

MEMORANDUM

TO: Hailey Lang, Deputy Director of Planning, County of Siskiyou

FROM: Ryan Lester, Assistant Project Manager

CC: Rick Dean, Community Development Director, County of Siskiyou
Brent Gibbons, Project Manager

DATE: October 31, 2023

RE: Project Status Update #1

This memo provides a summary of recent events and work completed on the Siskiyou County General Plan Update.

Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors Joint Study Session – August 29, 2023

On August 29, 2023, the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission held a joint study session to kick off the General Plan Update. During the meeting the consultants (Mintier Harnish and Rincon Consultants) provided a presentation summarizing general plans and State requirements, the General Plan Update process, and the community engagement program. Following the presentation and public comment, the Board and Commission facilitated a discussion about the General Plan and expectations for the consultant team. The consultant team has provided notes from the meeting, which are attached to this memo.

Background Report Preparation

The consultant team is currently preparing the General Plan Background Report. The Background Report provides a snapshot in time of existing conditions in the county to provide decision-makers, the public, and public agencies with context for making policy decisions. The Background Report will also serve as the “Environmental Setting” section of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prepared for the General Plan.

The Background Report provides a detailed description and evaluation of a range of topics typically found within the General Plan. All topics are discussed as they pertain to the jurisdictional boundaries within the purview of the County. The Background Report will include the following chapters:

- Land Use
- Population, Employment, and Housing
- Economic and Market Analysis
- Circulation and Transportation
- Biological Resources

- Cultural Resources
- Public Facilities, Services, and Infrastructure
- Safety and Hazards (including Geology, Noise, and Air Quality)
- Hydrology and Water Quality

The Background Report is the first major deliverable in the General Plan Update. The Administrative Draft Background Report is scheduled to be delivered to the County for review in early January 2024. Following staff review, the consultants will revise each chapter in response to staff comments and prepare the Public Review Draft Background Report, currently scheduled for release in March 2024.

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting #1

In coordination with County staff, the consultants are working to form a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) consisting of members from County departments and qualified individuals from agencies as appointed by the Planning Director. The purpose of the TAC is to provide technical input and review of administrative draft documents throughout the General Plan Update. The consultant team and County staff will facilitate TAC meetings during four Phases in the Update process, including the Existing Conditions Background Report; Vision and Guiding Principles; General Plan; and Draft Environmental Impact Report. The first TAC meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 6, 2023.

Project Website – Siskiyou2050.com

For more information on the General Plan Update, please visit siskiyou2050.com. The Project website provides an overview of general plans, information about the Siskiyou County General Plan Update process, links to online resources, and FAQs. Additionally, the consultant team has posted the first Project newsletter and will continue to post all deliverables as they are produced.



Siskiyou County General Plan

Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors Joint Study Session

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Attachment A

Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors Joint Study Session, August 9, 2023

Meeting Notes by Topic

Issues and Opportunities

- One size fits all is not right for Siskiyou. There are unique issues and opportunities here.
- Wildfires are a major concern; State and Federal lands need to be managed.
- Geography, demographics, and hydrology are all critical issues. This is a very diverse county.
- Housing is needed for residents experiencing homelessness, as well as low income and multifamily households. Adequate infrastructure is an issue for new housing.
- Illegal cannabis grows are an issue in parts of the county.
- Some areas get subdivided, but never built. People don't always understand water and utility connections, capacity, and cost when subdividing.
- Traffic on I-5 and other highways present opportunities for economic development. The General Plan should identify opportunities to capture spending of those passing through the county. Industrial zoning is lacking; expansion of industrial zones presents potential opportunities, but issues as well.
- There is not a lot of optimism amongst young people in the county. The General Plan should consider the potential future for young people and plan accordingly. Streamlining zoning to attract businesses can help keep young people here and employed.
- Some areas lack viable internet and television, which restricts business and hinders development.

Scope of Project:

- It would be helpful for the Consultants to outline State requirements so that the Board of Supervisors and public understand the minimum thresholds for compliance.
- Clear definitions need to be presented (i.e., "healthy communities"). The community has their own thoughts that may differ with the definitions used by the State.
- Does the Safety Element incorporate or analyze what the State and Federal government is doing on their lands? Is the Consultant Team meeting with lumber companies to discuss issues and opportunities? How can we ensure that Federal or State-owned land is coordinated with (or adheres) to the County General Plan. State and Federal agencies need to manage correctly and consistently with the County's plan.
- What about unincorporated areas just outside cities? How do we account for these in the General Plan if they are in the sphere of influence of another jurisdiction?
- Ordinances may have been adopted that are not what is best for the County. For instance, composting toilets were outlawed, but are more environmentally sensitive, so the County removed/amended the ordinance. The Plan should identify these types of conflicts/constraints/issues.
- Do county general plan's deal with groundwater GSA? (*response: general plans need to be coordinated with groundwater management plans*).
- Water storage is an issue. Will the plan include a benchmark based on existing conditions?
- The Plan should consider analyzing fuel densities in the existing conditions analyses.
- The Plan could identify areas with potential for rezoning as well as nonconforming uses.



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- The Plan could also identify parcels that have no water or bad soil and could plan appropriately for these properties.
- Evacuation route planning is needed.

Goals for the Project:

- Quality of life is critical. Siskiyou is not a high growth county. The population is aging.
- The General Plan needs to have longevity and needs to anticipate changing State law.
- Projects in south county are often litigated. The General Plan should mitigate this to the extent possible.
- It will be important to provide specificity and objectivity in the plan to avoid subjective criteria that can be litigated. Flexibility is key as well.
- There is a need for industrial development, but the location of industrial zones is important. Permitting should be streamlined for industrial uses, however planning needs to reduce potential for boom-and-bust cycles.
- The General Plan should streamline what we have currently. Encourage development, upgrades, rehab/redevelopment, property rights. Address constraints in the process.

Engagement:

- Following meetings with the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, the Consultants should summarize input received to let the County and public know what we heard.
- Public input is crucial.
- Outreach is among the biggest concerns. No local radio, news, or newspaper. Engagement will have to be creative and local. Information should be disseminated through local groups, outlets, and agencies in both digital and hardcopy.

Stakeholders:

- Cities are stakeholders and planning should be coordinated with them.
- AB 52: consider Shasta tribe and Modoc tribe. They are key stakeholders in the county. Incorporate these groups in public engagement.
- Community Service Districts and the economic council are key stakeholders that should be part of the process as well.
- Keeping the public at the center of the effort will be critical and reduce the influence of voices from those outside the county. Litigants are often not residents of the county.

Air Quality

- Air quality impacts are driven by public lands outside the county's control.
- Climate change adaptation. How to reduce GHG emissions and identify communities at risk? Rural counties have unique conditions and concerns.
- VMT. When counties establish a VMT baseline, does the State assist with funding or labor with plan or assessment? Data is needed that is accurate.
- The lasting impacts of fires are a big part of GHG emissions in the county. However, GHG is modeled based on impacts of the buildout of the General Plan land uses, not forest lands. This conflict is an issue when trying to establish a baseline for existing conditions.



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- Benchmarks should be realistic and feasible. Air quality is dictated more by fires than by cars, for instance, so there is little the County can do to mitigate the impacts.
- The Consultants should look at different data sources related to air quality models for something more appropriate for Siskiyou.
- Air quality is a huge issue here. Vehicular emissions are just a small part.

Water

- Everything will be connected to water use. There is concern that people may lose water rights. If properties lose Williamson Act protections, tax bills are affected.
- How do we protect agricultural uses, which are the biggest taxpayers in the county (as well as logging)? How do we keep agriculture uses viable with changing regulations that make agriculture less profitable?
- Water quality and water quantity will drive the General Plan land use effort. There are competing interests and requirements between use types and agricultural uses aren't favored.
- Zoning and water. Groundwater management plans are being prepared for some areas of the county. How will SGMA be incorporated with zoning changes? There is a prohibition on wells in some places. Residential is exempt, but we can't plan for residential in these areas based on exclusion if there is no access to water.
- Water is a big issue. Enforcement can be an issue.

Wildfires and flooding

- How will new State requirements be incorporated into the General Plan? Adhering to State requirements can be expensive and a constraint to development in the county. Fuel reduction can be expensive, for instance.
- Districts are inundated with timber. The Plan should identify the miles of open non-paved road that have been put in to address or fight fires. It should also provide maps that identify decommissioned roads and the correlation between new roads and those previously decommissioned to illustrate the impacts of decommissioning roadways.
- Insurance costs are high. People are losing their insurance too. Home hardening needs to be incorporated into the Plan to help lower insurance rates or manage them, to the extent possible.