

Mono County Collaborative Planning Team

Community Issues Final Report

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Submitted by:



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COMMUNITY ISSUES FINAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION

Along with the Economic Development and Job Creation Final Report, this report documents the results of the Mono County Facilitated Planning Process. Together, these two reports examine the array of issues faced by four Mono County communities, and they make specific recommendations for local and countywide policies for:

- Job creation and economic development
- updates to transportation policies for community and regional transportation plans
- a master Land Tenure Adjustment Plan for the County and the public agencies that hold land therein
- updates to the visions and overall goals of local community plans.

While the recommendations in this report are based upon community outreach, review of a broad variety of technical and policy documents, and interviews with dozens of government and community stakeholders, they have not received the high level of review that, for example, General Plan policies receive. These recommendations are instead intended to serve as a starting point for further discussion among local staff, decision makers and community members. Before any of these recommendations are considered for action, the County's established planning process should be followed, including additional technical work and community outreach.

PROCESS

Mono County has a long history of cooperative decision-making and citizen involvement in the planning process. Because so many unrelated agencies govern key areas of the county, the Collaborative Planning Team was formed to ensure regional communication. The Collaborative Planning Team is comprised of Mono County, Toiyabe and Inyo National Forests, Caltrans, the Bureau of Land Management, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, California Department of Fish and Game and the Town of Mammoth Lakes. The meetings of the Collaborative Planning Team are advertised and open to the public. At the sub-regional level, Regional Planning Advisory Committees (RPACs) deal with more detailed issues with more direct citizen involvement. The Board of Supervisors appoints citizen members to RPACs throughout the county, and these citizens are joined by relevant public agency staff.

Building off of the success of this advisory body structure, the Collaborative Planning Team appointed facilitators from Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates of San Francisco to assist four key sub-regions of the county to develop consensus-based goals and policies. The Nelson\Nygaard approach to addressing all these issues focused on identifying the real

choices and bringing them forward early in the process so that they can be discussed and understood in the community. Starting from the general desires of the community, the consultants helped individuals articulate what exactly they want, then worked to achieve a common vision of how citizens want their communities to look, work and feel. Finally, the facilitators helped the communities to develop strategies and specific action steps to build toward their vision.

Workshop Process

The process was based on a series of three workshops in each of four target areas across the county. These areas included:

- The Antelope Valley region including Topaz, Walker and Coleville
- The Bridgeport Valley, including the community of Bridgeport and the Native American Bridgeport Colony
- The June Lake Loop
- The Long Valley/Crowley Lake area, from Tom's Place to the Mammoth Airport

The first local workshop brought together all of the key stakeholders in the project area, including local residents, merchants, commercial property owners, County Public Works, County Planning, Caltrans, the Bureau of Land Management, the Forest Service, parents, children, senior citizens, and other agencies as appropriate. After introductions, the facilitators asked participants a series of pointed questions, including:

- What do they like best about their community?
- What works best in their community?
- What does not work so well?
- How is the community changing?
- How would they like to see their community change?
- What should we work to hold onto?

On the following evening, a second workshop was held in each community. The goal of this workshop was to refine the visions and goals outlined in the first workshop and to help participants begin to work toward a tangible community plan.

Working with County and agency staff, the facilitator then took the results of the second workshop and to develop a plan or set of alternatives that best addressed the results of all workshops to date. Depending on the specific issues facing the individual communities, the plan focused on community design, program development, inter-agency cooperative agreements, planning codes or other elements. The facilitators then presented the draft recommendations to the community and to ask for comments from the group as part of an open forum.

Since the economic development issues were addressed in an earlier paper, this document focuses on land tenure, transportation and community vision for each of the four communities. Each community is examined separately, working in alphabetical order from the Antelope Valley to June Lake.

ANTELOPE VALLEY RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Mono County's small towns are traditionally planned communities that have evolved over a period of time, with their development patterns grounded in history. They have evolved to accommodate growth without destroying their very nature: providing a diversity of opportunities for residential, social, and economic health within a small yet identifiable area. The older communities of Mono County have maintained their small town character because they have grown slowly, primarily due to economic limitations influenced by natural resources, geography, access to major urban centers and transportation corridors, and demographic characteristics which have maintained population stability.

Nonetheless, a tremendous number of growth pressures and environmental factors can influence future development within Mono County's communities. By working with the collaborative planning team through this planning process, residents are given the opportunity to identify characteristics of their community to preserve and elements to change or modify. The results of the prioritized "actions" from community meetings are to be incorporated into the process leading to an updated Countywide Plan, as well as local transportation, welfare-to-work and economic development strategies. These community meeting results provide a focus for future efforts.

The Mono County Collaborative Planning Team conducted a series of meetings in communities in Mono County to solicit public input in the planning process. The Antelope Valley is one of four communities visited in the process. The area is a landscape of scattered communities along Highway 395 surrounded by mountains. Although community-based planning has a long history in the Antelope Valley, the level of interest in the planning process fluctuates depending on the urgency of the issues at hand. This paper presents prioritized short-term and long-term planning issues for the communities of the Antelope Valley based on citizen input. Residents of Walker, Coleville and Topaz gathered at the Walker Community Center for a series of two community visioning meetings on July 22 and 23, with a follow-up meeting on August 23, 1999.

The purpose of these first two meetings was to identify areas of need in the communities. Key areas of planning and policy that will be addressed based on the strategies developed at the community planning meetings include the following:

- economic development/job creation
- land use, land development, land swaps
- transportation
- community development plans

Economic Development issues are addressed in a separate paper entitled "Economic Development and Job Creation Draft Final Report." This paper details land tenure, transportation and community vision issues not addressed in the earlier paper.

LAND USE, LAND DEVELOPMENT, LAND SWAPS

Land use, land development and land swaps were relatively minor issues with regard to the concerns of residents of the Antelope Valley. The communities' prime interest is in maintaining large lots and not allowing for the subdivision of existing lots. The land policy within the County General Plan is to "provide for limited development that is compatible with natural constraints and the Valley's scenic qualities" and to "retain the existing privately held land base in the Antelope Valley." Because much of the land in the Antelope Valley is privately owned, there are few concerns about land swaps within the National Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. Nearby public lands may provide potential opportunities for strengthening the economic base of the community. Snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, fishing and hiking are examples of recreational uses that should be encouraged.

One specific land issue of critical concern is the immediate development of a new campground in the valley to replace a U.S. Forest Service campground that was destroyed in recent floods. Responding to an executive order, the Forest Service replaced the campground outside the flood zone, but this location does not offer the same quality camping experience as the previous site. The County, local community, Forest Service and BLM should work cooperatively to identify an additional site that will offer the highest quality camping experience without undue risk of future flood damage.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation issues in the Antelope Valley are concentrated in three areas:

- Concern about Highway 395's impact on the communities. The highway is a vital connection between Walker, Coleville and Topaz, as well as to the rest of the county and to Nevada. The community is concerned that a bypass of the area would reduce passersby who are an important contributor to the economic health of the area. Likewise, it is important for the community to maintain the scenic highway designation. Ways to slow down traffic in the community would be encouraged, but traffic calming measures would need to be implemented with the support of Caltrans. Such measures would also need to address snow removal issues, maintain highway capacity and allow for the safe and efficient movement of freight and other vehicles along this key artery.
- The impacts of road closures outside of the area on the community. Public information about road closures can affect traffic in the area. Likewise, public

information about road closures is not readily available to residents of the community.

- The placement of the Caltrans sign warning that chains are required should be adjusted to allow motorists to stop in the Antelope Valley for supplies or for an overnight stay. Currently, motorists may be unaware that services are available in the Walker area.

Caltrans conducted separate workshops on road and traffic-related issues within Mono County.

COMMUNITY VISIONING

Residents of the Antelope Valley enjoy the rural feel and character of their communities. As part of the workshop planning process, residents described qualities of their community that they like. These qualities were transcribed onto a list. These “positive qualities” are presented in the following table. After noting the qualities they liked, residents were given the opportunity to place up to five “dots” on the board next to the qualities they deemed to be the most important. The five qualities deemed most important were the following:

- The rural environment rather than a suburban or urban form.
- The natural environment, rich with wildlife.
- There is not a four-lane highway running through the Valley and 395 is a scenic byway.
- Quality paramedics/fire department community services within Antelope Valley.
- The “family atmosphere” – the Valley is a good place to raise children.

ASSETS/LIKES

Score	Category
26	Rural Environment – not suburbia, not city. “Isolation” from California.
15	Environment – nature. Beauty and resources; green pastures, cows, 100 year old trees. Being close to wildlife.
13	Do Not Have a Four-lane Highway – 395 is scenic byway
12	“Family” Atmosphere – good place to raise children

Score	Category
12	Paramedics/Fire Department Community Services – far from Mammoth, disconnected
8	Large Lots – neighbors close, but not <u>too</u> close.
7	Clear Skies , no light pollution. <i>Can see stars.</i>
5	Safety – little or no crime
5	Self-reliant People – independence (no government)
4	Fresh Drinking Water
4	Services and Amenities are Close Enough – also recreation
3	Internet Access/technology is available to valley
2	AVIS 1610 AM – Information system radio
2	Adult Education Opportunity
2	“35 Miles from a Traffic Light” – preserve rural character
2	No Noise Pollution – quiet
2	Lake and River
2	Sense of Community – good neighbors, entire valley
2	Clean Air , not polluted
1	Native American Presence
1	Snow in Winter – weather changes all four seasons

Score	Category
1	Having the Marines Nearby
	Inclusive, welcoming "become a local" quickly.
	Local Supervisor – concern for community
	Fishing/Recreation
	Volunteer Organizations/Community Groups – volunteer, helpful attitude, dial-a-ride, medical escort

Likewise, residents identified local downfalls – areas in need of change. These "dislikes" or "areas for improvement" serve as the basis for community development goals:

- The Caltrans "chains required" sign keeps potential tourists away.
- Communication problems with government agencies as well as within the valley hamper cooperative improvement efforts.
- Limited opportunities for youth (jobs, recreation, etc.) mean that Bridgeport is an aging community that may not be capable of supporting a full array of community functions in the future, such as volunteer fire protection.
- Isolation from Mono County and County seat (Bridgeport) as well as the rest of California, limits the area's ability to solve problems quickly.
- No community "center" or focus for town makes it difficult to achieve a strong sense of shared community purpose.

Other areas for improvement include, in priority order:

DISLIKES/LIABILITIES

Score	Category
14	Caltrans signs turn people away – put the sign at end of valley before the canyon?
14	Communication, misinformation – much from government agencies. Lack of communication mechanism. ("Maybe we need a good reporter?")
11	Isolation from Mono County and County seat (Bridgeport). "Emphasis on southern Mono County." Feeling "No Mo" – taking a backseat to other communities. Everything is spreading to Mammoth.

Score	Category
10	Isolation from State of California – frustration dealing with Sacramento and the rest services in Bishop. "What's the government doing?"
9	No community "center". Center of town? No "town" ("Am I in a town?" "Walker-Coleville-Topaz").
8	Speed of traffic on highway slows folks down. Traffic calming?
8	No newspaper ("Only school newspaper")
8	Nothing for youth (tools: website, "trespassing," kayak, get the word out), recreational activities, programs, facilities. Organized athletics in schools? Not enough youth to warrant activities: no swimming pool, skating park.
6	No jobs for young people, for all, better/need benefits, for Native Americans
5	Separate infrastructure – Telephone services connect with Nevada, not Mono and California.
1	Dwindling campsites/tourist base – deer hunting/flood-fishing
1	Lack of daycare – preschool
1	A lack of diverse adult education courses
1	Everything is spreading to Mammoth.
1	Distance to medical services
	Native American community isn't recognized as a tribe

VISIONS

Examining the above charts, the following community visions emerge as the most important:

- Maintain the existing community services and recreation opportunities
- Keep the rural environment by maintaining large lots and keeping the rural design of the community.
- Support and maintain the natural environment, resources, wildlife and clean air, water, etc.
- Maintain the "family" atmosphere. Keep this community a good place to raise children.
- Seek new employment opportunities for young people and adults.
- Find new recreational opportunities for youth.
- Develop a sense of "town" — that this is a community.
- Determine new opportunities for bolstering the economic base of the Valley.

GOALS AND POLICIES

Drawing from the comments received at the workshops, the following goals, objectives and policies are recommended as a framework for the process of updating the Countywide Plan. General Plan policies and actions will be developed once further consensus is attained on specific suggestions.

Goal 1. Maintain and enhance the existing quality of life within the community with regard to community services and recreational opportunities.

Objective A. Maintain existing health and safety services within the Antelope Valley

- Policy 1. Ensure continued services of paramedics and the fire department within Antelope Valley.
- Policy 2. Provide educational, mentoring and job opportunities to attract and retain younger residents of the Antelope Valley.
- Policy 3. Provide support for the partnership with the Toiyabe Indian Health Project medical services clinic.

Objective B. Maintain the “family” atmosphere, keeping the communities of the Antelope Valley a good place to raise children.

- Policy 1. Find new recreational opportunities for youth, such as year-round youth center and programs, a skateboard park and/or a public swimming pool.
- Policy 2. Seek new employment opportunities for young people.
- Policy 3. Encourage new development that is welcoming for families.

Objective C Preserve the rural environment

- Policy 1. Maintain large lots and keeping the rural design of the community.
- Policy 2. Cluster development in existing communities to preserve expanses of open space.
- Policy 4. Promote controlled growth.

Objective D. Preserve the natural environment.

- Policy 1. Work with the BLM and Forest Service to ensure protection of the land while encouraging new opportunities for recreational uses.
- Action: Open new channels of communication with the BLM and Forest Service by working more closely with representatives and knowing who to contact as the first line of communication for land use and recreation decisions.
- Policy 2. Support policies that maintain the natural environment, resources, wildlife and clean air, water, etc.

Goal 2. Preserve and enhance community character through transportation infrastructure and information improvements.

Objective A. Optimize transportation information for visitors

Goal 3. Develop a sense of "town" — that this is a community.

Goal 4. Expand and strengthen the tourist economy by stimulating recreational facilities and retaining a diversity of businesses, while protecting scenic and natural resources.

Objective A: The community should evaluate means to expand the tourist base by developing facilities to encourage visitation.

Policy: Evaluate the development of facilities for special events.

Action: Plan, host and promote special events and festivals in the Antelope Valley. (Deer Hunter BBQ, Opening of fishing season)

Action: Develop new recreational opportunities. Examples include a catch basin/RV Park (require sewage treatment) on the land by the river. This land has recently been acquired. This will create opportunities for jobs and businesses.

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS FROM THE WORKSHOPS

The following sections contain other important ideas that were suggested at the three public workshops.

Issues for discussion: BLM, National Forest Service, Caltrans

- Publish the land maps?
- Executive Order ~~is~~ No floodplain development where practical alternatives exist.
- Missing potential for tax income from campers, recreational users, etc.

Community Qualities to Hold Onto

- Maintain Community Services and recreation opportunities.
- Keep rural environment: Don't become suburbia and keep large lots.
- Support and maintain the natural environment, resources, wildlife and clean air, water, etc.
- Maintain the "family" atmosphere. Keep this community a good place to raise children.

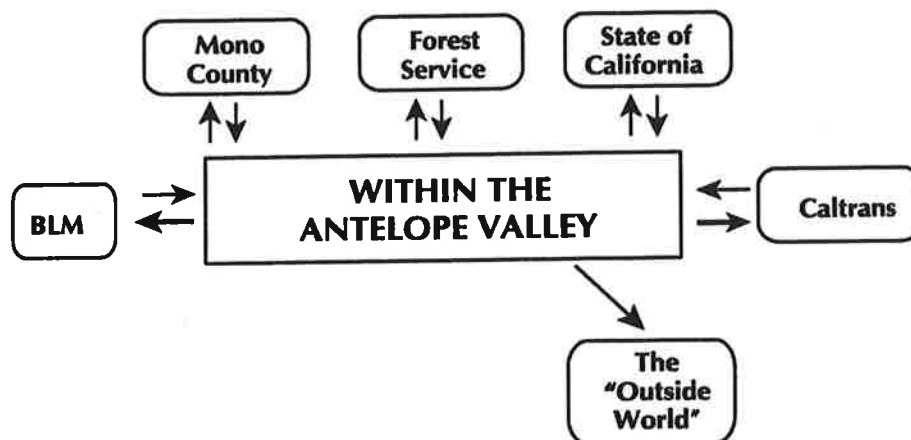
COMMUNITY QUALITIES REQUIRING FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

- Lack of jobs?
- Lack of recreational opportunities for youth?
- Where is the "town"?
- Bolster the economic base
- What to do about 395?

Improving Communication

With government entities

- State
- County
- Caltrans
- BLM
- Forest Service



With the outside World

- Website for public info:
www.walkerca.com
www.colevilleca.com
linked to other major websites
- Signs and banners on a chain link fence
- Community sign board "Welcome to Walker-Coleville-Topaz"
- Brochure/publication
- Electronic kiosk – Visitor centers, Bishop, 395

- Make use of the new AVIS radio station to describe the opportunities available in the Valley.
- Caltrans should move "The Sign", CMS
- CURES map on 395: get listed
- Rename Walker River Valley? There are too many Antelope Valleys. Maybe even rename the town of Walker to Walker River

Within the Community

- Send out school newsletter through entire community via bulk mail (school willing to take lead, including printing information from other agencies)
- AVIS as community bulletin board (AM radio)
- HFU-TV
- Internet mailing list
- County as a conduit for information
- Review-Herald (Mammoth – too far?)
- Regular joint agency public meeting – share costs. Turn minutes into newsletter.

ANTELOPE VALLEY ACTIONS

- Hold Special Events/Festivals
 - Deer Hunter BBQ
 - Opening of fishing season
- Develop facilities for events and widen the highway to allow for special events in the road:
- Develop a catch basin/RV Park (require sewage treatment) on the land by the river. This land has recently been acquired. This will create opportunities for
 - jobs
 - businesses

In Mountain Gate area? RV/Camping
Can operations be contracted out?
Also use for the catch basin/RV area for events
- Controlled growth
- Keep Caltrans sign for road conditions – not so far up. Also "Chains Required signs"
- Don't want to keep people away from here
- Four lanes in central area, similar to Bridgeport?
- Up-to-date school standards
- Maintain, modernize high school facility; keep up improvements, visual

- Safer or new highway bridge – children, bikes, pedestrians

Center of Town

- Summertime youth center and programs – year-round
- Community Center – Larger

Lack of Jobs/Economics

- don't pay enough
- sales tax too high
- agriculture
- reliance on tourists
- Internet-based jobs, telecommute market
- communication

Recreation for Youth

- Skateboard park
- Summertime youth sports
- Swimming pool – public