

ANDREW R. CASSANO
Land Surveyor/Land Planner

JOHN E. BAKER
Survey Coordinator

THOMAS L. LOTT
Civil Engineer

WILLIAM D. GREEN
Civil Engineer

NEVADA CITY ENGINEERING, INC.

505 COYOTE STREET, SUITE B • P.O. BOX 1437
NEVADA CITY, CALIFORNIA 95959 • TELEPHONE (530) 265-6911 • FAX (530) 265-8058

Engineering • Surveying • Planning

The View from Andy's Desk

andy@nevadacityengineering.com

March 16, 2012-Andrew R. Cassano is a City/Regional Planner and Professional Land Surveyor with over 43 years of experience in Northern California. He is CEO of Nevada City Engineering, Inc., a firm offering regional planning, surveying, and civil engineering consulting to the private and public sector since 1978.

Region Ripe for Company Towns

Well, actually we already have towns, so maybe company villages or company neighborhoods would be a better description. A company town is technically one where a lot of the real estate and key facilities are built and owned by one company. Typically, the houses were rented to employees.

In our region, you may have noticed places with the little cottages all painted the same color in Graeagle, Strawberry Valley, and Feather Falls. Larger and/or better known places, according to Wikipedia, are Chester, Fort Bragg, Weed, and Bodie. These towns were typically supported by mining, timber, or both.

Of special interest to me is Brandy City in Sierra County, the vanished mining camp on Federal land where my parents met and fell in love along with their friends, Bill and Marian Ghidotti in 1922. The little village was there only because of the nearby hydraulic mine.

The Grass Valley Special Development Areas: Loma Rica Ranch, North Star, Kenny Ranch, and South Hill all would be great company village sites, where a mixture of jobs, housing, and other essentials could be sited in close proximity. Each is planned for a significant inventory of job land use with residential too. Each has the potential for lots of healthy outdoor amenities and permanent open space/habitat conservation.

There are also business zoned lands outside of those special development areas too, coupled with

approved but unbuilt housing projects throughout the area, capable of meeting primary employer needs.

There are similar plans and set asides throughout our region, in the form of plans that are stalled or where construction has not started due to the Great Recession, which is now beginning to ease. I just reviewed a major town specific plan in Sutter County on Highway 70/99 called Sutter Pointe.

Western Nevada County enjoys a critical mass of tech companies and other primary employers, so there is plenty of talent around. And a new or expanded company that would help establish housing and amenities would attract a lot of young people and families along with their talents at a time when the average age in the region keeps edging toward over the hill and school enrollment is declining

Rural labor has always been more affordable than in the urban areas. In the early years of Grass Valley Group, they called on a talented, affordable new work force: the heretofore-stay-at-home mom. All aspects of production, including stuffing circuit boards was done at the Bitney Springs Campus. At the time, it was a secured and guarded facility, a complex of working people at various income levels. Now imagine that lovely rural setting with nearby housing, school, small post office, and a coffee shop and *voila*, a company village is born.

So what about it, value added businesses from the high rent regions of California? How about locating here in the mountains and small valley towns instead of Texas or Nevada? We have or can attract an affordable labor force and we suddenly (and for a limited time) have affordable housing opportunities. I know just the consultants that can plan the details and help you from beginning to end. Contact me.