

Live Oak

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And, she's hopeful that an updated Live Oak General Plan can "go a long way toward helping." A general plan is a sort of blueprint for growth of an area.

Supervisors have approved a general plan update program. It features four community workshops to identify significant issues. The first workshop will be Monday, with others scheduled for May 16, 21 and 23. All will begin at 7:30 p.m. at the Live Oak Senior Center, 1777 Capitola Road.

"I don't think there's any question the majority of people in Live Oak have been unhappy with how things have developed," Beautz says. "I have no doubt that in the last 10 years, the quality of life in Live Oak has gone downhill."

Robert Bremner, Beautz' planning commissioner, agrees. "We hear the same old problems," he says. "I think it all comes down to one thing: quality of life. Traffic, housing densities and other problems — it all really comes down to quality of life."

But that "quality of life" is improving in Live Oak, according to both Beautz and Bremner.

Beautz maintains, "All (Live Oak) projects going through the Planning Commission now are definitely being looked at closer. It used to be that you could practically draw a plan on a napkin and bring it in. Now, we require a lot more technical information up front."

She says the changes were the result of a combination of factors, including herself, Bremner and Planning Department Director Dianne Guzman, among others.

Bremner adds, "The scrutiny that is being given to projects now I think is unprecedented. We're denying a lot of projects."

Bremner points to so-called "minor land divisions," which often involve two, three and four-unit townhouse projects, that "were almost automatically going in before." Such projects are still automatic, he says — but now, they're automatically referred to the county zoning administrator for scrutiny.

"We've gone so far as to shoot aerial photos of Live Oak, showing street by street," Bremner says. "You can't necessarily correct what has already gone in, but you can make the new stuff meet a different set of criteria, and, hopefully, an improved set of criteria."

Beautz adds, "The density of housing, traffic impact on little res-

idential streets and lack of open space are concerns I hear all the time. Live Oak really is not as built-out as it probably appears. There are still a lot of big old lots with just one house on them."

The potential is there for a lot of "in-fill development," she says. Such development has already started to take place. Houses are being torn down and replaced with multi-unit townhouse developments, taking their place.

Jeff Loux, the county's assistant planning director for advanced planning, notes, "Planning isn't just a matter of accommodating new development, but also rebuilding. It's never too late to do planning."

The updated general plan will address the long-neglected "infrastructure" of Live Oak — including streets, sidewalks, drainage, water supply and sewage, Beautz says. Other concerns expressed at a recent Live Oak Community Association meeting included: how to preserve and restore neighborhood character, mobile-home parks, commercial districts and open space, such as Corcoran Lagoon and Schwan Lake.

Everdyn Wescoat, president of the Live Oak Community Association, is more diplomatic than most of her fellow residents.

"We need to recognize that, in some neighborhoods, higher densities are compatible with Live Oak lifestyles," Wescoat says. "Improved roads and installation of sidewalks depend on funding and on the degree of need."

Among Wescoat's primary concerns are certain beach neighborhoods, which are feeling beachgoers' traffic, noise and trash problems. She hopes some of that might be alleviated with stepped-up police patrols. "Now, it's uncomfortable for both groups: residents and visitors," she says.

All those concerned, agree that the general plan update process is a good starting point. The neighborhood-by-neighborhood approach of the community workshops is also good, even though all Live Oak residents are invited to participate in any of the workshops — not just the one focusing on their neighborhood.

Loux says that following the four workshops, a "scope of work" will be prepared that reflects the issues expressed by residents. This will then be used to select appropriate consultants for the general plan update. The entire process is expected to take at least 18 months.