

**Stakeholder Meeting Notes
Environmental Group
March 11, 2009**



GROUP CHARACTERISTICS

This group consisted of nine people representing the public, Butte College's environmental division, the Grange of other environmental groups.

GREEN BUILDING

The group didn't believe that there is a single answer regarding mandatory green building practices. There appeared to be majority support for a combination of mandatory and incentivized practices that promote green building but also are also based on economic realities. However, a couple members of the group did support mandatory green practices.

The group also identified that many areas of Chico consideration of retrofit of existing buildings is significant in making a difference. In these cases, generally, a combination of some mandatory provisions and some voluntary provisions will work best.

There was a substantial discussion regarding the commercial (LEED) and residential (Build It Green) options. The Build It Green standards are new for residential development. They are talking now about "bankable items/process". In Chico, retrofits of existing inefficient homes will be an important component of the City's move to sustainability. The City needs to come up with incentives for this retrofit to encourage and reward people for doing meaningful retrofits.

Preservation of historic buildings is important to be truly "green" which may mean that retrofits and improvements require a "consult" with a LEED certified historic preservation architect. There was concern expressed however, that not everyone who owns historic buildings (e.g., non-profits) can afford that consultation.

The group did believe that anything the City is building should be LEED certified and/or "green".

AGRICULTURE/URBAN INTERFACE

Regarding the urban edge buffer of 100', the group believed the City should consider expanding it to 300 feet making it similar to the County policy and look at options for interesting and meaningful transition zones aka a "multiple-benefit buffer" in the form of trails, community gardens, organic farms or other uses. The idea is to think about how those buffers might become viable public space.

The City's current policy doesn't require all 100 feet to be on City property and does not allow any structures within that buffer area. County wants to see the buffer requirement all on City property and to change the nature of what it is.

RESOURCE CONSERVATION AREA/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AREA

The group discussed the previous objectives of the RCA/RMA and new determinations by the City Council to remove development potential from the three primary areas more recently studies and identified as environmental resource. There appeared to be no major problems with removing these designations provided that the environmental protection they offered remains in place via other existing land use designations or biological constraints.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VS. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The group agreed that these are closely related and that the goal is definitely to balance those considerations. However, it seems to this group that “economics” seem to trump environment on a regular basis. They support giving higher weight to environmental outcomes to balance what they perceive as a lopsided equation now.

When looking at economic benefits, the group felt the City needs to consider who they are for and prefers that they benefit of the community as a whole and not individual developers.

The group believes that any economic development strategy should require the City to look at the balance of economy, environment and equity – the three legged stool of sustainability – to ensure sustainable development.

The group found irony in this policy discussion as titled - “Economic Development **VS.** Environmental Protection” and felt they were having this discussion too late in the process.

OTHER

The group recommended that the City get in touch with other experts in the field to discuss the potential solutions and implementation ramifications.