



# Contract with the Community

## *An Economic Policy Blueprint for Eastern Madera County District 5*

The Contract with the Community is the Economic Policy Blueprint for Eastern Madera County. This contract is presented to preserve the mountain way of life, and to give a local voice to the unique communities throughout Eastern Madera County. It is not presented to completely change the way of life in the mountains, but rather—to simply preserve the uniqueness as we grow.

### **CITIZENS ADVISORY GROUP**

A primary and overriding principle in my efforts will be citizen input. To accomplish that, I will create a large Citizens Advisory Group to meet monthly initially. Membership will come from any number of existing community groups and include nonprofits and religious organizations. The goal will be to have more people be involved with community issues. I will lean on this group for ideas and comments of pending proposals throughout the entire process.

### **WHAT IS A GENERAL PLAN?**

Within my first two years as your county supervisor, I will move to have the General Plan updated by the Planning Department. The original General Plan is over 20 years old and the last time it was amended was 2015.

California law requires that each county and city develop and adopt a General Plan. The General Plan is a statement of development policies and includes diagrams and text setting forth objectives, principles, standards, and plan proposals. It is a comprehensive long-term plan for the physical development of the county or city. In this sense, it is a "blueprint" for development.

The plan must contain seven (7) state-mandated elements and may contain additional elements that the legislative body of the county or city wishes to adopt. The seven mandated elements are: Land Use, Open Space, Conservation, Housing, Circulation, Noise, and Safety. The General Plan may be adopted in any form deemed appropriate or convenient by the legislative body of the county or city, including the combining of elements. The Madera County General Plan consists of the seven mandated elements.

By law, the legislative body of the county or city can amend any mandatory element of the General Plan only four (4) times a year. Accordingly, Planning staff schedules four "windows" per year to consider amendments to the General Plan. By statute, the General Plan is required to be updated "periodically." Some cities and counties update their General Plans as often as every 5 years, while others update in portions over time.



The housing element is the only portion of the general plan that is on a mandated update schedule of 4, 5, or 8 years, as listed by the Housing and Community Development agency (HCD).

**AREA PLANS**

Plan Documents	<a href="#">General Plan</a>	<a href="#">Ahwahnee Area Plan</a>	<a href="#">Ahwahnee/ Nipinnawasee Area Plan</a>	<a href="#">Coarsegold Area Plan</a>	<a href="#">North Fork/ South Fork Area Plan</a>	<a href="#">Oakhurst Area Plan</a>	<a href="#">O'Neals Area Plan</a>	<a href="#">Raymond Area Plan</a>	<a href="#">Rio Mesa Area Plan</a>
Last Amendment	2015	1998	1998	2006	2003	2003	1980	2009	1995

Area Plans drill down into the General Plan and are the mechanisms that give true local control to communities. They provide a legally strong voice to the Board of Supervisors and the Planning Department.

**The nine Area Plans of District 5, Eastern Madera County are—on average—24 years old.**

In my first two years as your county supervisor, I will work to reconstitute the committees to update each of the Area Plans in District 5.

**Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team**

The Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team is a group of local people and, typically, national multidisciplinary experts who volunteer to identify ways to encourage desirable change in communities. In order to preserve the history and the uniqueness of our mountain communities, we need to have a basic plan that can be followed as the community develops. It lays out the street designs, sidewalks, architecture, sitting areas, and everything that is needed to retain the historic communities that surround us.

**Report for Oakhurst**

A subject analysis for Oakhurst was completed April 29 — May 1, 1994.

As your county Supervisor, I will pursue adopting this report and encourage North Fork and Coarsegold to assemble a Planning and Beautification Committee to add similar plans to the AREA PLAN.

**HOUSING DEVELOPMENT**

**Standard rooftop permits issued**

I will seek policies that streamline the permitting process, reduce fees, and create interagency cooperation to enable construction starts as soon as possible after permit issue. Target time is a 30-day permit process for new construction, with maximum 30-day processes for utilities connections.



### **Affordable Housing—Unsubsidized**

We will identify suitable lots to be placed into an affordable housing program. These lots will undergo a low-cost lot splitting process to create buildable pads for homes at a minimum of one acre per pad. We will work with local contractors and a housing manufacturer to build starter homes of 1,000 to 1,100 ft.<sup>2</sup> with a one-car detached garage.

### **Subsidized Housing**

We will work with local organizations that are familiar with state and federal grant programs and HUD programs for subsidized workforce housing to build housing projects in suitable areas.

### **Senior Living**

Using the model of the California Grandmother's Village in Coarsegold, we need to establish senior living in all local communities. These can be small, planned developments of modest homes for seniors for when they decide to sell their larger homes and downsize, but do not want to leave this area.

### **Short-Term Vacation Rentals**

The County has failed to control this issue to a point that we have over 1,500 homes being rented out for less than 30 days. This is a big number in a small community that has affected available affordable housing and limited the ability for workers to live in our community. I want to have an ad-hoc committee representing the areas with Area Plans. We will work with County Counsel, to research and recommend what can be done to lessen the impact on our neighbors and our community while protecting property owners' rights.

### **Bed-and-Breakfast Business**

These short-term rentals are a well-defined category that may serve food and have on site management, usually the property owner. These businesses usually are well managed and do not impact the community. A special permit is required. These businesses are an important part of the community, as they allow local employment and, in some cases, are the only income to the resident owner.

### **Long-Term Rentals**

There is a shortage in our community and that shortage has driven up rental rates. I want to make sure renters take advantage of all resources available to them to help pay the cost. Over time I hope some of the short-term rentals become long-term rentals. We need more property owners to be willing to rent their property. I want to work with them to make sure they see renting is a valuable asset.



## **FIRE PROTECTION**

As most people in mountain communities throughout the state know, fire insurance premiums have escalated drastically, and our burgeoning fuel loads continue to grow. The perfect storm is building, primarily in the mountain communities. We must address all the risk factors insurance companies use to assess premiums for fire insurance coverage.

Certainly, two-road two lane ingress and egress in all communities for emergency vehicles and public evacuation must be considered in the reassessment of safety concerns in our General and Area Plans.

The County has done some; however, we can do so much more, primarily in the education of East Madera County residents. I would like to see a periodic mail campaign that educates every property owner on the requirements set by Cal Fire, including the dates in which these requirements are required and expected to be accomplished. In this mail piece, a booklet informing the property owners of all resources, agency phone numbers, volunteer groups, evacuation routes, and animal evacuation facilities available during a fire. I believe Firewise is doing a good job, but overall, the county can do a better job in cooperation with Firewise.

The guiding principle is that public safety, which includes fire protection, is a top priority, and has been neglected in recent years.

### **Fire protection recovery plans**

Fire protection in Eastern Madera County has dwindled disproportionately in the last few years, especially with continually reduced staffing. Although it's a great alliance with trained and skilled personnel, Cal Fire's focus is on open- and forestland fires in State Responsibility Areas, and not specifically structure firefighting.

We need a countywide detailed assessment of the county's fire protection, rescue, and recovery plans, with careful attention given to the foothills and mountain areas of Eastern Madera County. These evaluations should include the same elements as covered by the ISO rating system.

Further, for Madera County I will utilize the proven principles and guidelines used in the Tahoe Strategic Plan and adapt these to Madera County. The Tahoe plan saved the community this year as a fire was stopped at the boundary.

<https://tahoefire.org/attachments/article/37/Strategic%20Plan%202019-20%20Final.pdf>



### **Fuel reduction plans**—synergistic interagency and logging planning

Once again, leveraging my relationship and full endorsement of Congressman Tom McClintock, I will apply his influence to bring a restoration act bill for Eastern Madera County. I fully believe that the federal government has a responsibility in the scenic corridor to Yosemite National Park.

<https://mcclintock.house.gov/newsroom/press-releases/tahoe-restoration-act-of-2015-passes-house-natural-resources-committee>

### **Additional Resources**

Very clearly, our objectives involve careful consideration of several elements:

- Increased department staffing to meet current standards which are in general 4 firefighters
- Increased base pay for fulltime firefighters
- Increased and upgraded firefighting vehicles and equipment to meet the needs of multi-story buildings
- Fully staffed stations countywide, in order of priority
- Upgrade fire stations to house staff 24/7
- Expand our ambulance service system to facilitate lower response times.
- Require County staff to review and expose land entitlements that if implemented or develop will impact fire safety and neighborhood continuity.

Fire service standards can be found in NFPA 1710 at [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org). This is a great resource for more specific information.

### **TOURISM POLICY PLAN**

We will work with the Yosemite Sierra Visitors Bureau to enhance the tourism business in particular along Highway 41. Yosemite National Park, a federal park, is a destination attracting huge number of visitors and bringing in over \$700 million annually. While it contributes a substantial portion of increased traffic on Highway 41, we will seek additional funding from the federal government to widen Highway 41, which is so designated as a scenic corridor. In cooperation with Madera County and Caltrans, Highway 41 can be widened to a four-lane road. We can also use the Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team beautification plan to transform Oakhurst into an attractive destination location for vibrant tourism.



- We must work with the Department of Forestry to enhance the recreational use of our National Forest lands.
- Collaborating with Visitor Centers, we will strive to create more community events during the 14-week tourism window of Bass Lake and Oakhurst.
- We will work to develop more venues and attractions for visitors using tour companies and bus operators, so that Oakhurst is attractive to travelers from Fresno and throughout our state and the entire country.
- The Bass Lake area can be improved, with consideration for bicycle routes, bicycle and electric scooter rentals, a jogging path, expanded and improved hiking trails, and many other family-oriented activities surrounding the lake.

### **COMMERCIAL POLICY PLAN**

Several viable Eastern Madera County development opportunities are within reach and warrant exploration. They include:

- Attract a larger equipment rental facility for tractors and all other large equipment to meet area needs.
- Continue to work on creating improved Internet service for the area, including higher speeds and capacity in expanded service areas. Such service would be attractive for Call Centers, for example.
- Support a meat processing facility in Coarsegold that would cater to the local cattle owners and also facilitate animal harvesting for local hunters.
- Attracting a smaller version of a Bass Pro Shop to locate in North Fork, complete with overnight RV parking and a vehicle service facility to aid tourists with mountain destinations. This would help to bring more local commerce to North Fork and boost local employment.

Several ideas for family activities are on the table such as:

- A fun center, possibly including a demolition derby and Grand Prix go-kart racetrack for kids, with a food court
- Establishing mountaineering days and other events for our locale
- Provide tours of our local historic areas



All of this must be done and adhere to the General Plan Policy. For example, Scenic Routes 1.1.3 on page 23 that calls for enhancing scenic corridors, etc. Commercial Policy Plan needs a theme and to articulate suggestions to make our communities a destination instead of a shopping boulevard in a big city, such as Blackstone Ave.

The overall objective is to establish more opportunities for community events to occur during tourism season and to create a wider range of attractions for groups, such as tourism buses destined for Oakhurst and Bass Lake as a tourist destination, in addition to a launching point into Yosemite National Park.

## **INDUSTRIAL POLICY PLAN**

### **UTILITIES**

#### **Increase capital investments in Water and Sewer**

Until we make managed capital investments in the sewer systems and water systems, we will not have the capacity to expand as a community, in terms of housing and economic growth.

Capital investments in water can be best allocated by directing the county attorneys to research the purchase of water from Eastman Lake, Hensley Lake, and Bass Lake.

#### **Underground Water Supply and Storage**

We'll seek the services of a hydrologist and geologist to map the entire area of fracture systems to help us provide a forecast of how much water is available. We'll obtain a comprehensive report, by hiring graduate students to provide the research.

We should explore resurrecting the Temperance Flat Dam reservoir project as a water supply reservoir to ensure sustained supply for East Madera County.

<https://a31.asmdc.org/temperance-flat-dam-reservoir>

Two other water projects have been proposed, and engineering studies completed, to help bring water to Eastern Madera County in particular, with contributions to Madera County as a whole.

- [\*\*SURFACE STORAGE DELIVERY SYSTEM STUDY\*\*](#)  
18 June, 2003  
Prepared by K. Kretzinger
- [\*\*RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING FINDINGS of OAKHURST BASIN GROUNDWATER STUDY\*\*](#)  
Prepared by David Hopelain, PhD



In addition, we must revisit the Redinger Project and explore fully all possible avenues of surface water runoff collection in Eastern Madera County.

### **Sewage Management and Expansion**

We must develop a long-range comprehensive plan.

In order to manage growth in Eastern Madera County, we must have a comprehensive, long-range plan for sewage management and treatment. For that, we must develop the infrastructure by making capital investments in the collection systems and treatment plants, including transfer and lift stations. We can no longer continue to add more septic systems that percolate our waste into the fracture systems beneath us without risking the poisoning of our water.

The long-range plan will require hiring an engineering firm to create an overall plan capable of serving our existing populations in the short term, and to predict stage two and three buildouts based on projected population growth.

Our treatment plants must process all wastewater to a level-two treatment so that the water can be used for firefighting, agricultural watering, vegetation watering, construction dust control, and alfalfa growing industry. We will undertake to foster gray water programs.

There is the solid waste from the sewer treatment plant that can be easily used in a large composting facility that would create sellable compost for our local farms and fields to grow a variety of products. These are not new concepts; they already exist.

### **MEDICAL SERVICES DEVELOPMENT**

We need medical service to be closer to our community. I will work to bring a medical plaza near Hwy. 41 and Rd. 200, that would include urgent care services, imaging services, outpatient surgical care, and medical offices.

### **SUMMARY**

None of these ideas can take shape until we have a solid General Plan and Area Plans for carefully managed growth, consistent with community desires and companion development that will retain the characteristic of the historic town of Oakhurst and surrounding communities. The Area Plan should consider these and related factors in its design forecast.