

Summary of comments and concerns during the General Plan Update Focus Group Session #1 Holding Capacity Analysis

On Thursday, September 9, the General Plan Update Team held the first of four Focus Group Sessions designed to allow for public input and participation in the Update process. This session was focused on the Holding Capacity Analysis conducted by Planning Department staff. Holding capacity refers to the number of potential residential units that can be accommodated within the Urban Policy Area (UPA) of the 1993 General Plan. Discussion included a brief overview of the analysis, a synopsis of key challenges in managing and accommodating projected growth, and discussion about the County's future role in the context of our region and local communities.

HOLDING CAPACITY ANALYSIS ASSUMPTIONS:

Comment: Concerns were expressed regarding the assumptions used in the Holding Capacity Analysis:

1. *Do the assumptions take into account any rezones, upzones, or other zoning changes?*
2. *Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) and Holding Capacity Analysis growth projections do not add up.*
3. *Can the assumptions be modified to show a range of available parcels?*
4. *Many of the units identified by the Analysis as vacant or underutilized will not be developed within the 20-year timeframe of the General Plan.*

Response: The Holding Capacity Analysis was conducted to analyze and quantify the General Plan's capacity to accommodate future growth within the Urban Policy Area (UPA). A set of assumptions were used to estimate the number of vacant and underutilized parcels left within the UPA, which was then compared to the projected housing need over the next 20 years. The assumptions do not take into account any possible change in zoning that may affect a parcel's capacity to accommodate future residential development. Rather than show a high/low range of available parcels, the assumptions were designed to be conservative in nature. The number of available parcels generated by the assumptions were compared to the expected future need and found to be adequate to accommodate residential growth within the next planning cycle. While the parcels identified as vacant and underutilized are available for development in theory, it is difficult to forecast how many of these parcels will actually be developed for residential uses in the next 20 years. The Board of Supervisors will be evaluating the Holding Capacity Analysis and other information to determine whether the UPA will be expanded to allow for outward growth of the County, or if the UPA will be kept in place to encourage infill growth within currently urbanized areas.

RETAIN OR EXPAND THE URBAN POLICY AREA (UPA):

Comment: The following are the concerns expressed regarding potential adjustments to the UPA:

- 1. Keep the UPA where it is to encourage growth in urbanized areas.*
- 2. Expand the UPA to include the area west of Excelsior Road.*
- 3. More infill development is needed to encourage walking to shopping and jobs.*
- 4. What is the Planning Department's view on growth and the movement of the UPA?*

Response: The Planning Department's role is to provide the Board of Supervisors with the necessary information for the Board to make a decision regarding whether the UPA should be moved or not. Staff conducted the Holding Capacity Analysis to determine the land supply within the UPA, and is in the process of convening focus groups to get input from the community on what residents would like to see happen concerning future growth in the County. Staff will continue researching growth options, ranging from infill to new growth development, and relaying this information to the Board for their consideration. The Board of Supervisors will ultimately make the decision to move the UPA, or have it remain intact.

GROWTH & ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY:

Comment: There was general concern regarding how future growth will affect employment and economic sustainability in the County:

- 1. Residential growth alone does not create a sustainable tax base.*
- 2. Land uses need to be balanced to create a sustainable employment and tax base.*
- 3. Blighted housing should be upgraded. Blight deteriorates property values and the area's commercial vitality.*
- 3. The County needs to plan for jobs and commercial vitality.*
- 4. What will drive the local economy if development does not continue at the same pace?*

Response: Staff is looking at a number of commercial corridors in the unincorporated County, evaluating their present performance and future potential as centers of economic activity and employment. Supporting and revitalizing a network of vibrant commercial corridors will increase employment opportunities as well as the County's tax base, while providing communities with local commercial and retail opportunities. Encouraging residential growth and multi-modal transportation options in these areas will bring in more people, creating a larger retail consumer base. This base will help to drive economic growth in these areas, and therefore, further increase employment and tax dollars collected by the County.

LAND USE & TRANSIT LINKAGE:

Comment: There were general concerns relating to transportation and its relationship to both new and infill growth:

- 1. Is the County still promoting Transit Oriented Development (TOD)?*
- 2. Who opposes TOD and mixed use developments?*
- 3. How does the Planning Department plan to integrate public transportation into new growth? Is there any coordination with RT?*

Response: The County is still promoting TODs to encourage use of public transit, cluster housing and retail in mixed use developments, and enhance economic growth of specific nodes. Although TODs offer many benefits, some local residents oppose them in their neighborhood, and financing often proves difficult because banks are not accustomed to backing them. The Planning Department has coordinated and will continue to coordinate with Sacramento Regional Transit (RT) to plan for and provide an interconnected, multi-modal transportation network to serve the County's new developments, as well as built-out communities. Staff will continue to work with RT and other transportation organizations throughout the Update process to plan for and implement adequate transportation options for the County.

NEW GROWTH OR "GREENFIELD" DEVELOPMENT

Comment: There were questions and comments regarding "Greenfield" development.

- 1. What is the definition of "Greenfield development?"*
- 2. Developers are driving Greenfield growth.*

Response: "Greenfield" is a term that describes land not previously developed for urban uses such as residential, commercial or industrial. "Greenfield development" is development on lands that have yet to be built upon outside of agriculture or forestry uses. Many developers look to build on greenfields for a variety of reasons, but they are not the only factor pushing for expanding growth onto lands previously undeveloped.

GENERAL COMMENT:

Comment: There is a need for real world context and corroboration in the planning process.

Response: Comment duly noted.