

# Research paper: El Dorado County is dysfunctional

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

Development planning in El Dorado County is dysfunctional, according to an academic paper published this month by two scholars from UC Davis.

Past practices and politics mean that the county may not, on its own, be able to create plans for growth that will be sustainable in the long run, according to the paper, titled, "Gold Country: the politics of landscape in exurban El Dorado County, California."

"El Dorado County represents a very dysfunctional politics. It is kind of the cutting edge of dysfunction," said Stephen M. Wheeler, a professor of landscape architecture.

Wheeler was the faculty adviser to co-author Craig Beebe, who wrote a 200-page master's thesis from which the paper was excerpted for publication in the University of Arizona's Journal of Political Ecology.

Although Beebe was less biting in his comments, he said his research into county documents and news accounts – supported by interviews – confirmed the basic conclusion.

"What we're most critical about is that the planning there has been so difficult and so unproductive, basically," Beebe said in a phone interview from Oregon, where he now works for a land-use planning nonprofit.

One example is the 14-year struggle to develop a general plan for the county, approved in 2004 and facing some revisions right now.

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