

Summary of Comments and Concerns During the General Plan Update Focus Group Session #11

Urban Policy Area Expansion Strategy

On Thursday, February 2, 2006 the General Plan Update Team held the eleventh Focus Group Session to receive public input and participation in the Update process. This session was convened to focus on Urban Policy Area (UPA) expansion strategy. Staff began the workshop with a brief summary of past workshops and focus groups, followed by a recap of the 12th Board workshop and associated discussion. Once staff's review was complete, focus group participants raised a series of questions relating to UPA expansion possibilities. The following summarizes these questions and captures general group discussion.

WEST OF WATT

1. *The West of Watt proposed UPA expansion area is largely zoned Agricultural – Residential, and some community members are opposed to up-zoning.*
2. *Rezoning West of Watt properties may pose problems to owners for re-sale and home improvement.*
3. *Will the County use eminent domain to re-zone West of Watt properties?*
4. *The Watt Avenue redevelopment process is prompting up-zoning in the West of Watt area. More community input is needed for this process.*
5. *Planning processes are driven by development, and the current pressure is for “rooftops” and associated tax revenue. This drives up-zoning and gives undue influence to developers.*

Response: The West of Watt area has been historically constrained from urban development due to the noise contours associated with McClellan Air Force Base. Since McClellan no longer operates as an Air Force Base, these noise contours have shrunk, thereby allowing urban-type uses in this area. Since the West of Watt area is effectively surrounded by employment and retail uses, both Planning staff and the Board of Supervisors feel that it may be appropriate for future consideration. However, the County has no plans to exercise eminent domain to acquire land or force current land owners to develop their land. Rezoning is requested by private property owners; the County very rarely rezones privately-held land. Any planning process initiated for the West of Watt area will include an extensive public outreach component. The Watt Avenue corridor planning effort is just getting underway, and the community outreach component is still being scoped. Once implemented, it will eventually provide for extensive outreach to all residents of North Highlands so that the community can help shape the vision and buildout of the corridor.

The County does not pursue residential development, or “rooftops,” as a means to generate tax revenue. In fact, most residential developments do

not generate enough tax revenue to pay for the services that they require, resulting in a net loss for the County. While demand for residential development is driven by market forces and population increases, the County typically embarks on a comprehensive planning processes for such developments to receive input from the general public and stakeholders before moving forward.

GENERAL PLAN UPDATE PROCESS & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

- 1. What was the Board of Supervisors' reaction to the proposed UPA expansion areas?*
- 2. County staff has asked for 5,000 additional acres to accommodate 23,000 residential units. This is a 5 DU / acre density assumption. Will there be alternatives?*
- 3. What will future Board of Supervisors workshops on the General Plan Update include?*
- 4. What is the timeline for the General Plan Update?*
- 5. The Board of Supervisors should state the need for transit in UPA expansion areas now, while the MTP is in process.*
- 6. Protection from 200 year floods is more appropriate for Sacramento County than the current 100 year standard.*
- 7. City incorporations break more regionally-focused government. The County should consider a "Metro" system of government.*

Response: Planning staff proposed four potential areas that may be explored for inclusion into the UPA. Staff offered an analysis of constraints and opportunities in each area. The Board of Supervisors will consider the merits of each area to determine the most logical place for expansion of the UPA. Due to time constraints, the Board gave staff very limited feedback regarding staff's recommendation.

Planning staff made a broad assumption that approximately 5,000 additional acres may need to be included in the UPA to accommodate nearly 24,000 residential units. However, this was a very general assumption intended to give the Board and the public a rough sense of the acreage that may be needed. Much more analysis must be done to hone in on a more precise figure.

The next three Board of Supervisors General Plan Update workshops will be dedicated to determining the best areas for UPA expansion. Staff hopes that a determination will be made by the April 19th workshop. The current timeline indicates that a draft General Plan will be released in early winter of 2006. However, if more workshops are needed to discuss UPA expansion, the draft will be delayed. Once the draft is released, it will go into environmental review, which may take several months to complete.

After this review is complete, the draft General Plan will go to the Planning Commission and the Board for hearings and final adoption.

Planning staff has been communicating with Sacramento Regional Transit about the placement of transit services within its redevelopment areas, and will continue to do so once new growth areas have been identified. Staff is also working very closely with SACOG regarding the MTP update. Staff hopes to plan these areas with compact, mixed use nodes that are configured to support enhanced transit services and reduce vehicle miles traveled.

OTHER POTENTIAL EXPANSION SITES

1. *The County should reclaim mined-out sites for alternative uses.*
2. *There is a high potential for affordable housing in reclaimed sites.*
3. *Reclaimed Mather noise contour areas will provide additional space for holding capacity.*
4. *UPA expansion in the Jackson corridor area “makes sense.”*
5. *Is there potential for light rail on the Jackson corridor?*
6. *Proposed UPA expansions tend to be contiguous, except in north Sacramento County. What expansion is most likely in north Sacramento County?*
7. *What is the likelihood of the City of Sacramento annexing land to its north?*
8. *Infrastructure north of the City of Sacramento is at capacity.*
9. *Are the Board of Supervisors considering including the small parcel of land near Elk Grove in a possible UPA expansion?*
10. *Despite being outside of the USB, the 99 corridor is due for tremendous growth in the near future, and the County should plan for it now.*
11. *Many agricultural parcels south of the USB are too small to farm, and property owners would like up-zoning, and inclusion into the USB. The County should accommodate these requests now, before Elk Grove and Galt annex these areas for industrial uses.*

Response: One of Planning staff’s primary recommendations for UPA expansion is the Jackson Highway West area, a location featuring a number of reclaimed mining sites. Since this area is close to the urban core, jobs and retail services, it may provide for an excellent location for affordable housing and compact, transit oriented development. Bus rapid Transit (BRT) is currently being studied in this area. While a light rail extension has not been proposed along the Jackson Highway (a state highway), it is certainly not out of the question. Three alternative noise contours for Mather Air Park are currently being discussed. Land available for urban (namely residential) development in the vicinity of Mather will depend on which noise contour is ultimately adopted.

The City of Sacramento currently has a Sphere of Influence (SOI) in the northern portion of the unincorporated area, indicating that this land may eventually be annexed into the City. While Planning staff did not recommend expansion of the UPA in the Rio Linda-Elverta area, the Board has not yet made any decisions regarding UPA expansion in the unincorporated County. While there are some infrastructure capacity concerns in this area, there are facilities coming on line in the near future that will greatly expand this capacity.

Finally, there are some requests to expand the Urban Services Boundary (USB). However, since so much capacity remains inside the existing USB, staff is not recommended that the USB be extended in any part of the County. However, although staff does not support USB expansion, interested individuals are welcome to address the Board on this topic.