



*"Jobs, Homes & Individual Rights "*

October 20, 2009

Mr. Jimmy Smith, Chairman  
Board of Supervisors  
Humboldt County  
825 Fifth Street  
Eureka, California 95501

Subject: Humboldt County 2008 Annual Report

Dear Chairman Smith and Members of the Board:

We appreciate this opportunity to comment on the County's 2008 Annual Report.

Of the various accomplishments the County points to in the subject report, in HELP's opinion there is none more significant than the GIS tool your Board and staff have made possible. We believe the Permit Tracking system currently being developed will also be a big asset, not only to the County, but to the private sector when it becomes available.

HELP has numerous concerns with certain aspects of the Annual Report. Those concerns have been documented in detail in numerous letters submitted to the County over the past many months. (See <http://helphumboldt.com/updates.html>) ...Issues such as:

- The permitting approval process has become increasingly more protracted and costly. HELP believes there is a disconnect between the permit streamlining policies and programs identified in the General Plan / Housing Element, and the manner in which that process is being administered.
- Based on FOL's (Find Our Lots) research, the land inventory remains overstated. The FOL team continues to work with County Planner Michael Richardson to refine the inventory to assure its accuracy and conformance with State laws and guidelines.
- HELP reiterates its position made to your Board over five years ago, during June 2004, that the current framework General Plan was never fully implemented. An example of this is the lack of certain ordinances adopted which would have established authorization for implementation of the Plan.
- The RHNA process and the lack of conformance with State laws, and,
- The significant weaknesses in the recently-adopted Housing Element SEIR analysis and documentation. It simply does not satisfy CEQA.

We would like to have seen in the Annual Report, a status of the implementation of policies and programs contained in the eighteen (18) Community Plans adopted over the past recent years. In our opinion, the implementation of the McKinleyville Plan has especially been neglected.

When we step back and reflect on how the implementation of the policies and programs outlined in the Framework Plan, could have been improved, HELP encourages you to consider embracing a new collaborative planning approach with other jurisdictions. In other areas throughout California, as well as some other states, Regional Compacts have been executed between cities and counties. These Compacts are not legally binding documents, but instead, an expression of a willingness and desire to work together on a long-term basis to plan for issues which do not end at political boundaries -- issues such as:

- Air Quality
- Environmental Resources
- Open Space and Agricultural Lands
- Transportation
- Utilities (wet and dry) such as Water and Sewer
- Roads and Circulation
- Communication Facilities

An immediate need to do such collaborative planning exists between: (1) the County, (2) cities within the County, and (3) the various Community Services Districts within the County. The CSDs especially need to coordinate with cities and the County as their timeframe for implementation of sewer and water facilities requires they plan 50 – 75 years into the future. The link between where housing and support services are developed, dictates where roads, sewer, water, etc. will be needed during future decades.

If this type of regional planning were to be institutionalized, it would help assure the County not find itself in a crisis due to the lack of infrastructure, as is the current situation.

We look forward to working with you in the future and urge you to call on us if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Kay Backer, representing  
Humboldt Economic & Land Plan

cc: County Board of Supervisors  
County Planning Commissioners  
Loretta Nickolaus, County Administrative Officer  
Wendy Chaitin, County Counsel  
Carolyn Ruth, Deputy County Counsel  
Kirk Girard, Community Development Services Director  
Michael Richardson, Senior Planner  
Kathy Hayes, Clerk of the Board  
Sharyn Lodes, Planning Commission Clerk  
Bonnie Blackberry, Civil Liberties Monitoring Project  
Lynn Jacobs, Director, State Housing & Community Development  
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Cynthia Bryant, Director, Governor's Office of Planning and Research  
David Tyson, City Manager, City of Eureka  
Alan Bongio, Chair of the Humboldt Community Services District Board

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