

# Napa VISION 2050

“To promote the Health, Welfare and Safety of our Communities by Advocating for Responsible Planning to Insure Sustainability of the Finite Resources of Napa County.”

Go to: [napavision2050.org](http://napavision2050.org)

**A Better Plan. A Better Future.**

**VISION 2050 Creation and Activities**

**Updated January 2016**

January 2015 Save Rural Angwin joined VISION 2050, a coalition of fifteen neighborhood and preservation groups from across Napa County. Land use policy and regulations, conservation of watersheds and open spaces, and insuring the permanent sustainability of the finite resources of Napa County are shared priorities of these groups and now, the coalition of groups, VISION 2050. Unified, our voices become more formidable and influential. VISION 2050 exists to preserve local values and to protect our water resources, forests, rural communities, agriculture and open space.

## **Priority Activities including Summary Accomplishments of VISION 2050:**

- In the latter half of 2014, community activism in the form of public comments and letters to the Planning Commission and to the Board of Supervisors from a broad base of residents testifying to impacts of various proposed projects increased scrutiny of the cumulative impacts that the current permitting and development practices of the county were having on the county. Added to this fervor were an increasing number of appeals of permit approvals for various proposed discretionary developments and projects around the county. This activity led the county Board of Supervisors to call for better analysis of the current conditions and for greater forward-going community input. A joint meeting of the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors was scheduled for March 10, 2015, to begin the analysis and to potentially revisit county policies and regulations as a county planning staff priority for 2015 and 2016.
- As momentum grew among residents attending county meetings it became evident that a broader organization was needed to effect any substantive changes. In January 2015, neighborhood citizen groups that had just been born as well as community and preservation groups that

had operated in isolation for many years came together to form a “grand coalition” representing the one constituency – residents - that had consistently been left out of previous planning decisions. Fifty leaders of distinct “stake-holder” organizations from various corners of Napa County met in Napa to organize and pool their energy, resources and plain ol’ clout. The meeting was unprecedented in recent times.

- Throughout late January and February 2015, coalition meetings were held in anticipation of and preparation for the March 10, 2015, public meeting and hearing. A Steering Committee, comprising a representative from each of the groups in the coalition, was formed to identify common concerns, develop a name and structure, and discuss objectives and action plans. The group portends collaborative change building on the legacy of the visionary leaders of the 1960’s and ‘70’s who created the Agricultural Preserve and the Rural Urban Limits to prevent Napa County from replicating the sprawl of subdivisions and strip malls that dominate so many communities of the Bay Area. The group seeks a sustainable approach to both agriculture and wine making and marketing that protects local values. From these meetings, VISION 2050 emerged. Affiliated organizations include: California Fisheries & Water Unlimited; Calistoga Citizens for a Green Community; Defenders of the East Napa Watersheds; Dry Creek Road Alliance; Get a Grip on Growth; Living Rivers Council; Mt. Veeder Stewardship Council; Protect Rural Napa; Save Rural Angwin; Save Yountville Hill; Sierra Club; Soda Canyon/Loma Vista Foundation; Stop Syar Expansion; St. Helena Citizens; Watersheds Alliance of Atlas Peak.
- VISION 2050 was powerfully evident at the March 10, 2015 joint meeting of the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, which drew over 400 people together. Citizens, including Save Rural Angwin representatives, voiced concerns about the impacts of growth, compounding of traffic, diminishing water resources, and movement by wineries to increasingly become “event centers”. One outcome of the meeting was the formation (Board Resolution No. 2015-31) of the Agricultural Protection Advisory Committee (APAC), comprising 17 members (plus 12 alternate members) representing broad and diverse interests (wine/agriculture, general business community, environmental groups and neighborhood/community groups). Three of the 17 appointed members (plus 3 of 12 alternates) to the APAC were members of VISION 2050. The APAC was specifically tasked as an advisory body to the Planning Commission.

- Following the March 10, 2015 joint meeting, VISION 2050 worked to refine the coalition's short and long-term goals and objectives, to educate members and general public on land use issues including a CEQA workshop (Grassroots Guide to CEQA's Purpose, Power and Process), and began participating in educational events and forums such as Earth Day (April) and Watershed Awareness Month (May). Meetings were held to formulate committees for public relations, voter initiatives, campaigns, fundraising and political education and to shape consistent messages.
- Since the March 10, 2015, public forum, members of VISION 2050 have regularly attended Planning Commission and Board of Supervisor's meetings speaking for thorough environmental reviews and in opposition to the County's practice of issuing after-the-fact permits, believing the practice encourages non-compliance and unfairly penalizes those who do comply with the permitting process. Individual project applications have been reviewed, followed and, in some cases, challenged for a variety of reasons including inappropriate variances, forgiveness of permit violations, excessive production and/or visitation, and ever-increasing event schedules. Projects include: The Caves at Soda Canyon; Bell Canyon Davis Timber Harvest Permit Application; Melka; Reverie Winery; Calistoga Hill; Kongsgaard; Palamz Heliport; Syar Expansion. In several cases approval had been granted by the Planning Commission and has subsequently been challenged by individuals filing appeals. The organization of affiliated groups seeks more influence in local land use policy and strives for thorough environmental impact discussions. Essentially, VISION 2050 introduces a new factor into the way business in the County is addressed.
- One outcome of the April 21, 2015, Board of Supervisors meeting was Board approval for funding an additional code enforcement person. In August 2014, the Napa Valley Register reported that a winery "audit" conducted in 2013 revealed that almost half of the wineries randomly audited were out of compliance with their use permits. Members of VISION 2050 have advocated for compliance and enforcement of the land use regulations and use permits. Issuing a new "forgiveness" permit after the fact should not condone obvious infractions by permit holders.
- When the Agricultural Protection Advisory Committee (APAC) was formed, the Board of Supervisors provided extensive direction to the Committee on conducting its business, including schedule, topics, committee composition, and voting supermajority. The Board also provided

directives to the Planning Commission. Based on the Board's direction, the Planning staff laid out a schedule and tentative action for consideration of the recommendations. The APAC group tried to find the right balance between tourism and agriculture. It grappled with controversial subjects and ideas. Recommendations by the group had to pass by a two-thirds vote, very often a challenge due to the committee's diverse composition. After almost 31 hours work, in ten meetings, spanning four months, the APAC turned its proposals over to the Planning Commission. **APAC's Final Report (dated August 24, 2015) can be seen on this SRA website (Home page, right bubble below the photo).** The report includes pros and cons of each proposal as expressed by the various committee members.

- VISION 2050 representatives on the APAC felt the group should have had a professional facilitator, but the Board of Supervisors disagreed.
- In August and September 2015, VISION 2050 joined in support of the City of Napa's call for greater protections in its sensitive municipal watersheds.
- The APAC presented their final recommendations to the Planning Commission on September 10, 2015. During the fall months, the Planning Commission studied the APAC recommendations and made recommendations of its own. Extra public meetings were held in September and October 2015 and the public was encouraged to participate. VISION 2050 actively participated in all public sessions. Ultimately, of the original 12 recommendations made by APAC, the Commission without further change forwarded 9 of the 12 recommendations. The Planning Commission revised three of the APAC recommendations and the Commission added 2 new recommendations. A total of 14 recommendations were forwarded to the Board of Supervisors to be further addressed at Board public hearings.
- During the fall of 2015, member organizations within VISION 2050 prepared comments to Cal Fire requesting denial of the Draft Environmental Impact Report for a Timber Conversion Plan in Bell Canyon and extension of the deadline for more time to evaluate the project application. In Calistoga VISION members challenged the deforestation requested by those who want to build a luxury resort. And in Napa, VISION 2050 and the City of Napa requested the County deny the application by the Walt Ranch to cut down a forest of 28,000 trees to plant grapes. VISION 2050 opposes the Palmaz Heliport project proposed for private use in east Napa and will weigh in heavily against this ill-conceived

project at the January 14, 2016 public scoping session. Go to: [napavision2050.org](http://napavision2050.org) for news and information.

- On Tuesday, December 8, 2015, during a marathon five-hour-plus session before a packed chamber, Napa County Supervisors began grappling with the APAC/PC recommendations. Seventy-three people addressed the Board. Some people fear Napa might become a wine country on steroids dominated by tourist-oriented event centers that overshadow agriculture. Others fear too much red tape will strangle a wine industry that keeps subdivisions at bay. The only vote taken by the Board on December 8 was to continue the matter to January 5, 2016. The Board also provided direction to staff regarding 10 of 14 of the pending recommendations.
- The January 5, 2016 Board of Supervisor meeting provided Board members time to publically discuss the APAC and PC recommendations after having had time to further consider the public comments of December 8, 2015 and time to review follow-up information provided from Legal and Planning staff. It is clear that each Supervisor is evolving their opinions and approaching the myriad of complex issues with concern for the ambiguities that have and can arise when creating policies. Napa County's evolving plan to try to keep both wineries and agriculture thriving for decades to come will be slow to emerge over the year 2016.