



The *Business Alliance...Update* is a bi-monthly publication of the El Dorado Business Alliance (BA). The BA is made up of the following organizations: El Dorado Builders' Exchange, El Dorado County Association of Realtors (EDCAR), El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce, North State Building Industry Association (NSBIA) and Shingle Springs-Cameron Park Chamber of Commerce. Web Address for Subscription Info: KathyRussell@gmail.com

"Developing Mutual Support on Community-Wide Issues"

TID-BITS

Please note we did **not** publish a July 1, 2014 *Business Alliance...Update* issue.

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**Conundrum: That which does not compute!** The definition of the word "conundrum" is: "*Something that is puzzling or confusing.*" Thus I find myself smack dab in the middle of one. In honor of Memorial Day just past, here are six conundrums Americans face with criticisms of the United States:

*"America is capitalist and greedy."* Yet half of our population is subsidized.

Half of the US population is subsidized - yet many consider themselves victims.

Many think they are victims, yet their representatives run the government.

Their representatives run the government, yet the poor keep getting poorer.

The poor keep getting poorer, yet they have things that people in other countries only dream about.

They have things that people in other countries only dream about, yet they want America to be more like those other countries. And that, gentle readers, is a "conundrum".

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The **five best places to live** according to *Money Magazine* are: Sharon, MA; Louisville, CO; Vienna, VA; Chanhassen, MN; and Sherwood, OR. According to Sperling's interactive website comparing the cost of living in Placerville to other areas, the following results were found:

Placerville vs Austin, TX = Austin has a 12% cheaper cost of living, with food being the biggest factor. Austin's food runs 25% less than Placerville. **Golden, Colorado is a small city similar to Placerville**, located in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, outside of Denver, CO. The result of this comparison shows Golden is 12% more expensive to live than is Placerville, with housing being the biggest factor. Housing in Golden is 47% more expensive than Placerville - hard to believe. Finally, I compared **Bend, Oregon to Placerville, CA** and discovered that Bend is essentially the same cost of living as Placerville, California.

Note the comparisons were based on a hypothetical \$50,000 annual income. The real cost of living test for any area must consider jobs available and salary comparisons of those jobs elsewhere.

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**Survey Shows... California Remains Unfriendly to Small Businesses:** According to a survey by *Thumbtack*, a website that matches customers to businesses, and the *Kauffman Foundation*, a think tank, California has been rated one of the least friendly states *in the U.S.* for small businesses. The study was based on data gathered from over 12,000 small business owners across the nation.

According to Jon Lieber, Chief Economist of Thumbtack, "*After a two-month survey of thousands of small business owners nationwide, California's small businesses have rated it near the bottom as one of the least friendly states in the nation towards small business. Creating a business climate that is welcoming to small, dynamic businesses is more important than ever, and California continues to receive low marks from its small businesses for creating this kind of environment.* California received terrible grades in the study, including:

An "F" for its friendliness towards small business, joining only Illinois, Rhode Island, Vermont and Maine in receiving failing grades.

An "F" for its labor, health and safety, and environmental regulations.

A "D" for its tax code, licensing, and zoning laws.

In addition, seven of the worst cities in the country for small businesses are in California; of the 82 that were rated, San Jose was #68, Santa Rosa #70, Riverside #71, Los Angeles #74, Oxnard #76, San Diego #78, and Sacramento hit bottom at #82.

## **EDC HAS A SOLUTION.....**

This is a good time to remind our readers that El Dorado County (EDC) HAS A SOLUTION to the negativity perceived in this survey for our once Golden State. The solutions came from the original Regulatory Reform Subcommittee of the Board-appointed Community and Economic Development Advisory Committee. Reg Reform gathered hundreds of volunteers from small to large business entities, from ranchers and farmers to winery owners, from developers to anti-growth activists, from health care advocates to leaders at Marshall Hospital. The volunteers reviewed the General Plan (GP) and determined that (1) The GP was never fully implemented; (2) The Zoning Ordinance (ZO) was not consistent with the GP as required by state law; and, (3) the GP incorporated numerous regulations that were inconsistent with existing state law, or were onerous to the public in their application at large, effectively conflicting with some county goals to enhance the job market and bring new jobs and economic growth to this area. With limited changes recommended to remove regulatory burdens of the GP, while retaining the original land use designations set forth in the GP, the Board of Supervisors has moved the process forward as reported in past issues of this newsletter.

Today this process for updating the General Plan Amendment (GPA) and Zoning Ordinance Update (ZOU) process is being accomplished, with **the environmental analysis of the proposed changes now ready for public input.** The hearing schedule is set as follows, but note: the schedule is subject to change:

|                                    |                                                                   |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Monday August 4 <sup>th</sup>      | 5:00 pm -7:00 pm                                                  |
| Wednesday, August 6 <sup>th</sup>  | 8:00 am – Noon                                                    |
| Wednesday August 13 <sup>th</sup>  | Noon – 4:00 pm and 6:30 – 8:00 pm @ Regular Ag Commission Meeting |
| Thursday August 14 <sup>th</sup>   | 8:30 am - 3:00 pm @ Regular Planning Commission Meeting           |
| Monday, August 18 <sup>th</sup>    | 8:00 am – Noon                                                    |
| Wednesday, August 20 <sup>th</sup> | 8:00 am – Noon                                                    |

**NOTE: All public meetings will be held at the Board of Supervisors' Chambers @ 2850 Fairlane Court, Placerville, Ca in Building A.**

### **Developments Supporting Agriculture = "Agrihoods"**

Fortunately visionary people and community leaders still exist who embrace change. These people and places are finding better ways to accommodate the nations' growing population demands, while also meeting the needs of the marketplace. Our needs and wants change as we age. Many of us (this author included) used to live on acreage with horses, dogs and cats and many wild things lurking at night (not to mention those late afternoon rattlesnakes), and I, for one, never thought I'd want to live in town, let alone in a subdivision or planned development. But as I've aged I now see my close neighbors as good friends, rather than as people imposing on my lifestyle or solitude.

Americans have been attracted to the schools, parks, yards and square footage of suburbia for decades now. They enjoy the added perks some housing developments offer, including community pools, fitness centers, playgrounds and tennis courts, to name a few. But the biggest draw in the future might be a communal farm.

A new fad in the housing world is a concept called Development Supported Agriculture (DSA), or more broadly, "agrihoods." DSA is the child of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), in which consumers pledge money or resources to support a farm operation, and in turn, receive a share of what it produces: but take the concept one step further and integrate the farm *within* residential developments. Instead of paying for access to a golf course or tennis courts, residents pay to be a part of a working farm—helping with the growing process and reaping the crops it produces.

The CSA movement, which began on two properties in the US during the 1980s, boasts thousands of farms today, but DSA is just beginning to grow in popularity, with about 200 neighborhoods buying in to the concept. One of the first developments to create a working farm was Prairie Crossing in Grayslake, Illinois, about one hour north of Chicago. Today, Prairie Crossing has about 359 single-family homes. One of the newest projects is Willowsford, in Ashburn, Virginia, which is aiming much higher and hoping to fill 2,200 homes.

About 40 minutes outside of Washington, D.C., Willowsford is at the edge of Virginia's horse and farm country, where the booming housing market surrounding the nation's capital is gobbling up open spaces. Developers conserved some 2,000 acres, 300 of which are farmland. Eventually, the community will be divided into four villages, each with a designated farm. A rather idyllic setting, Willowsford is thoughtfully planned to include homes in the southern style typical of Virginia's Loudoun County, all with easy access to pick-your-own strawberries and a quaint farm stand, chock full of cucumbers, heirloom tomatoes, cartons of okra and string beans, and baked goods.

It's not difficult to imagine this kind of development in El Dorado County. Such projects should never be voted down simply due to a General Plan regulation: Rather the GP is a living document that will be adjusted to meet the future needs of the county as the county population continues to grow and evolve new ways of living together. Of benefit to a visionary way of thinking, is the fact that locally one of the issues recently addressed is removal of regulatory constraints on owners of Rural Lands, by encouraging Ranch Marketing and enhancing protected Agricultural Lands, all part of EDC's current General Plan Amendment and Zoning Ordinance Update process.