

Summary of Comments and Concerns During the General Plan Update Focus Group Session #8 Human Services Element and SACOG's Blueprint Project

On Thursday, September 29, 2005 the General Plan Update Team held the eighth Focus Group Session to receive public input and participation in the Update process. This session was convened to focus on SACOG's Blueprint project and how its principles and vision may be considered in Sacramento County's General Plan Update.

Staff began the workshop with a brief summary of the past 7 workshops and focus groups, followed by a recap of the 8th Board workshop and associated discussion. Once staff's review was complete, focus group participants raised a series of questions relating to Sacramento County's General Plan growth accommodation strategy and SACOG's Blueprint Vision. The following summarizes these questions and captures general group discussion.

HUMAN SERVICES ELEMENT

- 1. How would the new human services General Plan designation function? How are human services sited now? This designation should apply to both infill and new growth areas.*
- 2. Would the new human services designation distinguish between specific uses, or would it remain broad? Would existing human service sites be re-designated?*
- 3. Would planning for human services link them to transit or pedestrian facilities? Human services should be close to and/or connected to homes and community.*
- 4. How do you plan for complimentary uses in proximity to each other (e.g. a playground next to a retirement home, where the young and elderly can interact)?*
- 5. Almost anything that people really need could be considered a "human service" facility, including grocery stores.*

Response: While the 1993 General Plan contains a Human Services element, the current General Plan Land Use Diagram does not feature a specific land use designation to indicate where these services would be located. Creating a new Human Services General Plan designation is only theoretical at this point. The proposed designation would most likely encompass a broad range of human services; it would not distinguish between public and private human services. The term "human services" can encompass a broad range of uses and functions. The definition will have to be refined before the designation could be created. Existing human services would most likely not be re-designated with the new human services designation. Instead, the new designation will most likely apply

primarily to new development, both in commercial corridors and new growth areas.

As proposed in the draft Human Services Element, development related to human services would undergo review by appropriate County staff and a review committee to be formed by the Human Services Coordinating Council. County staff will work with appropriate entities to ensure that such developments are proximal to complimentary uses, and accessible to nearby homes and communities through a variety of transportation modes, including bicycling, walking and transit. Additionally, the Sacramento County Human Services Coordinating Council is currently conducting outreach among area transit providers to help ensure that development will be accessible by transit.

BLUEPRINT

- 1. Blueprint is not very aggressive in promoting dense growth.*
- 2. Sacramento and the Blueprint project is a model for the entire Central Valley, so it is important that it is implemented properly.*
- 3. What happens if the Board accepts the Blueprint growth allocation and developers do not build accordingly?*

Response: The Blueprint project was initiated to achieve a regional consensus regarding how the County should grow through 2050. The “Preferred Alternative” that was adopted represented years of work with community members, elected officials and professional staff. Since the project involved a variety of interests and individuals, there are differing opinions regarding the outcome: some feel that it is not aggressive enough in advocating denser growth, while others feel that it went too far. As is the case in any consensus building exercise, compromises must be made to reach a conclusion, often to the dissatisfaction of some participants.

The Blueprint project is definitely considered a model for regional planning and collaboration, and as such, it is being closely watched by many jurisdictions inside and outside of the Sacramento region. Now that SACOG has adopted the Blueprint Vision, Sacramento County must now decide whether or not to accommodate the Blueprint’s residential growth allocation (or a portion thereof) in its General Plan. If the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors accepts a level of residential growth that exceeds the existing holding capacity of the UPA, a number of decisions must be made how to best accommodate the growth. While the private market may react differently than as planned for by the County, it is imperative that these land use and planning decisions are made before moving forward with adoption and implementation of the General Plan.

GROWTH ACCOMMODATION

1. *How much growth is going to happen in the unincorporated area between the UPA and Urban Service Boundary (USB)?*
2. *We should intensify densities and redevelop existing parcels, not develop more greenfields.*
3. *Many communities are resistant to intensification in residential areas.*
4. *Accessory dwelling units are a strategy that is suitable to current demographics that can be employed to accommodate more growth.*
5. *Growth projections and holding capacity studies are “shots in the dark” rather than exact measures.*
6. *If the County accepts the Blueprint allocation, how will this affect current Community Plans, especially the Carmichael and Arden-Arcade plans?*
7. *How can we mitigate for the impacts associated with increased growth?*
8. *Is zoning going to be changed to accommodate more growth?*

Response: Strategic options to accommodate increased growth within the UPA that being explored through the General Plan Update process include maximizing infill development (addressed below); intensifying residential densities and rezoning nonresidential portions of new and planned growth areas to residential or mixed uses; proactively master-planning new growth areas; and intensifying growth within and adjacent to commercial corridors. If the County chooses to accept a residential growth allocation that exceeds the UPA’s ultimate holding capacity, areas outside the UPA may be explored for future development.

Through the General Plan Update, the County is considering increasing the rate of infill development, although not necessarily at higher densities than currently exist. While higher residential densities may be considered in appropriate places (such as commercial corridors), such uses are not suitable in other areas. The County is sensitive to existing Community Plans, as well as those being updated. The General Plan will be updated in a manner that recognizes the community’s desires that are captured in these plans.

Additional growth expected within the County and region will put more strain on existing infrastructure. It is the County’s intention to plan for the anticipated growth in an efficient manner as to minimize these impacts to the greatest extent possible. However, some infrastructure may have to be maintained, improved or replaced to lessen these anticipated impacts.

The General Plan Update is an important first step to changing land use designations to accommodate growth. However, the General Plan land use designations may change before zoning designations change. While

zoning designation changes will eventually change to varying degrees in order to accommodate general plan designations, the two do not necessarily occur concurrently.

CORRIDOR PLANNING AND INFILL DEVELOPMENT

- 1. How many parcels deep will be included in corridor plans – just those fronting on the corridors?*
- 2. Community centers should be located both within corridors and within communities. Centers can be close to, but not actually within, commercial corridors.*
- 3. Excessive parking lots offer a huge redevelopment opportunity.*
- 4. The County must aggressively pursue facilitation of infill development.*

Response: The thirteen identified commercial corridors are a fundamental part of Sacramento County’s urban framework, and link the County’s neighborhoods, commercial centers, and employment districts. A goal of commercial corridor planning is to create a sense of place for these corridors while providing for increased residential growth within these areas. Sacramento County will use a multidisciplinary approach to redeveloping the corridors and will include representatives from a number of interests, including: community members, local businesses, economic and community development, transportation, planning, housing, environmental concerns, etc. By comprehensively planning the corridors, Sacramento County hopes to redevelop them as centers of community, commerce, and culture that contain a mixture of residential, commercial, entertainment and employment uses.

Corridors will be planned individually, and their exact boundaries are yet to be determined. There will most likely be a specific focus on mixed use developments, identification of distinct villages, and creating “centers”. A large part of the commercial corridor planning efforts will be to identify underutilized lands (such as large parking lots) as well as facilitating appropriate infill development at higher intensities than currently exist. By doing this, Sacramento County hopes to accomplish a number of goals: accommodating compact residential growth; creating centers of community activity and culture; encouraging local shopping; increasing opportunities for alternative transportation modes; and attracting sustainable commercial enterprises.

COMMUNITY DESIGN

- 1. The General Plan should advocate for traditional grid pattern streets and should address excessive road widths.*

2. *When will mixed use be zoned and/or planned for? Mixed use development is currently allowed under the Zoning Code.*
3. *Mixed use and intensification may also happen outside of corridors, not just within their boundaries.*
4. *We should try to create “towns” and “centers” within our existing communities.*
5. *Has the County considered creating another regional park like the American River Parkway?*

Response: The merits of traditional grid pattern streets and reduced road widths are being explored through the update of the Land Use and Circulation Elements. While mixed use developments are allowed under the current Zoning Code, they often require numerous exceptions and deviations, resulting in a more expensive and cumbersome process than would be the case with a single-use development. Planning staff is exploring a number of different options to make mixed use developments easier across the County, including changes to the zoning code, establishing a mixed use zone, creation of special planning areas, etc. In addition, mixed use will be addressed extensively in the commercial corridor planning process.

A goal of the commercial corridor planning is to create a sense of place using the focal “town” or “center” model of development, within the more linear corridor model of development. By concentrating mixed use developments along the corridors in centers, Sacramento County hopes to create centers of community activity and culture, encourage local shopping, and attract sustainable commercial enterprises.

Finally, the American River Parkway is a multi-use corridor that services recreation uses, bicycle commuting and wildlife. The possibility exists to locate similar parks near other river/creek corridors within the County, but planning for such facilities would not necessarily be addressed concurrently with this General Plan update.

GENERAL

1. *Parking requirements need to be revised to set maximums (rather than minimums) as well as to decrease the size of parking spaces.*
2. *The County should rethink Level of Service (LOS) standards. The current standards discourage infill development.*
3. *How do the cities’ General Plans dovetail into the County’s General Plan?*
4. *Does the County consider possible future incorporations in the planning process?*
5. *Building more densely is much more energy efficient*

6. *The vacant, used mining pits throughout the County seem to be appropriate places for redevelopment.*

Response: While Zoning Code changes have not yet been proposed in regards to parking maximums vs. minimums or parking space sizing, alternative parking standards and sizes may be considered in upcoming commercial corridor planning efforts. In addition, through the update of the Circulation Element, alternative Level of Service standards will be explored.

The general plans for newly-incorporated cities do not necessarily need to be congruent with Sacramento County's General Plan. SACOG's Blueprint process was designed to overcome this disconnect by involving a number of jurisdictions to plan for the future on a regional scale. Many issues transcend the boundaries of individual jurisdictions and should be addressed on a larger scale, such as transportation, environmental concerns, economic growth, etc.