

**COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO  
CALIFORNIA**

For the Agenda of:  
November 8, 2006  
Timed: 3:30 pm

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Department of Planning and Community Development

Subject: **WORKSHOP #18 ON THE COUNTY GENERAL PLAN UPDATE:  
PRESENTATION OF THE PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT GENERAL  
PLAN 2030**

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**Overview**

The Sacramento County Public Review Draft General Plan 2030 is an update of the 1993 General Plan; it sets a vision of what the County will be like in the year 2030 and identifies steps required to move toward that vision. The Plan provides information about the County's long-term goals and objectives, and recommendations about a wide range of issues—future land uses, the character of new development, the preservation of natural resources, and the future of transportation and utility systems. As a long-term guide for development, the Plan will continue to help County leaders make decisions about the location, scale, and quality of new development; the improvement of neighborhoods and commercial areas; the revitalization of commercial corridors; the extension and upgrade of utilities; and the future of the County's parks, public spaces, and natural areas. The Plan will build on a long tradition of planning in Sacramento County. Since 1965, the year of Sacramento County's first General Plan, decisions regarding land development and revitalization, as well as public investments in transportation, public utilities, and parks, have been guided by a General Plan. General Plan Update 2030 will continue this tradition.

**Recommendations**

1. Receive and file the Public Review Draft General Plan (provided as Attachment "B") and Sacramento County Commercial Corridors Traffic Analysis (Attachment "C"); accept testimony on the General Plan Update and the traffic analysis.
2. Consider the results of the public outreach program during the review of the Public Review Draft General Plan Update.
3. Direct Planning staff to make changes to the Public Review Draft General Plan as appropriate and transmit the draft updated General Plan to the Department of Environmental Review and Assessment for environmental analysis.
4. Direct the Department of Environmental Review and Assessment to initiate environmental review.

**Fiscal Impact**

None.

## **BACKGROUND:**

The Draft General Plan represents the culmination of nearly two years of workshops held with the Board of Supervisors to frame and define the scope of the updated General Plan. Numerous issues have been addressed during these workshops. The workshops began in August 2004 with the assumption that the update project was to be minor in nature, representing a “tweaking” of existing policies rather than significant revision of the General Plan. However, the scope of the update project changed considerably with SACOG’s adoption of the Blueprint Vision. In light of this change, the focus of the Board Workshops shifted in August 2005 from policy analysis and modification to a consideration of changes to the Plan’s growth management strategies. Attachment “A” provides an overview and summary of key outcomes from each of the Board Workshops. These key outcomes formed the basis for the update of the 1993 General Plan.

## **DISCUSSION:**

The following discussion outlines key developments that have occurred since the previous series of General Plan workshops with your Board, including themes and concepts that have been included in this Public Review Draft General Plan Update. Staff has responded to and incorporated comments from your Board that came out of the previous workshops. However, it is important to note that this is a public review draft and further discussion will certainly occur. Your Board may also provide staff with direction to make modifications. Staff’s goal today is to give a broad introduction to the Public Review Draft General Plan and set out the next steps in this initiation process.

### **Traffic Study**

During the General Plan Update Board Workshops held in late 2005 and early 2006, your Board expressed concern regarding how additional homes, stores and employment uses in commercial corridors would impact traffic both along the corridor and in adjacent neighborhoods. In response to this concern, Department of Transportation staff engaged a consultant, Fehr and Peers, to analyze the traffic impacts of different growth scenarios in three corridors: North Watt Avenue, Fair Oaks Boulevard, and Florin Road. The results of this study, summarized below, will be presented to your Board today by Fehr and Peers. For more details, refer to Attachment “C”.

The results of this study indicate that additional housing along the three commercial corridors would generally add traffic to already congested corridors, which in turn would increase corridor travel time. However, congestion and increases to travel time will occur even without the corridor strategy due to general growth in the region. Therefore, the relative increase in traffic is relatively minor along the Fair Oaks Boulevard and Florin Road Corridors. The increase along North Watt Avenue is more notable because of the assumed emphasis on employment at McClellan. However, it is important to note that while traffic congestion would increase along these corridors, the additional housing provides benefits to residents along the corridor and for the region as a whole. Additional housing along the commercial corridors leads to a decline in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per household, with VMT per household across the six county region declining by over 12 percent under the Blueprint Scenario. The reduction in VMT is due

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to corridor residents making fewer and shorter auto trips due to the co-location of housing, shopping, and employment opportunities. The proximity of uses also makes walking and biking a more attractive transportation mode along the corridors.

### Results of the Public Outreach Program

As the scope of the General Plan Update expanded due to revised housing and job growth projections, the Board recognized the need to more proactively engage citizens and hear from them about what the County should look like in the future. Based on this direction, the County undertook a five-month expanded public outreach process to inform people about the GPU and encourage their participation and feedback. Through media outreach, an interactive online game and a series of community workshops, more than 600 interested citizens participated in this process. County staff has acquired very useful and important feedback from these community members and stakeholders. Results of this effort were presented to your Board during the October 31, 2006 workshop. A report was prepared which includes overall key findings and themes compiled from all of the workshops relating to the proposed growth management strategies and other key components of the GPU. This information will be available for Board consideration during the review of the Draft General Plan. Based on this information, your Board may choose to direct Planning staff to make appropriate changes to the Public Review Draft General Plan.

### Key Components of the Draft General Plan

#### **1. A New Growth Management Program**

The Land Use Element of the Draft General Plan Update proposes four growth management strategies to accommodate jobs and housing growth anticipated over the next 25 years. The first two strategies, Infill and Buildout of Planned Communities, are considered assumption based strategies – these strategies do not propose specific actions or changes to current growth management policy; rather, they simply assume continuation of current trends. The next two strategies, Commercial Corridor and Urban Policy Area Expansion, are new strategies that would require the County to implement specific programs to plan for new development.

Results from the public outreach show that 90% of participants (57 out of 63 tables) chose the “heart” map as part of their policy card exercises. Overall, this “heart” strategy presented an alternative that located new growth inward through commercial corridor revitalization with some expansion in new growth areas (West of Watt, Easton and Jackson Highway [to Excelsior]) and some growth in existing communities through infill and buildout of planned communities.

#### ➤ *Infill Strategy*

This strategy assumes that vacant and underutilized infill parcels located outside of commercial corridor areas will build out to be generally consistent with existing General Plan and zoning designations. A majority of private development requests will be considered and then either approved, denied or modified during the public hearing process. This strategy assumes that over time, some requests will be approved at or below zoned densities, while other requests for upzones may be approved on a site-by-site basis. The results of the

public outreach showed that participants wanted the existing character of their neighborhoods preserved. Based on these outcomes, as well as direction from your Board, the Draft General Plan assumes that this strategy can accommodate somewhere between 10,000 – 18,000 additional housing units over time. This assumption has a lower end range than what was presented to your Board in the previous series of General Plan Update workshops.

➤ *Planned Communities*

This strategy is actually an assumption that recognizes build-out of the five planned specific and comprehensive plan communities within the unincorporated County, as well as the inclusion of sites to meet the County's affordable housing ordinance. It assumes that over the 25-year planning period, approximately 25,000 to 35,000 new housing units can be accommodated through the development of the East Antelope Specific Plan, the Vineyard Springs Comprehensive Plan area, North Vineyard Station Specific Plan area, and the Florin Vineyard Gap Comprehensive Plan area.

➤ *Commercial Corridors*

The goal of this strategy is to revitalize commercial corridors by developing mixed-use centers and urban villages to improve community quality of life, optimize economic development, achieve balanced land uses, and foster the opportunity to accommodate a significant portion of the future growth. These corridors contain vacant and underutilized residential and agricultural-residential zoned parcels that can accommodate approximately 2,000 residential units, if build at current zoning capacity. However, these corridors also contain vacant and underutilized non-residential zoned parcels, as validated by the Planning Department's Corridor Conditions and Opportunities Assessment Report dated September 2004, that can be considered for alternative uses, including residential uses. SACOG's Preferred Blueprint Plan indicates that approximately 19,000 residential units can be planned for within the 13 corridors. During the community outreach workshops, a majority of participants expressed support for this strategy and expressed a preference to see the County pursue commercial corridor reinvestment prior to allowing development to occur in proposed new growth areas. Residents across the County generally supported the commercial corridor strategy; however, many expressed that corridor planning efforts should involve the local community and that additional traffic should not adversely affect local neighborhoods. Therefore, this strategy assumes that somewhere between 17,000-21,000 additional housing units can be accommodated in targeted corridors within the planning period.

➤ *Expansion of the Urban Policy Area*

The intent of this growth management strategy is to increase the residential holding capacity of the General Plan by amending the Urban Policy Area to include the West of Watt Agricultural-Residential Area, the Easton Planning Area, and the Jackson Highway corridor as new growth areas. Additionally, the draft General Plan includes direction for the initiation of master planning efforts to ensure that future development is sustainable and compatible with existing development. At several workshops, participants commented that the West of Watt area was better suited for new development than the other three proposed areas, although there were some concerns about airport noise. In addition, most workshop

participants felt that the Jackson A area (to Excelsior) was more appropriate to develop in the planning period than the Jackson B area (to Sunrise).

In the previous workshops with your Board regarding UPA expansion in the Jackson Highway corridor, staff recommended expanding the UPA just far enough to accommodate the remainder of the Blueprint Vision's growth allocation that could not be accommodated in infill, corridors or planned communities. However, based on input received from your Board during Workshops 13-16, the public review draft of the General Plan has been drafted to include a larger portion of the Jackson Highway in the expanded UPA. Staff also recommends this approach as discussed below. However, the draft Plan requires that subsequent master plans be consistent with a larger vision for the area (details below) and that growth radiate from one of four nodes. These nodes can be developed to serve not only as centers of community and transit-oriented developments, but they will also be an important economic engine for the County and feature a much greater emphasis on employment and retail uses. The updated plan assumes that between 31,500-47,000 new housing units can be accommodated within the expanded UPA (within the West of Watt, Easton and Jackson Highway areas), with 25,000-35,000 of these units occurring within the Jackson Highway area.

## **2. The Jackson Corridor Visioning Program**

The greater Jackson Highway Area, as discussed in the Draft Land Use Element on pages 21-24, represents the unincorporated County's greatest opportunity for future development inside of the USB. However, planning and buildout of this area will span a number of decades, and will reach far beyond the 2030 planning horizon of this General Plan. In addition, while a portion of what staff is calling the "Jackson Highway Visioning Study Area" is within the UPA and will be developed within the current planning period (2030), a large portion of this Area remains outside of the UPA and will not be available for development within this planning period. Lastly, in order to best realize the long-term potential of this Area, the County must consider a number of related near-term planning initiatives that will strongly impact future development in the Area. These initiatives include implementation of the South Sacramento Habitat Conservation Plan (SSHCP), protection of the Cosumnes River and its floodplain, planning of the Elk Grove/Rancho Cordova/El Dorado "connector" roadway, the creation of an agricultural-residential buffer along the inside of the USB, and other in-progress planning efforts. Currently, these efforts are proceeding without clear planning guidance on how this Area will ultimately be developed.

Therefore, in order to guide and coordinate planning efforts, the Draft General Plan recommends the preparation of comprehensive vision for the long-term buildout of the Jackson Highway Area. This vision will span beyond the 2030 timeframe of this General Plan to ensure compatibility between near-term decision-making and the Area's long-term development potential. This vision plan will strive to encourage the creation of new communities that are connected and balanced, while preventing piecemeal and haphazard development that can occur as large new communities emerge over an extended period of time. The scope of this effort, tentatively referred to as the *Jackson Visioning Study Area*, is anticipated to contain a level of detail and policy language that is more specific than that in the current draft of the General Plan, but not as exactly defined as a Community Plan. It would address strategic planning

considerations relating to the Jackson Highway Area, including development potential at full build out, phasing of development, location and conceptual layout of land uses, economic development opportunities, environmental issues, and public facilities and infrastructure.

### **3. Economic Development Strategy**

The General Plan 2030 contains a newly developed Economic Development Element to broaden, stimulate and strengthen the County's economic base, coordinate countywide economic development efforts and promote a thriving, competitive business environment that will ensure long term ability to provide quality services and local employment growth. The Economic Development Element contains several policies to meet the following objectives:

- Intensify business attraction, retention and development by attracting businesses that would contribute to the diversification and stabilization of the local economy.
- Redevelop Mather Field and McClellan Park with a mixture of public and private uses that promotes both as job centers for the region, maintains the facilities for viable air transportation related uses, and enhances the local and regional economies.
- Increase sports attraction and tourism and develop professional and amateur sporting events in the Capital Region.
- Act as a catalyst for commercial corridor redevelopment through partnerships with business associations, Business Improvement Districts and businesses retention and attraction efforts.
- Attract key regional sales tax generators by identifying opportunity sites and key partnering groups, including the real estate community and SACTO that will help market available opportunities.

### **4. Revisions to the Agricultural, Conservation and Open Space Elements**

The Agriculture, Conservation and Open Space Elements are updated to address current regulatory conditions and to incorporate local initiatives. Representatives of various County departments, including Water Resources, Transportation, Environmental Review and Assessment, Environmental Management, Waste Management and Recycling, Economic Development, Agricultural Commissioner and County Parks, were consulted during the update of these Elements. The following section captures key policy revisions and additions.

#### **➤ Open Space Element**

- A new Open Space Vision Map and corresponding policies and implementation programs were identified to guide open space acquisition and mitigation.
- New policies and implementation measures were included to establish trails and linkages as well as greenbelts to serve as habitat corridors and community separators.

➤ Agricultural Element

- Existing farmland protection policy was amended to include Statewide Importance, Unique and Local Importance Farmland, in addition to Prime Farmland.
- Revisions to its Williamson Act policies to promote Williamson Act contract retention.
- New policies and measures were added to support agri-tourism uses, including the development of an Agri-tourism program.

➤ Conservation Element

- Water Supply Section: Significant text and policy revisions to reflect the goals and values of the Water Forum Agreement, including conjunctive use, sustainable yield and conservation. New policies are introduced to promote water conservation education and water recycling. The surface water quality section proposes several policy amendments and new policies consistent with the Water Quality Control Board NPDES permit process.
- Mineral Resources Section: Policies were revised to address reclamation plans in the Jackson Highway area and hardrock mining, including the preparation of a comprehensive plan to guide future hardrock mining activities
- Materials Recycling Section: Changes were made to update information and data, including recent figures from the California Integrated Waste Management Board and explanation of the County's Environmental Purchasing Policy. A new implementation measure was added to support the County's GreenCycle facility.
- Soil Resources Section: Existing policies were revised to add Statewide Importance, Unique and Local Importance soils, in addition to Prime soils. A 1993 policy addressing golf courses outside of the USB was expanded to prohibit recreational uses constructed on prime, statewide importance, unique and local importance farmland outside of the USB if the use would impede agricultural practices.
- Vegetation & Wildlife Section: This section was extensively revised with policies and implementation measures now organized based upon an ecosystem approach addressing the following four topics – Habitat Protection and Management, Special Status Species, Aquatic Resources, and Terrestrial Resources. This approach was taken to maintain consistency with the Draft South Sacramento Habitat Conservation Plan objectives. The section also includes new policies and revised policies that address the following key topics: Habitat Protection and Project Review, Vernal Pools, Limitation of Fill in Floodplains, Protection of Rivers, Land Use Adjacent to Rivers and Streams, Urban Forest Management and Native Vegetation Protection, Restoration and Enhancement.
- Cultural Resources Section: New language, policy and implementation measures were introduced to support the State's tribal consultation requirements as well as pursuing

becoming a member of the Certified Local Government program through the California Office of Historic Preservation and the National Park Service.

## **5. Human Services Element Update**

The draft Human Services Element sets forth policies to guide land use planning decisions. This updated Element progresses from the emphasis of the previous plan upon the provision of county delivered human services to an emphasis upon the interplay of human services and land use planning. Policies are included in the Element that establishes an approach for examining the social consequences of development proposals and to enhance the County's capacity to interact with the physical planning process for new growth and existing communities in order to create whole and sustainable communities.

## **6. Noise Element Update**

The Noise Element was thoroughly updated to address the current noise environment of Sacramento County. New policies were crafted to recognize that Sacramento County is becoming a noisier place and to give the County more flexibility regarding how the policies are applied. For example, the definition of "sensitive outdoor areas" was refined so that multi-family and mixed use projects would not be burdened by unnecessary requirements, such as mitigating for noise impacts on outdoor balconies. The Element also encourages consideration of setbacks and site design to mitigate for noise before considering the use of barriers (such as soundwalls), since physical barriers often lead to unintended consequences, such as barren streetscapes and reduced pedestrian access to and from a given development.

The updated Element prohibits new residential development within the 60 CNEL noise contours adopted by the County for planning purposes at any airport or helipad within Sacramento County, with the exception of Sacramento Executive Airport. In addition, for new residential development within adopted Airport Planning Policy Area boundaries (but outside of the 60 CNEL) the Element requires granting of an avigation easement to the County, a minimum level of noise insulation, and notification in the Public Report prepared by the California Department of Real Estate disclosing the fact to prospective buyers that the parcel is located within an Airport Planning Policy Area. Lastly, the Element contains both the theoretic airport capacity noise 60 CNEL exposure methodology and the proposed master plan 60 CNEL exposure methodology for Sacramento International Airport and Mather Airport for review, as directed by your Board.

## **7. Circulation Element Update**

The Circulation Element is updated to address current changes in land use patterns that affect travel behavior, recent shifts in transportation planning analysis techniques, and to integrate with transportation planning efforts throughout the Sacramento region. The main theme of the Circulation Element of this Draft General Plan is to provide for mobility through choices. Rather than invest in one or two modes of travel, the intent is to invest in all modes of travel so that the residents of Sacramento County have access to multiple viable and efficient transportation alternatives. This integrated and balanced transportation system requires

investment in not only the roadway system, but also substantial investment in transit, bicycling, and pedestrian modes of travel.

### Requests for UPA and USB Expansion and Land Use Designation Changes

During past General Plan Update workshops, staff has received several requests to expand the UPA and/or USB or to change General Plan land use designations. Attachment “D” illustrates the location of these properties while Attachment “E” offers a detailed summary of these requests.

In the public outreach program, one of the questions in the policy card exercise asked participants if they supported requests from private property owners to develop land outside the UPA and/or USB by 2030. Approximately 46% of the participants who responded at the workshops and on-line felt that the County should only accept requests that are consistent with the proposed growth management strategies (e.g. lands south of Mather along Highway 16). Approximately 26% of participants felt that the County should not accept any of these requests from owners to develop these lands while 16% answered that the County should only accept requests for properties that are located inside the USB. Accepting all requests received from property owners was the answer chosen by 12% of the workshop participants. In addition, a map was included in the workshop materials that showed the general locations of the requests from property owners that your Board had seen as part of the Board workshops from February through May of 2006. However, the level of discussion regarding these requests was left up to the individual workshop facilitators as each table went through the Countywide mapping exercise. Due to timing and the other questions for this exercise, many tables did not cover this issue in great detail.

*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 area is the most appropriate area to include within the UPA and to ultimately develop during the 2005-2030 planning period. Therefore, staff supports requests within the expanded UPA shown in the Draft General Plan. Conversely, staff does not recommend that any request located outside of the recommended UPA expansion area be considered, specifically expansion requests within the East County area (i.e., east of Sunrise Douglas).

*USB Expansion Requests:* Given the substantial capacity remaining between the UPA and the USB, staff generally considers USB expansion to be premature. We do recognize that as a result of the Natomas Joint Vision planning process and the Folsom Sphere of Influence Study, the County’s General Plan will ultimately be revised to reflect these expansions when the respective cities (Sacramento and Folsom) complete their planning processes and update their General Plans. 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. 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.

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*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.

**NEXT STEPS:**

Several workshops have been scheduled to enable the Board of Supervisors to review the draft General Plan and to consider input and feedback received during the community outreach process. Today's workshop was scheduled to unveil the Public Review Draft General Plan and to give a high level overview regarding the new and updated information contained within. Workshops are also scheduled for November 15<sup>th</sup> and December 6<sup>th</sup> to review the Draft Plan in greater detail. Planning staff is working on securing one or two additional workshop dates in January and February 2007 to continue the discussion, if more time is needed. Once the Board has reviewed and endorsed the context of this Public Review Draft, the environmental review of the Draft General Plan will be initiated, which is anticipated to begin in late 2006 or early 2007. An Environmental Impact Report will be prepared to assess the environmental impact of implementing this Plan. Public hearings before the Planning and Commission will be initiated following the release of the Draft Environmental Impact Report.

**CONCLUSION:**

The Public Review Draft General Plan 2030 establishes the framework for sustainable growth in Sacramento County through 2030 and beyond. Using smart growth principles, it provides a series of growth strategies that enable Sacramento County to successfully accommodate the jobs and housing growth projected for the coming decades. These strategies also enable unincorporated Sacramento County to accommodate both the principles and the growth allocation of the 2004 Blueprint Vision. In addition to enabling Sacramento County to successfully accommodate the coming growth, the General Plan 2030 has been crafted to:

- Reinvest in existing communities through redevelopment of commercial corridors and infilling vacant or underutilized parcels;
- Reign in sprawl by developing more compactly and closer to the urban core;
- Provide a more diverse array of housing and transportation choices in recognition of demographic changes; and,
- Protect and preserve open space, agricultural land and sensitive habitat and species.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- A. Summary of General Plan Update Workshops
- B. Draft updated Sacramento County General Plan

- C. Sacramento County Commercial Corridor Traffic Analysis – Final Report
- D. Updated Map Illustrating UPA/USB Expansion and Land Use Designation Change Requests Received Before June 30, 2006
- E. Updated Spreadsheet Summarizing UPA/USB Expansion and Land Use Designation Change Request Details Received Before May 17, 2006