

**COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO  
CALIFORNIA**

For the Agenda of:  
March 15, 2006  
Timed: 2:00 pm

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Department of Planning and Community Development

Subject: **WORKSHOP #14 ON THE COUNTY GENERAL PLAN UPDATE:  
PROPOSED EXPANSION OF THE URBAN POLICY AREA**

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**Overview**

During the last Board Workshop on February 15, 2006, members of the public and private property owners provided testimony before the Board regarding expansion of the urbanized area of the County as identified by the Urban Policy Area (UPA). A number of property owners requested that specific parcels be included in the UPA of the draft General Plan, while others petitioned for the Urban Services Boundary (USB) to be expanded. In addition, requests were made to change General Plan land use designations. Members of the public weighed in on whether the UPA should be moved, and if so, where and to what extent it should be expanded. Once public testimony was complete, the Board engaged in a discussion regarding urban and rural residential expansion. The Board directed staff to report back during today's workshop on a number of key issues relating to growth in the County.

**Recommendations**

1. Accept testimony from citizens and private property owners regarding areas to be included in the Urban Policy Area (UPA) of the draft General Plan.
2. Endorse staff's recommended UPA expansion strategy as presented in the staff report dated January 25, 2006 (Board Workshop #12), or if needed, direct Planning staff to report back on specific issues, comments or questions regarding expansion of the UPA.

**Measures/Evaluation**

Expanding the Urban Policy Area will accommodate the construction of approximately 24,000 new housing units and supporting employment and retail services in the unincorporated area of Sacramento County by the year 2030.

**Fiscal Impact**

None.

## **BACKGROUND:**

During Workshop #13, held on February 15, 2006, members of the public and private property owners provided testimony before the Board regarding expansion of the Urban Policy Area (UPA). A number of property owners requested that specific parcels be included in the UPA of the draft General Plan, while others petitioned for the Urban Services Boundary (USB) to be expanded. In addition, requests were made to change General Plan land use designations. Members of the public weighed in whether the UPA should be moved, and if so, where and to what extent it should be expanded. Once public testimony was complete, the Board engaged in a discussion regarding expansion of the UPA and staff's recommendation. The Board provided numerous comments, including:

- Staff should provide an analysis of UPA/USB expansion and designation change requests.
- A more detailed analysis is needed on opportunities and constraints in each of the potential new growth areas, including how these issues were calibrated and weighed against each other, in order to arrive at a better understanding of why staff recommended the Jackson Highway West and South areas over the other potential new growth areas.
- Provision of water, environmental concerns, Mather's noise contours, and traffic need to be looked at in greater detail.
- More public outreach is needed before a decision can be made regarding where and to what extent the UPA is to be expanded.

### *Purpose and Scope of the March 15, 2006 Workshop*

During today's workshop, staff will respond to the questions and comments raised by the Board during the February 15, 2006 Workshop. Staff from a number of County departments, including Planning, Transportation, Water Resources, Water Quality and Airports, will be available to discuss and answer any questions associated with the Jackson Highway Corridor and the East County area, including environmental concerns, provision of water and sewer services, and transportation.

## **DISCUSSION:**

### **A. Opportunities and Constraints within the Jackson Highway Corridor and the East County Area (East of Sunrise Douglas)**

At the request of the Board, staff has conducted a more detailed analysis of the major opportunities and constraints within the potential new growth areas to further explain staff's recommendation to include the Jackson Highway West Area in the UPA and to further analyze the Jackson Highway South area for possible inclusion in the UPA over other potential new growth areas, particularly the Jackson Highway East and East County areas (see Attachment "B" for a map of these areas). The issues identified by the Board during the last Board Workshop on February 15, 2006 requiring more analysis included environmental constraints, provision of sewer service, provision of municipal water, and transportation/traffic issues. The following section provides a summary level analysis of each of these issues, as well as an examination of

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the ability to achieve Blueprint's principles in these areas and timing of development within the USB. The more thorough analysis of these issues is provided in Attachment "A".

1. Environmental / SSHCP Issues: The Jackson Highway West and South areas contain no environmental constraints that represent a possible impediment to successful implementation of the South Sacramento Habitat Conservation Plan (SSHCP). However, there are significant species and habitat resources within the East County and Jackson Highway East areas that must be protected to ensure successful implementation of the SSHCP. Expansion of the UPA to include the Jackson Highway East and East County areas before the draft SSHCP is crafted may threaten its viability. This issue is addressed at length in Attachment "A".
2. Provision of Sewer Service: Since sewer service will be available by the end of 2006 in the Jackson Highway West and South areas, staff considers expansion of the UPA in this area ideal and much more appropriate than the Jackson Highway East and East County areas, where provision of sewer service is not planned for many years. In addition, providing sewer service to the latter areas will ultimately require costly and potentially controversial interceptor extensions through urban areas and established rural communities, further complicating the process and possibly affecting the construction timeframe.
3. Provision of Municipal Water: The Jackson Highway West and South areas are relatively well-positioned for provision of water during the 2030 planning period. The Jackson Highway South area is entirely within the Sacramento County Water Agency 2030 Study Area for Zone 40 and is adjacent to existing Zone 40 infrastructure where it can be provided with a logical extension of infrastructure and service. A large portion of the Jackson Highway West area is within the City of Sacramento's American River Place of Use. Some of the Jackson Highway West and South area is already being irrigated, so a conversion of this supply to urban use will not result in a net increase in water demand. Should it become available, this area is also well positioned for use of recycled wastewater that would reduce impacts on surface and groundwater supplies. By contrast, the East County area is relatively poor-positioned for provision of water during the 2030 planning period. This area is not included in the Sacramento County Water Agency 2030 Study Area for Zone 40, is not adjacent to existing water infrastructure, is poorly situated for the supply of recycled wastewater and/or remediated groundwater, and little, if any, groundwater is available because of the proximity to groundwater contamination and the characteristics of the local aquifer.
4. Transportation Infrastructure and Traffic: In the Jackson Highway West and South areas, the major transportation infrastructure is already in place. In addition, urban development in this area can support the opportunity for Bus Rapid Transit along South Watt Avenue (as is being currently studied), as well as Light Rail or other enhanced transit service along Central California Traction Railroad (CCTR) or the Jackson Highway. While the Jackson Highway East area features roadway network, this area does not provide good access to either US 50 or Highway 99. In contrast, there is no transportation infrastructure in place in the East County area, particularly in advance of development of Rio Del Oro, Easton the remainder of Sunrise Douglas and the Folsom Sphere of Influence (SOI).

5. Achievability of Blueprint-Style Development and Principles: The County's growth expectation (based on SACOG's Blueprint Vision) and the style of development advocated by the Blueprint's principles go hand-in-hand. Accepting the growth allocation without accepting and advocating for the style of growth espoused by Blueprint's principles is contradictory to the spirit in which the Blueprint was initiated and the ultimate Vision was created. If the style and principles cannot be achieved, the County may elect to accept a lower growth allocation, rather than choosing to push this growth further out to greenfield areas outside of the existing UPA. It is staff's opinion that, given current development patterns, the Jackson Highway West and South areas offer much more promise in regards to achieving Blueprint's seven smart growth principles during the 2005-2030 planning period than would either Jackson Highway East or the East County areas.
  
6. Timing of Development: The Urban Policy Area (UPA) is the County's main tool to achieve strategic and well-timed buildout within the Urban Services Boundary (USB), with a specific focus on planning and development that will occur within the next planning period (2005-2030). Since the County's General Plan acknowledges that land inside the USB will eventually be built out, the key questions are *how* and *when* this development will occur. Essentially, identifying the UPA expansion area for this General Plan Update is a question of timing: what area makes the most sense to plan for and develop during the next 25 years? Again, since most areas between the UPA and USB will eventually be urbanized, choosing where to expand the UPA during this General Plan Update is less about what land can be developed; the more relevant factor is identifying the area most suited for such development in the near term. Staff considers the Jackson Highway West and South Areas the most logical choice for contiguous urban expansion and development within the 2005-2030 timeframe. In addition, water and sewer services area readily available, and there are few environmental constraints and nothing that would jeopardize the viability of the SSHCP. Attachment "A" goes into greater detail regarding this area, as well as the timing constraints within the Jackson Highway East and East County areas.

## **B. Analysis of Requests for UPA Expansion, USB Expansion and Land Use Designation Changes**

Attachment "A" provides a detailed analysis of constraints and opportunities in the Jackson Highway Corridor and the East County Area. This analysis provides a foundation for staff's recommendations regarding many of the requests received to date. In addition, a map is provided (Attachment "D") to illustrate requests received by staff before March 8, 2006 to expand the UPA and/or USB or to change General Plan land use designations. Attachment "E" offers a detailed summary of these requests.

1. UPA Expansion Requests: The County has received numerous requests from property owners asking that their land be included inside the UPA of the draft General Plan. Staff maintains that the Jackson Highway West and South areas are the most appropriate areas to include within the UPA and to ultimately develop during the 2005-2030 planning period. Therefore, staff supports requests within the Jackson Highway West area to be included in the UPA, whereas staff believes that requests within the Jackson Highway South area should

be further studied for possible inclusion in the UPA. This decision will ultimately be based upon whether the Jackson Highway West area can accommodate needed residential and non-residential uses.

Conversely, staff does not recommend that any request located outside of the recommended UPA expansion area be considered. Two major concentrations of such requests exist: one in the East County Area and another in the Jackson Highway East area. The more thorough analysis provided in Attachment "A" of this staff report (and summarized above) further details staff's recommended expansion of the UPA in the Jackson Highway West and South areas, as well as why staff believes that UPA expansion in the East County and Jackson Highway East areas is premature. It is for these reasons that staff cannot support UPA expansion requests within the East County and Jackson Highway East areas.

Requests have also been received for small landholdings in the Rio Linda-Elverta area. First, Beazer requested that approximately 38 acres (2850 Elverta Road) be included in the UPA. This property is located at the southwest corner of Elverta Road and Scotland Drive. Since this property is part of the "West of Watt" area that the Board previously decided to conceptually include within the UPA of the draft General Plan, staff considers this request tentatively granted.

Second, Crown Pacific/Syndicor requested that 34 acres in the northwest portion of the Rio-Linda/Elverta area be included in the UPA. Their property is currently designated as Agricultural Cropland on the General Plan Land Use Diagram and is located north of Elverta Road and east of Rio Linda Boulevard. Expanding the UPA to include this parcel would not represent a contiguous expansion, as the current UPA boundary ends at Elverta Road, approximately 1,000 feet south of the southernmost point of the property. Although the Elverta Specific Plan has still yet to be approved, it will ultimately provide up to 4,950 new residential units in this area for build out during the 2005-2030 planning period. Additionally, a similar request was considered during the recent update of the Rio Linda-Elverta Community Plan update. The Board did not support development of this property during the adoption of this Community Plan. Lastly, a significant portion of the property is located within the 100-year floodplain. Due to available holding capacity within the Elverta Specific Plan area, drainage and floodplain related impacts and mitigation, and a non-contiguous expansion of the UPA, staff does not support this request.

2. USB Expansion Requests: Given the substantial capacity remaining between the UPA and the USB, staff generally considers USB expansion to be premature, with the exception of consideration under the Natomas Joint Vision planning process. However, the following section provides a more detailed analysis of all USB expansion requests received by Planning staff, as well as more specific reasoning as to why staff does not recommend that these requests be granted:
  - a) Many USB expansion requests received by the County are located in the unincorporated Natomas area, within the boundaries of the Natomas Joint Vision Planning Area. These requests include those submitted by Gidaro, Weaver, Norton, Ose, and Lund. On December 10, 2002 the County Board of Supervisors and the Sacramento City Council

each approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that outlined a joint vision for land use and revenue sharing principles for Natomas. The MOU recognized the City as the agent of development and the County as the agent of permanent open space protection, including farmlands and habitat. As such, staff maintains that the most appropriate venue for addressing such requests would be in the context of the Natomas Joint Vision process. Therefore, staff recommends that future discussions be deferred to the Natomas Joint Vision process.

- b) Mr. Pruner has requested that approximately 166 acres (located about ¼ mile north of the Galt city limit) be included within the USB and UPA with a land use designation change from General Agriculture to Agricultural-Residential or a higher residential designation. Since a designation change to Agricultural-Residential would not require a UPA/USB expansion, staff contacted Mr. Pruner to clarify the intent of his request. Mr. Pruner made clear that he wants to explore the possibility of urban residential development, thereby necessitating the UPA/USB expansion. Approval of this request would either create a small unincorporated urban island north of Galt, or would require that the USB be extended well over 5 miles to the south through the Cosumnes River and its associated floodplain. The General Plan does not support either the creation of urban islands outside of the existing USB due to adverse impacts on infrastructure planning and financing, provision of municipal services, and encouragement of leapfrog development. However, the City of Galt is currently updating their General Plan and is looking at this area as a potential new growth area. While staff is not in support of this request, staff advises the proponent to contact the City of Galt regarding his desire to urbanize this land. If Mr. Pruner would like to explore a designation change to Agricultural-Residential (and forgo his request for an urban designation) staff suggests that a formal application be filed with the County.

3. Land Use Designation Change Requests: In addition to UPA and USB expansion requests, staff has also received three requests to change General Plan land use designations. Staff advocates that the proponents file private General Plan Amendment applications, as this is a more appropriate mechanism for considering the merits of their individual requests. A brief analysis has been provided below to further explain the details of each request and to illustrate the difficulties associated with processing them with the General Plan Update.

- a) Mr. Trimble has requested to change the designation of 40 acres from Agriculture Cropland to Agricultural-Residential. This property is located east of Highway 99 and north of Valensin Road (i.e., north of Galt's city limits). Staff does not support using the General Plan Update as a forum to discuss the designation change request. It is the opinion of staff that the merits of this proposal, including site and community suitability, agricultural-residential expansion outside of the USB, drainage, flooding and Swainson's Hawk impacts, can be better addressed as part of a stand alone General Plan Amendment request. In addition, the Agricultural-Residential study, which took over a decade to complete, resulted in the development of several policies in the Land Use Element relating to the establishment of Agricultural-Residential parcels. As such, the request can be better evaluated against these policies if the proponent submits a General Plan Amendment application so that the necessary time and analysis can be given to the

request.

- b) Mr. Namikawa has requested to change the designation of approximately 3 acres (located at 5200 Hedge Avenue, in the Jackson Highway West area) from Agricultural-Urban Reserve to Intensive or Extensive Industrial. If this area is ultimately included within the UPA, a master planning effort would most likely be initiated. This process would be the most appropriate venue for exploring such land use designation changes. While this parcel is located within the area staff has recommended for inclusion in the UPA, staff considers land use designation changes in this area to be premature. Granting such requests before a master planning effort can be initiated may lead to other similar requests, which together may compromise the ultimate master planning effort. Therefore, staff recommends that the request be put on hold until the updated General Plan is adopted and (if the area is included in the UPA) a master planning effort is initiated.
- c) Mr. Rooney has requested to change the designation of approximately 249 acres from General Agriculture to Agricultural-Residential. This land is located east of Grant Line Road and south of the Jackson Highway near the USB. While planning staff generally supports the idea of creating an Agricultural-Residential buffer adjacent to the USB, staff does not consider the General Plan Update process an appropriate venue for addressing a designation change on this property, given past difficulties with similar projects on nearby land. Staff is concerned that if this request is processed with the General Plan Update, the issues that beset the other processes may not be adequately addressed and that adjacent neighbors may not be engaged in the process early enough. Therefore, staff advocates that the project proponent file a formal General Plan Amendment application so that the request receives the appropriate level of analysis and attention, especially to determine if it is consistent with recently adopted Agricultural-Residential expansion study.

### **C. Buildout Scenarios for Jackson Highway West and South**

The Jackson Highway West area encompasses over 5,300 acres, while the Jackson Highway South area is nearly 1,650 acres in size, for a total of approximately 7,000 acres. However, a portion of this area will be constrained from non-rural residential development by Mather's noise contour, while local floodplains will limit development potential in other areas. Eventually, the developable acreage in this area and holding capacity will have to be determined so that a project can be defined for the environmental analysis. There are a few key issues that need to be addressed before staff can provide more specific figures regarding developable acreage:

- o The Sacramento County Airport System will be conducting a Board Workshop on March 22, 2006 with the Board to discuss the three noise contour alternatives in greater detail. These alternatives include Annual Service Volume (ASV), Theoretic Capacity, and Master Plan Forecast. Since the Board has yet to make a determination regarding the updated noise contours for Mather Field, it is difficult to assess the total amount of acres that may be restricted from non-rural residential development in this area.

- While the area within the adopted noise contour will not be available for non-rural residential uses, other uses (such as commercial, employment, public/civic, rural residential, etc.) would be allowed. Since the noise contour only represents a constraint to urban residential uses, the area located within the contour should by no means be considered undevelopable, since many other uses would be allowed. In fact, much of this area is situated along the Jackson Highway, a transportation corridor that may be appropriate for a myriad of commercial and employment uses.
- Many past master planning efforts have reduced the size of creek floodplains considerably by widening and deepening the creek's channels in order to contain the entire 100-year floodplain within the channel itself. Therefore, it is conceivable that much of the land currently shown as constrained by a floodplain would ultimately be available for development.

In an effort to begin exploring how the Jackson Highway West and South areas may ultimately be planned and built out, staff has identified a number of example plans that exemplify distinct land use mix scenarios. These scenarios are as follows:

- North Natomas Community Plan
- East Franklin Specific Plan
- Laguna Ridge Specific Plan
- North Vineyard Station Specific Plan
- SACOG's Blueprint Vision

The land use mixes within each of these buildout scenario is illustrated in Attachment "F". Staff requests that the Board review each land use scenario and to use this information to spur discussion regarding the future land use composition and mix for the Jackson Highway West and South areas.

Staff considers the Jackson Highway West and South areas to be well suited for more intensive commercial and employment uses. First, the surrounding area (including Planned Growth areas to the south and southwest) is comprised of predominantly residential development and is currently very underserved by such uses. In addition, the area is bisected by a number of major thoroughfares and offers good access to US 50 and Highway 99, providing the access necessary to serve concentrated retail and employment development. Lastly, since land within Mather's 60 CNEL noise contour will be restricted from most residential development, this area may offer a prime opportunity for a number of non-residential uses. Planning staff hopes to coordinate with Economic Development staff to analyze the potential commercial and employment needs in this area. Once this analysis has been completed, staff will return to the Board with information regarding how much commercial and employment development this area can support, and in turn, how much acreage is available for other uses, including residential.

#### **D. Draft Policy Framework to Guide Development in Any Identified New Growth Area(s)**

During the last two workshops, discussions have focused on where and to what extent the UPA should be expanded. Often times, discussion regarding the growth management strategies has

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been focused predominantly on the particulars of Blueprint's growth allocation and achieving a specific holding capacity. While achieving this allocation is a relatively important aspect of the Blueprint project, ensuring that planning and development in the County is consistent with the smart growth principles that the Blueprint project was built upon is the most crucial aspect of these discussions. Staff considers the creation of safe, healthy and livable communities of lasting quality to be the driving force behind decisions regarding UPA expansion and planning in both existing communities and new growth areas, whereas attainment of a precise holding capacity is only a means to an end.

Regardless of where new growth areas are identified or what acreage they may ultimately encompass, planning and development in these areas should be driven by policies and principles that will ensure the creation of new communities that offer a mix of uses and cater to a wide range of incomes, needs and desires. With that end in mind, staff has provided a number of policy considerations that can serve as a starting point for the introduction of a New Growth Area Planning Strategy in the Draft General Plan. Staff is not suggesting that the Board adopt these statements as policies for the updated General Plan at this point. Rather, these policy considerations have been provided to initiate discussions regarding the creation of a policy framework for the General Plan that will guide planning and development of new growth areas.

### **Goal**

Accommodate a portion of the projected population and employment growth where the appropriate level of public infrastructure and services are or will be available during the planning period.

### **Objective:**

Accommodate 24,000 residential units in new growth areas in a compact, transit oriented manner that features a mix of uses (both vertical and horizontal) while protecting environmental quality and preserving open space.

### **Policy Considerations:**

1. Create a plan that is consistent with the General Plan policies, SACOG's adopted Blueprint Vision, and smart growth principles.
2. Establish a contiguous form of urban expansion to facilitate a logical extension of public infrastructure.
3. Create a strong sense of identity, community, neighborhood and human scale.
4. Create a plan with a mix of land uses, including a balance of residential and employment (jobs-housing balance) as well as providing for neighborhood-oriented services and diverse commercial amenities.
5. Create well designed commercial and employment nodes at strategic locations along the Jackson and South Watt Corridors.
6. Provide a diverse range of housing densities and encourage more compact development where appropriate.

7. Provide affordable housing integrated with market rate units.
8. Encourage high quality urban design and efficient use of energy and resources.
9. Provide compact, mixed use development oriented around existing and future transit stations.
10. Coordinate planning and development of new growth areas with the South Sacramento Habitat Conservation Plan and other efforts to preserve and protect natural resources.
11. Utilize wetlands, drainage corridors (i.e., the Morrison Creek) and former mining pits to create a well designed and interconnected regional open space and recreation system.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Today's workshop is the third of four workshops scheduled to discuss the UPA expansion strategy of the General Plan Update. During the first workshop conducted on January 25, 2006, staff identified four potential expansion areas and described opportunities and constraints existing within each one. Staff recommended inclusion of the Jackson Highway West area in the UPA of the draft General Plan, as well as further analysis of the Jackson Highway South area (the "Elbow" area) for possible inclusion. The second workshop, conducted on February 15, 2006, was focused on receiving public testimony on the proposed UPA expansion strategy, as well as to engage the Board in a discussion regarding what further information and analysis is needed from Planning staff. Today's workshop has been scheduled to report back on the questions and comments raised by the Board and the public during the previous workshop regarding potential expansion areas and staff's recommendation.

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

- A. Detailed Analysis of Opportunities and Constraints within the Jackson Highway Corridor and the East County Area (East of Sunrise Douglas)
- B. Potential Expansion Areas Map
- C. Map Illustrating Staff's Recommendation for UPA Expansion (from Board Workshop #12, held on January 25, 2006)
- D. Updated Map Illustrating UPA/USB Expansion and Land Use Designation Change Requests Received Before March 8, 2006
- E. Updated Spreadsheet Summarizing UPA/USB Expansion and Land Use Designation Change Request Details Received Before March 8, 2006
- F. New Growth Area Buildout Scenario Comparison
- G. Vernal Wetland/Acres Density Index (VWADI) Map
- H. Map of the Laguna Formation

- I. Map from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's (USFWS) *Recovery Plan for Vernal Pool Ecosystems of California and Southern Oregon*
- J. Excerpts from Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District's (SRCSD) *Interceptor System Master Plan 2000 Executive Summary*
- K. Zone 40 Study Area Map
- L. SACOG's *Seven Principles of Smart Growth*
- M. Comments from Focus Group #12 – UPA Expansion Strategy