

**Stakeholder Meeting Notes
Environmental Groups
January 23, 2008**



GROUP CHARACTERISTICS

This group consisted of representatives of local environmental groups. They expressed concerns about maintaining and expanding the urban forest, preservation of Bidwell Park and existing Open Space as defined by the Greenline and Goldline. In addition, the group was in agreement that the City should explore and implement Sustainable development practices.

WHAT ARE YOUR PRIORITIES FOR CHICO IN THE NEXT 20 YEARS?

The group expressed a desire for the City to make a solid commitment to the preservation and enhancement of existing natural resources including:

- Preservation of Bidwell Park
- Protection and enhancement of the Urban Forest and development of an Urban Forest Element in the General Plan
- Registration, preservation and education regarding “significant” trees
- Enhanced alternative transportation favoring bike and pedestrian corridors
- Creating neighborhood centers where people can walk to shopping and schools
- Continue theme of a compact urban form
- Preserve all Open Space
- Creating neighborhood parks to take the pressure off of Bidwell Park
- Create connectivity between neighborhoods – no cul-de-sacs
- Need to move away from the compartmentalization of land uses. We aren’t being sustainable. Need to have high speed rail to other Cities. Improve all of our transportation. Traffic calming is not up date.
- Need to revitalize Downtown and have a vision for the future
- Need architectural review improvements
- There needs to be a focus on sustainability, but also an understanding of what that means. The group suggested that it is the simultaneous focus on the environment, the economy, and society.
- Air quality standards and how they effect the formulation of General Plans and the processing of development projects needs to be factored into the planning process.
- Protection of streams, creeks and waterways.
- Protection of the City’s Oak Woodlands for viewshed and habitat purposes.
- Need zoning that doesn’t allow ranchettes and focuses density in the City.
- City needs to require the mitigation of all impacts.
- Do not allow development adjacent to the Park.

- Protect the Greenline in perpetuity with a City supported agricultural easement program to protect farmland. No net loss of farmland.
- Cooperation with the Butte County HCP process.
- Water Conservation and groundwater management / aquifer protection.
- Some attendees thought that there could be some flexibility in the 'Greenline'.
- Use natural resource constraints to assist the process of land use planning.
- Keep open space around the perimeter of the City

WHAT SHOULD NOT CHANGE IN TERMS OF THE GENERAL PLAN?

- Don't change Greenline, however the group was open to slight variations if it meant enhanced preservation in other areas.
- Continue to focus on infill.
- Accommodating form-based code. That is very exciting. Continue to allow that diversity. Good stream setbacks, good housing mix.
- City should continue to buy stream side parcels but should also be more aggressive.
- Focus on Bruce Road (Meriam Park) for development.
- Maybe look to south side of town for development.
- Take marginal farmland for housing.
- City and County revenue sharing agreements need to continue and improve – otherwise we will get sprawl (fighting for tax dollars).
- Need to build ecosystem areas – comprehensive and contiguous habitat for restoration.
- Buffer zones between agricultural and urban areas is a good notion, but we need to really look at how to create effective ones that protect air quality (overspray) for urban residents.
- Financing of development is upside down – we don't need to grow at the rate we are growing.
- Need to be careful that we don't create other cultural centers that take away from the Downtown core, and its role as the City center.
- Keep our Urban Forester office, and increase the funding for office.
- Need a more aggressive parking lot shade effort. The blazing hot asphalt in parking lots is not sustainable. There can be better design.
- Need to limit drive-throughs. They are located at busy intersections and require more pavement, and therefore less trees.
- Put the "shalls" back in the Community Design Element.
- Create a linear cemetery along the Greenline – in perpetuity buffer.
- The Planning Department needs to be more open to public comment and have a better understanding of the General Plan.
- Need to have follow-up and monitoring for parking lot shade requirements.
- The City is doing good on affordable housing development.
- Infill development is good, but there has to be more attention paid to context sensitive design. Bad infill can ruin neighborhoods.
- Keep compact urban form.

- City should not provide services to proposed Casino.
- Encourage County not to sell water.
- Stand up against disc golf in Upper Park.
- Continue to protect Bidwell Ranch.
- Build the urban core “up” to provide more density.
- Protect the farmer’s market.

CRITICAL AREAS THE GENERAL PLAN SHOULD ADDRESS

- Water conservation for new development. New development has to be landscaped for water conservation (reduce landscaping).
- Improved bikeway connectivity.
- Need HCP data fed into the General Plan process.
- Use of latest technology for stormwater runoff and other environmental impacts
- Integration of sustainable practices into project review.
- Green building requirements.
- City needs PR staff.

WHAT BARRIERS DOES THE CITY FACE FOR SUCCESS?

- Need to combat public apathy. The City should take stands on environmental issues.
- Lack of cohesive public education regarding environmental issues and impacts
- We need best practices for City staff – new state-of-the-art tools.
- Planning Staff is too lenient on developers. The public does not have the same access to Planning Staff.