

MEADOW VISTA COMMUNITY PLAN

Adopted by the Board of Supervisors
May 21, 1996

Meadow Vista - preserving the best of the Sierra Foothills

VISION STATEMENT

Meadow Vista is located in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. The community rests in a flat meadowland surrounded by forested ridges and bisected by streams and waterways. These particular geographic characteristics have helped create a unique community. The people who have inhabited this area, beginning with the Nissenan and Maidu peoples, have always valued its natural resources and beautiful environment. The current inhabitants, both recent arrivals and those whose families have lived here for generations, continue to treasure Meadow Vista's natural setting, valuing its wildlife, natural landforms, and native vegetation, such as heritage oaks, sugar pines, and mixed forests.

This protected enclave, with its long tradition of people living in harmonious relationship with the land, has generated both an individual spirit and a community interdependence, where individuals freely come together to seek the common good. This community spirit, together with the natural features, has fostered a climate of vigilance and stewardship. As the community continues to develop, with new homes, new businesses, and improved roads, the existing character of the community must be retained and even enhanced wherever possible.

Meadow Vista will not have the population to support large new commercial enterprises; however, the commercial area will continue to provide for the daily needs of the residents. Expanded personal services, small retail stores, professional offices, and similar uses can be expected to be developed within the downtown, adding to the small town or village character of this area. Future growth in Meadow Vista must demonstrate an awareness of and consistency with this vision.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

May, 1996

	<u>Page</u>
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	
I. PURPOSE OF COMMUNITY PLAN	1
II. DESCRIPTION OF THE PLAN AREA	1
III. THE PLANNING PROCESS	3
1. <u>Previous Planning Efforts</u>	3
2. <u>Current Planning Process</u>	4
IV. THE PLAN ASSUMPTIONS	6
V. THE RELATIONSHIP TO PLACER COUNTY GENERAL PLAN	6
VI. COMMUNITY SURVEY	7
VII. VISION STATEMENT	8
<u>SECTION 1: LAND USE</u>	
I. PURPOSE	9
II. GOALS, POLICIES, AND IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS	9
III. DISCUSSION	20
1. <u>Holding Capacity</u>	20
2. <u>Land Use Designations</u>	20
3. <u>Economic Development</u>	25
<u>SECTION 2: COMMUNITY DESIGN</u>	
I. PURPOSE	26
II. GOALS, POLICIES, AND IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS	26
III. DISCUSSION	31
1. <u>Design Guidelines</u>	31
2. <u>Scenic Corridors</u>	34
<u>SECTION 3: POPULATION AND HOUSING</u>	
I. PURPOSE	35
II. GOALS, POLICIES, AND IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS	35
III. DISCUSSION	39

1.	<u>Population</u>	39
1.1	Historical Growth	39
2.	<u>Housing</u>	39
2.1	Existing Condition	39
2.2	Housing Need	40
2.3	Affordable Housing	40

SECTION 4: TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

I.	PURPOSE	42
II.	GOALS, POLICIES, AND IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS	42
III.	DISCUSSION	46
1.	<u>Existing Transportation System</u>	46
1.1	Streets and Highways	46
1.2	Existing Roadway Conditions	47
1.3	Public Transportation	48
1.4	Park 'n Ride Lots	48
1.5	Bikeways	48
2.	<u>Future Transportation Systems</u>	49
2.1	Roadways	49
2.2	Bikeways	53
2.3	Road Adjacent Trails	53
2.4	Public Transit	54
2.5	Capital Improvement Program	54
2.6	Capital Improvement Funding	54

SECTION 5: PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

I.	PURPOSE	58
II.	GOALS, POLICIES, AND IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS	58
III.	DISCUSSION	73
1.	<u>Water Supply</u>	73
2.	<u>Sewage Disposal</u>	75
2.1	Alternative 1 - Community Leachfield	75
2.2	Alternative 2 - Alternative Sewage Systems	75
2.3	Alternative 3 - Connection to SMD #1 via the Winchester Low Pressure Sewer System	75
3.	<u>Stormwater Drainage</u>	78
4.	<u>Flood Protection</u>	78

5.	<u>Solid Waste</u>	78
	5.1 Landfill	78
	5.2 Transfer Station	79
6.	<u>Public Protection</u>	79
7.	<u>Fire Protection</u>	79
8.	<u>Medical Services</u>	79
9.	<u>Public Education</u>	80
10.	<u>Utilities</u>	80
	10.1 Electric and Magnetic Fields (EMF), Electric Utilities . . .	80
11.	<u>Other Public Services</u>	80

SECTION 6: RECREATION

I.	PURPOSE	81
II.	GOALS, POLICIES, AND IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS	81
III.	DISCUSSION	84
	1. <u>Existing Park & Recreation Facilities</u>	84
	1.1 Regional Parks	84
	1.2 Local Parks	84
	1.3 Golf Courses	85
	2. <u>Potential Future Park and Recreation Facilities</u>	85
	2.1 Lake Combie	85
	2.2 Meadow Vista Trail Staging Area	86
	2.3 Sierra Hills School	86
	2.4 Neighborhood Park in Winchester Planning Unit	86
	Development	

SECTION 7: TRAILS

I.	PURPOSE	87
II.	GOALS, POLICIES, AND IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS	87
III.	DISCUSSION	89
	1. <u>Trails</u>	89

SECTION 8: CULTURAL RESOURCES

I.	PURPOSE	94
II.	GOALS, POLICIES, AND IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS	94
III.	DISCUSSION	97
	1. <u>Prehistory</u>	97
	2. <u>History</u>	98

3.	<u>Previous Cultural Resource Surveys in the Plan Area</u>	98
3.1	Prehistoric Archeological Resources	98
3.2	Historic Resources	98
3.3	Previous Field Surveys	99
4.	<u>Recommendations</u>	99

SECTION 9: NATURAL RESOURCES

I.	PURPOSE	100
II.	GOALS, POLICIES, AND IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS	100
III.	DISCUSSION	115
1.	<u>Vegetation</u>	115
1.1	Sensitive Natural Communities & Wildlife Habitats	115
1.2	Common Natural Communities	118
2.	<u>Water Resources</u>	118
3.	<u>Special-Status Plant and Wildlife Species</u>	118
3.1	Special-Status Plants	118
3.2	Special-Status Wildlife	119
4.	<u>Open Space</u>	119
4.1	Preservation of Natural Resources	119
4.2	Management and Production of Resources	120
4.3	Outdoor Recreation	120
4.4	Public Health and Safety	120
5.	<u>Soils</u>	120
5.1	Soil Survey	120
5.2	Erosion	120
6.	<u>Geology</u>	120
6.1	Metamorphic Rocks	120
6.2	Granitic Rocks	121
6.3	Slope	121
7.	<u>Air Quality</u>	121

SECTION 10: IMPLEMENTATION

1.	<u>Summary</u>	123
2.	<u>Zoning and Land Use Regulations</u>	125
3.	<u>Relationship to the Placer County General Plan and Related Functional Plans</u>	125
3.1	Placer County Transportation Plan	126

3.2 Solid Waste Management Plan	126
3.3 Air Quality Attainment Plan (1991-94)	126
3.4 Hazardous Waste Management Plan	126

SECTION 11: APPENDICES

1. Environmental Impact/Background Report
2. Meadow Vista Community Plan Survey
3. A Homeowner's Guide to Defensible Space and a Healthy Forest
4. Resolution of Adoption and Statement of Overriding Consideration
5. Acknowledgements

INTRODUCTION

I. PURPOSE OF THE COMMUNITY PLAN

The Meadow Vista Community Plan (MVCP), in combination with the Placer County General Plan, is the official statement of Placer County setting forth goals, policies, assumptions, guidelines, standards and implementation measures that will guide the physical, social and economic development of the Meadow Vista area to at least the year 2010. The Plan will provide overall direction for future growth within Meadow Vista.

The Plan expresses a vision of the future of the community and directions for growth so that Meadow Vista can continue to flourish as a community where people and the natural environment exist in harmony.

The Community Plan, in combination with the Placer County General Plan, satisfies the requirements of the California Planning and Zoning law. The following elements are included either by reference or inclusion herein: Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Conservation, Open Space, Noise and Safety. Optional elements such as Recreation, Public Services, and Community Design are also included due to their importance to the MVCP area.

The MVCP includes the goals, policies, standards, implementation programs, quantified objectives, the Land Use Diagram, and the Circulation Plan Diagram which together constitute Placer County's formal policies for land use, development, and environmental quality. The following definitions describe the nature of the statements of goals, policies, standards, and implementation programs.

Goal: The ultimate purpose of an effort stated in a way that is general in nature and immeasurable.

Policy: A specific statement in text or diagram guiding action and implying clear commitment.

Standard: A specific, often quantified guideline, incorporated in a policy or implementation program, defining the relationship between two or more variables. Standards can often translate directly into regulatory controls.

Implementation Program: An action, procedure, program, or technique that carries out general plan policy. Implementation programs also specify

primary responsibility for carrying out the action and a time frame for accomplishment.

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE PLAN AREA

The MVCP area possess a rich and diverse past beginning with its first inhabitants, the Nisenan Maidu, a Native American people whose migration range included this foothill country as well as portions of the Sacramento Valley and the Sierra Nevada high country. The Nisenan Maidu lifestyle was based upon hunting and gathering from rich natural resources which included abundant game animals, fish, fowl, fruits, berries, and acorns. They established many villages in the foothills, moving among them in seasonal migrations based upon the weather and the process of gathering food and other necessities.

In the 1850s pioneer settlers established homesteads in the area. These ranches established an economy based on cattle ranching and subsistence farming of hogs, sheep, horses, chickens, crops of hay, and vegetables. This economy continued into the 20th century. Logging was also active during the late 19th and early 20th centuries and resorts such as the Oak Resort, the Walmond Resort and Pinecrest Resorts also flourished during this period.

In 1919 a lending library was started and in 1922 a one-room schoolhouse was erected by citizens. Electricity was established for the area's slowly growing population in 1928. Combie Lake, first known as Lake Van Giesen, was created in 1927-30 by the Nevada Irrigation District. The volunteer fire department was organized in 1948.

People came to live in the foothills in increasing numbers during the 1940s and 50s. Real estate subdivision was active and Meadow Vista took its name from one of these ventures.

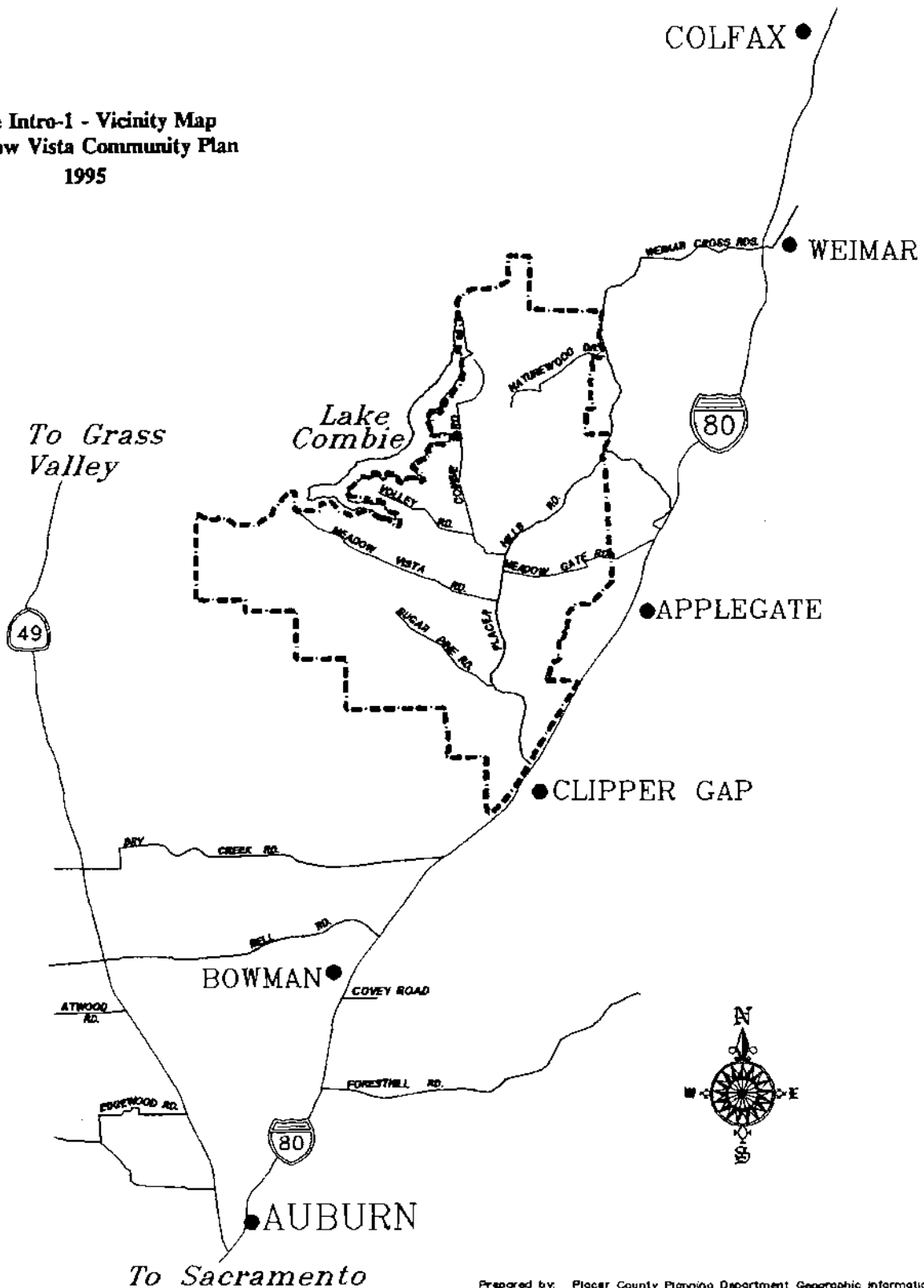
Population grew even more rapidly during the 1960s and 70s, when the now-familiar pattern of commuting to work in the greater Sacramento area became established.

MEADOW VISTA COMMUNITY PLAN VICINITY MAP 1995

----- *Plan Boundary*

To Reno

Figure Intro-1 - Vicinity Map
Meadow Vista Community Plan
1995



The MVCP study area is comprised of approximately 7000 acres located in the Placer County foothills approximately seven miles northeast of the City of Auburn. In 1990, the estimated population of the Plan area was 4087. The Plan boundaries include the Bear River to the northwest, the Naturewood subdivision to the north, the Meadow Gate Road area to the east, and the I-80 Meadow Vista-Clipper Gap interchange and the old Marty Ranch to the south (see vicinity map preceding page).

The MVCP area is typified by rolling hills and meadows, as well as pine and oak woodlands. The area's elevation ranges from 1650' to 2050'. Land uses in the study area are predominately rural residential with notable exceptions; the Chevreux rock quarry located on the Bear River at the northern end of the Plan area; a large agricultural area also at the northern end of the Plan area; an undeveloped highway services district located at the I-80/Meadow Vista-Clipper Gap interchange, and; the limited commercial services district and institutional uses in the center of the community.

The Plan area is within close proximity to Interstate-80 and therefore provides an attractive, convenient residential community for commuters whose places of employment are to the west (Auburn, South Placer County, and the Sacramento Metropolitan region). The Plan area is also situated within easy reach of major recreation resources such as the American River Canyons, Sierra Nevada Mountains, and the Lake Tahoe area.

Services to the area are provided by the Meadow Vista County Water District, Midway Heights County Water District, Placer County Water Agency, the Placer Hills Fire Protection District, the Placer County Sheriff's Department, and the Auburn Park and Recreation District. All of the Plan area is served by on-site sewage disposal systems and many private water wells exist in the area.

Significant riparian habitat in the Plan area is located along Orr and Wooley Creeks, as well as along a number of intermittent streams located throughout the Plan area. A large portion of the Plan area drains to Combie Lake on the Bear River which the Nevada Irrigation District utilizes for raw water storage.

III. THE PLANNING PROCESS

1. Previous Planning Efforts

During the 1940s and 50s when Meadow Vista began to develop, there was essentially no zoning in either this area or any other area of the County. People moved to Meadow Vista for the rural atmosphere and the beauty and peacefulness of the area. Land was inexpensive and the population of the County was small.

The character of the community was formed during this period. While some smaller parcels were created, the majority of parcels were one acre or larger. The focus was not how many houses per acre could be developed, but rather how many acres comprised each house site.

What exists today is a random assortment of different size parcels with residential structures ranging from very modest cabin-like structures to large, luxurious residences. This is what gives the Meadow Vista area its charm. When viewed as a whole, the existing land use pattern displays a harmony and sense of community.

In 1957 the County adopted an "emergency ordinance applying certain regulations to the use of land." Minimum residential lot sizes were based on public or private water sources and public or private sewage disposal (sewer or septic). Residential parcels served with public water and private sewer facilities were required to be a minimum of 10,000 sq. ft. exclusive of public easements and rights-of-way. Residential parcels served with private water and private sewer facilities were required to be a minimum of 20,000 sq. ft. Because much of Meadow Vista is served by public water and private sewer facilities (septic systems), a minimum residential parcel size of 10,000 sq. ft. (less than 1/4 acre) was allowed.

By 1960 houses were being built on small (1/3 acre) parcels. While consistent with the County's emergency land use regulations, they were not consistent with the desired land use in the Meadow Vista area. Community residents realized that without more appropriate land use regulation the creation of small lot sizes could spread throughout the community, destroying its rural character.

A petition to impose one acre minimum zoning in the area was circulated by community members. It was presented to the County and the zoning proposal was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in February 1961. The following excerpt from a letter prepared by the Planning Commission to the Board of Supervisors in January 1961 demonstrates that this was a grass roots effort by the community:

"There have been several well attended meetings of local residents held in both areas (Bowman is the other area) to discuss and vote on this proposal which has been initiated completely by local residents and property owners. Petitions requesting the above action from a large majority of property owners are also on file."

Thus began a pattern of community advocacy and involvement aimed at maintaining Meadow Vista's rural character, which continues today.

The adoption of this amendment to the 1957 emergency land use regulation was only an "emergency measure," requiring the eventual adoption of permanent precise zoning. In 1963 the first official "zoning" of the County occurred in Meadow Vista and resulted in the entire area being zoned for 40,000 sq. ft. minimum parcel sizes.

In the early 1970's the Meadow Vista-West Applegate General Plan was developed. For the first time residents were able to focus on the area as a cohesive community and set goals and priorities for the future. This Plan was proposed by local citizen groups who also did much of the actual work on the document. Again community advocacy served to protect and improve the area.

The Plan was adopted in 1974 and laid the foundation for future development and land use. It was obvious to the framers of the Plan that the existing blanket of 40,000 sq. ft. zoning would not work if the rural environment was to be preserved. Consequently, the majority of the Plan area was rezoned; only 14% of the total area retained the 40,000 sq. ft. minimum lot size. This area is concentrated in the central, most developed portion of the Plan area. Surrounding this are lower density uses including Rural Residential-one to 2.3 acre minimum, Rural Estate-4.6 acre

minimum, and other appropriate designations including agricultural, recreation, open space, and some industrial.

Under the 1974 General Plan, significant land development has taken place in Meadow Vista. The majority of this has been accomplished by minor land divisions (4 or fewer parcels). There have been six small subdivisions, the largest being 46 lots. One large development project in the Plan area is the Winchester Planned Unit Development consisting of 409 residential units, an 18-hole championship golf course, a golf club, a swim and tennis facility, 10 miles of pedestrian and bicycle trails, 4.7 miles of equestrian trails, and an eight acre community park. In addition, significant areas comprised of wetlands, woodlands, and sensitive habitat have been set aside from development as preserves. Winchester was approved by the Board of Supervisors on August 3, 1993, and as the new community plan was being written, the applicants were working to complete the conditions of the project's entitlements. All of these land divisions and developments have been in accordance with the 1974 General Plan. In the 21 years that the General Plan has been in force, only a few minor zoning changes have been approved.

The 1974 Meadow Vista-West Applegate General Plan was based on a 15 year planning period. As that period drew to a close the County initiated steps for a revision of the Plan to guide the orderly growth of the community for at least the next 15 years.

2. Current Planning Process

The 1974 Meadow Vista Community Plan (MVCP) was written to guide development of the area through the year 1990. Consequently, in July of 1990 the Planning Department staff reported to the Meadow Vista Municipal Advisory Council (MAC) on the department's timing and strategy for revision of the 1974 Meadow Vista-West Applegate General Plan.

After hearing commentary from the MAC and community members at both regular and specially held meetings, Planning Department staff recommended to the Board of Supervisors, which subsequently approved, that the update of the Meadow Vista/West Applegate General Plan (new title is Meadow Vista Community Plan) be limited to a "review and readoption," rather than a complete "rewrite and overhaul." This direction was based

upon the premise that the area's residents generally supported retaining a predominantly rural lifestyle, while maintaining the Plan's current holding capacity (i.e. maximum dwelling units). In addition, development within the Plan area during the past 15 years had been consistent with the 1974 Plan's Land Use Element.

In March of 1991, the Meadow Vista Community Plan Steering Committee was formed as a sub-committee of the MAC. The Committee, consisting of two MAC members and six other members from the community, was charged to help facilitate the review and update of the Community Plan.

The MAC, with considerable assistance from the Steering Committee, helped the Planning Department staff to develop a questionnaire which was mailed to every property owner in Meadow Vista. (For a summary of the survey results see page 7.)

Based on the 1974 Plan, the results of the community survey, and public commentary at many MAC meetings, Steering Committee members prepared drafts of various sections of the new Community Plan for the MAC members and Planning Department staff to review. The Planning Department then prepared a draft document based on this initial work by community members.

The 1996 MVCP primarily retains the Land Use Element designations from the 1974 Plan with only a few exceptions. The 1996 MVCP focuses on updating the text's goals, policies, and implementation programs, adding comprehensive community design guidelines, adding a section to address trails in the community, and generally modernizing other portions of the text to reflect current standards and contemporary planning practices. Many of the goals and policies were derived, at least in part, from the 1994 Placer County General Plan. This will ensure consistency between the Community Plan and the County-wide General Plan.

Throughout the Community Planning process, the MAC and its Steering Committee were instrumental in the preparation of the new Plan by providing a forum for citizen review and input, and feedback to the County staff.

Public hearings were conducted by the Planning Commission on September 14, 1995 and November 9, 1995 after which the Commission forwarded its recommendation to the Board of Supervisors. The Board held a public hearing on May 21, 1996, and adopted the Meadow Vista Community Plan on that date.

IV. PLAN ASSUMPTIONS

Assumptions, along with goals and policies, provide the basic foundation for a plan. They give direction and provide a basis for the preliminary planning studies and inventories. The assumptions contain statements of apparent facts and observations of current trends in the Plan area. Following are several assumptions upon which the MVCP is based:

1. Residents of the Meadow Vista area locate there because of its scenic rural environment, feeling of community, recreation opportunities, and forest and woodlands setting.
2. During the life of the Community Plan (until at least 2010), population in the Plan area will continue to grow at a moderate rate (less than the County average of 2% annual growth rate).
3. Single-family residences on large lots will continue to remain the dominant housing type in the Plan area.
4. Should the sewage disposal problems in the downtown commercial area be resolved, the downtown commercial area will be improved to better accommodate primary commercial uses that better serve the Plan area residents.
5. The primary means of transportation will continue to be the automobile. However, in an effort to reduce air pollution and traffic congestion, residents will increasingly use carpools, public transportation, and telecommuting.
6. Demand for parks, recreation facilities, and equestrian/pedestrian/bicycling trails will continue to increase as the area develops.
7. The need to protect and conserve natural resources and remaining open space will become more important with a growing population and additional development.
8. Septic tanks will continue to be the primary source of sewage disposal in the residential areas; however another type of sewage disposal system may be needed for the commercial area along Placer Hills Road.
9. In general, the zoning implemented under the 1974 General Plan will remain unchanged during the Plan's life.
10. Chevreux Quarry will continue its operations for the life of the Plan, and quarry truck traffic will continue to travel Combie and Placer Hills Roads.
11. Although the use of the Meadow Vista landfill has been permanently discontinued, the Meadow Vista Solid Waste Transfer Station will remain in operation for the life of the Community Plan.

V. THE RELATIONSHIP TO THE PLACER COUNTY GENERAL PLAN

On August 16, 1994, the Placer County Board of Supervisors adopted the Placer County General Plan (PCGP) which establishes an overall framework for development of the County and protection of its natural and cultural resources. The goals and policies contained in the PCGP are applicable throughout the County, except to the extent that County authority is preempted by cities within their corporate limits.

The Meadow Vista Community Plan (MVCP or Plan), provides a more detailed focus on a specific geographic area of the unincorporated County. Some of the goals, policies, and implementation measures contained in the MVCP repeat those goals, policies, and implementation measures contained in the PCGP which pertain to the MVCP area. Other goals, policies, and implementation measures in the MVCP go further to supplement and elaborate upon (but not supersede) those contained in the PCGP to address specific community concerns and issues. In some

instances, the MVCP relies entirely on the PCGP to address certain issues which are not unique to the MVCP area and which are more appropriately addressed in a broader sense in the PCGP. In particular, noise and seismic safety rely entirely on the PCGP, while the air quality section relies on the PCGP for the broader air quality issues, and also contains policies to address air quality issues specific to Meadow Vista.

VI. COMMUNITY SURVEY

In October, 1991, the Planning Department mailed a survey to all property owners in the Meadow Vista Community Plan area to gather information regarding issues relevant to the Community Plan update. Of more than 1400 surveys distributed, a total of 913 surveys, or 65%, were returned. The response rate for surveys of this type is usually 10-15%. The fact that nearly two-thirds of the households in Meadow Vista took the time to respond demonstrates the concern and interest of community members in the future of Meadow Vista. Many of the respondents wrote extensive comments as well. This extensive and significant community response helped provide a clear direction for the development of the Community Plan, especially the "Vision Statement."

A sample survey and the tabulated results appear in Appendix 2 of the Plan. The following is a summary of responses on significant issues:

Note: Many of the answers were registered on a scale of one to five, i.e., "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." For the purpose of this review the responses are grouped as either positive or negative, not separating, for example, "agree" from "strongly agree."

1. Question 6a, "The rural character of Meadow Vista should be preserved," received almost unanimous support (96%). This sentiment is evident throughout the survey. If one had to summarize this entire document in one sentence, this sentiment probably captures it best.

2. The survey shows that a large number of Meadow Vistans (82%) do not want lot sizes to be smaller than currently zoned (ref. Question 60). This position is supported by Question 12g in which 91% of the responses consider lots less than 1 acre in size "inappropriate." Question 6p asks if developers should be allowed increased density when they provide public facilities, i.e., trails, park sites, school sites, open space, low income housing or recreational

facilities. All of the options were rejected by a majority ranging from 54% to 77%. In response to the statement that "no density bonuses should be allowed" 73% agreed.

3. Regarding land development projects, 77% agreed that developers should pay the full cost of required public services, 76% rejected gated communities, and 89% rejected high-density housing.

4. Question 6n focused on the traffic circulation system. Eighty-seven percent of the respondents want to "retain the rural character of our roads." To preserve the rural quality, the community responded that traffic signals are inappropriate (62%), that commercial traffic should be controlled (70%), and that an alternate truck route should be found/used (56%). Seventy-three percent disapproved of widening Placer Hills Road to four lanes. Eighty percent agreed that "paths should be built along heavily traveled roads."

5. Eighty-one percent of the respondents felt that the business district should be maintained within its existing boundaries, and 85% agreed that it should have a plan for its overall layout and appearance. To achieve this goal, Meadow Vistans want sign controls (78%), landscape and design requirements (72%), and a common architectural theme (66%). A bar/tavern is opposed by the community (86%). An improvement generally supported is a public sewer system only for the business district (47% in favor, 30% opposed).

6. Strongly supported in this survey were paths along heavily traveled roads (80%) and a network of off-road hiking, equestrian and bicycle trails (63%). Respondents also wanted a noise ordinance (61%) and a Tree Ordinance/Woodland Forest Management Policy (54%).

The Community Survey conclusions have been reinforced by comments from community members at various workshops, Municipal Advisory Council (MAC) meetings and other public meetings where the Meadow Vista Community Plan review and readoption effort has been discussed. As a result, the Planning Department staff and members of the MAC subcommittees who are working on the Plan update, relied heavily on the survey results. However, in a few instances the Plan does not reflect the survey results (traffic signals, widening of Placer Hills Road, and density bonuses). In these few instances, it was determined that the survey direction was contrary to a County ordinance, policy, and/or program.

VII. VISION STATEMENT

Meadow Vista is located in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. The community rests in a flat meadowland surrounded by forested ridges and bisected by streams and waterways. These particular geographic characteristics have helped create a unique community. The people who have inhabited this area, beginning with the Nissenan and Maidu peoples, have always valued its natural resources and beautiful environment. The current inhabitants, both recent arrivals and those whose families have lived here for generations, continue to treasure Meadow Vista's natural setting, valuing its wildlife, natural landforms, and native vegetation, such as heritage oaks, sugar pines, and mixed forests.

This protected enclave, with its long tradition of people living in harmonious relationship with the land, has generated both an individual spirit and a community interdependence, where individuals freely come together to seek the common good. This community spirit, together with the natural features, has fostered a climate of vigilance and stewardship. As the community continues to develop, with new homes, new businesses, and improved roads, the existing character of the community must be retained and even enhanced wherever possible.

Meadow Vista will not have the population to support large new commercial enterprises; however, the commercial area will continue to provide for the daily needs of the residents. Expanded personal services, small retail stores, professional offices, and similar uses can be expected to be developed within the downtown, adding to the small town or village character of this area. Future growth in Meadow Vista must demonstrate an awareness of and consistency with this vision.