas should be included or excluded. This issue has not yet been resolved and will clearly be an important topic of debate within the community as well as for county officials as they go on to make substantive decisions regarding the future of Valley Springs.

Regardless of the official boundaries, community members hold Valley Springs in very positive regard, making comments such as, “It should be a privilege to build here.” Community members feel that developers should carry some of the costs (social, environmental, etc) of their developments in order to maintain the high quality of life in the area. Although the explicit focus of the community work is on crafting a Vision for Valley Springs, concern for environmental quality and hopes to improve local governance are clearly part of the agenda. Valley Springs residents would like to see better cumulative assessments about environmental and social service impacts of development because, while particular projects may be small or have little impact, together multiple developments and land use changes can have great impact on local service provision and natural resources.

GVSAG has made a concerted and continued effort to be inclusive and to invite a variety of people to their community meetings, including public officials (Figure 3). The proposed poll is another avenue being pursued to solicit wider public input on the work being done by

GVSAG. Although there is a general consensus that people feel they lack expertise, participants have been making up for it with enthusiasm and commitment to an inclusive process.

Figure 3: GVSAG Community Meeting



C Hiner, 19 Feb 2008

The topic area groups have committed extensive amounts of time and effort into crafting visions that will be summarized, compiled and shaped into one unified community vision. The goal has been to be objective and inclusive in their proceedings to create a welcoming atmosphere so that all community residents and stakeholders feel encouraged to participate. The boundary group in particular clearly wanted their recommendations to be defensible, based on facts, and to utilize clear criteria for any decision of inclusion or exclusion so that personal interests are not seen as driving the process.

The topic area visions, and the boundary options being formulated by the boundary group, have been presented to the public numerous times at community meetings and have been available in print and electronic format on the GVSAG website for review and public comment. In order to meet the County's deadline for submission, which unfortunately has been ill-defined to date, the immediate next steps for GVSAG are to:

1. Finalize topic area groups' visions and proposed boundary options.
2. Complete the compiled, unified Vision for Valley Springs.
3. Offer the completed Vision and the various boundary options to the public for approval or endorsement through a community poll.

The goal is to solicit as much public input as feasible so that community preferences will be seriously considered in County decision-making processes.

The participants of the community planning process feel that their efforts have legitimacy and authority due to the authentic democratic participation it inspires. Yet fear persists in the

community that all of their work will amount to nothing, that county will move ahead and make decisions regardless of what the community has produced. Some stakeholders feel that Valley Springs has developed rapidly, haphazardly, and with very little oversight or control, which is why they have taken on the intimidating project of community planning and visioning. Participants truly want to know that the time and effort they have committed to the process will be worthwhile in the end.

While county officials have privately expressed the intention to meaningfully include or consider documented community preferences, this has not been made clear or significantly been acted upon as of yet. Once the County's Community Plan workshops get underway, it will be clearer if the county has taken into account the work of involved Valley Springs citizens. No matter the degree to which the County meaningfully considers or incorporates the community's efforts into its official process, participants in the visioning have a sense that they are "doing what's right," regardless of the hurdles and stumbling blocks they face along the way. In this way, the group clearly sees the benefit of increasing democratic participation in the process, making sure their desires are known, and encouraging Supervisors to be accountable to their constituencies.

Recommendations

As the previous sections on County and community perspectives indicate, there are multiple issues and concerns at stake in the process of community planning in Valley Springs. First and foremost, it must be recognized that the community initiated a process of community planning in order to constructively influence decision-making in the greater Valley Springs area. The goal throughout has been to highlight the uniqueness and specific needs and desires of the Valley Springs community, especially since the town is split by two Supervisor districts. Also at stake more broadly is the form and function of Valley Springs as the town moves forward. Will Valley Springs be a "bedroom community" or a so-called "balanced community"? What ideals and values will be privileged as policy and development decisions continue to shape the change occurring? These are questions of great significance in which local residents and stakeholders as well as County decision-makers each have an interest.

Given the importance and gravity of these concerns, several recommendations for future action can be offered, which will be described in depth below. Many of these recommendations are mutually supporting and could be pursued simultaneously.

1. Increase and clarify communication between the County and the community, especially in relation to boundary and land use decision-making processes.
2. Foster a unified sense of community in the Valley Springs area.
3. Maintain and improve the quality of life for current residents concurrently with planning for a pleasant and viable future.
4. Provide for the production and dissemination of adequate, up-to-date planning information by prioritizing baseline data collection and compilation.
5. Include, at minimum, community specific language for Valley Springs in the General Plan to demonstrate County valuation of community planning efforts.

6. Encourage inclusive community participation by continuing existing – and developing new – outreach strategies.

Increase and Clarify Communication

The community planning process in Valley Springs has been productive and collaborative with the County. The community has tried to be responsive to County desires and preferences and for the most part the County has done the same. As one County official said, the County has been “trying hard to listen.” One improvement that could be made is increased and clearer communication from the County about what they have learned and their intended actions. A major concern for the community, which the County could be helpful in mitigating, is clarifying how it intends to incorporate and validate the work of GVSAG. In other words, the County could outline how it hopes to be accountable to stated community preferences.

Specifically, there is a need for clarity around community boundaries. The community is unclear about what different boundary options might mean in terms of planning and management. As the County has not provided explicit information either way, there is community speculation about whether bigger or smaller boundaries are “better” in terms of providing increased accountability for decision-makers to review and be critical of development in the area. For some, the ultimate goal of community planning is increased protection of local environmental and social assets. There is fear in particular that setting boundaries, especially large ones, will increase the “risk” of development in the area. To address this ambiguity, the County could:

- Provide clarification about zoning and land use decision-making processes.
- Outline the official process for boundary decisions.
- Indicate the implications for various boundary options.

Foster a Unified Sense of Community

Another area of ambiguity revolves around community identity and function, such as whether Valley Springs is (or should be) “a bedroom community” or some other kind. At a recent meeting it was suggested that Valley Springs strive to be “a balanced community, not a bedroom community.” So, although, the County clearly cannot determine this factor, planning decisions obviously have an impact on proximities from work to home and service provision within town centers. As the community preference for what type of community Valley Springs should be is still evolving, this is perhaps an issue to which the county should pay particular attention.

Maintain and Improve Quality of Life

There is also concern from current residents that service provision and quality of life issues be examined for the existing population of Valley Springs in addition to the efforts being launched to provide for a viable and pleasant future Valley Springs. Given that the purpose of a Vision is to forecast 20-30 years into the future, the current emphasis on the Valley-Springs-to-be seems warranted, but the point is well taken that for all of the planning efforts aimed at future scenarios, decision-makers should not forget to look around in the present and adapt or adjust current situations as appropriate and feasible. In fact this was among the recent items suggested

for “new business” for GVSAG itself – identifying some short-term issues for the group to work on so that participants feel that they can do something that impacts the present.

Prioritize Baseline Data Collection

The original intent of this Baseline Report included the compilation of data specific to Valley Springs such as community plan, land use and zoning documents and maps, seeking information about developed land, the community plan study area, water/sewer availability, Level of Service (LOS) for roads and highways, planned road projects, current and future land developments, etc. The purpose of this work was also to identify data gaps. The scope of the work changed as it became clear that much of this data, while theoretically available, was either outdated, difficult to access, or both. Direct attempts to collect public information including developed and approved-for-development land and parcels transitioning out of Williamson Act status failed due to incomplete county records and an apparent lack of attention to the requests. Nevertheless, both the County and the community noted that it is difficult to plan effectively without adequate baseline information, so it is clear that data collection and compilation by the County or other entities should be a high priority.

Demonstrate County Valuation of Community Planning Efforts

As has been the case thus far, it is important that the community be clear and strategic in its actions, taking ownership of the community planning process so as to ensure that their preferences get consideration in the broader county planning processes occurring, such as the General Plan update. In fact, one main intended outcome for this community work is the production of information to inform community-specific language for the General Plan. The County could be proactive in encouraging and facilitating the inclusion of this community-generated information into the General Plan.

Encourage Inclusive Community Participation

The GVSAG has worked hard to be inclusive in its operations, encouraging public involvement at all levels and stages of its work. Continuous efforts to involve all sectors of the community are indicative of a broad-based community process. New strategies could be explored to increase representation of diverse interests in the community planning process. Inclusive practices should be continued to maintain and further develop community legitimacy and authority.

Conclusion

The community planning process occurring in Valley Springs, California, has had both its challenges and its successes. Overall, the project demonstrates how local government and communities can effectively collaborate to achieve mutually desirable ends; in this case, a Vision for Valley Springs which will positively impact the development of a Community Plan for the area which is responsive and representative of community preferences. While the work is not done yet, there have been constructive exchanges and cooperative working relationships built which will be valuable as community planning efforts move forward to the tasks ahead: the completion of the community Vision, the determination of community boundaries, and,

ultimately, the crafting of a Community Plan and community specific language for inclusion in the Calaveras County General Plan update.

Engaged community participation is an asset for the County and for the community as it improves governance, encourages stakeholder buy-in to decisions made and policies adopted, and provides for community development and capacity building at the local level. The process of community planning in Valley Springs has had many benefits of which County officials and local citizens should be aware. If both the County and the community remain committed to the inclusive and democratic processes that have occurred thus far, both should emerge better off from the project of community planning in Valley Springs, California.

Appendix

1. Documents produced by MyValleySprings.com.....18-23
 - a. Community Planning Flyer
 - b. “What is a Community Area Plan Update?”
 - c. “About Smart Growth”
 - d. “Overview of Community Planning in Valley Springs”
2. Documents prepared by Colleen Hiner.....24-28
 - a. “What is a Vision, and how do we get one?”
 - b. Correspondence to GVSAG Coordinating Committee
 - i. Recommendations & Suggestions
 - ii. Response to Lynn’s Guidance on Visioning
 - c. “Tips on Writing a Community Vision”
3. Documents pertaining to GVSAG.....29-30
 - a. About GVSAG
 - b. GVSAG Website (intro page)
 - c. GVSAG Mission Statement and Philosophy

Community Planning Flyer, prepared by MVS.

COMMUNITY PLANNING FOR A GREATER VALLEY SPRINGS



Please Come
to an
Organizational Meeting
to provide
Broad-based Public Input
for the
Valley Springs
Area Community Plan Update

February 19, 2008, 7:00-9:00 p.m.
Community United Methodist Church
135 Laurel Street, Valley Springs
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

~refreshments provided~

additional information: Joyce Techel, 772-8812 or jaytee@caltel.com

hosted by
MyValleySprings.com, P.O. Box 1501, Valley Springs, CA 95252, info@myvalleysprings.com



“Overview of Community Planning in Valley Springs” (page 1), prepared by MVS.



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Valley Springs, CA 95252

Overview of Community Planning in Valley Springs

In 1884, an eighteen block grid was laid out to form the town center for Valley Springs. This was the first, and some of the best, land use planning applied to our community. In the spirit of those first planners, we can abide by the smart growth principles inherent in that grid, namely, a specified town center from which to grow, designated land use that is considerate of existing infrastructure, preservation of open space and working landscapes, and economic opportunities. The current community plan, written in 1974, references those eighteen blocks of “tree-lined streets” and envisions “an attractive, pleasant community” for the future. However, the ’74 plan, though visionary, lacked specificity and concrete suggestions for the implementation of a vision.

In 1992, a group of citizens encouraged by their supervisor, Dick Gordon, conducted “A Survey Regarding the Greater Valley Springs Area.” The survey solicited responses from over 1,000 residents of the area, which included Rancho Calaveras, La Contenta, Valley Springs proper, Jenny Lind, Quail Oaks, Mother Lode Acres, and Scenic Valley Ranchos. The survey collected information on demographics, community character, circulation, land use, housing, conservation, and safety. The data was intended to be used to update the 1974 Valley Springs Community Plan, the 1983 Rancho Calaveras Special Plan, and “to bring the rest of the area” into a community plan.

The survey group wrote, “The issue of future development in the greater Valley Springs area should be of interest to all residents and/or landowners.” They recognized “planning is needed so the area can grow in a manner to preserve our rural and recreational character, yet still accommodate business and residential growth.” Unfortunately, though the survey results are valuable background information, they were never used to update the Valley Springs plan.

The effort to update the plan died from lack of interest, so we are still faced with the same issue today: an outdated community plan that does not adequately address the increasing pressure of growth and development. The Rancho Special Plan was updated in 1999. “The result was to re-affirm that the Rancho Calaveras community still desires to maintain the rural residential atmosphere and to prohibit commercial and multifamily development.”

MyValleySprings.com, convinced of the necessity of public participation in community planning, took the initiative, formed a group, and began to educate ourselves about community planning, land use, and smart growth principles. We started a website to share what we have learned with the public and increase awareness of local planning issues. In 2007, the website had 27,060 visits representing 11,464 visitors, so the interest is clearly there.

“Overview of Community Planning in Valley Springs” (page 2), prepared by MVS.

In an effort to initiate the Valley Springs Community Plan update process, MyValleySprings.com launched a series of town hall meetings on February 28, 2007 with “Community Design: An Overview of Smart Growth Principles” followed by “Understanding the Calaveras Council of Governments: A Look at Regional Transportation Planning” on April 12, and “Water and Land Use Planning: Making the Connection” on May 23.

In cooperation with the director of the Calaveras County Cooperative Extension office, we developed a proposal to hire a graduate student land use planning intern to compile the baseline information necessary for the community plan update. The proposal was funded by the California Communities Program—University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources, and we have hired a doctoral candidate who began work in January.

With grant funding, we were able to host a two-part community design workshop (a mini-charrette) on November 24 and 27. Over 75 residents and stakeholders participated in the interactive presentations facilitated by the Local Government Commission (LGC). A report was issued and made available to the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors, the Community Development Agency and other interested entities, so they may apply the results to the county’s general plan update. MVS is seeking funds for its next step in the community plan update process, a community image survey.

Finally, the Calaveras Council of Governments (CCOG), in partnership with the Calaveras Community Development Agency (CDA), the Local Government Commission, and MyValleySprings.com, has applied for a \$207,000 Community-Based Transportation Planning grant from CalTrans. Notification will likely be in October and, if successful, funding for the proposal would be in January 2009. The final product will be a community planning document consistent with the Calaveras County General Plan requirements and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The heart of the proposed community planning effort is a highly participatory public design charrette process. A charrette is a concentrated series of meetings, workshops and design sessions in which a professional design team works with the public onsite to produce a collaborative vision or a plan.

An inclusive advisory group of agencies and community stakeholders will be convened in advance of the charrette to build common understanding of the project from different perspectives, to scope out core issues and key players, help plan the events, and provide guidance to maximize community participation and involve under-served groups. The group that forms here tonight could be the advisory group for the grant project. Even if the Caltrans grant is not successful, we need to move forward as a community to update our plan. At the least, we need to offer a vision and suggestions for its implementation to help shape community specific language for the current county general plan update.

2/08

“What is a Community Area Plan Update” (page 1), prepared by MVS.



www.MyValleySprings.com

P.O. Box 1501

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Valley Springs, CA 95252

What is a Community Area Plan Update?

A collaborative process of planning for the community's future!

The Community Plan Will:

- ❖ establish the long-term vision of the community and provide strategies to accomplish the community's vision;
- ❖ develop baseline levels of service and capacities for all community facilities, services, and infrastructure to help plan for future needs;
- ❖ determine the need, location, and policies to obtain new community facilities, including parks, trails, recreation, cultural, public buildings, etc.
- ❖ survey existing resources and provide policies for protecting open space, scenic, and environmental resources; and
- ❖ promote a balance of land uses so that services can be augmented concurrently with new growth

Many plans also contain background information about the community, such as population projections, traffic levels, natural hazards, community history, and housing characteristics.

How do Community Plans and the General Plan fit together?

Area and community plans are part of the general plan. “Community area” plans focus on a particular region or community within the overall general plan area, and **refine policies** of the general plan as they apply to a smaller geographic area. A community plan **must be internally consistent with the general plan** of which it is a part. To facilitate such consistency, the general plan should provide a policy framework for the **detailed treatment of specific issues** in the community plan.

A community plan need not address all of the mandatory general plan elements when the overall general plan satisfies these requirements. For example, a community plan need not discuss fire safety if the jurisdiction-wide plan adequately addresses the subject and the community plan is consistent with those policies and standards. Keep in mind that a community plan may provide **greater detail** to policies affecting development in a defined area, and the plan should address “**community specific**” issues. What makes the Valley Springs area “**distinctive**” from the rest of Calaveras County?

General Plan Elements:

1. **Land Use:** designates the type, intensity, and general distribution of housing, business, industry, open space, education, public buildings and grounds, waste disposal facilities, and other land uses.
2. **Circulation:** correlates with land use and identifies the general location and extent of existing and proposed major roads, transit routes, terminals, and public utilities and facilities.
3. **Housing:** assesses current and projected housing needs for all economic segments of the community. It identifies local housing policies and the programs that implement those policies.

“What is a Community Area Plan Update” (page 2), prepared by MVS.

4. **Conservation:** addresses the conservation, development, and use of natural resources including water, forests, soils, rivers, and mineral deposits.
5. **Open-space:** details plans and measures for the long-range preservation of open-space for natural resources, outdoor recreation, public health and safety, and for agriculture.
6. **Noise:** identifies and appraises noise problems within the community and influences the distribution of land uses.
7. **Safety:** establishes policies and programs to protect the community from risks associated with natural and manmade hazards (e.g. seismic, geologic, flood, wildfire, and toxic materials hazards.)

Optional Elements, or Optional Chapters under General Plan Elements:

8. Economic Development
9. Community Design
10. Historic Preservation / Cultural Resources
11. Bicycle / Pedestrian Routes
12. Fire and Police Protection /Fire Safety
13. Emergency Response / Evacuation Plans
14. Parks and Recreation
15. Urban Boundaries
16. Scenic Corridors and Viewsheds
17. Air Quality
18. Sustainable Strategies
19. Water
20. Flood Management

Consistency: The general plan is the basis for all local land use decisions. Zoning, subdivisions, and public works projects can only be approved when they are consistent with the general plan. An action, program or project is consistent with the general plan if, considering all its aspects, it will further the goals, objectives and policies of the plan and not obstruct their attainment. Not only must all local land use be consistent with the general plan, the plan itself must be internally consistent. Each part of the general plan, be it a goal, policy or map/diagram, must mesh with all of the other parts of the plan. For instance, the land use element must not contain statements or assertions that conflict with the housing element. Similarly, the location of a major highway on the land use element diagram must match its location on the circulation element diagram as well. Community plans must also be internally consistent and consistent with the county's general plan.

Definitions:

Goals=abstract and general expressions of community values
Objectives=specific intermediate steps in attaining a goal
Policies=specific statements that guide decision making
Implementation programs=descriptions of how the goals, objectives, and policies are to be put into action.

adapted from OPR's *Guide to California Planning and Steamboat Springs Community Plan*
http://www.opr.ca.gov/planning/publications/General_Plan_Guidelines_2003.pdf
2/08

“About Smart Growth,” prepared by MVS.

About Smart Growth

Development decisions affect many of the things that touch people's everyday lives - their homes, their health, the schools their children attend, the taxes they pay, their daily commute, the natural environment around them, economic growth in their community, and opportunities to achieve their dreams and goals. What, where, and how communities build will affect their residents' lives for generations to come.

Communities across the country are using creative strategies to develop in ways that preserve natural lands and critical environmental areas, protect water and air quality, and reuse already-developed land. They conserve resources by reinvesting in existing infrastructure and reclaiming historic buildings. By designing neighborhoods that have shops, offices, schools, churches, parks, and other amenities near homes, communities are giving their residents and visitors the option of walking, bicycling, taking public transportation, or driving as they go about their business. A range of different types of homes makes it possible for senior citizens to stay in their homes as they age, young people to afford their first home, and families at all stages in between to find a safe, attractive home they can afford. Through smart growth approaches that enhance neighborhoods and involve local residents in development decisions, these communities are creating vibrant places to live, work, and play. The high quality of life in these communities makes them economically competitive, creates business opportunities, and improves the local tax base.

Smart Growth Principles: Based on the experience of communities around the nation that have used smart growth approaches to create and maintain great neighborhoods, the Smart Growth Network developed a set of ten basic principles:

1. Mix land uses
2. Take advantage of compact building design
3. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
4. Create walkable neighborhoods
5. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
7. Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices
9. Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective
10. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions

Encourage Community and Stakeholder Collaboration: Growth can create great places to live, work and play -- if it responds to a community's own sense of how and where it wants to grow. Communities have different needs and will emphasize some smart growth principles over others: those with robust economic growth may need to improve housing choices; others that have suffered from disinvestment may emphasize infill development; newer communities with separated uses may be looking for the sense of place provided by mixed-use town centers; and still others with poor air quality may seek relief by offering transportation choices. The common thread among all, however, is that the needs of every community and the programs to address them are best defined by the people who live and work there. Citizen participation can be time-consuming, frustrating and expensive, but encouraging community and stakeholder collaboration can lead to creative, speedy resolution of development issues and greater community understanding of the importance of good planning and investment. Smart Growth plans and policies developed without strong citizen involvement will at best not have staying power; at worst, they will be used to create unhealthy, undesirable communities. When people feel left out of important decisions, they will be less likely to become engaged when tough decisions need to be made. Involving the community early and often in the planning process vastly improves public support for smart growth and often leads to innovative strategies that fit the unique needs of each community.

from the EPA and the Smart Growth Network

“What is a Vision” (page 1), prepared by Colleen Hiner.

What is a Vision, and how do we get one?

Prepared by Colleen Hiner
for the community of Valley Springs
4 March 2008

What is a Vision?

A vision establishes long-range plans or goals. It should have 20-30 year time horizon, and in this case should coincide with the General Plan time horizon. In a vision, a community identifies priorities for development, development in the broad sense of what the community is or will become in the future. A vision encourages and utilizes the widest possible participation from the community. Therefore vision leaders should search for disparate opinions and involve and wide cross-section of the population and local stakeholders. In undertaking a vision, the community seeks common ground among these different interests and pays attention to often over-looked issues in the area.

Visioning is undertaken to avoid a piecemeal approach to planning. Visioning uses participation as a source of ideas and a foundation for future policy-making. A visioning process solicits the feelings and opinions of diverse stakeholders using questionnaires or surveys and small or large meetings distributed throughout the planning area. A vision synthesizes the opinions and perspectives of the public into one comprehensive, democratically-derived view of the future. A broadly-based, public visioning helps determine and develop policy by making agencies aware of community issues, conflicts and preferences. In this way, priorities can be identified.

A successful visioning process requires committed participants and leaders. The process entails meetings, writing and research, thus volunteers are vitally important. People are need to reach out to and soliciting opinions from residents and stakeholders as well as to write and look into issues as needed. Most importantly, a successful vision is founded on the meaningful participation of the public.

How do we do “Visioning”?

An important first step in beginning a visioning process is to set a timeframe for the project. The plan should outlines appropriate and achievable goals along with when those tasks will be completed. This means that if there will be work done by subgroups independently, that accountability standards and reporting deadlines need to be identified. The preparation of the visioning process (planning, defining instruments and tools, deciding on the presentation format and follow-up procedures) is essential to its success.

There are many techniques used for visioning, including community meetings, group meetings, surveys, interviews, workshops, etc. The best way to reach out to the community will be determined by the community itself. Visioning is best done with support from the local government, and, in fact, volunteer, community-based planning has been recommended by the Board of Supervisors. So as long as the process is fair and inclusive, local government support can be nurtured.

Benefits & Challenges

An identifiable benefit of visioning, besides the production of the vision itself, is that the process can pave the way for further public involvement in the planning process through the creation and maintenance of viable community groups, an indicator of an active and engaged public. A challenge to visioning is that the process is time consuming. Also, it can also be difficult to

“What is a Vision” (page 2), prepared by Colleen Hiner.

What is a Vision, and how do we get one?

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4 March 2008

satisfy all interests present in the community. Nevertheless, another benefit of visioning is finding, or forging, common ground between diverse interests.

Strategies for Visioning

- Small groups increase each individual’s ability to contribute to the process.
 - This group has formed subgroups based on interest. The smaller groups can do work independently and then report back to the large group.
- Group discussion can be used to clarify meaning or intent and identify agreements or differences. Through the process of collaboration the group can create consensus.
- Because it is difficult to write in groups, one method for writing the vision is to elect one or two people to draft the statement and bring it back to the large group for revision.

Action Steps

If the goal for Valley Springs is to develop a comprehensive, inclusive vision, the following method could be used:

- Get together in your small groups.
- First, individually, think about Valley Springs 20 years from today. How does it look? How does it function? Who lives here? Where do people live? Where do people work? What do people do? What kinds of businesses are present? What sorts of infrastructure or recreation activities are there? Be creative and unencumbered by worries that your dream will not come true. Let your preferences, not your concerns, take precedence. Write down your ideas. Be as specific as possible. Be as brief or detailed as you like.
- Then, together as a group, discuss what you wrote, what your preferences and ideas are. Create a master list and/or detailed notes about your discussion describing what Valley Springs will ideally be like in 20 years given your preferred future.
- Elect one or two people to write up the subgroup’s vision and decide who will present your combined ideas at the next large group meeting.

References

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Correspondence with GVSAG Coordinating Committee: “Recommendations & Suggestions,” prepared by Colleen Hiner.

GVSAG Coordinating Committee Planning Meeting, 22 April 2008
Recommendations & Suggestions from Colleen Hiner

Selected Accomplishments to Date:

- Formation of a Coordinating Committee (CC) for GVSAG
- Final Drafts of topic area groups’ visions collected and posted online
- Community-wide meeting planned for Thursday, 24 April 2008.

Pending Tasks (decisions in this area to be made by Coordinating Committee in consultation with GVSAG general membership):

- Organizational work for Coordinating Committee
 - Determining/managing involvement, communication, decision-making structure, roles/functions, etc
- Organizational work for GVSAG
 - Managing involvement, communication, decision-making structure, roles/functions, etc
- Finalize topic area groups’ visions
- Compile sub-groups visions into one Valley Springs Community Vision, thus creating community specific language to be included in the General Plan (GP).

Possible Future GVSAG Actions:

- To be determined by GVSAG Membership and Coordinating Committee
 - Poll/survey to gather more information about Valley Springs residents’ preferences for the area
 - Gaining official sanction from the county
 - Seeking funding for community activities
 - Etc

Some Procedural Notes:

1. As I believe was decided at the last GVSAG community meeting, subgroups (“topic area groups”) have finalized their draft visions and those have been made available for viewing on the website.
2. Those visions are to be presented to the large group and feedback received.
3. After input, the subgroups will submit to the appropriate people (either the Coordinating Committee or a different sub-committee, as determined by the CC or the general membership) their final versions which will then be compiled, collated, etc, to create on broad Community Vision for Valley Springs.
4. It was proposed that this Vision be shown for greater public approval before being finally accepted by the GVSAG and ultimately submitted to the County for inclusion in the GP.
5. The method for its showing or presentation (a poll – online, mailed, door-to-door; a well-advertised and attended public meeting; other options; or some combination of options) needs to be determined by GVSAG (by the Coordinating Committee in consultation with the large group or by the large group by vote or consensus).
6. As is clear from the many steps still to be undertaken, a clear leadership structure will be essential as GVSAG moves forward. This is the purpose of the Coordinating Committee:
 - a. to plan meetings,
 - b. strategize action and
 - c. guide the wider community process.
7. Things have gone very well so far – keep up the good work!

Correspondence with GVSAG Coordinating Committee: “Response to Lynn O’Connor’s Guidance,” prepared by Colleen Hiner.

Some Comments in Response to Lynn O’Conner’s Guidance on the VS Community Vision
Colleen Hiner, 22 April 2008

Lynn’s Words:

What I mean by specific is what is unique to your community. Colleen Hiner is doing your background information which should identify those things in great detail. How many buildings or sites in the core or proposed area are historic or have cultural significance. Are they protected, crumbling, is the viewscape worth enhancing in the core? What land is available for public parks, parking, park and ride lots, bus pull outs, walking or electric cart paths. How does the existing circulation around the subdivisions and commercial areas work/not work? As a large majority of people in VS commute out of the county, what types of goods, services, transportation alternates, meet their needs? What issues are created by boat haulers, tourists, and special events? What opportunities exist for affordable housing? Are any houses in town worth fixing up, are there teardowns that could be replaced with affordable homes? Is 0 setback appropriate here? Design stds.? If there is no future bypass, could the parallel st. and the state route be designed as one-way couplets to lessen the through traffic on 12? If there is a bypass, what opportunities will be created?

My Response:

Lynn is making some very good points: she says that you should focus on what is specific and unique about Valley Springs. A Vision should portray what makes Valley Springs a good place to live, worth maintaining or enhancing, and/or different than other places in the county. The purpose of the General Plan is to convey this information about the county *as a whole*. It is an inclusive document. Lynn is trying to let you know that the only reason to have community specific language in the GP is if you have something to say that is different than what is said about Calaveras generally.

Her later comments are urging you, as the active and leading community members (as part of the Coordinating Committee or GVSAG generally), to focus on the positive and the particular without advocating for specific policy choices. The policy-making (rules, regulations, stipulations, etc) is to be left to the county government, which is mandated to be accountable to all citizens. Her words, “paint them a picture or tell them a story” indicate that you should focus on description and your dreams for an ideal future, worrying less about how you will create that future (through rules, regulations, stipulations – the work of the county). In essence the county government is accountable to you, the citizens. In order for them to do their job effectively, they need to know what you want and hope for in Valley Springs. That is the purpose of the Community Vision – to clarify, identify and specify what works well and what can be improved over time in Valley Springs.

So, as for what the Vision should look like, it describes the local area (its functionality, opportunities, constraints, natural and social resources, etc) and clearly conveys an image of what an ideal Valley Springs of 2028 is like. Lynn writes: “It seems to me that VS is rather unique—smack in the middle of three lakes, near three others, intersection of two state highways, probably the only downtown in the county with a grided street system deeper than one block, gentle topography.” Using descriptive words such as this, followed with community goals for improvement (better traffic circulation is identified areas, more affordable housing in a particular area, increased access to certain resources, etc using details supplied by the topic area groups), a vision portrays the Valley Springs you hope for and know can come to be.

“Tips for Writing a Vision,” prepared by Colleen Hiner.

Tips for Writing a Community Vision

By Colleen Hiner, 24 April 2008

Suggestions for Creating a Vision

- Focus on what is specific and unique about Valley Springs.
 - What makes Valley Springs a good place to live, worth maintaining or enhancing, and/or different than other places in the county?
 - The GP outlines the general characteristics and goals of Calaveras, focus on Valley Springs!
- Focus on the positive and the particular without advocating for specific policy choices.
 - The policy-making (rules, regulations, stipulations, etc) is for the county government, which is mandated to be accountable to all citizens.
- Focus on description and your dreams for an ideal future.
 - The purpose of the Community Vision is to clarify, identify and specify what works well and what can be improved over time in Valley Springs.
- Describe the local area (its functionality, opportunities, constraints, natural and social resources, etc) and then clearly convey an image of what an ideal Valley Springs of 2030 is like:
 - State community goals for improvement which portray the Valley Springs you hope for and know can come to be.

EXAMPLE: Possible Valley Springs Vision Statement

This example is based on the Natural Resources/Conservation topical group's draft vision from the GVSAG website's Conservation & Open Space page as well as general comments from the group. All the details are of this example are being used for illustration purposes only. This is meant as a sample of what a vision could look like, but the specific details are to be negotiated by the Valley Springs community.

The Greater Valley Springs Area is bounded by Gillam and Paloma Roads to the north, Jenny Lind and Burson Roads to the South, the Calaveras River to the East and Jenny Lind and Burson Roads to the West. Valley Springs is characterized by its rolling hills, close proximity to several water bodies, confluence of two major highways and unique gridded street system dating from the town's inception. Also present are several important historical sites such as Castle Rock and the Depot building. To celebrate and maintain these unique characteristics as well as promote a livable place which provides for a high quality of life for all residents, the people of Valley Springs advocate for minimum signage along roadways, using catch basins for water runoff, encourage setbacks and landscaping along major roads as well as preserving oak trees on development sites. This is partially accomplished through developing bushy or marginal lands first instead of other more ecologically or agriculturally productive sites. Wildlife needs are accommodated as much as possible, such that wildlife corridors are present to facilitate movement and fencing which is minimally disruptive is chosen over more invasive types. There is community sentiment in favor of preserving the rural heritage and functionality of Valley Springs, and, as such, all efforts are pursued to protect and enhance the ecological and social assets of the area.

About the Greater Valley Springs Advisory Group (GVSAG)

Contact info: PO BOX 1071
Valley Springs, CA 95252
www.gvsag.org

Organizational Structure:

- Open community meetings held on fourth Thursday of every month.
- Coordinating Committee, consisting of the Coordinator from each topic area sub-group (Economics, Housing, Boundaries, Safety, Land Use, Circulation and Conservation & Open Space), handles administrative and meeting planning tasks.
- Currently, there is one Chair of the group, Mike Hazelhoffer, who facilitates the public meetings with a co-facilitator, Marty Crane.

The goal of GVSAG is to compile community comments on topic area visions and then create a consolidated Community Vision for Valley Springs which will be approved through a public poll. The poll will also be used to solicit public preferences in regards to several proposed boundary options for the Valley Springs Community Planning area. The resulting Vision and preferred community boundaries will be submitted to the County for consideration and possible inclusion in the Community Plan workshops to be held during the summer of 2008 as part of the Calaveras County General Plan Update.

Introductory Page of GVSAG website, www.gvsag.org. Accessed 18 June 2008.

Greater Valley Springs Advisory Group info@gvsag.org

- Home
- Boundaries
- Circulation
- Conservation & Open Space
- Economics
- Housing
- Land Use
- Safety
- Meeting Dates
- Vision Writing Tips
- About Us
- Contact Us

You are visitor
1 7 0 7
since April 8, 2008

What makes Valley Springs unique?

The Greater Valley Springs Advisory Group would like to invite all citizens and officials to participate in developing a Community Vision for the greater Valley Springs area. This vision will be used for the community and general plan updates being undertaken by Calaveras County.

A vision will be developed for each of the following topics: Economics, Housing, Boundaries, Safety, Land Use, Circulation and Conservation & Open Space. Further topics may be added as needed.

Your input on each vision is appreciated. Please click on the desired topic, read the current draft, and submit your comments. Your input will be evaluated and incorporated as appropriate. You may be contacted for clarification and/or further comments.

Please tell your friends about the Greater Valley Springs Advisory Group project and encourage them to participate.

Next General Meeting:
Thursday, June 26, United Methodist Church, 135 Laurel Street, Valley Springs.

[Meeting Dates](#) [Vision Writing Tips](#)

This website is a work in progress. Please email webmaster@gvsag.org with suggestions, corrections, or criticism.

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Web design by S&R Enterprises
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“GVSAG Mission Statement and Philosophy,” prepared by GVSAG.

GREATER VALLEY SPRINGS ADVISORY GROUP

5/22/08 Mission Statement and Philosophy:

Mission Statement: It is the mission of the Greater Valley Springs Advisory Group to promote a healthy, safe, attractive and sustainable future for the Valley Springs area through open community participation.

Philosophy: The GVSAG is an ad hoc group of residents and stakeholders who recognize the inevitability of growth in the Valley Springs community and Calaveras County as a whole. The GVSAG is inclusive and encourages broad public participation in community planning and in the general plan update. While we embrace growth, we appreciate the small-town rural atmosphere, which is enhanced by agriculture. We will work in cooperation with local government officials and other decision makers to ensure adequate infrastructure and services for our community. We support:

- ❖ retail and commercial services in accessible community centers;
- ❖ parks, preserves, and facilities necessary for children, youth, and adults to engage in organized sports and spontaneous activities;
- ❖ an identified town center from which to grow;
- ❖ increased density and infill development within community center boundaries;
- ❖ preservation and revitalization of the historic “downtown” area;
- ❖ housing for all income levels, age groups, and special populations;
- ❖ “green” environmentally responsible site design and building and architectural standards;
- ❖ tourism, outdoor recreation, education, local independently owned businesses, agriculture, and light industry;
- ❖ protection and expansion of open space, wildlife habitat, and critical environmental areas; and
- ❖ health, wellness, safety and security.